

## ***Researching anti racism education: Negotiating the paces 'in-between***

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### ***Researching anti racism education: Negotiating the spaces 'in-between'.***

It is a quandary for narrative researchers of racism and anti racism education that even as the other is encouraged to speak, the researcher orchestrates their voices and is also positioned within the research. Researchers are cautioned that it is difficult, to write about others and that a first task is to understand ourselves. Recent writings demonstrate that we are multipositioned, implicated in unequally empowered ways of understanding and doing; that people share positionings in common and yet are not simply defined by sets of binaries; black, white, working class, middle class, female, male. This paper seeks to understand the implications of this 'changing of the subject' on positionality. In doing so it untangles Homi Bhabha's observation that subjects are formed in excess of parts of difference, especially as they are defined as race, class and gender; and that communities share experiences but have understandings, and priorities which are antagonistic, conflictual and incommensurable

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#### ***Introduction***

In any research for a more coherent and critical response to multicultural and anti racism policies, one is forced to ask the question, "What is my position in the research". The literature of narrative research warns us of dilemmas which emerge when undertaking ethnographic research. These writings remind us that we, as researchers, have the last word. Even as we allow others to speak, we have chosen to whom we wish to listen, the questions which we want them to answer, how much time we will allow them to speak. We as researchers orchestrate the research. We have control. As I go into schools to undertake research which studies racism and ways to combat it, this question takes on particular meaning.

Theorists make two particular suggestions they believe will help to overcome this predicament. They suggest a 'poli-vocality' of speakers and ways of thinking: of letting many voices speak, of allowing different voices to tell their own story, of presenting a chorus of

competing and perhaps irresolvable readings of the same text . More particularly they remind us that participants in the study are silenced, and that the last word remains with the uncontested and privileged interpretations of the author. The author too we are reminded, has a voice, a final voice and in the end it is this voice which remains uncontested within the data. If we are to disrupt this voice, these theorists argue, we need to understand and explain our own positioning within the data , . We must properly define the place from which we speak, the person we are, and the way we might effect, or be effected, by the interpretations inscribed within ethnographic texts.

My concern, in this paper, is not to displace these strategies, but to explore the way recent literatures of post colonialism and anti racism might develop their meaning more fully. In this paper, I seek to understand how it is that we can position voices; either those of others, or our own. Recent literatures have made it clear that the positioning of voices, of bodies, is no simple matter. They suggest that positioning is both nothing, an invention, and everything, our every day lives. They argue that we are multipositioned, implicated in unequally empowered ways of understanding and doing; that people share positionings in common and yet are not simply defined by sets of binaries; black/ white, working class/ middle class, female/ male. They point out that positioning is something strategic, a coalition, a way of resistance, a precursor of agency and yet and at the time something mediated by, and mediating, of a crisscrossing of understandings and ways of doing.

Positioning is often discussed as if it is a natural, authentic, timeless, essential, primordial, something which can fully explain and categorise us and them. Yet we find ourselves saying there is something more; that we are not just that. In this paper I seek to uncover how we can discuss differences that position us so clearly and irretrievably within material existence and yet, at the same time how we are in excess of these parts, multipositioned, part of communities which share meanings and priorities which are antagonistic, conflictual and incommensurable. In doing so I hope to understand how it is that we can speak of self and other, of listening to the other and positioning self, especially when embarking on projects such as that of anti racism research. As the focus of my research is that of developing theories of anti racism, this discussion privileges unashamedly positionings of difference and race. However, as can be seen, this is not separate from other positionings; especially those of class and gender.

### ***Ways of positioning***

What do we mean 'position ourselves within the research', or 'portray the positions or multiple voices of others'. What are the categories which we are to use? Where do they come from? What are their effects? I ask these questions which are not quite rhetorical because, of course, I already know what is being asked. I am woman and Jewish. Or more accurately as far as this research is concerned, I am *woman*, heterosexual, Australian, middle class, teacher, *Jewish*, and white. In Australian Government documents I am also of Non English Speaking Background (NESB), of German ethnicity. By a strange trick of fate I was born in Germany, of German born but already nationalised Australian parents. My resume also shows that I went to the local high school in what was then a staunchly working class and Anglo Australian suburb of Melbourne and that after a quite uneventful university education went on to teach in another working class but most cosmopolitan area on the other side of Melbourne. I am also over forty years old, married and the mother of not quite any more teenage boys.

These ways of positioning make sense. It is not that I cannot read the question. I share a common understanding of what positioning means. Yet I also feel a sense of frustration. At every turn I add layers and layers of complexity. And still - and still- and still, I want to write, there is so much more to say - and less. These intuitive awarenesses of positioning: one of

solidity; of concreteness of definitive understanding of who we are and where we are placed; the other of increasing complexity; of fragmentation; of change; of being something more or less than; work together as I struggle to define who it is I am. If I am to define positioning then I must begin by recognising and explaining both these solidnesses and fragments, these more thans and less thans and just the same as, these choosings and absolute powerlessnesses.

Frankenberg , in a revolutionary study of woman and whiteness, provides a framework which begins to describe, though by no means properly explain, this so solid and yet fragmentary aspect of modern identities. She argues that ways of understanding of race and difference in modern western societies reflect three particular moments: essentialism, colour blindness and race cognition. It is in my own analysis and critique of these three moments that I begin to unravel what 'being positioned' might mean in contemporary times.

In a most pernicious and white supremacist document, Ronald E. Henderson writes:

All people need a sense of identity. Who are you and where are your roots? Most people belonging to the White Race are being deprived by propaganda, of the knowledge of their precious heritage. They fail to understand the uniqueness of the knowledge of their precious heritage. They fail to understand the uniqueness of their true place in history and the role that their White Ancestors played in the progress of civilisation. It is only today, with a deliberate miseducation program and the dilution of the white genes that the white race is threatened, particularly in Australia.

The point of Henderson's arguments is threefold. First, particular qualities are markers of difference. White skin and white genes are different to, and bounded from, other skins and other genes. Secondly, there are common histories, common ways of doing, common biological superiorities which differentiate white, and other. Finally, white skin deserves different and exclusory treatment. This first moment for understanding difference in modern times marks the place where 'race' is made a marker of difference, an axis of differentiation. It is a view which defines race as something biological, something primordial, something always and forever there. Frankenberg labels this way of 'benchmarking' race and difference, of marking the moment when 'race is made into difference', as essentialism .

More recently, these ways of identifying difference have changed from those of biology, to others related to place of birth, common experiences and culture. Goldberg , as well as others (for example see , trace the way common ethnicities have increasingly become essentialised as race. Groups are defined as different if they share natural and heritable qualities by virtue of their common histories and experiences, regardless as to whether it can be seen that they share particular phenological or biological characteristics. Boundaries are constructed around these groups as if they have been forever other, and identities within those boundaries are internalised and naturalised, as if they are forever the same and held in common. A protean collection of groups (Blacks, Jews, Aborigines, Japanese or Greeks) become referred to interchangeably as racial or as ethnic groups. The way these understandings have increasingly slipped into our vocabulary is well illustrated in a recent book review. Placed on the front page of 'The Age' newspaper, (book review become news), headlined *How migrants fuelled ALP's race to power* and subheaded *A dangerous brand of racial politics flourished during 13 years of federal Labor government*, the article posited that:

The handling of immigration by the previous Labor Government was, I'd have to say, less than distinguished because, I think, immigration was seen as very important, tremendously important element in building up a long-term political constituency. There was a sense that you might get the Greek vote locked up

or, from the other party -political points of view might get the Chinese vote locked up. As a result, the idea of bringing groups of people to fulfil family reunion requirements and so on , was seen at the time as being a real advantage to the party in power at the time ... In less than three generations Australia has increased its population by 150% , radically changed its racial and ethnic ... It should be time to recognise this achievement. It is not. Public discourse has instead become a drumbeat of discord, division, complaint and blame (The Age, Saturday 30 May, 1998, pp.1&8)

Greekness and Chineseness are seen as something homogenous, something solid and unchanging, a disturbing presence, a canker set against otherwise pure and untroubled Australianness. This solidness, this taken for granted way of describing and explaining race and difference is of course exactly the point that is being made here. In Australia, we can barely envision speaking of these groups otherwise.

Parallel to, in opposition to and yet intermixed with this common understanding of essential and biological difference, is a common understanding of essential sameness, that 'we are all the same under the skin':

What it means to be Dutch- that's a good question- is that the only way that you define your identity- I don't think that your identity is defined by birthrite - I think that is something that is nice - I think that is something that you choose - I think that you choose - and when I talk about identity I mean cultural point - the Dutch did some horrible things in the various colonies of the world .... they don't have a clean slate and record but I don't take that baggage on board - I take on the things I like - I enjoyed the lovely exuberance of life - I saw in France - the passion for life that I saw in Italy and I take that on board - that's a bit of me too - that's my cultural identity- so your identity is also a lot of other things that came in between during your travels - yeah - you choose - you choose - you take these things on and - I am not a nationalist in this regard - I think that nationalism has a hell of a lot of things to answer for - a hell of a lot to answer for - it really terrified me when I saw what it can do - I was travelling through Poland - Poland historically has been a wonderfully pluralistic society where Jews and Christians lived side by side in harmony- they have and they still have the longest period of stable democracy of any European nation- ... Hitler made everyone suddenly realise that they were different - identified the Germans of ... as being better as being part of the greater brotherhood - and even sadder the Polish went in on this- after the war a lot of the German speaking Jews were forcibly immigrated and that is very sad to me - it is now a very monoculture - they have exported what they saw as a problem- they have ripped their inside out (Arber, Unpublished materials, 1998)

In this second moment People are understood as having a choice, of choosing only the best from cultures, of taking only that which is most exciting. In such a rose coloured world Jews are not killed in concentration camps but just quietly immigrate leaving behind a sadder Poland sorry about their choice. Colonising powers, might have done terrible things in the colonies, but this aspect of history is something for which we can choose not to take responsibility. Policies of assimilation, integration and multiculturalism assume that people are able to choose whether or not to be different in the same way as they might choose to join a particular basketball team. What is different between these ways of understanding is not the fact of choice but the amount of choice and difference we are prepared to tolerate. Difference, is something superficial, something changeable, something to do with the natural exuberance of life, something to be celebrated.

Goldberg and others (for example , ) see this moment of 'colour blindness' as reflecting the irony of modernity. Central to this liberal moment is the common 'man', masculine, atomistic, general, universal, divorced from history, commanded only by reason. It is understood that this individual, transcendent of any particular historical, social or cultural difference, can rationally choose who 'he' will be and how 'he' will behave towards others. However, even as abstract universal identity is insisted upon, difference is being reimposed. Even as those part of the evershifting 'we' talk of being able to choose between identities, we have differentiated between them. The exuberance of life of the French, the passionateness of the Italian, the pluralism of Polish Christians and Jews living side by side are not quite part of us. Even as we continue to search for commonality, we have celebrated or gritted our teeth at what we already define as different, prepared to tolerate the already othered. More particularly we fail to note that we and they cannot always choose; that even as we note that people are all the same we have already noted their difference. It is these moments of noting difference which has already meant that there has indeed been no choice, that colour blindness has in fact been what Frankenberg has called colour evasiveness and power evasiveness. In the split second that the difference has been noted, it has already been seen and acted upon.

It would be too narrow to trace in this second moment only the instance of liberalism. Commonsense accounts viewed through the instance of neo marxism can be similarly blind. A newspaper article entitled *Multiculturalism: why its gone astray: too much emphasis on ethnicity has distracted us from the ideal of equality* stresses that:

To elevate multiculturalism above equality as a defining characteristic of being Australian was an error of some magnitude, not only in its politically divisive effects but because it distorted the struggle for the expansion of democratic rights. If equal rights for citizens is our central aim, then claims by particular treatment have to be justified and given specific assent. We have done this for the aged (in pensions), for war veterans (in special services) for the disabled (Principally in regulation on access) but there is no clear case, in my view, for special treatment for migrants as a class ('The Age', Thursday, 6/8/98, p.13).

Once again difference disappears into convolutions of connotations . Migrantness and Non English Speaking Backgroundness (NESBness) becomes something inevitably related to poverty. Migrants are both a commonality- an underclass - and a difference which is fleeting, a subproletariate, artificially, transiently, perhaps malevolently separated from other under-privileged classes. Race itself is understood as a production, an ideology, an illusion which allows some people to expect different and unequal treatment from others . As a false consciousness race, ethnicity and difference are once again non existent. Difference, is but ideology. It doesn't exist and everyone seems once again to be the same.

Frankenberg's third moment for positioning difference insists once again on difference but here the terms of essentialism are formulated, not by those who control the centre, but by those in the periphery. Difference provides a focus for coalition, autonomy of culture and a benchmark for values and aesthetic standards. No longer solely a site of exclusion and repression, choosing difference becomes a strategy, a way of constructing oneself, a source of radical social action and a site of resistance. The margins, as they are constituted by difference construction, become a space to renew oneself , a means for social transformation, a way of dealing with the interests of oppressed groups . Race and difference become a way of self definition, of self naming, a place for fighting back. It is from the moment of 'race cognisance' that Wayne King is able to argue in 1996 in his most moving book *Black Hours* that:

The problems of alcohol, health and education are not the real problems of the Aboriginal community, The real problem is a sickness of spirit. If Aborigines are to survive, we need to revitalise that spirit and have pride in being Aboriginal. moreover, we must have our land back unconditionally, Aboriginal identity and belonging come from the land, As someone who has been deprived of his culture, I know the only way that I can get it back is through those people who still have Aboriginal Law; those people who know what it is to be Aboriginal in the fullest sense of the word .

Even as those defined as different are made increasingly transparent - are forced once again to explain themselves - that which is Us remains undefined. An American white student's cry that:

I wish I had something to contribute, but I don't know much about my background. In fact, I don't even have a culture (Suzuki, 1991 in ,

articulates with the almost complete inability of respondents within a recent study, to talk about Anglo Australian identity . Whiteness, the ethnicity of the centre, of dominance, has become the universal something, yet something so empty of content that those situated within its ambit do not see it as there. Whiteness becomes something beyond ethnicity, history, privilege or struggle. Something indefinable, something silent. The central point to Ruth Frankenberg's argument is that contemporary moments concentrate on descriptions of an/other as different rather than on that which makes 'us' the same, that we have failed to make 'usness', make whiteness, visible. Her argument is that those who are 'us' and those made different live racially structured lives. Far from being non racial or neutral, whiteness, like otherness refers to sets of locations that are historically, socially, politically and culturally produced and linked to unfolding relations of domination. The site of whiteness, is a site where privilege and dominance seem normal, its structures invisible and its understandings and practices unmarked and unnamed. Discussions of positionality, Frankenberg's argument implies, concentrates on the difference of otherness and fails to consider a fourth moment for considering race and difference, the priveleged site of the 'us', of 'whiteness'.

It is through these definings, these articulations and silences, that the complexities and ironies of identity are understood in modern times. Yet, we critique these common ways of understanding identity, only to reintroduce our problematic in a different guise again and again. Even as we talk of uncovering whiteness, even as we show that individuals positioned as white share similar priveleged and racially structured lives, we have already essentialised whiteness as sameness, as being equally positioned, as one dimensional, as never changing. Even as we talk of forming coalitions, of finding a place for self definition, self naming, for fighting back, we have suggested that people have a choice, that choosing difference can become a strategy, that people can decide who they want to be and how they want to be placed. Yet, we have argued that individuals are not so easily placed by such positionings, nor that we can choose between such positionings so easily. How then is it that we can look at positioning in these modern times?

These dilemmas of self definition intensify as we place them against the frenetic changes convergings and fragmentings which combine and recombine within the times and spaces, conditions of 'New Times' . Hugh Mackay , in a recent summary of populist understandings entitled *Reinventing Australia*, traces Australian attempts to live more comfortably in the 'Age of Redefinition'. His book rearticulates what he feels to be the widely held view, that Australians feel unable to find their bearings or to know who they are . His attempt to rearticulate populist understandings of identity assert once again the problematic being suggested here; that even as we outline a wish for comfortableness, for a solidity of self, for a concreteness of identity, identity seems to move, shift, fragment ever faster.

Metaphors and images develop and play with these terrors, and with the increased fragmentation and fluidity of identity. Bauman posits that concepts of identity enter modern times 'dressed from the start as an individual task' as a pilgrim 'whose truth is elsewhere': 'not where he ought to be' and not 'where he dreams of being'. Pilgrims strive to make the world solid by making it pliable, by building it at will, by building it 'floor by floor and brick by brick'. As we move within modern times, uncertainty takes on new dimensions as the 'world as such' and 'the world within easy reach' becomes increasingly undecidable, uncontrollable and frightening. In such a world of radical uncertainty, identities become successively worn masks, a series of instantly assembled and yet easily dismantled shapes painted one over the other to form, a 'palimpsest identity'.

Boundaries become befogged and eclipsed where they ought to be clearly seen. Clifford talks of modern informants as travellers and as not travellers, of movements in colonial, neocolonial and post colonial circuits, diasporas, borderlands, exiles, detours and returns. Giroux describes the border crossings, the places where ethnicity becomes a constantly traversed borderland of differences and where identities are fashioned and refashioned in relation to the shifting terrains of history of history, experience and power. Gilroy shows how post colonial criss-crossings of the Atlantic impacts on highly symbolised world community cultures to change, develop, combine, dispel, constantly make and remake Black cultural practices. Most interesting, Donna Haraway takes pleasure in the confusion and construction of boundaries between machines and organism, between social relations and technology, so that we are become chimeras or cyborgs.

The processes of globalisation which underpin the terrors of Hugh Mackay's Australia form the world into an increasingly singular domesticated space. Cultures seem to 'flow like water' and easily dissolve the differences they encounter, people slip in and out of ethnic identities. People live between cultures or on the borderlines. Yet at the same time people are understood as different, as choosing difference, as being us or not us, as living their identity through a form of 'double consciousness, formed from their experiences both inside and outside of modernity'. Even as the boundaries, the borders, the high tech myths which surround identity in modern times are understood as something rapidly being 'disembedded', as something reconstructed and redefined, it is this very moment of under-determination and free-floatingness that most allows it to become visible or graspable. It is this so solid, yet so permeable nature of 'usness', of difference, its material and its cerebral nature, which needs to be explained. How am I, so solid yet so fractured within the times and spaces of contemporary societies, positioned in these 'new times'.

### ***Re/positioning positioning***

In this paper, I began with the proposition that a central concern for narrative researchers is to position oneself within the research process. I have noted that the task is a far more complex one than is usually understood within the narrative literature. Increasingly, the barriers between what seems real and unreal; symbolic and material; fluid and discrete; desirable and contemptible seem permeable; parallel; intersecting and fragmentary. What then is the substance of these positionings, so eupherial and so solid, what are the semi permeable yet insurmountable barriers which hold them, how do we re/position positioning and how do we negotiate the spaces in between?

A central aspect of my research, as I go back into schools, is just how far I have been able to know, to predict, the kinds of things teachers will tell me about the school. I work in the area of racism and difference research with the knowledge that, even as I unpick the meaning of the things my respondents are saying and lay them bare in my research, I am staring in horror at my own beliefs. Teachers, in Australian schools, I find, often understand the world in common. They share common knowings, common understandings and I share

them too. I share with them an understanding of what should be achieved within a good English essay, I share with them understandings about how good students should behave and I 'know' with them beliefs about how students from different groups within the schools 'do' behave (Arber, Unpublished material, 1998).

This sense of understanding in common is fundamental to the argument being developed in this paper. Basing their work around that of Foucault, theorists as diverse as Gee, Weedon and Hall, argue that identities, far from being something already formed, something separate from the social, are instead something constructed, something irretrievably interwoven with histories, languages and cultures, something in the process of becoming. These arguments form crucial lenses, provide more complex means to understand the so solid, yet fragmentary aspects which underpin modern views of identity.

Meaning, such theorists posit convincingly, far from being something transparent, is something contracted and contested, something presented and re/presented to us in a process of translated, moulded and negotiated codes of understandings which provide common ways of knowing and common ways of being in the world. Within these discourses opportunities for people to be, and to recognise other people to be, are created, produced and reproduced. Rather than already being, people are 'summoned to be' are inconsistent and changing, as they make and are made the site of parallel, conflicting and convergent discourses.. Identity becomes a construction, something never completed, something always in the process. Identity becomes, as Stuart Hall tells us, about:

using the resources of history language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we are' so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves

The Cartesian individual, whole and undivided, rational and consistent disappears, but not quite. The quest to find that self which came before, who is composed of these multiple positions, who can satisfactorily know oneself, remains unanswered (. Psychoanalytic theories, especially as they are articulated by Freud and Lacan, theorise this fragmented yet solid aspect of identity differently. In Lacan's the Other remains separate from the subject by a wall of language. Never fully confident of the others reply(or lack of reply) the inevitable distancing, the gap between the self and the object longed for, remains insoluble . Desire becomes something unfulfillable, something to be governed or subordinated to fantasy. The subject remains ambivalent, grounded in fantasy and decentred from itself.

Derrida's play on speech and language derails the very coding of communication to conceive of the subject as nothing except the play of text . Accepting with Saussoire that binary oppositions govern the thinking of everyday life he disrupts these knowledges with the indecidable . The sign becomes displaced, no longer meaning either/or, simply absent or present, dominant or in the margin, logocentric. It leaves a trace, a play of difference. There is a distance, a delay, a opacity and therefore an ambiguity between the text and its reading. Subjectivity becomes something under erasure, something which can no longer be thought about in old ways, something about which we cannot always ask .

These three approaches for studying identity through language: (theories of deconstruction, discursive theories and psychoanalytical theory) merge to explain this fragmented, constructed aspect of modern identities. The identities we wish to position become indeed far from solid. Identity becomes something fragmentary, changing, constructed, in process, struggled over, something that 'we might become'. The resources of history, language and culture are part of a 'the process of becoming' rather than something in 'the process of being'. Difference, is not merely something oppositional, a series of dualisms reflecting

margin and centre, but something that is never finished, something which is always deferred. What is Us and what is different becomes distorted in a doubling where there is always a trace, an unfolding, an over or under-determined, 'something left over':

a process of articulation, a suturing, an overdetermination not a subsumption. There is always 'too much' of 'too little' - an overdetermination or a lack, but never a proper fit, a totality. Like all signifying practices, it is subject to the 'play' of difference. It obeys the logic of more-than one. And since as a process it operates across difference, it entails discursive work, the building and marking of symbolic boundaries, the production of 'frontier effects'. It requires what is left outside, its constitutive outside, to consolidate the process [Hall, 1997 #52

Beneath post modernist theories, beneath the quite different theories of Derrida, Lacan and Foucault, is a lacunae, a crucial problematic, a terrible loss. I feel with the feminist writer Zwiag as she mourns for a self, so deconstructed that it has become transparent, that it seems dead, that there seems nothing else left. I too feel that that there must still be found a 'good ol' self', a 'wizard behind the curtain' an inner self somewhere to be found. I am forced, as have so many others (See for example in his most careful analysis of post modern theories) to acknowledge that these post modernist theories have not been able to provide answers to this most crucial question. Nevertheless, it is this non unitary, fragmented, contradictory, constructed nature of the individual, so thoroughly explained by post modernist thought that has proven most important to the emancipatory politics of our time. Innumerable writings about gender and difference (See for example, , , , ably portray how these ways of thinking portray realities for all of us as we continue to live with uncertainty, paradox, ambiguity and constant change. I find myself positioned endlessly, always something more and yet, I find that these fragments are not equal, I cannot choose endlessly are irretrievably placed. Therefore, rather than digging ever deeper to find such an elusive core of self, I look even more insistently at ways redefining subjectivity can help explain positionality in contemporary times.

### ***Re/formulating Otherness, re/positioning Us***

To break down the unity, the wholeness, the universalism of the Cartesian individual, to understand the individual as something constructed, fragmented and contradictory, only goes part way to explain what is meant by positioning. It leaves unexplained the solidity, the materiality, the sheer terror that underpins articulations of difference in modern times. Entangled within, in fact underpinning, the fragmentation of discourse, the contradictoriness of desire, the doubling and play of text are mechanisations of formulating otherness, repositioning us.

Bauman describes the process of making other as the social production of strangers; people who do not fit the cognitive, moral or aesthetic map of the world, people who are slimy, who are left outside as problem, as dirt which needs to be disposed of. It is a production of otherness produced in the production not on them but of ourselves. Through struggle, these racialised discourses, these racialised understandings become part of the maintenance of a symbolic order between the 'normal' and the 'deviant' binding together those who are part of the symbolic community and sending into symbolic exile those who are them.

These ways of understanding are not just made, they are made to work. 'Words' work. The naming of difference not only marks, it signifies and speaks. Representations of who we are and who are they, become in themselves incontrovertible evidence of the naturalness of racial difference. The violence of colonialism in Fanon's analysis, comes not just from the weapons but the 'word' of colonisers. The world of the colonised becomes understood only

through the eyes of the colonisers; through the mechanisms of an invisible, uncontested and all-embracing Western culture. The colonised comes to believe that the coloniser provides the light to 'lighten their darkness', is 'the loving mother who protects her child' and that they themselves are but 'the very categorisation of negritude'. The other, the Black for instance, reduced to a very essence of blackness, becomes seen, and begins to see themselves, as nothing else. There is nothing more than the essentialism of the stereotype.

Silence also works. Frankenberg's three moments of understanding (essentialism, colour blindness and race cognition) noisily cohere, collude, negate, fight with each other to define the way that difference is interpreted, practiced and reacted to in contemporary western societies. The fourth moment, the subject of her book, however, is one of silence. The site of whiteness (or of Anglo Australianness, of Britishness, of Usness) is one where privilege and dominance seem normal, its structures invisible and its understandings and practices unmarked and unnamed. The description, the marking, the social constructions of such a privileged site, remains unremarked. Whiteness has come to be more than itself. Silently, it takes the words and practices embodied within its persona (objectivity, normality, truth, knowledge, merit, motivation, achievement and trustworthiness) and uses them to support the already accumulated cultural capital which underpins the positioning of that which is 'white'. When I am asked to position myself in the research I answer that I am woman and Jewish. It is only later that I realise I am *woman*, heterosexual, Australian, middle class, professional, *Jewish*, and white. These sites where I am privileged, where I have become one of us, remain unremarked. I do not think about them. I can barely explain them.

These words and silences permeate our society, they are not just something which can be peeled off the surface. They transform the common sense of what we know. In a world that is material and not merely symbolic they shape the spaces we can and can't inhabit, our physical landscapes; the way 'we', 'they', 'I' can (or can't be) be travellers. The other is imprisoned within a different space: a space where we cannot or do not or are too afraid to go. The schools we go to, the neighbourhoods in which we live, the friends we make, the occupations we do, the spaces 'we', 'I', 'they' are positioned, are constrained by the way subjectivity is made spatial. Positionality, is not simply a matter of places but of the spatial relationships between places and spaces and the distribution of people between them. Not only do contemporary cities (Grossberg speaks of Los Angeles) reflect increasingly fortress like space alongside extraordinary mobility but people are given access to particular kinds of places, and to the paths that allow one to move to and from such spaces.

Positioning defines both spatial and temporal space. It sets out, not only where we are and where we can go but that which we might become, what is postulated, demanded and /or sought upon. The European vision of progress exalts the immanence of time, its historical totality and assumes that with that glorious march forward they will be like us, the west will win against the rest, that local and not modern will become defined by the possibility of the modern. It defines a changing same. The expression of difference fixes social subjects in place and time, no matter their spatial location. It limits and delimits privileges and possibilities to some and not to others. It is in this fixing, that those imposed and imagined histories freeze not only those made different but also the privileged - those made 'White' - into given identities, perspectives and dispositions. Thus, I ask these questions about positionality both as someone multipositioned, fragmented, in the process of becoming and yet, and at the same time, as someone firmly fixed within the places and spaces of contemporary society.

### ***Negotiating the spaces in/between***

Spivak describes to us the subaltern, the person of such marginalised social position, that she is left with no words to speak, cannot speak at all. If the subaltern, should speak, should

make an insurgent effort, then to our relief, she is not a subaltern anymore . The other, the native is something slimy , is the bad thing to be replaced . Identities, we have argued, operate through exclusion, through the discursive construction of a constitutive outside and the production of abjected and marginalised subjects . We construct ourselves through the other and yet leave that which is ourselves silent. Perhaps it is knowing this which makes me stumble as I ask the question:

I was wondering, whether you could tell me, a bit about your own - How you see your own sense of identity?

Do I already suspect how he will (not) answer it.

I have no trouble, at all. I don't -I'm more than happy with Asian kids coming in, Asian people or Asian background, coming into Australia. I enjoy the - As a group, they seem to be wanting to fit in. I live in an area where, none of my neighbours are Asian background, but Box Hill has an Asian population in it. There's a - I can not see how people can have a problem with Asian people, to be ho -.but I deal with Asian kids and that's different, perhaps and then. I don't have any threat from them I don't feel any threat from them. .. They're Australian kids, they've...a lot of them have a lot values, that I've had. .. You don't look at them as kids. You, just, look at them as students to teach, them you enjoy teaching (Arber, unpublished materials, 1998).

When talking about positioning we consider two silences. The silence of the person who cannot speak, though she is constantly spoken and the silence of the person who remains silent about himself even though he never stops talking. The former is silenced because her position is made only through 'Our' eyes and we have left her with no words to speak: the latter is silent because he is just there, just is and so doesn't have to speak, can speak only by telling us that which he is not.

Positioning is not about idle namings. It is about relationships of power as they are played out within conditions of history. It is about positionings made implicit throughout the temporal and spatial spaces of contemporary societies. This is not about a blind relativity of choices about the place where one wants to be positioned. Rather it is to differentiate between what Homi Bhabha has called *diversity* (areas of experience and practice marked and separated as different) and *difference* (practices of signification which are both reflective and constitutive of prevailing economic and political relations and mark out people as different). It is about finding the place where one has been put. It is about defining the practices which have defined this 'putting'. It is about stating the place from where one can speak. It is about what Hall , p.5) has called :

the meeting point, the point of suture, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to 'interpellate' speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us a subjects which can be 'spoken'. Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us. They are the result of a successful articulation or 'chaining of the subject into the flow of discourse.

I have argued in this paper that the moment of colour blindness underpins modern conceptions of diversity, and assumes that even as we understand difference as a construction, people are already seen, explained and treated as being different. I have explained that these constructions of difference are not only a matter of words but that

'words work', that words work through material practices which have become normalised throughout Western societies. The literature focuses particularly on two positionings from which words and practices work in contemporary societies, the silence of the subaltern, and the quite different silence of whiteness. Yet I have argued that the place from which one speaks is not a simple bipolarity of opposites which can be simply stacked alongside each other and separately studied and analysed. Rather, I have argued that the positioning of identities is a highly decentred and decentring process of social construction, a site for and subject of the conflicting, corresponding, parallel and fragmenting discourses which struggle to formulate where we are placed and place others. How is it then that we can talk about both the fragmented conflicting nature of positioning and the material differences which these different positionings make. How can we cross the borders, speak from the cracks, find a third space, an alternative diaspora, prevent pasting between the breaks and negotiate the spaces 'in between'.

Grossberg, illustrates the way theorists have used concepts of *differance* and *fragmentation* as ways of exploring the inherent instabilities and ambiguities at the centre of identity formation and the kaleidoscope conditions of these fractured and decentred identities. He explores ways metaphors of borderlands, hybridity and diaspora have been used to analyse the existence of the subaltern caught between competing identities, living in 'in between' places, living on borders, crossing borders and linking identity to particular histories and experiences of oppression. In his analysis Grossberg argues convincingly that these theorists have often come to ignore the fragmentary and conflictual nature of discourses of power, their heterogeneity and their material realities. He reminds us that such theories are limited in so far as they generalise discussions of positionality from particular struggles of subalterns, in particular historical periods and contexts. He reminds us that theories which explore identity must look at ways that difference itself is a historically produced phenomenon and that positionings take place within particular structured terrains which have a particular spatial as well as a temporal logic.

Homi Bhabha's analysis of the way spaces in between might be negotiated is most useful even as we are reminded of both Grossberg's and Young's considerations. Bhabha, (p.25) develops the concept of hybridity to describe the construction of cultural authority within conditions of political antagonism or inequity:

... whereby there opens up a space for translation: a place of hybridity, figuratively speaking, where the construction of the political object that is new, neither the one nor the other, properly alienates our political expectations and changes, as it must the very forms of our recognition of the moment of politics.

Bhabha here, is not proposing hybridity to mean the simple blending of cultures suggested by contemporary theories of integration and multiculturalism. Rather, he argues that attempts by colonial discourses to totally appropriate the other, to so totally make silent yet make knowable and visible the other, are always slipping, ceaselessly displaced, never complete. Bhabha's concern is to demonstrate ambivalences within colonial discourse, to find instabilities of power through which anti colonialist resistance is no longer powerless, to define a place where hybrid strategies open new spaces of negotiation. Ambivalences work within discourses of the coloniser, so that authority is undermined even as it is asserted. The 'mimic man', becomes the person like the coloniser but not quite. The native remains only a partial creation of the coloniser and the coloniser, seemingly unequivocal in his power, finds the native still there, fraught with menace. The coloniser's discourses, seemingly authoritative, reverse the very process of domination which they seek to replicate so that

both coloniser and colonised remain locked into movements of destabilisation neither of them can contain.

It is from this borderland culture of hybridity, this third space that we untangle Bhabha's observation that subjects are formed in excess of parts of difference and that communities share experiences, but have understandings, meanings and priorities which are antagonistic, conflictual and incommensurable. By hybridity, he is talking about something that doesn't settle down as positionality, something that is 'in between', something which disrupts those things which have been constructed as binaries. It is something which comes between well established identities and breaks them up.

Bhabha's explanation disrupts the problematic which underpins this paper. It traces the ambivalences which appear between the cracks, studies resistances, breaks down the binaries between solidarities of us and them. His explanation does not however, explain the fragmentary nature of post modern individuality. Cameron McCarthy explains positionality through other lenses which seek to study these cracks in other ways. Theories of nonsynchrony acknowledge that economic, political and cultural institutions do not share identical consciousness, interests, needs and desires at the same time. Whereas Bhabha's theory suggests images and metaphors for breaking down binaries through ambivalences and contradiction. McCarthy's theories begin to discuss both solidities of difference and the contradictory and fragmentary nature of struggle. Individuals are called to their positions differently, have qualitatively different experiences, receive different rewards and sanctions and can move differently in space and time. The ideological appropriations of others which work to enforce these structures are constant sites of struggle and change. Attempts to map these struggles never quite allow us to place identities properly in position, they are always shifting, there is always something left over. Yet, these shifting identities struggle together with concepts of what Nietzsche has called 'resentment': practices of identity displacement in which the social actor consolidates his own identity by the complete disavowal of the merits and existence of his social other. Even as identities fracture, conflict, cohere and change they reconstruct themselves against representations of others.

It is through works such as that of McCarthy and Bhabha that we begin to come terms with this so fragmentary, so solid aspect of identity, begin to negotiate the space between. Yet still I feel that we have not accounted for everything. Still I say this is more and less than what I am, more and less than what I feel. I am more and less solid, more or less securely placed. Thus to my question at the beginning of the paper. It is too simple to talk of positionality, as simply being that of stepping into pre-configured and solid identities. Identity is ways always slipping, always in the process of becoming. To be *woman*, heterosexual, Australian, middle class, teacher, *Jewish*, and white in Australia, brings together ever changing, conflicting, fragmenting, cohering forms of sites which can never quite be mapped, which always leave something left over. Nor can we talk of difference as colour blind, as fragmenting to nothing, of allowing everyone to be the same, of allowing people to decide who they want to be in the research. We cannot forget that these sites are not just conflicts of words but of work, that they have materialities of power consolidating identities through the negation of others. Perhaps, it is only through the ambivalences which appear between these cracks, that we can begin to disrupt these binaries of us and them and begin to negotiate the spaces 'in between'.