Locating Whiteness in Western Sydney: Theory, Pedagogy and Identity

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Certificate of Authority/Originality

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Abstract

This thesis is a discursive study of whiteness in Western Sydney, focussing on pedagogy and identity. Situated within a feminist and post-structural theoretical framework, the thesis is a contribution to exposing and redressing racialised discourses and racist practices through an investigation of whiteness as structure of authority; and being white as a location of identity, in the socio-political context of Western Sydney Australia. The thesis demonstrates the invisibility of white privilege to white people and, simultaneously, the mutual constitutedness of being white with other locations of identity such as gender, class and race, within the current context of Western Sydney. As a contribution to working against racist discourses and practises, the thesis argues for the importance of working within and across our differences. A central activity of the research lies with its engagement with my pedagogic practice in teaching about whiteness, difference and identity. Further to this, aspects of the thesis research are located within research as pedagogy, designed to engage the research participants in reflecting on whiteness and opening possibilities for new and different understandings about whiteness and being white.

A number of different strategies are engaged in undertaking this research. The first of these is to provide an overview of the thesis in relation to the literature on whiteness, the research methodology engaged and my positioning in relation to the research. The second strategy is a documentation and analysis of my pedagogic practice in relation to whiteness and difference and the insights gained over a number of years of teaching and about whiteness, difference and identity with a multitude of students. The third strategy is a close reading of my textual practices in writing about whiteness over the last several years—treating my writing as a case study—identifying the changes in my understandings about whiteness, linking to the emergence of the field of whiteness studies and the difficulties in finding a voice within the field. The fourth strategy is an analysis of discourses of whiteness engaged by the research participants to talk about whiteness and being white, within the context of Western Sydney. In undertaking this analysis of discourses of whiteness in Western Sydney, the research exposes the ways in which the history of Indigenous Australians and their dispossession through invasion and white settlement is written over by whiteness.

The thesis points to the importance of acknowledging and exposing the structure of whiteness as authority. Alongside this the thesis locates the complex space between whiteness as authority and being white as a location of identity as a space for working with and against whiteness. Further to this, the thesis demonstrates the value for research of combining pedagogy and writing and research together.

Chapter One: Introduction to the thesis

> … while we wait in silence for that final luxury of fearlessness, the weight of that silence will choke us. The fact that we are here and that I speak these words is an attempt to break that silence and bridge some of those differences between us, for it is not difference which immobilises us, but silence. And there are so many silences to be broken (1984b p.34).

Positioning the thesis

This thesis provides an analysis of whiteness in Western Sydney, engaging theory, pedagogy and identity. The focus of the thesis arises from an earlier involvement on my part in anti-racism as activist and as educator, and encapsulates the shift in focus necessitated in coming to understand that an analysis of whiteness, as structure of authority and as location of identity, is integral to understanding discourses and practices of racism. The thesis draws on my engagement with anti-racism, inter-constituted with my engagement with feminism, and with feminist post-structuralist theory, and my professional life as an educator. These are the conditions from which the thesis emerged and which have shaped its framing and location, in particular the intersection of the research with my pedagogic practice both as site of research in Western Sydney and, also, in framing aspects of the practice of research as pedagogy.

There is no innocence in this thesis, no innocent location from which the research is presented as an objective study of whiteness. Apart from the fact that, as is argued in Chapter Three, research is always positioned, in this thesis there is no intention to separate the research from my practice as educator, as feminist as working against racism. Partly this is a recognition of the impossibility of such a stepping aside, but more importantly it is a deliberate act to position the research as political act, fully cognisant of my anti-racism activism, my positioning as a feminist and as adult educator as its antecedents. The research does not step away from these positionings but rather it should be seen as on a continuation

of my earlier activism in relation to anti-racism. This is a thesis that has been unashamedly designed to engage with the subjectivity of the participants, with my own subjectivity and to contribute to working against practices of racism. That said, the thesis, positioned within a feminist post-structuralist framework, gives great weight to reflexivity as is discussed in detail in Chapter Three. Here, I want to raise reflexivity as an important aspect of the thesis given the nature of the thesis and in particular my stance as working against racism. In particular, it is important to note that I do not locate myself outside of racialised and racist discourses and racist practices. These are prevalent throughout Australian political, cultural and social institutions and discursive practices and I am neither immune to these or outside of them. So while I position myself as working against racism (most of us would) that position is one that demands reflexivity in working to recognising racist discourses and practices that are part of our everyday lives, particularly within the context of the normativity of whiteness. It also demands reflexivity on my part as a researcher working within the field of whiteness.

With this in mind, the work of this thesis is to provide a reflexive analysis of whiteness and identity, situated in three different sites of investigation. The first site of research is an analysis of pedagogic practices in relation to teaching about whiteness, culture, identity and difference over several years at the University of Western Sydney. This is a challenging area in which to teach. Reflections on my pedagogic practice, combined with my changing understandings of whiteness and identity that have emerged through the process of my research, have provided significant insights into whiteness and about teaching about whiteness. In a continuing and mutually constituted process, these insights fold back into my pedagogic practice and into my understandings of whiteness and identity.

The second site of investigation is my own changing subjectivity as a white Anglo-Australian woman/researcher, coming to particular understandings about the nature of whiteness and white subjectivity. Given my own location as a white woman, it seems imperative that my own positionings and understandings come under scrutiny as part of the reflexive process of the thesis. The documentation of my own moments of realisations—

both Ah Ha! and Uh Oh!—provides an important record of changes in understandings and the layers of complexity involved in thinking about whiteness, identity and difference.

The third site of investigation is an exploration of whiteness and white identity within the specificities of Western Sydney, Australia in the late 1990s and early 21st century. The participants in this field research were students at the University of Western Sydney and were people living and working in Western Sydney, who gave their time to take part in interviews and workshops about whiteness and identity. The research undertaken with the participants provided useful insights into the workings of whiteness in Western Sydney and the interplay of white identities and positionings across discourses of race, class, gender and location, in particular. Importantly, the discourses of whiteness within which the participants spoke about whiteness in Western Sydney have been analysed in relation to the positioning of Indigenous Australians within discourses of whiteness and race.

This thesis effectively brings these three sites of investigation together. It reflects an investigation of whiteness and being white and pedagogic practice in teaching about whiteness and difference in these sites at a particular moment in time, the late 1990s and early 2000s. The investigation exposes the invisibility and normalisation of whiteness for many white people that has hitherto rendered an unspoken and unacknowledged privilege to being white. Concurrently, the pedagogical and research practices investigated in the thesis, in raising issues of whiteness, privilege and identity seek to engage with and challenge this taken-for-granted positioning of many white people. As part of a growing body of literature on whiteness, both internationally and in the Australian context, the thesis seeks *to be of use* in challenging racialised discourses and discursive practices that are contingent upon the invisibility and prevailing authority of whiteness and being white.

Overview of the thesis topic

The last fifteen years have witnessed a growing body of activists, educators and researchers (including me) who have located themselves in the field of whiteness studies as a site for progressing the work of understanding and dismantling racisms. This has proved to be a fertile and challenging ground for exploring discourses and practices of whiteness,

difference, and race and racism. Researchers have turned their attention to exploring whiteness in a diversity of sites and through many different lenses. Areas of research have included how whiteness is constructed: who gets to be white; whiteness as ethnicity; whiteness and gender; whiteness and class; whiteness as invisible; whiteness in the construction of the ethnic other; and whiteness in the classroom. A particular concern in much of this research has been, and continues to be, to expose the normalised and often invisible, unspoken privileges that accrue to those who are white. Alongside this, there is also an intention to recognise the ways in which that privilege is mediated by other locations of identity such as gender, location, class, sexuality, and race, for example, and to take account of local contexts. This thesis, situated within this body of research, is a contribution to the work of understanding and deconstructing whiteness as a structure of authority and power.

An important impetus for the interest and focus on whiteness by white researchers and activists, and one that spoke directly to me, arose from the demands made by black American writers such as bell hooks and Toni Morrison. These two writers in particular demanded that the critical gaze on race and racism be turned from the effects of racist practices on the objects of racism to a focus on whiteness and its effects for/on the white subject. In 1992, bell hooks called for a repositioning of the white subject, suggesting 'that this process of repositioning has the power to deconstruct practices of racism'(1992b p.148). At the same time Toni Morrison argued that while considerable attention has been given to the effects of racism on the objects of racism as well as to the study of the underpinning assumptions and origins of racism, '…[it] seems poignant and striking how avoided and unanalysed is the effect of racist inflection on the subject' (Morrison 1992 p.24). This thesis research is a contribution to the process of exploring the effects of racialised discourses and practices on the white subject located in the Australian context. In this context, the study of whiteness can be seen as part of a project to take up the challenge issued by hooks and Morrison, and also by Gayatri Spivak when she argues that '…holders of hegemonic discourse should de-hegemonize, their position and themselves learn to occupy the subject position of the other ...' (Spivak 1990a p.122). These and other writers were making a call to white people to turn their gaze away from the racialised other

towards the normalised white subject in order to explore the positioning of the white subject within the discourses of race and racism, and to explore and document the effects for white people of living in a racialised world. The study of whiteness by white people, in all its complicities and impossibilities, can be seen in part as a response to these challenges to engage in the study of the effects of the power and authority of whiteness.

This thesis is a contribution to our knowledge about the operation of whiteness, in particular within the specificities of Western Sydney. This work contributes to building understanding of whiteness as a structure of authority, exposing the privileges that accrue from the normalisation of whiteness with racialised hierarchies, as well as the intersections of being white with other locations of identity such as race, class, and gender. The thesis takes up the injunction for white people to examine whiteness not just through an exploration of whiteness with participants in Western Sydney but also through an examination and analysis of my own coming to understand whiteness and being white, and the contribution of this more generally to the field of whiteness studies. In researching whiteness, there is an imperative to locate myself as white woman in the research. In responding to Spivak's instruction above, I make no claim to have occupied the position of the other. In fact, I note in this regard that there is some irony attached to the location of my research in Western Sydney, itself a site of multiple socio-economic-cultural disadvantages that are not part of my personal experience. Nevertheless, as will unfold in the body of the thesis, I am cognisant of my own privileged position in relation to the research participants and more generally as a white, well-educated first world woman, which gives even more cogency to the demand for me to be reflexive of my own positioning in the research. As such, there are a number of intersecting processes in the thesis that come under the microscope in terms of turning the gaze onto whiteness in general, whiteness in Western Sydney and my practice as a white researcher, and my pedagogic practice in teaching about whiteness and difference.

Conceptualising whiteness

From the body of literature that has developed on whiteness both internationally and in Australia (as discussed in Chapter Two), it is possible to attach meaning to the concept of whiteness. Ruth Frankenberg, whose work has been groundbreaking in the field of

whiteness studies, argues that whiteness is relational and contextual but always signals dominance (1993b). Homi Bhabha, commenting on the burgeoning study of whiteness within cultural studies in the late 1990s, argued that a Foucaultian understanding of power must be central to any analysis of whiteness and its effects so as to expose the normativity of whiteness (Bhabha 1998). That is, central to any analysis of whiteness it is imperative to consider whiteness not simply as about being white—similar to, say, being black—but as a signifier of power and authority. And as Bhabha further argues, whiteness studies needs to reveal the operations of whiteness that bear on its becoming '... a transparent and transcendent force of authority' (1998 p.21).

This gives some idea of the complexity of the concept of whiteness to be investigated in this thesis. Alongside this conceptualisation of whiteness as a structural signifier of authority, white is also a marker of identity alongside other racialised markers of identity. Thus, in investigating and engaging with whiteness, it is critical to engage simultaneously with the complexity of whiteness as a structure of authority, and with white as a location of identity within discourses of race and identity. As Frankenberg argues above, whiteness is always in relation to other similarly socially constructed concepts and must be understood as such. It is a relational concept located in time and in place, responsive to and reflective of intersecting local and global dynamics. The meaning of whiteness and its effects, and the construction of the white subject, all need to be read through an understanding and analysis of the complexity of local, social and global discourses and relations of power that come together to produce whiteness and white identities in mutually constitutive relationships in specific time and spatial settings. In researching whiteness in this thesis, there is no intention to define whiteness in a narrow and instrumental fashion. Rather, this thesis, by actively engaging with whiteness, dynamically contributes to our understanding of the workings of whiteness in a specific time and place, as a means of challenging and breaking down the dominance of whiteness.

Making Australia a white nation

The single most significant point to make about the Australian context in relation to this thesis is that we are predominantly a white nation living on black land. The indigenous people of this land have been in continuous occupation for around 60 000 years. This was

interrupted permanently 218 years ago by English invasion and settlement. Further to that, the dominant discourses about race and difference that operate in the public sphere are framed within the denial of this fact of history. As a white nation, we work hard to deny the history and practices that led to this land now called Australia, becoming a white nation, and this profoundly shapes who we are and how we—all of us—live in/on the land. The specificities of Australia's history prior to and after 1788 are not the focus of the research for this thesis. The presence of whiteness on what was for 60 000 years a black continent broadly frames the research, giving whiteness its historical and spatial context. While the thesis is not engaged directly with discussing the history of invasion and settlement, this history permeates the discourses of race relations in Australia, constituting the presence and effects of whiteness. In researching whiteness in Western Sydney in the here and now, this history that is still happening now, is always already present. As an aside to this, I want to indicate here a particular use of terminology in relation to Indigenous Australians. There are a number of terms that are in current usage to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and, in this thesis, I will be adopting the following protocols. In general discussion, I will as much as possible be using the term Indigenous Australians/peoples to refer to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. As appropriate, I will also make specific reference to particular Aboriginal peoples and to Torres Strait islanders. Following the argument of Jackie Huggins (1993) the term Aborigines will not be used. Huggins' recommendation is to use the term Aboriginal as both noun and adjective. As far as possible, this injunction will be followed.

In addition to being a white nation imposed on a black country, we are also a nation of immigrants[1]. Non-Indigenous Australians have come from many different cultures, languages, ethnicities, religions, framed within the dominance of the Anglo/white-Australian culture and heritage. This immigration since 1788 and up to 1901 largely occurred under the regulation of the various state colonial governments and, subsequent to federation in 1901, under the control of the federal government. The central and over-

[1] This is not to ignore the regular movement of Indigenous clans across the continent over thousands of years prior to white invasion for trade and ritual meetings; or the trading and inter-settlement between Aboriginal people of the north western parts of Australia and the Macassans in the Indonesian archipelago from at least the 1500s (Cleland 2003).

arching theme of immigration regulation from the time of invasion and settlement until very recently, has been to maintain Australia as a white nation. There are several moments of enactment of this commitment to keeping Australia white throughout the period of white settlement. These reflect both official policy/practice up until the 1970s and, more recently, continuing practice, despite official policy and rhetoric that disclaimed such racialised discrimination. Significant of these include actions such as the banning of immigration from China by different States and Territories during the 1890s (ABC 2001a). In Queensland, indentured labour from the south pacific islands was brought in to work in the cane fields from the late 1880s onwards. The islanders were later returned to the pacific islands, with no regard to where they originally came from and or their newer connections in Australia, once the practice was outlawed to project white Australian wages after federation (Megarrity 2006). The official proclamation of White Australia through the passing of the Immigration restriction Act of 1901 at the time of Federation (ABC 2001b) was the first legislation to be passed by the newly federated parliament. Throughout most of the 20th century there was a continual informal and successful ban on immigration from Asian countries through the operation of the Immigration Restriction Act 1901 (Jupp 2002). Combined with this there have been successive waves of aggression towards Asian communities by far right political groups, notably in the 1980s at the time of the bicentennial (Jupp 2002) and then again through Pauline Hanson's attacks on Asian immigration and Asian communities (Jupp 2002). During the 2001 federal election campaign, the "children overboard" incident—when the Howard Government acted with little regard for humanity and a great deal of dishonesty in representing refugees as terrorists and barbarians who would throw their children overboard (Marr and Wilkinson 2004) was a very recent and ignoble enactment of political expediency. Similarly, the Tampa crisis, also during the 2001 election campaign, when the Howard Federal Government refused to rescue refugees from a sinking ship (Marr and Wilkinson 2004), demonstrated the victory of racism over humanity. All of these acts have taken place within the framework of colonisation and immigration.

Thus, the story of immigration since white invasion and settlement can be understood through discourses of race and racialised practices (see Jupp 2001; 2002; 2004; 2007)

designed with deliberateness, to keep the Australia of our official imaginary as white. Consequently, over the last 200 plus years this imaginary has had to be defended, more and less vigorously within the immediate and changing contexts of the threats to this imaginary white nation, particularly through processes of immigration. Joseph Pugliese (2002) for example, describes the efforts taken to keep Australia literally white in the 1950s post-war period of European immigration, when prospective migrants had to pass the tan test. The test involved labouring men lowering their trousers to see the colour of the skin below the tan line (2002). And, of course, the dictation test, requiring prospective migrants to undertake a dictation test in any language set, as a criteria for entry to the country (Jupp 2007), was Australia's most infamous means of keeping out those who would challenge the white imaginary.

Western Sydney

At the time that this thesis began to take shape, I had taken a position at the University of Western Sydney and this provided an excellent opportunity to locate the research in Western Sydney. In constructing the shape of this research, it was important to locate the research in a site that offered a complexity of intersections of the social and the subject and in particular offered opportunities for exploring the intersections of the race/class/gender triplet[2] with the concept of whiteness. Western Sydney is such a site of multiple intersections of locational disadvantage, racialised tensions, and class stereotypes that provide a rich complexity for analysis.[3] A powerful symbol of difference and locational disadvantage, Western Sydney provides ready fodder for banner headlines and stereotypes that cry out for deconstruction. In many ways the other to Metropolitan Sydney, Western Sydney is commonly referred to in such deprecatory terms as problem suburbs/problem people, under-resourced and under-serviced, working class, home to the westie and the wog, a sprawling suburbia of single mums, the uneducated, and the unemployed. Western Sydney, however, is not only, or even, any of these. Thus, locating my research in this area offered an opportunity to engage in deconstruction of these previously mentioned

[2].I borrowed the idea of the triplet from Carmen Luke and Jennifer Gore (1992) who linked the terms class, race and gender as a triplet (p.4) to indicate the inter-relationship of these terms and generally the inter-relationship of all locations of identity

[3]Appendix 1.1 provides detailed information about the socio-economic composition of the population of Western Sydney.

stereotypes and dominant discourses of Western Sydney. The underlying values and assumptions expressed in these descriptors of Western Sydney not only need to be challenged in terms of their meanings for the construction of the social and geographical space marking out Western Sydney but also for the ways in which certain popular discourses continue to draw on particular constructions of family, culture and social engagement. Drawing as they do upon simplistic and moralistic viewpoints, these popular discourses demonise certain positions and bestow moral rectitude on others, for example, the single mother as opposed to the heterosexual nuclear family unit. Given these popular and resilient discourses in relation to Western Sydney, it is a fertile site within which to explore whiteness and being white, in all their complexities. It is through and against these discourses of Western Sydney, interlinked with discourses of race and racism and framed within the silent presence of whiteness that my research has unfolded and taken shape.

When talking about Western Sydney in these terms there is most often a denial that the social, cultural and geographical space now known as Western Sydney has been country for thousands of years to Indigenous Australians from a multitude of language groups. The Dharag, for example, are the traditional custodians of the area that became known as the Cumberland Plain over which Sydney and Western Sydney have developed. The area now known as the Greater Western Sydney region accounted for a number of different clans and language groups and the history of the traditional owners, the Dharug, has now been well documented.[4] While no longer living on the land in a traditional manner, some of the descendents of the original people of this area (and from many other areas) are present in Western Sydney, making Western Sydney home to one of the largest populations of Indigenous Australians in one local area (Australian Bureau Statistics 2004; WESTIR 2003, see Appendix 1.1). Yet non-Indigenous Australia in the main continues to remain ignorant of this history and presence. Dominant discourses speak as if this history and these communities do not exist, or if they did, they are a thing of the past. This tells us something of the power of whiteness to silence the history of occupation and destruction of the local

[4] See Appendix 1.2 for information and maps of the language and clan groups in Western Sydney, also (City of Sydney 2002; Kohen 2006; Kohen and Blacktown and District Historical Society 1993).

Indigenous communities that unfolded during the early years of white settlement in this region.

Within the representation of Western Sydney as a sprawling suburban extension of the city of Sydney, a further denial takes place in relation to the development of towns and villages in the Western Sydney area that were part of the settlement process from the beginning of white occupation. The beginnings of towns and villages such as Parramatta, Richmond, Penrith, Toongabbie, Castlereagh, Campbelltown and Camden lie in the very early 1790s (Kass 2005). These townships now largely have been overtaken by the spread of Sydney West, North and South and in this process, the histories of each place have also been largely subsumed. For example, the settlement of Parramatta, the demographic centre of Sydney was in its very early days up to the 1790s larger than the settlement of Sydney at Port Jackson (West 1986).[5] However, I stress here that this is not an historical or a geographical thesis. The point of this discussion is to highlight what is silenced and made invisible, and what is normalised in contemporary discourse about Western Sydney and the people who live there. These particular layers of settlement, thousands of years of life, community and culture juxtaposed against the last 218 years of white settlement, are not the focus of this thesis. Nevertheless, these same layers of settlement are significant to the examination of whiteness and discourses of race and racism. Thus, my research into whiteness, undertaken with people living and working in Western Sydney, is framed within and against the popular and resilient discourses of Western Sydney as the other. It is woven throughout with the representations and denials of Indigenous land and culture, and white occupation and settlement that are situated within the space that is Western Sydney. This place that is Western Sydney and the multiple layers of settlement are written through this analysis of whiteness in Western Sydney.

Research and pedagogy

A central element of this thesis is my research into teaching about whiteness and difference. This has evolved in a particular direction over a period of several years, reflecting shifts in my theoretical understandings in relation to discourses of race and racism and teaching practice. More than this, however, the focus of this research and the research process itself

[5] A map of the settlements around Parramatta at around 1820 is shown in Appendix 1.3.

is an extension of my positioning within pedagogic discourses of social change and feminist post-structuralist pedagogies. It is this that I want briefly to talk about in this introductory chapter, with the intention of demonstrating the underlying purposes of the thesis. In doing this, it is useful to engage the term *research as pedagogy*, to intimate that my engagement with whiteness as a thesis topic is an act invested with a desire to bring about social change. The act of investment, of course, does not determine the outcome. At one level, any act is an act of change, whether framed within a simple cause and effect equation or in a complex philosophical discourse. Having said that it is important to note the desires and (self) interests that have been inflected into the research through my stance as a researcher steeped in a critical pedagogic discourse of social change (a desire to participate in the process of bringing about a better world). Equally important to note is my engagement with post-structuralist theories and post-structuralist pedagogies that acknowledge the problematics of desires and practices involved in effecting change in any particular direction, forcing mediation but not relinquishment of those desires. Thus, research as pedagogy is both a method of research and also a coming together of tensions that arise through the coming together of post-structuralist theory and humanist desires.

In working with students as interview participants in the research, and when teaching about whiteness to different groups of students, I set out deliberately to open up possibilities for producing new understandings about race and racism that challenge dominant discourses and practices in relation to race and difference within Australian society. That is, the research is a deliberate intervention to open up possibilities with my research participants for seeing whiteness (differently) and to explore the transformative possibilities this opening up offers. Thus, the significance of my research lies in the possibilities provided for opening up new and potentially more useful understandings of whiteness, identity, and difference that contribute to disrupting dominant racial discourses and racialised practices. It also lies in exploring pedagogical practices that directly engage people with constructing these new understandings of cultural differences.

Organisation of the thesis

This section provides an overview of the organisation of the thesis. There are eight chapters in all. The first three chapters, including this chapter, provide a framework for the thesis, positioning the thesis in relation to the literature and the research methodology. Chapter Four provides an in-depth analysis of my pedagogical practice in relation to teaching about whiteness and difference, an integral site of the thesis research. Chapter Five, a data chapter of a different sort, takes my writing as a site of investigation, examining the development of my understanding of whiteness and through that, the development of the field of whiteness studies and the challenges of working with whiteness. Chapter Six and Chapter Seven present and analyse the research participant material arising from the workshop and interviews conducted for the research. Chapter Six focuses on the participant understandings of whiteness and being white, identifying and analysing the discourses through which the participants spoke about whiteness and being white. Chapter Seven also works with the participant material, this time with a focus on the participant commentary about Indigenous Australians. The final chapter, Chapter Eight closes the thesis. It presents an overall conclusion to the thesis investigation into whiteness. The discussion below provides a more detailed overview of each chapter and its contribution to the thesis.

Chapter Two: Locating the thesis in the whiteness literature

Chapter Two lays out the terrain of whiteness studies, documenting the literature that has emerged on whiteness in the last ten to fifteen years and frames the arena of whiteness studies. The chapter provides an overview of the international (predominantly United States) literature on whiteness and explores issues in the literature relevant to this thesis. In particular, it looks at the issue of whiteness as a structure of authority, and literature relating to whiteness, identity and white privilege. The chapter provides a discussion of the emergence of whiteness studies in this moment and identifies the different theoretical perspectives from which the literature on whiteness is drawn. In recognising the location of my work within anti-racism, the literature under discussion in this chapter has a similar trajectory. That is, the discussion of the international literature sets the theoretical frame within which the work of this thesis is located in contributing to understanding the place of whiteness in understanding racism. This broader discussion of the literature is followed by

a discussion of the literature that has emerged on whiteness within the Australian social and political arena. The chapter particularly examines two major contributions within the Australian field of whiteness studies, that of Ghassan Hage and Aileen Moreton-Robinson. The work of these two authors serves to illustrate particular features of the emergence of whiteness studies in the Australian context. Further to this discussion, the chapter provides a brief overview of the development of the field of whiteness studies in Australia through a series of conferences and related publications, leading to the establishment in 2003 of the Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Association.

This review of the international and local literature highlights in particular two strands that have emerged in the field of whiteness studies and that are directly relevant to this thesis. The first of these relates to an examination of whiteness as structure of authority. The second relates to the work that explores whiteness as identity, the privileges associated with being white, and the intersecting of locations of identity such as race and class and gender with being white. These broad themes are central to this thesis and are taken up in later chapters as set out below.

Chapter Three: A methodology for researching whiteness identity and pedagogy in Western Sydney

Chapter Three delivers a substantive analysis of the theoretical underpinnings of the research methodology; and details the specific research methods employed and activities undertaken to complete the thesis research. The approach taken to the thesis research is located within a feminist post-structuralist framework and theoretical underpinnings. Feminist post-structuralism draws together feminist theorists and researchers, who, over the last two decades, have worked within and against the work of post-structuralist theories and feminist theorising to develop an amorphous body of research and theorising that has come to be known as feminist post-structuralism. This body of work does not provide a systematic or absolute approach to research. Rather, feminist post-structuralism is an approach that reflects a conjoining of theoretical positions relating to conceptualisations of the subject, truth, discourse and power, in particular, that have brought together, challenged, disrupted and reinscribed different possibilities and different ways of knowing and understanding the world. Locating my research within this body of theoretical work is

about choosing to refuse the absolutes of a more positivist and clear cut research methodology in favour of an approach that offers no certainties and risks being considered relativist and indeterminate. This is a risk worth taking both for the greater possibilities it offers for engaging with the complexities of the world we live in, and for understanding the intricacies of our complicities in racialised structures and discourses. Feminist post-structuralism, in offering no absolutes, opens up spaces for the emergence of alternative understandings and relationships hitherto beyond the imaginable.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, there is within my research a construct of research as pedagogy. This sits uncomfortably within a post-structuralist framework, posing what could be seen as a theoretical contradiction. Chapter Three addresses this tension, providing a detailed discussion and analysis of the feminist post-structuralist underpinnings of my research, alongside the use of the notion of research as pedagogy, a practice clearly embedded in a humanist paradigm drawn from critical theory. It makes a case for the theoretical location of the thesis within these contra-positions, partly from within the logic of post-structuralism. As a framework, post-structuralism promotes the deconstruction of boundaries that limit the possibilities for the emergence of new and different approaches to research. That is, the adoption of research as pedagogy within a feminist post-structuralist framing emphasises the possibilities that can arise from within the tensions of this contra positioning. The chapter further explores the work of the major theorists, who have been instrumental in shaping the particular directions of this research. This includes the works of Linda Alcoff, Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, Elizabeth Ellsworth, Donna Haraway, and Patti Lather.

Following this exposition of the theoretical underpinnings of my research, the chapter outlines the research methods that have been employed to conduct the field research. The field research for my thesis involved interviews and a workshop with the participants. A detailed explication of the steps involved in undertaking the interviews and workshops conducted with the research participants is provided in this chapter. The chapter also details the method of analysis of the field data derived from these activities.

Chapter Four: Teaching through difference

Chapter Four is significant to the thesis in providing a detailed documentation of my approach to teaching about whiteness and difference—*teaching through difference*. The chapter provides the explication of the location of my research in pedagogic practice. Further, the chapter provides an in-depth discussion of the background to the development of *teaching through difference* and its methodology and practice, elaborating the conceptual and theoretical tools that underpin the work of *teaching through difference*. As such, Chapter Four is the first of the four chapters that provide the analysis of the sites of investigation of this thesis research. Given the location of my academic teaching within the field of adult education, the discussion in Chapter Four centres around issues related to working with whiteness and difference in adult education teaching contexts. However, the methodology and practice of *teaching through difference* are not limited to adult education sites. Beyond this, the location of the pedagogic research within the broader framework of the University of Western Sydney and the Western Sydney region frames the discussion in Chapter Four of the pedagogic site of research. The chapter points to ways forward for a pedagogic practice that works within and against the pitfalls of the desire for transformative learning, for a pedagogy of whiteness and difference that opens up possibilities for change.

Chapter Five: Writing myself into whiteness

Chapter Five addresses the second site of investigation for the thesis, an investigation of my own changing subjectivity as a white Anglo-Australian woman/researcher, a coming to particular understandings about the nature of whiteness and being white as a location of identity. This investigation is pursued through an analysis of the production of the thesis, examining the documentation of the theoretical developments and shifts that have taken place in my thinking about whiteness during the process of completing the thesis. A number of documents and events have come to be seen as markers of significant developments and insights that have shaped the thesis research and determined its final form and content and it is these documents that are the focus of analysis in this chapter. From the initial conceptualisation of the thesis and the motivations for a thesis on whiteness, the chapter documents changes in my understandings in relation to whiteness, identity and difference as well as the research process and my pedagogic practice. The selected documents and events, while seemingly arbitrary, have come to be seen by me as

markers of significant moments, validations, and changes in the production and development of the thesis.

In providing this analysis, the chapter presents my development within the field of whiteness studies as a case study of shifting understandings and analysis of whiteness. This is significant as this development took place at the moment of the emergence of whiteness as a concept of importance within the field of anti-racism. The thesis took particular directions from its original inception that while contingent are also a logical extension of the ways in which I have engaged with the concept of whiteness, reflecting my anti-racism stance and process of undertaking the thesis research. In undertaking this reflexive analysis, the chapter reflects my changing engagement with/in the field of whiteness studies, the location of my work within the Australian context and the specificities of the field of whiteness studies in Australia. Thus, the chapter highlights the broad and particular developments that have taken place within the field of whiteness studies intermeshed with my own development within that field.

Chapter Six: Understandings of whiteness

Chapter Six is the first of two chapters that address the third and final site of investigation, whiteness and being white in Western Sydney. This is undertaken through an analysis of the participant material on whiteness and being white within the specificities of Western Sydney. In analysing the participant material and the broader themes of whiteness and being white, that are central to this thesis, Chapter Six addresses a number of themes within the participant material that can be clustered under the heading of *coming to see whiteness*. The chapter begins with a reiteration and explication of the methodology and issues for analysing and presenting the participant material that applies to both Chapter Six and to Chapter Seven. The chapter is concerned to explore the available discourses through which the participants speak about whiteness and being white in the context of Western Sydney and in the context in which the research has been undertaken. Thus, it provides an analysis of the themes that emerged from the participant commentaries about understandings of whiteness and being white. These are identified as whiteness as invisible, being white, being invisible, better to be white, whiteness as responsibility, colour is not important, when colour does matter, and a final section on identifying difference. Further, the chapter

identifies the dominant discourses through which the participants talk about whiteness in relation to these themes and analyses the positioning of the participants within the different discourses on whiteness. The chapter links the analysis of the participant material to the broader themes and issues identified in the literature in Chapter two. As such, Chapter Six is central to the thesis in addressing the third site of investigation, whiteness and being white in Western Sydney.

Chapter Seven: Whiteness and Indigenous Australians

Chapter Seven essentially undertakes a similar task to that undertaken in Chapter Six of analysing the participant material, but this time with a focus on whiteness and Indigenous Australians. In searching for ways to talk about whiteness, many of the Anglo-Australian participants drew upon their views and experiences of Indigenous Australians. The chapter demonstrates how these commentaries speak directly to the power and authority of whiteness to silence, deny and rewrite history. The chapter presents an analysis of the discourses through which the participants talked about Indigenous Australians and, in the process, it reveals the histories of whiteness that must be silenced to maintain the power and authority of whiteness in the Australian context. Taken together, Chapter Six and Chapter Seven make an important and central contribution to the thesis, addressing the third site of investigation undertaken in the thesis. It is useful to see the chapters as linked through the common work they are doing in analysing the participant material. Chapter Six undertakes this analysis in relation to what could be argued as the micro level of whiteness as a location of identity, while Chapter Seven provides an analysis at the macro level, analysing the power of whiteness to write over Indigenous presence in Western Sydney.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

The final chapter of the thesis provides a summary discussion of the significance of this thesis and its contribution to the field of whiteness studies and our knowledge about whiteness. The chapter draws together the main findings arising from the three sites of investigation into whiteness—my writing about whiteness, discourses of whiteness and being white in Western Sydney, and whiteness and pedagogy—identifying the significant findings of the research in relation to these three sites of investigation. The chapter closes the work of the thesis and gestures to ways forward for working with whiteness. In

particular, the chapter points to the importance of the pedagogic site as central to the research and the value of combining research and pedagogy in working with whiteness.

Finally

In bringing this introductory chapter to a close, I want to say something of the context of Audre Lorde's quote that opens this chapter. The work of Lorde, and others like her, in drawing my and others' attention to the privileges of whiteness cannot be underestimated, particularly within the context of the western feminist movement of the second half of the 20th century. In the quote that opens this thesis, Lorde's words are addressed to the need to break the silences of sexism and racism and class, and their competing and overlapping intersections. Her words acknowledge that this speaking, to the oppressor, whoever and wherever they are, and to each other as oppressors and victims alike, risks opening differences of interest and focus, of mutual and opposing pain, that can drive us apart as much as bring us together. Lorde speaks in spite of those fears and asks that we do so too, rather than waiting for 'the final luxury of fearlessness' (Lorde 1984b p.34). This thesis is a speaking to and about silences, within the limits of my own ability to see and to hear and to speak over my fears.

Chapter Two: Locating the thesis in the literature on whiteness

> One change that would be real cool would be the production of a discourse on race that interrogates whiteness. It would be just so interesting for all those white folks who are giving blacks their take on blackness to let them know what's going on with whiteness (hooks 1990b p3).

Introduction

In line with hooks' injunction, the literature on whiteness has emerged over the last 15 years or so. Whiteness, white, being white, privileges of whiteness, invisibility of whiteness, white racism have all entered the lexicon and whiteness studies has taken its place within the broader field of race and racism. This chapter documents the emergence of this literature on whiteness, providing an overview and analysis of important aspects of the literature. The analysis provided here extends our understanding of the field of whiteness studies, in particular the literature located in the Australian context. The chapter opens with a discussion of the international emergence of whiteness studies as a field of study over the last decade or so and further identifying and addressing the strands in the literature that are of relevance to the thesis. Most importantly, the chapter then moves to a discussion of the literature on whiteness that has emerged in the Australian context. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the location of this research into whiteness in the literature, demonstrating the connections between my thesis and other work in the field. The discussion highlights the significant ways in which this research on whiteness digresses from the generality of research on whiteness and makes a specific contribution of knowledge to the field of whiteness studies.

Background to the literature on whiteness

Before moving to discussing the literature specific on whiteness, I want to emphasise that, in Australia and internationally, this literature is part of a broader body of work related to

race and race relations that crosses over a number of disciplinary areas of study. These include identifiable areas of study such as ethnic studies, cultural studies, sociology, race theory (and more recently critical race studies), critical theory and feminist studies. Leaving aside earlier anthropological work on Indigenous Australians, in Australia this body of literature includes works from Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers/writers. Notable in regard to Indigenous writers have been contributors such as Rita Huggins (1994) and Jackie Huggins (1998; 1994) who have written in particular about the experiences of Indigenous women. Ruby Langford Ginibi (1988; 1998) and Sally Morgan (1987; 1989) have provided important insights for non-Indigenous Australians into the everyday experiences of oppression and marginalisation for Indigenous people in Australia. Well-known poet and artist Kevin Gilbert's work (1978; 1988a; 1988b) raised the angry voice of Indigenous Australia in poetry, plays and commentary. Notable, in relation to white writers, is the extensive work of Henry Reynolds (1972; 1981; 1987a; 1987b; 1989; 1990b; 1993; 1995; 1996; 1998; 1999; 2000; 2001; 2003; 2005). His work has comprehensively documented black/white relations in Australia in a lifetime of research and writing on Australian history, white invasion and the impact of white invasion and settlement on Indigenous Australia and non-Indigenous Australians. There is also the work of Lorna Lippmann who committed herself as an academic to educating white Australians about the conditions of life and the effects of invasion and white settlement on Indigenous communities (1970; 1973; 1981). Other white academics in the field of black/white relations include Gillian Cowlishaw (1988) whose work, from an anthropological background, has provided insights into Indigenous/non-Indigenous race relations in country towns in the West of New South Wales (NSW), Australia; and Heather Goodall (1996a; 1996b) who has documented the history of land rights in NSW.

In line with the dualism discussed later in this chapter, that effectively divides the racialised terrain in Australia into the separate binaries of white (Anglo)-ethnic and white (Anglo)-Indigenous, earlier (mainly academic) literature on race relations in Australia has generally been organised around this dualism. Alongside the literature on Indigenous Australia, during the 1980s and early 1990s the Centre for Multicultural Studies at the University of Wollongong was responsible for the production of a large body of research and

publications about Multicultural Australia and the experiences of immigrants from different language and cultural backgrounds[6]. Researchers and authors from within and outside the centre included Caroline Alcorso, who wrote about Non-English Speaking Background women in the workforce (1991; 1987); Stephen Castles (1987; 1992; 1993; 1992), who wrote extensively on immigration as well as the effects on immigrant communities of social and economic policies; Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis who have written extensively on racism, multiculturalism and education (1992; 1994; 1991; 1981; 1987; 1989); and Jan Pettman who wrote from a feminist perspective on women, race and gender (1986; 1992; 1996). Finally, within the body of work on immigration and multiculturalism, the works of Jock Collins (Collins 1988; 1995), James Jupp (1998; 2001; 2002; Jupp and Office of Multicultural Affairs 1988) and Jeanie Martin (1978)[7] are recognised as important contributions to the documentation of various aspects of Australia's history of migration and the social, political and economic contexts of immigration.

It is within this rich and varied body of literature in Australia, alongside similar developments in other countries, that the literature on whiteness is located. That is, the field of whiteness studies is a particular direction of this work rather than a new and uncharted area of study. In this chapter, the focus of the discussion is not the literature from these broader areas of study on race and racism in any detail, apart from insisting that whiteness studies did not spring out of a vacuum: it has roots and antecedents within these different bodies of research and literature. The discussion in this chapter gestures to these antecedents indirectly through discussion of particular literature within whiteness studies. As such, the focus on whiteness provides useful insights into the workings of discourses and discursive practices of race and racism that complement and complicate the broader and longer standing bodies of work that engage with race and racism.

The predominance of literature from the United States

In framing the literature on whiteness, it is also important to comment on the preponderance of literature from the United States addressing whiteness, and its relevance,

[6] At that time, the terminology for the ethnic other was Non-English Speaking Background or NESB for short.
[7] See also: The Future of Australian Multiculturalism: Reflections on the twentieth anniversary of Jean Martin's *The Migrant Presence* (Hage and Couch 1999).

or otherwise, to this thesis research on whiteness located in Western Sydney, Australia. In relation to the dominance of the field of whiteness studies by literature from the United States, it is important to bear in mind not only the similarities of colonisation as experienced in Australia and North America but also the very significant differences. In brief, the significant differences between the two countries in terms of colonisation can be identified as follows. Firstly, there are differences in social structures and settlement patterns between the Indigenous peoples of Australia and the Americas prior to invasion. Secondly, the difference in timing of invasion and settlement and the greater length of white/European settlement in the United States as well as in other parts of the Americas as compared with Australia needs to be acknowledged. Thirdly, the specificities of invasion and settlement in the Australian context, in particular the claim of *terra nullius,* had a profound effect on the relations between early settlers and indigenous people in the Australian context in terms of land. Fourthly, the slave trade and its impact on the Americas and the resulting African-American population within the United States has no similarity in the Australian context[8]. Fifthly, the specific histories of migration and settlement to both countries, of people from various parts of the world while often resulting from similar causes and events, have their own trajectories in the country of arrival. Sixthly, and finally, the differential power and status in world politics enjoyed by the United States as compared with Australia is a backdrop that cannot be ignored.

These differences in context while not rendering the United States literature irrelevant do mean that it is important to explore the specificities of whiteness in specific localised and national contexts, such as is undertaken in this research based in Western Sydney, rather than simply extrapolating from the United States literature and experience. The appropriateness or otherwise of drawing on the international literature that is predominantly United States-based when discussing specific contexts can then be determined by purpose and relevance. As will be discussed in the next section, the work of Ruth Frankenberg (a North American scholar) has been influential across the international spectrum of work on

[8] Australia did have its own form of slave trade with workers brought in from the South Pacific Islands in the 1800s to work in the cane fields in Queensland. This came to a halt in the early 1900s as a result of fears about the wages being paid to the indentured labour undermining the award wages paid to Australian workers (Graves 1993; Megarrity 2006).

whiteness, this thesis being no exception to that. Thus, this thesis draws on the international literature in particular ways, partly to map the field, as is undertaken in this chapter, and partly to identify important similarities and differences in the operation of whiteness in different localised contexts.

The emergence of whiteness studies

The recent wave of writings and research about whiteness, particularly but not exclusively by white[9] researchers and academics, and that has become known as whiteness studies, had its beginnings in the late 1980s and early 1990s, as stated earlier. The discussion of the literature in this chapter and the positioning of this research in the literature on whiteness are limited to the work on whiteness within an anti-racist framework that has emerged from the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia for the most part. That is, the framing of my research into whiteness lies within this body of English-speaking literature. This loosely framed body of work is diverse in the approaches to investigating and studying whiteness, reflecting differences in theoretical perspectives, differences in focus, in location, and differences in motivation and starting points of investigation but all with an underlying commitment to addressing race and racism. The earliest works of note emerged from quite different sites. Richard Dyer's essay *White* (1988), often cited as the first article in this recent wave of research and writing, is located within film and communication studies and arose out of his interest in the ways people are categorised and visually represented. Dyer continued his interest in whiteness and in 1997 published a collection of essays that examined representations of whiteness and the other on the screen, in literature and photography (Dyer 1997). His scholarship has been particularly focussed on the normalising of whiteness, how whiteness equates to humanness and the relationship of whiteness to the racialised other. While his analysis offers insights into representations of whiteness in specific works of art, his engagement with whiteness is broad and risks a conflation of whiteness as humanness with the white middle class male.

[9] I use the term white here loosely but purposefully also. It is applied loosely in its reference to what could be called a white ethnicity such as Anglo-Celtic or Anglo-Saxon. It is used purposefully in that an important aspect of the field of whiteness studies is that people such as myself, who identify as white and who would previously have identified as working in anti-racism, have moved deliberately into the arena of investigating whiteness.

Another early contributor to the field was Vron Ware, writer, film maker and activist, with a collection of essays entitled *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* (1992). Unlike Dyer, Ware's work is gender specific, focussed on white women abolitionists in the 19th century. Ware highlights the complexities of the intersections of race and gender through her analysis of the role of particular white British and American women in the fight to end slavery and the links between this and early Anglo/western women's liberation. Across the Atlantic, in the United States, the works of African-American writers and scholars such as Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992) and bell hooks' *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (1990b) and *Representing Whiteness in the Black Imagination* (1997) were critical to the development of this field of studies. In particular, these two authors were eloquent in their arguments as to why white people who were interested in challenging racism needed to turn their attention to whiteness and the effects of dominant race relations and racism on being white, rather than continuing to focus on the racially objectified other. At much the same time, the first writings by Anglo-Americans were emerging. For example David Roediger's *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (1991) that arose from his work in the arena of labour studies in the United States, explored the interplay of race and class amongst blue collar workers. Finally, in this list of beginnings, Ruth Frankenberg emerged out of feminist politics and anti-racism to undertake her PhD research with white women. The book that resulted from this research, entitled *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness,* was published in 1993. The unique contribution of Frankenberg's work and its importance in relation to this thesis research lies in her study of 25 white women in the United States growing up white (Frankenberg 1993b). Her study offered some of the first articulations of the difficulties in seeing whiteness as expressed by the women interviewed, giving life to the ideas that were emerging at the time about the normalisation of whiteness and its invisibility in racialised discourses.

From these beginnings, the last decade or so has seen a minor eruption of commentaries, academic research and writing, and conferences on whiteness, situated within an anti-racist framework. Notably, the continuing work of Frankenberg (1993a; 1994; 1996; 1997a;

2004; 1997b) whose contributions have added further to the available research on whiteness. Frankenberg's work continued to focus on women and whiteness (see for example 1994; 1996) and also continued the theme begun in her first publication of drawing links between whiteness and the history of colonisation, and whiteness as always a form of dominance (see for example 1997a). Finally, in relation to Frankenberg's contribution, as will be discussed in the following section of this chapter, she has provided a useful analysis of the field of whiteness studies (1997a; 2004). Similarly the work of Alistair Bonnett located in cultural geography, has been an important contribution to our understanding of the historical and contextual operations of whiteness (1998a; 1998b; 2000b; 2003; 2005a). His work analyses the emergence of whiteness studies (1996; 2000c; 2005b), and examines whiteness, race racism and anti-racism (2000a; 2006a; 2006b). Bonnett's work is taken up in detail below.

Works on whiteness were also emerging in the Australian context in the mid 1990s, beginning, I suggest, with Ghassan Hage's somewhat informal article *Anglo-Celtics Today: Cosmo-Multiculturalism and the phase of the fading phallus* (1994) and more formally with Peta Stephenson's *'Race', 'Whiteness' and the Australian Context* (1997). There was also in 1995-96 a study/reading group meeting of academics in Adelaide and this would seem to be an appropriate marker of the beginnings of the field of whiteness studies in the Australian context. In 1998, the first panel of papers on whiteness was presented at the *Constructing the Multicultural Subject: Adventures of Identity* Conference convened in July 1998. Following these beginnings, a number of local conferences, workshops and published works substantiated the Australian field of whiteness studies. Contributors of note include Hage (1999; 1998; 2000; 2005; 2006) and Aileen Moreton- Robinson (1999; 2000a; 2000b; 2000c; 2001; 2003; 2004a; 2004b; 2004c) both of whose works are discussed in greater detail below. Jane Haggis and Susan Susanne Schech have had a productive collaboration for a number of years researching and writing about identity, whiteness and Migrancy in the Australian (post)colonial context (1998; 2004; 1999; 2000a; 2000b; 2001; 2004a; 2004b; 1999). Sue Shore who like myself works within the field of adult education has also been a significant contributor to our knowledge and understanding of whiteness and to exploring the identity of the adult educator in relation to whiteness (1997; 1998; 2000;

2001; 2003a; 2003b; 2004). Finally, my own work that crosses the borders of adult education and cultural studies in researching whiteness, identity and difference (Durie 1999a, 1999b, 2000, 2003, 2004; Durie and Taylor 1998). This overview of the emergence of the Australian literature in the mid to late 1990s demonstrates that whiteness has been a subject of interest and focus at much the same time as its emergence in North America and the United Kingdom. The Australian literature is further elaborated in a later section.

The international body of work has covered an extensive territory in relation to whiteness, ranging from broad analyses of the concept of whiteness to questions about the specificities of whiteness in different contexts and locations. Research and analysis of whiteness relates to areas such as the privileges of being white (Applebaum 2003; McIntosh 1986; Rothenberg 2002); the shifting boundaries of whiteness over time and place (Ang 1999; Heneghan 1998; Shome 1999; Young 1990); who gets to be white (Brodkin 1998; Ignatiev 1995; Stratton 1996); and whiteness and locations of marginality and disadvantage (Durie 1999b, 2000; Durie and Taylor 1998; Haggis 1998; Luke 1994; Perera 1999; Shirley 2003; Weis and Fine 1993; Wray and Newitz 1997). While predominantly falling within the broad arena of race studies, cultural studies and sociology, whiteness has also become a topic of study within specific disciplines and professions such as teacher training (Giroux 1997a, 1997b; McIntyre 1997), law (Haney 1996; Harris 1998) and psychology (Gladwin and Saidin 1980; Guthrie 2004). The intent of the work on whiteness from an anti-racist perspective has been to decentre whiteness by exposing the normalised invisibility of being white and the authority of whiteness that renders an unspoken and unacknowledged privilege to those who are white. My work and that of Sue Shore also lies in this arena, arising from our work within the field of adult education. Both of us at a similar time though from different directions were drawn to think about the place of whiteness in our teaching practice in the field of adult education.

Themes within whiteness studies

Frankenberg (1997a) in her review of the emerging literature on whiteness related to racial hierarchies and racial subordination, identified four overlapping strands that continue to provide a useful mapping of the terrain of whiteness studies. First are the historical studies that map whiteness as part of '... the formation of nationhood, class and empire in the

United States and in the European colonial enterprise' (1997a p.2), and extending to a larger body of work on racism. The second strand concerns work within sociology and cultural studies that examines the place of whiteness in contemporary society. Frankenberg argued that scholars writing in this arena have focussed on investigating both the formation of subjects and the structures and institutions within which examination takes place. Frankenberg's third strand relates to studies of whiteness as lived experience, some of which expose the experiences of whiteness masquerading as the universal while others examine how this comes about - that is, '... how white dominance is rationalised, legitimized and made ostensibly normal and natural' (1997a, p.3). The fourth strand identified by Frankenberg captures work within radical social movements that critique racism and the place of whiteness in such movements. This strand of whiteness includes works that offer a critique of the presumption of leadership by whites within social change movements, such as those which developed within the women's movement in the 1980s, and studies that offer an analysis of white supremacist identity and politics (Frankenberg 1997a).

Taking Frankenberg's template as a mapping of the field that still holds today, whiteness studies can be seen to be an extension of the work of exposing, critiquing and challenging racism. Beyond this, it is also an important (though risky) divergence from the study of the subordinated other. It is an opportunity to bring whiteness under the microscope in terms of its place within discourses of race and racism, its operation as a transcendent form of authority, the methods by which whiteness legitimises itself, and the multiple experiences of being white. It is a continuation of - and a breaking away from - work on colonisation and nation building within specific national and global contexts. A continuation in the sense that the newer work on whiteness clearly draws on and extends the analysis of white racism embedded in social structures and in social discourses and practices operating within different local and national sites. It is a divergence, in introducing a new focus on the embodiment of whiteness, exposing the multifaceted experiences of being white across a range of different contexts and locations. These are not either/or positions. Much of the work on whiteness encompasses more than one of the strands identified by Frankenberg,

crossing over between structural considerations of racism and the place of whiteness, and the multiple experiences of whiteness as location of identity.

The study of whiteness is simultaneously to be understood as a dangerous and a positive move, turning the focus of investigation back onto the centre and shifting the focus of anti-racist work from the effects of racism on its object to, amongst other things, examining the operations of whiteness as structure of authority and as location of identity. Frankenberg suggests that while the shift to studying whiteness was anti-racist in intent, to the extent that '... focusing on white identity and culture displaces attention to whiteness as a site of racialized privilege, its effectiveness as antiracism becomes limited' (1997a p.17). This focus on whiteness risks drawing our attention away from the work done by colonised others to tell their own stories of racist practices and experiences, which has played such a crucial role in exposing and decentring racist discourses and practices. In shifting the focus of the accounts of racism and racist practices away from those who are its object, it risks the violence of silencing those narratives. As much as the field of whiteness studies can be seen as a safe space for white people to talk and write about whiteness and being white without seeming to be writing and defining the other, that very comfort risks the usefulness of the work. The danger in this lies in the nature of whiteness, the ease with which its operation as a structure of authority disappears into the universal position, its ability to hide its privilege from which white researchers, me included, are by no means immune. It invites a reinscription of racist practices through the failure to recognise the complicity that is enacted within the very acts of challenging and deconstructing whiteness. Thus, in the very process designed to deconstruct and decentre whiteness, there is risk. This is not, as I argue in a different context in Chapter Three, a reason not to proceed. Rather, it alerts us to the dangers of proceeding and underlines the importance of proceeding with care.

This thesis research sits predominantly in the second and third strands identified by Frankenberg, as discussed above. It examines both structural aspects of whiteness as well as the ways in which white subjects position themselves in relation to discourses of whiteness and difference. A further strand of the thesis about whiteness and pedagogy locates aspects of my work directly within the specific area of educational studies (this will

be discussed in detail in Chapter Four). The remainder of this chapter provides a discussion of the literature on whiteness as it bears directly on my thesis, commencing with a brief examination of the emergence of whiteness studies now.

The conditions of possibility: Why whiteness now?

This question is pivotal to the emergence of this thesis. Almost ten years on, it may seem that this thesis is following rather than leading in the field of whiteness studies. Nevertheless, the conceptualisation of this thesis and its beginnings in 1996-1997 were coincident with the emergence of work on whiteness in Australia. That is, the ideas for this thesis were conceptualised at the moment of emergence of whiteness studies, even as part of that development. Emerging, as it has, not unco-incidentally, in the post-modern moment, the literature on whiteness has included considerable commentary about the field of whiteness studies itself. Reflecting the relative smallness and therefore seeming graspability of the field of whiteness studies, but also the emphasis on reflexivity, a number of writers in the field have included in their work some commentary on the development of the field. Notable in this regard are the works of Bonnett (1996) and Frankenberg (1997a), who have provided useful socio/historical framings for the emergence of the study of whiteness within western academic circles at this time that are worth briefly elaborating.

Before moving to a discussion of these framings, it is worth bearing in mind David Roediger's comment in the edited collection *Black on White* (1998) that brings together essays on whiteness by US black writers written over the last 110 years. In his introduction to the collection, Roediger makes the following point:

> Writers of color, and most notably African-American writers, are cast as providing insight, often presumed to be highly subjective, of what it is like to be 'a minority'. Lost in this destructive shuffle is the fact that from folktales onward African Americans have been amongst the nation's keenest students of white consciousness and white behaviour (p.4).

This comment from Roediger serves as a useful reminder that nothing is ever new, and even more important, that white people are not the experts on whiteness. Thus, in making

this claim for a beginning to whiteness studies in the early 1990s, it relates to the emergence of the study of whiteness and being white from within, so to speak. The knowledge that Roediger is referring to—the critical consciousness and analysis of the practices of whiteness from the perspective of the racialised other—is not new, though I would argue that an important aspect of whiteness, of being white, is to be able to remain ignorant of the effects of the practices of whiteness on the racialised other. For this very reason, it is imperative to turn the gaze onto whiteness, as has been effected through whiteness studies, so as to understand the operations of whiteness in executing and maintaining a silence and denial of its own destructive power and effect. This is discussed later in this chapter. Here I want briefly to take up the discussion in the literature about the emergence of whiteness studies now.

Bonnett attributes the rise of the white studies phenomenon in the main to the emergence of post-structuralist theory (Bonnett 1996). He argues that the incompatibility of post-structuralist theory with essentialised positionings about race within anti-racism theory and practice led to a more reflexive practice emerging in anti-racism work (1996). While no phenomenon can be isolated and explained in a simple cause and effect analysis, this development can be identified in my own and others' shift towards the study of whiteness. A shift I would argue that has arisen directly from the emergence and greater accessibility of post-structuralist theory by the early 1990s. As Bonnett argues, this shift has worked to bring white identity into focus as a sight of study. My own experiences working in the field of anti-racism, as will be discussed in Chapter Five, exemplify this development, as does this thesis.

Frankenberg also identifies this shift from anti-racism to exploring whiteness and the white subject, pointing out that it was particularly noticeable within feminist texts and activism (1997a). One of the significant sites of implosion and disintegration within the women's movement during the 1980s took place around the question of race (Barrett and Phillips 1992; Girls Own Collective 1982-3), and the effects of this have been dominant in the shift that Bonnett identifies. Within the women's movement during the late 1970s and early 1980s, discourses of race were active, explosive and often destructive agents. Questions of

white racism and hierarchies of injustice were high on the agenda within radical and socialist feminist groups. The works of hooks (1984), Lorde (1984b) and Angela Davis (1982) offered prominent critiques of white feminism at this time that left their mark not just in the United States but also across the Anglo-Western women's movement, including in Australia. In the Australian context, the feminist weekly newspaper *Girl's Own,* which was a strong voice for Indigenous and immigrant women, regularly ran articles on white women and racism. Articles such as *Hints for an Anglo Feminist when first she meets a Black/Jewish/Immigrant/Non-Anglo Woman* (Unknown 1883) were typical of the regular features and articles that appeared in *Girl's Own* during 1983-84. This disruption within the women's movement around race was both destructive and generative. A significant result of the disruption was the shift to thinking about racism and whiteness as part of understanding and challenging racist practices for many white women involved in feminist racial politics.

A further related factor that has contributed to the emergence of whiteness studies, as noted by Bonnett (1996) has been the application of theories of deconstruction drawing on the work of Jacques Derrida (see for example 1978; 1997; 1997; 1976) and Spivak (for example 1988; 1990a; 1990b). Generally seen as drawing from post-structuralism, deconstruction has been described as a "...method of reading and theory of language that seeks to subvert, dismantle, and destroy any notion that a text or signifying system has any boundaries, margins, coherence, unity, determinate meaning, truth, or identity" (Henderson and Brown 1997). Post-structuralism, particularly feminist post-structuralism, and the application of deconstruction, has provided a theoretical framework for recognising and explicating the social fragmentation that shook the women's movement and many other movements and social structures in the 1980s. As Bonnett argues, deconstruction has '... provided a specific analytical praxis and intellectual climate that has enabled and encouraged researchers to start interrogating the "centre" of a number of different social arenas' (1996 p.147). Thus, in similar fashion to the trend within gender studies to explore masculinities, and within sexuality studies to explore compulsory heterosexuality, whiteness has come under scrutiny within the arena of race studies.

While it is not possible to track specific developments in such a linear cause and effect manner, it is possible to see the very real impact of post-structuralism and deconstruction, both in theory and in practice. For example, the fragmentation (literally and figuratively) of feminist movements in western countries during the 1980s and the deconstruction of the universalist claims of the mainstream white western women's movement can be attributed to the emergence of difference both as theoretical position and manifest in the voices that were emerging in opposition to universalist claims about women's position. Chandra Talpade Mohanty's work 'Under Western Eyes' (Mohanty 1988) is an important example of the work that was appearing during the 1980s critiquing white western feminism. Concurrently, the rise in more subtle and complex theoretical engagements with identity, difference and power relations directly impacted the theory and practices of many feminists. The study of whiteness and the white subject is clearly one of the sites that emerged from this theoretical shake-up. The disintegration/dispersion of the women's movement referred to above was also for many feminists a moment of theoretical re-assessment and shifting in many different directions. Foucault was in the air, identity politics was on the rise and Judith Butler and queer theory were just around the corner. Socialist feminism (my own brand of feminism at the time that brought together interests in economic and social disadvantage with race and gender, that is, the race/class/gender triplet) was under considerable attack from many different directions, including from within. These attacks were multidirectional but in particular concerned the privileging of class within socialist feminist texts and the failure to take account of race and sexuality in the analysis of relations of power and oppression. For example the work of a well-known socialist feminist theoriser at that time, Michèle Barrett (1980) was critiqued within the feminist movement for being too focussed on the economic as the primary force of oppression. Out of these ruins for those feminists engaged in anti-racism, it was imperative to find other possibilities for analysis and action. The possibilities offered by the deconstruction of binary relationships, in bringing the unmarked and unanalysed dominant term to our attention, are clearly apparent in the shifting of the analytical gaze from the racially marked other to whiteness itself and white identities. Similarly, the need to take account of many differences, many sites of oppression, simultaneously, provided an incentive to engage with more complex conceptions of power and oppression.

As Spivak has argued '... deconstruction gives a certain critical edge to all possible totalizations ...' (1990a p.122). The emergence of deconstruction has enabled greater subtlety and complexity in our understandings of both terms in the binary (for example black and white, woman and man) and the breaking down of the implied simplicities of the binary relationship. The shift of focus from the effects of racism on its object (the racialised other) towards the subject of racism (the white subject) can be traced directly to the impact of the work of Foucault and the subsequent work of Derrida and Spivak on deconstructive theory. The last 20 years has witnessed a tangible shift in the investigation of racism. From the study of the effects of racism on the object of racism, and the (implicit if not explicit) question: *what can white people do (to help)?,* there has been a shift to a closer exploration of the white subject and the privileges of being white, as an important aspect of deconstructing racialised structures and racist practices. Simultaneously this shift in thinking has also led to investigations into the concept of the multiple subject, and the desire to find a language for talking about who we are that reflects our multiplicity rather than a singular essentialised subject in terms of race, class, gender, for example.

The final factor that Bonnett (1996) puts forward to explain the emergence of whiteness studies relates to what he sees as the incompatibility of deconstructive theory with certain understandings about race within anti-racism theory and practice. Bonnett suggests that prior to the emergence of deconstructive theory, many white people in the field of anti-racism, who considered themselves unable to write about the experience of racism, operated within a '... kind of omnipresent critique of their right to speak about "others"' (1996 p.147). Bonnett argues, as I have argued above, that this sensitivity has been addressed in part by white writers adopting a reflexive practice, viewing whiteness as a legitimate terrain in which to work. Bonnett explains it thus: 'Whiteness [becomes] ... a politically acceptable and alluring terrain on which to make "their contribution"' (1996 p147). I agree with Bonnett about the appeal of the relative safety of writing about whiteness, having witnessed it in my own work and in that of others in the field. Reflexivity of the white voice is prominent within the field: focussing on whiteness has seemed to be a safer place to be located, thus contributing to the emergence of the field amongst white academics. The acceptance of this move, however, does not expunge the

risks inherent in writing about the other. The issue of voice and speaking for/about others, particularly as it relates to whiteness is discussed in detail in Chapter Three, drawing on the work of Linda Alcoff (1991; 1998), as part of the discussion of the thesis research methodology; and in Chapter Five in relation to my own voice.

Bonnett suggests that the '... importance of the new "White studies" lies not in the originality of the object of that study but in the attempt to treat that object as a historically mutable social construction' (1996 p.152-3). However, Bonnett points to a problem of the literature that raises an important consideration about the process of decentring whiteness. He argues that whiteness is a centred identity and: '...this centring is both subverted and reproduced...' (p.153) in the texts under review. As the focus of critique, whiteness: 'emerges from this process as an omniscient and all-powerful historical force. ... seen to be responsible for the failure of socialism to develop in America, for racism, for the impoverishment of humanity...' (p.153). That is, whiteness takes on a new centring, responsible for everything, and with this '...White people, are turned into the key agents of historical change' (p.153). This is exemplified in Shome's statement below:

> As a power-laden discursive formation that privileges, secures and normalises the cultural space of the white Western subject, whiteness 'travels' and has historically 'travelled' to 'other worlds'—whether it was the physical travel of white imperial bodies colonising 'other worlds' or today's neo-colonial travel of white colonial products—media, music, television products, academic texts, and Anglo fashions—to 'other worlds'. Historically sustained by forces of imperialism and global capitalism, whiteness has affected and impacted identities and cultural spaces well beyond the shores of Western counties. ... [whiteness] is not merely a discourse contained in societies inhabited by white people: it is not a phenomenon that is enacted only where white bodies exist. Whiteness is not just about bodies and skin color, but rather more about the *discursive practices* that, because of colonisation and neocolonialism, privilege and sustain the global dominance of white imperial subjects and Eurocentric world views (1999 p.108-09).

Here again, I emphasise a potent danger of whiteness studies. For if whiteness studies is to promulgate whiteness as colonisation, as central to racism, as synonymous with capitalism, then the value of critiquing whiteness is lost in its renewed recentring rather than the possibilities for decentring that are made possible by deconstruction of whiteness and the white subject. The point to be emphasised here is to highlight the challenge of writing in ways that surface whiteness as operating universally and contextually as structure of dominance and simultaneously to separate, deconstruct and expose the processes of this dominance rather than to reinscribe and conflate it. Alongside this, the task is to separate whiteness as structure of authority from whiteness as subject and location of identity.

Finally, in addressing the question of "why whiteness now"? and in similar vein to the work that presents whiteness as universal, white abolitionists have argued that whiteness can neither be redeemed nor reworked and needs to be abolished. Work identified as abolitionist has included that of Theodore Allen (1994; 2002), Roediger (1994) and contributors to Noel Ignatiev's Race Traitor (1996). bell hooks work has also at times crossed into this arena (see for example hooks 1992a). Bhabha presented a particular interpretation of the work of the white abolitionists, linking it to the desire to reassert the ascendency of class as the privileged term for analysing social and economic oppression (Adler 1998; Bhabha 1998). As Bhabha argues, this reassertion of class needs to be understood in the context of the work of cultural studies and the politics of difference in bringing our attention to many differences. This has lead to the displacement of class, Bhabha argues, from its privileged place in the analysis of relations of power. As such, the emergence of whiteness studies '... cannot be adequately understood without being situated within the precarious balance between old left and cultural left, between the national and the cosmopolitan ...' (1998 p.24). Bhabha suggests that what is required is an analysis of social relations of power that privileges neither race nor class or other markers of difference and oppression. '...whiteness studies would be concerned with the overlap, the displacements the ... twilight world in which these differences interact with each other' (in Adler 1998). Bhabha asserts that what we need from whiteness studies:

> ...is a way of looking that restores a third dimension to hard-set profiles; a way of writing that makes black and white come alive in a shared text; a way of talking,

> of moving back and forth along the tongue, to bring language to a space of community and conversation that is never simply white and never singly black (1998 p.24).

This discussion of "why whiteness now?" underlines the importance of the post-modern moment and the emergence and accessibility of post-structuralist and deconstruction theory in opening the space for whiteness studies to take shape. The location of this thesis in feminist post-structuralist theory and, from a personal perspective, the ruins of anti-racist and feminist activities, is a case study of a more general trajectory to whiteness studies. It also identifies the problems of a discourse of whiteness that conflates whiteness as an undifferentiated universal authority and that fails to differentiate the white subject.

In continuing with the discussion of the literature on whiteness in this chapter, I will now turn my attention in greater detail to discussion of these particular aspects of whiteness: structure of authority and location of identity as they have emerged in the literature. The chapter finishes with a focus on the particularities of the Australian literature on whiteness and the location of this thesis within that literature.

Whiteness as a structure of authority

Frankenberg talks of whiteness as signalling dominance, arguing that whiteness always exists in relation to other racial categories but, importantly, that this relationship is '... fundamentally asymmetrical, for the term "whiteness" signals the production and reproduction of dominance rather than subordination, normativity rather than marginality, and privilege rather than disadvantage' (1993b p.236). Even more cogently, Bhabha likens whiteness to a paint primer: '... a base color that regulates all others, a norm that spectacularly or stealthily underlies powerful social values' (1998 p24). Further, and here I will take the liberty of using a more extensive quote from Bhabha, he argues:

> Since 'whiteness' naturalises the claim to social power and epistemological privilege, displacing its position cannot be achieved by raising the 'gaze of the other' or by provoking the 'return' of the repressed or the oppressed. The subversive move is to reveal *within* the very integuments of 'whiteness' the

> agonistic elements that make it the unsettled, disturbed form of authority that it is—the incommensurable 'differences' that it must surmount; the histories of trauma and terror that it must perpetrate and from which it must protect itself; the amnesia it imposes on itself; the violence it inflicts in the process of becoming a transparent and transcendent force of authority (1998 p.21).

Bhabha's words gesture to the history of whiteness as a colonial force that has played itself out in slavery, in invasion—its living histories of trauma and terror—that simultaneously manifest and represent whiteness as a structure of authority. The naturalising of the power and authority of whiteness in the Australian context means, for example, that longer- term non-Indigenous Australians and more recent immigrants do not reflect on how Australia, once black, became a white nation. It means that when Anglo-Australians talk of places being taken over by newer immigrant communities, supposedly at the expense of Anglo-Australians, a general amnesia is at work about earlier patterns of settlement and land use. This amnesia denies the realities of settlement and cultural development over thousands of years across the Australian continent; and concomitantly, the terror and trauma that have resulted for these communities as a consequence of white invasion and settlement in the last 210 years. This is not to say that there is not any challenge to this presumption of right.[10] However, for most non-Indigenous Australians, the displacement of the Indigenous people from their land is so complete that it can seem as if the history of Indigenous people in Australia is non-existent and Indigenous people invisible.

When Indigenous people are visible, it is more often than not in relation to issues and problems occurring in communities. These problems generally relate to community disintegration, family and community violence, alcohol and drug problems, sexual and physical abuse and so on that reflect generations of disruption and displacement. These issues emerge and are spread across the front pages of the press from time to time, in the main as a political argument and presented as if they are issues unique to Indigenous

[10] The 'History Wars' refers to a debate that has taken place in the last three to four years in academic and journalistic circles. The debate is a current example of challenges (and counter-challenges) to the general amnesia and denial that surrounds the history of invasion and settlement of Australia and the particular impacts on Indigenous communities at the time of settlement (Attwood 2005; MacIntyre and Clark 2004; Manne 2003; Reynolds 2001; Windshuttle 2002). The continuing survival of indigenous communities is a constant reminder of this history.

communities. More often than not, they are presented as newly discovered with no reference to the last outbreak of public attention and with no attention to the ongoing work that is being done by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to address these issues. In addition, very often, the issues are presented without context and with little or no attention to the paucity of resources directed to these issues and, more importantly, the underlying causes, on an ongoing basis from government. A recent outbreak of the representation of Indigenous communities in this way occurred in June 2006 at which time the federal Health Minister, Tony Abbott, called for a renewed policy of paternalism in relation to reports of sexual abuse, drunkenness and lawlessness in Indigenous communities (Dodson 2006; Grattan 2006). Thus, generational issues and problems in communities, directly arising from the impacts of colonisation and displacement, are represented in popular discourses as deriving from internal problems within Indigenous people and Indigenous communities. That is, popular representations isolate and separate the current circumstances in Indigenous communities as if they are unrelated to our shared histories. Further, Indigenous communities are presented as a problem and a burden (the white man's burden) for the broader non-Indigenous population to deal with. This turning on its head and denial of events is succinctly reflected in the popular view that we cannot afford to allow refugees into our country as we have enough problems with the Indigenous people. Herein rests the power of whiteness to rewrite history, to shift the burden of responsibility and to set others against each other.

These discourses and practices in the Australian context, briefly outlined above, demonstrate well Bhabha's argument about the processes of whiteness becoming a transparent and transcendent force of authority (1998). In later chapters, this thesis will explore the way in which such discourses are evident in the voices of the participants. Further to the processes by which whiteness becomes a transcendent power, Bhabha (1998) argues that the displacement of the power of whiteness must involve the exposure of the workings of whiteness, its mechanisms of denial and amnesia. That is, this exposure of whiteness must be done not just at the macro level but also in relation to time, within local sites, and in the mutual space of whiteness and being white. As such, whiteness can be analysed as a concept with universal impact. However, it must also be analysed and

unpacked in ways that recognise the variable historical, spatial and contextual specificities of whiteness, the divergent material effects of whiteness within localised sites, and the complexity of enactments of whiteness at the level of the white subject. This research into whiteness will provide an analysis of whiteness that recognises the universal structural authority of whiteness enacted *within* the specificities of the parameters of the time and place of the research. That is, this research into whiteness is located within Western Sydney, exploring whiteness with a specified group of people, and framed by particular contextual relationships and is underwritten by the acknowledgement of whiteness as structure of authority. By enabling the participants in the research to see whiteness, the research contributes to dismantling the transcendent power of whiteness. Concurrently, conducting the research in a particular location and time allows the surfacing of information and understandings of the operations of whiteness in a specific context. This adds to our understanding of the authority of whiteness and our ability to intervene in its overbearing authority.

Whiteness and identity

The second theme in the literature on whiteness to be explored in greater depth is the relationship between whiteness and identity. Within the field of whiteness studies, the concept of identity is important in at least two of the strands of work Frankenberg (1997a) identifies, as outlined above. These strands concern firstly, work that examines the place of whiteness in contemporary society, including the formation of subjects and structures and institutions; and secondly, studies of whiteness as lived experience. Within these strands, the conceptualisation of the subject has not been given sufficient attention in many individual works that deal with white identity.

Bonnett (1996) offers a useful analysis of the conceptualisation of identity in the field of whiteness studies. Similar to the strands that Frankenberg has identified, Bonnett suggests two trajectories within the literature (in the United States). These are '...Whiteness as an agent within the history of class struggle and Whiteness as a diverse, locationally contingent, experience' (1996 p.147). Bonnett argues that the work of Frankenberg and others who promote locational and other divergences of white experience, would suggest

the possibility of generating '... anti-racist forms of whiteness , or at least ... anti-racist strategies for reworking the terrain of whiteness' (Frankenberg 1993 in Bonnett 1996 p.149). In contrast to this, there are those who argue that whiteness as a social construct needs to be disowned and abolished, as discussed above. As Bonnett points out, these two trajectories of whiteness studies that he identifies '... are symptomatic of an important divergence of opinion about the construction of white identity and the strategies by which it may be challenged' (1996 p.148). Not only, as Bonnett points out, are there these different trajectories about white identity, from reshaping it to anti-racist to its abolition, the conceptualisation of the subject is a poorly theorised aspect of whiteness studies. My reading of the literature suggests that the different conceptions of identity/subject position underpinning various approaches to whiteness and white identity are rarely surfaced. Frankenberg's research for example, concerned with the lived experience of whiteness, did not present a clear conceptualisation of the subject. This lack of conceptualisation does not suggest that the research should be dismissed, far from it. Rather, I argue that the explicit conceptualisation of the theorisation of whiteness as location of identity (the subject) is integral to engaging with whiteness in ways that work to deconstruct and elucidate whiteness and the white subject/being white.

Problematic with the lack of theorisation is the conflation of whiteness as structure of authority with whiteness as location of identity. This has the effect of assuming a singular white subject, unmarked by other locations of identity such as gender or class and so on, a subject who is undifferentiated from whiteness as a structure of authority. It confuses embedded institutional and governmental practices that we can understand as whiteness at work with the individual actors. Further, it can lead to an essentialising of being white as racist and needing to be converted to anti-racist. Bonnett's critique of the trajectories of whiteness studies in the United States underscores the problematic that lies at the heart of the work I will be discussing in later chapters. I argue that it is critical to address this elision between whiteness as authority and as location of identity, and one way of doing that is to conceptualise a space between the two.

In taking up the concept of identity the research in this thesis has drawn directly on the work of Stuart Hall, in particular his work in relation to identity and becoming (1990). His analysis of the question of identity, drawing on the work of Foucault and Butler (see 1996), is central to the conceptualisation of identity in this thesis. Hall talks of identity as strategic and positional:

> Directly contrary to what appears to be its settled semantic career, this concept of identity does *not* signify the stable core of the self, unfolding from beginning to end through all the vicissitudes of history without change; the bit of the self which remains always already 'the same', identical to itself across time (1996 p.3).

Hall's explication of identity recognises the importance of decentring the centre not just in terms of structures but also at the level of identity. The idea of identity as shifting across interrelated locations of identity and always becoming , underpinning the development of a way of understanding identity in relation to working with whiteness. The importance of this conceptualisation of identity to this thesis cannot be overstated. As will be elaborated in Chapter Three and Chapter Four, the research for this thesis has been constructed as an act of intervention, wanting to engage the research participants in noticing, deconstructing and challenging their positioning in relation to discourses of race and racism. The concept of the subject as shifting, as always becoming, opens up possibilities for new understandings about whiteness, new positionings within discourses of race and racism, resulting from engaging with the participant's understandings about whiteness.

The Australian context

The discussion of the Australian literature is focussed predominantly on the work of Ghassan Hage and Aileen Moreton-Robinson, arguing that these two contributors bookend the Australian literature on whiteness. Drawing attention to these works in particular, is a means of emphasising that their works reflect the powerful dualism that operates in the Australian context in relation to discourses of race and race relations. This dualism, effectively divides the racialised terrain in Australia into the separate binaries of white (Anglo)-ethnic and white (Anglo)-Indigenous. The dualism is not unique to Australia

though it takes its own contextual form. Bonnett (1996), for example, points to a narrow white/black dualism that is particularly prominent in race politics in the United States. This narrowness and dualism enables talk of 'the white community' or 'the black community' as homogenous, unified entities; and fails to take account of the myriad ways in which race is enacted across and outside the boundaries of a black/white dualism. In the Australian context, Hage and Moreton-Robinson were the first authors of books focussed on whiteness in the Australian context, with each work falling on different sides of the dualism. This has operated to reiterate that dualism and to some extent set the parameters for discussions of whiteness in the Australian context.

In *White Nation* (1998), Hage takes up questions of whiteness in terms of the relationships between white (Anglo) Australians and non-Anglo immigrant groups—the white/ethnic binary. In brief, Hage argues that the policy of multiculturalism is in practice an act of tolerance towards ethnic others undertaken by a white middle class metropolitan power elite within Australian society who have the power and position to be tolerant. Hage's work drew attention to whiteness in the public arenas in Australia in a way that had not been done before. Drawing directly on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, and the concept of cultural capital (see Swartz 1997), Hage analyses whiteness in Australia within the white/ethnic binary. His main argument and, as such, his main contribution to debates about whiteness in the Australian context, focussed on the limits of multiculturalism as government policy and its basis in tolerance (1998). He engaged the concept of cultural capital as explanatory factor in understanding the relationship of different white social groups to the acceptance or otherwise of multiculturalism (as policy). In particular, he differentiated between the cultural capital of the marginalised and often deemed racist white working class and that of the white middle class cosmopolitan. The latter deemed to have the cultural capital that positioned them as having a strong sense of governmental belonging and thus able to enjoy the benefits of multiculturalism and display tolerance to the non-white immigrant. The publication of *White Nation* brought important issues in relation to multiculturalism and locations of power within Australian society to public attention, generating renewed public and academic discussion and analysis of the realities of multiculturalism. In particular, his work raised issues about class, location, cultural capital, multiculturalism and tolerance, in

relation to the arrival and settlement of immigrants to Australia from European, Middle Eastern and Asian countries that do not conform to the dominant and Anglo identity of Australia. A timely publication in terms of the development of whiteness literature in Australia, Hage's work brought whiteness to public attention in the Australian context and provided important talking points in relation to Australia as a white nation, specifically in relation to immigration and multiculturalism.

Apart from its contribution to our understandings about the operation of whiteness in relation to multiculturalism, Hage's work is significant in its location within one side of the dualism in relation to racial discourses in Australia. That is, his work lies within the binary of white-ethnic, with no reference to the place of Indigenous peoples in Australia and the story this tells us about whiteness, as Hage himself acknowledged in the preface to *White Nation* (1998). This central omission in Hage's work of any reference to Australia as a white nation in a black land with an Indigenous occupation that preceded European arrival by at least 60 000 years, served to underline the strength of the dualism as it has emerged in some academic quarters and in policy frameworks in the Australian context. In this regard, nevertheless, there were positive outcomes from the publication and public discussion of *White Nation* and the shock (for some of us) that such a significant work could so easily overlook what should have been the starting point for thinking about Australia as a white nation. The publication of the book and the subsequent public discussion led to a series of seminars and papers organised by Hage and Gillian Cowlishaw (email circulars 1999/2000) designed to cross this divide and bring academics from across the dualism together.

In contrast to Hage's work, Moreton-Robinson's major work *Talkin' up to the White Woman: Aboriginal Women and Feminism* (2000b), is firmly located within the white/Indigenous binary. Her work reflects her location over many years in Indigenous politics and processes and within the feminist movement. It provides a close and critical reading of dominant Australian feminist discourses (within the academy) that fail to acknowledge the normative positioning of woman as 'white middle-class woman'. As Karin Brodkin highlights in the preface, Moreton-Robinson '... unpacks the unspoken normative subject of feminism as white middle-class women, where whiteness marks their

position of power and privilege vis-à-vis Indigenous women, and where silence about whiteness sustains the exercise of that power' (2000 p xi).

Bringing attention to Moreton-Robinson's work alongside the work of Hage is intended to acknowledge the important position of these two works and the position of the authors in the field of whiteness studies in Australia. More particularly, it draws attention to the way both works are located on different sides of the duality of racial discourses in Australia. This does not undermine the contribution of the works, rather it points to the power and endurance of the duality. In this regard, Ann Curthoys provides an important discussion of this framing of race relations in the Australian context in her essay: *An Uneasy Conversation: The Multicultural and the Indigenous* (2000). In this work, Curthoys examines the ways in which these two strands of inquiry have not spoken to each other. This duality has been strongly embedded in the academy where focus on either Indigenous Australia (white/Indigenous) or immigrant Australia (white/ethnic) has tended to shape and delineate areas of academic interest and research. At a structural and governmental level in relation to administration, policy and funding the duality has largely shaped the organisation and development of services at all levels of government. I would argue that in many cases community alliances and actions have worked across this duality rather than reinforcing it. No doubt this points to arbitrary lines of differentiation between the academy and the community that is not being pursued here except to note it and to recognise that there have been individuals within both arenas who have worked across this duality. The important point in relation to whiteness studies is to emphasise that if studies in whiteness are to contribute to deconstructing racism and move us forward in thinking about race and racialised practices then it is imperative that our work in the field contribute to exposing embedded dualities and binaries that hold our debates and research within limiting frameworks. Thus, the works of Hage and Moreton-Robinson are critical to the field of whiteness studies in the Australian context both for their insights and for their limitations. In fact Hage's work has taken a number of different directions since the publication of White Nation, including deliberate moves to address the divide his work contributed to in setting up whiteness only in relation to the ethnic other as mentioned above.

Moreton-Robinson has moved on from this initial work on whiteness in relation to feminist discourses and practices to an examination of the concepts of indigenous sovereignty and patriarchal whiteness (2001; 2004a; 2004b; 2004c). Of particular interest are her arguments in relation to the indissolubility of Indigenous sovereignty and the importance of this in understanding whiteness and in any attempts to move forward against racism and the dominance of whiteness in Australia. In this work, Moreton-Robinson has not only underlined the dualism of Australian discourses of race but in fact embedded it in relation to Indigenous sovereignty (Moreton-Robinson 2004a, 2004b). Importantly though, this sets up a different binary—Indigenous/non-Indigenous—as the pivotal point of delineation. This effectively dislodges the idea of there being any difference in right of governance between Anglo and other immigrant groups in relation to Indigenous Australia. Moreton-Robinson asserts the centrality of Indigenous Australia in its long history of settlement and relationship to country. Further she argues that any claim by others—Anglo-Australians—for a greater right to being in Australia/to governance, is incommensurable with the history of Indigenous presence in the land and the very recent arrival of any immigrants, Anglo or otherwise. This work, while starting and finishing in a different place in terms of the duality of Australian racial discourses, dovetails with Hage's work in one important respect—the position of Anglo-Australians. Hage is arguing against some right of governance by Anglo-Australians. Moreton-Robinson for different reasons is arguing the same thing. However, in arguing from an Indigenous perspective Moreton-Robinson avoids (side steps) the duality by positioning her work in a different relationship of Indigenous/non-Indigenous.

Finally, in relation to the works of Hage and Moreton-Robinson, and regardless of the limitations of their individual works, in terms of the duality of racialised discourses in Australia, it is important to emphasise these works have been critical to the development of the field of whiteness studies in the Australian context. Hage's work in particular, as the first book on whiteness in the Australian context gave the topic prominence and stimulated debate about whiteness amongst a broader audience. That is, it put whiteness on the agenda within the academy and within broader social audiences as something to be taken seriously and incorporated into discussions of race and racism across different fields of endeavour. Moreton-Robinson, both in terms of her published work and her contribution more

generally to the development of whiteness studies in Australia, has played a central role in developing and shaping the field of whiteness studies in Australia, as we understand it today. She has been central to keeping race and racism at the centre of debates and discussions about whiteness. Moreton-Robinson has also argued strenuously that the indissolubility of Indigenous sovereignty must lie at the centre of any deconstruction of discourses of Australia as a white nation. The work of Moreton-Robinson is one that challenges all our work in the field of whiteness studies. The challenge of finding a way forward that recognises the centrality of Indigenous sovereignty, beyond rhetoric and engages with the tensions inherent in this position, is an important consideration in this thesis overall and in the pedagogic work that forms part of this thesis.

The majority of other Australian contributions to the field of whiteness studies come from different discipline areas within the academy, theorising whiteness in different social and institutional contexts and social relations. These works have appeared in conferences proceedings, edited collections and as individual journal publications. The first of the collections was *Unmasking Whiteness: Race Relations and Reconciliation* (McKay 1999), a collection of the papers presented at the first public conference on whiteness in Australia—Unmasking Whiteness, Brisbane October 1988. Other collections published more recently include *Race, Colour and Identity in Australia and New Zealand* (Docker and Fischer 2000), Moreton-Robinson's recent edited collection *Whitening Race: Essays in social and cultural criticism* (2004c), as well as a special whiteness edition of *Borderlands e-journal* published in 2004. The common threads in much of this work on whiteness in the Australian context is the emphasis on the privileges of being white, the racism inherent in being white and the impacts of whiteness as an oppressive force in relation to indigenous Australia and to a lesser extent on the non-Anglo immigrant.

Two final works that need mention that are exceptions to the edited collections are Katrina Schlunke's *Bluff Rock: Autobiography of a massacre* (2005) and Warwick Anderson's *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, health and racial destiny in Australia* (Anderson 2002). I mention these two publications in particular in bringing this discussion of the Australian literature to a close, as they provide very different but useful contributions to the field of

whiteness studies in the Australian context that work alongside the duality discussed above rather than reinforcing it. Schlunke's work is both fictionalised autobiography and creative analysis of the Bluff Rock massacre. It asks the reader to recognise the impossibility of ever knowing the truth of this massacre (or others) at the same time as it is imperative to see white invasion and settlement for what it was/is for the Indigenous people of the land—a series of acts of killings, displacement, removal over time and place. It forces us to think about the way in which the Australia of today, our national psyche, our identities, our stories are always/already embedded in the history of white invasion and settlement and the acts of massacre that we will never know the truth about.

In contrast to the highly creative and original work of Schlunke, Anderson's work provides a documentation of understandings of whiteness and race in 19th century Australia and the place of medical and scientific discourses in shaping popular discourses. His work documents shifts in understandings based on medical and scientific discourses of the time imported from Europe that engaged with and were troubled by the very different conditions of life on the Australian continent for the white man. In so doing, his work offers a window onto the emergence of understandings of race and of being white in the initial establishment of Australia as a white nation.

This discussion of the literature on whiteness in the Australian context underpins the central focus of the work, which is to highlight whiteness as an oppressive structure of authority and racism. My own work on whiteness in the Australian context is significant, in its location in Western Sydney and in its insistence on analysing whiteness not just at the macro level as structure of authority but also at the level of identity. As this thesis demonstrates, my interest in whiteness is to expose its overarching power and authority and to understand whiteness at the level of the white subject. That is, to work in the spaces of whiteness and being white, and to investigate the relationship of other markers of identity and difference such as race, class and gender, to the position of being white; working with/against the framing that is the Australian context, understood and analysed as discussed in the literature.

Chapter Three: A methodology for researching whiteness identity and pedagogy in Western Sydney

> ... post-structuralists ... imagine again and again that when a narrative is constructed, something is left out. When an end is defined, other ends are rejected, and one might not know what those ends are. So I think what they are about is asking over and over again, What is it that is left out? Can we know what is left out? We must know the limits of our narratives, rather than establish the narratives as solutions for the future, for the arrival of social justice, so that to an extent they're working within an understanding of what they cannot do... (Spivak in Hawthorn, Spivak, Aronson, and Dunn 1990 pp.18-19).

The research undertaken for this thesis is under-pinned by feminist post-structuralism. This chapter will explicate the principles of feminist post-structuralism as research methodology and their application to this research into whiteness in Western Sydney. This is followed by an outline of the specific research activities undertaken for the thesis. Finally, the chapter provides a discussion and analysis of the research issues that are significant for this research. These issues, in short, include voice, representation and speaking for others; situated knowledges; research as pedagogy; and research as text/writing research. This chapter thus serves two major purposes—it presents a discussion and analysis of the research approach, the research issues and problematics pertinent to this research; and it provides an explicative analysis of the research activities.

In search of a methodology to be of use

If there was – indeed is - any particular desire that most reflected my motivations in undertaking this thesis it would be the desire *to be of use.* There is nothing particularly remarkable about this term, except possibly within discourses of research practice. *To be of use* is also the name of a poem by Marge Piercy (1982). The poem is reproduced in

Appendix 3.1. That said, there are significances in the expression as a reflection of a trajectory to feminist post-structuralism that will be laid out here. I came across the term in an article by Patti Lather titled *Creating a Multilayered Text: Women, AIDS, and Angels* (1997) and was struck by a connection between Lather's motivations and inspirations and my own, which is pertinent to my location within feminist post-structuralism. When I first read Lather's article, I did not register the connection to Marge Piercy's poetry of the early 1980s, to which the former makes direct reference. Re-reading her text more recently, I made the connection to Piercy, a poet and author who was central to my feminist awakening in the early 1980s (alongside the work of others such as Alice Walker, Audre Lorde and Adrianne Rich). I make this point now as it seems both improbable and yet unsurprising that Lather was moved by the same texts, at the same time, despite our different locations and trajectories to research. Investigating further, I checked my collections of Marge Piercy poems and found the page with the poem *To be of use* (1982 p 106) marked by a tattered piece of paper. This discovery, while evoking emotional memories of that time, evoked no memories of that particular poem. And yet, the expression *to be of use* very aptly reflects my desire, both then and still now, to work for change—*to be of use*. But it is also a reminder of the greater conviction and certainties (expressed in the poem through the metaphor of physical labour) with which I and my feminist friends and colleagues faced the world back then.

Now, today, those certainties are gone. For me, at least, a term such as *to be of use* is fraught with dangers. These dangers are not just in terms of how others may perceive its application (see *Insert 3* Chapter Five). More importantly, the term is a symbolic representation of a positioning of detachment from others and **their** problems and hence a greater ability to see (what others need, what is required). I have on view in my office a statement by Lillian Watson: 'If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time ... but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.'[11] That, rather than suggesting the need to help others, reflects a more engaged position of being in it altogether (as portrayed in Piercy's poem, albeit very romantically).

[11] I have found a number of different references to this statement and its attribution to Lillian Watson, Aboriginal woman. The exact wording of the statement varies but the intent is still the same. In no mention of the statement is there any formal reference.

This positioning of *to be of use* is not a denial of the differential material effects of our differences: rather it is an assertion that white people need to see themselves as part of the story not apart from the story. And, as might reasonably be said with some vehemence, white people could even be the problem and definitely not the solution.

While *to be of use* is not in itself a research methodology, it speaks a particular trajectory to a research methodology when linked to Marge Piercy's poem, and complicated by Lillian Watson's call to work together. If I take these two injunctures together, enmeshed in and reflective of my feminist and activist trajectory to this research, the notion *to be of use* can start to take shape as pertinent to a research methodology. The story of the journey I travelled to this research (see Chapter Five for a detailed discussion and analysis of my coming to whiteness), identifies the work of certain researchers and writers who have been influential in (in)forming my research subjectivity. The works of Patti Lather, Donna Haraway and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (discussed in the next section) in particular have been critical to the ever-ongoing process of positioning me as a researcher. Challenging and inspiring, these writers in their different ways, have contributed to the process of my coming to understand how it is possible to research whiteness that works within and against the authority and invisibility of whiteness. So, by adding this to the combination of ideas and history reflected in Piercy's and Watson's inspiration, it is possible to move closer to a research methodology that offers the possibility *to be of use*. This is, a being of use that is cautious and questioning rather than based in certainty, a being of use that is about possibilities rather than absolutes, and about asking better questions rather than providing answers. Thus, the research is located within a feminist post-structuralist methodology that reflects my stated desire *to be of use* in all its complicities. This position is elaborated in the following sections of the chapter.

Feminist post-structuralism

Feminist post-structuralism is not an easily describable theory or even set of theories. It brings together two loosely bound sets of theories encapsulated in each of the terms feminist and post-structuralist. As St Pierre and Pillow argue, it is better understood as a relationship of feminism *and* post-structuralism, '... a relationship that gestures toward fluid and multiple dislocations and alliances' (St Pierre and Pillow, 2000, p.3). In order to

elucidate this research as underpinned by feminist post-structuralism it is useful as a starting point to address each of the terms of the category. This is done below.

Post-structuralism

Post-structuralism, as such, is not in itself a singular theory: the term refers to a body of theoretical work that incorporates the works of Michel Foucault[12] and Jacques Derrida and their followers and interpreters. In general, it is marked by scepticism of humanist universalising knowledge claims, the grand narratives that have shaped European thought for hundreds of years. As Pierre (2000b) argues, post-structuralism addresses itself to the themes of humanism such as language, discourse, reason, power, resistance and freedom, knowledge and truth, not to reject but to reinscribe in ways that recognise the diversity and complexities of the world today. That is, post-structuralism is not simply in opposition to the themes of the enlightenment, offering an alternative set of themes (or interpretations) or dismissing humanist themes as untrue. Rather, it works to deconstruct and interrogate, exposing the effects of certain ways of being and the truths of humanism at different historical moments—what Foucault referred to as regimes of truth (1980). Post-structuralism conceptualises '... truth as multiple, historical, contextual, contingent, political, and bound up in power relations' (St. Pierre 2000a p.26). Post-structuralism offers interrogation rather than a solution, providing the tools to investigate how things have come about—it asks the Foucaultian question: what are the conditions of possibility? It is not looking for any straightforward and easy answers. And, as Lather argues, it enables us to ask better questions rather than offer easy answers (1991a; 1991b). This interrogation is not to be confused with the avoidance of truth, or, as its detractors would argue, a reduction to meaningless relativism. It is a considered recognition that, as discussed below, knowledge is contingent, always already for the taking. What is required is wholehearted interrogation rather than unequivocal acceptance. As Hawthorn identifies in an interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak:

> ... [W]hat's been distinctive about this interrogation is that instead of using science and reason to get to a clearer truth, these writers [Michel Foucault,

[12] It is appropriate to acknowledge Friedrich Nietzsche (1989) here as certain aspects of Foucault's work draw from Nietzsche's writings.

> Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze and others] have viewed the very idea of truth with extreme suspicion, something to be dismantled, de-constructed (Spivak, 1990b, p.18).

Thus, in short, post-structuralism is about deconstructing and challenging claims to truth, not by setting up an alternative truth but by exposing the structures and power relationships that uphold particular regimes of truth at particular moments in history. But, post-structuralism is more than this, as will be elaborated later in the chapter. For now, the discussion will focus on the other term in the relationship—feminism, before moving on to a closer examination of the feminist post-structuralist methodology employed in this research.

Feminism

It is not the intention of this section to discuss feminist theory so much as to stake a claim that this research sits within a feminist theoretical body of work and feminist activism. This is argued on two fronts. Firstly, my trajectory into post-structuralism was by way of feminist theory and activism. My location within feminism is always already present in the knowledge I bring to bear in the analysis of the data, in the reading of research, in all the activities of the research process. This does not need any apology. All research is positioned, and my positioning within a body of work and activism that can be loosely labelled as feminism is not exceptional. Further to this, and regardless of the researcher's cognisance of it, gender is always already present within the discourses and practices written through. Feminism makes this explicit and highlights the power relations written into gendered discourses and discursive practices. This research is not about gender; it is about whiteness. Nevertheless, as is argued throughout the thesis, whiteness, as a location of identity, is always mutually constituted with other locations of identity such as gender, race, class, and sexuality. As a feminist researcher therefore, it is the case that while gender is not the focus of the thesis, it is an informant.

Secondly, given my positioning as a feminist, it is not surprising that the literature that I draw on within post-structuralism is feminist in its positioning (Lather, Haraway, Spivak,

Butler, St Pierre to name a few). The direction followed to post-structuralism emerged from (a particular) location in feminist theory and the ideas and critiques that were emerging in the 1980s within feminist texts that both adopted and critiqued Foucault and post-structuralism. It is these works that have shaped my adaptation to post-structuralism. Like any body of theoretical work, post-structuralism was constructed from within dominant discourses and practices of race and gender and class, even as it can be put to use to deconstruct and expose the workings of dominant structures and practices. Thus early feminist texts that engaged with post-structuralism did so on their own terms. These terms included wanting to exploit post-structuralism for what it had to offer in the way of opening up possibilities for better questioning and analysis of gendered social relations; and at the same time to critique post-structuralist texts for their lack of deconstructive analysis of gendered relations of power. Chris Weedon's work *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* (1987) has come to be seen as a classic text in bringing feminism and post-structuralism together. Similarly the work of Jane Sawicki *Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, power and the body* (1991), as well as the work of Diamond and Quinby (1988), Ramazanoglu (1993) and McNay (1992; 1994) all took up the challenge of making post-structuralism work as a feminist approach.

A propos of Nietzsche's warning that we seek to understand the world through that philosophy that makes us feel freest to function (cited in St Pierre, 2000b, p.479), Butler argues: '... the question of whether or not a position is right, coherent, or interesting, is ... less informative than why it is we come to occupy and defend the territory we do, what it promises us, from what it promises to protect us' (1995 pp.127-28). According to St Pierre, (who brought these arguments together), this could be the hardest work we have to do, 'this work of being willing to think differently' (2000b, p.479). That position for me historically has been within feminism and more recently in *feminist* post-structuralism. As such, it is imperative that this writing of research presents itself in ways that recognise that knowledge and experience are always-already in the making of the text. But, at the same time, the application of the tools of feminist post-structuralism will hopefully enable different enmeshments, possibilities, juxtapositions to be surfaced, working against what is always-already possible. And the history of feminism is just that—surfacing the

experiences of women in the face of the regimes of truth(s) that have written women out of history and constructed woman as other to and lesser than. Needless to say, this has not happened in an unproblematic way. I make this point not to elevate feminist research or feminist history-making (with its own silencing and regimes of truth) but rather to demonstrate that within the will to truth of any particular feminism there is also a chipping away at regimes of truth that have written out women's experiences. Thus we need to preclude any final reading and to look for ways of understanding what is represented in and by the texts that challenge our understandings, our expectations, feminist and otherwise.

A feminist post-structuralist methodology

Having established the separate terms that come together in feminist post-structuralism this section explores what it means to undertake research within a feminist post-structuralist methodology that is about being of use. It is by no means intended to suggest that this is a straightforward process of undertaking selected research activities that inevitably produce research that is of use in addressing discourses of race and racist practices. The remainder of this chapter will address the translation of a methodology for research from theory to practice. In the first instance, it outlines the specific research activities, providing a detailed explication of the organisation of the activities in line with the broader framework. This is followed by a discussion of the problematics of the research both in terms of the methodology and in terms of the research intentions *to be of use*. Before undertaking either of these discussions, however, I want briefly to position this research in terms of a coherent feminist post-structuralist research methodology that contains within it the activities and issues discussed below.

The adoption of feminist post-structuralist methodology is an insistence on the refusal of absolutes and the recognition of 'regimes of truth' operating through discourse and subjective positionings within competing discourses. It requires that a deconstructive stance is taken, foregrounding '... the lack of innocence in any discourse by looking at the textual staging of knowledge, the constitutive effects of our uses of language' where deconstruction '... provides a corrective moment, a safeguard against dogmatism, a continual displacement' (Lather 1991b p.13). In this process of grappling with a methodology of researching/writing whiteness I am indebted to Lather's discussion of her

research with women with HIV/AIDS and her notion of a 'double science' (1997 p.236). In discussing this research, Lather draws on the work of Walter Benjamin to develop the idea of a double science:

> ... [Benjamin's] capacity for a 'critical subjectivity' that flies in the face of idealist/materialist dualisms is produced by a double practice. This practice sifts through the fragments, fixing them conceptually in place next to apparently heterogenous fragments as an ensemble, so that an idea may be momentarily represented (Pensky p.67, in Lather 1997 p.239).

Lather takes up this notion of a double practice or double science as she names it (1997 p.236) in her research into women living with HIV/AIDS. A double science, according to Lather, requires the doing of it at the same time as the deconstructing of it, so that meanings can be settled as part of developing our understandings but are also simultaneously to be deconstructed and disturbed so that the tendency to settle on a single truth is interrupted. Lather's account of this research: *Troubling the Angels: Women Living with HIV/AIDS* (Lather and Smithies 1997), uses the textual device of juxtaposing different types of texts and different voices to undercut any sense of a straightforward accounting either of the research or of the lives and experiences of the women living with and dying of AIDS. In this writing of research, there is no attempt to be quite so textually creative. However, through an ongoing reflexivity and disruption of any taken-for-grantedness of the text, multiple readings should be enabled that engage with the constructedness of the text, but at the same time gesture towards bodies/experiences/knowledges that are beyond enclosure within my way with words. Not in the sense of there being some real/some truth 'out there' that cannot be captured, but in acknowledgement of my own partialities and nuances of seeing, the multidirectional-limitations of my own textual representations, and the need to leave space for other, different, competing, intermeshings of text and what is outside of the text.

Research design and activities

The different research activities outlined here reflect the different layers of intentions and aims of the research, starting with its location in Western Sydney, and the commitment to

engaged research that was not just about documenting what people did or did not know about whiteness. In order for the research *to be of use,* it needed to engage the participants in the process. As set out in the Ethics Application (Appendix 3.2), the research was designed as an intervention with the participants, planned to open possibilities for new understandings and positionings in relation to whiteness and being white to emerge. Further to that, the research investigates whiteness more broadly, and processes of teaching about whiteness and difference as an intervention in racialised discourses and practices (as will be discussed in Chapter Four). This section outlines the design of the research and the logic of that design in producing the participant material through discussion of each of the research activities: selection of the research participants; development and conduct of the workshop and the interviews; transcription and documentation of the participant material; data analysis; and the writing of the research. Before moving to this, however, design issues in relation to researching whiteness and being white will be addressed. These issues relate firstly, to the nature of whiteness and its normativity and hence invisibility to many white people; and secondly, the notion of research as pedagogy, a term used in this thesis to describe aspects of the research methodology.

At the time that the research commenced, whiteness was not a commonly understood concept. This raised the issue of how to conduct engaged research with participants who were not familiar with the concept of whiteness and had no means to talk about it. This was and still is the case for many Anglo-Australians as whiteness, being white, is the taken-for-granted, the norm, and as such is often not seen. For this reason then it made sense to recruit participants into the research who had completed the unit *Working with Cultural Differences*[13] at UWS in which they would be introduced to the concept of whiteness. As will be discussed in Chapter Four, this unit was designed to approach questions of whiteness, difference, race and racism from the perspective of identifying and focussing on whiteness and being white rather than focussing on the racialised other. As was outlined in the ethics application, the research process in relation to the participants was envisaged as an intervention in their lives (and mine) that would enable participants to engage with new

[13] Students were also solicited for their participation if they had completed its predecessor *Cross-Cultural Communication.*

knowledge about whiteness and from this, reflect on their positioning in relation to whiteness starting with participation in the unit at UWS.[14] To this extent, the research was far more than a data gathering process. Rather, a central purpose was to provide an opportunity for the researcher and the participants to engage in a dialogue about whiteness in the classroom, in the workshop, and in the interviews, that would present opportunities for learning (more) about whiteness as a structure of authority and about being white within societies structured by racialised hierarchies dominated by whiteness. For all participants but in particular those who positioned themselves as white, the research would be an opportunity to understand new possibilities for being white. That is, the research was designed to provide the participants with a new and different space for thinking about themselves and their position in racialised discourses and for taking up new understandings and subjectivities. In this process, it was expected that the interactions between myself as the researcher and the participants would provide opportunities for all of us to learn more about the discourses surrounding whiteness and the racialised other and some of the ways in which discourses of race and racism operate in Australian society.

Conceptualising the research in this way brought together my teaching practice, my anti-racism activism and the investigation into whiteness in an integrated approach to the research. In determining the form of the field research in this combination I was influenced by (a) Ruth Frankenberg's use of life history interviews in her research into whiteness amongst white women (1993b); (b) the memory work of Frigga Haug (1987; 1992); and (c) the advice of my supervisor at the time, Alison Lee. I also was motivated by my interest in research as a form of pedagogy that was implemented in this research both through the students' participation in - and reflection on - their classroom experiences in doing the UWS unit, and in the combination of classroom, workshop and interview experiences. Each of these components of the research provided opportunities not just to gather data from the participants about whiteness and its interrelationships: simultaneously there would be active dialogue, examination, and reflection taking place; in short, what could be described as

[14] I should add here that at the time, I was planning and conducting the field research, the composition of the adult education course was much whiter (or Anglo) than it is now. I am very aware in my classes today that the class groups are much more mixed in terms of how they might experience whiteness and position themselves in relation to it.

research as pedagogy. The concept of research as pedagogy is discussed in terms of the positioning of this research within feminist post-structuralism, later in this chapter. More immediately, the discussion outlines each aspect of the field research in more detail.

Selection of participants and demographics

Initially all of the students enrolled in the degree course I worked on who had completed the relevant unit and who had either finished their studies or completed all the units taught by me in the degree, were contacted to seek their participation in the research. That is, only students with whom I was no longer in a teaching/assessment relationship were approached about participation. The participation request letter (see Appendix 3.3) included a response form and a stamped addressed return envelope. Students who returned the response form indicating their willingness to participate were then contacted by phone/email to set up interview times. At this time, they were also sent a Consent Form (see Appendix 3.4). No further contact was made with students who returned the form indicating that they were unwilling or unable to participate or who did not return the form. In total, twenty participants were recruited in this way and, reflecting the purposes of the research, this was more than sufficient.

Issues related to the lecturer/student relationships and the researcher/participant relationships are discussed below in voice and representation. Students who did participate were not questioned about their reasons for agreeing to participate in the research. Therefore, there are no definitive statements about why any of these students accepted or declined the request to participate in the research. It was important that the students who did participate knew they would not be doing any further course units under my supervision. Apart from that, I took the position that knowing the reasons why students agreed to participate (or not) was not critical to the research, and that asking the question in the workshop or interview context could compromise the process. What can be said in relation to those who agreed to participate is that among all the participants there was a general interest in the project and a willingness to help me out; and, for a smaller number of participants, there was an active interest in the research content. This was not always reflective of a sympathetic view vis-à-vis my motivations and intentions in undertaking the research, though a small number of students were very sympathetic. However, I can say

categorically that throughout the workshop and interview process no one was antagonistic toward me, even if it became obvious that our views were different.

At the time of conducting the interviews (1999/2000), the students enrolled in the degree at UWS from which I drew the participants were predominantly women of mixed ethnic but predominantly Anglo-Australian backgrounds. Mainly mature-aged, many were undertaking university education for the first time, often as the first person in their families to go to university.[15] Unsurprisingly, the twenty participants recruited from this student body fell broadly into these categories. That is, they were predominantly women (a total of sixteen), Anglo-Australian, in the age range thirties to early fifties, and all were living/working in various parts of Western Sydney at the time of the field research. Most had grown up there as well. As part of the recruitment process, I was concerned to have mainly, though not exclusively, Anglo-identified participants. Achieving this was not an issue, given the composition of the student body from which I was selecting the participants. The reason for this was that my teaching about whiteness and difference was (is) designed to capture and focus the attention of white people in relation to whiteness. This does not mean that the teaching process excludes others but its effects are different. This research was planned to focus in the main on thinking about those issues in relation to white Australians.

In addition to the main body of participants recruited from UWS, there was a small number of people (seven in total) who were all known to me as colleagues or friends or both who participated in interviews. There were different reasons for the inclusion of these interviews: two were brought into the project to do practice interviews, one a friend (female), and the other the thesis co-supervisor (male). A further two were interviewed based on their knowledge about - and research into - whiteness, as a means of getting their informed perspectives on the interview questions in relation to whiteness. These four interviews were conducted for my research purposes rather than to add to the material for

[15] This profile was and still is an accurate reflection of the field of adult education, as an area of work predominantly occupied by mature-age Anglo Australian women. It is not an accurate reflection of the student body at UWS. The student body in Adult Education in the last few years post my field research has, for a variety of reasons, become more reflective of the ethnic and age mix of students at UWS.

analysis. A further three interviews were included based on the interest of the interviewees and their self-identification as Indigenous Australians (and as ex-students/colleagues from a similar course at another university).

Memory writing workshop

The first formal activity for the participants was the memory-writing workshop. This took place in October 1999.[16] Prior to the workshop, the participants were sent a letter containing details of the workshop, background reading, and a preparation activity. This information is contained in Appendix 3.5. The design of the workshop drew upon and adapted the memory-work of Haug (1987; 1992) and an Australian documentation of the application of Haug's memory work procedures entitled *Emotion and Gender* (Crawford, Kippax, Onyx, Gault, and Benton 1992). The purpose of memory work as developed by Haug is to demonstrate that memories are socially constituted. The process of group reflections on memories is designed to assist with the process of people being able to see how that is the case. In relation to this research, the workshop was organised as an opportunity for the participants to talk together about their memories about whiteness and difference and to identify the commonalities as well as the differences. Students prepared for the workshop by writing memories of events that were about noticing difference (see instructions in Appendix 3.5). Their writings formed the basis of the discussions at the workshop. The workshop itself took the following form: participants arrived at a conference meeting room at UWS (that they were all familiar with) and were organised into small groups of between four to six participants. Prior to the small group activity, the process and the logic of the discussions and the procedure to follow in the small groups were explained. Each participant was to have the opportunity to relate the memory they had written to the group and this was to be followed by a group discussion of the memory in terms of its social meaning rather than an interpretation of the individual through the memory. The small groups went for about an hour and a half and I sat in on each group at some point in the evening. The workshop lasted about two and a half hours in total, including a light supper and tea and coffee. The material from these discussions was taped, transcribed, and included in the participant evidence. It mainly appears in the participant

[16] Out of those who agreed to participate in the research, only two were unable to attend the workshop, for personal reasons.

material presented in Chapter Six and Chapter Seven through references to the workshops in the interviews.

During the evening, I did take some control of the groups. Most of the participants who attended were Anglo-Australian so I organised the groups so that the four participants who were not from an Anglo-Australian background formed one group rather than mixing in the other groups. The logic of this was two-fold. On the one hand, I did not want to influence the talk of any of the Anglo-Australians about whiteness and difference and the racialised other by including someone in a group who Anglo-Australian participants could consider as the other. The presence of someone in the group who might be seen as a visible marker of difference could prove a trigger for censuring the talk. I was also concerned that the dynamics of the groups might be such that those who were marked as the racialised other would be seen as monitoring the conversations or might have to endure discussions that were not being monitored for their potential racist effect. This was not a straightforward decision. It was based on a number of assumptions about how the groups would function and the categorisation of the individual participants in relation to one particular marker of inclusion or exclusion that I was well able to see as much more complicated than the simple categorisation I had allowed for. I do not argue that this was the right or only way to organise the groups. I had particular objectives in mind: particular issues were operating for me at the time that led to that decision. It was not unchallenged and there is no way of arguing about its effect. At the time, it seemed the appropriate way to proceed.

Interviews

The interviews were conducted over a three-month period in late 1999 and early 2000, following the workshop. All of the interviews, with the exception of one, were conducted face-to-face, either at UWS, the participant's place of work, or at the participant's home (by choice). One (pilot) interview was conducted at my home. It proved impossible to meet face-to-face with one interview participant so this person agreed to answer the questions directly onto a tape. The interviews generally took about one and a half hours to complete. They comprised sets of questions constructed around childhood experiences, identity, experience and knowledge of being different or of others' differences, experiences of doing

the degree unit, and being located in Western Sydney. The interview questions are shown in Appendix 3.6.

For most of the participants, their first experience of thinking about whiteness came through their participation in the *Working with Cultural Differences in Educational Settings* unit, as part of their study at UWS. The workshop and interviews following this were designed to enable participants to speak about the experience of learning about whiteness and to think differently about their own understandings of whiteness and being white. The interviews also allowed for further discussion of aspects of the participants' experiences of growing up, events/people/places that were markers of difference, the opportunity to talk about their identity in terms of their own choosing, what it meant to be an Australian, and to position themselves in relation to Western Sydney.

The interview questions and format were designed to elicit discussion and elaboration rather than yes no answers. The individual interviews were conducted in the form of semi-structured interviews with the opportunity for interaction and elaboration rather than strict adherence to the interview questions. The logic of this is well documented in the literature on qualitative research and in this regard I am particularly indebted to the various contributions in the Norman Denzin and Yvonne Lincoln series on qualitative research (1998a; 1998b; 1998c; 2005).[17] My understanding of the interview process was particularly informed by the work of Elliot Mishler (1986) and his argument for considering interviews as a linguistic event producing text for analysis. That is, the interviews would serve the purpose of allowing the production of a textual event through which issues of whiteness and difference could be explored in a contextualised manner. As such, meaning is to be seen as jointly constructed as part of this process rather than being treated as separate from the context of their production for the purposes of analysis. There is further discussion of the significance of this in terms of my analysis of the participant material later in this chapter and in Chapter Six.

[17] As part of coming to understand the practice of research, I was part of a reading group that made its way through a number of different articles and texts on issues to do with qualitative research and the production of research texts.

In formulating the particular questions for the interviews or rather the areas of questioning, for example questions about childhood and neighbourhood, I was influenced by the approach of Ruth Frankenberg in her research into whiteness amongst white women in the United States (1993b). Frankenberg's approach was to use a life-history approach to gathering information from the participants. As she discussed in outlining her methodology (1993b) she was required to decide on a number of compromises and strategic decisions about how to solicit and approach anonymous interviewees given the focus of the interviews on issues of race and being white. Informing my research in particular was the idea Frankenberg promoted of asking the participants about their childhoods, their local neighbourhoods, and so on, as a means of understanding how the participants positioned themselves in relation to others, without directly asking about their attitudes to other people. When I came to do my field research in 1999-2000, the issues she was concerned with in organising and structuring her interviews were not as critical to my research for two reasons in particular. Firstly, I had deliberately chosen to interview people already known to me and in particular known to me directly through my interest in researching whiteness and difference. This meant that the participants/interviewees were stepping into the arena not as anonymous participants to do an interview with a stranger but as students with varying personal/professional relationships with me, the interviewer. As such, I did not have to approach potential interviewees in a formal manner. Obviously, the question of being known to - and having such a direct relationship with - the research participants itself raises issues in relation to the research, but issues different to those experienced by Frankenberg. Secondly, Frankenberg conducted her interviews between 1984 and 1986, almost fifteen years before I did mine (twenty years in terms of the finalisation of this thesis) and a world apart in terms of the linguistic turn and the rise of feminist post-structuralism that has taken place in the intervening period. Now if the issues that Frankenberg discusses in relation to her interviews were to be rehearsed here it would be going over well-trodden ground. Issues of voice, relationship, dialogue and textual analysis (discussed in following sections), all relevant to my research as to Frankenberg's, are no longer ground breaking in the location of my research in the overlapping arenas of cultural studies, social sciences and education.

Transcription

The interviews were recorded directly onto an audiotape, using a sound recorder, and then transcribed. Transcription was undertaken professionally as I had some funding from UWS to support my research. This was a pragmatic decision based on the fact that (a) the funding was available, and (b) it would be time saving. Using a transcription machine, the transcriber typed the interviews word for word from the audiotapes. The participants were aware that this was happening and no one raised any objections to another person doing the transcription. Once an interview was transcribed, it was sent back to me as an email attachment. The interviews were laid out in a standard format with text marking such as bold, italics, spacing, and capitals, all used to indicate different speakers, commentary by the transcriber, words the transcriber could not understand from the tape, and so on. In the case of some transcripts, the transcriber indicated that she had difficulty following the interviewee, as the voice was too soft or the narration too fast. In cases where direct quotes from the transcripts have been used, and there seems to be some doubt as to the words, I have checked the tape myself. In cases where the transcriber expressed difficulty interpreting the tape, I listened to the tape myself to verify or adjust or fill in the gaps. Only in a very few cases was it extremely difficult to make out the specific words of the interviewee, even from the context. Separate to this process of checking the accuracy of the transcripts, I listened to each taped interview as a means of reflecting on the individual interviews for the purposes of my analysis.

While acknowledging that there are issues and politics in relation to transcriptions and transcribing it is argued here that these are not critical to this research in terms of the analysis of the interview transcripts. One point to bear in mind is that made by Celia Roberts, who claims that: '... transcribers bring their own language ideology to the task. … All transcription is representation, and there is no natural or objective way in which talk can be written...' (1997 p.168). Once all the interviews and the workshop material had been transcribed, I interviewed the transcriber to get a sense of how she did the transcription. She indicated that although she followed my instruction to type word for word, at the same time she tended to correct the participants' grammar and to make the statements make sense.

When the tape was not clear, she would type what she thought the interviewee (or I) said and generally this is indicated in the transcripts with a comment such as '... can't hear clearly, sounded like, ...' Furthermore, the transcriber punctuated the text with commas, full stops, and question marks, which gave the interview transcripts the appearance of formal written text. This presented interesting issues for my reading of the texts and the subsequent use of the texts in this thesis. My decision not to undertake the transcribing process myself led to my first sighting of the transcripts as completed texts that had taken on the appearance of a final text, very different in form and language to the spoken word. In particular, the styling of the interview texts with punctuation and formalised layout initially drew from me an acceptance of the transcripts as given. However, I found myself irritated by the punctuation, even correcting it and then having to remind myself that it was in fact already a construction by the transcriber from the tape of the spoken word. Listening directly to the tapes I found was much more evocative of the interview. I was able to get a better sense of my experience of the interview at least from that process, rather than from reading the transcripts. This made me question my original decision to have the transcribing undertaken by someone other than myself, even though the process of writing the spoken word is always a process of construction, irrespective of who undertakes it. Finally, in relation to the transcription, each participant was sent a copy of their interview and invited to respond with any comments or deletions that s/he would like made. The letter accompanying the transcript is contained in Appendix 3.7. In response to this, two to three transcripts were returned with corrections either to spelling or to specific words.

Thematising the participant material

The following section provides an analysis of the overall approach to analysing the interview and workshop material taken in this research. Here I will briefly outline the initial hands-on approach to categorising and thematising the material. In the initial stages, the transcripts were read for broad themes and from these initial readings, the following categories emerged identity, pedagogy, gender, class, difference, and Western Sydney. I organised sets of transcripts marked for these various themes, both in hard copy and in electronic files. On the hard copies, the material was marked with stickers and highlighters. If you were to look at the Western Sydney set of transcripts, for example, it contains a set of all transcripts that have any references to Western Sydney, with the references in the

transcripts marked with a sticker to indicate the page, and highlighter or pen marking to indicate specific comments. Similarly, the broad categories identified in relation to whiteness have been grouped into sets of transcripts and marked similarly, bearing in mind that many comments on whiteness fell (fall) into more than one of the broad categories. So the same comments may be highlighted for different categories. In the case of the electronic files, thematised material was cut and pasted from the original transcripts into themed documents. This was done by a combination of reading from the hard copies and word searching the electronic files for relevant material. Similar processes were applied to the material that arose from the workshops and unless there seemed some compelling reason to make it known, the material from both sources was not separately identified.

In presenting and analysing the data, I focussed on the material from the student body with a couple of inclusions from two of the indigenous women. The interview participants were not a representative sample of particular categories of people from which generalisations would be made about whiteness amongst people living/working in Western Sydney. The purpose was to analyse the discourses through which the participants spoke about whiteness/being white, not to make representative claims. Thus, for example, while there were noticeable gender differences amongst the student body in terms of identifying experiences of difference, notably experiences of gender within family contexts, I was not particularly looking for these differences along gender lines. They emerged through the interview process. It was, however, my intention to select only those students who lived/worked in Western Sydney, as this was an important locational aspect of the research.

Analysing the participant material

As has been made clear earlier, my interest in the participant material was not to interpret/analyse the individual participants' understandings of whiteness and their views and attitudes towards whiteness. The research focus lies with identifying the discourses available to the participants to speak about whiteness, how whiteness is made visible or not, and the ways in which the participants are positioned/position themselves in relation to whiteness. In order to undertake such an analysis of the participant material I have drawn upon a Foucaultian approach to discourse analysis. This section provides a discussion of that approach and demonstrates its application to the participant material. It is important to

note that for many of the participants their understanding of the concept of whiteness would have emerged directly from their participation in the UWS unit. This is not to say that their understandings are only to be seen as a reflection of the unit content, but it is to acknowledge that the unit provided an important entree for many participants to discourses of whiteness.

The concept of discourse, which has been widely adopted in cultural studies, the social sciences, and in education, carries with it a variety of different meanings and associated research practices. In relation to this research, my use of the term is informed by the work of Foucault and those who have taken, applied, critiqued, and extended his work as part of the Foucault legacy. In his early work, Foucault (1972) identified a number of ways in which the term discourse could be used, indicating that his work had, in fact added to its meaning rather than clarifying its meaning. His usage included '... treating it [discourse] sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements' (1972 p.80). In this research, the second and third meanings of discourse are activated. That is, I identify discourse as statements that carry with them a set of practices, and statements that work to position subjects within discourse and in relation to each other. Discourse also operates in its absence, and this is a critical consideration in this study of whiteness.

Foucault was concerned with the ways in which discourses have been historically produced and the ways in which power is exercised through the operations of discourses. He argues to the effect that 'discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it' (1990 p.101). That is, power is inextricably tied in with the operation of discourse but not in any straightforward or necessarily easily identified manner. This is a critical point in understanding the operation of whiteness and different subject locations within discourses of whiteness. As Usher and Edwards argue:

> For those who speak it, a discourse is a given - it operates 'behind their backs', it is an 'unthought'. It is not itself questioned although it is the means by which questions are asked. One consequence of this is that discourses not only constitute objects but 'in the practice of doing so conceal their own invention' (Foucault, 1974, p.49). Discourse, therefore, 'speaks' but is yet silent – it is an absent presence, yet a powerful one, since what it is to be a speaker … and with what authority … is itself a function of discourse (Usher and Edwards 1994 p.90).

Herein lies an explanation for the invisibility of whiteness that will be explored in the analysis of the participant material in Chapter Six and in Chapter Seven. From here, it is possible to talk about Foucault's notion of regimes of truth, and, as indicated earlier, the conditions of possibility. These are critical factors in understanding and analysing whiteness. More importantly in terms of this thesis, understanding discourse and seeing the workings of discourse, in this case discourses of whiteness, is critical to challenging its power and opening up possibilities for other ways of seeing, for other relationships to emerge. In relation to the participant material, I undertook an analysis of the discourses of whiteness and being white drawing upon the participants' talk about themselves and their experiences. This enabled certain questions to be asked of the participant material rather than the participants, such that the analysis is not an interpretation of the participants but an analysis of the ways in which whiteness is brought into being through discourse. That is, the analysis seeks the conditions of possibility of that emergence and interrogates its silences.

From theory to practice: Issues in feminist post-structuralist research

So far, in this chapter the discussion has focussed on presenting an exposition of the feminist post-structuralist methodology underpinning the research. This includes an explanation of the research methods and activities as a reflection of the methodology and as a means to achieve the purposes of the research. In this following discussion, issues and concerns that arise within a feminist post-structuralist methodology as they apply to this research are discussed. The issues addressed below are about voice, speaking for/about

others, representation, situated knowledges, research as pedagogy and writing research/research as text. These issues and concerns can largely be understood as directly related to the problematics of undertaking research that sits within feminist post-structuralism but at the same time incorporates practices that gesture to humanist and critical theoretical positionings. The tensions and problematics of this juxtapositioning are taken up in discussion of specific aspects of the research through which the interplay of these tensions takes place.

Voice

Given the presence of voice in this thesis – my voice and the voices of the research participants – and the ways in which voice has become part of the feminist research apparatus (both post-structuralist and otherwise), it is critical that this be framed by an understanding of voice that addresses the risks of its elevation and privileging in research texts. Lather argues that '… [f]rom the perspective of the turn to epistemological indeterminism, voice is a reinscription of some unproblematic real' (2001 p.208). She suggests that the problem lies in any honouring of the unmediated voice that heralds a return to the equation of language as a transparent medium of the truth. Giving space to 'unmediated' voice engages with a romantic notion of the speaking voice as an essentialised presence that contradicts the important work of post-structuralism in overthrowing the possibility for such easy representation. Lather further argues that: '… the move is, rather, to endorse complexity, partial truths, and multiple subjectivities' (2001 p.212).

Given this, the presentation of what could be considered to be unmediated voice in this thesis would seem somewhat problematic; indeed, I argue that yes, it is problematic and, further, it is dangerous. As St. Pierre suggests, '[i]f everything is both political [from feminist theory] and dangerous [from poststructuralist theory], then we are ethically bound to pay attention to how we word the world' (2000b p.484). However the research is written, there lie dangers and humanist traps in the presentation of voice. In this thesis, the presentation of unmediated voice could be argued as occurring in particular in Chapter Five, in relation to the documentation of my position in this research; and in Chapter Six and Chapter Seven in the presentation of the participant commentary. In Chapter Five, my

voice articulates a journey into the thesis as a case study of coming to see whiteness and understanding the importance of addressing whiteness in deconstructing racialised discourses and racist practices. As part of designing the research within a feminist post-structuralism methodology, I determined that the value of this, in providing insights into the emergence of discourses of whiteness as site of analysis in anti-racist practice, outweighed the risks associated with essentialising my voice and a singular journey into the thesis. Similarly, in Chapter Six and Chapter Seven, the presentation of the voices of the research participants is an intentional aspect of the research design. This decision was fraught, reflecting the tensions between humanist desires to present some real, and a methodological position that sought to undertake an analysis of discourse. That is, I wanted the participants to be present in the thesis for the insights their commentary offered on particular aspects of Australian life and racialised, gendered and classed relationships at a particular moment of history. At the same time, I recognised the problematics of this claim to voice as a transparent representation of the real, rather than a reflection of the discourses available to speak about experience. Therefore, the presentation of the participant voices is a calculated risk as to how that will be interpreted; and, more critically, laying myself open to a critique I would mount myself about using voice to (re)present some real, some essence.

Obviously, this is not my intention in such a straightforward manner. Nevertheless, at the same time I argue that there is a real, a real of material effects that flow from the intersecting structures and relations of power through which we live our lives. There is no transparent exposition of the real, it is relational and contextual and any statement of it silences other competing utterances. Nevertheless, as St Pierre argues: '[w]e must pay attention to humanism's desire for unity, coherence, totality, and equilibrium as well as to the language that enacts that desire, a language that produces real, material structures – categories, binaries, hierarchies, grids of intelligibility based on essences – that reward identity and punish difference' (2000b p.485). Thus the use of voice in this thesis in ways that may seem to represent the real, and to essentialise and make singular what is complex, is always tempered by the recognition of the simultaneous impossibility of such representation **and** the impossibility of speaking/writing that does not gesture to the real. In as much as we construct stories of how things happen, what influences us, that come (seem

to come) to take the shape of the core—what Butler refers to as the discourse of the core (2000), there is both danger and value. It begs the question of how else can we live/work/research. Thus, in engaging voice in the thesis, the research acknowledges its location in the tensions of the humanist and the post-structuralist and that it is not a matter of one or the other but recognising the inter-complexity of the effect of voice in writing research.

Speaking for/about others – a question of representation

This question arises in relation to the issues of speaking for and about others that are inherent in any research project that incorporates the reading and representation of others' lives as part of the process of the research. Alcoff begs the issues of speaking for others in her question: 'Is the discursive practice of speaking for others ever a valid practice, and, if so, what are the criteria for validity? In particular, is it ever valid to speak for others who are unlike me or who are less privileged than me?' (1991 p.7) Alcoff makes the point that some speaking for others is easy to dismiss; for example, governments using the rhetoric of fear and liberation to justify the invasion of other countries or the repression of their own citizens (1991, p.5). However, as Alcoff further argues, many other cases of speaking for/about others are not so clear-cut: they are fraught with the problematics of identity, belonging, representation and questions of self/other. Questions of who is our other, what groups we belong to or do not belong to, the complex relationships of privilege and disadvantage, on what basis we can speak for anyone including our selves in the messiness that constitutes our intermeshed lives and subjectivities, are in many instances not easy to demarcate. Therefore, in using arguments for or against speaking for others there is a need to grapple with these questions. Judgements need to be based on an analysis of the speaking in its context and in the play of representation and effect.

Alcoff is not arguing for a moratorium on speaking about others, through what she refers to as the reductionist response—essentialising, and the retreat response—to speak only for oneself (1991 pp.16-24) to speaking about others. In fact, she highlights the essentialising of the other, and the speaking self, that such responses entail. She takes up Spivak's argument from *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988)] for a 'speaking to', whereby '... the intellectual neither abnegates his or her discursive role nor presumes an authenticity of the

oppressed but still allows for the possibility that the oppressed will produce a 'countersentence' that can suggest a new historical narrative' (Spivak in Alcoff 1991 pp.22-23). That is, while it is not appropriate to privilege the speaking of the oppressed or less privileged '...since their speech will not necessarily be either libratory or reflective of their "true interests", if such exist ... yet it can still be argued ... that ignoring the subaltern's or oppressed person's speech is "to continue the imperialist project"' (Spivak 1988 p.298). In this sense it is the act of speaking itself that is to be valorised as a move to open up other possibilities, other histories, as the '... problem with speaking for others exists in the very structure of discursive practice, no matter its content, and therefore it is this structure itself that needs alteration' (Alcoff 1991 p.23).

All acts of speaking in some sense involve a speaking for others. Speaking for/about others cannot be avoided, most particularly in the act of not speaking. Thus, the liberatory move—the move that will make a difference/be of use—is also the same move that can silence and reinscribe old and oppressive conditions. So what about speaking about whiteness, speaking for/about white people through discourses of race and racism that generate effects for those racialised others? Caught in a double bind of my desires and intentions in this writing of research, there is no safe place, only places of speaking that constitute dangerous possibilities for new and different understandings to emerge now in this writing or in some other speaking/reading.

Something further to be grappled with is my speaking position in relation to the research participants. In the neat binary that Alcoff sets in terms of the impetus to speak, '[s]ome of us have been taught that by right of having the dominant gender, class, race, letters after our name, or some other criterion, we are more likely to have the truth. Others have been taught the opposite, and will speak haltingly, with apologies, if they speak at all' (1991 p24). I am clearly in the privileged position as white, as educated, as teacher, as first world. However, this business of my speaking position, my location, is never simply an autobiographical 'I am ...'.[18] So what does this mean for this research: for speaking about other white people;

[18] I can tell stories of 'who I am' that speak to the complexity of any positioning of privilege, in particular stories of gender. Nevertheless, while these are the stories I can tell about my life, stories that have real effects for me and for others, they are juxtaposed beside rather than overriding a social positioning of privilege that I

and for their speaking about racialised others? Am I better positioned as a white person myself to speak for/about other white people? Can I represent 'who these people are'? Clearly not better positioned and certainly wanting to avoid an essentialised reduction of whiteness/being white to some singular position, my intention is not to speak for but rather to provide an analysis of the ways in which the research participants speak about, and do not speak about, whiteness and being white. That is, to surface the discourses available to the participants to speak about whiteness, about being white, and about racialised others.

At the risk of presenting a determinist/essentialised view of the research participants, I am familiar with the circumstances and discursive positionings of people whose understandings have been framed by dominant discourses of race and racism in Australia, and that are premised today on scape-goating racialised others. I am not outside of these social histories and discursive practices and as such appreciate the willingness of the participants to offer their time and resources for this research at the risk of being labelled racist. Through their participation in the research, the participants placed themselves in a situation where their understandings and views could be analysed and assessed in relation to race and racism. It is critical to the process that the representation of the interview participants is undertaken within a framework of respect for their humanity and appreciation of their generosity in participating in the research. It is not the intention of this research to position particular interview participants as racist (or not racist). Rather, as is discussed earlier, it is to surface the discourses through which it is possible to speak about and understand whiteness and race. Further to this, the research process identifies different positionings in relation to these discourses.

There are many problematic assumptions in the above statement that in some ways could bring me more difficulties than the trouble I want to avoid in its saying. I have clearly set up some necessary (and multi-dimensional) but very problematic space between the interview participants and myself. I have also suggested, at least implicitly, that all the participants are positioned in much the same way, with similar effects that I am able to see,

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clearly occupy within structures of dominance that privilege me as a well educated, professionally employed, white woman.

understand and analyse. In addition, even more problematic, I have engaged in a bit of realist writing that would suggest that I know myself and my participants in some transcendent all-seeing way that pre-empts others' readings of my text and the representative moves possible within it. As Alcoff argues, '[a]cknowledging the problem of speaking for others cannot result in eliminating a speaker's accountability' (1991 p.16). In the case of this research text, the problem is both one of speaking for/about those others who are the community of people who participated in the research, and for/about those more dispersed others who bear the effects of discourses of race and racism. Taking responsibility for the text and making myself accountable means being cognisant of the representations possible within the readings of the text and its effects (even as I cannot be aware of all the multitudinous possibilities for representation and effect). So I have spoken in a transcendent way that my own research methodology would want to expose as a 'god trick' (a lá Haraway 1994) , a way of speaking that goes against the grain of feminist post-structuralist writing of research. But despite my 'realist pretensions' I argue that acknowledging these tensions, and the need for me to be accountable and take responsibility for this text, contributes to rather than undermines the possibilities of a feminist post-structuralist methodology of writing research. Writing research under these requirements requires a juggling and juxtapositioning of many tensions, demands and desires that should enable a transgression of the limits of my own seeing and writing. Therefore, I live with the contradiction, knowing that what is said is a gesture of accountability and responsibility on my part towards the participants.

Taking this approach to the participant material does not mean that the participants are not present in the text. They are present and thus unavoidably open to interpretation. Consequently, there is a need to theorise their presence in the text of the thesis as part of explaining the focus of the analysis on discourse. It is through discourse that we speak and understand ourselves and through the textual analysis that these people are presented to the world. So how should the participants be spoken about? One way, is to describe the participants in terms that are commonly accepted as ways of describing 'who we are'. So, for example, they can be described to the reader in terms of gender, age, class, location, and sexuality. This could be followed with an interpretation of the interview texts in terms of

these participant characteristics—that is, an interpretation of how for example, the race or class or gender characteristics of the participant shape what is said and how, in reverse, what is said can be understood in terms of these characteristics of the interview participants. However, these descriptors, these facts about 'who we are', cannot be understood as bounded, stable and clear-cut. They must be understood as socially constructed in relation to - and in opposition to - their others, within and across competing discourses of race, class, gender, sexuality, and location, for example. Thus, we are positioned within, and position ourselves within, these discourses in multiple and competing ways. The facts about the participants, while not devoid of explanatory power, represent but one story of 'who we are'.

However, this cannot be the case in relation to research as pedagogy, as an intention of this research is to engage the participants in the process of thinking about whiteness, of taking up a 'new' subjectivity in relation to whiteness. While it is possible to talk about these aspects of the research as separate and distinct, at the same time I need to acknowledge that they are both part of the same research – perhaps multiple layers, like multiple subject positions. The research is layered and complex just as the subjects of the research are layered and complex, as is the concept of subject itself.

Situated knowledges

In designing the field research for the thesis it was important to situate this investigation into whiteness in a specific location—Western Sydney. The research was designed to be engaged, situated, and *to be of use*. In recognising all of these aspects of the research within a feminist post-structuralist framework, it was logical to locate the research alongside my teaching location at the University of Western Sydney. This discussion provides a view of Western Sydney that forms part of the fabric of the participant material, and part of the everyday practices of my teaching. Haraway's work on 'situated knowledges' has proved useful vis-a-vis my decision to localise the research. Her concept of situated knowledges is premised on the need to shift away from the god trick of relativism and totalisation whereby the researcher (implicitly at least) is positioned as nowhere in particular and able to see everything towards '... the particularity and embodiment of all vision' (1988 p.582). She further talks of partial views that come together in all their limitations and

contradictions to be views from somewhere, to be the basis for possibilities of understanding across differences and across communities. As suggested above, my research takes form in the discourses and material realities of Western Sydney. Its partiality is one contribution to that broader network of knowledge and community.

In part, this research has been about working with a community in my pedagogic practice of teaching about whiteness and difference at UWS. The field research for the thesis was limited to one group, but taken over all the years of my teaching the unit concerned, a community has been constructed. It is an eclectic, shifting community of students attending the University of Western Sydney and working with the concept of whiteness, and working at the boundaries of our understandings of whiteness and of being white, particularly as white people.

Research as pedagogy

Given my location within an educational context and my attachment to the idea of education as a tool for social change, it follows that this research would engage in some way at least a pedagogical approach. As set out in the original Ethics Application Document (see Appendix 3.2), and discussed in Chapter Five, some of the original ideas for this thesis emerged from my teaching, and the challenges of teaching about and working with difference. While the emphasis on the pedagogy has been in some flux in the framing of the thesis, reflecting shifts in its framing between education and cultural studies or both, what have remained constant are my pedagogic practice itself and the idea of teaching as a tool for social change. As such, pedagogy in one way or another has remained a critical component of the research.

As a methodological approach, research as pedagogy is not about traditional pedagogic practices in any straightforward sense but rather the transformative potential arising from an engagement with the research process, whether in the classroom or in any other context. That is, research as pedagogy is a way of conceptualising the research process in terms of learning and transformation. Within a critical pedagogical framework, from which the term has been fashioned, learning leads to transformation through the process of engagement with and critical reflection upon information about the world that previously was unknown

to the participants. For example, while Paulo Freire's work with illiterate peasants was about teaching literacy, just as critically it was about raising the consciousness of the peasants (conscientisation) of their position in the world and the oppressive forces that kept them in their place of poverty and fear (Freire 1972, 1974). In this context, it is theorised as a liberatory process with both educator and students learning from each other and producing new understandings about the world through dialogue and praxis.

The first thing that needs to be teased out is how to bring together critical pedagogy and feminist post-structuralism, given they do not sit comfortably with each other. Research as pedagogy, as it is engaged here, steps away from any universalising claims that might reflect its attachment to critical theory. Important critiques of critical pedagogy and its universalising claims for liberation and transformation emerged from within feminist post-structuralism in the late 1980s. For example, Luke and Gore's collection titled *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy* (1992) brought together a number of important critiques of the orthodoxy of critical pedagogy. Ellsworth in particular, provided a powerful critique of the central tenets of critical pedagogy—student voice, empowerment, liberation, dialogue (1992). Her work highlighted the universalising and hence repressive assumptions underpinning these concepts as they operate within any localised context. Lather also explored the impossibilities of critical pedagogy in *Critical Pedagogy and Its Complicities: A Praxis of Stuck Places* (1998). These works, situated with feminist post-structuralism, recognise that it is not a matter of wholesale dismissal of critical pedagogy to be replaced by some newer, better theory. Rather, through the process of recognising the complexities and contradictions inherent in any situation, the impossibilities of any one pathway, or a single destination, it is possible to work more strategically in the dynamics of a teaching context, whatever it brings. My work as an educator and researcher in the last decade has been critically formed within the context of feminist post-structuralism **and** critical pedagogy **and** the critique of the latter by feminist post-structuralism. Of particular importance in this regard has been the recognition that certain truths about knowledge, the individual, and liberation are regimes of truth, rather than the truth (Foucault 1980, 1982). In choosing to use the term research as pedagogy, it carries with it the legacies of critical pedagogy and my own feminist post-structuralist positioning. Importantly, it reflects the

positioning that the research that has been conducted in relation to whiteness, racialised discourses and discursive practices of racism, is an act of intervention that carries with it the weight of my desire for a transformative effect even as I strongly critique both that desire and the idea of a pre-determined transformative effect.

At some level, similarly to pedagogy, research is always an intervention in the lives of research participants. This intervention occurs differently across a range of possible research scenarios, from minimal intervention solely to obtain data for analysis, through to action research where the participants are the researchers. Thus, the intervention varies, as can the effects, desired or otherwise. This research into whiteness in Western Sydney is not an intervention in the sense of documenting people's lives over time, nor is it action research. Rather, it is an act (or several acts) of intervention that have effects for the participants thinking about their selves and about whiteness/being white. These acts or interventions have taken place in the classroom, in the interview process, and in the workshop that the participants attended. Clearly, for me, far more than for the participants, this has been a sustained and ongoing process, both in terms of writing this research and in my ongoing reflections on the process of teaching about whiteness, the meanings and effects of whiteness, the white subject, and difference and relations of power. Nevertheless, it also provides the participants with an opportunity for reflection and contemplation, albeit not in a way that can predict or determine the nature of that reflection or its effects. And in this sense, the practice of research as pedagogy is captured within Haraway's theorisation of situated knowledges (1988) arising from the specificities of the research processes and the coming together of different understandings and experiences as a community of knowledge about whiteness. Critically, as an intervention, this research is potentially transformative as it offers opportunities for participants (and I include myself in that category in this context) to explore and take up new understandings and new subjectivities in relation to whiteness and being white.

Writing research/research as text

There is now a considerable body of literature on the textual turn and on writing research. Issues and contributions focus around questions about ways of writing, the relationship between writing and research, speaking for/about others, representation, text/reality and

authorial positioning in the text. The publication of *Writing Culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography* (Clifford and Marcus 1986) could be seen as groundbreaking in this regard (see also Lee and Poynton 2000; Tierney and Lincoln 1997). Reflecting on my own induction into research and the issues that have held my attention in relation to 'doing research', three related concerns have been both formative and informative of my research trajectory and underpin the writing of this thesis. These are about ways of writing (questions of writing technique), the interrelationships of writing and research, and questions of voice, representation and text. As discussed below, these should be considered as overlapping juxtapositions.

Research as text

In positioning myself in relation to writing research I am particularly indebted to the work of Alison Lee and her commitment to exploring ways of writing research and the '... "linguistic turn" in the human sciences' (1998 p.122). Lee argues for a more complex understanding of the relationship between research, knowledge and writing than is represented in the traditional writing/research relationship. In this latter relationship, writing '...is understood as the recording or documentation of what has already been collected or discovered or produced through a variety of processes which *precede* the writing itself ...' (Lee 1998 p.123). It is this conception that is reflected in the term writing–up. In her supervision of the formative stages of my thesis and in her published writing about doctoral writing and supervision, Lee sought to discipline me (and others) into certain ways of conceptualising research as writing/writing research. This thesis reflects that disciplining, placing writing research and research text as integral to each other. This centralises writing within the process of research, particularly in contrast to the notion of the act of writing as a reporting of the research that has already taken place outside the written text. It recognises the impossibility of separating the act of writing from the act of research, or at the very least the impossibility of not recognising the act of construction of the research in the act of writing (about) the research. Text is not merely a reporting of what happened. Rather, it is a site of construction and creation of the research. The act of writing, the act of positioning oneself and one's research in discourse, constructs the research/the idea/the view.

This is not to suggest that the notion of 'writing-up' is obsolete in this relationship. There is a lot of writing-up to do in the 80,000 plus words that comprises a thesis. However, to suggest that such work is only ever editorial, or merely a reporting of the research already completed, undermines the serious work of research that takes place in the writing process. The process of writing a thesis seems at times to be no more than an arbitrary allocation of (too much and too little) material within and across a constantly moving structure of chapters and sections and understandings of the purpose of the research. This reconfiguring, reorganising and (re)writing is an integral part of the process of constructing the thesis, constructing the research. There is no right way to put it all together, although there are obvious academic conventions and practices that govern some of the work of organising text. Thus, the writing of this thesis has been an act of construction of the research, a final construction in the sense of the requirement to bring the process to an end but not the final word. In this regard it is worth drawing attention to Stuart Hall' argument that:

> Meaning in any specific instance, depends on the contingent and arbitrary stop—the necessary and temporary 'break' in the infinite simiosis of language. This does not detract from the original insight. It only threatens to do so if we mistake this 'cut' of identity—this positioning, which makes meaning possible—as a natural and permanent, rather than an arbitrary and contingent 'ending'. ... Meaning continues to unfold, so to speak, beyond the arbitrary closure, which makes it, at any moment, possible ... There is always something 'left over' (1990, p.230).

That is, any final production of the thesis should be seen for what it is—a contingent and arbitrary, though deliberate and intentional, stop. Meaning is both always/already in the construction of the text and will always continue to unfold beyond any specific writing and reading of the text.

Ways of writing

Other texts on writing and research bear more upon the question of the processes of writing and questions of representation and voice in the text. For example, Alison Jones' *Writing*

Feminist Educational Research: Am 'I' in the Text? (1997) and Laurel Richardson's *Writing: A Method of Inquiry* (1994) are instructive regarding issues of 'good' writing and the importance of inserting one's own voice in the text. Richardson's text in particular plays with ways of writing differently and the question of inserting the author into the text, beginning with her admission of boredom in thirty years of reading '...supposedly exemplary qualitative studies' (p.516). Richardson suggests that paying attention ... 'to writing as a method of inquiry' (p.517) will assist in the process of producing texts that hold our interest and make a difference.

Richardson goes on to suggest that in considering writing as a process of writing-up research—'I was taught ...not to write until I knew what I wanted to say' (p.517)—the creative, dynamic, discovery possibilities of writing are ignored. For Richardson, the social homogenisation that takes place in the production of the research professional suppresses individual voices, thus contributing to research texts being boring (1994). Richardson's work points to some interesting considerations for my own research writing. As Lee has argued: '[W]hatever the genealogy of *voice* in qualitative research, Richardson's emphasis on pleasure makes an important point regarding the centrality of writing to research and of the centrality of pleasure to reading' (1998 p.130). Richardson proposes that experimenting with different ways of writing can serve the purpose of providing new and different understandings of the material of research and offer different ways of writing research texts. That is, the practice of writing can be a means for playing with and exploring the material that can offer different, unexpected and multiple readings of the material. In turn, experimenting with ways of writing research text through different voices, styles and genres offers the opportunity for reflexively representing and challenging questions of authority, voice, truth and subjectivity within research texts. Moreover, while there are no guarantees, such practices of writing may produce texts that are pleasurable to read.

So what does this all mean for this particular text, for the writing of the research that I am currently engaged in? I do not see my writing as inspirational: more often, it seems plodding, heavy, and caught up in endless explanations and qualifications (such as I am doing now). What I want is the sense of words flowing like liquid gold, a sense of

excitement generated by the way the words disappear into the flow of ideas - effortlessly across the page - so that as I am reading it is possible to believe that: 'yes, it is possible to live in a different world; it is possible to make a difference'. My words, when I read them, most often do not do that. For the most part, they fail to transport me to some other place of hope and pleasure. Largely, this is to be expected, for I am so caught up in the writing, and writing over, as I search for an organisation of words that will reflect what I am trying to say in the very moment that the ideas are coming together in the words on the page. While this can be exciting and pleasurable, it also can be frustrating and disappointing. I find this reflected in the text in places, so that the ideas stumble over the words in a clumsy and somewhat laboured fashion rather than taking over, a gifted writing that some others possess. So for me, the works of Alice Walker, bell hooks, Stuart Hall and many others have over the years given me moments of incredible pleasure and excitement and inspired my own ideas and visions of a better world. And that statement is written through with things it is no longer possible to say innocently—why those writers? why not others? What do I mean by better—for whom? when? how? Yet, in all its impossibilities, we have to be able to dream and to experience pleasure. We have to be able to imagine a better world even as such words are circumscribed by who/where we are, by the material realities of a world seemingly locked into structures of dominance and oppression in relation to race, gender, sexuality, religion and so many other sites of difference, disputation and oppression. And yes I digress, but at the same time it is the magic of words flowing in ways that transgress the limitations of the material world, the horror, the greed, the madness, that is needed to inspire and to make possible other places of understanding, other imaginings where the impossible can happen.

A rereading of the last paragraph, gave rise to another possibility, another positioning—that writing is nothing, is a waste of time in the face of the horrors of the world, a curtain that acts to disguise the realities of the horror and madness of the world in the twists and turns of the text. So, caught in the beauty of the prose, the writer forgets to act. But of course, neither position is true or false. Writing itself is a form of action: it certainly can inspire action. Such binary oppositions are of little use in moving us to the places of our imaginings. So while it may seem arrogant, ridiculous even, this thesis - my writing

research - sits in that place of imaginings, bound by the limitations of my 'way with words' but yet striving to open up other possibilities, other places of understanding and action for a better world. This thesis does that through the engagement of the participants, though the documentation of a mode of teaching that can move us forward in understanding and challenging the power and authority of whiteness and in deconstructing racialised discourses and practices.

Research without absolutes

This chapter has documented the positioning of this research within a feminist post-structuralist methodology and laid out the logic of the research design and the research activities, as befits the methodology. The discussion in this chapter has demonstrated the complexity of this relationship and that there is no easy fit between methodology and method. Feminist post-structuralism is not a prescription for action in any straightforward manner. It is, rather, a juxtaposition of feminist and post-structuralist framings, working against the straightforward and recognising research as a messy engagement with the complexities of the world. Working within the various instructives discussed in the chapter requires that any lingering attachment to a grand narrative, or to a universal act of liberation, must be dispensed with, risking the danger of being seen to be tentative and the research voice to lack authority. There can be no god trick, no unproblematic voice, representation or final truth. Research and the researcher are always situated, always partial. As a researcher, it is imperative to see and take account of these limitations and the partiality/partialness of that seeing and understanding and ways of writing, as constrained as that will be. There is always something else and research as practice/text is always multiple in its effects in ways that we cannot fully know. Similarly, this positioning insists on the refusal of absolutes and the recognition of regimes of truth operating through discourse, and subjective positionings within competing discourses, as Foucault has argued (1980). Further, it requires that the researcher take a deconstructive stance and foreground the construction and lack of innocence underwriting the discourses used to describe what we do and exposing the nexus of the material and the text. Finally, and as Haraway argues:

> The point is, in short, to make a difference--however modestly, however partially, however much without either narrative or scientific guarantees. In more innocent times, long, long ago, such a desire to be worldly was called activism. I prefer to call these desires and practices by the names of the entire, open array of feminist, multicultural, antiracist technoscience projects (1994 p.62).

This thesis is a product of the engagements I have made with feminist post-structuralist methodologies for writing research differently. In the bringing together, this chapter documents the underlying and the explicit ways in which the research has been constructed, reflecting my desire to be of use even as the dangers of such a desire are exposed. Thus, as has been argued, it is necessary to step back from any straightforward interpretation of how *to be of use*. Then again, there is the lure of physical hard work as a straightforward way *to be of use* bringing in the harvest, working in rhythm with each other and with ones body, not struggling, not questioning. Research does not generally have this powerful sense of physical labour, but just sometimes, when I am in the classroom there is a sense of hard work and of working together. And, just sometimes, when the words seem to flow, the writing feels like a labour well done.

Chapter Four: Teaching through difference

> The classroom was invented as a cautious experiment ... and remains an experimental space in that a whole series of experimental strategies, dreams, programmes, and so forth, are brought to bear and tested there; ... these experiments are always productive in the sense that ideas, objects, actors, new forms of self, emerge from this arena (Kendall and Wickham 1999 p.124 - 5).

Introduction

This chapter provides an explicative discussion of the development of an approach to teaching about whiteness and difference that I have named *teaching through difference*.[19] My pedagogic practice in teaching about whiteness, difference and identity is an integral part of the thesis research. It has provided a site for exploring whiteness and difference that informs both my teaching practice and my understanding of whiteness, identity and difference. It would be difficult to overstate the place of my teaching about difference—and my anti-racist activism—in inspiring and framing this thesis. The mutual constitutedness of the three different sites of my research into whiteness makes the thesis a unique piece of research. To reiterate from Chapter One, these are: a) the documentation and analysis of my shifting subjectivity as a white Anglo-Australian woman/researcher reaching particular understandings about the nature of whiteness and white subjectivity; b) the discourses engaged to speak of whiteness by residents of Western Sydney, Australia; and c) the pedagogical practices I exercise when teaching about whiteness and difference. This chapter provides a sharper focus on pedagogy as a site of this research into whiteness. It also enables a detailed discussion of the development of *teaching through difference* and its relationship to the thesis overall by way of discussion of its emergence from teaching

[19] The initial pilot for *teaching through difference* was undertaken in 1997 in collaboration with friend and colleague Affrica Taylor, at the University of Western Sydney. Our research was supported by Jenny Newman, who undertook the arduous task of transcribing, and by Jayne Bye who provided an insightful analysis of the research data. In a paper presented to the AERA Annual Conference in 1998 we presented a synopsis of the approach and the research conducted with the first group of students (see Durie and Taylor 1998).

experiences within extant models of multicultural and anti-racism education. This discussion identifies the problematic assumptions and resistances common to these pedagogic approaches that led to the development of *teaching through difference*. The discussion outlines the underpinning intentions, assumptions and methodology of *teaching through difference*, highlighting the ways in which this approach covers new ground in promoting pedagogic practice as a tool for challenging racist practices and relationships.

Background

The approach to teaching about difference that I have developed, arguably emerged from three coincident events in relation to my activism, employment and postgraduate study that occurred in the early to mid 1990s. The first of these arose from my involvement with an anti-racism group in 1994-95 which brought me into contact with two critical early works on whiteness: Ruth Frankenberg's *White Women, Race Matters: The social construction of whiteness* (1993b) and Lee Mun Wah's *The Color of Fear* (1994). This material was significant as it provided a new angle for thinking about race and racism at a time when it was becoming clear that the anti-racism approach was not working as a way of understanding and addressing racism. Secondly, at the same time, as part of studying for a master degree, I deliberately sought out feminist post-structuralist theory and writers. Through this study I was formally introduced to the legacy of Michel Foucault, feminist critiques and adaptations of Foucault (for example Bordo 1993; Diamond and Quinby 1988; Sawicki 1991) as well as the works of Patti Lather and Elizabeth Ellsworth, amongst others. Both Lather (1992; 1986; 1991a; 1991b; 1992a) and Ellsworth (1992) had been initially disciplined in critical theory and critical pedagogy in relation to research and pedagogy but had turned to feminist post-structuralist literature in more recent work. Ellsworth's *Why Doesn't this Feel Empowering: Working through the repressive myths of critical pedagogy* (1992) was a seminal influence for my own critique of my teaching practice (Durie 1996). Thirdly, teaching in the area then known as cross-cultural communication or multicultural education, I was struggling with a curriculum that framed race and difference as lying with the not white/not Anglo-Australian Other. This teaching was very challenging due in part to my own unclarified discomforts with the nature of the curriculum, and in part to the students various resistances to the content of the curriculum. As a result, I was highly motivated to seek other ways to approach teaching groups of

mainly Anglo-Australian students about race and racism and to bring whiteness explicitly into the equation.

Taken together, these events can be understood as the conditions of possibility for a major shift in my understanding and positioning in relation to anti-racist education and the term anti-racist. Their convergence acted as a catalyst firstly, to explore my teaching and the classroom dynamics through the lens of the newly honed tools of feminist post-structuralism; secondly, to reflect on my positioning in relation to race and racism through the newly emerging discourses on whiteness; and thirdly, to bring these together in a new approach to teaching about difference. That is, they came together as a theoretical base for understanding and critiquing the assumptions about whiteness and difference underpinning extant multicultural education approaches.

The socio-political context of multicultural education

A further background to the dynamics of *teaching through difference* is provided via an overview of the broader socio-political context that gave rise to the development of multicultural and anti-racist educational programs in schools, higher education institutions and the community in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s. As stressed in the introduction to the thesis, within the framework of colonisation and immigration[20] since white invasion and settlement, the Australia of our official imaginary has been white. Consequently, over the last 200 plus years this imaginary has had to be defended, more and less vigorously within the immediate and changing contexts of the threats to this imaginary white nation, particularly through processes of immigration. Joseph Pugliese (2002) for example, describes the efforts taken to keep Australia literally white in the 1950s post-war period of European immigration, when prospective migrants had to pass the tan test. The test involved labouring men lowering their trousers to see the colour of the skin below the tan line (2002). And, of course, the dictation test, requiring prospective migrants to undertake a dictation test in any language set, as a criteria for entry to the country (Jupp 2007), was

[20] The story of immigration in itself can be understood through discourses of race and racialised practices that have been well documented by James Jupp (2001; 2002; 2004; 2007). In brief, immigrants have traditionally and pre-dominantly still now come from the United Kingdom and Europe with much smaller percentages of immigrants from Asia and the Middle East, increasing in the last 30 years (Jupp 2007).

Australia's most infamous means of keeping out those who would challenge the white imaginary.

An analysis of the historical and current context of policies and practices in relation to immigration, multiculturalism and Indigenous Australians contributes to understanding the prevailing racialised discourses current during the time of my involvement in teaching about culture and difference in a university context (since 1995). Such an analysis contributes to understanding why the blame for the effects of pre-eminently economic decisions to rationalise and open up the Australian economy during the 1980s and 1990s has been popularly directed towards marginalised racialised groups. It can explain the particular direction of the responses by students in the teaching context whereby resentment and anger have been directed at Indigenous Australians, immigrants from Asia, refugees and, within the recent framework of the 'war on terror', immigrants and refugees generically from Islamic countries and specifically from 'The Middle East'. In the Australian context, these arguments are now well rehearsed, and here I will provide only a brief overview of the context of emergence and the main discourses that have been in circulation in the last decade.

Prevailing racialised discourses – Hanson, refugees and the war on terror

A useful way to frame the racialised discourses of the period in which this thesis and the pedagogy of *teaching through difference* are situated is in terms of three distinct but overlapping events: the Pauline Hanson phenomenon, the refugee crisis, and the war on terror, each of which is outlined briefly below. These events have shaped the racialised backdrop to the classroom context, feeding classroom resentments and commentary.

Pauline Hanson rose to notoriety in Australia during and after the federal government election in March 1996. At this time the current conservative Liberal and National Party Coalition under the Prime Ministership of John Howard came into power and Hanson also became a member of parliament (Australian Electoral Commission 1996). Hanson's maiden speech to the Australian federal parliament in September 1996 was amongst other things an outright racist attack on Indigenous Australians as unfairly privileged (Hanson

1996). Her continuing attacks on Indigenous Australians, and on immigrants from Asian countries in particular, were aided and abetted by a Prime Minister and Federal Government intent on using the politics of fear, hate and division for their own electoral benefit (Kalantzis and Cope 1996). While never completely endorsing Hanson's statements, Prime Minister Howard publicly refused on a number of occasions to condemn Hanson or to contradict her statements (Kalantzis and Cope 1996). Howard's role in anti-Asian immigration debates in the 1980's (Jupp 2007) would suggest that in addition to using Hanson as a political tool, he was largely in agreement with her views. These circumstances fuelled a round of racist debates in Australia in the second half of the 1990s, with the unofficial mandate of the federal government the aftermath of which is still apparent today - several years on - notwithstanding the political decline of Pauline Hanson herself even as she has continued to reinvent herself in the Australian media (Razor 2005). That aftermath has included a noticeable shift to a more conservative stance in relation to difference and tolerance, in relation to immigration from Asia and a firmer assimilationist approach to Indigenous Australians. These shifts have been well documented in academic and general media over the last several years by a number of public intellectuals (see, for example, the work of Ien Ang (2002; 2006) in regard to multiculturalism, difference and diversity in the Australian context; and Robert Manne in relation to Indigenous Australia (2003), and refugees (Manne 2002; Manne and Corlett 2004).

The refugee crisis refers to the period from about 1999 through to 2003 when a number of boats of asylum seekers arrived on Australian shores, mainly from Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq (Leach 2001; Manne 2002; Manne and Corlett 2004; Marr and Wilkinson 2004). During this period, a range of steps was taken by the federal government to stop the boats from landing on the Australian shoreline. These included harsh detention conditions in remote and isolated locations, and the excision of Australian islands as part of Australia, to prevent asylum seekers arriving by boat at these islands from claiming refugee status in Australia (Leach 2001; Marr and Wilkinson 2004). These measures were accompanied by a concerted campaign by the government to incite fear and anger in the community towards the asylum seeking boat arrivals who were only ever referred to by the government as illegal arrivals and 'queue jumpers' (McDonell 2000). In the midst of this crisis, the attack

on the World Trade Centre in New York took place on 11 September 2001. In addition to the fear and antipathy this event generated of itself, it became entangled in the campaign against the boat arrival of asylum seekers who were linked by conservative politicians and media with the World Trade Centre attack and labeled as potential terrorists (Australia Links Asylum Policy to US Attack 2001).

The war on terror is a phrase used by the United States President, George Bush, to describe the more aggressive external and domestic policies, including the war on Iraq that followed the attack of September 11 2001. British Prime Minister Tony Blair and the Australian Prime Minister Howard strongly supported the rhetoric and implementation of a wide-ranging war against terrorism. This war on terror has included the invasion by the USA (and its British and Australian allies) of Afghanistan, in December 2001, and Iraq, in March 2003, as a direct result of the World Trade Centre attack. In addition, in the case of the Howard Australian Federal Government, the war on terror has provided an umbrella for any number of public attacks on groups and activities labeled un-Australian. This has resulted in Middle Eastern and Muslim communities coming under close surveillance and being on the receiving end of considerable community animosity and attack (Dreher 2006).

These three events and the Pauline Hanson phenomenon in particular, followed on from a period of official promotion of multiculturalism at federal government level that had begun in the 1970s. The promotion of multiculturalism and the National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and Office of Multicultural Affairs 1989) was one of the hallmarks of the Hawke and Keating Labor Governments between 1983-1996 (Jupp 2002), with its beginnings in the Whitlam and Fraser Governments in the 1970s. This period came to a dramatic end with the emergence of Hanson and the pervasive attention given to her in the press, as well as the signs that she was attracting strong support with the election of the Coalition Government under the leadership of Prime Minister Howard in March 1996. During the earlier period from 1983-1996 the implementation of a number of landmark changes and decisions had promoted a different official imaginary for the nation. This imaginary was one of a multicultural Australia that recognised its colonial history, acknowledged the invasion and displacement

of Indigenous Australians, and recognised and celebrated its ethnic, religious and cultural diversity. It also brought in a turning towards Asia as Australia's geographical, economic and cultural point of reference, rather than to the more distant colonial powers of Britain, and, post World War II, the United States of America (Ang 2001a; Jupp 2002). As discussed in Chapter two, Hage (1994; 1998) has mounted a critique of the official promotion of multiculturalism as a form of tolerance by a cosmopolitan elite. Regardless of this, the multicultural agenda and associated policies and practices offered a different more open and diverse imaginary for Australia.

Some notable developments of the Hawke and Keating Governments' emphasis on multiculturalism included funding for a range of community and government resources to service newer immigrant communities and promote active support for multiculturalism; and the formulation of the National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and Office of Multicultural Affairs 1989). This was itself a continuation and expansion of multicultural policies firstly of the Whitlam Government from 1972-1975, which heralded a new era for Australia in the promotion of a more egalitarian and multicultural Australia that recognised the realities of Australia as a multicultural nation. This process continued under the Fraser Federal Government of 1975-1983, with the release and implementation of (some of) the recommendations of the *Review of Post Arrival Programs and Services to Migrants (1977-1978)* (Galbally 1978) and the establishment of the Institute of Multicultural Affairs (Fraser 1981).

Under the Hawke-Keating Government, significant decisions and actions were also taken in relation to Indigenous Australia and to addressing relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. In particular, the High Court Mabo Decision of May 1992 (Butt, Eagleson, and Lane 2001) was a landmark legal decision that recognised the possibility of Indigenous Australians being able to claim rights as occupiers of land prior to European invasion. This was followed by Prime Minister Paul Keating's Redfern Speech, at the Australian launch of the International Year for the World's Indigenous People. This was a landmark speech in which Keating acknowledged the invasion and dispossession of the Indigenous people (Keating 1992). The establishment of the Native Title Tribunal in 1994,

and the High Court Wik Decision in 1996 (Butt, Eagleson, and Lane 2001) also resulted from the Mabo decision. In this period there were two important Royal Commissions: the Royal Commission into Black Deaths in Custody in 1987 (Marchetti 2005) and the Royal Commission into the Stolen Generations which resulted in the *Bringing Them Home* Report (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2005) (Wilson, Dodson, and Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Australia 1997). Arising from the Royal Commission into black deaths the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation was established for a period of ten years from 1991- 2001 (History of Reconciliation 2005). Taken together, and while not sufficient in themselves, this was a time of great movement towards reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The federal election in March 1996 brought a sudden end to the processing and progressing of these decisions and events into legislation, policy and practice that would have taken effect over the second half of the 1990s.

The election of a conservative government heralded a turnaround in attitude and approach, underpinned by an antagonistic rather than reconciliatory approach to Indigenous Australians (Manne 2001; O'Donoghue 2007). In many instances, decisions taken by the new government led to reversals or severe limitations on the proposed implementation of earlier decisions. Most significantly, Prime Minister Howard's continued refusal to apologise to the Indigenous peoples of Australia for the wrongs done offered a powerful symbol of the different official agenda and imaginary at work after the 1996 election.

The discussion above is a brief synopsis of some significant changes that were evident in forming the context of the project and pedagogy described in this thesis. With the rise of Hanson, the 'war on terror' and the campaign against boat people, it was evident that unsympathetic and racist public discourses were being widely articulated with both tacit and explicit support from the conservative Coalition Government elected to power in 1996. The account here is necessarily a truncated one. For example, it does not address the changing economic framework wrought under the Hawke-Keating Government during the late 1980s and early 1990s, when the job security and income of many working class and rural people was threatened, and that arguably contributed to the emergence and initial

popularity of Hanson. Nor does it refer to the gendered and classed responses to Hanson herself, which were an important aspect of her reception and treatment. Nevertheless, the discussion identifies the shift in political/social climate that accompanied the change of government in 1996, facilitating the (re)surfacing of conservative discourses and discursive practices in relation to race and racism. This social/political environment formed the backdrop for my teaching over the last decade and the period during which the research participants were recruited into the research.

Anti-racism, cultural diversity and ethnic check lists

Reflecting the policy directions of the Hawke-Keating Federal Government in the 1980s and 1990s, multicultural education was incorporated into mainstream educational programs in schools, higher education institutions and workplaces from the late 1980s and early 1990s. In general, there were two broad approaches taken to multicultural education, the anti-racist approach and the cultural diversity approach. The term anti-racist in this discussion refers to curriculum and approaches that have been designed to inform the student about history and events that illustrate our (Australian) racist history. An example of this kind of approach is *Anti-Racism: A handbook for adult educators* (Chambers, Pettman, and Human Rights Commission 1986) a curriculum that was widely in use in the 1980s and early 1990s. The term cultural diversity refers to approaches that have been designed to teach the student (future educational professional) about the learning needs and the cultural practices of the ethnic, religious or cultural other. This approach, what I have termed elsewhere the ethnic checklist approach (Durie 1999a), draws on stereotypes of ethnic characteristics and cultural practices (for example: manner of address or gender interactions) as the basis for developing a checklist for teaching practice when working with culturally/ethnically diverse student groups. These two approaches go under various titles including *cross-cultural communication, multicultural skills, cultural diversity education and anti-racism education*. For the purposes of this discussion, these two broad approaches are grouped together based on the unacknowledged assumptions common to both approaches, the effects of which are critical to the undoing of the anti-racism/cultural diversity approaches. This is not to deny that the motivations for these broad approaches can be very different, one to highlight and challenge racism, the other to highlight the

differences that are argued to lie with the racialised other and ways to work with this racialised other. And of course, many educational programs will include a confusing combination of both of these motivations.

Assumptions and issues in multicultural education

The assumptions and issues that underpin cultural diversity and anti-racism approaches to multicultural education are discussed here as a means of demonstrating the conditions from which *teaching through difference* emerged. The first of these assumptions relates to what is termed the absent presence of whiteness, both as a subject position—being white—and whiteness as a structure of authority in addressing race. The second assumption to be addressed is that the location of difference lies obviously and unproblematically with the generally non-white ethnic other who is assumed to be outside the teaching context and not part of the student body. The conceptualisation of the subject as unified and singular is the third assumption that will be discussed.

The absent presence of whiteness

The structural authority of whiteness and the normalisation of whiteness, gives rise to the description of whiteness as the absent presence, there as both authority and as location of identity but not recognised by those who are its bearers. In the case of the cultural diversity and anti-racism approaches, the assumption is that the students in the teaching context are white-/Anglo-Australian yet this is never stated. These curricula are premised around this centring of whiteness as the unstated norm. The generally assumed-to-be white student undertaking the subject will learn about the other and their learning styles and how to work with the ethnic (racialised) other in Australian contexts, whether it be education or other professional contexts. So for example, in the curriculum outline for *Cross-Cultural Communication and interpersonal Skills* (see Appendix 4.1 for the complete outline) the content description identifies cultural groups that will be the focus of attention: '... South East Asian learners ... Central and Southern European learners ... Middle Eastern and Latin American learners' (Appendix 4.1). As Bhabha argues, here is whiteness operating as a '... transparent and transcendent force of authority' (1998 p.21). Whiteness or being white are never part of the curriculum to be taught about, rather they are always only the

absent presence. Shore in her work on whiteness in the field of adult education talks about this in terms of asking questions about who is the 'I' in adult education (1997).

The location of difference

Further to the assumption that the student body is white, such approaches assume that difference lies with the racialised other. That is, difference is marked only by ethnic, cultural or religious differences that are external to the normalised white culture and, within the context of teaching about the other, lie outside the classroom. This is predicated as will be discussed in the following section, on a singular, unified subject and in general draws on stereotypes of cultural/ethnic/religious difference rather than a more complex engagement with the concept of culture and with the workings of difference and identity. The positioning of difference outside the classroom student body works to place all students within the classroom as (unproblematically) not different, and as those who need to know about the other and about difference. Apart from the wrongs this does to those who are assumed not to be present, it leaves little or no space for the students who are in the classroom, regardless of their relationship to whiteness/being white, to explore identity and difference through their own locations of identity—for example of race or class or gender or ethnicity.

The lack of space for a more complex exploration of the concepts of culture, identity and difference is an important factor in some of the frustrations and resentments that can be expressed in the classroom in these contexts. At the extremes of the spectrum of these approaches, the cultural diversity approach is less likely to give rise to these frustrations because it is based on locating the problem of difference with the ethnic other and that generally fits the preconceptions of most of the students, regardless of ethnic identity (Durie and Taylor 1998). Even though ethnic others may be in the classroom the curriculum assumes their absence, and in directing itself not to racism but how to work with different learning styles and needs deriving from stereotypes of ethnic and cultural differences it is less threatening to most students. At the other extreme of the spectrum, with anti-racist curricula set on locating racism with an undifferentiated white student body, the frustrations and resentments are at their greatest as students are locked into a binary

constructs that mark them as either being different or being racist. Most curricula operate within these two extremes and delivery is never as straightforward as might be supposed from looking at a curriculum document. Nevertheless, students can easily be caught up in the assumed binaries underpinning these approaches and this then shapes their participation in the class. In particular, students can become defensive and resentful, leading to comments such as 'I wasn't there [when Captain Cook discovered Australia]' or 'If you don't like it you can go home'. This latter comment is said to, or about, any number of racially identified groups (including indigenous Australians) who may or may not have another 'home' to go to. The space for all students to engage with more complex conceptualisations of culture, identity and difference that do not locate difference as solely with the (absent) other is more likely to result in all students having a sense of belonging in the curriculum, rather than its being its object or target. As will be discussed in later sections this is not to suggest a perfect solution but rather a difference of approach that facilitates more complex engagement with the processes of addressing racist discourses and practices.

The subject as unified and singular

The final assumption addressed in relation to cultural diversity/anti-racism approaches to multicultural education relates to the construction of the subject. Both in and out of the teaching context, the subject is constructed as singular and unified. That is, the approaches draw on an essentialised unchanging subject generally marked by ethnic identity, or alternatively as racist or anti-racist. This results in a number of consequences. Firstly, the conceptualisation of the subject as unified enables an undifferentiated difference to be readily positioned with an essentialised other. Further, it allows an easy delineation between those in the classroom as the unstated white norm and those outside the classroom as the racialised other. This is assumed regardless of the intricacies of who is in (and out of) the teaching context at any one time. Such a conceptualisation of the subject, while contributing to the ease with which difference can be located outside the subject/object of the curriculum, is implausible and problematic at a practical level. In particular, it does not allow for the reality that we can never be singly just white or just black, for example. We are always positioned within discourse as raced, classed and gendered, at the very least,

with these positionings intersecting with each other in determining how we are positioned in any particular context.

The assumption of a singular subject and the lack of theorisation of the concept of the subject within these approaches reduce the possibilities for engagement with difference and the complexities of identity and the inter-relationships of the social and the individual. It precludes the recognition of the subject as multiple, shifting and mutually constituted across any number of different locations of difference and identity, as argued by Butler (1990), Foucault (1982), Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn and Walkerdine (1984). If I overstate the case here in favour of the multiply positioned subject, it is not to underplay the importance of whiteness, particularly the power of its invisibility and normalisation. Nor is it to underplay the relations of power within which different locations of identity intersect, or the focus of this thesis on whiteness, but rather to emphasise that we are never just singly anything.

Student resistances

Given the broader context and the logic for multicultural education described earlier, working with the anti-racism/cultural diversity approaches in the classroom can be intense and challenging. The anger and frustration generated in the classroom in my initial teaching in 1994-96 within the framework of the cultural diversity/anti-racism approach, often meant that the atmosphere was extremely tense, bordering on open hostility. The responses of Anglo-Australian students often took the form of resentment and anger directed at racially identified others. These groups labelled as different are implicitly and at times explicitly, presented within the curriculum and within broader social discourses as different and lesser (Vasta and Castles 1996). At the same time, discourses of special treatment position racialised others as beneficiaries of economic and social policies that are said to disadvantage the non-marked Anglo-Australian, in particular the Aussie battler (poorer working class Anglo-Australians). There can also be an undercurrent of anger provoked by the view that considerations of difference are an unwanted burden for (assumed-to-be white and therefore not different) students as educators/workplace trainers, who have to deal with these others in their professional practice. Consequently, amongst all the other dynamics that are present in any teaching context, class discussions can be highjacked by often

aggressive and usually resentful arguments that leave their imprint on the course as a whole and contribute to the lasting impressions of the students. This often gave rise to binary and didactic arguments on my part and on the part of the students, which was far from useful for the learning process. While, in part, this is a classroom management issue, it is also to do with the ways in which the curriculum sets the assumed white students against the content. *Teaching through difference* arose in response to these kinds of tensions and dynamics that seemed to serve very little purpose, either in achieving greater understanding and acceptance of difference or in skilling students to work with and through differences in an integral manner.

If it were possible to identify a moment when all of this came together (or fell apart) for me as an educator it would be a moment captured in a story I wrote in 1996, following a class I was teaching using a curriculum that combined elements of both an anti-racism approach and a cultural diversity approach. The frustrations I had been experiencing teaching within this curriculum framework were captured in the narrative about a particular incident that had taken place in the classroom. I will take the liberty of reproducing some of that narrative here (the full story with further background to the construction of the story is reproduced in Appendix 4.2).

> It is mid afternoon. Outside the sun shines warm, almost languid, and through the windows come the occasional voices of students outside on the grass. ... The students come in singly, in pairs or in groups, taking up seats but not filling the room. It is a small class and as has become the pattern I choose not to insist on a reorganisation into small groups. This afternoon I am going to be using the overhead projector and presenting information about immigration and cultural diversity and I have not planned any small group activities, so why cause an unnecessary upheaval? ... As I begin, the organisation of the room starts to play at the edges of my consciousness. To my left there is a group of three women sitting apart from the rest of the students clustered to my right. The cluster of students includes a couple of women and many more men. My view of these students is partially blocked by the overhead projector and I am physically closer

to the three women but my attention is drawn to the larger grouping as the (male) students ask questions and make comments.

My obsession for the perfectly arranged classroom is surfacing. I certainly don't like this cluster on top of each other with a small group to one side as has occurred today, or not all sitting as far as possible away from me, almost hanging out the windows, as often happens. Why is it that in this class I do not insist on students sitting in small groups around the room? Is it that I sense so many levels of resistance that it seems easier to let it go? Am I going to pay the price today?

I continue the presentation, slipping easily through some parts of the material, lingering at other times as questions or comments come … and we slowly weave our way through the session. … I wonder how many of the students are travelling with me, as I respond more or less patiently to the insistent challenge voiced by some of the men (but shared— I think—by the most of the women) to the concept of the acceptance of cultural diversity that underlies the material I am presenting. These challenges come in different forms— stories of personal experience, questions—but a sense of anger and resentment about perceptions of special treatment seems like a unifying theme.

Once again the Pandora's Box has been opened—facts', hurt feelings, fears, class resentments, values and beliefs are clanging around us but there seems no space for calling attention to such complexity, no space in the curriculum for such reality, no time. There are only frustrations, good intentions, the occasional laugh to break the unspoken, the often unknown, tensions.

Towards the end of the session and I come unstuck. A voice from the wilderness! The women on my right … have started their own discussion in the midst of my attention being yet again directed to the other side of the room. I curse the overhead projector, I curse the layout of the room and I think that I take it out on the woman. Tell me, us—the rest of the group, what you are discussing. I pay the price of my impatience and frustration. One of the women speaks in a tentative but determined voice, raising yet another challenge to Australia's immigration

> policy— economic and environmental concerns about Australia's immigration intake.
>
> I want the women to speak in class but do I only want them to say what I want to hear? Why am I seemingly less patient with the argument raised by this woman? Is it just the cumulative effect of almost two hours of dealing with challenges to the material I am presenting? Or is my subconscious acting out a different relationship to the women in the class than to the men?
>
> I engage with her … Does my disapproval and frustration give permission for what happens next? Suddenly there is a voice of quiet authority from the back of the room. One of the men has decided to take up the argument (and, it appears, put this woman in her place). He has sat quietly through all the challenges and questions and comments from the men in the group but now he is taking this woman to task. I run my hands through my hair, calming myself. How am I to understand this? How am I to respond? Is it possible to enlist the support of his argument without further contributing to the dismissal of the woman? On this occasion I feel I have dug my own grave. Vocal support for acceptance of cultural and racial diversity has come at the expense of gender and the right of students to express their views in safety.
>
> … The platitudes flow off my tongue as I bring the class to a close. Outside the sun still shines, the occasional voice rises up and through the open windows. The classroom empties quickly and it is quiet as I gather up my papers and overheads. Did I imagine such a drama that unfolds and disappears on the turn of a clock? I am forced to wonder at my choice of lecture presentation and my own complicity in the events of what has turned out to be the most contested class to date (Durie 1996 pp.137-39).

This story sums up the frustrations and difficulties I was experiencing in the classroom with this particular group of students but also, with less intensity, other classes I was teaching at the same time. In this particular classroom there were enormous tensions clanging around that arose primarily from the intersections of the race/class/gender triplet present in the room but not acknowledged in the curriculum. The form of the curriculum objectified the

students as the ones who needed to be told about the other and the stories and experiences of the students were always only interruptions, counter-claims and challenges to the curriculum content rather than part of it. That is, the curriculum forced many of the students into a position of resistance if they were to be heard at all. The frustrations experienced in this context, reverberating with the theoretical work I was traversing in the masters, came together in the writing of this story and a shift toward a different framework for teaching about difference.

Another way forward

The story was published in an article that provided an analysis of the difficulties associated with teaching in the field of anti-racism with a curriculum that positioned difference and an undifferentiated sense of marginalisation as lying with the non-Anglo other (Durie 1996). This work offered a theoretical critique of teaching within this framework—drawing directly upon the works of Ellsworth (1992) and Lather (1991a; 1991b). The writing of this paper was a turning point. It represented the formalisation of a theoretical shift in my positioning within socialist feminism towards a feminist post-structuralist positioning. That is, a theoretical shift away from critical theory towards feminist post-structuralism, but still within the framing of the race/class/gender triplet. Further, it marked a shift away from a long-standing attachment to critical pedagogy. This was not a rejection of shared investments in education as a tool for change and social justice and a means of raising consciousness about issues of oppression and exploitation and injustice. Rather, it was an acceptance that this process was far more complicated, localised and partial than was generally represented in critical pedagogy/critical theory texts. These texts tended to universalise and simplify relations of power and the interplay of the race/class/gender triplet and I was drawn to the complexities, messiness and multiple positioning that feminist post-structuralism allowed (Ellsworth 1992; Lather 1992b; Orner 1992).

It also marked a turning point in my understanding about race and racism, the binary framework often presumed in anti-racism education and a shift in my understanding of the assumptions and effects of practices of anti-racism in general. In particular, it marked a new attention in my own work to the absent presence of whiteness and the binary racist/anti-racist positioning it implied. I do not locate myself outside of these problematics (or others

I may not even be able to comprehend). Rather I argue that certain circumstances, events, frustrations, came together to open up other understandings and directions The teaching experiences that led to writing the story, combined with my masters study, focussed my thinking on theorising pedagogy in a way that I had not previously. Identifying the assumptions and the problems that marked the cultural diversity approach reflected an engagement with a more complex body of theory. This brought together firstly, my strong anti-racist, socialist feminist and critical pedagogic attachments (discussed in detail in Chapter Five) with feminist post-structuralism; and secondly, the literature on whiteness that was beginning to emerge. This is taken up in the next section with an analysis of the elements of *teaching through difference* and its basis is these theoretical shifts.

Teaching through difference

The development and continuing implementation and adaptation of *teaching through difference* is a central component of this thesis. Central concepts of this work include culture, identity, difference, multiple subject, discourse, relations of power and whiteness. In addition, *teaching through difference* explicitly addresses the question of pedagogy and student voice. The literature that *teaching through difference* draws on is primarily located within education, cultural studies and feminist post-structuralism. It includes works by Ellsworth (1992), Giroux (1986; 1992; 1997a; 1997b; 1994) Hall (1990; 1992), hooks (1990a; 1994a; 1994b; 1997), Lather (1992b), Foucault (1980; 1982; 1988; 1990; 1994) and Bhabha (1990; 1994; 1996) as well as the literature on whiteness. The strands of theory drawn from the works of these theorists bring together *teaching through difference* as a very different curriculum both in terms of its theoretical underpinnings and its pedagogical approach as compared with that encompassed in the cultural diversity/anti-racism approaches. In particular, it is more explicit in its underpinning assumptions, more inclusive in addressing difference, and clearly situated within relations of power operating in the broader context and in the localised context of the classroom. It was designed intentionally to engage with the politics and problematics of student positionings within the teaching context in relation to the curriculum content and in relation to the broader social context and intersecting relations of power. This different approach does not mean there are no frustrations and resentments expressed in the classroom. The difference lies with the

space constructed in the curriculum/classroom to allow these to emerge, to be responded to and to be incorporated into the curriculum content.

Culture, identity and difference

In *teaching through difference,* students are required to move beyond a traditional and popular view of culture, for example as fixed and attached to a traditional ethnicity and location, to consider a more complex construction of culture as shifting and dynamic. Drawing on the work of Hall (1990; 1992; 1996) to explore culture and diaspora and the work of Bhabha in relation to the location of culture and hybridity (1990; 1994) the curriculum offers students a concept of culture that recognises differences within cultures as much as between different cultures. It looks at the history of the term through the work of Raymond Williams (1976) and more recent additions to his work on culture (Bennett, Grossberg, and Morris 2005) and examines the discourses through which the concept of culture is prevalent in Australian society today. The emphasis is on looking at how identity is constructed in relation to a set notion of culture, the operation of sameness and difference in silencing histories of oppression and forced movements of people, and the place of locations of identity such as race, class, gender, sexuality, religion in determining identity.

The multiple subject

Not surprisingly, given the literature informing the work on culture, *teaching through difference* works with a construction of the subject as multiple and located in discourse. That is, the concept of the subject operating in *teaching through difference* derives from post-structuralism. It is a subject that is multiple, shifting and always becoming, rather than essential and core. Beginning with the idea of the interrelationship of the subject and the social (Henriques et al. 1984), the subject is presented as constituted within discourse (Foucault 1972, 1980, 1982, 1997) and as Butler argues a matter of reiteration and performance rather than a settled unchanging core (Butler 1990, 1993, 1997a, 1997b, 2004). Further, and integral to *teaching through difference* given that it is concerned with possibilities for new understanding and subjectivities, the idea of identity as becoming (Hall 1996). This acknowledges that identity is formed around particular historical events but also recognises the possibilities this enables for identity as always becoming. Hall (1990) uses the example of slavery as an event that brought together diverse groupings of

people, from across the continent of Africa, united under a similar history of slavery and oppression in a new location and a new identity as African slaves. Working with the concept of the subject as multiple and shifting, rather than given, it is possible to recognise the historical conditions that gave rise to this essentialised identity – the African slave and its location in discourses of solidarity and resistance to oppression. At the same time, it is also possible to challenge its fixity and open possibilities for other more complex, nuanced and shifting locations of identity. Thus in *teaching through difference* students are asked to reflect on their identity through stories they write about their experiences, about events that have brought to their attention moments of inclusion or exclusion or a sense of who they are. These stories are used as a tool for reflecting on identity, relations of power and the idea of centres and margins in social/structural relationships (hooks 1984, 1990a). In class discussions, private journals and assessment tasks, students are required to reflect on their understandings of these concepts and their own positioning in discourses of the subject and identity.

Discourse and power

In line with this engagement with the concept of culture, identity and difference, and with the subject, *teaching through difference* works with the Foucaultian concepts of discourse, power and knowledge. The *teaching through difference* approach brings to our attention the many differences and the shifting relations of power within which discourses of difference operate in specific conjunctions of time/space/location. It is framed within the body of work that encompasses and is derivative of the work of Foucault, particularly concerning thinking about discourse and power and knowledge. As Foucault argues '... power and knowledge directly imply one another ... there is no power relationship without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations' (1997 p.100). The implementation of *teaching through difference* is guided by Foucault's concept of the truth/knowledge/power nexus operating within and across discourses and locations of identity. It works through the power relations in the classroom, as enacted between the curriculum, students and lecturer, and the broader social discourses that frame and intersect with the classroom dynamic. This operates at the level of interactions around curriculum content, readings and discussion taking place in the classroom, and, also, critically, in terms

of the broader discourses and relationships of power in terms of the race/class/gender triplet and other locations of difference.

Decentring whiteness

Central to the process of *teaching through difference,* the concept of whiteness is introduced and analysed. Attention is drawn to its absent presence in racialised discourses and discursive practices (Frankenberg 1993b, 1997a). Whiteness is discussed both as structure of authority (Bhabha 1998) and as location of identity (Durie 2003). The relationships underpinned by whiteness as structure of authority in the Australian context are explored, as are the intersections of whiteness as a location of identity with other positionings of difference such as gender, class and race. White students in the class, in particular but not exclusively, initially struggle with identifying some specific difference to discuss in relation to cultural differences. This struggle arises mainly from two interrelated discourses that prevail in relation to cultural differences. These are firstly, a view of cultural differences as being only related to ethnicity and therefore only pertaining to the racialised other; and secondly, a failure to see/experience being white as a racialised positioning (amongst other things). The focus on whiteness in *teaching through difference*, in particular its normalisation and hence invisibility, enables the exposition of the relations of power that sustain the power of whiteness. The explicit centring of whiteness within the *teaching through difference* curriculum provides the opportunity to examine the discourses and discursive practices that uphold its authority. At the same time focussing on whiteness as identity invites examination of the interrelationships of race and class and gender with whiteness as a location of identity.

The methodology and practice of *teaching through difference*

The *teaching through difference* approach is essentially a pedagogic framework for teaching about culture, identity and difference. It foregrounds its theoretical framework and its political intent to challenge students' understandings of culture, identity and difference and to reflect on whiteness, relations of power and the intersections of locations of identity. Dominant social discourses present difference as largely pertaining to the racialised other and it is usually the case that incoming students expect that *teaching through difference*

will follow this pattern.[21] That is, many incoming students generally expect to learn about differences as located with the racialised other. Unless a student is positioned as different, particularly racially, or has had experiences that have surfaced understandings of difference and relations of power, it is unlikely they will be able to recognise difference as located within them, or to understand the significance of considering difference in terms of relations of power. Therefore, *teaching through difference* introduces many of the students to new theoretical frameworks and simultaneously address students' expectations of, and resistances to, the imagined and perceived content and purpose of the course. The methodology and practice of *teaching through difference* in the classroom context are detailed in the following discussion.

Methodology

The introductory sessions of *teaching through difference* aim to familiarise students with a selection of conceptual tools borrowed from post-structuralism and cultural studies, including diaspora, hybridity, discourse, the multiply positioned subject, and relations of power relations, as discussed in the previous section. These concepts not only provide students with the tools to do the work the course demands: they raise awareness in the students of the conceptual polarities and binaries that operate within popular discourses of culture and difference. For example, the conceptualisation of culture as fixed and pre-determined on the one hand, generative and dynamic on the other is subject to analysis in terms of its effects. Students further consider the construction of the subject, tracing different ways of understanding the subject ranging from the enlightenment subject - rational, universal, unchanging – to the multiply positioned changing subject with no core self (see Hall 1992). Students need to develop an awareness that we are all positioned in relation to different markers of identity such as gender, sexuality, age, class, religion, education, location and ethnicity. Further to this, it is likely that at different times and in different contexts we are all likely to draw on sometimes contradictory and shifting framings and markers of identity to make sense of our various experiences.

[21] This has been borne out by discussions with students doing the unit in the early stages of the teaching semester.

Building upon this work in relation to culture identity and difference, an important aspect of the methodology of *teaching through difference* is to insist upon difference(s) as being located with everyone in the class. This is not to deflect from the importance of understanding differences as hierarchically located within relations of power, and, further, the importance of understanding whiteness as a structure of authority framing these relations. Rather, it aims to contribute to building the complexity of locations of difference within relations of power. It also diverts from the expected process of taking an empirical approach to cultural diversity whereby differences are positioned as only belonging to the (generally ethnically/racially marked) other who is to be learned about via a set of empirical presuppositions apposite to each cultural group. Thus, the methodology of *teaching through difference* situates students in the curriculum as sites of difference: students are required to produce their own stories (not for assessment) that assist them with identifying their positioning in relation to markers of difference that they determine. The handout for this activity (see Appendix 4.3 for the text of the 2006 handout) emphasises that it is up to the students themselves to determine what markers of difference they see as relevant for themselves and that form the basis of their stories of identity. This activity encourages students to think about their identity in relation to location, education, religion, gender or race, for example, as well as current or past experiences of inclusion and exclusion. This is not to suggest that difference is merely a matter of experience and circumstance. Rather, its purpose is to engage all students actively in the process of working with difference as part of the process of learning about the concepts. Students are required to consider their own stories in the light of the course readings, the concepts under discussion and the prevailing relations of power. Critically, the work on identity and difference is framed by the introduction and analysis of the concepts of whiteness and relations of power and exemplars from the students and the readings that demonstrate the power of whiteness as a structure of authority.

The theoretical framing of *teaching through difference* enables greater complexity to be brought to bear on the analysis of the concepts of culture, difference and identity and the power relationships within which these operate. The classroom becomes a site for working with cultural differences as they are represented in the collective student body as well as

introduced differences. That is, *teaching through difference* offers an integrated approach that works with the students in the classroom, challenging students to bring themselves into the curriculum as sites of difference and to think about difference in terms of relations of power and the structural authority of whiteness. *Teaching through difference* thus offers an opportunity to use the pedagogic stage as a site for opening up new and different understandings and positionings for the students and the lecturer in relation to the concepts under consideration. Most importantly, students are required to think about the absent presence of whiteness in discussions of culture, identity and difference in the Australian context. For many students this will be the first time they have heard these ideas and been required to think about their positioning in relation to whiteness and being white.

Finally, in this discussion of the methodology of *teaching through difference*, is the consideration of the place of assessment. The assessments themselves focus on students demonstrating their understanding of the theoretical concepts central to the unit—culture, identity, difference, whiteness and relations of power, as well as the interplay of these concepts in relation to differences in the Australian context. Nevertheless, the unit does require students to reflect on their own experiences and their understandings of these in terms of the concepts discussed. Students' experiences are relevant to the assignments both implicitly and explicitly, as part of demonstrating their understanding of the readings and the concepts. Drawing on student subjectivity as happens in this unit is not unique to *teaching through difference.* It could even be argued that in this unit student subjectivity is made overt as compared with other courses where subjectivity is hidden within discourses of academic objectivity. Nevertheless, given the nature of the unit and the emotional responses students can have to various aspects of the curriculum content, student assignments need to be treated with great sensitivity where it involves reference to students' own stories of identity.

Pedagogic practice

Within any pedagogic site, with its own discursive practices of silencing and privileging that take place more or less consciously, the classroom dynamics can take interesting and challenging forms. The pedagogic setting is framed by dominant discourses about knowledge and the relationship between the student as learner and the teacher as expert.

Within this framing, entering the classroom can be like entering a structure where all the moves have already been set—who gets to speak when, who has the knowledge, what is allowed to be spoken about, are all pre-determined. It is also constructed within what can be described as modernist and overbearing pedagogic intentions to impart useful knowledge, to generate social change, or, at the very least, to provide a momentary challenge to students' attitudes and practices. Working within and against these discourses and the expected practices of the classroom in terms of teaching practice, content, and relationships is no easy task. In this environment, as an adult educator with a commitment to working in democratic ways, I find myself engaged in an uneasy shifting between asserting a different space and falling back on accepted discursive practices to manage what is happening at particular moments. It is in this space that *teaching through difference* is enacted, taking shape within the interplay of intentions and motivations, student/teacher relationships, curriculum content, pedagogic practice and the always surprising twists and turns in the issues that emerge in the broader social/political context that forms the backdrop to *teaching through difference* at any one time.

Regardless of my desires and intentions and the clarity of my understandings of my own motivations, the power dynamics that arise in the classroom between what is known and spoken about, who knows and can speak about it, and what this translates into for each participant at the time and in the future, is unpredictable. The dominant positioning of the educator as transcendent and able to bring clarity of exposition and opportunities for taking up new knowledge and understandings to the homogenised student body is highly problematic yet it is always already present in the classroom. Similarly, the pedagogic imperative to know the answer, to know the direction of change for the better (for whom, when and in what context?) does not disappear in the rhetoric of critically engaged pedagogy though it may be suppressed. Any position, any answer, can as easily be oppressive in its effects as liberatory for some or all of the students. As the educator, I cannot always or ever stop this from happening. However, I can intervene in its effects by the practice of bringing it to the attention of the class and speaking about it as it is happening. That is, in acknowledging that my speaking (and the speaking of different

students) literally through the act of utterance silences other possibilities for making connections and seeing differently.

Similarly, the classroom, as the site of the enactment of *teaching through difference,* is not innocent. The specific context of each classroom is a discursive site invested with particular relations of power and authority between students and the lecturers. The purpose of bringing *teaching through difference* into the classroom is, amongst other things, one of disruption—an unsettling pedagogy (Taylor 1995) that attempts to disrupt the business as usual pedagogical discourses at the same time as I call upon those discourses to manage the class. Thus the specificities of the classroom, who is in the room, where they come from, the dynamics of the race/class/gender triplet, amongst other positionings, the curriculum content and the myriad of expectations, are all part of the politics of pedagogic practice. Methodologically, *teaching through difference* takes these challenges face on, making each part of the curriculum, to be discussed and analysed. Similarly, *teaching through difference* does not operate in a vacuum outside the effects of dominant and popular discourses. Thus in the implementation of *teaching through difference,* I have developed a number of strategic practices to address and bring attention to the operation of particular dominant discourses and relationships that permeate the context in which *teaching through difference* is enacted.

Binaries and dead ends

In the classroom it is hard, if not impossible, to avoid the overbearing presence of binary relationships that often shape how we see who we are - and the choices we can make - in very simplistic ways. The racist/anti-racist binary is always hovering in the delivery of *teaching through difference.* It calls into operation the injunction to be anti-racist positioned as politically correct, alongside the popularist derailing of such injunctions. In this framework, it is unlikely that you will ever find me labelling a student in the classroom as racist. Certainly, I talk about the effects of particular discourses and emphasise that it is important to think about the effects of our speech on others. Racist or derogatory comments of any kind coming from the students are checked and addressed. At the same time, I would argue strenuously that in the pedagogic context, labelling a student as racist has to be an act

of last resort. This would immediately bring the binary into the forefront of *teaching through difference,* and more seriously, it would undermine the purpose of *teaching through difference* to move away from binary representations. This said, however, I do not have to bring the discourse into the classroom explicitly for it to be there, or for the binary relationship of racist/anti-racist to operate as a backdrop for student reactions to the content of *teaching through difference.* Further to this, the inter-changeability of whiteness with being white in everyday talk and in academic discourse is part of the fabric of working with whiteness in the pedagogic contexts. In this loose equivalence, whiteness is represented as synonymous with racism and the white subject as singularly racist. This representation comes from a number of different directions in some of the current literature on whiteness, race and racism,[22] leaving little space for working with more complex positionings in relation to being white.

In addressing this binary there has been a move within some pedagogic literature on whiteness to provide students with an alternative, anti-racist white positioning to counter the rejection of whiteness and white identity advocated in some texts because of what is considered to be its inherent racism of this position. In the main, the work of generating an alternative anti-racist white subject is situated within the literature framed by critical pedagogy. For example, Kincheloe (1999) has described experiences of disorientation in relation to white identity that, he argues, are produced by limiting definitions of whiteness. He argues that many young people from western societies are caught in '...the crisis of whiteness' (p.172):

> ... countless young white people in various Western societies attempt to deal with the perception that they don't have an ethnicity or at least that they don't have one they feel is validated. Whiteness finds itself in an identity vacuum and needs help in the effort to construct a progressive, anti-racist white identity as an alternative to the white ethnic pride shaped by the right-wing ... (p.172).

[22] See for example Noel Ignatiev (Ignatiev and Garvey 1996), who argues for the abolition of the white race, hooks (1992a), who advocates that whites relinquish their white identity, and, in the Australian context, the work of Moreton-Robinson (2000b).

These are grandiose rather than useful statements from Kincheloe, as is his loose conflation of whiteness with an essentialised white identity that buys directly into the dominant discourses that operate to uphold such binary positionings. It is premised on the conceptualisation of a unitary, essentialised, white subject that is loosely positioned as indistinguishable from whiteness and therefore racist. It immediately limits and constricts the ways in which we can understand ourselves as white or otherwise. At the same time, I have seen and heard enough similar expressions of loss and displacement from students (see for example Rhonda's commentary in Chapter Six, p.154) as well as anger and resentment, to recognise the so-called crisis to which Kincheloe refers.

In the context of *teaching through difference*, a common response that often emerges from the sense of displacement and emptiness experienced by white students is resentment and anger, more often than not, directed towards those who are disadvantaged but who popularly demonised as being in receipt benefits and special treatment. This mimics/reiterates the events of the broader social-political context outlined earlier in this chapter. For example, the targeting and vilification of Indigenous communities and immigrants from Asian countries by Pauline Hanson at times surface in the classroom. A contributing factor for some (not all) students in this context is the experience of social and economic marginalisation, growing up in Western Sydney. The issue here is not that people should not feel resentful about their situation in Western Sydney, poor government resourcing, high long term and generational unemployment, lower educational achievement comprise the material realities in Western Sydney. However, it makes no sense to direct that resentment to groups of people who are by no means the cause of the social and economic disadvantage in Western Sydney and in fact are likely to be equally if not more so the victims of it. Grappling with how these juxtapositions of scape-goating and misplaced anger and resentment can be traced to the dominance of certain discourses and practices that silence other knowledges and understandings is an important strategic aspect of the practice of *teaching through difference*.

Thus, in the space of the classroom and the enactment of *teaching through difference*, there is always much going on, and the work of exposing whiteness and challenging discourses

of race and racism and binary relationships is never straightforward. In the first instance, it is littered with 'what abouts' that reflect broader social/political issues that merge into classroom discussions at different moments. For example, I find myself addressing statements such as "now we are living with terrorism..." or listening to rebuttals and countering stories of experiences of discrimination against white people premised in moral outrage: "It's not fair that Aboriginal people can prevent me from going onto their land..." There are refusals and denials, and the ignorance of the workings of whiteness as a structure of authority covering its tracks. "I wasn't there [with Captain Cook] therefore I am not responsible". Within each body of students that undertakes the unit, the dynamics of resistance to and engagement with the content of the curriculum, with listening to the documentation of the histories of whiteness, are different. There are always white students who welcome a different perspective and respond positively to the challenges of thinking about themselves in relation to whiteness. So, too, are there students who, marked as different/not-white by colour or appearance, welcome the opportunity to see whiteness under the microscope. Often though, these are not the dominant voices in the classroom. Those of us who are white are well versed in our refusals, well practiced in not seeing any space outside our own experiences, and blind to the ways in which the normativity of whiteness takes up the available space. Thus, working with whiteness is far more likely to be alive with voices of dispute and refusal than acknowledgement and openness, made more difficult by the dominance of binaries such as racist/anti-racist as discussed above.

The multiple subject

Faced with a choice of being either racist or anti-racist there is not a lot of room to move for the disadvantaged and possibly resentful student. One strategy for interrupting this often very negative pathway lies with the conceptualisation of the subject as multiple and positioned in discourse (Foucault 1990; Henriques et al. 1984), rather than, as Kincheloe suggested, in a call for an opposite anti-racist subject to be inculcated. The conceptualisation of the subject as multiply positioned in discourse enables greater complexity and movement in discussing whiteness and in dealing with the issues that arise in the classroom. The adoption of the conception of the multiple subject facilitates a move away from the simplistic binary of racist/anti-racist. This serves a number of purposes in

teaching about whiteness and in dealing with the power of the binary. If it is allowed that the subject is multiple, there is no need to call for the anti-racist white subject to be brought into being. This subject is already present but not in an easy either/or relationship such as Kincheloe's work suggests. Students can begin to see that they are not simply one or the other. Further, through an exposure of the theory and practice of *teaching through difference*, students can begin to understand the processes by which they are caught in particular positions and relationships.

Whiteness and being white

Following on from this concept of the multiply positioned subject, a central strategy for working with whiteness and difference in the classroom is the negotiation of a strategic space between whiteness and being white. As argued by Bhabha (1998) whiteness needs to be understood as a form of transcendent authority and structural dominance. Whereas being white is an identity that attaches to individuals and groups of people. Taken together with the conceptualisation of the subject as multiple, this facilitates the exposure of whiteness in all its torture and trauma alongside the recognition that being white is not the same as whiteness. That is not to abrogate responsibility for the history of whiteness or to suggest that somehow being white is unconnected to whiteness. It does however, allow for the space to be white and to be connected to but not the same as whiteness. A multiple subject positioned across and within discourses of whiteness, race, class, gender and other sites of difference always/already becoming, as Hall (1996) argues. This strategy makes room for hope and for change and the recognition of the complexities of who we are. A subject that is conceived as always becoming rather than set and essentialised either as racist or as anti-racist offers much more possibility for change and for the space to move back and forth. What is required is an understanding of subjectivity that can be both of these - and more and less - rather than one or the other, a subjectivity that soars beyond the limitations of language to give life to this multiplicity.

No guarantees

Reflecting on my experiences of teaching about whiteness and difference, over a number of years, the classroom can be understood as a space of pleasure, fear, desire, frustration, hard

work, excitement, and occasionally even boredom. As Kendall points out, it is also a space of experiment, dreams, ideals and pragmatism (Kendall and Wickham 1999). It is a place of opportunity where, within/against all the multifarious intentions and cross-purposes of the people in the space at any one time, silences can be broken, new knowledges can emerge, and better questions can be asked. The students can explore the multiplicities of their own positionings within discourse and intersecting relations of power and in particular come to see and understand whiteness as a structure of authority and as a location of identity.

As I have discussed above, *teaching through difference* has been designed to facilitate shifts in understandings and in positionings in relation to race, racism, whiteness, difference and relations of power. In concluding this chapter and the discussion of whiteness and pedagogy in this thesis, I would emphasise that there are of course no guarantees in this, neither in the possibilities that do emerge nor in the direction of any change. Each performance of the curriculum, with each different group of students and contextual issues, will yield its own set of experiences and understandings about whiteness and difference. Similar to Haraway's concept of situated knowledge (Haraway 1988) each performance of *teaching through difference* needs to be recognised as giving rise to situated knowledge to be considered in the context of its production in the immediate setting, and within the broader structures and relationships that frame the classroom context. This is not to say that, as the lecturer, I am not able to offer directions for framing and contextualising classroom discussions, in order to open up possibilities for students to see and understand issues differently, while not foreclosing on different and contradictory understandings and knowledges. It requires a reflexivity on my part in relation to my pedagogic practices, in particular, as they are framed by my (emancipatory) desires to offer other (better?) ways of seeing, understanding and acting in relation to whiteness and difference.

It is worth noting that the initial development of *teaching through difference* occurred at the beginning of my work on whiteness and over the period of my research and teaching my understanding of whiteness has become far more sophisticated than in the early stages of the thesis and in the initial delivery of *teaching through difference*. In developing this approach to teaching about difference, whiteness has been a central concept to be

incorporated into the curriculum and the pedagogic practice. Importantly, it has been through the integration of my research, writing and teaching that I have come to understand much more clearly the complexities of whiteness and of being white. Similarly, my confidence in addressing the ever present resistances from different students has also increased, as has my willingness to allow students to challenge my will to truth about particular issues. It is in these shifts in my pedagogic practice, as much as anything else, that reflect the significant changes in my subjectivity as teacher and as research that have arisen from undertaking the teaching and the research in an integrated fashion.

In the classroom, as lecturer, as white, as woman, as educated, I am powerfully situated within dominant and hegemonic discourses that shape the relationships in the educational context. Concurrently I am also situated differently within and across these discourses by challenging the absent presence of whiteness and by opening up spaces for students to see and understand the transparent and transcendent force of the authority of whiteness. Every classroom is an encounter with the contradictions of speaking from and being positioned within/against these discourses. I speak about whiteness to challenge its hegemonic authority and yet, as I speak, so too does whiteness speak. When I speak, I am also speaking through and perceived through a multitude of positionings that mark me as different from - and the same as - my students in ways it is not always possible to know. But, as much as my speaking is always an act of silencing, both of myself and of others, it is also an act of opening up possibilities for new meanings and new ways of seeing in relation to whiteness.

As a teacher who is passionate about this area of teaching and learning, it is an exhilarating journey. It is also hard work and for students who do not have my agenda(s), let alone my interest in making the journey, it makes for a challenging classroom. It requires working with students not just in relation to the concept of whiteness, often itself new and challenging for white students, but also engaging students in new theoretical material in order to challenge and disrupt the way they see the world. While this work is hard, both theoretically and personally, it can also be rewarding for students willing to enter a terrain where there are no clear landmarks and certainly no guarantees.

Chapter Five: Writing myself into whiteness

> Haraway's visionary program [of reflexivity and objectivity] defines a space of juxtapositions and unexpected associations formed by a nomadic, embedded analytic vision constantly monitoring its location and partiality of perspective in relation to others (Denzin and Lincoln 1998c p.403).

Introduction

This chapter provides an account of my writings about whiteness as a site of investigation into whiteness. Through an analysis of these writings, the thesis explores the shifting subjectivity of a white Anglo-Australian woman, who conducted the research and has arrived at particular understandings about the concept of whiteness, white subjectivity, identity and difference. There are a number of reasons for making myself a site of investigation in the thesis research. In part, this analysis reflects my engagement with research as a reflexive process where my positioning in the research is acknowledged rather than remaining a shadowy omniscient voice. As in any research, there is an impossibility of objectivity that should at all times be subject to reflexive scrutiny, recognising that it is not possible to see from a position of transcendence, and that seeing is always framed by our understandings and perspectives and positionings in any given context. As a white woman researching whiteness, it would seem imperative that my own positionings and understandings in relation to whiteness and being white come under scrutiny, not discounting that being white in itself easily blinds those of us who are white, to the effects of whiteness and of being white on our lives and the lives of others.

Alongside this commitment to reflexivity as a researcher, my positioning in the field of whiteness studies overlaps with the emergence of discourses of whiteness in the Australian context and a new academic and activist focus on whiteness in discourses of race and racism. Taking myself as a case study of emerging understandings of whiteness offers important insights into the particularities of the field of whiteness studies as it emerged in

the Australian context. The analysis exposes the negotiations of one researcher with the emerging field of whiteness studies and with the newly emerging discourses of whiteness and being white. Without doubt, there is a danger that focusing on myself as a subject of the research could be interpreted as nothing more than self-indulgence disguised as reflexivity. The analysis in this chapter, however, demonstrates the value of an analysis of my coming to whiteness as the field of whiteness was emerging. This is particularly so given the co-emergence of the field of whiteness and my own emerging positioning in relation to discourses of whiteness and being white. As such, the analysis contained in this chapter is a documentation of the layers of complexity involved in thinking about and through whiteness.

One further observation to be made in relation to this analysis is that the presentation of an analysis of "me" clearly flirts with a humanist narrative of coming to understand whiteness that is at odds with my stated location within feminist post-structuralist theory. While this is a risk, the purpose of the analysis in this chapter is to identify the discourses through which I have come to understand whiteness and identity and the events from many different directions that provided opportunities for various shifts and changes in these understandings. At the same time, I do not want to suppress the humanist narrative. Thus, the challenge in writing this chapter has been to recognise and acknowledge the lure of the linear narrative and the appeal of the discourse of the core self. This is no easy task and this chapter is an engagement with that challenge, weaving a fine line between a humanist narrative and a Foucaultian discourse analysis. The humanist style of narrative that weaves in and out of the discussion highlights my emotions, desires and commitments, while the Foucaultian analysis highlights the conditions of possibility for the emergence of discourses of whiteness and being white in the different events and writings documented and analysed.

The chapter is organised around a series of writings I have identified as marking confusions, departures, shifts and consolidations in my understanding of whiteness and the direction of the thesis. This can be understood in the context of Foucault's concept of effective history rather than general history (Foucault 1984). That is, it is not a story of what happened but a documenting of particular positionings and challenges to those positionings that disrupted

the taken-for-granted and offered possibilities for movement and shifts in understandings. To set the scene, the discussion begins with my trajectory into the thesis topic. This provides the opportunity to analyse the linked but also contingent events through which I came to be engaged with the field of whiteness studies. This discussion of the terms of engagement with whiteness studies is followed by an analysis of various working papers and publications that document early stages of the thesis as a means of identifying the central concepts of the thesis and shifts in my thinking and positioning in relation to these concepts. Inter-mingled with the chapter text there are references to particular incidents or events that were significant in relation to the shifts in understandings being documented, or underline a contradiction in my positioning. The narratives of these incidents and events are presented as inserts, separate from the immediate text of the chapter but integral to the overall analysis. These inserts are set on coloured paper juxtaposed with the chapter text. In the chapter text the inserts are marked by the placement of the term *Insert* followed by a number to indicate which insert. There are six inserts altogether and they appear alongside pages 121, 132, 134, 136, 139, and 141. They also form a single document in Appendix 5.1.

A trajectory to a thesis

Any story constructed here must be seen as just that. The use of the term 'trajectory' has connotations of a rocket or other propelled object that is on an unstoppable path to a particular endpoint. And this story of the trajectory of the researcher into the thesis, like any other, will do just that, suggest a pathway from there to here, from before to now, and establish links between events, thoughts and processes that have led irrevocably to the thesis topic and the act of doing this thesis. The progressive, linear narrative is almost impossible to resist. In this space, it is not my intention to resist it so much as to recognise that this is a story told in hindsight, a story that has come to seem probable, comfortable, impossibly true, but simultaneously partial and misleading of other stories that could be told of how I arrived at this point. Importantly though it is also accompanied by a Foucaultian analysis that focuses on the conditions of possibility, the available discourses for understanding and positioning the events, practices, emotions and desires that comprise the humanist narrative. So, a story—

Anti-racism activism

This narrative begins more than 25 years ago when I came to active anti-racist work as a new recruit to the feminist women's services community. In this case, this was in Canberra but with close political and theoretical links to similar communities in Sydney, dominated by socialist feminist and lesbian politics, and to socialist feminist writers and feminist women's groups in the English-speaking world. Around that time, in the early 1980s, it was the works of bell hooks (1981; 1984), Audre Lorde (1984a), Cherie Moraga (1983), Toni Morrison (1987; 1991; 1992) and Alice Walker (1976; 1983; 1984; 1985a; 1985b) in particular, amongst many other noted fiction and non-fiction writers that first familiarised me with the notion of what is called white race privilege. (See *Insert 1* for a different story about my reliance on and attachment to these authors, one that highlights the multiple ways in which our purposes can be put to use.) The writing of Audre Lorde in particular opened up possibilities for understanding the politics of difference: 'Some problems we share as women, some we do not. You fear your children will grow up to join the patriarchy and testify against you, we fear our children will be dragged from a car and shot down in the street, and you will turn your backs upon the reasons they are dying' (1984c p.119).

The context of Lorde's statement is the discursive struggles within the women's movement at that time (using North America, the United Kingdom and Australia as the reference points) over race (and class). A linguistic irony present at that time, one that certainly went unnoticed, was the use of the expression 'women of colour' as the positive term of choice to describe those who were not white. And yet white remained unnamed as a colour. There was talk about the race privilege of being white but whiteness itself as part of the terrain of race and colour was not a focus of analysis. Recent discourses that identify whiteness as a structure of authority were not yet in circulation. These have only come into circulation, for white westerners in particular, in the last few years through the emergence of research and analysis focussing on whiteness, as exemplified in this work. But notwithstanding, the importance of the challenges arising from feminist discourses and practices, the politics of difference and identity politics in the 1980s, in putting difference and identity and the interrelationships of class and race and gender on the agenda, cannot be overstated. It was a challenge to and intervention in dominant western discourses of gender, race and class,

opening possibilities for discourses of whiteness to emerge as a language for describing and naming racism. Subsequently, as indicated earlier, I adapted Luke and Gore's '"class, race, gender" triplet' (1992 p.4), seeing it as neatly encompassing my long-standing engagement with race, class and gender as inter-related terms.

Those were heady times for me, theoretically, intellectually and emotionally. They were marked by a sense of political and theoretical homecoming that has stayed with me through and despite various theoretical shifts and reconceptualisations of my relationship to feminism, social change, identity and activism. Since that time, in one way or another, my work and activism have been underpinned by a foregrounding of the race/class/gender triplet and an engagement with issues of race and gender in particular. Having said this though, over the years I have often felt defeated and at a loss as to how to engage in anti-racism work. Involved with a local anti-racism group in Sydney in the mid 1990s I was once again feeling defeated in my attempts to work with others around race and racism. As a group, we struggled to find a purpose and sense of community around our shared commitment to working against racism. But the focus and activities of the group did at least afford me some insights into the problematics of what we were doing (or not doing).

The activities of this particular group in 1994-95 brought us into contact with developments that were taking place in relation to whiteness. For example, Ruth Frankenberg's book *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (1993b) was brought to our attention. At the same time, Lee Mun Wah's film *Color of Fear* (1994) which deals with whiteness in North America, was brought to Australia and as a group we attended a public meeting to view and discuss the film. Victor Lewis, one of the participants in the film, makes a compelling case in the film for the power and privilege of whiteness and the blindness of many white people to this power and privilege. Lewis was present at the screening of the film in Petersham Town Hall in Sydney and visibly and passionately demanded that white people do the work of seeing how whiteness operates. While it was a challenging and very uncomfortable experience as a white person to be presented with such a powerful portrayal of white blindness, as portrayed by the character of David in the film (Wah 1994), it made connections that significantly impacted my understanding of race,

racism and difference. Put simply, it made available new and different discourses for understanding and talking about racialised relations. Whiteness became available as a conceptual tool for framing relations of power, and talking about whiteness offered new insights into relations between being white and its racialised other. These new understandings were a means for reflecting differently on my teaching practice and acted as a catalyst for framing this thesis. Examining the curriculum I was working with, an amalgam of the cultural diversity and anti-racism approaches to multicultural education (King 1992), through new discourses of whiteness, revealed its silencing of whiteness, to being white. Whiteness was there implicitly, particularly in the anti-racist aspects of the curriculum, as an absent presence and as the representation of authority in the Australian context but it was not part of the curriculum to be discussed. Similarly, as has been discussed in Chapter Four, it became evident that in only talking about the other, rather than those presumed to be present in the curriculum, invited resentment and resistance rather than engagement and openness.

In the anti-racist group I was a member of, watching the *Color of Fear* made explicit that we needed to talk about whiteness and our position in relation to being white, particularly those of us who were Anglo-Australians. So too, it was clear that the term 'white race privilege' needed to be unpacked to expose our various complicities in racist practices, as well as the ways in which being white is mediated by the race/class/gender triplet. However, we did not know how to do this. That language in fact was not yet available to us as mainly Anglo/European-Australians. And, if it was, it was predominantly in terms of the binary racist/anti-racist and here we were (I was) in a group positioned as working against racism, that is, positioned as anti-racists. Interestingly though, some of the tensions in the group arose from attempts within the group to essentialise members as either white and racist or non-white ands anti-racist. In the Australian context, discourses of whiteness were still only just emerging within the academy and for groups such as ours. We were endeavouring to speak about ourselves and about our involvement in anti-racist activities in the community, but we were very much at the beginnings of this shift in anti-racist work. Thus as a group we floundered in our attempts to find the language to take up whiteness as a useful conceptual tool for our work to address our own racism and to bring attention to racist discourses and practices in the broader community.

Much of the frustration and sense of defeat I have experienced in anti-racist work arises from the trouble white people such as myself have with seeing/acknowledging the discursive practices and effects of racism and engaging with the concept of white race privilege. Reflecting on my experiences and relationships as part of the women's movement in the 1980s, many of us were deeply imbued with our experiences of being victims, of class, of race, of gender, of other oppressions, in taking up the causes of others. We were fighting against men's violence and domination across race and class at the personal and the political level and carrying our own scars as markers (sometimes trophies) of our victim status. There was frequent talk of a hierarchy of oppression, of the triple oppression for women of colour, who were also disabled and lesbian, of the triple oppression of working class women, also disabled and lesbian. Thus even as white women we talked about racism and racist practices we were generally talking from a position of being oppressed and positioning ourselves as anti-racist and reflecting on others' racism. Positioned as a victim within discourses of men's power and abusive practices, it was hard to positioning ourselves as responsible for and complicit in racist practices. Simplistic but very powerful, these discourses worked both to unite and to divide white women and women of colour across a number of locations of identity. For me (white and middle class) that division predominantly fell to taking up the cause of racism over other oppressions, a cause I clearly located within a feminist socialist framework. A decade later in the mid 1990s when my interest and commitment to fighting against racism had meant a shift to the concept of whiteness, the spectre of victim-hood was still present. I was struggling with this linguistic and discursive turn, still positioned within the language and practices of binary positions of racist and anti-racist. At the same time, I was seeking new discourses and new understandings made available through feminist post-structuralist literature.

From Anti-racism to whiteness and difference

As discussed in Chapter Four the coincident events of my anti-racism activities, my introduction to literature on whiteness and on feminist post-structuralism, and the challenges I was experiencing teaching in a multicultural skills course opened up new ways of understanding the effects of anti-racist education. From this point on too, my working career took a particular direction. I had recently taken up a full-time position as a lecturer and was

contemplating the idea of doing a thesis. As my participation in the anti-racist group came to a dwindling end, I was bolstered by the possibility that the new position would enable me to continue to work with concepts of race and racism through teaching and by doing some research in the field – this thesis. This new direction was not considered to be a shift away from working for change but rather as a different site of activity. And so, this brings to an end this story, a trajectory to a thesis on whiteness and teaching about whiteness and difference. It interweaves the theoretical, social and personal intentions and motivations that brought the researcher to this thesis. The motivations and trajectory to the thesis can be read through the events discussed and the pathways taken over others. My location within socialist feminist theory and feminist action, combined with anti-racist work provided a particular positioning and perspective for coming to whiteness. The desire to take the ongoing frustrations with anti-racist work beyond another 'failed' group provided a clear incentive to do something different rather than just walk away (the privilege of those of us who are white). On yet another trajectory, undertaking academic work, I was drawn to feminist post-structuralism and through this lens was able to identify issues with more straightforward critical pedagogy approaches. Grounded in the work of Ellsworth (1992) and Lather (1991b; 1992a; 1992b) I was motivated to develop a more complex approach to teaching about difference and race and racism as discussed in Chapter Four.

Documenting the thesis

The remainder of this chapter contains an analysis of extracts from various thesis documents and associated papers that contain the traces of my shifts in understanding and positioning in relation to whiteness and being white. The extracts capture and reflect changes in emphasis and mark breaks and convergences in my understanding of whiteness. Further, they highlight the interconnections between my theoretical grappling with whiteness as whiteness itself emerged as a defining concept, and my experiences teaching about whiteness, being white, identity and difference. The documents selected for analysis consist of the early writings associated with the thesis research and are categorised into two sets. The first set contains the original thesis proposal written in April 1997, a number of iterations of the thesis proposal written in the following months to November 1997, and the Ethics

Application submitted in May 1998. For the purposes of this chapter, these documents are collectively referred to as the Thesis Proposal Documents.

The second set of documents contains the Doctoral Assessment Paper (DAP) and a collection of conference presentations and published papers that were written around the same time as the DAP was prepared and finalised (1998-99). Extracts from these documents demonstrate the traces of events and the contradictions and the contingencies within which lay my struggles with making sense of whiteness. They are evidence of my shifting position and the ambivalences and fears that shaped my discursive work with whiteness in the classroom and more broadly in the emerging field of whiteness studies. The analysis provides a reading of the documents and associated events that have been marked as moments of disruption and intervention that have shaped, undermined and (re)directed my coming to understand and position myself in relation to discourses of whiteness, being white, identity and difference. It is also a reading of those documents and events (including this chapter) undertaken at different times, reflecting the extended production of the thesis, and this chapter in particular from its initial draft in 2001, incorporating additional work in 2003, 2005 and now (mid 2006) a final writing. The value of the analysis of these sets of documents and associated events lies in their evidence of the discourses available and being mobilised to talk about whiteness. The analysis documents my positionings within discourses of whiteness, alongside the gradual emergence of literature on whiteness.

The thesis proposal documents

The Thesis Proposal Documents were written between April and May 1998. (The full texts of the original thesis proposal and the iterations are provided in Appendix 5.2, the Ethics Application is contained in Appendix 3.2.) The analysis and deconstruction of these documents is organised into three areas that address different aspects of the researcher's struggle with coming to understand whiteness as a useful concept for understanding/analysing/deconstructing racialised discourses and discursive practices. Firstly, *The words to say it ...*, contains an analysis of the difficulties I experienced in developing a language to express ideas and understandings about whiteness, drawing on the discourses of whiteness as they were emerging in the broader literature. Secondly, *Tracing the marking of whiteness,* analyses the use of quotation marks in my writing that are seen to

be a reflection of the difficulties I had with assuming a normalised positioning within the emerging discourses of whiteness. Thirdly, and finally, *Complicating the race/class/gender triplet* discusses the uses and abuses of these terms in the selected writings, in the process of developing a more complex and deconstructed understanding in relation to differences within and across race, class and gender.

The words to say it ...

My writing and thinking about whiteness, as reflected in the Thesis Proposal Documents, demonstrate a lack of clarity in the use of many if not most of the terms that are conceptually critical to the thesis. The application of terms including white, whiteness, ethnicity, race, reflects confusion about the signification of the terms and their relationship to each other. This does not mean that now I would provide a concise definition of whiteness. Even then, I did not consider I was going to discover what it meant to be white, or that I would arrive at a straightforward definition of whiteness. As I wrote in the Thesis Proposal:

> In the research I want to examine concepts and constructions of whiteness both at the individual level and at a social/cultural level (Thesis Proposal Documents Appendix 5.2).
>
> These are very complicated processes to do with constructions of identity at different levels, taking place within the cultural practices of 'the family' and other cultural institutions, etc. in 'white' dominated societies and (in different ways: in relation to class, for example) within particular white communities and localities (Thesis Proposal Documents Appendix 5.2).
>
> The research will provide insights into how different individuals and groups of people come to be described as 'white' or 'non-white'; and for the latter as ethnic and 'other'; and how this plays itself out in current expressions of racism in an Australian community (Thesis Proposal Documents Appendix 5.2).

These quotes indicate I was aware of the need to talk about whiteness and identity and to recognise whiteness as a structure of authority separate from being white as a location of identity, but the language I was using was clumsy, bordering on simplistic. I did not have

access to discourses through which I could understand and articulate a clearer relationship between whiteness and being white and demonstrate the '...very complicated processes to do with construction of identity...'. Through undertaking this analysis of my own writing, it is possible to see how my work over the last several years has contributed to understanding and describing these processes. Thus, it is now possible to talk about whiteness as a structure of authority and, as is undertaken in Chapter Seven, explicate the operation of this authority in the Western Sydney region and the broader Australian context. Further, in ways that were not available for me to articulate at the beginning of the thesis, my own and others' work in the field has surfaced the supposed invisibility of whiteness as a location of identity, framed within whiteness as a structure of authority.

At the time of writing the documents from which the above extracts were taken, as I have discussed elsewhere, there was very little literature specifically investigating whiteness. Particular texts that have been critical to shifts in my understandings about whiteness and to the practice of research were either still not published or not widely available at the commencement of the thesis. This includes a couple of short but critical pieces by Homi Bhabha specifically on whiteness (Adler 1998; Bhabha 1998) and Hall's piece 'Who needs Identity?' (1996). These works in particular opened to me different ways of understanding identity construction and whiteness and possibilities for describing that relationship. Today, work on whiteness is commonplace enough that it is not unusual to find a chapter or a section on whiteness in an edited book collection, a session on whiteness included in a lecture as part of a semester unit, at a conference, or in passing reference in discussion. These contributions are often token, their inclusion generally not having any noticeable effect on other contributions or the overall focus of the collection, the lecture series, the conference, and so on.[23] And, as Shore (2007) points out, even now work on whiteness has not significantly permeated the academic field of adult education nor more broadly into teaching in the academy across the spectrum of disciplines. Nevertheless, the gesture towards the concept of whiteness is an acknowledgement of the position it has acquired in discourses of race and relations of power. In short, the conditions of possibility for this

[23]The experience of having a chapter on whiteness (Durie 2004) included in an edited collection—*A Fair Go: Some issues of social justice in Australia* (Leonard 2004)—bears this out and an aspect of this experience forms the basis for *Insert 6* presented later in this chapter.

thesis were emerging and this thesis was part of that emergence, rather than coming after (as may seem to be the case now). Thus, the work of this thesis, to the extent that I have been publishing and publicly discussing my work, has contributed to the process of producing discourses on whiteness, and constructing the field of whiteness studies, particularly in the Australian context. At the same time, my work has benefited from the work of others emerging at the same time.

Further to grappling with the meaning of whiteness, an important concern at that time was the interrelationship of race, class and gender. From the very beginnings of the thesis, my interest lay in exploring the meanings of whiteness across these locations of identity. It was important to complicate what it meant to talk about white privilege, when identity cannot be traced to a single positioning and is always framed within a hierarchical and shifting intersection of discourses around race, class and gender, as witnessed by the story related in Chapter Four. As I argued in the Thesis Proposal Documents:

> The research will contribute to our understandings at both theoretical and practical levels of the construction of whiteness and how this intersects with current expressions of and experiences of racism. The analysis will take account of the complexities of racism in terms of class and gender (Thesis Proposal Documents Appendix 5.2).
>
> Further,
>
> This thesis proposal focuses on the construction of whiteness and how this contributes to and structures racism in Australia today. Integral to this will be considerations of the ways in which class and gender intersect around whiteness and racism (Thesis Proposal Documents Appendix 5.2).

I understood then that the work of my thesis was located within and around the spaces of identity. This brought together complexities of the intersection of the subject with the social, framed within whiteness as power and authority. That is, the work of the thesis in terms of identity was located in the mutual constitution of the social and the subject, framed within an acknowledgement of whiteness as a transcendent and transparent force of

authority (Bhabha 1998). I did not know then how to express this or how to grasp where/how the thesis was located in the still emerging discourses of whiteness. Thus, the language reflected not just my position as a new PhD student grappling with her topic, but also reflected the absence of ways of talking about whiteness and identity, discourses that were to emerge through my own work and that of others in the newly developing field of whiteness studies.

When I first reviewed the Thesis Proposal Documents in 2001 for the purpose of this chapter, it was obvious that the ideas I wanted to express were not clear. The writing appeared clumsy as if the ideas in my head were not fully formed and thus not able to be expressed in discourse. Moreover, it was apparent then, and even more so as I have revisited my writings later, the irritatingly persistent use of the expression 'complexity and contradictions' (see for example, Durie 1996). In 2001 when the first version of this chapter was drafted and the thesis proposal and other documents were (re)read and deconstructed, I came to realise that the expression "complexity and contradictions" was (still is) a substitute for concepts I was unable to express in recognisable discourse. As I write this now for a final time, I can recall the sense of frustration I experienced with the jumble of ideas in my head, half-formed thoughts, and incomplete ideas, ideas that could not be grasped or moulded into a coherent sentence. There was always a struggle, a sense of impossibility that any single sentence or combination of sentences would be able to convey the complexity of identity formation, of racism, of who we are in relation to all our selves, in relation to others, the global and local meanings of whiteness as a structure of authority. Others may have a magic way with words – I read the works of Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall and still on each reading I am inspired and touched with a sense of awe and excitement.—an emotional connection, physically felt—with the ideas and possibilities expressed in their writings. Theirs was (is) a world of words where difference is not portrayed as evil and where the possibilities for living together in all our differences are exciting and yet unimaginable. My world was and is a struggle with words.

The analysis of the Thesis Proposal Documents revealed that my early writings were inconsistent in the application of many terms including white, ethnic, whiteness, anti-racism,

and so on. Thus in the extract above, I talk about race and class intersecting with whiteness and racism with no acknowledgement that the terms do not have the same relationship to each other: whiteness being a term that represents power and authority, racism a discursive practice deeply embedded in institutional and individual relationships, and gender and class as locations of identity. The documents lacked the clear sense of the importance of separating in language and in construct, the position of being white and the concept of whiteness as a structure of authority. The documents were in fact a reflection of the conditions of (im)possibility of saying then what I can say now. The words to say it, the juxtapositioning of certain ideas and relationship were in construction though this thesis as much as in the work of others in the field that was still emerging. That is, this separation, of whiteness and of being white, is not about identifying a binary relationship between the concept of whiteness and the identity of being white. Rather it is about recognising and bringing into discourse the mutual constitutedness of the white subject, the category of being white, with the structure of whiteness as authority, simultaneously as the white subject is mutually constituted in relation to other socially enacted markings of identity such as gender, class, religion and sexuality.

Tracing the marking of whiteness

The Thesis Proposal Documents were burdened with quotation marks enclosing words and phrases of significance and words/phrases of disputed or ambivalent meaning. The Ethics Application also was laden with 'white', 'whites', 'ethnic' and 'the other'. In fact, almost every term that spoke to some significance in the thesis is in qualifying quotation marks. For example:

> My research is intended to examine issues … that open up possibilities for understanding these issues from within the concept of 'whiteness as ethnicity' and examining how 'white' people construct the 'ethnic other' (Ethics Application, Appendix 3.2).

And

> That is, my research is intended to begin some of the work of understanding and exposing the centrality of 'whiteness' in constructing the 'ethnic other'. This is

> similar to the work that has taken place …in feminist texts of understanding how woman has been constructed as 'the other'. In so doing it will expose the ways in which whiteness as an ethnicity is 'invisible'... (Ethics Application, Appendix 3.2).

In a paper presented to the American Educational Research Association Annual Conference in April 1998, a footnote was included explaining what was intended by the scare quotes or at least what it was not intended that white should be read to mean:

> We do not use the term 'white' literally but rather as a signifier of privilege / coloniser / dominance (Durie and Taylor 1998:1).

(Re)reading these documents, littered with quotation marks standing guard over any word that could possibly have a duplicitous meaning or a significance beyond its immediate contextual meaning, reminded me of Bhabha's comment about scare quotes in post-structuralist work that ' … festooned the text like garlands at an Indian wedding…' (1996, p.53). The scare quotes, as I was schooled to refer to them, were commonly represented in a verbal presentation by the simultaneous raising and wagging of the index and middle fingers of both hands as particular expressions were spoken. The use of quotation marks was intended at the very least to indicate the possibility of simultaneous meanings, provisional meanings, and to indicate textually that here is a word that the author wants to imbue with complicity. That certainly was an important part of why I used the quotation marks; that is, to suggest to readers that they needed to think about how they were making meaning of the text and of particular words. *Insert* 2 demonstrates the pitfalls of relying on quotation marks to do far too much work, including indicating a quote is being used, and to convey irony and reader beware. In that irony there is also a presumption on the part of the author that 'I know/can see these things', in fact a dangerous claim by the author, in this case me, to a transcendent position.

Now when writing I rarely use quotation marks. I am less concerned to indicate to the reader that they need to be aware of multiplicitous and provisional meanings, of words being used in ways not consistent with expected usage. I am less careful, not because these concerns are

no longer relevant but because I am aware that even though the quotation marks are a visible textual sign to trip the reader there is no guarantee of the direction of the trip. That is to say, the text does its contingent work within the context in which it is being taken up, irrespective of the author's intentions. Further to that, it had also became apparent that the labouring of the point, underlined by my use of the quotation marks, was inconsistent with the greater theoretical complexity with which I was increasingly able to write about the concepts under discussion. To be consistent in the practice it seemed that it would be necessary to enclose all words that referred to identity—race, gender, class, black, woman, man, and so on—and any word that was in any way a signifier of possible double meanings, in quotation marks. Nevertheless, in November 1998, when I gave my oral presentation for my doctoral assessment the quotation marks were still with me as I set out some questions and issues in my opening comments:

> In taking whiteness as the site of my research I place myself in the position of working at the 'dangerous' end of cultural politics – a white' person researching whiteness with 'white' people. … It is possible that … my blindness will reinforce 'others' experiences of racist oppression and silencing (DAP).
>
> What does it mean to talk about my research about constructions of whiteness in a room full of 'white' people? And what does it mean that I have just categorised you all as 'white'? What is lost/hidden/erased by my addressing you all as 'white'? How will you all hear and respond to me differently to my intentions and in ways that I can't comprehend? (DAP).
>
> As my audience there is some work for you to do. Throughout this paper I have placed the terms 'white' and 'ethnic' in scare quotes. As I speak I am not going to indicate that each time but I would ask you to be cognisant of that and to think about what work the scare quotes are intended to do (DAP).
>
> In doing this I am asking that you, particularly the 'white' people in the audience, position yourself in relation to whiteness (DAP).

Not long after this presentation, the quotation marks were abandoned altogether (or so I thought, see *Insert 3*) when a paper I had presented to the *Unmasking Whiteness* Conference in Brisbane in September 1998, was submitted for publication in the conference proceedings. After some deliberations and discussions with the editor, it was agreed that the quotation marks would be left out and the following footnote was inserted to accompany the published text:

> Throughout this paper I have used the term 'white' to denote both a construct of ethnic heritage (Anglo-Celtic) and also a position of privilege within hierarchically constructed racial categories, neither of which are straightforward or easily categorised. No one exists simply within either of these constructs. Apart from the realities of mixed ethnic heritages that confuse the construction of ethnicity as a means of categorising groups of people, we all have, amongst other positionings, a gender and a class, that intersect with and complicate any straightforward reading of the white subject. So, throughout the paper, the reader needs to be cognisant of these issues in their reading of the term white as it might apply to individuals and to groups of people (1999b:160).

What did the quotation marks stand for? The footnote quoted above gives some insight into the meaning attached to the use of the quotation marks in relation to white. The quotation marks were a visual method for expressing the idea that all categories of identity are a construction, varying over time, space and context. This raises the question as to why the quotation marks were not applied by me to all indicators of identity such as gender, or age for example. Partly this reflects that these constructs were firmly embedded in text (mine, and others) as fixed and immutable, taken-for-granted and naturalised, rather than described as constructions embedded in social practices and institutions. In the case of gender in particular this is an interesting elision given the considerable body of work devoted to gender as a construction. The discourses of whiteness were newly emerging and I was both tentative about claiming a clear meaning for the terms white and whiteness, and, also, aware that the point was not to fix the meaning of the terms but to explore their meanings and positioning in contextualised relationships of power. Further to that, in the context of this thesis, white is the active term, white is the term to be deconstructed, examined, held up to

the light of day and to have something said about it. Not in isolation to other markers of identity, as I make very clear, and which of course would be impossible, but as the term in the hot seat.

The quotation marks were certainly not intended to indicate some ambivalence towards white racism, as Nicoll (2000) argued (see *Insert 3*) though, at the same time, we were both positioned very differently in relation to our talk about race and racism. It would have been useful to elaborate the intended purpose of the quotation marks. Why did I not do this? The short answer refers back to the idea of the conditions of possibility, the words to say it were not easily available and I was struggling to position myself in discourses of whiteness that complicated rather than simplified, that recognised complexity and contradictions rather than straightforward binaries. Thus, the elaboration always seemed too hard. But as is often the case, at some point a hurdle disappears and the words are there, the discourse is easier to grasp, as in the footnote quoted above. The work completed in 1997/1998—the Thesis Proposal, the Ethics Application, the DAP, the paper for the Unmasking Whiteness Conference, as well as the talking that I did around that conference—overcame particular hurdles to finding the words to say it. Even as I was using the quotation marks, they seemed cumbersome and disruptive in terms of the visual smoothness of the text. Possibly the desire to have the paper published also pushed me to find the words, a position that made sense to me, thus enabling the text to move on. Not that the footnote did/does it all, then or now, in conveying the levels of meaning and representation always present in the term white within discourses of race, racism and difference.

Complicating the race/class/gender triplet

The expression race, class and gender, as discussed above, is one I have carried with me since the early 1980s. Well before that, as a child growing up in a large Irish Catholic family, while there was no clear identification with a workers' or socialist alliance, there was a clear imbuement of caring for others less fortunate. As a university student reading radical feminist and socialist feminist texts for the first time in the mid-1970s, I was aware of an underlying alliance with those less fortunate, rather than a specific association with the oppression of women. Several years later, actively ensconced in my corner of the women's

movement this general sense of caring for the disadvantaged was crystallised in theory and practice within a socialist feminist framework that gave voice to interrelationships of race, class and gender. From this perspective of socialist feminism, differences of material resources and of power were central organising concerns that framed my understanding of the world. As such, the focus was on concern for those who lacked resources and power; and critique and action against those people and institutions that maintained such inequalities.

In hindsight, it is easy to recognise that period in the 1980s as encompassing what has since become known as identity politics. Recognition of marginalised and groups and groups of difference was not new but traditionally what has been difficult has been to recognise the integrity of the different relationships and experiences in and of themselves. Thus, recognising that oppression took place along racial and gender lines in and of itself and not simply as a corollary to exploitative economic practices and relations was a major theoretical and practical challenge that emerged in the 1980s for socialist feminist and other ideologically aligned groups. This time marked the fragmentation of socialist and left politics into a thousand pieces of which the women's movement, along with other social movements of the time, were wittingly and unwittingly at the forefront. This period in the recent history of Western social movements, alongside of—contingent on the 1960s—can be understood as a Foucaultian event (Foucault 1984). From this period emerged different possibilities for understanding relations of power, for forging different alliances, for seeing the complexities hidden by the binaries. When it came time to write the Thesis Proposal, it was unthinkable that I would be doing any research that did not engage with the race/class/gender triplet and the meanings the term imbued to the thesis, as I understood it (see *Insert 4*). I had been working with issues of race, class and gender for several years. The focus on whiteness arose from within my commitment to working against racism and ongoing frustrations with anti-racist feminism that I had been part of constructing as well as challenging. Using the race/class/gender triplet was second nature to me even as the meanings attached to the terms have shifted and changed over time.

Looking closely at the use of the race/class/gender triplet in the Thesis Proposal Documents, reveals some interesting twists. At no point does the text straightforwardly engage with the

combination of race, class and gender. Rather in both places where class and gender are referred to, race is separated out as the active term. Yet race actually disappears from the equation when it is situated as the active agent, something that is affected by class and gender. Examined now, with the purpose of deconstructing the text, the language seems confused and almost impossible to understand. What was I thinking, how was I positioned? It is not that the text cannot be made sense of, but the wording demonstrates the limitations of my struggles to see the workings of the race/class/gender triplet in relation to whiteness. Was white a separate term? Clearly, being white was different to being black, but how was this to be represented in discourse? How did the interrelationships of the different terms of the race/class/gender triplet intersect with whiteness in discourse and in discursive practices? Looking at the quotes from the Thesis Proposal Documents, presented earlier, confusion abounds. *...Integral to this will be considerations of the ways in which class and gender intersect around whiteness and racism...* separates whiteness and racism both from class and gender and from each other. Or, did I mean them interchangeably? It is not clear. I was not clear in my thinking about how these terms related to each other. *...The analysis will take account of the complexities of racism in terms of class and gender...* makes no mention of whiteness and again removes race from the equation as if, in working with racism, there is no need to mention race. In the writing of this analysis of these earlier statements, I risk positioning myself now as the transcendent holder of the truth, able to see these earlier confusions as if the position I hold now is outside the discourses and discursive practices of whiteness, being white and writing whiteness. Clearly, that is not a tenable position. However, while I am still positioned within discourses of whiteness, I want to suggest that the current positioning is informed by, and more informed than, earlier positionings. And, also, I want to emphasise that even the highly rational and analytic acts of academic writing gloss over a series of commitments and confusions when I as a white woman write about racism and whiteness.

At the time of writing the Thesis Proposal Documents, several things were uppermost as issues that were important to a thesis about constructions of whiteness. First among these was a commitment to working against racism. This is still an integral commitment in researching whiteness. Secondly, I wanted to make more complex readings of racism as it

intersected with class and gender (and race, I should have said). That is, the research was intended to demonstrate that there was no singular racist position among white people, that racism (and race) was written across with class and gender (amongst other things), and that racialised discourses and practices operated within differential relations of power within and across race, class and gender. The ramifications of the emergence of Pauline Hanson in the year prior to the thesis research commencing and her particular style of engagement with racist discourses of Anglo-Australian loss and displacement, was a timely reminder of the importance of the need for more complex readings of white racism, particularly in relation to class and gender. The clearly gendered and classed responses to the Pauline Hanson phenomenon were prominent in my insistence that there needed to be a more complex understanding, not tolerance, of the emergence of racist discourses at particular moments. Thirdly, I wanted to gesture towards white people as having engaged with issues of racism from very different perspectives and that there was no single pathway to being anti-racist, however that might be interpreted. Finally, I wanted to challenge a presumption of being white equalling being racist, a view implicitly if not explicitly expressed in much inner circle talk about racism and anti-racism.

Within left feminist discourses of anti-racism in the 1980s, from which I had emerged, not unscathed, there was an almost taken-for-granted presumption that being white was synonymous with being racist. I recall in late 1987 having a finger pointed at my stomach and being told: 'it's inside you/us' while participating with a group developing ideas and resources for the Bicentennial Protests to take place in January 1988 to coincide with the Bicentennial Celebrations. The Bicentennial marked 200 years since white settlement/invasion of the land now called Australia. The intensity and uncompromising nature of the stance taken within this circle of feminist activists was at times intimidating, particularly for those of us in the circle. It kept us on our toes for fear of being seen not to have the correct anti-racist position. In doing so, the prevailing practices of this time resulted in racism being essentialised and reduced to a binary of racist/anti-racist that did not recognise any mediation or complexity in positioning people as racist, for fear of being seen to be soft on racism. Carrying this legacy with me into whiteness studies, I wanted to avoid such binaries. I wanted to assert that there were different possibilities for individual

white people in positioning themselves in relation to discourses of race and racism and practices of racism. This was not intended as a denial of the presence of racism and its effects, or to be soft on racism as such, rather it was to recognise the complexities of our lives and positionings in relation to categories of race or class or gender and other socially constructed markers of difference embedded in our material realities. It was certainly not to deny that being white does unquestionably carry with it an often unmarked and unacknowledged (if differential) privilege in societies hierarchically structured around race.

The Doctoral Assessment Paper

The DAP provided a comprehensive analysis of the purpose and intentions of the thesis. Its completion was an important milestone as the process of writing the paper moved the thesis along in significant ways. The Paper contained important elaborations in the conceptualisation of whiteness, and the identification of discourses of whiteness and these are the focus of discussion and analysis in this section. The central challenge of this thesis has been coming to terms with writing the meanings of whiteness and grappling with heterogenous positionings in relation to the concept of whiteness and of being white, and, at the same time, not letting go of the authoritative, colonising practices of whiteness that always/already permeate any single positioning of being white. In this coming to terms with whiteness my positionings, my locations in discourses and discursive practices in relation to whiteness and racism have constructed limitations and opportunities in shaping the thesis and conceptualising whiteness as a space to work in/with *(Insert 5)*. This discussion addresses two particular aspects of the DAP that demonstrate the process of coming to terms with engaging with whiteness. These are what I refer to as *Being circumspect*, and *The slippage of whiteness*. Each of these is discussed in turn.

Being circumspect

In the early stages of the thesis, one of the ways I dealt with not being clear about the meaning of whiteness and my positioning within discourses of whiteness was to use quotes from experts in the field to do that work in the text. For example, in *Naming Whiteness in Different Locations* (Durie 1999b) and in the DAP, I used quotes from Frankenberg (1993b), Bhabha (1998) and Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) to do the work of establishing the meaning(s) of whiteness. (The specific quotes used are shown in Appendix 5.3.)

In using these quotations, I added the following commentary:

> These definitions while leaving us in no doubt as to the complexity of the concept of whiteness also place whiteness clearly within a discourse of privilege and authority. Whiteness in this sense is not so much about individuals who are 'white' but about cultural and social constructions and relations of power and authority which provide people who are 'white' (shifting and unstable over time and geography) certain social and economic privileges in relation to those who are 'not white'. There is in these definitions and understandings about whiteness an unavoidable, complex and contradictory interplay between whiteness as the symbol of authority and dominance and the material lives of people who are 'white'. That is, there is no straightforward, singular relationship between whiteness as a signifier of dominance and authority and the lived experiences of 'white' people.

This statement demonstrates the struggle I was having finding the words to demonstrate the relationship between whiteness and being white that in part was about being a novice at writing theory. It also reflected my continuing reluctance to embark on anything that could have seemed like a definitive or reductionist statement about whiteness beyond the recognition of its power and authority, for which I would return still now to Bhabha's statement about whiteness (see Appendix 5.3). Significantly, the complexity of exposition about whiteness reflected in the overall statement of this thesis came about through the ongoing challenges of teaching about whiteness interwoven with my other research activities. The process of teaching about whiteness, identity, difference and relations of power, to mainly white students (many of whom were often threatened by and resistant to the idea of thinking about whiteness) led to a clearer understanding of the pedagogical dynamics surrounding teaching about whiteness. It became easier to recognise more and less useful ways to challenge white students to let go of their fears and hear different possibilities for seeing racialised relations. This led to new understandings on my part about the available discourses of whiteness and being white and the ability to use these in the classroom in less confusing and more useful ways. For example, very early on it became clear that there was less resistance and greater engagement with discussing whiteness and being white if students

could also talk about how they were positioned in other locations of identity. This was not about letting students off the hook so to speak but rather, a means to recognising both the power of whiteness **and** the intermeshing of relations of power with different locations of identity. Similarly, discourses of whiteness that conflated every wrong in the world to whiteness (and implicitly and sometimes explicitly being white) were deconstructed for what they had to tell us about language and relations of power. Moreover, over time I became more relaxed with the material and more confident in my ability to work the discourses and deconstruct the assumptions and implications and complicities. Thus, working through the issues that emerged in the teaching process, being held to account in different teaching contexts, discussing and explaining the concept of whiteness to different groups of students, forced some resolution in relation to theorising and conceptualising whiteness and being white. It also meant the terrain, the pitfalls, and challenges of working with whiteness became more familiar. As is discussed in Chapter Four, this was not to suggest I could rely on packaged and clichéd answers. Rather, discussion of whiteness became a more comfortable space in which to be regardless of what might emerge and I was confident that I would be able to respond from a position of openness rather than fear and defensiveness to whatever arose. Thus, the process led to greater and more complex engagement on my part than was present in the early work of the thesis (and in my teaching). Thus, as I became confident in my own writing and analysis of discourses of whiteness, there came a point when the long quotes could be dispensed with *(Insert 6)*.

The slippage of whiteness

It has been in grappling with what I came to term the slippage of whiteness that some of the most challenging moments of writing about whiteness have been located. The first formal discussion of slippage appeared in *Naming Whiteness in Different Locations* (Durie 1999b), a paper written at much the same time as the DAP, in which I argued:

> Whiteness doesn't come to us as a neat package of attributes uniformly distributed across an easily defined 'white' population. It is shifting and unstable over time and place. It is also mutually constituted in relation to many other subject positions. There are no easy boundaries in relation to 'race' and 'class' and 'gender' and in fact there is a noticeable slipperiness of whiteness in relation

> to these constructs. While it is possible to identify the attributes of 'white race privilege' in general terms and identify the colonising habits of 'white' people, there is still an elusiveness about whiteness and a difficulty in 'isolating' whiteness as it slides (often unnoticed) into gender or into class (p.154).

There is in this statement an example of my own slippage, demonstrating that at that time I was not distinguishing in my writing between the concept of whiteness as a structure of authority, and the position of being white as a location of identity, thus using the term whiteness interchangeably to mean both structure of authority and location of identity. The focus of the analysis of slippage was in relation to other locations of identity, notably, race, class and gender, not about constructing a space between whiteness and being white. This came later. The analysis of slippage in this paper went on to discuss examples of this slippage available in some of the writings about whiteness. This included an analysis of Richard Dyer's work on whiteness (2002a; 2002b) in which his writing about whiteness could easily be transposed onto gender or class, I wrote:

> Talking about the film Simba, Dyer refers to the '... endorsement of the moral superiority of white values of reason, order and boundedness ...' (Dyer 2002b p.151) which in another context could so easily be describing the privileged attributes of the "white middle class male". Similarly the location of whiteness slips easily into a classless gender analysis when the character Julia in the film Jezebel has said to have '... learned to behave as a white woman should' (2002b p.154).

The discussion in the DAP also highlighted the work of Kincheloe in *So purely white ... whiteness in critical multiculturalism* (1999), where the slipperiness of whiteness—as authority and as identity—results in the definition of whiteness being written into the masculine gender. The authors initially do this consciously, but in places, the slippage between whiteness and the 'white middle class male' goes uncommented, reflecting the tendency in the text to universalise a particular male experience of being white. Thus, while the authors recognise the problematics of universalising the position of being white in terms of class differences, they leave no space for differences that are gendered and raced and so

on. At the same time, my own analysis of this text is not consistently marking this space. As Kincheloe argued further,

> ... a dominant impulse of whiteness took shape around the European Enlightenment's notion of rationality, with its privileged construction of a transcendental white, male, rational subject who operated at the recesses of power while concurrently giving every indication that he escaped the confines of time and space. In this context whiteness was naturalized as a universal entity that operated as more than a mere ethnic positionality emerging from a particular time, the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and a particular space, Western Europe. Reason in this historical configuration is whitened [and gendered, I would add] and human nature itself is grounded upon this reasoned capacity (1999 p.164).

In selecting these particular texts for the discussion of the slippage of whiteness, the intention in the paper had been to demonstrate just how difficult it is to write about whiteness (as a location of identity) without slippage coming into play. This was not to suggest this was not a problem with my writing as well, as witnessed in the example above where I use the term whiteness for being white. In discussing this at the time (1999) I argued that:

> In grappling with the complexities of the intersections of these concepts it is important to remember that 'race' and 'class' and 'gender' are not real, stable concepts in the world but are constituted through systems of signs that are historically and socially constructed; and that shift and slide and intersect within and across our individual subjectivities. So that even as I ask the question "when am I a woman?" or "when am I white?" there is an impossibility of grasping either cleanly and purely. The systems of signification denoted by whiteness and by class and by gender are mutually constituted and constituting of each other (Durie 1999b p.155).

Again there is a conflation in this statement, even as the problem of the tendency to universalise whiteness as identity, with the position of being a white male is being

highlighted. The problem of slippage, as it is identified it in these earlier texts, operates at the macro level of signification and in terms of the interweaving of our individual subject positionings within and between the discourses of race, class, and gender. It is not something to be solved by attempts to isolate a position of being white in order to understand exactly what it is. Such a task is neither possible nor desirable. The system of signification denoted by whiteness as a structure of authority and the positionings marked out by identity locations of, for example, white, male, working class, are mutually constituted and constituting. These locations of identity are not variables that can be isolated and grasped independently of each other. Whiteness is not a construct or system of signification that can be easily reduced to a statement of flat dimensional descriptors. But yet, the act of speaking/writing risks doing just that. The practice of speaking through and about who we are by the flagging of identity signifiers is unavoidable. Thus, by its very act, speaking/writing locks in static, separable meanings in the moment of expression, thus violating other possible speaking/writing and even as one's intention is to challenge that very process.

Beyond this, there is yet a further consideration, arising from thinking about slippage. That is the requirement to construct a space that recognises that the effects of discourses and material practices in relation to race, class and gender are not the same and cannot be homogenised through the universalising tendencies of whiteness. This requires a space that works against the slippage that writes out gender, writes out class, and writes out race in a universalising of being white (and being male). Thus, at the same time as it is not possible to isolate being white, it is important to be vigilant vis-a-vis the slippages that merge being white with other locations of identity. These can erase the overlapping boundaries of being white with class, with gender, with race, (however merged these might be) in ways that homogenise identities; and do not give space for the ways in which race, class, and gender (and other identity locations) intersect and confound relations of authority and dominance in regard to whiteness in localised contexts. That is to say, in exposing the unacknowledged, unseen, unspoken attributes of whiteness as a structure of dominance and the white race privilege that flows from this, it is imperative to acknowledge that the experiences of being white and the privileges of being white are neither universal nor uniform. At the same time, it is critical to recognise that at different moments in space and time and in unstable and

shifting realities there will indeed be a dominant signifier of power relations. As Probyn (2001) argued, "[c]onceptualising concepts [such as gender, race, class, sexuality] as sites compels both a recognition of their genealogical trajectories, and acknowledgement that concepts are not geo-politically neutral … gender or sexuality are not universal: *how* they are used in different contexts greatly affects *how* they may relate in proximity to other sites' (p.179).

And now...

This brings to a close the process of analysis of my writing myself into whiteness. In making my writing a site of investigation, this chapter has provided an analysis of my changing understandings and positionings in relation to whiteness and the process of finding the words to write about the meanings of whiteness alongside the emergence of the field of whiteness studies and discursive analyses of whiteness in the Australian context. The analysis of my writings in this chapter has represented a major documentation of my engagement with the concept of whiteness as a structure of authority and as a location of identity and the writing of the meanings of whiteness and being white in relation to the race/class/gender triplet, in particular.

As already discussed in Chapter Three, the thesis is situated in a feminist post-structuralist framework that draws on the work of Foucault (1971; 1982; 1990). As such, a useful way to proceed has been to pose the question that arises from a reading of Foucault: *What are the conditions of possibility?* That is, what produces the slippage between whiteness and class; whiteness and race; and whiteness and gender? And, further, what are the effects of the conflation of whiteness and being white. I would argue now, as is undertaken in Chapter Six and in Chapter Seven, that whiteness is best pursued not as a stable and bounded concept but rather by pursuing an analysis, drawing on the work of Foucault of the discontinuities, contradictions and silences of whiteness. This reveals the ways in which whiteness is discursively constructed within a particular place and time—in this case within the historical, political and social specificities of Western Sydney, the site of this research.

Chapter Six: Understandings of whiteness

> … I had a real problem with this idea of experiencing whiteness because I don't think I ever have experienced it. … I think I'm just Joe Normal and I've never felt anything about being different from anyone else. It's been a non-issue for me. I've tried to look for things that have to do with being white but I just can't think of any. It's been a real puzzle all the way through (Michael, participant).

> The concept of seeing yourself as white, I actually found that quite profound because I had never thought about that before. So I found that quite a new way of looking at myself (Mandy, participant).

Introduction

This chapter and Chapter Seven, present the third and final site of this research into whiteness, an analysis of discourses of whiteness in Western Sydney through the participant commentaries. Questions of how to present the material as a (re)presentation of the participants in the research process, and as a discursive analysis of the discourses of whiteness, have been at the centre of the organisation and structure of this thesis. This chapter and Chapter Seven reflect the textual tensions that arise when undertaking a discourse analysis and simultaneously (re)presenting the participants in the text through their commentary; and the risks associated with the interpretation of the participants themselves that is opened up through this representation. A dilemma in writing this account of the participant discourses has been the question of chapter organisation. At different times the account has been presented as one (very long) chapter; as three chapters or two chapters with a separate overarching introduction; and finally this current organisation of two chapters. Alongside this, the internal chapter structure has undergone its own multiple re-workings. These are more than just questions of organisation and presentation. Rather, they are questions that go to the very heart of my position as a researcher located within certain theoretical tensions and contradictions. Their resolution in the textual presentation of necessity must be read as a final statement—a closing down of other possibilities for

representation in the interests of bringing the thesis to a close. As Hall (1990) noted, such closure is a settling that silences other possibilities and must be read as such: a settling made not as a resolution but to best engage with the tensions and desires of the research; tensions that need to be kept in play in the text rather than worked out/erased.

Research tensions

In undertaking research into whiteness with participants living and working in Western Sydney, my purposes were to (a) engage with the participants in thinking about whiteness; (b) to open up new and different understandings and positionings in relation to discourses of identity, difference and whiteness; and (c) to analyse the discourses available to participants to speak about whiteness. The engagement of the participants in thinking about whiteness, and in taking up new understandings and positionings in relation to discourses of whiteness has largely been the focus of Chapter Four. In this chapter, the approach to the analysis of the participant material draws on a Foucaultian analysis of discourse, identifying and interrogating the broader social discourses within which the participants are located in speaking about whiteness.

The juxtaposition of this approach with my research/pedagogical practice in engaging the participants in the process of reflecting on their positionings and understandings in relation to whiteness and being white, gives rise to a seeming contradiction in my research. This contradiction is expressed on the one hand, through my pedagogic and research activities with the participants as active subjects in the research. The thesis research—from a pedagogic stance—is predicated on dialogue and interaction with the participants as research subjects. This practice of research as pedagogy is derivative of a set of assumptions drawn from critical theory, positing a subject that can be known about and can be changed (for the better) through pedagogic persuasion based on universalist/transcendent knowledge. This situates the participants as central to the research process, seeking to engage the participants in thinking about whiteness and possibilities for different understandings about whiteness, constructions of identity and difference, and discursive practices of racism. On the other hand, for the purpose of analysis of discourses of whiteness in this chapter, the participant commentaries can be understood as a means to an end. That is, the work of this chapter is not concerned with the commentaries as an

interrogation and interpretation of the participants as research subjects. Rather, it is concerned to explore the available discourses through which the participants speak about whiteness and being white in the context of Western Sydney and in the context in which the research has been undertaken.

This juxtaposition within the thesis encapsulates the tensions arising from the coexistent humanist and post-structuralist motivations within the research, as discussed in Chapter Three and Chapter Four, a juxtaposition that I argue is complementary and productive. I raise this here not to repeat the discussion but to premise the presentation of the participant material in the following analysis. In this analysis, the participants are not presented as subjects for analysis and interpretation in relation to whiteness. Nevertheless the (re)presentation of the participant material risks inviting this kind of analysis. In particular there is the risk of essentialising the participants, both individually and as a group and as a location, through the textual (re)presentation of the material in the form of s/he said this or that, which by its very act announces an individual authorised statement and suggests a singular humanist subject. This sits uneasily with an analysis that seeks to engage with the intersecting discourses for speaking (and not speaking) about whiteness and its effects, rather than an analysis and interpretation of the individual subject through his/her statements.

Thus, it is not the intention of the analysis presented here to interpret the participants as individual subjects, racist, anti-racist or otherwise. Neither is it about avoiding naming and deconstructing participant statements in relation to the racist discourses and practices from which they arise. This would run counter to the purpose of the thesis overall which is located within the desire to challenge racism and racist practices. The purpose of the analysis in this chapter and in Chapter Seven is to demonstrate whiteness at work both as location of identity and as structure of authority through an analysis of the discourses through which the participants speak about whiteness and being white. The presentation in this chapter directly engages with the available discourses and the intersecting of whiteness with race, class, gender and other locations of identity with discourses of whiteness and difference. It demonstrates the different locations of participants within discourses of

whiteness and within discourses of race and racism. The two chapters sit in the space of my competing desires and theoretical imperatives. I do not attempt to resolve the tensions and risks, merely to acknowledge their actuality.

Production of the research material

In the main, the participants in the research, at the time of the interviews and workshops, were students enrolled at the University of Western Sydney. All of these participants had completed either *Cross Cultural Communication* or *Working with Cultural Differences* under my instruction. In this analysis due consideration has been given to concerns relevant to both the reading and analysis of the participant material. These have been discussed in detail in Chapter Three, so are only reiterated here. The concerns relate firstly, to the teacher/student relationship that existed between the participants and myself. Secondly, the lack of awareness of the concept of whiteness on the part of many of the participants prior to their participation in the units mentioned above. Thirdly, their subsequent willingness to participate in the research interviews and workshop. Finally, the broader context of the dominant discourses of race and racism within the Australian context, played out in a Western Sydney setting was also a concern. As discussed in Chapter Three, these are not minor matters. Rather, they are important reference points for understanding and making sense of the participant material. Importantly, these concerns are reiterated not to claim particular effects, a bias one way or the other, for example, given the teacher/student relationship. Rather, I reiterate these here to further elaborate the contextual construction in which the participants spoke about whiteness and thus to emphasise the always contextual nature of research material data and some of the specificities of that context that mark this thesis.

It is important to note that over the time that the interviews and workshop were undertaken (mainly late 1999 through early 2000) there was within the Australian context heightened public awareness of—and debate surrounding—domestic race relations, as has been discussed in Chapter Four. The focus of these debates was primarily on reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, and on immigration, in particular immigration from Asia. Pauline Hanson was still a prominent figure, actively promoting the white backlash against the supposed/perceived favourable government treatment shown

towards Indigenous Australians and Asian immigrants vis-à-vis real Aussies, particularly those who could arguably fall into the category of the Aussie battler. Many of the research participants, having grown up in working class, predominantly white communities, were the very people who constituted the idea of the Aussie battler, coming from what would classically be described as 'socially and economically disadvantaged circumstances. Further marked by their location in Western Sydney as the 'culchaless' and racist westie as compared with the cosmopolitan city dweller, the commentary of the participants must be read in the light of the dominance and intersections of these contemporaneous race debates and the dominant discourses of Western Sydney.

Presentation of the research material

To facilitate the reading of the participant commentary in a contextual light, I have as much as possible provided longer rather than shorter extracts of commentary. The longer quotes have the benefit of reminding us (researcher and reader) that these are extracts from longer interviews, and from even longer lives, that are not reducible to a simple statement or a singular subject. Thus, rather than just demonstrating the invisibility of whiteness, for example, a contextual frame enables the possibility for complexity of experience and understanding in the stated inability of many of the Anglo-Australian participants to see whiteness, or to understand racially-marked relationships. It is possible to evoke some of the emotion and contextual experiences from which the participants speak, and to convey more of the complexity of the lives lived and the positions taken. This is not intended as a simple cause and effect strategy: it is designed to convey the experiences and issues that were fore-grounded by the various participants during the workshop process and during the interviews. This provides the possibility for seeing the complexity of ways in which participants are positioned within and across the different discourses through which they speak about whiteness. In so doing I am conscious of the invitation it proffers to the reader (and myself as researcher) to read the participants rather than the discourses, to attempt the interpretation of the participant as individualised and essentialised subject rather than as discursive subject positioned variously within and across overlapping and competing discourses. An invitation, I argue that should be declined.

In the body of this chapter, the analysis is organised under a number of sub-headings as follows: whiteness as invisible, being white, being invisible, better to be white, whiteness as responsibility, colour is not important, when colour does matter, and a final section on identifying difference. As with any categorisation of the participant commentaries, it is imposed as a means of organising the material, at the same time recognising that there are overlaps, arbitrary divisions and alternative readings. In this case, the organisation of the participant material served as a useful means of capturing both the diversity and generality of comments made by the participants, and the spectrum of positionings within the discourses engaged to speak about whiteness and being white.

Seeing/not seeing whiteness

Many of the participants were first introduced to the concept of whiteness, and asked to think about whiteness and being white, through their participation in the *Working with cultural differences* unit at UWS. In the interviews following this, participant responses covered a spectrum of positions in relation to whiteness from a continued sense of the irrelevance of being white as a marker of racialised identity, to an awareness of the significance and impact of not seeing whiteness and not seeing themselves as white in relation to their experiences. The different responses are illustrated in the quotes below, including the commentary from Michael that opens this chapter (and repeated here for the purposes of the discussion) and his further commentary explaining his difficulty in experiencing being white.

Whiteness as invisible

> … I had a real problem with this idea of experiencing whiteness because I don't think I ever have experienced it. … I think I'm just Joe Normal and I've never felt anything about being different from anyone else. It's been a non-issue for me. I've tried to look for things that have to do with being white but I just can't think of any. It's been a real puzzle all the way through (Michael).

In this statement Michael positions himself as Joe Normal and in doing so demonstrates with absolute clarity the blindness associated with being located in the centre and not seeing difference (hooks 1984, 1990a). The puzzle Michael refers to is that he was asked to

think of situations where he had experienced being different or excluded. In Michael's case (and I extrapolate here) as an Anglo-Australian in a secure skilled job, living in white suburbs all his life and in a settled nuclear family there was no disruption to the cocoon of normalcy within which his life was enacted. He goes on to say:

> ... that video we looked at, *The Color of Fear*,[24] I thought OK that's appropriate for an American because they have a lot of colour in America, but we don't. I mean we have a lot of, you know we're supposed to be the most multi-racial society in the world but we don't have colour as such. There are Aborigines and that but we don't see them. So it's just something that you never come across (Michael).

The confidence with which Michael is able to say '...but we don't see them ...' reaffirms the centrality of his location within discourses of Australia as a white country. The silencing and denial written into Michael's statement demonstrates the operation of whiteness as a structure of authority that shapes his view of Australia. Even when difference is allowed to exist in another country, '... they have a lot of colour in America ...' the operation of whiteness in Michael's own context keeps difference at bay, over there, not here.

Commenting on the same film, Elizabeth, below, makes a gesture towards the possibility of being white as a location of privilege but at the same time, as with Michael, the normalcy of being white is difficult to break through.

> That was the really interesting thing because really honestly I don't think I had ever thought about it before. ... I obviously had thought about myself being different to people who were coloured but not different that I had different privileges. And growing up I can never ever remember there being an issue about being white (Elizabeth).

Jim explains the invisibility of whiteness in its being everywhere.

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[24] Michael is referring to a video—The Color of Fear (Wah 1994)—that was shown in class as part of the discussion about whiteness.

> No. I don't think we ever really thought about being white. And I suppose it was just the accepted thing. Everyone around you was white, the people across the road, down the street. I guess 99 per cent of the community was white. And I guess in that way not many of us thought about, nor would comment upon, anything else about whiteness (Jim).

His statement gestures to the comparative whiteness of the suburbs of Western Sydney in the 1950s and 1960s, making it possible to grow up never having to experience being different (at least racially) and, as a white person, to be positioned without question as the universal norm.

The comments reproduced above reflect a continuing scepticism about the authority of whiteness and the privileges of being white or at least a reluctance to acknowledge that it is something that needs to be engaged with, either because it is not considered relevant, or cannot be seen.

Being white being invisible

In contrast to the discourse of whiteness as invisible was the discourse that being white was to be in a state of invisibility. As demonstrated in the following two commentaries, these participants were located in a discourse of being white as a place of loss and emptiness:

> … being suspended in a cultureless state with little recognition or acknowledgment of my roots creates a non-entity when confronted with ethnicity on a daily basis. Not being able to speak another language, not having the richness of a well-defined culture and not having entrenched traditions and customs of an accepted culture, leaves one in an empty space, a vacuum, an endless tunnel, a void in one's life (Bridget).

The language of this statement positions the white person as rootless and vacuous, overshadowed by the richness and traditions of ethnic cultures, almost perfectly reflecting the discourses of white displacement and loss championed by Pauline Hanson. In this discourse not only is whiteness displaced, being white is experienced as a location of

marginality. In a similar though more explanatory statement Rhonda, responding to being asked about being white, spoke about feeling invisible:

> It's funny because I ... had to talk about other things as well. ... being told you're white is one thing but remembering at the same time you're being told that you're oppressed, and you're told that you're a woman and you're being told that you're poor and you're told that you're this and this so that was just another thing that you were. ... I remember having that argument ... and that you were not trying to say: "you were so white, but that you didn't notice that you were white". And I'm saying: "no opaque, as in see through". So that [I was] like invisible. ... Sometimes I wish I wasn't. ... *What is it that you wish you weren't?* ... Invisible...That example that I wrote about the memory down the beach, ... just looking at these people ... Samoan or Pacific Islander, I think it was just the family that I was envying, all the stuff that was happening between them ... what was really noticeable on that day was that um, we were the only white people there in the place down the coast. There were probably 40 – 40 plus, big, big family group. It just looked like a whole heap of fun and lots of sort of family stuff happening and then my small little family. *So there is a construction of other ethnicities as richer, as more...?* And I think that's part of the opaque stuff as well in a broader sense and it just seemed that the culture stuff; I didn't see culture belonging to white people in general. Sort of stolen bits (Rhonda).

These commentaries highlight a number of different discourses of whiteness and invisibility and the process of becoming white. In the Australian context, becoming white is about giving up a particular ethnic or racial or cultural identity. These women even just one or two generations ago may have been Irish or Scottish or English or Welsh or some combination of these or other European groupings. The power of whiteness operates to ensure that over time these distinctions are lost for those who can become white. The specific histories of where they came from and the histories of that coming[25] are lost in the process of being swept up into whiteness. Importantly, one's length of stay in Australia is not the only determinant of becoming white, as Australia's Chinese background community

[25] For example in my own location in Australia the history of the Irish and the English, the Irish famine, the persecution of Irish Catholics in Ireland and elsewhere, the Irish language, is lost in my own becoming white. And so too, my ancestry from Scotland.

is well aware. Many Chinese Australians have lived here for generations but their physical features, along with the history of racism and exclusion that has been practiced against the Chinese in Australia, operate to preclude Chinese Australians from being accepted as Aussies, even when there is no active connection to a Chinese cultural heritage. This underscores the prevailing requirement to look like an Anglo-Australian in order to be considered a white Australian. 'But where are you really from?' is the clichéd phrase by which Australians who do not look Anglo-Australian, regardless of how many generations Australian they are, describe the experience of constantly being asked to explain who they are (Ang 2001b).

As James Jupp (1988; 2001; 2002) demonstrates, being white was, over a period of time, a matter of relinquishing any allegiance to being Irish or Scottish, or Welsh. Jupp's work provides a detailed explication of the processes of relinquishment involved in becoming white in the Australian context and who was white at different times that circulated around British/English ancestry. Jupp's commentary gives an insight into the changing usage of the term white over time. For example, it is unlikely that today we would use the term white to describe people in Australia whose first language is not English. There is now such a close linking of the term white with Anglo-Saxon, Celtic **and** English speaking, that the idea of people from Britain ever having spoken languages other than English is lost in the mists of various episodes of colonisation. This is so much so that our common understanding is to think of people of British origin as always having spoken English. Thus, Anglo-Saxon/Celtic becomes synonymous with English-speaking and creates a convenient divide between British and other immigrant Australians, between white Australians and the others. This has been discussed more extensively in Durie (1999b).

Thus it is important to understand that at the time of the arrival of the first fleet to Australia in 1788 there was '...considerable cultural and racial differentiation within Britain' (Jupp and Office of Multicultural Affairs 1988 p.56). Many people in Ireland, Scotland and Wales did not speak English and for those that did it was their second language. This gives some context to the comments of Bridget and Rhonda, quoted above. Their comments can be understood through a discourse of loss and denial that results from the process of becoming

white over time a process that many are not aware of taking place. This loss and denial takes place in changing practices in relation to particular individuals, families and communities (for example name changing, loss of language, ignorance of history) but more importantly at the level of whiteness as a structure of authority that shapes and oversees these processes. For many who are white Australians now, this process began even before the first white people came to be in Australia. It can be traced to the relations of power operating between the English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh all living in the British Isles under various forms of English rule and occupation.

There are other aspects of this discourse of loss to be considered and, in particular, it needs to be read in terms of discourses and discursive practices in relation to other locations of identity. In the case of Bridget and Rhonda, it is a matter of considerations in relation to gender, class and location. The positionings of being women, coming from Western Sydney and being working class are all relational positionings of disadvantage. Taken together, these locations of identity are positioned within discursive practices that produce economic and social disadvantage. I emphasise that this is premised on a social and individual blindness to the material benefits of being white where whiteness is the default position. Nevertheless, without arguing about hierarchies of disadvantage, to be a white working class woman from Western Sydney certainly carries with it material effects of disadvantage. As such, the positioning of women such as Bridget and Rhonda, within discourses of loss and invisibility in terms of being white, can be traced to historical contingencies, and the effect of firmly embedded social practices in relation to race, class and gender. From this, it can be seen that there are grounds for arguing the complexities of becoming/being white and the power of the structure of whiteness in covering the tracks of the historical/contingent processes involved in becoming white.

This is not a case for arguing for the abnegation of responsibility from being white. Nevertheless, it provides an insight into the ignorance and invisibility many white people continue to experience in relation to the privilege of being white. For most of us our lives are negotiated within a web of discursive practices that become the real, deriving from broader social discourses and relations of power that are not necessarily visible to us on a

daily basis. One effect of this can be the valorising of the individual over the social so that we are vested in our own lives, our own experiences and individual understandings of those experiences (Butler 1990; Henriques et al. 1984; Smith 1999). In consumer-focussed and competitive societies, dominant discourses and social practices that validate individualised understandings prevail, as if outside relations of power, acting as a barrier to a greater complexity of understanding and analysis of our relationships, as Smith (1999) argues. Given this, it is easy to see how seemingly individualised interpretations of our personal experiences can become the single lens through which we make sense of our own lives and the lives of others, denying broader social discourses and relations of power that offer more complex and more confronting understandings of our relationships to the other.

In the case of Tricia, of British/European heritage, her statements about whiteness engaged a discourse of being white as lacking culture and as being positioned as disadvantaged. The context of this was moving to Sydney and living in the heart of multicultural Australia and working in a multi-ethnic Christian church where to be white was definitely to be in the minority.

> ... our big crunch was when we first came over and ... straight away we stayed six weeks with an Egyptian family and from then on we haven't been in a white community and my eldest daughter went through a crisis. She never believed we had a culture before. She was in Year 11 and for her it was an enormous thing to find out she was the different one. ... we had to help her work through a lot of things as she faced real persecution at school ... she was white and there were hardly any white people in her school. In Year 11 in her school, there were seven white people, so she was definitely the odd one out (Tricia).

As a member of a multi-ethnic, predominantly non-white, Christian community Tricia considered that being white positioned her as disadvantaged:

> Well, I find sometimes it's a big disadvantage being white because the other sides, all the other sides, have a bias against you so you have to prove yourself and I presume that they feel that's what they have to do to white people (Tricia).

This statement engages a discourse of in/equality that denies the authority of whiteness in relation to being white. In not seeing the overarching authority of whiteness, it is possible to assume a level playing field where discrimination 'works both ways' and being in the minority as a white person can be understood as the same as being in the minority as a person of colour. In the localised context of the church setting, it may well be that there are ways in which 'it works both ways' and being the white minority may be experienced as a location of disadvantage in that context. Nevertheless, that localised context exists within a broader social context and relations of power, where whiteness is a structure of authority that intersects and mediates the localised relations of power. As such, 'it works both ways' needs to be understood not just in the local context but also in terms of the interconnections with these broader social relations and structures of power.

Better to be white

Lily's statement below reflects a different position in relation to whiteness, capturing a blunt honesty about the benefit of being white as compared with what can happen to you if you are not white.

> … I guess I have [thought about being white] if I see a movie where …the blacks are being attacked by the Ku Klux Klan and I …think that's disgusting …it doesn't affect me because I wouldn't do it, so it's like that's really awful and when the movie is over that's it … It's not really an issue for me. And that's what whiteness has always been, it's not really been an issue, and I guess it's because I'm white, so I'm not on the other foot, I'm not being put down all the time (Lily).

But again, Lily's reference, like Michael's, portrays difference as over there (in the United States and with the actions of the Ku Klux Klan). The showing of the film *The Color of Fear,* which focuses on whiteness in the United States, could have contributed to this emphasis on difference existing over there but not in Australia. It is also a reflection of the silence and denial that has been a critical part of building Australia as a white nation in the last half of the 20th century.

Lily again:

> … when we were looking at memories … in the light of colour and quite a few of us said …: 'I don't remember … many people that weren't white'. It's not like I could say there was an Aboriginal kid… like if I went to school now. I took my niece and nephew up recently to where my brother and I went to school. … my first reaction was: 'where's the Australians, where's the Aussies?' … when I was there … it was predominantly all white and maybe we had one or two that were Italian but that was it, but as far as I was aware, they were all white. We had …people who were Yugoslavian and Danish but they were white, and they acted like we did so there were no issues there. It wasn't until you went to their house, like I went to [Anna's] house and I met her parents and I just instantly went in and said hello to her dad and they all gasped because apparently you're not allowed to speak to him until he speaks to you first and I wasn't aware of that. And I did wonder why the mother was always out in the kitchen. She was never anywhere else but in the kitchen while he lay out in the lounge room. So there were obviously issues of difference but they didn't come to school, so unless you physically went to her house… And then it was like, well that's just her dad …she's white. I just didn't have coloured friends. *So in fact, they probably went out of their way to hide any difference?* Yes, definitely. I have really good friends [Anthony and Michael]. They're Italian. Basically, you didn't go their house, they didn't want you to go and if you did go, you were raced out within five seconds. They would put down their parents, they loved them, but they would go: '… Oh he's an idiot, don't worry about what he's saying', because they had good English but they didn't have good accents. [Anthony] was actually made to marry an Italian girl but [Michael] stood up to his parents and married an Australian girl …. And until that happened … I would have said that him and his parents are really Australian, but obviously behind the scenes there was that hiding … [Anthony's] wedding was all spoken in Italian, there was only five of us that were Australian and didn't speak Italian. But [Anthony] and his brothers didn't speak Italian either so none of them had any idea what was being said. And as they got drunker, they said: 'talk Australian because we don't know what you're talking about'. So, there's all this hidden … (Lily).

This statement from Lily engages with discourses about whiteness and Australianness and what it means to be an Aussie that tell us something about the discursive practices of those marked as the ethnic other in coming to terms with living in a white/Anglo-dominated society. Many of the cultural practices and habits that endure amongst minority ethnic families and communities are hidden from the public domain and, as Lily points out, it was only on entering into the private domain of her Aussie friends that she became aware of their difference. Lily's statement also reflects a very strong either/or positioning—*be like me*, for that is what it means to be a white Aussie, to be normal. This discourse has a number of effects. Firstly, it objectifies difference as lying with the other who is lesser than, as in a binary relationship, and operates to silence the expression of this difference. To be accepted, you must *be like me* as Lily plainly puts it. And, as is documented in numerous accounts (see for example Ang 2001b; Vasta and Castles 1996), this has been the experience of many immigrants to Australia, and in particular those who have come from Southern Europe, the Middle East and Asia who are marked by skin colour, accent and facial features as not being white/Anglo-Australian. Further, in objectifying difference as lying with the ethnic other the possibility of difference lying within and across locations of ethnic identity, such as Anglo or Italian, is also silenced. In this discourse there is only one Aussie to be like in each construction of difference—the one that stands up to his parents and marries an Australian girl, not the one that lies about in the lounge while the wife is always in the kitchen.

Lily's statement 'I just didn't have coloured friends' also provides insight into the operation of whiteness and invisibility. Clearly, this statement can be read in different ways. In the first instance, it can be understood to mean [by design or possibly by chance] 'my friends were not coloured'. Alternatively it can be understood to mean 'I would not have coloured friends therefore these friends are not coloured'. In either case, there is a powerful thrust in Lily's commentary for her friends to be white like her. Such illustrations as are provided by Lily of the discourse of what it means to be an Aussie may seem overly simplistic and therefore easily challengeable (for example the suggestion that Anglo-Australians do not have such gendered relations in the home). If that is the case, however, these simplistic statements only serve to underscore the power of the binary in upholding both the location

of difference with the ethnically identified other and the power of the discourse to silence possibilities for difference across ethnic and/or culturally identified groupings, not just between different groups.

In a very different manner, Michael demonstrates the benefits of being white in the workplace, as well as the blindness that comes with being white, as he positions himself and other white workers in relation to other staff:

> Yes, it's interesting actually when I say our group of six who work in the control room, we're all Anglos... what I was going to say is there's quite a few non-Anglo people working in the office, our support people. I've never really thought, all the years I've worked there, well in the industry generally, I've worked amongst a lot of migrant people and people of different ethnic backgrounds and it just isn't an issue, they're just your workmates (Michael).

There is no question here of something untoward in the positioning of the white Anglo-Australians as the workers in the control room and the non-Anglo-Australian workers as the support workers. The fact that Michael cannot see in that relationship a particular positioning in relation to whiteness/being white and the ethnic other is testimony to the power of the discourse in normalising certain relationships and hierarchies. There is no questioning as to why the control room workers are Anglo-Australians and the non-Anglo-Australian workers are the support staff. In operation here - and in Lily's comment above - is a presumption of whiteness as authority: the authority to speak about who is an Aussie and the authority to normalise the racialised hierarchy that describes the workplace.

A critical power of whiteness lies in the denial it enables at a societal level, to cover its tracks, not always impenetrably, but seemingly so. This refers to Bhabha's analysis of the power of whiteness to both perpetrate and simultaneously to deny the terror, trauma and violence it has imposed (continues to impose) in the process of becoming and maintaining its authoritative power (Bhabha 1998). To do this it has to occur both at the level of structural power and violence but also to carry people with it through the operation of discourses that continually re-inscribe particular relationships. This is at work all the time,

sometimes more obviously than at other times. So for example, the invasion of Iraq and the continuing so-called war against terror conducted by the United States and its allies, in particular Australia and Britain, enshrine violence and terror within discourses that legitimate these actions as bringing democracy to the people of Iraq (Iraqi Elections Vindicate War: Howard 2005; Kirk 2005) and reposition the violence onto the other. Closer to home is the decision taken by the Howard Federal Government in June 2007 to takeover Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory on the basis of a report into sexual abuse of children (Donald 2007). This action is the latest in the history of policies and practices of governance of Indigenous people since white invasion and settlement, leading, not inevitably, to this latest decision. It speaks loudly to the authority of whiteness simultaneously as oppressor and as protector from the effects of that oppression.

Whiteness as responsibility

From a somewhat different perspective, one that demonstrates a shift in understanding about whiteness and an emerging awareness of the concept of whiteness and the implications of this, are the following comments from Mandy and Lorrain:

> Well I was first aware of these sorts of issues in the classroom … I thought it was really interesting and I think the concept of seeing yourself as white, I actually found that quite profound because I had never thought about that before. So I found that quite a new way of looking at myself … (Mandy).

This statement from Mandy demonstrates her recognition that acknowledging being white is not a simple thing to do and in understand herself as white it had a profound effect on how she understood who she was in the world. Similarly, Lorraine's statement demonstrates that thinking about being white requires a shift in positioning and understanding.

> … it made me think about areas that I hadn't really considered before and I've never thought of myself as being white until I was slapped in the face with it… [And further on] … I was one of those people that thought I took it into account you know other people's differences, but then I'd never thought of it as me possibly being different from them, they were the different people (Lorraine).

Lorraine's comment also hints at some of the broader themes of the research including its transformative possibilities (research as pedagogy) and questions of identity. These latter comments also suggest a very different positioning in relation to being white—that is, a sense of responsibility and moral awakening to the implications of being white.

Colour is not important

A different way of talking about the invisibility of whiteness and its privileges was through reference to colour. The position that colour does not matter, as reflected in a number of different comments, was predominant amongst the Anglo-Australian participants.

> Personally, I don't care what colour a person is, it's the way they behave that bothers me (Tricia).

This statement draws on a popular discourse about colour that works to underplay the racialised aspect of judgements made about the racialised other. By foregrounding a claim to a universal standard of behaviour that is blind to differences of race, class, and gender as well as to locational and cultural contexts, the discourse effectively imposes an unacknowledged set of behavioural practices deriving from English cultural practices, on everyone. Thus, the discourse allows the judgement of others to be seen simply as a matter of behaviour and nothing specifically to do with who the other is. It begs the question of who can make this statement. Further, Tricia comments about being a white immigrant to Australia:

> Yes, that's a really good entrance point for me. They [non-Anglo immigrants to Australia] know that I'm also in the same position and I've been through a lot of things, and when they find out that it has nothing to do with your colour, that I have actually had a harder time than a lot of them have had, because people had expectations on me being white, they didn't understand that I didn't know. There's no way that New Zealanders can find out a lot of things whereas they have migrant centres and that for a lot of different nationalities. So when they realise that I actually had a worse time than a lot of them had, the only advantage I had was [that I speak] nearly the same language. But a lot of our words are

> different, a lot of our meanings for the same words are different … and I tell some people some of our experiences and they feel quite light hearted about theirs in comparison. And yes, I think I can empathise better with having gone though it myself rather than a lot of other people and maybe I'm more approachable because of that (Tricia).

This raises further twists to thinking about difference that call into play the transcendent position that whiteness occupies. Positioned within the discourse that colour does not matter, Tricia's statement argues that not only does colour not matter but that white immigrants to Australia receive worse treatment than racialised immigrants marked by colour. From the position of being white, Tricia's statement invokes the transcendence of whiteness, able to see, understand and judge her and others' treatment from the perspective of being white. From this position not only does (being a) colour not matter but in fact being white in this context generates greater discrimination as there are no support structures to assist the white immigrant whose first language is English.

Terry commented that it was not colour that mattered but individuals and mateship:

> My point is it's never been something particularly I've thought about - being black or white. … Since I've grown up, I tend to look at people as individuals … no matter what country they come from or what colour they are, as long as they talk to you and you talk to them and that's all that really matters. … [a story] was told to me by one of my colleagues who was in Vietnam: 'a group of Australians went into a pub while they were on leave and their group actually contained one or two Aboriginal soldiers. They … sat with American soldiers … [there were] beers and carry on, just a whole group of them, black and white. And of course there was the usual joshing that went on and one of the [Australian] black boys called one of the [Australian] white boys a white bastard or something like that and one of the American soldiers was just about to get up and punch his lights out. The whites had to get up and defend the Aboriginal soldier from the yanks who wanted to beat him up. They could not understand …one American soldier would not drink with a black man. There was really strong racial separation and racial prejudice there. And they couldn't understand how the Australian soldiers

> could do that, and call each other all sorts of names in good natured fun.' ... when I heard that [I thought]: 'that's what being an Australian is all about, its not that you're... black or white, its good old Aussie mateship' (Terry).

Again as with Tricia's commentary, Terry's statement invokes a number of intersecting discourses about whiteness, colour, and 'good old Aussie mateship' that require disentanglement. In the telling of this story, as with earlier statements from Michael and Lily, Terry's commentary suggests that colour is not a problem in Australia but rather a peculiarity deriving from the particular racial context and practices that operate in the United States. In addition, the story being told must be understood as a discursive practice related to a very specific circumstance – Australians (Australian men) at war. Terry invokes the discourse of Australian mateship to argue that the only thing that matters is how you treat the other bloke, your mate. The discourse of mateship (amongst men) is very strong in Australian cultural folklore. Its usage, while predating World War I, 1914-1918, came to the fore in describing the support the Australian soldiers displayed to each other in the trenches during World War I. Since then it has acquired almost mythical power and status as a symbol of Australian fair go principles despite the application of the term almost universally only amongst men and traditionally only white men. In the context of Terry's story, it is very likely that mateship would override colour—these are men at war, drinking and relaxing with their wartime mates. In another context, back home in Australia, these men mostly likely would not even have known each other and the likelihood of such a combination of men hanging out and drinking together in the late 1960s and early 1970s is highly unlikely. This has changed to some extent and there is less segregation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in social and institutional contexts. Nevertheless, the discourse and practice of mateship is far from describing the treatment that is still commonly directed to Indigenous Australians both at the level of individual interactions and at government and institutional level. The story of the treatment of returned Indigenous soldiers who fought alongside their 'Aussie' mates is a case in point.[26] None of this is to suggest that Terry himself in his everyday interactions in the world does not practice a form of egalitarian colour blindness that offers him an ethical position from

[26] Indigenous soldiers received discriminatory treatment in relation to various federal and state government concessions made to the general population of returned soldiers.(Londey 2006)

which to form relationships and understand the world. Nevertheless, it does question the validity of the idea that colour does not matter, begging the question of how, when, and where colour blindness operates and for whose benefit.

Elizabeth also had not considered colour an issue until she undertook the study at UWS:

> I had never, and I guess I came to see … how that is seen by some people. It certainly wasn't something that I had thought about before. Maybe subconsciously I sort of thought about people being on the fringes of things and not really involved. Or maybe not feeling secure enough to be involved … I haven't even put it down to whiteness and blackness. I just thought about it as being a more self-confidence or more self-esteem thing. Not thinking about whether colour was the issue, more about people as people… that whole subject opened up a lot of stuff that I now take into account I think. That I can actually see perhaps why somebody might feel like that whereas before I perhaps would have dismissed it a little as being paranoid or you know: 'why can't you just move on' (Elizabeth).

Further on Elizabeth identifies that she had always considered what happened to a person in their life was just about the individual dealing with whatever comes their way:

> But I've never had, that I can remember, barriers put in my way, or I've felt like there were barriers put in my way. Because I just feel those barriers are there whether you would have been white or black or brindle or male or whatever, that there would have been some barriers to whatever you wanted to achieve … (Elizabeth).

Elizabeth's statement demonstrates the power of the discourse of individualism and the degree to which whiteness can be invisible to white people through the operation of such discourses. To believe that, irrespective of being black, white or brindle, we all experience barriers, and it is how we deal with them that is important gets to the heart of what it means to be white and to be blind to its operation. This is not to dismiss the range of ways that individuals can and do respond to the diversity of situations and experiences within which

we construct our lives. In terms of individual responses, these are most commonly talked about today in terms of discourses of resilience and discourses of self-esteem. The point to be made here is not that these concepts may or may not be useful in making sense of individual coping mechanisms. Rather, the engagement with whiteness requires an engagement with the very different opportunities and barriers that operate for different groups within society, regardless of how these might be dealt with at the level of the individual. Thus, concepts of resilience or self-esteem have very little to do with the differential rates of imprisonment between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians (Gooch 2005), or the 17 year gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians (Close the Gap: Indigenous health in crisis 2007)

When colour does matter

The comments above made by white Australian participants, reflecting the position that colour does not matter, appear in sharp contrast to the commentary of participants who knew they were not white or came from ethnic and cultural backgrounds that were marked as racially non-white in the Australian context. These participants were far more likely to attach significance to whiteness and to identify the effects of not being white in a white-dominated society. The following comments were made by five different women of colour. Marg, is an Aboriginal woman who grew up in a ethnically/culturally mixed family in country NSW. Alicia, arrived in Australia from Lebanon when she was very young and has lived in Ws ever since. Angie grew up in Australia as a member of a Maltese-Australian family and talks about passing as white. Maya, is an Indian-Malaysian who came to Australia as an adult. Finally, Sally is an Aboriginal women who grew up in a mixed- race family in Western Sydney.

Marg comments about growing up in what she describes as two cultures:

> … it's Aboriginal people who fire me up to think about the world and our place in the world. … when you have … these two cultural influences one's Aboriginal one's not, the Aboriginal one has … very easily identified political issues, has readily identifiable conflict which is not necessarily what we want to experience but that sets you up to go: "Yes! I am there." or "No! I am not." … it forces you

> to make choices … Non-Indigenous or non-Aboriginal is widely assumed to be the norm, it is invisible and you don't get challenged to make that choice … When people ask you questions, or … someone gives you a form and says tick this box or don't tick this box its Aboriginality that …[is marked] (Marg).

The presence of difference in the very heart of her family constructed/forced a choice (of sorts) on Marg as to whether she was white or Aboriginal, to be both did not seem to be an option. In this context, the invisibility of whiteness breaks down and the discursive practices of whiteness and the operation of whiteness in constructing the different other surfaces. In her commentary Marg was not gesturing to her family 'as the problem', rather her commentary emphasises that given her family situation she could not help but be aware of difference and it was the difference of being Aboriginal that was identifiable. In commenting that there was nothing to attach to in relation to the white side of her family, Marg is positioning herself within discourses of whiteness as invisible, reiterating that whiteness acts to make itself invisible, and in her case, to make her Aboriginality louder and clearer.

Alicia's experience, related below, similarly highlights the operation of whiteness moving from invisibility to visibility, this time in the process of immigration to Australia from Lebanon and degrees of assimilation.

> I didn't really think of myself as different although I wasn't non-white until I came out here … when I was overseas I thought I was white. … When I came out to Australia, I realised that "No, I wasn't white, I was different." …I guess it's about feeling … normal. … that's what I see as what white is, not being looked at differently, as though I've got a mark on my face or something … I looked different, I ate differently and I dressed differently and I couldn't have said that I belonged. … I haven't thought of myself as ethnic, because I guess that's what I am but I still don't see myself as a different colour … it's just the whiteness I think as non-ethnic, I guess Anglo-Australian. … when I'm with my own family and relations I feel white to them because they look at me as white, they look at me as if to say: 'you're now Australian, you're different' meaning that you're Anglo-Australian and you don't have an ethnic culture in you … it's a strange

> feeling to not belong to your own culture and then not belong to the culture that you're living in, so you're not here or there (Alicia).

The experience Alicia relates links the act of becoming different (non-white) with the process of immigration, an event that has effectively positioned her as separate not just from the dominant white/Anglo-Australian culture, into which she has physically moved, but also from her own family of origin from which she has moved too far in assimilating into the Anglo-Australian culture. Her commentary draws attention to the variability in who gets to be white in different contexts. In Lebanon Alicia considered herself to be white (by that I would argue she means part of the dominant normalised culture) but in the Australian context the discourses and practices of whiteness mean it is impossible for her to be white, partly because of her colour but also because her origins are Arabic not Anglo and thus incompatible with the construction of normalised dominant whiteness in the Australian context.

Different again, Angie talks of her experiences through a discourse of passing - that is, knowing she is not white as it is understood in the Australian context of her childhood, but able - through the acquisition of certain markings of being white, that is, accent, colour, surname - to be positioned as white. Angie explains it as follows:

> … when I was younger I think I hid … that I had origins elsewhere …it was a time where we weren't so multicultural and cosmopolitan and … it wasn't very trendy to be that … All those things worked in my favour at the time. I mean the fact that I was born here, the fact that I … grew up as an Australian, there was no accent … the name was OK, it was an acceptable name and all that sort of thing… Because it opened more doors for you, I mean to say, in those days you could be called a wog … if your name happened to be a Maltese name like Zammit, or Vella, or something like that. But if your name was … you weren't called a wog (Angie).

Angie's commentary also points to the very reasons why practices of passing would have been appealing to those who could do it. As Angie said, being able to pass '… opened more

doors for you'. That is, passing enabled people who would otherwise have faced practices of discrimination that acted as barriers, to participate in society and to achieve in ways that were not open to those more clearly labelled as ethnically or racially different.

When asked about her understanding of whiteness, Maya related a number of experiences that related to different contexts and engaged different discourses of whiteness and colour. In talking of whiteness in relation to her country of origin, Malaysia[27], Maya conveyed the importance of skin colour[28] in determining status:

> ... until we came to Australia [from Malaysia], it [whiteness] was more like fairness. Even among our race [Indian], you have people who are dark-skinned, people who are fair ... so you know, whiteness always meant a little bit better than those who were dark. And I am dark compared to the others so I used to feel at a disadvantage. *Even in your family?* In my family ... my sisters are fairer than me... *So very literally, it was skin colour?* Skin colour, yeah the colour of the skin (Maya).

In the Australian context, Maya's experiences of whiteness were presented in terms of discourses of discrimination and racism:

> ...when we came to Australia, I had a ... few experiences actually with regards to whiteness. ... I applied for a job as an ESL [English as a Second Language] teacher. And this guy who answered the phone, he recognised my accent and he said: 'you're not a white?' I said: 'no, I'm not, I'm from Malaysia ...is that a problem?' and he said 'there is a problem because the students may not want a coloured teacher teaching them.' ... I was taken aback and I didn't do anything about it ... (Maya).

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[27] Within Malaysia itself, there are discourses of race and difference, and discursive practices of racism based on very different racialised relationships, as compared with those in operation in Australia. Whiteness is present in both contexts through processes such as colonisation. But it takes different forms and authority, reflecting different historical circumstances of settlement and development (Faaland, Parkinson, and Saniman 1990).

[28] This idea of the lighter skinned the better is well documented amongst communities of colour with complicated effects. See for example Wah's *Color of Fear* (1994) for a discussion of this within many different communities of colour.

In this story of outright discrimination, a number of discourses are enlisted. Firstly, the question of accent as a marker of whiteness, as Angie also commented upon. Being white is about not having an accent as it is so often expressed by default. Thus, even over the phone whiteness takes on transcendence as the accent acts as marker that the person speaking can be identified as non-white as they speak with an accent that is not Anglo-Australian. More complexity is added to the commentary of Maya with the statement that 'the students may not want a coloured teacher teaching them'. Here whiteness (or the lack of it as displayed in the accent) works to invert and enact a further discrimination against those who are not white, as not the right people to teach English. Regardless of whether in this particular case the students had expressed a desire to have an Anglo-Australian teacher, the discourse that is being drawn into the discussion is not uncommon in this context. It can be understood as an enactment of the processes of colonisation that was first elaborated by Frantz Fanon (see Fanon 1968; Hall 1990) whereby the colonised subject comes to see themselves only through the representations available through the eyes and language of the white oppressor. Fanon's work may seem somewhat remote from teaching English at a local centre in Sydney, Australia but I would argue it is very relevant as an explanation for the positioning of the students who may express this view.

Maya goes on to relate a further example of discrimination, which she locates within discourses of colour:

> There are certain whites who don't really want to mix with the coloured people … about two weeks ago [late 1999] I went to the supermarket. I met a person who was doing a course [university unit] with me, a white lady, and she didn't even want to look at me. But I had noticed that she was a bit, she likes to keep herself away from… *So you noticed that even in the course?* Yes I did. And she was with me for about three courses I think, at least three if not more. … at the University, and I met her two weeks ago. …And even in the University she made no attempt to talk to us … she could be sitting next to us but she would not talk to us. … And the others felt it as well. *Who were the others?* The coloureds. *So who were the coloureds?* [names two students who also migrated to Australia as

> adults] ... It was a group of them [white students] actually, but she was in particular ... (Maya).

Coming to Australia from Malaysia positioned Maya in different discourses and practices of whiteness that reflected the Australian context of racialised discrimination and exclusion. Maya's account of the exclusion she experienced when undertaking the course at UWS brings to light the ongoing practises of exclusion and discrimination towards people of colour that come to be normalised in the lives of many white people. Such practices are positioned within discourses that position difference as lying with the different other, in this case the coloured ethnic other, who is *lesser than.* That such behaviour is normalised is witnessed by its continued practice even in the very context of the classroom where discourses of whiteness and difference are being discussed and analysed for their racist effects.

Finally, Sally's commentary as an Indigenous Australian demonstrates, from a very different perspective to that provided by Marg, the effects of growing up in a racially mixed family:

> ... *as you were growing up this issue of black/white was big in your family?* Yeah, very much and not just in the family but everywhere you went ... it depended on what you were as to what you got ... at every school I went to [they said] '... her behaviour's bad. She's Aboriginal ...'. So you weren't sent home the books like everyone else because 'Aboriginal people don't read it anyway and then you won't return it because they move so much they never keep anything'. So at school you were treated differently: then you went home and whether I was at home or in foster care or [at] my grandparents' [place] or anywhere ... you were treated differently because I either looked like my father, sounded like my father, or behaved like my father, who was Aboriginal. *So you were constantly being reminded* ... Yes ... it used to be said at least 20 times a day [by her Anglo-Australian mother] 'this is my house ... this is our rules ... if you want to live like an Aboriginal person go out in the bush' ... that was if I'd done something wrong so definitely 24 hours a day seven days a week ... my mother would say that in the same sentence anytime she wanted to refer to something bad it would be: 'you

> know her father … is Aboriginal so you know that they're dumb' and that was a normal sentence … *So it was a pretty big marker?* Oh it was huge, huge and because even when I did define who I was … relatives of my mother not talking to me which meant that I chose in her eyes the wrong identity so that was a big issue yes (Sally).

This commentary from Sally demonstrates the power and effect of discourses that position Indigenous Australians as dumb, troublesome and useless, no doubt doubly powerful coming from one's own mother and family. Sally had no trouble knowing she was different as she was constantly reminded of it, and the cause of that difference—her Aboriginal father. In presenting this particular commentary, it is not intended to suggest that this is the pattern of relationship in all mixed race families. Marg's commentary above provides a different perspective where the drive to see and be marked by difference came from outside the family rather than resulting from intra-family dynamics. Nevertheless, Sally's commentary in demonstrating the effect of being Aboriginal within her family underscores the pervasiveness of the marginalisation, discrimination and oppression that Indigenous people have experienced through the discursive practices of colonisation and institutional and everyday racism.

A further example of discriminatory practices is exemplified in the treatment that Sally received at the hands of her school [in the late 1960s and early 1970s]. Her reference to the attitudes expressed to her at school gesture to much broader and far-reaching practices of discrimination against Indigenous people. In this regard, it is worth noting that until the early 1970s a particular practice of discrimination in NSW (and other States in Australia) was the right of the school principle to exclude Indigenous children from schools (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2001). Such a right flowed from the central tenets of white invasion and settlement including terra nullius—the claim that as the Indigenous populations were nomadic the land was considered to be practically unoccupied (From Terra Nullius to Native Title 2000). In addition, the early categorisation of Indigenous peoples with the native flora and fauna (Pearlman and Gibson 2007) ruled out the possibility that Indigenous peoples could own the land. Further to this, two centuries and more of various official and unofficial practices and policies including outright warfare

and massacre, deliberate and benign neglect, protection through forced movement to missions, forced removal of children and various processes of assimilation continuing today both in the practices of current governments and in the ongoing effects of past practices. This is not the place to discuss these policies and practices in detail. The point to be made here is that the treatment of Indigenous people, gestured to by Sally's commentary about her school experience, and in relation to her family, reflects whiteness in operation in the way that Bhabha highlights when he talks about the '...the violence it [whiteness] inflicts in the process of becoming a transparent and transcendent force of authority' (1998, p.21).

In their clear demarcation of what it means to be not white, and their invocation of discourses about whiteness and difference and their discriminatory effects, the extracts above, about whiteness and colour, highlight one of the core privileges of being white in a hierarchically structured society wherein being white is considered the norm. That is, enjoying the privilege of not being marked and therefore able to live as if colour does not matter. At the same time the quotes highlight why it is so difficult for white people to see their whiteness by the fact of it (being white) being the norm. That is, being part of it makes it invisible whereas being outside of it makes it obvious you are not it.

Experiencing difference—gender, religion, poverty

In the remainder of this chapter, the discussion of discourses of whiteness deriving from the participant commentary continues but with a different focus. The discussion of understandings of whiteness so far has focussed on specific instances of the participants talking about whiteness and race even when this has involved discourses of not seeing whiteness and race. This section, in bringing the discussion of whiteness in this chapter to a close, canvases the ways in which participants identified difference, not through race and ethnicity but through other markers of identity such as religion and gender. Given the difficulties the white participants had in identifying racialised difference, or in explicitly positioning themselves in relation to racialised discourses in the interviews, I usually asked participants to describe any differences they were aware of while they were growing up. In response to this, and almost without exception, the Anglo-Australian participants talked

about poverty and/or religion (in terms old antagonisms between Catholics and Protestants, not Islam and Christianity, given the participants were mainly referring to growing up in the 1960s and 1970s) as the noticeable markers of difference. Gender was also an important marker of difference and, not surprisingly, it was mainly the older female participants who raised gender as a site of difference and discrimination. The men interviewed generally did not identify gender as a marker of difference—a pattern similar to that demonstrated by the Anglo-Australian participants who were unable to describe their whiteness. The commentary presented below is representative of the comments made by the women about gender as all the women's talk was singularly located within a discourse of discrimination based on being girls in families with both girls and boys. The commentary below more than anything elicits the discourses through which participants growing up in the late 1950s, the 1960s and the early 1970s in Australia understood difference. What is significant about the commentaries presented below is the total absence of any engagement with discourses of racialised difference, demonstrating the silent normalisation of whiteness in many suburbs in Western Sydney, suburbs that now have a very different complexion, reflecting the changing demographic resulting from migration since the 1950s.

Religion and religious antagonisms were a significant marker of difference raised by a number of participants Referencing old antagonisms and practices transferred from the British Isles they spoke to the continuing practices of social segregation between Catholics and Protestant families and communities. Anne, for example, recalled:

> we were the only Catholic family in that block … I remember the girl next door … her grandmother used to hate Catholics and I used to go to her place and it was almost like you could feel the chill in the air (Anne).

Jim also identified religion as an important marker of difference in his childhood:

> … religion was probably one of the biggest things …. But there was that difference and it was spoken about in the house and I guess it was the same as talking about the Aboriginal community and there were opinions about that and

> they were bandied around. So I guess between indigenous and religion that was probably the main focal point of … the discussions that we had … (Jim).

When Michael was growing up, religion was the most prominent, albeit not the only, marker of difference.

> Probably the biggest difference … we noticed was nothing to do with ethnicity, it was religion. … we were Protestants and the others were Catholics. … there weren't a lot of them and we really didn't mix with them. My sisters had a couple of Jewish friends too and they were very odd, to be Jewish, that was very strange. They were the biggest differences. … We were all Methodist. …we're talking about the … early to mid 50's [when] there was this Catholic/Protestant divide. … I only remember one kid in the street who was Catholic and we had nothing to do with him, it was terrible. I mean he was just a normal kid but he was Catholic … Methodists were particularly strict on a lot of things, absolutely no drinking or gambling or anything like that … and we tended to sort of look down our noses a bit at people who did those things. I suppose we were religious snobs in that way (Michael).

Michael's commentary is located within a number of discourses about religious differences and discrimination in operation in the 1950s and 1960s when he was growing up. This is not the place to pursue an analysis of these discourses except to make two brief points. Firstly, his commentary in making reference to his sister's Jewish friends as very odd highlights the almost unspoken presence of Jews in Australia at that time and the unremarked and continuing marginalisation of Jews from mainstream society. Secondly, Michael's reference to religious snobs in relation to Catholics demonstrates the unquestioned position of superiority that lay with being Protestant rather than Catholic. Within this discourse are traces of the history of dominance and oppression based on the intertwining of religion with culture, ethnicity and location that continue to inform the shape and authority of whiteness today and therefore not irrelevant to the specificities of the form and authority of whiteness in Australia.

The other major difference identified by the participants related to gender, predominantly described by the older women as a marker of both difference and discrimination. Maya's experience, for example, related to growing up in an Indian family in Malaysia:

> I think Indians always believe that the boys are better than the girls. And we girls did used to feel that … I know that when my brothers were born it was different. When there was a girl born in the family it was not so happy an occasion. The same thing happened with my sister-in-law … had three girls … When the third girl was born, the people were ringing up my mother-in-law and consoling with her because she had a girl. … That's the concept in our society (Maya).

Other comments about gender were in the context of growing up in Australia and related to schooling, housework, expectations, and a sense of importance … Cathy sums up:

> …gender was always an issue. My parents only had one son and I think that was important to my dad. I mean he actually liked all his daughters but I think my brother was very privileged in our family (Cathy).

Education in particular was identified as a site of different treatment based on gender. Kath's comment below typifies many of the comments made by the older woman participants, who raised gender as an issue:

> … There were four and I was the eldest with a brother two years after. He was doing well as well and there just wasn't the money to send me on … actually, I did go on because … money from the canteen fund from the war. I was educated in the last two years of school. But I had a commonwealth scholarship … I couldn't take it up because I had my brother coming along and I took a two years scholarship at teachers college because I'd be finished by the time he went to Uni. I remember all those things then, gender was a big thing. … I remember people would say: 'how could you let a girl go on to the last two years at school. You know they just get married and have children.' And I suppose in those days when women did get married they often lost their jobs (Kath).

Kath's comment encapsulates the educational experiences of many women of her generation and location. The practices of gender-based discrimination played out in all aspects of women's lives, not least in access to education.

Jim also talked about gender, when prompted, in a way that reiterated the discourse of male dominance. He gained an understanding of gender relations from living with his grandparents:

> Yeah, and I guess one of the influences my grandfather did have which is part of growing up in a multi-parental home … at 2:00 on Saturday afternoon for example the lunch would be put on the table. And he dictated what he wanted for tea and my grandmother cooked it. … He wouldn't eat [take away food], he always insisted on home-cooked meals and that was part of her job. I guess that has rubbed off a little bit. I must admit… it's always in the back of my mind that he'd say: 'I'd like apple pie today' and she would literally role the pastry, cook the apples, put it all together and it would be on the table at 12:30 in time for him to go to bowls. And I suppose in the back of my mind … it's still there that there was this male thing. Not that I get treated that way anymore (Jim).

Mandy, who grew up in a country town in NSW, identified gender combined with drinking as the biggest marker of difference:

> … at 11 or 12 my mum and dad divorced ... traumatic at that time … I would have been one of about two kids in the class who had that experience. … Well, we would have been different [anyway] because of what happened in the family, because my mum was drinking … the enormity of that was very high … mum frequented hotels, I mean women just didn't do that. … She was really breaking the norms … and there were times that mum left and this shame of the mother not being there. To me it was sad that my mum wasn't there, but I couldn't understand all this other stuff because I didn't think life was that bad (Mandy).

Finally, Cathy identified poverty as the biggest marker of difference in her childhood:

> ...I was always aware that we were poor ... Not debilitatingly so, but ... I suppose a little bit embarrassing but not really humiliating ... I was probably more conscious before of being poor when I was young. That was the biggest definer of me (Cathy).

These commentaries about difference serve to explicate the discourses through which experiences of difference were understood in peoples' lives, predominantly in the context of growing up Anglo-Australian in Western Sydney. Although the comments are not a comprehensive reportage, they nevertheless demonstrate the ways in which many of the Anglo-Australian participants were able to identify difference. As such, the comments highlight the very absence of discourses of whiteness and race in the lives of the Anglo-Australian participants in understanding their experiences.

Understandings of whiteness: summary comments

As the discussion in this chapter has demonstrated, Anglo-Australian participants born and raised in Western Sydney, Australia found it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to (explicitly) position themselves within discourses of race and whiteness. Such ideas and discourses were hidden, subsumed beneath the normativity of whiteness. Thus, being white was not part of the everyday stories they narrated about themselves, either as adults or in relation to growing up. Thus, when asked about difference in their childhoods, the Anglo-Australian participants positioned themselves in discourses of religion and gender not discourses of race and whiteness. Difficulties pertaining to race were unlikely to have been an issue in their own personal lives; they were, after all, the great white norm. From the late 1950s through to the early 1970s, when most of the participants would have been children growing up in different parts of Western Sydney, there would have been little visibility of others such as Indigenous Australians or non-white immigrant Australians, against whom whiteness in the Australian context is most often marked.

The extracts from the participant material that have been analysed in this chapter, have provided a window through which to visualise growing up Australian-born and Anglo in a particular time/place in Australia's cultural/racial history. Many of the participants, now in their forties and fifties, when speaking about childhood memories in the interviews and

workshops, recalled the Australia of the late 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The dominant discourses of race and race relations in the white Australia of that time—captured in the participant commentary—reflect the particular constructions of Indigenous Australians, Anglo-Australians, 'new' Australians, migrants, and post World War II refugees that were popular at that time. Captured also is that hard to describe but evocative sense of a white Australia now gone but for some still the real Australia. This was **the** time of white Australia.[29] For many it is a nostalgic site, before the Tent Embassy, before the end of the Vietnam War, before Multiculturalism. That is, a time when many white Australians were able to—and did live—in a white bubble. Thus, it is not surprising that the commentaries of some of the participants reflect an understanding of their experiences through newer discourses of white marginalisation and cultural displacement. At the same time, the commentaries reflect the participants' attempts to make sense of whiteness and of being white, a new way of thinking about themselves and their place in the world.

In summarising the work of this chapter, the inability of the white participants to see whiteness, its privileges and its effects, is most striking. An invisible veil seems to hang in front of many of the participants so that they see only a particular view of what is in front of them and seemingly have no means to ask questions outside of that view. Thus, the power of whiteness can seem to be almost invincible. As Foucault (1971) argues the power of discourse lies with its ability to seem to be the natural state of affairs such that it determines the questions that are asked or not asked and determines what people can see and understand. Thinking about whiteness did not (still does not) come easily for people for whom whiteness is the norm and when there are no obvious disruptions to the prevailing normalising discourses and discursive practices. The ways in which the participants have talked about whiteness reflects their own family and locational experiences while growing up, positioned within familiar discourses that facilitated particular understandings of those experiences. These understandings were disrupted through the process of participating in

[29] In saying this, I am of course aware that over the generations of white invasion and settlement there have been other moments of whiteness. However, the 1950s in Australia were sufficiently far removed from first contact, and the battles and close encounters that continued well into the 1800s between the white invaders and Indigenous peoples (see Goodall 1996a; Reynolds 1987a, 1989, 1990a). As well, the fifties preceded the major impact of post World War II immigration, the Vietnam War, the rise of Indigenous voices, and globalisation, all of which have been major instigators of change in the white Australian psyche.

the unit at UWS, and in the research workshop and interviews, all of which have had the effect of interrupting the taken-for-granted stories the participants have called upon to talk about their lives and their childhoods. Some of the commentary analysed in this chapter, and to follow in Chapter Seven, revealed the struggles of the participants in attempting to understand whiteness. For many of the people I interviewed there had been no previous entrée into discourses of whiteness prior to their participation in the research process. Thus, it was a new way of seeing and understanding their experiences and position in relation to others.

Chapter Seven: Whiteness and Indigenous Australia

> I think that there is a basic goodness in the Australian community. I believe there is a widespread and genuine wish and willingness to come to grips with the process of reconciliation. One way of helping is for as many people as possible to join study groups-to study history and learn what Aboriginals have gone through and how they were dispossessed. We're not on a guilt trip here. I'm not on about trying to make people feel guilty. But there needs to be a general acknowledgment of what has happened (The Aboriginal Voice: Lowitja O'Donoghue—Elder of our nation 2001).

Introduction

The focus of the discussion about whiteness in this chapter draws on the participant commentary about Indigenous Australians. In searching for ways to talk about whiteness, many of the Anglo-Australian participants drew upon their views and experiences of Indigenous Australians. These commentaries while not explicitly about whiteness talk directly to the power and authority of whiteness to silence, deny and rewrite history. The chapter presents an analysis of the discourses through which the participants talked about Indigenous Australians and, in the process, it reveals the histories of whiteness that must be silenced to maintain the power and authority of whiteness in the Australian context.

In reading the commentary in this chapter, the various issues discussed in the introduction to Chapter Six are equally applicable in this chapter. From the interview material, it is possible to identify a number of discourses through which the participants talked about Indigenous Australians that tell us about whiteness in operation in the Australian context. There was no immediate trigger for the prevalence of commentary in the interview material focussed on Indigenous Australians, in addressing the question of whiteness. However, the preparation and discussions that many of the participants undertook at the memory

workshop (that was part of the research activities with the participants and that took place before the interviews) focussed on memories or incidents related to Indigenous Australians as examples of difference, and this carried over into the interviews. The material has been organised under the headings of: *Strangers in their own land*; *Its all in the past what can we do now?*; and *Special treatment*. As I have indicated earlier in relation to categorising the participant commentaries, none of it falls naturally or only into a single category. These categories are for the facilitation of the analysis discourses of whiteness at work. Further to that, it is worth noting that the participant commentaries gesture to the prevailing denial and ignorance of the history of invasion and black/white relations, Indigenous culture and people, and the impacts of colonisation prominent in the ways of talking about the Indigenous other. The following discussion draws on the participant commentaries to illustrate and analyse these points.

Strangers in their own land

The commentary below highlights that for many non-Indigenous Australians still today knowledge of and contact with, let alone friendship with, Indigenous people is still not common:

> .... Actually, Gwen [class of 1999] was the first black person I've really got to talk to ...you do assume they [Aboriginal people who live in the city] all hang out at Redfern and they all live in big group houses. It's the media portrayal of the aboriginal people. In actual fact, Gwen was born not far from where I lived all my life. She grew up in [suburb in Western Sydney] so we had a lot in common. ...I think Gwen felt a bit like she was the focus of everyone because she might have felt like she knew that she was the only black person that these people might meet and so she carried the weight of the Aboriginal people on her shoulders. She had to behave herself as everyone was ... its like when you travel overseas and you're the only Australian and you dare not do the wrong thing because it reflects on your country. I don't know. I can't speak for Gwen anyway. I thought she was a lovely person (Anne).

This commentary from Anne demonstrates her understanding of Indigenous Australians mainly through ignorance and media portrayal. Leaving aside questions of intention, Anne's commentary is positioned within discourses that clearly locate Indigenous Australians as the other, strange, unknown, talked about rather than talked with.

From a different perspective, Mandy's commentary (below) talked about the discursive practice of talking about rather than talking with Indigenous Australians. Mandy was interpreting her experiences, growing up in country NSW in the 1960s and 1970s, in relation to others as a means of examining her whiteness:

> … I was in the car with Nan and pop and they were talking about Greek people who owned shops and worked around the clock and supposedly were wealthy. And I guess the thing that really amazes me when I look back and as I'm thinking about it, is that people jump to these conclusions and have these opinions, but their paths never met. We never interacted with those people, we never went into their shop … We had our sphere well others had their sphere, and our paths never crossed. …another experience … in Armidale … when I was at High School and my Pop worked for a furniture place … and they had a mattress that … was to go to the Aboriginal people. And so I said I'll come for the ride and we drove to the Aboriginal settlement, which was on the outskirts of town, very much smaller houses, fibro houses and um, quite dilapidated in appearance. And we drove there and my Pop got out of the car and lifted the mattress and just threw it over the fence and just drove away. And I remember just sinking in shame in my seat and I just sunk in shame. I didn't see anybody but I just knew 'that's wrong'. I had this absolute sense of shame (Mandy).

Mandy's commentary highlights the discursive practice of separation and in the case of Aboriginal people segregation between Anglo-Australians and the rest. Ethnic and Indigenous others were talked about but lives were very separate. In the reminder of her commentary, Mandy pursues these issues further:

> Because I lived in Armidale in some ways I was fortunate and because through the Church there and through the University, there were people with other ideas.

> So I was then starting to become involved in other things that gave a different view … people there were building a pre-school and doing homework centres with Aboriginal youth and that sort of stuff. Even when I look back now that was probably very much that white charitable model that I wouldn't feel comfortable with now, but at the time was certainly an improvement on dumping mattresses over the fence. And I said oh I went and I said I want to go down and work on this pre school and I was actually told I was not allowed to go. … Then of course, later on the woman whose name escapes me, [Gillian Cowlishaw], I was in some of her classes at Bathurst … she then gave a whole different version of Aboriginal history. … That was even later again. So that puts a different framework on it. So unless you're given an opportunity to look at things within a different framework, which is what education does, or some parts of it does, you're still, even though you feel uncomfortable, you've got no direction to change (Mandy).

This commentary from Mandy touches on discourses and practices that framed her life and gave her the opportunity to see things differently from the prevailing norms. The obvious discourse relates to education. Mandy was fortunate, as she puts it, to go to High School in Armidale, a university town as well as a rural and regional centre in Central NSW. As a result, there was the opportunity to see things through discourses that disrupted the dominant practices and understandings that prevailed in her family environment and in the small town where she had lived with her parents. In this circumstance, education can be understood as a lifeline. It offered Mandy the opportunity to understand the feelings she had of shame and discomfort though discourses that addressed Indigenous people in a different way. As Mandy herself notes, that addressing was possibly still within a frame that today she would understand as the practice of white charity. Nevertheless, education opened up different ways of seeing (a position that is critical to this thesis). There is still in the work that Mandy became part of, as she herself identifies, a framing that is about talking to and working for Indigenous people which positions white-Australians and Indigenous Australians so as to reflect rather than challenge the prevailing relations of power and the subordinate position of Indigenous Australians, receiving white charity. Nevertheless, Mandy and I both now have the benefit of shifts in understandings in these relationships via the emergence of new discourses about race and racism (arising from post-

colonial studies, feminism and the emergence of whiteness studies) that have challenged the prevailing relations of power between the coloniser and the colonised, disrupting taken-for-granted relationships and practices.

From a different perspective and again with hindsight, Cathy's commentary points to the separation that existed between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Australians and to the practice of speaking about the other from on high:

> Well I think [in Australia] we are still the powerful class of people. We've had the most privilege in the past and the most education and we're still calling the tune ... deciding what funding is spent for different things. Its still white people making decisions in Australia. ... in that workshop the thing I recounted was we only, well I only know of one Aboriginal family, they were considered different. So that was something that I became very aware of. And that's actually one thing in which my mother comes out ... she said something like 'oh those children are a credit to her, always so clean and da, da, da, da, da' and ... it wasn't until much later when I looked back that you sort of realised that what she was really saying was: "you wouldn't expect that". ... That's what I'm thinking now you know like I don't know how we redress the past for what we've done to the Aboriginal people (Cathy).

Here Cathy's mother comments on the children being clean and tidy as not the norm for Indigenous children, something that stands out and worthy of comment and praise (as an attempt to be like us). Cathy recalls this now as something she came to understand through discourses of patronage, her mother positioning herself as superior to and able to make judgements about Indigenous Australians. This also underpins the separation of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people and the strangeness and difference attached to being Indigenous. Cathy's commentary also points to two other related discourses in relation to whiteness and Indigenous Australians. In talking about it being white people who still make the decisions there is an implicit link to her final statement: 'I don't know how we redress the past for what we've done to the Aboriginal people'. Not only is this statement positioned in discourses that present the (bad) treatment of Indigenous Australians as a thing of the past, it consequently positions the continuing practices of white people still

making all the decisions as incongruent with this state of affairs. This is taken up in relation to further commentary from Cathy discussed later.

Continuing with the discussion of discourses of being strangers in their own land is the following commentary from Michael. At the end of his interview, when asked if he had anything more to add, Michael was keen to relate some stories about his travel to Central Australia.

> My really only experience of Aborigines face to face was on this bus tour we did to Central Australia about 30 odd years ago [around 1970]. ... we had been travelling across Queensland ... from town to town, and pull up outside the pub and go in and have a drink and the last place we stayed that evening was Camooweal. ... and we were in the pub and there was an Aborigine there and ... he led us on a great story about how he lived in the bush and we were the first white people he's ever met. Well not quite, but you know along those lines. ... he's never been in a city and Camooweal was the only town he'd ever known, and we were all spellbound by this primitive Aborigine. Then later on the driver of the coach told us that they'd taken him on the trip several times with them, he'd been right around the whole circuit, Sydney, Melbourne and all over the place, and he was really... a bush Aborigine but he wasn't as naive as he told us. ... the next one was right out near Ayers Rock [Uluru], ... an old Aborigine sitting on the ground, typical I suppose, classical Aboriginal pose sitting cross-legged on the ground with a piece of mulga wood and he was cutting it with an axe, a tomahawk, and shaping it into I suppose a ceremonial snake sort of shape. ... before I took a photo I asked him: 'do you mind if I take a photo?' and I suppose this is stereotypical thing, I don't think he even looked up. He just put out his hand and said: 'two bob'. So we all gave him our two bob [20 cents] and took his photo. ... We live in Australia, which supposedly has an Aboriginal culture, but we never ever see it and they were the only Aborigines I can ever remember meeting and talking to in my 55 years (Michael).

Here, it could be argued, it is Michael and his travelling companions who are the strangers to Aboriginal customs and practices, travelling to remote parts of Australia to see it and

capture it on camera for two bob. This would deny, however, the reality of how Aboriginal people have been forced to become strangers to the lands that have been stolen from them. Michael comes from a place in Western Sydney where the Cadigal and Wangal peoples used to live, now been permanently displaced by suburbs and a prevailing whiteness. From recalling this trip, Michael then remembered the following:

> … as a kid playing in the bush I was probably only seven or eight and ... somebody mentioned about black fella land … my sister … informed us Australia was black fella land, black fellas lived in Australia. … I remember being amazed by that concept because I'd never seen a black fella and that was the first I'd ever heard of Aborigines. So, this thing of living in a country with an Indigenous culture and nationality that we just never ever come across. … I also remember one time, I used to … just get on my bike and ride and go places and I rode into the city one time and came back through Redfern and I was surprised to see Aborigines there because I didn't realise that any lived in Sydney (Michael).

Put together Michael's commentaries underline the discourse of strangeness, strangeness that in fact Indigenous people did live in the city (but only in Redfern) but more significantly the strangeness of the idea that this, Michael's backyard bush setting, was 'black fella' land. In this place, unlike in Central Australia the displacement has been total and there are no visible signs to indicate that this bush was previously someone else's place of playing/hunting/living.

It all happened in the past what can we do now?

Michael continued his story of the trip to Central Australia as follows:

> On that same trip, … we pulled up in Katherine … it was a Saturday morning and as we came in there were lots of Aborigines on the street and uh, maybe I shouldn't tell this story but it probably says something. And we all thought: 'oh yeah, here's all these Aborigines.' And the driver … said: 'they're in from the stations with their pay, when we come back in the afternoon you'll see a different sight', and we honestly did. They'd been in the pubs all day and they were quite literally lying in the gutter and I saw them being thrown out of hotels and things

> and that changed my concept of Aborigines a bit. Oh, I think we thought they were victimised and not ... being treated the way they should I suppose. ... later on I went on another bus trip ... we traced the same route ... to see some of the towns that had been built, settlements for Aborigines, and they'd been trashed and you sort of wonder... why when we try to do things for them, why do they wreck things. Obviously ... the government's trying to do the right thing but hasn't consulted the people who are most involved. They don't ask the Aborigines what they want, they say: 'here, here's a nice settlement for you. Now go and live in it', and then they're surprised when they don't find that's what they want. ... I've got sort of mixed feelings about Aborigines. I think they certainly have had a raw deal over the years, but how do you treat them? Do you put them back out in the bush? Do they want to be back out in the bush, or do they want a part of so-called white civilisation (Michael).

Here Michael is positioned as still sympathetic but his views have been changed somewhat by seeing what *really* goes on, the drinking, trashing houses, and so on and he is left with the question: 'how do you treat them?' the classis question of the white colonist. From here, Michael's commentary is located with a discourse of whiteness as authority: 'what to do about the white man's burden?'. It gestures to the primitiveness of the Indigenous people who need to be looked after, clearly not able to live in a civilised manner but also not capable of looking after themselves without white resources and input. This is a somewhat harsh reading of Michael's commentary and Michael would be shocked I am sure to think that his comment implied such things. Nevertheless, within this commentary lies the incommensurability of the discourses of white invasion and settlement, and Indigenous sovereignty, framed from his perspective as 'what should the white man do?'

Cathy also poses this question in response to being asked if she saw herself as white:

> ... Yes I'm very conscious of being white and I mean a few years ago I would have probably felt um actually probably did feel a little bit like we were being picked on a lot. And, actually, I remember saying that. I had a class, a TAFE class of TAFE Aboriginal people, ... It was a Koori [Indigenous] TAFE specific and I remember going to a reconciliation meeting. ... It was one of the things I felt and

> I think, now I understand why they are angry but think if you can overcome your anger somehow, people will then perhaps listen to you better. You know, it's almost like a circle. Because I kept thinking: 'you know I'm really sorry for what our, my forefathers did, but don't get angry with me. I don't want you to be angry with me. I didn't do it but I know I feel I have to take responsibility for what my forefathers have done. But don't be angry. Tell us what we can do to fix it but don't be angry'. I don't like people being angry (Cathy).

Cathy's commentary surfaces a number of discourses in relation to Indigenous Australians. These include gesturing to a sense of white displacement, it all happened in the past, and what should we do and reconciliation. These are addressed in turn. The discourse of white displacement has already been discussed extensively in Chapter Four in relation to Pauline Hanson and Cathy's text is a reminder of its pervasiveness. This discourse positions white Australians, in particular poorer working white people, as displaced and disadvantaged by the special treatment made available by (white) government policy to groups such as Indigenous Australians. As such, the discourse of displacement and backlash is not just against Indigenous Australians though they are the target of its verbal and sometimes physical practices of attack, as have been members of different Asian communities. The discourse of displacement positions poorer and working class Australians against a white cosmopolitan elite (Hage 1998). This latter are positioned as determining government policy and enjoying the benefits of multiculturalism and doing the right thing, at the expense of working class Aussie battlers. It was the racist aspects of this discourse of displacement that Prime Minister Howard deliberately capitalised on in the 1996 election and continuing throughout his period of government (Adams, Buchanan, and Australian Broadcasting Corporation 1997).

The question of saying sorry has been a major focus in the Australian context over the last decade. The Australian Federal Government under Prime Minister Howard has refused to say sorry to Indigenous Australians for their treatment at the hands of white colonisers, in particular for the removal of generations of Aboriginal children. This was called for by the National Inquiry into the Removal of Indigenous Children (Wilson, Dodson, and Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Australia 1997). This Inquiry was established

under the previous Keating Government but its recommendations were handed down under the Howard Government. It is unlikely Howard would ever have commissioned such an inquiry and he has certainly proved determined in positioning himself and the government within discourses that place the actions against Indigenous people as being a thing of the past. Cathy's statement positions her as one who is accepting of the need to say sorry, in fact to feel sorry. However, this positioning is qualified by two important considerations. Firstly, not wanting Indigenous people to be angry; and secondly, she is positioned within the discourse that the bad treatment all happened in the past. So much of the discussion and debate around the treatment of Indigenous people is positioned within a discourse that it (what white Australia did to the Indigenous people and culture) all happened in the past, it is not happening now. This discourse is very powerful, even amongst those who would agree that saying sorry is the right thing to do, and has a number of effects. In particular, it operates to separate us now from acts of abuse, oppression and mistreatment that are seen as only having happened in the past. From that, it is then possible to position these actions as practices that sprang from different understandings and values, now replaced with enlightened attitudes and practices.

Cathy also raises the issue of anger as like most of us, she does not want to deal with anger, feeling more partial to people who are forgiving rather than angry. This gestures to another effect of the discourse that it all happened in the past. If we are able to accept that abuse and mistreatment, discrimination and removal of children are all things that no longer happen, maybe were carried out by our forebears but not us now, then it is also possible to deny the reasons why Aboriginal people might be angry now. So long as we continue, as a society, to deny the practices and impacts of colonisation that took place in the past (and that live on in present day generations); **and** we deny the continuation of these practices of colonisation in the present day, even as the forms of colonisation change, then it is also possible to deny that there is reason for current generations of Indigenous people to be angry.

In addition to these discourses, Cathy's commentary also makes passing mention of reconciliation. This has been addressed in Chapter Four and refers to the official process of

reconciliation set in motion in the mid 1990s, arising from the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Black Deaths in Custody (Johnston, Muirhead, and Australia Government 1991). Cathy's comment refers to a particular practice of the reconciliation process, the establishment of local community reconciliation groups designed to learn about the Australian history of black/white relations. The groups were based on principles of grass roots engagement and peer-education framed within the discourse that education and learning contribute positively to social change. Cathy was a member of one of these groups.

Participation in the research reminded Anne of a memory she had from her childhood:

> Yeah, ever since in this course, I keep thinking to my shame and I didn't even know his name, there was one boy who was adopted by people two streets away from us. And I never got to meet him. He was older than I was but I just know he used to stand out because he was very dark. I never knew the story behind why he lived with this white family. ... I was aware in my childhood, it was '67 when they had the referendum on giving Aboriginal people the vote[30]... I do recollect that the referendum was passed. I didn't realise how important it was to pass it because I was only ten I think. ... my parents wouldn't have been opposed to it at all. My mum was a country girl and she often said that the Aboriginal in the country really got a raw deal. And she used to play with Aboriginal kids when she was little too. Other than that, I didn't know much about Aboriginal people. I probably knew more about the migrants, the Polish and post-war migrants than aboriginal people. (Anne).

This commentary from Anne speaks to two important episodes in black/white history in Australia. The first of these is the practice of taking Indigenous children from their families to be fostered in white families or placed in institutions. Regardless of the history of this particular boy, Anne's recollection points to the sorry history of children being taken from their families 'in the best interests of the children'. This practice commenced officially in

[30] Anne got the year right for the referendum, 1967, but not the purpose though the referendum is often mistakenly referred to as being about the vote. In fact, the vote at the federal level of Australian government was granted in 1962. At State level, the right to vote for Indigenous Australians occurred at different times—1850s for Indigenous men and 1894 for indigenous women in South Australia, right through to 1965 when Queensland granted Indigenous people the right to vote (Australian Electoral Commission 2005).

the Australian state of Victoria in 1869 though there are instances of it well before this time in NSW (Link up NSW) and subsequently other states and territories followed with legislation making it possible to remove children (The History of the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families 2005; Wilson, Dodson, and Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Australia 1997). The practice of removal was maintained over several decades and across all Australian states and territories, only officially ending in the 1980s. Indigenous children are still removed but there is no current legislation to allow this specifically for Indigenous children (The History of the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families 2005). The public emergence of the history of the stolen generations began in the 1980s with the establishment of *Link-Up NSW* in 1980 (Wilson, Dodson, and Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Australia 1997). The history of removal of Indigenous children is highly contested in its extent, purpose and impact and this is reflected in competing discourses that explain, justify, contest and decry the practice of removal. Anne's reference to the dark boy in the white family/suburb is a stark descriptor of the effect of the policy. It speaks to the isolation of the dark boy in the white suburb that previously was the land of the Cadigal and Wangal people. It also speaks to the isolation and alienation of the children who were removed at the same time as the practice itself was by no means isolated in its application.

The second episode referred to in Anne's commentary is the referendum of 1967. This referendum '... saw more than 90% of eligible Australians vote YES to count Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in the national census of the population and to give the Commonwealth Government power to make specific laws in respect of Indigenous people (Reconciliation Australia 2007a). This referendum came about through the hard work and commitment of many Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people who campaigned for the referendum and for a yes vote (Reconciliation Australia 2007a). In terms of the discussions of discourses of whiteness, the importance of the referendum probably cannot be understated. For the first time it brought Indigenous Australians into the national limelight in a positive way. There is of course a terrible irony in the referendum that speaks directly to the power and authority of whiteness. That is, the irony of the Indigenous people

of the land, the original owners/occupiers of the land, whose ancestors have lived on the land for up to 80 000 years, being brought into the scope of the government of the invaders. Previously the constitution had specifically precluded the Commonwealth Government from making laws that related to Indigenous Australians (Reconciliation Australia 2007b). That such a right was fought for, and won, and seen as a victory, speaks to the contradictory positionings of the Indigenous people in a colonised land. This is not to suggest there should or could be a turning back to pre-1788 or even that it is desired. Rather, it demonstrates firstly how whiteness works to establish itself as the referential power; and secondly the complexities and complicities of being Indigenous in a colonised land.

Special treatment

Some of the earlier commentaries have already surfaced the discourse of special treatment though mainly in terms of current reflections. For Jim, an Anglo-Australian, being Aboriginal Australian was presented to him in his childhood as all about special treatment.

> ... in that era [1950s-1960s] my grandfather ... had a very determined point about the Aboriginal community ... which he feverishly discussed around the dinner table ... how he felt that they were treated and given so much and perhaps returned so little. And so I can probably remember that more than a lot of things (Jim).

In Jim's case, unlike the experiences of many other participants, he was very aware of Indigenous Australia as he was growing up. That positioning, however, was not based on contact with and familiarity with Indigenous people and communities. It came rather, via the ranting of his grandfather at the dinner table. Jim's knowledge of Indigenous Australians was framed within discourses that positioned them as 'receiving so much and returning so little'. This was a powerful discourse of ungratefulness circulating in the suburbs of Western Sydney and throughout Australia in the 1950s and 1960s. It shaped Jim's and many others' views about Indigenous Australians, in the absence of any alternative discourses or personal contact that might have proffered more complex understandings based in knowledge about the history and practices of white invasion and settlement. This discourse is integral to whiteness covering its tracks. Here whiteness is

positioned as the benefactor, bringing civilisation and material wealth to Indigenous Australians who are positioned as ungrateful and even incapable of realising and understanding what they are being offered. There are hints of this also in Michael's earlier comments about drinking and trashing houses: what do you do when it seems that Indigenous people are not capable of taking advantage of what we are offering them? Through this discourse, whiteness can remain one-dimensional and keep its hands clean as the benefactor, as the discourse works to silence the practices, events and the ongoing effects of colonisation. In a clever twist, this discourse frames the problem as lying with Indigenous people and their inability to become civilised and to appreciate the benefits of white society.

From a different perspective, Kath also referred to Indigenous Australians and special treatment in response to a question about the meaning of whiteness. In the process of responding to the question Kath's commentary engaged a number of different discourses positioning her as struggling to put things together in a way that made sense in relation to her previous understandings.

> Well, I think that a lot of points of view come mainly from white people ... It [whiteness] means privilege. It means looking at things from the white point of view, from the centre ... instead of being marginalised like a lot of other people are - like migrants, like aboriginals and ... having difficulties ... accessing institutions and you know having their voices heard and that kind of thing. But I still, because of the area I grew up in there were, I mean for example my sister-in-law lives in Mount Druitt and her children found it difficult to get jobs till they gave the address of relatives that didn't live in Mount Druitt .... I mean there was still sort of difficulty. But then I could imagine an immigrant or being Aboriginal would be harder still ... particularly in those days. So I think there are far more privileges attached to being white. ... I've never tried to stand in another person's shoes and look at the world from their point of view. ... lighting of the fires in the Housing Commission houses and that kind of thing. I guess like everybody else ... But I sort of hope now that I can look at those things and think more deeply about it and about the reasons and causes. ... and having to teach ... the children, you teach the European view and the Aboriginal view. Say the European view of

> settlement and the Aboriginal view of the invasion so that you know the students can make up their own mind. Or at least see that there's more than one other view. I never even knew that Blacktown was named after a black settlement, even when I was in school. … you often mentioned it [whiteness] does intersect with a lot of other things with gender and so on and other differences, … I mentioned in class a case in a country town where the very poor whites were below the Aboriginal people there. Now that I think of it, that was just a perception because they were getting a lot of grants from the government and so on. But, they were still treated very badly because they had been brought from a mission and they'd been dumped you know like kilometres out of town. And they were exploited by people in town, the taxi driver, who was an ex-social worker you know sort of thing. But, in that situation, the poor whites in that town who got themselves into trouble seemed to be on a lower rung, at that stage. I mean they were exploited in other ways too, like white men going out to the mission to the women, like that kind of thing as well. That was back in the early 70's (Kath).

Kath's commentary demonstrates the challenge to take account of newly presented discourses of white privilege that threaten to disrupt her location within discourses of white working class disadvantage. The reference to lighting fires gestures to the commonly held discourse discussed above that Indigenous people are not capable of being civilised. 'What is the point of providing housing to Indigenous people if they are just going to chop up the floors and walls for firewood' and other similar statements exemplify the position that Aboriginal people are not like us and do not know how to be like us. Thus, it follows that there is no point in giving out special benefits like houses, as they do not know how to look after property.

Further to the problems of making sense of relative advantage and disadvantage, Kath's struggle to make sense of the newly acquired concept of white privilege, alongside new information about the conditions of Indigenous Australians, is contained within a binary relationship. This relationship sets privilege against disadvantage, the European view against the Aboriginal view, making it difficult to put it together in any way that makes sense. A broader more complex frame is required that allows seemingly contradictory things to exist together. Kath's commentary continues, still marked by the challenge of

trying to make sense of her different experiences and take into consideration new possibilities for understanding different events.

> ... there's been a couple of questions I've pondered for a long time um because of the Aboriginal girl, [Rebecca]. I taught her my first year out, and I sort of ended up having to get a transfer to the country because I guess in a way she was harassing me but now I feel really guilty because I didn't realise at that age the problems that she had. I don't know what I could have done, I didn't realise that she was one of the stolen children. I knew she was living with a white Methodist Minister and his wife ... I feel very guilty and wonder what I could have done. I mean I think about it a lot, let's put it that way. ... But I wasn't aware. Here I was my first years of teaching and I knew nothing about the stolen children or anything like that. ... I never heard my parents talk about it or, I mean they possibly did they would have know of the government policy and so on but, I don't know. I think there is this sort of blank period in our history. People in the past knew, then people of our generation or a bit older or a bit younger didn't know and its only now in the 90's that it's started to come out again. There's a definite period in our history when it was written out it was denied. ...these things niggle at you. ...not that I'm to say that I'm to blame or anything 'cause she turned out to be very successful [newsreader on the ABC] ...*Well you obviously did something good.* Oh, I don't know about that. I was trying to teach her French. ...she found her father I know ... and changed her name back to his so I think she ended up a lot happier than when I met her in the first place (Kath).

Here Kath demonstrates that despite positioning herself as knowing little about conditions for Indigenous Australians she has informed herself through her teaching and her location in country towns and is quite knowledgeable. It is the putting it all together that is problematic. That difficulty arises, I would argue, because of the process of denial and fabrication that circulates around whiteness in the process of covering its tracks. It also arises because of the predominantly binary framing of knowledge that operates in western societies (Thorpe, Minter, Lui-Chivizhe, and Smith 2004) working against complexity. Partly this is achieved through constructing contradictions that have to be resolved through a rebuttal of one point of view as only one view can hold the ground. This process supports

the authority of whiteness. Denial and dissembling (for example about the history of Australian invasion and settlement) are constantly in process to uphold prevailing discourses and/or to adapt these discourses so as to maintain the authority of whiteness, in the face of challenges that arise via events that enable the emergence of counter discourses. So for example, one narrative of this could be that social changes in the 1960s led to the Tent Embassy, literally an embassy set up by Indigenous people in 1972 camped in tents on the lawns in front of the federal parliament in Canberra (Goodall 1996a). Along with other events, such as the election of the Gough Whitlam Labor Government in 1972, there was greater space for Indigenous voices to tell their stories of the effects of colonisation. And so the stories of stolen children began to emerge which, eventually, resulted in the National Inquiry in the 1990s and so it goes on. And as these events take place, as different voices are heard, the discourses, discursive practices, institutions and relationships that constitute whiteness are constantly being reproduced and reinvented within binary framings of knowledge to suppress or to adapt to the challenges that are emerging. Thus, whiteness both evolves and maintains its power through the processes of covering its tracks.

Summary comments

The discussion and analysis in this chapter has provided insights into discourses of whiteness, and the operation of whiteness as structure of power and authority, available through the commentaries of the participants about Indigenous Australians. This speaking of the participants was not intended explicitly (or even implicitly) to be about whiteness. Yet, more so than most of the participant commentary, it yields critical insights into the operation of the transcendent authority of whiteness and black/white relations in Australia. From Michael's question: 'how do you treat them?' to the mattress over the fence, the broken rulers, the dark boy on the white street, the lighting of fires and the drinking, the always so clean children, from Uluru to Western Sydney, it is possible to read in the participant commentary the history of the operation of whiteness and the complexity of the operations of whiteness between oppression and protection.

In his discussion about whiteness studies Bhabha (1998) made the point that the subversive move within the field is to reveal how whiteness transforms itself into a transcendent

authority through what he calls white amnesia. In this process of making itself transcendent and consequently normative, the histories that constitute that becoming—histories of violence, invasion, oppression—disappear. Whiteness becomes the authoritative voice that determines whose and what history is told, from whose voice, from whose position and with what intention. In the Australian context this history of trauma and terror, of white amnesia, lies within the history of white invasion and settlement from 1788 onwards; the consequent disruption and destruction of much of traditional Aboriginal ways of life; and the breakdown of Indigenous communities and relationships. It continues within the ongoing relationships between white settlers and more recent immigrant settlers and Indigenous Australians. It lies within the question: 'How did Australia become a white country?' It lies within our ignorance and denial of that history of becoming a white nation and the forced assimilation of newer European, Asian and Middle Eastern immigrants to the values and practices of the dominant white culture. It lies within the irony of our treatment as a nation of the 'new' boat people/refugees. It is all this and more that constitutes Bhabha's '...histories of trauma and terror...' (1998 p.21) that must disappear for whiteness to become '...a transparent and transcendent force of authority' (p.21).

The participant commentaries are monuments to the amnesia of whiteness at work in constructing itself as a structure of authority. The history of invasion and settlement of the land now called Australia, the effects of colonisation, of assimilation, of denial and transcendent authority are all written into the participant commentaries. And of course, the events, practices, impacts and effects of the history of white invasion and settlement are the subject of great contestation, beginning at the 'white beginning' with the language of invasion versus settlement. In the context of this thesis, this contestation has been foregrounded in Australian politics and popular discourses since the Howard Federal Government came to power in 1996. There has been much controversy surrounding the refusal of the Prime Minister, Howard, to issue a formal apology on behalf of the Australian people to the Indigenous people of Australia for the practices of removal and institutionalisation of Indigenous children (Howard Refuses Apology 2007; Peacock 1999; Spencer 2000). The history of white invasion, massacre and displacement has also been the subject of derisory comment by Prime Minister Howard in his attacks on what he has

referred to as Australia's Black Arm Band History (McKenna 1997). And it has been subject to academic debate and contestation in what has become known as the 'history wars' (MacIntyre and Clark 2004; Manne 2003; Windshuttle 2002). These contestations can also be read in the participant commentaries, particularly within discourses of white backlash and special treatment.

And yet, despite the very public controversy and debate, Australia's black/white history remains poorly understood and for the most part relegated to the past as something that happened before and is no longer relevant to us now except in dealing with 'the problems' of Indigenous communities. Many settler Australians new and old are ignorant of our history and the current relationships and living conditions of black Australia. This continues to be the case despite and because of the regular outbreaks of media attention to conditions in Indigenous communities of abuse, poverty and in some cases almost total disintegration of social order (see Wild and Anderson 2007). The most recent of these outbreaks was in May 2006 (Kerin 2006) and June 2007 (Barker 2007) in relation to child sexual abuse in indigenous communities in the Northern Territory of Australia. The public release of *Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle/Little Children are Sacred* (Wild and Anderson 2007), the official report into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse in Northern Territory communities, released a media frenzy. It also triggered dramatic action on the part of the Howard Federal Government in a military style takeover of Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory (ABC 2007). This is a highly significant development in black/white relations in Australia, potentially a new form of invasion and takeover of Indigenous people and communities by the assertion of the authority of whiteness. This requires close analysis and critique that cannot be provided here in any detail. The point to be emphasised in relation to this thesis and to the authority of whiteness relates to the way in which these events become major markers of 'the problems with Aboriginal communities'. It is not that the conditions that are reported on are not horrendous but rather that our attention is drawn to these terrible conditions through processes of horror towards and voyeurism of the other. We are not offered an analysis of the processes of colonisation and oppression, of the impacts of child removal, poor health and lower life expectancy—for example, currently there is a 17 year gap in average life

expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians (Close the Gap: Indigenous health in crisis 2007). Rather, we are expected to understand these terrible conditions through discourses that present these problems as somehow a function of being Indigenous. These discourses write out our past, and present, shared histories and complicities. It is as if problems of drinking abuse, male violence and gender-based sexual abuse and violence operate in Indigenous communities in a vacuum free of the discursive practices and inter-relationships of race, class and gender and specifically the history of colonisation and disempowerment that has taken place in this land now called Australia. Further, while it is the case that these conditions may be endemic in a **small** number of Indigenous communities, excessive drinking, sexual abuse and violence are by no means solely the terrain of Indigenous communities, being an integral aspect of social relations in the broader Australian population.

Finally, in closing this chapter, it is significant to note that the commentary of the participants that is analysed in this chapter provides an insight into the paucity of knowledge and understanding many of the participants demonstrated in relation to Indigenous Australia and the history of Australian invasion and settlement. This is a telling example of the power of whiteness to hide its tracks and the complicity of societies dominated by whiteness in this process.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

If you are here to help me,
then you are wasting your time.
But if you are here
because your liberation is bound up in mine,
then let us begin.
(attributed to Aboriginal activists group, Queensland, 1970s).[31]

Introduction

This thesis is an examination of whiteness and of being white, an investigation into teaching about whiteness and difference, and an exploration of whiteness in Western Sydney. The thesis took shape within a personal and political framework that reflected my desire *to be of use* and to make a difference. Such desire is by no means straightforward or unproblematic and yet it remains with me, shaken, turned on its head, disturbed and neither singular, or mono-directional, a flame that has burned for me and for others and that is reinvigorated each time I step into the classroom to teach about culture, identity, whiteness and difference. This final chapter brings together the work of the thesis, the insights and understandings that have emerged from my research into whiteness in Western Sydney, and my pedagogic practice in teaching about whiteness and difference at the University of Western Sydney.

The discussion is organised to follow the thesis chapters and sites of investigation, focussing on the central issues and arguments of the thesis and its contribution to knowledge. I would argue that the contribution of the thesis to the field of whiteness studies

[31] This quote is usually attributed to Lila Watson Aboriginal activist. In this attribution I am following information available at http://northlandposter.com/blog/2006/12/18/lila-watson-if-you-have-come-to-help-me-you-are-wasting-your-time-but-if-you-have-come-because-your-liberation-is-bound-up-with-mine-then-let-us-work-together/ (Ricardo 2006).

lies in the following four broad areas. Firstly, it contributes a new account of the emergence of the field of whiteness studies and of Australian work in that context. Secondly, it provides a new analysis from the perspective of my own location in the field of the concepts of whiteness and being white, and the challenges of working in the field of whiteness studies. Thirdly, drawing on both the institutional setting and prior experiences of the researcher, and also the interviews with the students, discussed in this thesis, the thesis provides an analysis of teaching about difference, identity, whiteness and relations of power and provides a pedagogic model of practice. It argues for a pedagogic approach to practice that scrutinises and politicises content and practice in relation to teaching about difference, for-fronting relations of power around locations of difference and whiteness as a transcendent structure of authority. Fourthly and finally, the significance of the thesis lies with its investigation into discourses of whiteness within a specific time and location, that is, in Western Sydney in the late 1990s and early 2000s. This analysis highlights the specificities of the invisibility of whiteness as privilege to those who are white in the here and now of Western Sydney. Further, it highlights the power of whiteness, as a transcendent structure of authority to cover its tracks in relation to the displacement of Indigenous peoples in the process of white invasion and settlement up to the present day.

The emergence of whiteness studies

The thesis proper began with a discussion and analysis of the literature on whiteness. Significantly, the beginnings of my investigation into whiteness and the subsequent production of the thesis coincided with the emergence of literature on whiteness, as has been discussed in Chapter Two. And as has been discussed in Chapter Five there has been a uniquely mutual relationship between the development of my understanding and application of the concept of whiteness in this thesis and the emerging literature on whiteness, given the timing of both. In this sense, the reflexive discussion of the trajectory of the thesis is one way of contributing an account of how a particular field has been developing. There is no doubt that my thinking about whiteness has been positively informed and influenced by the available literature. Similarly, it is the case that my work in the field has contributed to the body of knowledge about whiteness in Australia, particularly in its formative stages. This has been the case through various publications as

well as through attendance at conferences on whiteness, in particular the 1998 Unmasking Whiteness Conference in Brisbane that was the first whiteness conference to take place in Australia (see McKay 1999 for the conference proceedings) and following Australian conferences on whiteness. It is significant to this thesis to have been there at the beginnings of the work on whiteness in Australia, a statement about the position and significance of my engagement in the field of whiteness studies. Thus, this thesis offers a unique perspective on whiteness in the Australian context, attendant on its moment of emergence. There is no coincidence in this. Rather my ongoing work in anti-racism brought me in touch with the very earliest international literature on whiteness. The emergence of this literature (mainly in the United States) at that time was a reflection of a direction that anti-racist work was taking; and, in that sense, my turn to whiteness was a logical extension of my anti-racism activism. Thus, this thesis can be seen as a reflection of the shift to examining whiteness at the same time as it is also a contribution to the emergent field.

Theoretical framings of the research

Two aspects of the research methodology are significant, in the context of the contribution of the thesis to knowledge, and to the conduct of research. These are, in the first instance, the positioning of this research within feminist post-structuralism but also in the space of humanist and modernist desires in relation to education as a tool for change. Secondly, and inter-related, the concept of research as pedagogy has been a critical aspect of the conduct of this research. As such, these aspects of the research highlight the tensions of feminist post-structuralist and humanist motivations and intentions.

Feminist post-structuralism is not a manual for action, a singular trajectory of method and analysis. Rather the framework gave me permission to play with research, to experience the joys of writing as a research process in it self—*writing the research*, rather than *writing up the research*; and to work within/against the limitations of a research project that desires to be of use. When I set out to do this research I was inspired by the work of Patti Lather and Donna Haraway to see research as a means for asking better questions, for creating community, if only momentarily, and working against my own limitations. Similarly, I have employed the legacy of Foucault to explore the conditions of possibility and to

looking differently. In short, I have found within feminist post-structuralism a way of working and a space for working with whiteness. This is not to be mistaken for a method but rather a framework and an approach that positions the research as a work of writing, of making sense through language, of surfacing ideas through discourse and in that process seeing and understanding differently.

Further to this, working within feminist post-structuralism creates the space for recognising the impossibility of speaking while at the same time acknowledging the imperative to speak, to break the silences of whiteness in all the impossibilities of speaking—as a white woman—for/about others. In allowing for multiple positionings, for tensions and contradictions, for recognising the impossibility of being able to see/say everything, the research illuminates the contradictions of speaking and the silences created both by speaking and by not speaking. The act of speaking/writing by its very enactment closes down other possibilities for utterance. What is spoken/written, speaks over, writes out, that which is not said or written. As Hall (1990) has argued, this becomes problematic when the utterance made is mistaken as the final statement. No singular speaking should be taken for all there is to say and in framing this research with feminist post-structuralism, the thesis seeks possibilities and openings rather than closure.

Finally, in relation to the research frame I want to highlight the seeming contradiction of working within a feminist post-structuralist approach at the same time as enacting modernist and humanist desires for bringing about change through my pedagogic practice and through aspects of the research that draw directly on the concept of research as pedagogy. That is, the co-existence of a presumption of a straightforward relationship of change as suggested by education as a tool for change working with the singular subject in a known trajectory, alongside the multiple subject, and a recognition that there can be no easy knowing of where/how the direction of change should take. This works not because there are no contradictions, but because feminist post-structuralism allows for the messiness, the contradictions and the uncertainties. There is space for the pedagogic desire and practice that recognises its limitations and the absence of any guarantees, while striving to open possibilities for change that move us all forward. Thus the enactment of this

research, working between the tensions of post-structuralist and the humanist subject and the will to knowledge in my teaching and in my analysis, is it self a contribution to our understanding about conducting research.

A pedagogy for whiteness and difference

My work in teaching about whiteness and difference is central to this research into whiteness. The process of researching whiteness, writing about whiteness, and teaching about whiteness at the same time has been a creative and inspiring process. Working within the *teaching through difference* approach, the interaction with students in relation to whiteness, difference, identity, race, racism, gender, has been the lifeblood of the thesis. I have learned more about whiteness through my pedagogic practice than from just about any other activities associated with the thesis. The classroom has been where whiteness, difference, power and knowledge have come alive. It has been in the classroom that I have had to learn to speak (and to think) about whiteness in ways that are meaningful to people who are new to the concept. It is where I have had to challenge myself, and others in the classroom, to think about their relationship to whiteness as structure of authority and to being white. It is where I have had to respond to the 'what ifs' and the 'buts' and call on students to reflect on what they are saying, how they are positioned, how they are positioning other people. The pedagogic site is a place of excitement and learning for me, and for the students, the place for taking responsibility and making a difference. Arising from this there are significant findings to emphasise in relation to whiteness and pedagogy and these are summarised below.

Whiteness and being white

The most significant finding arising from my teaching relates to the importance of negotiating a space between whiteness as a structure of authority and being white as a location of identity in order to facilitate the complexity and inter-relationships of whiteness and being white. That is, to recognise that being white is directly related to whiteness as a structure of authority, but yet it is not the same. As has been argued in the thesis, whiteness as concept is best understood as a 'transparent and transcendent force of authority' (Bhabha 1998, p.21). It permeates all our social/political relationships and institutions above and beyond the presence of white people. That is, it is not the same as being white as a location

of identity. On the other side of that binary, no one is ever singularly white, everyone carries the markings of intersecting locations of identity and difference, in particular the race/class/gender triplet. Thus, while being white carries with it the markings of the authority of whiteness it is not the same as conceptualising whiteness as structure of authority even though some individuals can approach that representation of authority.

This finding has a bearing both on pedagogic practice in the classroom; and the conceptualisation of whiteness and identity. In relation to the classroom, working within the space of whiteness and being white gives everyone in the classroom, including white students, the space to reflect on the multiplicity of locations of identity within which they live their lives and the relationship and bearing this has on being white, or being the other to whiteness as a location of identity. Working in this space is not about white people avoiding the realities of the horror and trauma of whiteness as it asserts it power and writes over the histories of others. Rather it is about white people recognising the histories of whiteness and the histories it has written out and at the same time giving space to white people to recognise that at the level of identity we are all multiply positioned in relation to intersecting locations of identity and difference. This contributes to breaking down the simplistic binary of racist/anti-racist and makes possible a more complex engagement with being white and to the histories and traumas that are whiteness. Thus, it is a pedagogic tool for working with whiteness. More than that, it is a useful way of conceptualising whiteness and working to expose whiteness in all its horrors and complexities.

Directly related to working within the space of whiteness and being white as a location of identity is the theorisation of identity as always becoming (Hall 1996) rather than fixed and given. This is central to the idea that teaching about whiteness can bring about change as it gives space to the possibilities for multiple and shifting positionings in relation to whiteness. If new understandings and ways of seeing are to emerge through the pedagogic process there must be the possibility for us, in or out of the classroom, to reflect on and to shift in relation to different insights and shifting relations. Thus, it is possible to work the space of whiteness and being white and to engage students in seeing things differently through challenging dominant and silencing discourses that offer possibilities for new

understandings and new positionings in relation to the discourses and discursive practices of whiteness.

The challenge to be open

Teaching about whiteness is not for the faint hearted. It is challenging, uplifting and hard work. To stay with the process, to always be present in the process it is critical to be open on all fronts. A desire rather than an always-present reality, being open is more likely to present opportunities for pointing to new knowledge, for seeing possibilities for new/different relationships. To be open as a teacher means recognising that responses based in defensiveness, guilt and blaming are not useful in the pedagogic process. This is not a naïve claim for the perfect teacher but rather a recognition, based on extensive experience of teaching about whiteness and difference, that classrooms do not function well with this material in an atmosphere of fear. That is not to say it never arises but it can often be diffused by honesty and openness (and in my case plenty of humour) rather than withdrawal to the pedagogic pedestal. Alongside this, there can be no sacred cows. In asking students to take risks in thinking about whiteness, race, who they are and how they are positioned in relation to discourses of race and racism, it is critical that as the teacher I am prepared to do the same. This requires that I acknowledge my own inconsistencies (easily identified by the students) and take the time to reflect on how my constructions and perspectives blind me to seeing differently and to seeing from others perspectives. Thus, the pedagogic site is messy and confronting and brimming with all of our humanities.

Working with whiteness and difference in all the messiness, the fears, the teacher/student dynamics that shape the classroom, the desire to step away, to allow the refusals to sit unchallenged can sometimes be overwhelming. At times it is necessary to make choices about what to respond to and what to let pass (hopefully to come back to at another time). At other times, my limitations of understanding construct particular choices and responses that are far from useful. Writing this brings to mind occasions when talking about whiteness in a room seemingly choking with resistances, resentments and wariness to the concept of whiteness as privilege has been hard work. And I have to remind myself that therein lies an aspect of my privilege as a white woman. I am not directly oppressed by actions and statements that vilify and attack the racialised other (though I am brought down

by them) and my own fears can lead me away from the challenges and opportunities presented. Teaching about whiteness requires that we are willing to stay in the space of the discussion, engaging with the pedagogical complicities of speaking about whiteness and to acknowledge the times when our practice falls short as critical moments for seeing our blindness and fears.

Writing into whiteness

Writing and analysing whiteness has been a powerful process for coming to understand the ways in which the concept of whiteness is put to work. A close reading of my own writing, as I have undertaken as part of this thesis, has given me insight into the power of the language we use to position ourselves and to silence other possibilities. This analysis also exposed the uncertainties represented by my choice of phrasing and/or the practice of using scare quotes in talking about whiteness and locations of identity including being white. Most importantly, the analysis of my own writing demonstrates the transcendent power of whiteness asserted through language to hide its own history that needs to be constantly under the microscope. There is no innocence in language; it always speaks in relation to power. The writing I am referring to here formed the basis of the data for Chapter Five, an analysis of my coming to understand whiteness, drawing on various documents that were stepping-stones along the thesis pathway. The work of Chapter Five demonstrates the complexities of the field of whiteness studies and the challenges of locating oneself/being located within the field of whiteness studies. This site of investigation proved to be an interactive documentation of my engagement with the field of whiteness studies from its beginnings in the Australian context. Thus, it serves as an important marker of developments in my own positioning in relation to the field of whiteness studies as well as a documentation of developments within the field of whiteness studies over the last several years.

Further, the chapter highlighted the challenge of working with the slipperiness, the invisibility and the power of whiteness to deceive, to disguise itself and through this to maintain its power. Thus, for those of us who are white recognising our complicity in the workings of whiteness in the past and in the here and now is a critical challenge for

working in the field. To be open to possibilities for seeing, even minutely, how we are implicated in its hold—how my/your/our lives reinvent certain relationships of privilege and oppression, even when our intentions might be otherwise. And further, the challenge lies in acting on that seeing even as we implicate ourselves.

Understandings of whiteness

A notable feature of this research is that it gives locational specificity to whiteness and to its invisibility. Thus, the material provided by the participants, taken together with the contextual knowledge of the location of Western Sydney enables the analysis of the workings of whiteness to be inter-laid with the history and complexities that comprise the location of Western Sydney. Not surprisingly, as is demonstrated in Chapter Six, what stands out in the analysis of discourses of whiteness in this thesis is the invisibility of whiteness as a location of privilege for those who are white. By this, I mean the profound difficulties that white participants experienced in a) seeing what it means to be white and the accompanying privileges of being white, and b) seeing the powerful effects of whiteness as a structure of authority. Further to this, studying whiteness within the locational specificity of Western Sydney provided the opportunity to explore the intersecting of whiteness with the race/class/gender triplet in an identifiable context. Dominant discourses of Western Sydney popularly represent it as working class, the other to Sydney's generally wealthier and more resourced eastern, northern and southern suburbs. There can be no singular understanding of the operation of whiteness or of being white in Western Sydney, nevertheless, markers of difference in relation to the race/class/gender triplet are far more likely than not to speak to disadvantage and marginalisation rather than to privilege. As highlighted in Chapter Six, the invisibility of whiteness as a marker of difference, or of privilege, led the participants to speak of other markers of difference such as religion, gender and class. In relation to these latter positionings the participant commentary invariably spoke to poverty and to discrimination and oppression along gender lines.

Finally, in examining the discourses of whiteness within the location of Western Sydney the thesis offers critical insights into the ways in which whiteness covers its tracks and the

seeming naturalness of Australia being a white nation. In relation to Western Sydney, this is demonstrated through patterns of settlement and resettlement that continually deny 60 000 years of occupation and community by the various Indigenous clans that have lived in the area and still maintain communities there. In the Australian context, this localised, and, by extension, national, denial of the previous long history of settlement by Indigenous Australians has to be seen as the single most significant statement of the operation of whiteness in Australia.

Ways Forward: A language and practice of possibility

The work of challenging the transparent and transcendent authority of whiteness requires that we step out onto a terrain where there are no certainties and where it is not possible to foresee where we are going. In fact, integral to this work is the understanding that there can be no endpoint. Rather we need to engage in a process of questioning and challenging that opens up new possibilities and further questions in an infinite unfolding of meanings and relationships. We need to be willing to recognise the contingencies (in all their material effects) rather than the permanency of identity formations in relation to race, class, gender, sexuality, location, and be open to seeing that our ways of understanding privilege certain knowledges and experiences and silence others. Moreover, alongside this, there needs to be an understanding, as hard as this might be, that there can be no sacred positions, no sacred relationships, and no meanings that can be privileged beyond the strategic and contingent. That is, we need to risk being unorthodox and going against the grain of acceptable and politically correct good intentions.

I would argue that this is a journey of uncertainty, rather than knowing. The exposure of whiteness is a journey that requires a sense of shared commitment and good will even as we trespass on ourselves and others. And, critically, for those of us who wear the markings of privilege, however that transpires across different time/space, it requires a commitment to relinquishing the spaces of this privilege. Building a language of possibility, building community, is not for the fainthearted. It requires us to take our courage and our hearts in our hands on a journey replete with no guarantees and no certainties except the unknown

possibilities of a better world. This is a journey where any moment of stopping is never final but always only contingent. This thesis is a contribution to that journey, a science of writing whiteness that recognises its partiality and situatedness, a contribution from and to the many positions from which we draw our knowledge and understandings about whiteness. This research, and the experiences of whiteness and of white represented here, are not a final truth about whiteness but rather a contribution, simultaneously reinforcing, contradicting and opening other spaces of understanding—that is, situated knowledges that bear witness to - and offer an opportunity to extend and challenge - the meanings by which we live.

Appendices

Appendix 1.1 Socio-Economic descriptors of Western Sydney[32]

Summary

The demographic structures of Greater Western Sydney continue to paint a different picture to the rest of the city and the state of New South Wales. Population wise, Greater Western Sydney is in general younger; it is relatively less dense than the rest of Sydney, and; it is continuing to grow at a faster pace than the rest of Sydney.

Families are also more stable in Greater Western Sydney than the rest of Sydney or the state. Marriage rate is higher while divorce rate is lower. There are also a higher proportion of two-parented families in Greater Western Sydney despite also a higher proportion of single-parent families than the rest of Sydney and New South Wales. Overall dependency ratio has decreased, except for some marginal increases in particular LGAs, due to decrease in both the 0-14 years and 65 years or over age groups.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population experienced increases in all LGAs with the exception of Fairfield, which decreased by 13.5%. The ATSI age group structure continues to be younger persons dominated, with almost 60% of the Greater Western Sydney ATSI population under the age of 25 years.

A larger proportion of Greater Western Sydney's population was **born overseas in non-English speaking countries.** These populations make up large proportions of populations in Auburn, Fairfield, Liverpool, Parramatta and Holroyd. People of particular ancestral backgrounds are also concentrated in particular Greater Western Sydney LGAs, namely Vietnamese in Bankstown and Fairfield, Maltese in Blacktown and Holroyd, and Turkish in Auburn. The most ancestrally and ethnically diversified Greater Western Sydney LGAs in 2001 are Auburn and Fairfield.

Two-fifths of Greater Western Sydney's population speaks a **language other than English at home**. This proportion is more than the one-third recorded in the rest of Sydney. The major languages spoken are Arabic, Chinese, Vietnamese and Italian. Auburn, Bankstown, Fairfield, Holroyd. Liverpool and Parramatta are the most linguistically diverse LGAs in Greater Western Sydney. Significant proportions of people of non-English speaking backgrounds in the LGAs of Auburn, Bankstown and Fairfield reported having difficulty with spoken English.

2003 Social Indicators of Western Sydney

The major religion throughout Greater Western Sydney, the rest of Sydney and the state of New South Wales is Christianity. However, a significantly larger proportion of Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists also reside in Greater Western Sydney.

Higher proportions of Greater Western Sydney's dwellings are **owner occupied** than the rest of Sydney. Majority of Greater Western Sydney's housing are still detached dwellings,

[32] The material in this appendix is an extract from *2003 Social Indicators of Western Sydney WESTIR Occasional Paper No. 1 2003* (WESTIR 2003). The Westir data are primarily adapted from the 2001 Australian Bureau of Statistics census data.

accommodating on average more occupants than other types of housing. Monthly mortgage repayment and weekly rental repayment have increased significantly since the last Census in 1996.

Lower proportions of Greater Western Sydney's population has completed high school **education,** are currently attending university or a tertiary education institute, or have a tertiary qualification than the population of the rest of Sydney. However, there are indications that there will be a higher proportion of Greater Western Sydney's population with a qualification in the near future, with a significantly higher proportion of people in Greater Western Sydney than the rest of Sydney currently studying for their first qualification. The major field in which the population of Greater Western Sydney is qualified under is engineering and related technologies.

Computer access at home and access to the Internet is generally lower in Greater Western Sydney than in the rest of Sydney. Computer users in Greater Western Sydney are relatively younger than those in the rest of Sydney, while access to the internet is more likely to be from the home in Greater Western Sydney than in the rest of Sydney.

The population of Greater Western Sydney **enters the labour force at a comparatively younger age** than those from the rest of Sydney although not as likely to stay in the work force as long. The population of Greater Western Sydney is also more likely to be employed in clerical and service work, and less likely to be a professional than those from the rest of Sydney. The dominant industry in Greater Western Sydney continues to be manufacturing despite a slight decline since the last Census. The dominant industry in the rest of Sydney is property and business services.

Unemployment rates have declined steadily since September 1997 in Greater Western Sydney while in the rest of Sydney it remains stable. Unemployment level remains relatively high in Auburn, Campbelltown and Fairfield.

Similar proportions of households in Greater Western Sydney and the rest of Sydney earn less than the state's **median household weekly income** range of $800-$999. However, significantly higher proportions of households from the rest of Sydney earner higher weekly income than those in Greater Western Sydney.

Vehicle ownership remains higher in Greater Western Sydney than in the rest of Sydney, with higher proportion of households in Greater Western' Sydney owning multiple vehicles. Male workers are more likely to drive to work than female workers, and workers from Greater Western Sydney are less likely to travel to work using public transport.

Statistics in Brief

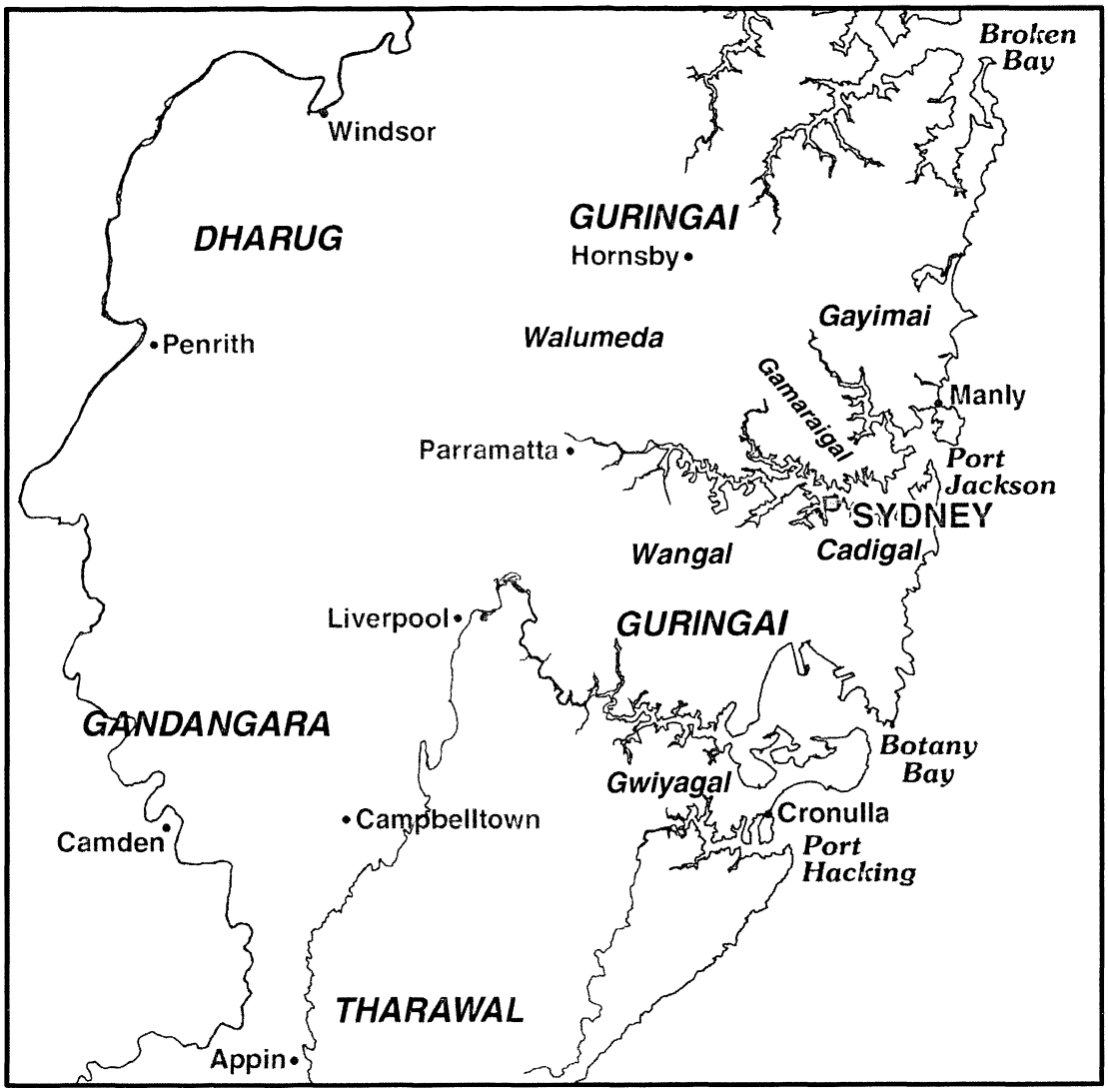
- Greater Western Sydney makes up 9.1% of Australia's total population and 43.0% of Greater Sydney's population in 2001.
- Two-parent family is the dominant family type across all geographies analysed, although the proportions of two-parent families are significantly higher in Greater Western Sydney than in the rest of the city.
- Greater Western Sydney also has a higher proportion of single-parent families than the rest of the city.
- There are significantly lower proportions of couple-families in Greater Western Sydney than in the rest of the city (26.9% and 36.7% respectively).
- Campbelltown has the highest proportion of single-parent families in Greater Sydney, with 21 .6%. It is closely followed by Blacktown (18.8%), Fairfield (18.4%), Penrith (17.3%), and Holroyd (17.0%).

- 60.1% of Greater Sydney's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population reside in Greater Western Sydney in 2001, a slight increase from 58.9% in *1996.*
- 1 .4% of Greater Western Sydney's population identified themselves as of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background in 2001. This is equivalent to an increase of 14.8%, or 3,010 persons.
- Almost 60% (59.4%) of Greater Western Sydney's Indigenous population were under the age of 25 years in 2001, with less than 6% (5.9%) of its indigenous population over the age of 55 years.
- The proportions for the rest of Sydney are 50.6% and 8.5% respectively.
- In 2001, 38.6% of Greater Western Sydney's population was born overseas. This makes up 43.0% of Greater Sydney's overseas-born population. 83.4% of Greater Western Sydney's overseas born population is from non-English speaking countries.
- 24.3% of Greater Western Sydney's population nominated English as their ancestral background, after Australian (28.4%).
- 16.0% of Greater Western Sydney's overseas-born population arrived since the last Census in 1996.
- Greater Western Sydney and the rest of Sydney have the same proportion of overseas-born population in 2001 (38.6%).
- In Greater Western Sydney, a higher proportion of these overseas born persons are from non-English speaking countries (83.4%) than those residing in the rest of Sydney (75.3%).
- Major birthplaces for Greater Western Sydney include Vietnam (46,622 persons), Lebanon (32,318 persons), the Philippines (31,567), China (28,479 persons), and Italy (19,633 persons).
- In 2001, 38.1% of Greater Sydney's population spoke a language other than English (LOTE) at home. This proportion is higher than the rest of the city (31 .5%) or the state of New South Wales in general (25.0%).
- Frequently spoken languages in Greater Western Sydney homes, apart from English, include Arabic (5.4%), Chinese (4.2%), Vietnamese (3.0%), and Italian (1.9%). These compare to 2.2%, 5.4%, 0.6% and 2.1% respectively for the rest of Sydney in 2001.
- Over 60% of New South Wales' Islamic population resides in Greater Western Sydney. Only 26.5% of the state's Christian community resides in Greater Western Sydney.
- Greater Western Sydney also houses over half of the city's Hindus (58.5%), Buddhists (58.2%) and practitioners of other minor religious groups (51 .0%).
- There are proportionately more Christians (69.6%) and fewer atheists (no religion, 8.9%) in Greater Western Sydney than in the rest of the city (65.2% and 13.9% respectively).
- A lower proportion of Greater Western Sydney's population (69.1%) has completed a school education of Year 10 or above than the population of the rest of Sydney (75.2%).
- A lower proportion of Greater Western Sydney's population currently attends university or other tertiary education institutes.
- Lower proportions of Greater Western Sydney's population have undergraduate or graduate qualification than the rest of Sydney.
- 36.6% of Greater Western Sydney's population aged 15 or over has completed high school education, compared to 49.9% for the rest of the city.
- A larger proportion of Greater Western Sydney's population left school at Year 10 (27.1%) than those in the rest of Sydney (20.4%).
- Almost 60% of Greater Sydney's population aged 15 or over who did not go to school reside in Greater Western Sydney.
- There is a significantly higher proportion of Greater Western Sydney's population (54.8%) that does not have any Census classifiable non-school qualification, as compared to 44.2% for the rest of Sydney.

- The rest of Sydney has 3.6 times as many persons with post-graduate qualification than in Greater Western Sydney. There are also proportionately twice as many people with graduate diploma/certificate or undergraduate qualifications in the rest of Sydney than in Greater Western Sydney.
- There is a higher proportion of population in Greater Western Sydney who are either studying for their first qualification or do not have a Census classifiable qualification (55.4%) compared to the rest of Sydney (43.9%).
- Only 29.1% of Greater Sydney's professionals reside in Greater Western Sydney.
- Manufacturing continues to be the dominant industry in Greater Western Sydney, at 15.7%.
- 46.7% of Greater Sydney's unemployed reside in Greater Western Sydney.
- Clerical and service workers make up 43.0% of Greater Western Sydney's employed population, compared to 34.9% for the rest of Sydney. The rest of Sydney has a higher proportion of workers in professional and managerial occupations, 48.7% compared to 32.4% in Greater Western Sydney. There are significantly more labourers and related workers in Greater Western Sydney (8.8%) than in the rest of the city (5.2%).
- In 2001, the median weekly household income range for New South Wales was $800-$999. 37.8% of Greater Western Sydney's households earned less than $800 per week, compared to 35.0% for the rest of Sydney, 50.0% of Greater Western Sydney's households earned more than $800 or more a week. The proportion for the rest of Sydney is 53.6%.
- A significantly higher proportion of households in the rest of Sydney (30.1%) earn more than $1500 or more per week compared with households in Greater Western Sydney (22.5%).

Appendix 1.2 Aboriginal languages and clans in the Western Sydney region[33]

Aboriginal Language and Tribal Groups
Sydney Region

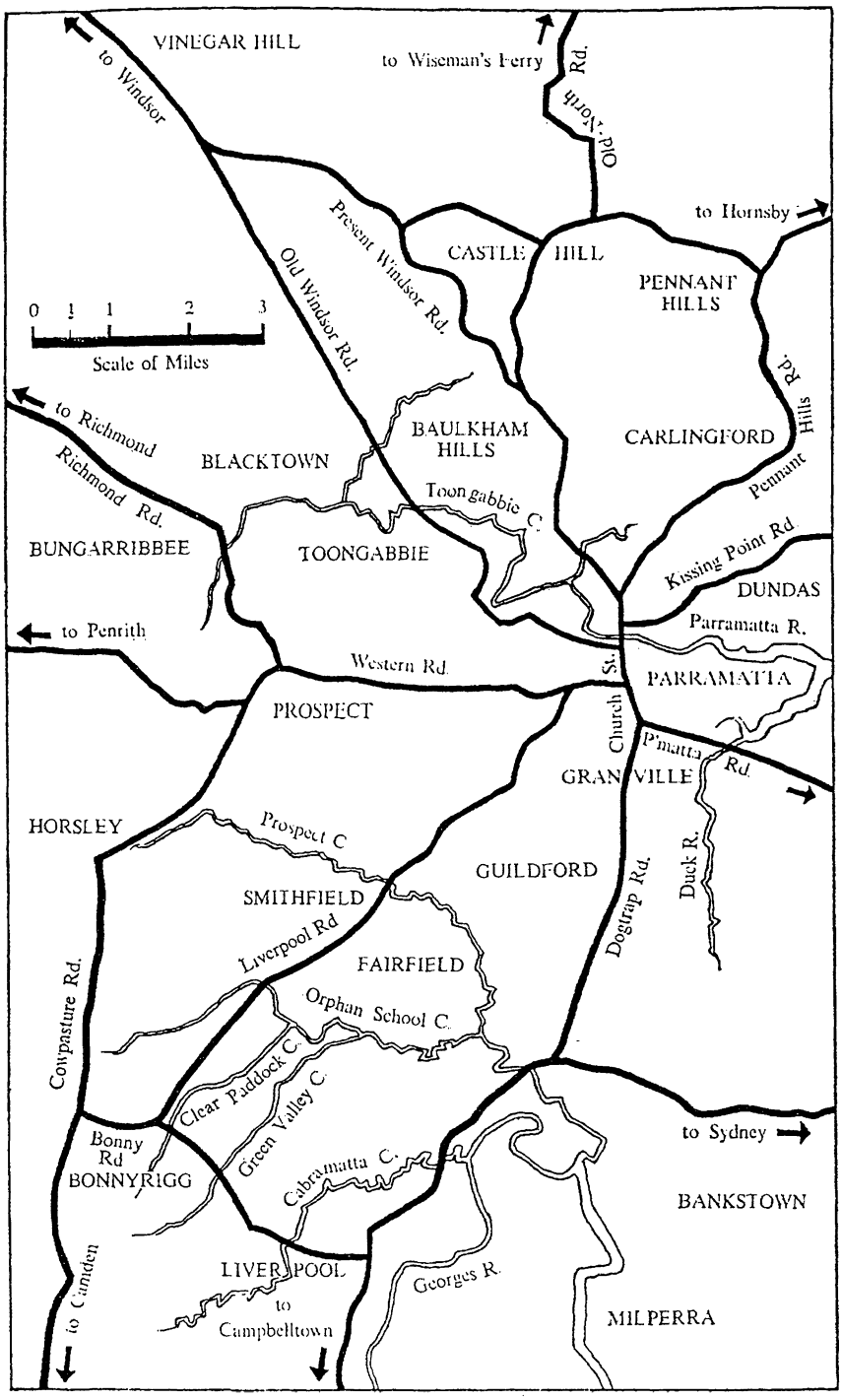


[33] The material in this appendix is sourced from *Barani: Indigenous History of Sydney City* (City of Sydney 2002).

Clans or bands (called "tribes" by the Europeans) within Sydney belonged to several major language groups, often with coastal and inland dialects, including Dharug, Dharawal/Tharawal, Gundungurra and Kurringgai. (City of Sydney 2002).

Band	Language Group	Location	Band	Language Group	Location
Cadigal	Dharug (Eora)	Sydney	**Kurrajong**	Dharug	Kurrajong
Wangal	Dharug (Eora)	Concord	**Boo-bain-ora**	Dharug	Wentworthville
Burramattagal	Dharug (Eora)	Parramatta	**Mulgoa**	Dharug	Penrith
Wallumattagal	Dharug (Eora)	Ryde	**Terramerragal**	Kurringgai	Turramurra
Muru-ora-dial	Dharug (Eora)	Maroubra	**Cammeraigal**	Kurringgai	Cammeray
Kameygal	Dharug (Eora)	Botany Bay	**Carigal**	Kurringgai	West Head
Birrabirragal	Dharug (Eora)	Sydney Harbour	**Cannalgal**	Kurringgai	Manly (coast)
Borogegal-Yuruey	Dharug	Bradleys Head	**Gorualgal**	Kurringgai	Fig Tree Point
Bediagal	Dharug	North of George's River	**Kayimai**	Kurringgai	Manly (harbour)
Bidjigal	Dharug	Castle Hill	**Gweagal**	Dharawal	Kurnell
Toogagal	Dharug	Toongabbie	**Norongerragal**	Dharawal	South of George's River
Cabrogal	Dharug	Cabramatta	**Illawarra**	Dharawal	Wollongong
Boorooberongal	Dharug	Richmond	**Threawal**	Dharawal	Bong Bong
Cannemegal	Dharug	Prospect	**Tagary**	Dharawal	Royal National Park?
Gomerigal-tongara	Dharug	South Creek?	**Wandeandegal**	Dharawal	
Muringong	Dharug	Camden	**Ory-ang-ora**	Dharawal	
Cattai	Dharug	Windsor	**Goorungurragal**	Dharawal	

Appendix 1.3 Map of settlements around Parramatta 1880s[34]



[34] This map is taken from Peter West's *A Short History of Western Sydney* (West 1986 p.8), map by Aart van L'wjk, reproduced from Mitchell Library NSW (1965).

Appendix 3.1 To be of use[35]

To be of use

The people I love the best
jump into work head first
without dallying in the shallows
and swim off with sure strokes almost out of sight.
They seem to become natives of that element,
the black sleek heads of seals
bouncing like half-submerged balls.

I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a heavy cart,
who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience,
who strain in the mud and the muck to move things forward,
who do what has to be done, again and again.

I want to be with people who submerge
in the task, who go into the fields to harvest
and work in a row and pass the bags along,
who are not parlor generals and field deserters
but move in a common rhythm
when the food must come in or the fire be put out.

The work of the world is common as mud.
Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.
But the thing worth doing well done
has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident.
Greek amphoras for wine or oil,
Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums
but you know they were made to be used.
The pitcher cries for water to carry
and a person for work that is real.

[35] Marge Piercy *To be of use* (Piercy 1982)

Appendix 3.2 UTS ethics application 1998

This research project is for my PhD thesis on constructions of whiteness and how this contributes to and structures racism in Australia today. The research emerges from my long-standing interest and commitment to challenging racist practices and values and to developing educational practices that enable people to understand and challenge the operation of racism in our society. In undertaking this research I want to examine the ways in which an understanding of 'whiteness as ethnicity' and the centrality of 'whiteness' in constructing the 'ethnic other' can better inform anti-racist education. I am also seeking to explore questions about the ways in which class and gender intersect with whiteness and ethnicity. As outlined in the following application I plan to undertake group work and interviews with a select number of research participants to generate understandings about how whiteness is taken up within individual subjectivities; and how this contributes to and is structured within discourses of race and racism in our society.

To ensure minimum delay in the consideration of your application, please indicate by ticking the appropriate box if you have supplied the following:

Supervisor
Alison Lee
Faculty of Education
Ph 9514 3859
email: alison.lee@uts.edu.au
Haymarkets Blding D, Level 3, Room 306

Student
Jane Durie
Faculty of Education
Ph 9772 6319/ 9516 5439
email: j.durie@uws.edu.au

1. Project Title
Constructions of whiteness

2. Degree being undertaken
Doctor of Philosophy (Education)

3. Have Candidature and supervisor been approved?
Yes. (Copy of the letter is attached.)

4. Source of funding
None

5. Proposed commencement date
August 1998

6. Proposed completion date
2001

7. Proposed research procedures: (please list in brief - a fuller description should be given in your attached proposal)

- Historical and current documentary study and analysis
- Orientation workshop
- Memory writing workshop
- Journals
- Interviews

8. **Please describe the risks (if any) which this research might pose for your participants/subjects.** (E.g. painful procedures, invasion of privacy, possible embarrassment, anxiety, discomfort, etc. You must answer this question fully.)
The research process of workshops and interviews possibly will involve some invasion of privacy as well as possible embarrassment and anxiety. This is taken up and discussed in Q.17 and in the attached document: Description and Justification of the Research.

9. **How will you recruit your participants?**
My research is based in Western Sydney and participants will be recruited in a number of ways from this region.

Firstly, students who have completed the subject *Working with Cultural Differences in Educational Settings*, or *Cross Cultural Communication* (name of degree deleted) at UWSM will be invited to participate in the research. Issues related to using my own students in the research are discussed in Questions 17 and 18 of this Application; and in Sections iv (Research Plan) and vi (Ethical Issues) of the attached document: Description and Justification of the Research.
Secondly, I will be approaching community organisations in Western Sydney as a possible avenue to recruit participants. In doing this, it would be intended that my research would be of benefit to these organisations and their clients.

Thirdly, potential participants may be identified through my existing networks within the community and at work.

I would expect that the participants will primarily, but not exclusively, be people who identify as 'white' or 'Anglo-Australian', both male and female, living in Western Sydney. While the research is focusing on whiteness, it is not intended that participants will exclusively be 'white'. For example, an Aboriginal person who 'grew up white' would have a valuable contribution to make to research on constructions of whiteness. There will also be scope for participation by people who do not in the Australian context identify as 'white', for example, immigrants from non-English speaking countries who can offer very different insights into the constructions of whiteness as a factor in race relations.

10. **What will this study involve for your participants/subjects?** (E.g. inconvenience, time, etc.)
The research will involve the following:
- participation in an orientation workshop;
- participation in a group memory writing workshop;
- keeping a journal for a short period of time;
- participation in an interview of one - two hours duration;
- review of transcripts of interviews; and
- comments on aspects of draft documents for publication.

11. **Will participants receive any financial or other compensation for their time and inconvenience.** If yes, give details.
No.

12. **How will you use the data you collect?** (For example, will it be published in a form which could identify your participants? Give details.)
The primary purpose of the research is for the preparation of a PhD thesis. It is anticipated that there will be papers resulting from the research that will be published and/or presented

at conferences. Participants' contributions to the research would be incorporated into published material in ways that guard their confidentiality, unless specific written permission was sought and obtained to present material in such a way as to reveal a participant's identity.

13. **Who will have access to the information you collect?**
Participants in the research will have access to material relevant to their contribution to the research. For example, transcripts of their interview and agreed proceedings of group workshops. If tapes of interviews and workshop sessions are transcribed by an outside transcriber the identity of the participants will not be available to, or able to be determined by, the transcriber.

14. **How will you store the data you collect?** (Include details of security measures.)
All tapes and written material from interview sessions and workshop sessions as well as any written material provided by participants will be stored in my office at UWSM where I am employed as a full-time lecturer. The material will also be stored on the hard drive of my computer and on floppy discs that will be used in my office and at home. When not being used audio tapes, transcripts and floppy discs will be stored in a locked cabinet in my office and at all, times when I am not present my office is kept locked. The offices at UWSM are patrolled by security staff.

15. **How will you protect the privacy of your participants and ensure that your research does not contravene any of the 11 Privacy Principles?** (See attached.)
Each participant will be given a consent form prior to participating in the research. This consent form will include:
- the aims and purpose of the research;
- an outline of what participation in the research will involve and the possible risks to the participant;
- details about how the information will be stored and kept secure;
- arrangements for access to their personal contributions to the research; and
- options for individual negotiations about participation in the research project including the option to withdraw from the research at any time.

Participants will have the opportunity to review any transcripts of personal interviews and agreed workshop material and ensure it accurately reflects their views. They will also have the opportunity to comment on how I am using the material.

At all times when I am working with participants they will be reminded that they can withdraw from the research at any time and/or have particular material not recorded, excluded, etc.
A sample Consent Form is given in Attachment 4.

16. **Does this research involve another institution? If yes, give details including whether or not you have submitted an application to that institution for ethics approval.** (If you have already received ethics approval from that institution, please attach a copy of your letter of approval with this application.)
Yes. University of Western Sydney, Macarthur (UWSM) where I am employed as a lecturer in the Faculty of Education. I have included a letter from the Dean of my Faculty outlining his support for my research and for the participation of students from the Faculty in the project (see Attachment 3). I will be submitting an application to the next meeting of the

UWSM Ethics Review Committee (Human Research), pending acceptance of this application at UTS.

17. **Please give details of the ethical issues arising from this research.** (For example, if it involves deception, describe provisions you have made for debriefing and giving feedback to participants. You must answer this question fully.)
The research with participants may involve some or all of the following issues:

(i) Many of the participants will be known to the researcher in an earlier lecturer/student relationship at the University of Western Sydney.
(ii)The research requires participants to think about and write about events in their life that relate to perceptions of whiteness and ethnicity. As such this could involve reflections on unpleasant experiences in the past that may or may not be directly related to the topic.
(iii) It could be in the group sessions that difficult memories arise for participants. The 'public' nature of this could be a problem for all participants, not just the participant(s) experiencing difficult memories.
(iv) In group workshops participants may experience anxiety and/or embarrassment in expressing their views on race and ethnicity as it is a topic that can generate heightened emotional involvement.
(v) Participants may also say things that are derogatory, hurtful or offensive to other group members.
(vi) Many participants will be known to each other and this could make it possible for participants to identify each other in any published material.

These issues are discussed fully in the attached document: Description and Justification of the Research.

18. **Does this research involve any difficulties with informed consent?** (For example, does the research involve minors, people in dependent relationships, the mentally ill, or unconscious patients?) If yes, please give details.

In my research I am planning to ask ex-students who have previously attended and completed the subject *Cross Cultural Communication* and/or *Working with Cultural Differences in Educational Settings* if they are willing to participate in the research. These are subjects that I teach at UWSM within (name of degree deleted) and that are relevant to my research. My reasons for asking these ex-students to participate is linked to the need for participants in the research to be familiar with the concept of 'whiteness as ethnicity' and have begun to think about how that plays itself out in their lives. Undertaking the subjects referred to above will give potential participants this grounding.

I understand that using one's own students in research raises particular issues of power and dependency that could mean that potential participants could feel 'coerced' to participate or that their performance in the subjects may be influenced by their willingness or otherwise to participate in the research, etc. For my research I will only be asking those students to participate who have completed one of these subjects and who have also completed all other subjects that I teach within the degree. That is, they will not be my current or future students within the degree. In this way I will avoid any possible conflicts of interest or abuse of the power relationship of lecturer/student. This issue is also discussed in Section iv (Research Plan) and Section vi (Ethical Issues) in the attached document: Description and Justification of the Research.

ATTACHMENT 1
Description and justification of the Research
Preamble
This research arises out of my long-standing interest and commitment to challenging racist practices and values and to developing better ways to engage educational practices that enable people to understand and challenge the operation of racism in our society. The current climate of divisiveness around race and Indigenous issues in Australia underlines the importance of ongoing research that will engage with these issues and give rise to different possibilities for understanding and working with these issues. My research is intended to examine issues of race and racism from a different perspective that opens up possibilities for understanding these issues from within the concept of 'whiteness as ethnicity' and examining how 'white' people construct the 'ethnic other'. That is, my research is intended to begin some of the work of understanding and exposing the centrality of 'whiteness' in constructing the 'ethnic other'. This is similar to the work that has taken place over the last 25 years in feminist texts of understanding how woman has been constructed as 'the other'. In so doing it will expose the ways in which whiteness as an ethnicity is 'invisible'; and the assumed centrality of whiteness from which other ethnicities are generated. This research will enable new ways of understanding racism and offer strategies for addressing racism that incorporate these understandings.

i. Introduction
This research project is for my PhD thesis on constructions of whiteness and how this contributes to and structures racism in Australia today. Integral to my thesis research are questions about the ways in which class and gender intersect around whiteness and racism. The research has arisen out of my interest and involvement with anti-racist education. In undertaking this research I want to examine the ways in which a greater understanding of whiteness as ethnicity can better inform anti-racist education. My thesis involves theoretical research, text analysis, empirical research with people living in Western Sydney as well as continuing education work in the field.

Most studies on race and racism in Australia and elsewhere have largely ignored whiteness as a construct, instead focusing on 'non-white' ethnic communities and Indigenous communities. This focus on 'the other' in some ways contributes to beliefs that the problems and causes of racism lie with these communities of difference. Until the emergence of feminist, postcolonial and post-structuralist theories there has been little or no acknowledgment or focus on the central and invisible positioning of whiteness (most often embodied as white, male and middle class) against which the 'ethnic other' has been constructed. Thus, whiteness as a construct has largely been an invisible factor in race debates.

In the last 4-5 years, particularly in the United States and now in Australia a small but growing number of researchers have been turning their attention to whiteness: how whiteness is constructed; who gets to be white; whiteness and gender; whiteness and class; whiteness as invisible; whiteness in the construction of the 'ethnic other'; and whiteness in the classroom. My research will contribute to this new and important area of knowledge on race and racism. In particular, I want to examine the ways in which individuals construct their identities around whiteness and how its invisibility is woven into and around this. I also want to examine the ways that class and gender cut across and intersect with our constructions of ethnic identity.

ii. Literature Review and Bibliography
In examining whiteness as a construct I am concerned not only with broader social and cultural constructions but also how whiteness is constructed and embodied in individual subjectivities and how it intersects with class and gender. For this purpose I will be drawing on psychoanalytic theory in the work of people such as Lacan, Kristeva and Grosz as well as postcolonial and cultural studies

literature on 'the other' and constructions of race, ethnicities, gender and class including that of Trinh T. Min Ha, Bhabha, Brah and Hall. In framing my research into whiteness I will also be drawing on the significant body of Australian research and literature on 'race, class and gender', multiculturalism, Indigenous Australia and, more recently, postcolonial and post-stucturalist work focusing on difference and 'the other'. This literature includes the work of Pettman, Hage and Gunew, amongst many others.

As already noted there has been a recent upsurge of interest in whiteness as a focus of study in ethnic identities. This work addresses a range of issues in relation to whiteness, including examining the intersections of whiteness with class and with gender in different locations. The work of Frankenberg and McIntrye, amongst others, is important in this regard. There is also a growing body of work on difference and pedagogical practices, drawing on feminist post-structuralist work such as the work of Luke and Gore, and my own work in this area. My current research into the constructions of whiteness will be informed by and extend this growing body of research literature about constructions and meanings of whiteness and its relevance in the field of education.

In undertaking this research and as part of my PhD thesis I will also be exploring the limits of research methodologies and text analysis, drawing on the work of Lather and Britzman, in particular and also the 'memory-work' of Haug.

Bhabha, Homi (1994) *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
Bottomley, Gill, De Lepervanche, Marie, & Martin, Jeannie (1991) *Intersexions: Gender/class/culture/ethnicity*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
Brah, Avtah (1996) *Cartographies of Diaspora*. London: Routledge.
Britzman, Deborah, H. (1998) *Lost Subjects, Contested Objects*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
Crawford, J., Kippax, S., Onyx, J., Gault, U., & Benton, P. (1992) *Emotion and Gender*. London: Sage.
Fairclough, Norman (1995) *Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Longman.
Frankenberg, Ruth (1993) *White Women, Race matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*. London: Routledge.
Giroux, Henri & McLaren Peter (eds) (1994) *Between Borders: Pedagogy and the Politics of Cultural Studies*. New York: Routledge.
Grace, Helen, Hage, Ghassan, Johnson, Lesley, Langsworth, Julie, & Symonds, Michael (1997) *home/world: space, community and marginality in Sydney's west*. Sydney: Pluto Press.
Grosz, Elizabeth (1989) *Sexual Subversions*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
Grosz, Elizabeth (1988) *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
Gunew, Sneja, & Yeatman, Anna *The Politics of Difference*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
Hage, Ghassan., Lloyd, Justine., & Johnson, Lesley (1994) "An Inquiry into the State of Anglo-Saxonness within the Nation", *Communal/Plural* 4.
Hall, Stuart (1996) *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London: Sage Press.
Haug, Frigga (1987) *Female sexualisation*. London: Verso.
Haug, Frigga (1992) *Beyond Female Masochism*. London: Verso.
Jamrozik, Adam, Boland, Cathy, & Urquhart, Robert (1995) *Social Change and Cultural Transformation in Australia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Lather, o(1991) *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy: With/in the Postmodern*. New York: Routledge.
Lather, Patti & Smithies, Chris (1997) *Troubling the Angels*. Boulder: Westview Press.
Luke, Carmen & Gore, Jennifer (eds) (1992) *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy*. New York: Routledge.

McCarthy, Cameron, & Crichlow, Warren (eds) (1993) *Race, Identity and Representation in Education*. New York: Routledge.
McIntrye, Alice (1997) *Making Meaning of Whiteness*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
Moi, Toril (Ed) (1986) *The Kristeva Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
Pettman, Jan (1992) *Living in the Margins*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
Stronach, Ian., & MacLure, Maggie (1997) *Educational Research Undone*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
Trinh T. Minh-Ha (1989) *Women, Native Other*. Bloomington: Indiana Universe Press.

iii. Aims

This research is being undertaken for my PhD thesis on constructions of whiteness. The particular aims of this research project are to explore with a number of individuals:

- the ways in which whiteness is constructed within individual subjectivities;
- the invisibility (or otherwise) of whiteness within white subjectivities;
- who gets to be white; and
- intersections of whiteness with gender and class.

iv. Research Plan

As already stated this research project is for my PhD thesis which I expect to complete over the next 4 years. The empirical research discussed in this project will be conducted over the next 18 months to two years and be integrated with other theoretical and documentary research I am undertaking for my thesis. The specifics of this research project are set out below.

Design

For many people the concept of 'whiteness as ethnicity' is new and unfamiliar. Whiteness is something that many 'white' people consider to be natural and taken-for-granted, and therefore often not seen. I would expect that many people would not immediately relate to the concept of 'whiteness as ethnicity' and have some difficulty engaging in discussions about the ways in which whiteness has been played out in their lives. Therefore it would be difficult to get 'people off the street' to participate in the research without some sort of orientation and familiarisation with the project and the concepts that I am working with. For this reason I hope to be able to recruit a substantial number of participants from the body of students who have completed *Working with Cultural Differences in Educational Settings* or *Cross Cultural Communication* at UWSM. These are subjects that I teach at UWSM that provide students with an introduction to and awareness of cultural differences and the concept of 'whiteness as ethnicity', etc. For those participants in the research who have not completed one or other of these subjects the project is designed to discursively introduce the concept of whiteness through an Orientation workshop.

The research will be an intervention in participants' lives that will enable participants to engage with 'new' subjectivities in relation to whiteness. In this way the research provides the opportunity not just to 'gather data' but also for the researcher and the participants to take part in a process that is intended to enable greater awareness and understanding of dominant and other discourses available to 'white' people in taking up white subjectivities. In this process the researcher and the participants will learn more about the discourses around whiteness and the 'ethnic other' and some of the ways in which these discourses of racism operate in Australian society.

To facilitate this process the project is designed to research whiteness through an orientation workshop on culture, cultural differences and 'whiteness as ethnicity'; memory writing workshop; journals; and interviews. These are discussed below.

Orientation workshop on culture, cultural differences and 'whiteness as ethnicity'
This workshop is for those participants who have not completed either *Working with Cultural Differences in Educational Settings* or *Cross Cultural Communication* at UWSM. It is designed to introduce potential participants to the research concepts of culture, cultural difference and whiteness; and to engage their interest in the research project. The workshop would run for half a day and involve participants in readings and discussions; stories of identity; and discussions about whiteness and ethnicity. Participants will also have the opportunity to discuss the research project and the ways in which it might relate to their work, lives and current social issues. Following the workshop it would be expected that participants would be able to begin to reflect upon whiteness and the ways in which it has been taken up in their lives.

Memory writing workshop
This workshop is designed to follow on from the Orientation workshop and/or completion of the UWSM subjects. It will serve to get participants reflecting both individually and as a group about their common and different experiences of whiteness. The workshop would run for half a day and involve: working with cues and prompts to identify memories that relate to whiteness and identity; flow-of-consciousness writing about those memories; individual and group reflections on the writing and on childhood events and incidents around whiteness; and analysis of the ways in which these memories and incidents are socially constituted. The design of the workshop draws on and adapts the memory-work of Frigga Haug and others who work with memory and writing as a means of understanding the ways in which our individual subjectivities are socially constituted.

Journals
From the Memory writing workshop and the Orientation workshop participants will be asked to start keeping a journal focusing on narratives of whiteness and ethnicity and the ways in which they see that these have intersected with their subjective positionings in relation to gender and class, etc. These journals will be kept for as long as the participant is willing and will be another source of material for the research; as well as serving to facilitate the interviews.

Interviews
Each participant will be asked to take part in an interview of 1 - 2 hours to explore: their whiteness; their understanding of it; ways in which they see they have taken up whiteness; factors contributing to their understanding of being white; its visibility or otherwise in their lives; the ways in which they see their subject positions in relation to gender and class intersecting with whiteness; and experiences of 'non-white' ethnicity and/or Aboriginality, within whiteness.

I expect that in the workshops there will be a multitude of responses and different subject positions to the ways in which I as the researcher take up and present discourses of whiteness and ethnicity and race to the participants. Similarly participants will be engaging with each other either directly in discussion in the workshops or indirectly through their journals. The interviews also will hold a myriad of possibilities for engaging with different subject positions in relation to discourses of whiteness and race. These possible conflicts and contradictions of understandings and positionings both within individual participants' subjectivities, and amongst different participants and the researcher will be an important part of the research material.

Outlines of the Orientation workshop, the memory-writing workshop and the questions for interview are provided in Attachment 5.

Selection and number of participants
The research is based in Western Sydney and the participants will be drawn from the region. The primary basis for selection to the project would be the prospective participant's identification as

'white'/Anglo-Australian; or where the person has grown up 'white' but is aware of being of mixed ethnic/Indigenous background.

The participants will be drawn to the project though a number of self-selecting ways:

- students who have completed the subject *W*orking *with Cultural Differences in Educational Settings* or *Cross Cultural Communication* at UWSM will be asked if they are willing to participate in the research project;
- from community organisations in the Western Sydney region; and
- word-of-mouth through work and community networks of people interested in race and ethnicity issues.

The orientation workshop that forms the first step in the research process will be offered as a community service to interested community organisations and workers. This will be both a way of locating interested participants for the research project and also of building connections between the university and local communities. The design of the research requires that participants make a considerable commitment of time and energy to the process of the research and as such I would not expect all the participants in these workshops to continue with the research project. In view of the time commitment and the quantity of research data that will be generated I would expect that the total number of participants will be around 10-12 people. The research is designed to explore the ways in which individuals take up subjective positions in relation to whiteness and as such the participants are not intended to be in any way a representative sample.

Western Sydney has been chosen as the site for the research primarily because I am based there for my work and the research provides the possibility for building bridges from the university into local communities. In taking up issues of race and ethnicity in the Western Sydney region it is in no way intended that the research contributes further to existing stereotypes about Western Sydney. I would hope in fact that my research would contribute to the work being done to challenge and breakdown the 'monolith' of Western Sydney.

Analysis

The research process will produce transcribed taped material, journals and workshop material for analysis and incorporation with other aspects of my thesis research. My theoretical analysis of the material will draw on psychoanalytical, feminist, post-structuralist and postcolonial literature as described in the literature section above. Once the material is gathered from the participants the research does not require any further participation on their part in the research process. Participants will have the opportunity to comment on any work that directly relates to their input but there is no requirement for ongoing involvement. It may be that some participants develop an ongoing interest in the research in which case this involvement will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis with interested participants.

v. Qualifications and Experience

Jane Durie - Student

Qualifications:

Bachelor of Economics (ANU)
Graduate Diploma in Adult Education (UTS)
Master of Education (UTS).

Experience

I have extensive experience over the last 15 years in the community sector, trade union movement and as an academic working with race, gender and class issues and anti-racist education. This experience includes working with individuals and in groups where participants are sometimes distressed by the proceedings and/or are reminded of difficulties in their past or current lives. This

work has provided me with considerable understanding of the potential situations that can arise and the skills to deal with them in the immediate setting; and the knowledge and networks for appropriate referral and support.

My research experience includes working as a research officer in the Australian Public service, research for the Australian Council of Social Services, research projects for my Masters degree and my most recent project focusing on teaching about cultural differences.

Alison Lee - Supervisor
Qualifications
PhD (Murdoch University 1992).
Experience
Alison is an experienced researcher with expertise in post-structural and feminist research in education, including experience in examining the implications of post-structural theorising for empirical research. She has published most recently in the fields of literacy, pedagogy, postgraduate education and critical discourse analysis.

vi. Ethical Issues

The ethical issues related to this research project are concerned with participants discussing with the researcher aspects of their private lives; comments in group workshops that might be hurtful, derogatory offensive to other participants; confidentiality; and prior relationship to the researcher. These are discussed below.

Discussion of aspects of private lives
The research requires participants to think about and write about events in their life that relate to perceptions of whiteness and ethnicity. As such this could involve reflections on unpleasant experiences in the past that may or may not be directly related to the topic. For example, some people in thinking about the formation of their ethnic identities, may also think about or remember incidents from their childhood involving sexual or other abuse which could make them feel distressed and vulnerable. While this cannot be avoided, participants will be made aware of this possibility and be prompted to identify their own support networks in case of need before being included in the research. In addition, participants will be informed of the counselling and support services that are available at the University before participating in the research process.

It could be in the group sessions that difficult memories arise for participants. The 'public' nature of this could be a problem for all participants, not just the participant(s) experiencing difficult memories. This will in the first instance be addressed with potential participants before they attend any group sessions. In individual and private discussions potential participants will be asked to identify strategies for handling this possibility as well as being informed of counselling and support services available at the university. In these individual discussions with participants it will be emphasised that the sessions are not designed to encourage participants to disclose things about their past that they do not feel comfortable about but nevertheless it does sometimes happen. At the outset of any group sessions the issue will again be canvassed and participants will be reminded to recall any strategies that they identified for dealing with difficulties of this nature if something arose during a group session either for them or for another group member. At the same time as taking these precautions I will not want to over-emphasise these potential risks as it could contribute to difficulties arising in a situation that might otherwise have been a safe and non-threatening situation.

Hurtful, derogatory or offensive comments
In group workshops participants may experience anxiety and/or embarrassment in expressing their views on race and ethnicity as it is a topic that can generate heightened emotional involvement. Participants may also make stereotypical comments that are offensive, derogatory or hurtful to other group members and possibly give rise to anger and distress in the group. At the commencement of group sessions participants will be reminded to speak respectfully about themselves and others. If such comments are made that give rise to tensions and anger in the group I will be responsible for dealing with the situation as it arises. As an experienced educator in this area I am familiar with dealing with these types of situations and I would expect to be able to handle anything that arises through discussion and other strategies designed to reduce the tensions in the group.

Confidentiality
All efforts will be taken to guarantee the confidentiality of material and the identity of participants. The research process involves participants knowing the other participants and all participants will be required to agree to confidentiality about the workshop discussions. Before attending the workshops participants will be required to give written and verbal agreement to the workshop rules relating to confidentiality that is: what is said in the group stays in the group.

Many participants will be known to each other as students at UWSM and also through the research workshops. This could make it easier for participants to identify each other in any publications. Participants will be coded for confidentiality in all stored and published research material. In any published material individual narratives will only be included with written permission of the participants concerned. In most cases published material will be a collaboration of different participants narratives unless a participant specifically wants their story published.

Prior relationship to researcher
Many of the participants will be known to the researcher in a lecturer/student relationship at UWSM. Participants will self select to the research project but nevertheless the previous relationship of student/lecturer may raise issues for them in relation to their performance as students and as participants in the research. I will ensure that any potential participants from the student body of the (name of degree deleted) at Macarthur will only participate in the research once they have completed all the subjects that I teach in the degree. This should ensure that possible conflicts of interest or abuse of the power relationship of lecturer/student are avoided.

_____ ___/___/___
Signed by
_____ ___/___/___

Witnessed by

NOTE: This study has been approved by the University of Technology, Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any aspect of your participation in this research you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officer, Ms Susanna Davis (Ph: 9514 1279). Any complaints you make will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

1. Outline of Orientation Workshop

Participants will have the opportunity to discuss the research project and the ways in which it might relate to/benefit their work, lives and current social issues. In addition the workshop will cover:
readings and discussions on culture and cultural differences;
stories of identity; and
discussions about whiteness and ethnicity.
Following the workshop it would be expected that participants would be able to begin to reflect upon whiteness and the ways in which it has been taken up in their lives.

2. Outline of Memory writing Workshop

This workshop will explore whiteness through memory and writing exercises as follows:
working with cues and prompts to identify memories that relate to whiteness and identity;
flow-of-consciousness writing about those memories;
individual and group reflections on the writing and on childhood events and incidents around whiteness; and
analysis of the ways in which these memories and incidents are socially constituted.

3. Outline of questions for interview

The interviews will be loosely structured around the following questions/issues:
Location and physical/spatial environment:
where the participant lived as a child;
who was in their family/extended family;
who lived around them in the street and local neighbourhood;
how it changed over time;
on reflection how would they describe their 'socio-economic' status.

Sense of culture and cultural differences:
what cultural differences they were aware of as a child such as ethnicity, class, sexuality, gender, religion, etc.;
what marked cultural differences;
insiders and outsiders;
where did they meet difference - in the home, in the street, not at all, etc.

Important issues:
what issues were they aware of as a child - for example: Land rights, sexuality, politics, religion, etc.

Whiteness:
Having participated in the workshops what different ways can you now understand some of the events in your childhood around cultural identity;
what can you say about the ways in which whiteness was (or was not) invisible to you/to your family/in the neighbourhood;
what can you say about the ways in which your gender or class or sexuality may have affected the ways in which you have taken up whiteness.

Appendix 3.3 Letter of request

31 August 1999

Name
Address

Dear

I am writing to you in relation to my research project, *Constructions of Whiteness in Western Sydney*. You may recall when you undertook the subject *Working with Cultural Differences in Educational Settings* or *Cross Cultural Communication* that part of our discussions and readings in the subject focussed on whiteness. As you have completed that subject and have at least some introduction to my research topic I am seeking your voluntary participation in this research project.

Participation in the research includes attendance at a workshop of about 3 hours duration and participation in a one-to-one interview of about 1.5 hours. I have attached the proposed workshop outline and interview schedule for your information. I am expecting that the workshop and interviews will take place in September and October of this year.

If you are interested and able to participate in this research can you please indicate your preferred availability for attendance at a workshop on the attached sheet; and/or your willingness to participate in an interview. A stamped addressed envelope has been included for your convenience. I will not be arranging specific dates or times until I know who is available and the times that best suit those who are interested. Once I have the returns I will contact prospective participants by phone/email, etc. To facilitate this could you please ensure that I have your current contact details.

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary and if you agree to participate a formal consent form will be provided to you. This form sets out your rights as a participant in the research and that you are free to withdraw from the research at any time without having to provide any reason. All documentation in relation to your participation will be kept confidential. The study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney, Macarthur Ethics Review Committee (Human Subjects) and if you have any concerns about any aspect of your participation in this research you can contact Claire Kaspura, Executive Officer on 02 46203641.

Thankyou for your time and I look forward to hearing from you in relation to the research project.

Yours sincerely

Jane Durie

Constructions of Whiteness in Western Sydney - Participation

Name:_____

Participant Workshops

I am able/not able to participate in a research workshop

If you are willing and able to participate please indicate your availability and preferences in the following table and any restrictions on your availability. For example, if you are going to be away from some period of time; or not available during the school holidays, etc.

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
morning							
afternoon							
evening							

Any comments on availability

Participant interviews

You may be able to take part in an interview even if not available for the workshops.

I am able/not able to participate in a research interview

Contact details (please indicate how you would prefer me to contact you)

Phone: Home Work Mobile

Fax
Email

Appendix 3.4 Consent form

CONSENT FORM

I, _____, agree to participate in the research project "Constructions of Whiteness in Western Sydney" being undertaken by Jane Durie, PhD student at the University of Technology, Sydney. I understand that the purpose of this study is to explore constructions of 'white' identity with people living in Western Sydney.

I understand that my participation in the research will involve attendance at a taped memory writing workshop and a taped interview. In addition if I choose I can keep a journal of relevant reflections that I can make available to the researcher. Participation in the research will involve approximately 5-8 hours of my time.

My participation in the workshops and interviews could involve some exposure of my experiences and views in a group situation as well as in a one-to-one interview and this has been made clear to me. I have identified support networks that I am able to call upon in the event that I feel distressed by the research process. In addition, the researcher has informed me of support and counselling services available at the university and in the community.

The researcher has fully outlined to me the ground rules for participation in the group aspects of the research. I agree that any of the proceedings of the group workshop will remain confidential to the group; and I also agree to take responsibility to ensure that in the group workshop I speak with respect about myself and others.

I am aware that I am at liberty to contact Jane Durie (Ph 9772 6319) or her supervisor Dr John McIntyre (9514 3999) if I have any concerns about the research. I understand that all documentation related to the confidential aspects of the research will be stored securely at all times when not in use and that I will have access to material that relates to my contributions to the research. I also understand that I am free to withdraw my participation from this research project at any time I wish and without giving a reason.

I have in the past been a student of Jane Durie but I have now completed my studies. OR
I am a continuing student at UWS Macarthur but I have completed all the subjects that Jane Durie teaches in the course in which I am a current student. I understand that my participation and/or withdrawal from this project bears no relationship to my academic progress.

I agree that Jane Durie has answered all my questions fully and clearly.
I agree that the research data gathered from this project may be published in a form that does not identify me in any way.

_____	_____	___/___/___
Signed by	(Print name)	
_____	_____	___/___/___
Witnessed by	(Print name)	

NOTE: This study has been approved by the University of Technology, Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee, No. 98/38; and the UWS Macarthur Ethics review Committee (Human Subjects), Protocol Number 98/80. If you have any complaints or reservations about any aspect of your participation in this research you may contact the UTS Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officer, Ms Susanna Davis (9514 1279) or the UWSM Committee through the Executive Officer, Claire Kaspura (4620 3641). Any complaints you make will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix 3.5 Memory workshop instructions

Step-by-step guide to writing a memory

As a lead-up to the workshop, you could begin the work of thinking about and writing a memory/memories. (If this immediately sends you into a panic or produces a blank mind please do not worry as there will be time at the workshop to undertake this process.) If you do have the time to do this, the steps to follow in writing your memory are set out in detail below:

1. Write a memory of a particular episode, action or event (see triggers below to help focus your memory).
2. Write the memory in the **third person**. That is, the memory is written as if it is about another person. See the examples below and in the Background Information in Attachment 1, which are written in the third person.
3. Write the memory in **as much detail as possible**, including even what might seem inconsequential or trivial. These details can include things like sound, taste, smell, touch or any other details that help to provide information about the episode, action or event that you remember.
4. In writing the memory, **do not embellish** it with interpretation, explanation or biography. That is, allow the memory to exist without explaining it.
5. In writing your memory, **write your earliest memory** (related to the triggers below).
6. So that the memories can be shared in the group but their 'owner' can remain anonymous **do not use your name in the memory**. Write the memory using either he/she or use a name different from your own.
7. You can repeat the exercise writing a memory from a more recent time.

Triggers

The focus of the research is constructions of identity and in particular whiteness. Cues that could help to trigger memories related to whiteness and identity include the following:

- skin colour (yours and others)
- experiencing difference (yours or others)
- *The Color of Fear* (the video shown in Working with Cultural Differences and Cross Cultural Communication
- other people's houses.
- the neighbours
- the bus driver/cleaner/teacher/doctor/etc.

If you have other suggestions for triggers for memories please bring them along. Remember that in writing a memory you need to **focus on the details of the memory** and not on explanation or understanding or interpretation.

Examples of third person memories

Memory 1

They were sitting around the kitchen table and Maria was standing up at the end of the table. The table was yellow and there were at least 3 children at the table and their mother was there as well. It was in the afternoon after school and the sun was coming in the kitchen window. It was summer. Maria was talking a lot in 'broken' English and doing a lot of waving of her hands and arms. She was telling them how she was going back to Italy to visit her family and that they (her and her husband) needed to make a phone call. Her husband was in the hallway talking in a loud voice on the phone. Afterwards one of the children or perhaps the mother joked about how it must be difficult for them to talk on the phone as they wouldn't be able to use their hands. All the children

thought that was funny but nothing was said to Maria or her husband. They laughed behind their backs but not at them.

Memory 2
She was at a party that was being held by her mother at their home. There were lots of adult as well as her brothers and sisters who were all running around and generally having a good time. One of her sisters had a friend there as well, Yole. The little girl was standing in the darkened hallway beside the phone table with the light coming from the lounge room when Anna came by and said that no one would talk to her. The little girl immediately said that was because she looked different to everyone else. Yole got very upset and said that wasn't true. The little girl cried because she had said the wrong thing. It all happened very quickly. Her older sister was angry with her about it.

Participants also received the following extract as background reading:

Crawford, J., Kippax, S., Onyx, J., Gault, U., & Benton, P. (1992) *Emotion and Gender*. London: Sage, pp.43-51.

Appendix 3.6 Interview questions

Monday 22 November 1999

Can you state your name, your age, where you live now and where you grew up

Participation in the research
Just to recap a little on the workshop and your involvement in this research project:

- Can you recall your experience of participating in the workshop?
- Has your participation triggered any other memories to those that you spoke about at the workshop?
- Can you recall the experience of participating in the subject "Working with Cultural differences"?
- What has it meant to you to be thinking about and talking about whiteness
- Do you see yourself as white? (If not how do you see yourself?)
- If I asked you now to say something about what it means to be white or what whiteness means to you what would you say?
- Can you imagine a time when you couldn't have answered that question? If so tell me a bit about that.

In the present:

1. How would you describe who you are/your identity

2. What makes your identity in the present?

3. What are the things about your identity that you see as framing who you are - possible triggers for this:
    - your gender
    - your family background
    - where you live/lived
    - who you mix with
    - what you do
    - where you come from
    - education
    - childhood experiences

4. How would you identify yourself in terms of ethnicity or racial background
    - how much do you see this as part of who you are
    - how has it framed who you are
    - is it something that you have always been aware of/or had very little awareness of
    - Do you see yourself as part of the dominant Australian identity? What does that mean to you? How do you experience being included/excluded from it?
    - do you see yourself as part of white Australia, why/why not

As a child

1. What are the stories that describe your childhood that relate to your identity?

2. Were there stories about being different - what were these about?

3. Were there stories of being part of the mainstream - what were these about?

4. Where you lived as a child who lived with you:
    - in your home
    - in your street
    - in your neighbourhood
    - how did it change over time

5. In terms of your identity what sort of things were you aware of as a child:
    - being a girl or a boy
    - sexuality
    - ethnicity
    - religion
    - politics

6. As a child were you aware of difference

7. Were you different - in what ways

8. Who was different to you - in what ways

9. Where did you meet difference:
    - in the home
    - on the street
    - not at all

10. What did these differences mean to you?

Thinking about Western Sydney

1. What does the term Western Sydney mean to you?

2. Do you see yourself as living in Western Sydney?

3. Are there thing s you could say about how living/working in Western Sydney as part of your identity?

Appendix 3.7 Letter accompanying the transcripts

Date

Name
Address

Dear

Please find enclosed a copy of the transcript of the interview I did with you for my research into "Constructions of Whiteness in Western Sydney". I was planning to go through and edit the transcript before sending it out but have decided against that as it will take too long and I would rather that you had the copy now than wait till I complete an edit process. As a result there are some spelling and grammatical errors as well as gaps in the text that will be corrected. My apologies in particular if your name has been misspelt in the transcribed copy, the transcriber was listening from the tape and did not have the spellings with her.

Please let me know if there is any material in the transcript that you would not be happy for me to use in the research. If you have the time and the interest I would welcome any additional comments you would like to add to your comments in the interview.

One of the ways in which I am planning to use the material is to construct composite stories from the themes and comments from across all the interviews. For example I am planning to construct some stories of Western Sydney drawing on all the different comments made by the interview participants but not attributable to any one particular participant. If this happens it is quite likely that you might recognise yourself in a story but there will be no discernible quote from any particular interview transcripts. If I do (with your permission) use quotes from individual transcripts I will be attributing the quote to a fictitious person with a made-up name. If you have any preferences as to what that name should be please let me know.

Memory–writing workshop transcript

I also have copies of the transcript from the small group discussions in the memory-writing workshop in October 1999. These transcripts cover the contributions of all the group members in each small group and I have decided not to send them out as it could be seen as a breach of confidentiality. If you wish to view the transcript for your small group please let me know. I will be using this material in a similar way to the interview transcripts and in any case where I take a direct quote from the discussions I will discuss this with the relevant group member(s).

Once again thank you for your time and much appreciated participation in this research. I do plan to organise a final meeting of the participants later this year for any of you able to attend and will contact you closer to the time as to possible dates/times/places/etc.

Best wishes

Jane Durie

Appendix 4.1 Curriculum document for cultural diversity

Cross-Cultural Communication and Interpersonal Skills

(name of degree deleted)

University of Western Sydney (Macarthur) 1996

CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Pre-requisite: Nil **Subject Load Factor:** *0.125*
Duration: One Semester Contact Hours: 40
Level: 2

RATIONALE

In Australia, there is currently increasing emphasis on adult education, vocational training and the notion of lifelong learning. Australia is a highly multicultural society, and adult educators will inevitably be involved in supporting the learning development of immigrant and Aboriginal students and trainees from diverse racial, religious, linguistic and gender backgrounds. In addition, there is increased participation by Australian educators in the international adult education arena and specifically in the Asian-Pacific countries. In these different contexts, adult students and educators will bring to the education and training process a wide range of cultural assumptions about teaching and learning, as well as assumptions about interpersonal roles and relationships. This subject aims to introduce students to a number of critical issues in cross-cultural awareness and the development of interpersonal skills, particularly in intercultural communication. It focuses on the nature and meaning of culture, similarities and differences which may exist across cultures, the role of verbal and non-verbal communication in cross-cultural exchanges, cultural expectations of the roles and relationships between speakers and the significance of interpersonal skills in effective cross-cultural communication.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- become aware of the historical and social contexts of immigration and multiculturalism and the scope and diversity of cross-cultural communication in Australia.
- examine theoretical and practical issues in cross-cultural and interpersonal communication at social, group and individual levels and critically evaluate their implications for teaching and learning.
- identify the nature and meaning of culture and consider the implications for adult education and learning, where learners come from a range of immigrant and Aboriginal backgrounds
- develop awareness of the role of verbal and non-verbal aspects of cross-cultural and interpersonal communication, particularly in adult education and training contexts.
- demonstrate their understanding of the factors operating in cross-cultural interpersonal encounters through case studies relating to their own professional contexts and practices.

CONTENT

- setting the context: immigration and multicultural policies and practices in Australia
- theoretical concepts of the nature, scope and meaning of culture

- psychological and affective factors in cross-cultural encounters: ethnocentrism, culture shock, enculturation
- learning another language: social and psychological implications
- the relationships between verbal and non-verbal communication
- cultural and interpersonal factors in race and gender
- cross-cultural perspectives in the classroom: interpersonal roles and relationships
- cross-cultural perspectives in the classroom: the role of spoken and written language in learning
- cross-cultural perspectives in the classroom: methodologies, materials and learning resources
- focus on major cultural groups in Australia: South East Asian learners
- focus on major cultural groups in Australia: Central and Southern European learners
- focus on major cultural groups in Australia: Middle Eastern and Latin American learners

PRESENTATION

The subject will be presented through a combination of modes ranging from weekly lectures, task-based discussion and feedback, self-directed study, student seminar presentations, audio-visual input (videos and tapes) and workshops, to weekend or residential schools.

ASSESSMENT

The subject will be assessed via the graded mode.

Annotated bibliography and critical review

Choose five articles on the subject of the relationship between culture and communication, psychological and affective factors in cross-cultural communication, interpersonal issues in race and gender, and present them in the form of an annotated bibliography. In about 1,200 words, analyse the articles critically for their implications for adult educators and trainers.

A case study

Record an interview, within the context of your own professional practice, a learner of immigrant or Aboriginal background. Focus on his or her racial, immigration, community, educational and linguistic experiences in Australia.

In no more than 1,500 words, describe these experiences and draw out the ethical implications for cross-cultural communication and interpersonal exchanges in your educational context, using your annotated bibliography and at least five *(5)* other references in your discussion. Provide a tape-recording of the interview and substantiate your findings and conclusions with excerpts from the interview.

Seminar presentation

In a fifty-minute seminar presentation, outline the findings of your case study and engage the class in a critical discussion of the adult educational implications.

TEXT

There is no set text.

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Appendix 4.2 A story to tell

Extract from:

Durie, Jane. (1996) Emancipatory Education and Class Room Practice: A feminist post-structuralist perspective. In *Studies in Continuing Education*, Vol 18 No 2, pp 135-146.[36]

The story I tell is both a 'true' account of a lesson and at the same time it is a fiction, a recounting for a particular purpose, loosely based around a particular 'incident' in a particular class. This is partly to protect the identity of the students, but also an acknowledgment that any story carries with it traces of other stories. It is drawn from conscious memories that remain with me of particular incidents and shaped by other experiences. It is informed and mediated by my own knowledge of and relations to discourses around race and multiculturalism; by my subjective experiences as a teacher and a student; and the changing and shifting perspectives, both conscious and unconscious, that I carry with me to see and understand what goes on around me. Another time, another purpose and the story I tell could be quite different in emphasis and in outline. And, of course, for each student there are also many stories which are not for me to tell.

Following the narrative, I move into an analysis of my classroom practice, drawing on feminist and post-structuralist arguments and relating these to my own experience of teaching. In this section, I draw out the themes touched on in the story and other issues and understandings I have of the classroom dynamic. In particular, I address teacher/student relationships and the notion of 'student voice'. In bringing the paper to a close, I argue that feminist post-structuralist analysis opens up emancipatory possibilities for recognising that at all moments in the classroom different discourses are competing for meaning and place. Such an approach can expand our knowledge and understandings of the classroom dynamics: opening up possibilities for engaging with the relations of power in the learning context and making space for different and more complex voices and positions to be heard and taken up.

A story to tell

It is mid afternoon. Outside the sun shines warm, almost languid, and through the windows come the occasional voices of students outside on the grass. This afternoon at least we are not to be disturbed by the sounds from the building site across the road. The students come in singly, in pairs or in groups, taking up seats but not fifing the room. It is a small class and as has become the pattern I choose not to insist on a reorganisation into small groups. This afternoon I am going to be using the overhead projector and presenting information about immigration and cultural diversity and I have not planned any small group activities, so why cause an unnecessary upheaval? There is a lot of material and I need to move through it quickly. So with just a brief introduction, I hand out the question sheet based on the presentation ('No, it is not an assessment task. Yes, you can include it in your journal.' *(That was easy, no major discussion about assessment today.)* and launch into the presentation.

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[36] Reproduced with permission from Taylor and Francis, http://www.tandf.co.uk

As I begin, the organisation of the room starts to play at the edges of my consciousness. To my left there is a group of three women sitting apart from the rest of the students clustered to my right. The cluster of students includes a couple of women and many more men. My view of these students is partially blocked by the overhead projector and I am physically closer to the three women but my attention is drawn to the larger grouping as the (male) students ask questions and make comments.

My obsession for the perfectly arranged classroom is surfacing. I certainly don't like this cluster on top of each other with a small group to one side as has occurred today, or not all sitting as far as possible away from me, almost hanging out the windows, as often happens. Why is it that in this class I do not insist on students sitting in small groups around the room? Is it that I sense so many levels of resistance that it seems easier to let it go? Am I going to pay the price today?

I continue the presentation, slipping easily through some parts of the material, lingering at other times as questions or comments come, only from the male students, and we slowly weave our way through the session.

If the choice had been there I wouldn't have got out of bed today, desiring more sleep than is ever possible. But that decision has been made many hours ago with the insistent voice of my daughter. And now lam in the midst of the class, it is happening all around me, Jam making it happen, comfortable in my role but always alert to the students; ease and challenge woven together, sometimes battling, sometimes at rest and no time to contemplate.

We move on and I wonder how many of the students are travelling with me, as I respond more or less patiently to the insistent challenge voiced by some of the men (but shared— I think—by the most of the women) to the concept of the acceptance of cultural diversity that underlies the material I am presenting. These challenges come in different forms— stories of personal experience, questions—but a sense of anger and resentment about perceptions of special treatment seems like a unifying theme. *Once again, the Pandora's box has been opened—facts', hurt feelings, fears, class resentments, values and beliefs are clanging around us but there seems no space for calling attention to such complexity, no space in the curriculum for such reality, no time. There are only frustrations, good intentions, the occasional laugh to break the unspoken, the often unknown, tensions.*

Towards the end of the session and I come unstuck. A voice from the wilderness! The women on my right, possibly feeling forgotten and isolated, have started their own discussion in the midst of my attention being yet again directed to the other side of the room. I curse the overhead projector, I curse the layout of the room and I think that I take it out on the women. Tell me, us—the rest of the group, what you are discussing. I pay the price of my impatience and frustration. One of the women speaks in a tentative but determined voice, raising yet another challenge to Australia's immigration policy— economic and environmental concerns about Australia's immigration intake. *I want the* women to speak in class but do I only want them to say what I want to hear? Why am I seemingly less patient with the argument raised by this woman? Is it just the cumulative effect of almost two hours of dealing with challenges to the material lam presenting? Or is my subconscious acting out a different relationship to the women in the class than to the men?

I engage with her. Her argument is not one I feel comfortable with, having seen it being misused by those who would use any means available to halt immigration to Australia of people of different cultural backgrounds. Does my disapproval and frustration give permission for what happens next? Suddenly there is a voice of quiet authority from the back of the room. One of the men has decided

to take up the argument (and, it appears, put this woman in her place). He has sat quietly through all the challenges and questions and comments from the men in the group but now he is taking this woman to task. I run my hands through my hair, calming myself. How am I to understand this? How am I to respond? Is it possible to enlist the support of his argument without further contributing to the dismissal of the woman? On this occasion, I feel I have dug my own grave. Vocal support for acceptance of cultural and racial diversity has come at the expense of gender and the right of students to express their views in safety.

We have run out of time. I gather my thoughts, gathering together the threads of what we have done, the ground that we have traversed. 'Yes, we will keep talking about these issues. It is important that we express our views and we listen to others. There are no simple answers.' The platitudes flow off my tongue as I bring the class to a close.

Outside the sun still shines, the occasional voice rises up and through the open windows. The classroom empties quickly and it is quiet as I gather up my papers and overheads. Did I imagine such a drama that unfolds and disappears on the turn of a clock? I am forced to wonder at my choice of lecture presentation and my own complicity in the events of what has turned out to be the most contested class to date. Today no one has lingered to ask a question, not even about assessment. I am stranded on an emotional high that doesn't feel like pleasure. I go upstairs to look for someone to talk to and find a responsive listener.

Appendix 4.3 Class handout – stories of identity

Handout: Student Activity - Stories of identity

Over the next few weeks, you need to think about and write your own stories of identity. These stories will reflect the idea that there are many stories to tell about our identity. Each week (or more often as you like) you can write a different story of your identity focusing on any/all of race, ethnicities, sexuality, gender, class, religion, disability, education, location, etc. (You can add to this list.)

Think about things/events/people/places throughout your life that for you have contributed to producing a sense of who you think you are/your identity. These could be moments of inclusion/exclusion, a sense of belonging, feelings of marginalisation, a sense of privilege, a sense of knowing who you are, confusing and contradictory experiences, feelings of difference, etc.

These stories of identity are about 'positioning' yourself in relation to different discourses and within relations of power. They can be drawn from different times in your life from your childhood through to more immediate events in your life and provide a marker of how much (or how little) your identity changes and shifts over time and contemporaneously. The stories can also be a reminder of how new information enables us to see and understand our lives differently. That is to position ourselves differently, to reinterpret an experience, etc. As we proceed through the semester covering different material this should enable you to construct other stories of your identity.

Thinking about and writing these stories, contributes to the process of understanding identity and difference. Your stories can be incorporated into your discussion of the readings and concepts in Assignment 5.1.

Appendix 5.1 Inserts

Insert 1: Making a point

I first related a version of this story in a paper presented to the *Unmasking Whiteness Conference* in Brisbane in September 1998 and later published in *Unmasking Whiteness: Race Relations and Reconciliation* (McKay 1999). I referred to it as a personal journey and it related a story of my path to whiteness studies from its beginnings in the women's movement. Following the presentation of this paper at the conference criticism was made of my reference to these North American writers as the source of inspiration for the work many of us were doing at that time (the early 1980s) in challenging racism within the women's movement and the broader Australian community. The purpose of the challenge was to make the point that we should have been using the work of Indigenous women in Australia. In an earlier working version of the paper I finally presented I did draw attention to the fact that these were pre-dominantly writers from North America and the general reliance on the writings of North American women of colour as an issue to be explored. However, in the interests of shortening the final presentation I removed this point, an error of judgement on my part I guess.

In response to the criticism that was made at the conference about the preponderance of North American literature as the source of inspiration for (mainly but not exclusively) white feminists there is much to be said, both about the attractions of the North American literature and the relative absence of and awareness of local writers and writings at that time, a situation that is no longer the case. Nevertheless while I did not want to be dismissive of the broader point being raised the purpose of my paper at that time in mentioning the literature was to trace an 'historical fact' rather than deconstruct why that literature and not local writers. This question does need to be addressed but in the paper I was giving, it was not central to my argument.

Insert 2: The vagaries of representation - a diversionary story

The paper I gave at the Australian Association for Research in Education conference in December 2000 I entitled: "I'm not a white middle class male", where the quotation marks were very much meant to be part of the title. My intention with the quotation marks was to indicate irony as well as claim a space for different understandings of white positionings. Unfortunately, from my perspective, the quotation marks were lost in the conference printing process and so I appeared in the program as giving a paper entitled: I'm not a white middle class male. At first when I read it, I couldn't figure out what was wrong. But, something was very wrong. Apart from the fact that the quotation marks were there to indicate it was a quote, I knew that was not the paper I was giving. It read as in your face, strident, demanding placation. It took me a couple of days to realise it was the absence of the quotation marks that was causing the textual glitch in my reading of my own paper

presentation. At the time of my presentation, I incorporated the following comments into the paper presentation about the missing quotation marks:

> When I saw the title of my paper in the program all alone and minus the quotation marks, intended to suggest irony and ambivalence, from both the student's perspective, and mine, it took me a while to figure out what was the problem. And then it hit me that suddenly it seemed I was presenting a paper representing everything that I am working against in interrogating whiteness—a bald claim to distance myself from the privileges of whiteness. Rather than this, the title, encased within its quotation marks, was intended to capture the frustrations and difficulties that many white students experience when confronted with the task of thinking about themselves as white; and to express the tensions of working with and against the impossible task of engaging students with thinking about whiteness as privilege, simultaneously as I work against any easy categorisation of whiteness.

And of course my concerns about the missing quotation marks probably had very little bearing on the many different readings that conference participants gave to the title as it appeared, naked and standing alone as a claim for consideration, prior to seeing or hearing the paper itself. I was caught in my own trap of asking quotation marks to do too much work in the text.

Insert 3: Too many quotation marks: Another diversionary story

At the time of the call for papers for publication from the Unmasking Whiteness Conference [1998], an invitation was also issued for participants to comment on the conference itself. The conference had been a heated affair with some difficult moments though obviously those difficulties were experienced and attributed differently by the participants. I wrote a commentary on the conference, submitted along with my conference paper and thought not much more about it until the proceedings became available and, in addition to my paper, my commentary had been published alongside only one other commentary. There was no explanation in the text as to whether these were the only two submitted or whether perhaps they had been selected from others submitted. Needless to say, I was disconcerted to see my commentary almost alone and unedited from its original submission.

But time moves on and apart from the original shock, I was just happy to have another publication. That is, until I read a published article that included a discussion of the Unmasking Whiteness Conference and proceeded to use my published Commentary as a centrepiece of that discussion (see Nicoll 2000). I was confronted with a reading of the use of the quotation marks in a way that I had never intended. I found myself being used as an example of someone who wanted to deny the racism of my whiteness from a position of being an 'anti-racist'. Perhaps if the Commentary in the publication had been edited as the article had been this would not have happened. Perhaps this particular (mis)reading of my quotation marks would never have taken place. But it did and there I am positioned as

someone who is in denial of my white privilege, does not acknowledge my own white racism, etc. Ouch!! But, there is redemption (of sorts):

> The author's struggle with her [that's my] whiteness is palpable. Quotation marks around the word 'good' indicate that her proprietorial relationship to virtue has been unsettled. However, her response to this unsettlement is to desire greater 'generosity of spirit and understanding'. In other words [that is, Fiona Nicoll's words] she will contribute to solving the problem of racism by becoming a better woman. I would suggest that the reverse is true (Nicoll 2000: 381).

I am not sure how Nicoll is interpreting my use of the term generosity of spirit but for me it was a reference to my own somewhat hesitant and fledgling interest in Buddhism, and a recognition of my own inability to see and understand others' experiences. It was also a nod to the theoretical positioning of my research that recognises the impossibility of seeing and knowing everything from any position—Donna Haraway's God Trick (Haraway 1988: 582). As to 'good', in using the quotation marks, I wanted to deliberately unsettle the idea of goodness and of being good, not to suggest that my 'proprietorial relationship to virtue has been unsettled', but that subtly seems to be lost on Nicoll, intent on using my Commentary for her own purposes.

But, there it is in print and I have to live with the consequences of my quotation marks—a good woman of questionable intent wanting to solve the problem of racism. Which is not to say that I do not want to solve the problems of racism or that I can possibly be aware of all the implications of that desire and of my positioning as an educator who uses pedagogic practices to work with students in the field of cultural differences, relations of power, racism, etc. Informed good intentions may be the best I can draw upon.

Insert 4: Falling over my own political correctness

One thing I haven't made clear about the usage of the race/class/gender triplet is that it operates as a shorthand marker of my theoretical evolution through the Australian women's movement of the 1980s as a socialist feminist, rather than any one of the myriad of other versions that were possible at that time—radical feminist, lesbian feminist, liberal feminist, eco-feminist, etc. Thus, an engagement with class/race/gender was part and parcel of my and others theoretical/activist approach to issues and concerns. When I came to this thesis in the late 1990s, it was second nature and a term of shared meaning amongst those I knew who shared my views about the world and feminism, even as the moment that had given rise to that shared meaning had passed.

Working in a reading group in 1999, I was challenged on my selection of these three terms as the focus of my analysis and asked why I did not include disability, for example, as a relevant term to work with. I was being challenged to think about my attachment to the race/class/gender triplet as a recognisable embodiment of the theoretical position of socialist feminism that I took for granted. Even as I now challenge the certainties of such a positioning, I consider its symbolic meaning to be clear in terms of its representation of a body of theoretical thinking and activism. This was not understood or agreed by all or

possibly any of the other members of the reading group, none of whom had similar experiences to mine within the women's movement of the early 1980s.

Leaving aside any question of my willingness or otherwise to engage with disability as a site to focus my work, I would also argue that the race/class/gender triplet has symbolic meaning beyond a listing of descriptive terms of difference and oppression that could include disability, sizism, heterosexism, locationism, heightism, ageism, etc., etc, (See the works of Ellsworth (Ellsworth 1992) and Mimie Orner (Orner 1992) for discussions of these lists of descriptors.)

Insert 5: Political correctness and binary divides

For those who want to see the world in terms of simple binaries—right and wrong, white racist versus oppressed black (or, from the other side of such a divide, white civilisation versus black primitiveness) grasping more complex and often uneasily contradictory positionings is a challenge. Wanting to work with the multiplicities of what it means to be white at the same time as working against its racist privileges and practices—is challenging to an easier and more straightforward understanding, such as: 'the problem of racism is white people; or whiteness'. To suggest for example that there is something to be gained from more in depth understandings of white privilege—for example as not evenly distributed across those who are defined as white—challenges the easy binary understandings that often operate within the field of anti-racism. This is particularly a problem when there is a polarisation of positions in popular Australian discourses over race, racism, responsibilities, reconciliation, etc. It is easy to be caught falling on the wrong side of the divide, to be seen to be not speaking against racism by the very fact of speaking about complexity. That is, the public debate and the ways in which some commentators and intellectuals take up the arguments (on both sides of the arbitrary divide) contribute to an either/or, with us/against us reductionist positioning that generates defensiveness and blaming; and prevents an airing of the complexities and subtleties that could open up different possibilities for challenging and intervening in dominant racist discourses and practices.

This binary construction and territorialisation of the field has played its part in my writing and speaking about whiteness. In early conference presentations and publications, I was concerned to establish my anti-racist positioning in order to avoid being labelled an apologist for white racism. Mostly this was expressed in long introductions that covered what I have identified as the dangers of whiteness studies. On occasion, it also included a brief outline of my own trajectory into the field, establishing my PC credentials. In some ways this was almost a deprecation of my own work—"I know I am a white woman investigating whiteness but if I spend most of my time explaining the dangers of this positioning and explaining how my work is a contribution to undermining racist discourses and practices it will be okay". I abandoned the practice partly in recognition that the restrictions of a 20-minute conference presentation did not leave time for much else than the elaboration of my positioning as a white researcher into whiteness. I also become more confident of my work and my theoretical positioning and no longer felt the need to justify myself in that way.

This begs the question of who would be in a better/best position to investigate whiteness. It begs the question of who it is that I see as making the judgement. And of course while there is no perfect position—no god trick— people who are not white have a historically compelling claim to both be distrustful of white peoples' intentions in this field as well as being able to see and experience the effects of whiteness from a very different position, as eloquently argued by bell hooks:

> I remember the fear, being scared to walk to Baba's, our grandmother's house, because we would have to pass that terrifying whiteness. ... Even when empty or vacant those porches seemed to say danger, you do not belong here, you are not safe. (hooks 1997, p.175). [And further on] ... even though that journey was made a long time ago there is no comfort that makes the terrorism disappear. All black people in the United States, irrespective of their class status or politics, live with the possibility that they will be terrorized by whiteness (hooks 1997 p.175).

Insert 6: Coming unstuck

Even when I think I am clear and confident about the meaning of studying whiteness I can come unstuck unexpectedly. In a seminar with a group of academic colleagues preparing papers for a publication I found myself suddenly challenged by the question "Why whiteness?" I was (naively) not expecting such a question as I was with academic colleagues working on a publication about social justice and had not even imagined there would be a challenge to the place of a discussion of whiteness in such a publication, and certainly had not prepared myself for the sorts of resistances I meet in the classroom everyday when teaching about whiteness and difference. But here I was on the spot having to justify the point of researching whiteness (in the face of far more pressing issues, was the implication).

Comments and questions thick and fast, were along the lines of: Surely socio-economic status/class is the most important factor in discussing social justice? One of the problems with the postmodern is that analyses of class have been overshadowed by considerations of cultural difference. Why do we need to know about whiteness? How does it help us to understand about racism? What do you mean by white privilege when we are addressing issues of working class oppression?

Not prepared and in the limelight I lurched into silence (as often happens when put on the spot) until a colleague rescued me with a few well-chosen lines of rebuttal/justification that are the common responses to these types of comments. This enabled me collect myself and to take up the issues that were being raised, if not satisfy the emotional resistances of the challengers. And interestingly my rescuing colleague reminded us as a group that we need to ask ourselves what silences we do not address by not looking at whiteness. What do we loose in our analysis if questions about whiteness are left out of the equation and if we have an already complete idea of what the questions are in relation to social justice.

Appendix 5.2 Thesis proposal and working documents

Thesis Proposal Submitted April 1997

Introduction

This thesis proposal focuses on the construction of whiteness and how this contributes to and structures racism in Australia today. Integral to this will be considerations of the ways in which class and gender intersect around whiteness and racism. The site of the research will be Western Sydney. My choice of Western Sydney largely is due to the fact that I am based there for my work- at the University of Western Sydney. In taking this as the site for my research I will problematise the site so as to avoid drawing on stereotypes about Western Sydney. In this regard I will draw on the work of Leslie Johnson - Theorising Western Sydney.

Research Overview

In the research I want to examine concepts and constructions of whiteness both at the individual level and at a social/cultural level. To do this my research will include work with individuals, community organisations and current texts such as media reports. This will be integrated with the research and analysis of the theoretical areas outlined below. The research will provide insights into how different individuals and groups of people come to be described as 'white' or 'non-white'; and for the latter as ethnic and 'other'; and how this plays itself out in current expressions of racism in an Australian community. Clearly, as Australian based research the particular position(s) of indigenous peoples in Australia will also be taken up in terms of research and discussion of racism. My work will also take account of the changing composition of 'ethnic' populations: that and ethnic groups are not static and the concept of ethnicity changes. This arises not just from changing populations of immigration into Australia but also from shifts in power and influence of different groups in Australia (inter)acting upon beliefs about who is 'ethnic' and who is 'other' and who gets to decide.

In undertaking the research I will incorporate an investigation of the "Pauline Hanson" phenomenon. In doing this I want to contextualise my research in terms of current and recurring debates in Australia in relation to race and racism. This will include examining research undertaken by the Council for Reconciliation about attitudes in the community; and reactions and responses to the Pauline Hanson debate. It is not intended to focus on Pauline Hanson, in particular as she is (just) the current messenger, but rather what her speeches have tapped into/are representative of in the community. I will also examine research material about peoples' experiences of racism in Australia. I will combine these different sources of material to give a sense of the complexity of racism and peoples experiences of racism within local communities in Western Sydney'.

Theoretical work/literature about the construction of whiteness.

In undertaking this research, I plan to draw upon various theoretical bodies of work as listed below.

- *Feminist post-structuralist theoretical works* including the works of Lee, Sawicki, Weedon and Yeatman.
- *Psychoanalytical theory* drawing on the works of Lacan and Kristeva amongst others.
- *Postcolonial studies (from a psychoanalytical perspective).* Authors in this area include Bhabha, Fanon and Hall.
- *Feminist theoretical work on race* taking up the works of Lord, Moraga, Singh, Trinh Min Ha and others.
- *Australian literature on racism/class/gender.* This will include looking at research undertaken by Castles, Perera, Petman, the Council of Reconciliation, and others.

There are many overlaps and crossovers between and amongst the areas of theory and the authors' works in the above areas. In the process of undertaking the research my intention will be to map the overlaying theoretical works underlining my work.

Theoretical work/literature around research methodology

My research methods will largely be in depth semi-structured interviews, text analysis and research through writing. In the process of undertaking research I want also to problematise the process of research. In doing this I will draw on the work of, amongst others, Patti Lather and Elliot Mishler.

Community liaison and involvement

An important aspect of the research will be my involvement, and hence the involvement of the University of Western Sydney, in local communities in Western Sydney. This is integral to the process of research both in terms of engaging in a collaborative process of doing the research(to the extent that is possible within the constraints of thesis work) and ensuring that the research is useful to the local communities involved. My intention is that there would be mutual benefits for both parties in undertaking the research arising through the process of research and through the implementation of findings at a later stage.

Summation

In undertaking this research there would be four parallel strands to the thesis. These are as outlined above:

'Grounded' research in Western Sydney	Theoretical research	Problematising research method	Community liaison

My intention would be to carry all these strands forward as integral aspects of the overall thesis.

Significance of the research

The research will contribute to our understandings at both theoretical and practical levels of the construction of whiteness and the how this intersects with current expressions of and

experiences of racism. The analysis will take account of the complexities of racism in terms of class and gender. In focussing the research within local communities in Western Sydney the research will also contribute to the work of community development in the area. In challenging concepts of 'ethnicity' and 'other' and the relations of power that bring about and uphold particular configurations at any one time. Thus, the work will contribute both to theory and to practice in community settings.

The work will also contribute to the development of education curriculum and community development projects designed to challenge and breakdown racism by enabling a more complex understanding of how it operates.

Thesis proposal working document 27 July 1997

Strands of the thesis as set out in proposal

'Grounded' research in Western Sydney	Theoretical research	Educational implications of the research	Problematising research method	Community liaison

Questions:

What are the cultural/social processes that turn resentments into racism for the individual/ community?

What literature do I need to get into to understand what might be at work in producing racism at the individual/community level?

Strands of the thesis	Literature
Theory	
- *psychoanalytic* • notions of the individual • subjective positions • the unconscious • how does this all link to theories about identity?	Jacques Lacan Melanie Klein Julia Kristeva
- *'race', 'ethnicities'* • concepts of race, ethnicities • how are these concepts constructed socially/culturally • what are the different ways in which individuals take up 'their race'	Frantz Fanon Ghassan Hage Stuart Hall

- *postcolonial theory* • identity and colonisation • centres and margins • how do 'whites' create 'the other' for themselves	Gayatri Spivak Homi Bhabha Trinh T. Minh-ha
Feminist-post-structuralist theory • feminist 'takes' on Foucault	Michel Foucault Jana Sawicki Jane Flax
'race/class/gender' triplet intersecting 'oppressions'	Cherrie Moraga Audre Lorde Paulo Singh
Pedagogies of difference *anti-racist education* *cross-cultural communication*	Henry Giroux Ali Rattansi bell hooks
"Grounded' research in Western Sydney *theorising and problematising Western Sydney*	Lesley Johnson
Theorising research *Problematising research methodologies*	Patti Lather Elliot Mishler
Current Australian context *Colonisation/immigration/multiculturalism* *discourses around racism* *current 'text's - eg Pauline Hanson*	Mary Kalantzis Stephen Castles Jan Pettman
Community/UWS 'liaisons' *Concepts of community* *who creates communities* *community identities* *'the place' of 'the university' in 'the community'*	

What do I mean by community? Is it an appropriate term?

Thesis proposal working document 5 September 1997

My thesis is looking at constructions of 'whiteness'.

What I want to do is to examine the processes whereby a person creates themselves/is created as 'white'. Once constructed as white the social centricity of whiteness means that the white person does not see their centrality. In seeing others as 'non white' they participate in the construction of 'others' and develop a centrist position in relation to those

'others'. How does this all come about in the degrees of complexity not represented in that description?

These are very complicated processes to do with constructions of identity at different levels, taking place within the cultural practices of 'the family' and other cultural institutions, etc. in 'white' dominated societies and (in different ways: in relation to class, for example) within particular white communities and localities.

My empirical work will be undertaken in 'western Sydney' (given my location at UWS). A particular outcome of my work around centrist notions of whiteness would be to examine it's relevance for anti-racist education. This is based on my interest and experiences in anti-racist education and does not derive from any interest in mounting arguments in relation to the greater or lesser experiences of racism in western Sydney though clearly images and perceptions of western Sydney come in to the picture and will need to be examined, as do assumptions about class/race/gender, etc.

At this stage I haven't decided whether I will focus on women only in terms of 'the field work' or focus on both men and women and what this might mean in terms of my study and the thesis. Clearly it is not possible or desirable to dismiss gender within identity formations/subjectivities so it might be a matter of thinking through how I am going to take up gender in my work (to the extent that it is possible to do this) and ways that it will be played out by only looking at women or looking at men and women, etc. Or do I just say I am looking at constructions of whiteness in relation to white women, not as a way around interplays of gender identity and ethnic identities but possibly as an easy limit to the research.

So what do I need to do? What theories do I need to be familiar with to get at constructions of identity/constructions of whiteness?

I think the 'big' body of theory I need to come to terms with is psychoanalytical - the self, subjectivities, etc. as well as more sociological/cultural studies material about culture and identity.

Appendix 5.3 Whiteness Quotes

Ruth Frankenberg

> ...whiteness changes over time and space and is in no way a transhistorical essence. ... It is a complexly constructed product of local, regional, national, and global relations, past and present. ... And ... it is also a relational category, one that is co-constructed with a range of other racial and social categories, with class and gender. ... This co-construction is, however, fundamentally asymmetrical, for the term 'whiteness' signals the production and reproduction of dominance rather than subordination, normativity rather than marginality, and privilege rather than disadvantage. (Frankenberg 1993b, p.236-7)

Kincheloe and Steinberg

> Even through no one at this point really knows what whiteness is, most observers agree that it is intimately involved with issues of power and power differences between white and non-white people. Whiteness cannot be separated from hegemony and is profoundly influenced by demographic changes, political realignments and economic cycles. Situationally specific, whiteness is always shifting, always reinscribing itself around changing meanings of race in the larger society. As with race in general, whiteness holds material/economic implications - indeed white supremacy has its financial rewards. ... Undoubtedly, there continue to be unearned wages of whiteness. (Kincheloe 1997, p.207)

Homi Bhabha:

> One of Foucault's most enduring arguments is that the place of power is always somehow invisible, a tyranny of the transparent. Recent work on the experience of 'whiteness' ... makes the Foucauldian line practically axiomatic. The critique of whiteness ... attempts to displace the normativity of the white position by seeing it as a strategy of authority rather than an authentic or essential "identity". Since 'whiteness' naturalises the claim to social power and epistemological

privilege, displacing its position cannot be achieved by raising the 'gaze of the other'.... The subversive move is to reveal within the very integuments of 'whiteness' the agonistic elements that make it the unsettled, disturbed form of authority that it is - the incommensurable 'differences' that it must surmount; the histories of trauma and terror that it must perpetrate and from which it must protect itself; the amnesia it imposes on itself; the violence it inflicts in the process of becoming a transparent and transcendent force of authority. (Bhabha 1998, p.21)

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