

2022 Joan Cook Memorial

State of the Pākehā Nation Essay

Treaty education group Network Waitangi Whangārei has commissioned annual reflections on the State of the Pākehā Nation since 2006. Founding member the Rev. Joan Cook died in 2010 and the essays since that time commemorate her pioneering Treaty and anti-racism work. As an Australian she was so intrigued by the racial and cultural contradictions of her adopted country that she learned and then taught us our hidden history over several decades.

The speeches and essays are free to download from the NWW website nwwhanqarei.wordpress.com, along with Treaty of Waitangi Questions & Answers. The group co-published with Te Kawariki an independent panel report on Stage I of the Ngāpuhi claim (WAI 1040), called Ngāpuhi Speaks, available as an e-book from meBooks.co.nz or hard copies from reotahi2@gmail.com.

About the author

Helen Gibson is a social science researcher and registered nurse with many years' experience in clinical practice, and teaching cultural safety in Ōtautahi Christchurch. She completed her Doctorate in Education at the University of Canterbury, titled, The Invisible Whiteness of Being: The Place of Whiteness/Racialisation in Pākehā Women's Discourses in Aotearoa New Zealand and some Implications for Anti-racist Education.

Since 1995 Helen has had a consuming interest in the challenges of Te Tiriti O Waitangi for Pākehā and has been involved in the facilitation of workshops on Pākehā cultural literacy, gender analysis and structural analysis. Helen has been an organising member of Network Waitangi Ōtautahi for a number of years and is still a strong supporter of all working for a Tiriti-based future.

What is not seen cannot be discussed or changedⁱ

On March 21 we celebrated International Race Relations Day, our annual celebration of diversity in Aotearoa. This year the Human Rights Commission named the day, Whiria te muka tāngata - Flourishing interwoven communities of Aotearoa New Zealand.ⁱⁱ It is important to celebrate the increasing numbers of diverse peoples now making Aotearoa home and as Pākehā it allows us to feel comfortable and even somewhat self-congratulatory about how tolerant we are and how far we have come from that overtly white supremacist colonial mindset that many believe we have done away with. However, while acknowledging and celebrating diversity is important, it can be a distraction and diversion for us from other essential work that Pākehā need to do if we want a Te Tiriti based and just future.

An aspect of this crucial work involves Pākehā picking up a mirror, metaphorically speaking, and having a good hard and sustained look, exploring what is behind the mirror, what mechanisms 'reflect' back to us, this normal, ordinary, well intentioned, fair-minded fair-skinned person. What stories does our image conjure up that tell us who we are. One of our foundational stories is our belief that we have moved on from our colonial past and are members of a just society where all have equal opportunity. Yet we keep hearing unsettling stories supported by evidence and statistics about the discrimination and marginalisation experienced by Māori and other marginalized groups.ⁱⁱⁱ And here's the catch, if we look harder, we know there is a corollary to this travesty, basically if something precious is stolen or denied someone, then who gets it, who benefits from it?

This is when our reflection starts to fracture, and our closely held beliefs prevent us from realising that mechanisms behind the mirror, beyond the mirror, are distorting what we see. We feel fearful, fragile, exposed and accused because we believe that our identity as a well-intentioned fair-minded person is being unjustly challenged! Our defensiveness arises out of a powerful belief in our independence and separateness from society; an individualistic lens that reflects racism and white supremacy as matters of individual intent and action. Robyn D'Angelo describes this reaction well. She believes that too many of us get stuck in our 'weaponised hurt feelings'.^{iv} Our hurt becomes our focus and we feel the need to defend our innocence. Often this is as far as we get. Our understanding remains unchanged and any hope we have of resolving that contradiction between a Pākehā sense of fragility and innocence, and the reality of racism is lost. Crucially, we have no conception of the entitlements, gains, and preferences that constitute and cushion our normal ordinary lives and consequently the silence around white privilege in particular lingers on.

This vignette portrays the strong emotional reactions that can prevent Pākehā from exploring behind and beyond the mirror. However, Black feminists Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa identify that "...fear of losing one's power, fear of being accused, fear of a loss of status, control, knowledge is possibly the emotional, non-theoretical place from which serious anti-racist work... can begin".^v

Some years ago, despite my fear, my need to understand propelled me to look behind and beyond that mirror. I began my journey with 28 Pākehā women exploring what it means to be white or to be seen as white.^{vi} I was attempting to understand why racially explicit language such as racism, white supremacy and white privilege are so difficult for Pākehā to discuss let alone allow past our lips! I was also responding to the critiques by women of colour of the imperialism of Western feminism and its presumed universality and the suggestion that white feminists explore their hegemonic location with white men.^{vii} My ultimate goal was to find a learning model that would reveal a path through Pākehā fear and fragility towards some confidence and resilience.

I was delighted when Moea Armstrong invited me to revisit that research for this essay. Moea specifically mentioned the varying silences, that emerged in my thesis as significant strategies for maintaining an existing scheme of white privilege.^{viii} I was eager to revisit this inquiry as I have been disappointed but not surprised by the continuing silence in our Pākehā nation around this concept. You may be wondering how an exploration into whiteness has any relevance in contemporary Aotearoa. Is it just a discomforting term, harking back to eighteenth century imperialism and colonialism, that seems impossible to tear away from its essentialist origins; and more importantly what relevance does this line of inquiry have for Pākehā Treaty workers in 2022? I invite you to read what I have found and decide for yourself.

In this essay, I focus on the silences in the interviews that initially passed me by. However, they developed into convincing evidence of the power of silence to maintain a scheme of privilege. Recognising the importance of the silences opened up my research into exploring and analysing fascinating and significant ways in which whiteness is so powerfully maintained and reproduced. My hope is that this analysis might provide some further ideas for pedagogical strategies for use in Pākehā Tiriti education.

Where is the Talk about Whiteness?

The very structure of privilege will generate silences. When the privileges are systematic, that is, more than momentary, the attendant silences will be systematic. Ironically the most powerful rhetoric for maintaining an existing scheme of privilege will be silent.^{ix}

When I approached this study, I was initially concerned about the strategies that I would use to encourage “talk” about whiteness with Pākehā women in Aotearoa, especially when the social politics of the time and place usually prohibited such talk. This concept white or to assert one’s whiteness has remained taboo in Aotearoa. It is not often claimed as a social identity, largely because identification as white has been associated with racism.^x In this context, the term white is more commonly used as an empty biological descriptor for people with white skin or British European ancestry.

I used specific strategies suggested by Ruth Frankenberg to invite women to participate in this project as well as to encourage their “talk” about whiteness. In the process I hoped to encourage as much as possible such “talk”.^{xi} These strategies initially appeared to me to have limited success for two main reasons. First, although I was aware of the differing processes that constitute the development of social identities in relation to power dynamics, I initially paid less attention to the significance of these differences in my analysis. The distinction between the unconscious generalised nature of hegemonic positionings, and the negotiated, claimed and asserted marginalised social identities, had initially eluded me. As Dreama Moon observes, “Whiteness must come to be understood as normative, general, and pervasive, rather than positioned and particular”.^{xii} I was disappointed at the lack of explicit “whiteness talk” that I had anticipated, because I underestimated the significance of the differences in how subordinated identities and hegemonic locations are achieved.

Second, most of the feminist and antiracist literature illustrate the ease with which marginalised subjects can articulate the specificities of their identity. This had led me to assume that if I got the questions right, I would get “the talk”.^{xiii} I had worked hard to reduce any barriers to anticipated “whiteness talk” and my underlying assumption was that such explicit talk would emerge, although I had no conception of what form it would take.

At that stage, I was beginning to wonder whether I had thesis! I had 60 hours of women’s speech interspersed with prolonged silences and little explicit “whiteness talk”. I was well aware of Le Compte and Preissle’s warning that “qualitative researchers must balance between two problems: too much data and too little data. If the data are too thin, the researcher has insufficient evidence to substantiate results”.^{xiv}

Discovering and Uncovering the Silences

Silences symbolize hierarchical structures as surely as does speech.^{xv}

As I was grappling with this challenge of little explicit “whiteness talk”, Carrie Crenshaw’s ideas provided a breakthrough.^{xvi} Crenshaw maintains that, “researchers must locate interactions that implicate unspoken issues of race, discursive spaces where the power of whiteness is invoked but its explicit terminology is not.” Crenshaw’s insights prompted me to look for these discursive spaces where the participants and I were “doing race” using discourses that veiled the explicit repertoires of whiteness. What also became significant for me was whether our silences were also a critical aspect of our co-construction of “doing race” in the interviews.

Richard Scott explains that silence, as a concept, can be an absence only if we expect sound and therefore silence is relative to our expectations.^{xvii} This researcher goes on to differentiate between instrumental silence and symbolic silence. The former, he explains has three basic forms in communication. Attentive silences, where one remains silent when another speaks; terminal silences, which mark the beginnings and ends of “something said”; and a third form that mark junctures within longer utterances such as pauses that are often barely perceptible but act as punctuation. It was the latter, symbolic silence that were significant for my study because these silences have symbolic rhetorical roles that are also available for interpretation.

Lisa Mazzei confirmed that silences often occur, particularly when researchers pursue issues of race and culture. It also affirmed my decision to listen to and to attempt to interpret “the voices of silence” as well as speech.^{xviii} I recognised that, that which is not said is as important as that which is said. So, I embarked on a process of analysing what had been absent in my initial analysis, namely, the participants and my silences.

The Dynamic Forms of Silence

The rhetorical silences of whiteness must be overturned if we are to effectively resist racism... It is within these silences that the power of whiteness is invoked.^{xix}

When I began to listen for them, participants’ prolonged silences became patently obvious in the latter stages of the data collection and analysis process. I developed a framework for analysing these silences combining these two researchers’ categories. Both Scott and Mazzei present different types of silence in their discussions. Scott differentiates between sequential and simultaneous silences. The former filled the actual gaps in speech when there was an expectation of some spoken response, the latter were the silences that were simultaneous with speech. Mazzei identifies polite silence, intentional silence, privileged

silence, and veiled silence.^{xx} The combination of Scott's and Mazzei's categories provided a useful template that helped to make intelligible the varying silences that I encountered.

What was noteworthy in my study was that Mazzei's different forms were sometimes sequential to, and often simultaneous with speech. I found that just reading the transcripts was not sufficient and I listened to the recordings again to ascertain the length of the silences and the contexts in which they arose. These silences took a number of forms and there were common patterns among the participants relating to particular questions. Of the four forms of silence that Mazzei (2003) identifies, polite silence and intentional silence appeared more frequently in the observable sequential silences that both the participants and I were more conscious of. The privileged and veiled silences were initially more difficult "hear".^{xxi}

I will now discuss these four forms of silence in turn as they were frequent discursive strategies that both participants and I deployed in our interactions. I learned to "listen differently" to passages of interview text that I had read many times before and I began to recognize the depth in my own and the participants' silences; in particular what was not spoken, what was not discussed and what was not answered. This process revealed the hidden, the covert, the inarticulate, the gaps within and outside the observable.^{xxii}

Symbolic Silences in the Interviews



Sequential Silences - Polite Silences and Intentional Silences

There were many occasions in the interviews where both the participants and I were silent. Some were just the natural spaces of reflection time that occur in the ebb and flow of conversation and I was always aware that it was vital to maintain a relaxed pace in our discussions. There were also silences that spoke of something more and they were the actual observable silences in the interactions between the participants and me. These sequential silences were more noticeable to me to begin with, and were of course the silences that had primarily prompted some of my initial concerns. Although there was a predisposition for our silences to alter, there were some occasions when the visible silences

remained as sometimes participants seemed reluctant to speak and I withheld comments and questions as researcher.

Those questions that invited participants to discuss aspects of their whiteness resulted in the most obvious/observable silences^{xxiii} Marjorie De Vault recommends that hesitations where participants mark time while thinking how to say things in a particular context are important to explore. The participants' silences were often punctuated with *ah* and *um* and sometimes I filled that gap with some further explanatory words, but often the participants filled the space with talk that circled around "race" though without making it an explicit topic.^{xxiv}

Polite Silences

Mazzei refers to the common expression "If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all", as an important script that underpins polite silences. She stated that this turn of phrase was useful for her to recognise the deployment of polite speech among her research participants. The gaps in speech between the participants and I were often examples of polite silence. Some participants' polite silences appeared to derive from a desire to present a reasonable, moderate and tolerant view that endeavoured **not** to call attention to "race", in particular their own.^{xxv}

At times, participants showed a lack of certainty about how their words might be interpreted. The possibility that explicit "race talk" about themselves could be made in a polite fashion, seemed unavailable to them and they often looked to me for guidance. This was evident in the way that the interviewees' perceived me as interviewer at times, especially when racially explicit terms were being discussed. There was an expectation that I was looking for a certain answer, that there was a "right answer". Although I had repeated my assertion, that there was no right answer, some participants continued with queries that indicated that they thought that I had preconceived ideas about what they would or should say. Rosemary, when she was struggling with articulating her ethnic identity asked me directly: *Is that the right answer? I[ve] probably not given the right answer!* Another participant Elaine, a woman in her 80s, when asked if she had felt proud of being white, she asked me directly for clarification, saying, *Now exactly what did you want?*

There was a distinct pattern of silence in participants' responses to the question whether they were proud of being part of Pākehā culture. Most were initially silent for some time, (some up to 20 seconds) and then followed with comments that expressed their difficulty with this question. The majority of participants seemed to be working out ways to respond about how they felt, that were acceptable, minimising the possibility that they may be interpreted as boasting, discriminatory or superior in a racialised sense. An example follows.

When asked if she felt proud of being white, Jacinta was silent for 8 seconds, *Actually, no, (4 seconds silence.) I'm proud of being me and being white, I suppose, is part of that, but being proud of being white! No, I haven't ever felt specifically proud of being white. And I think that it implies a, um, sort of a feeling of superiority in a way if you have that feeling. No.*

Jacinta was clear that any acknowledgement of “being proud of being white” was expressing superiority but she was confronted by the perception that she was seen as white. Her words showed a rejection of the possibility that she could claim any pride in being white. This reveals that Jacinta’s identity elides whiteness – she is proud of being herself, and that self is white, but she’s not proud of being white. Questions on topics such as being white and, in particular claiming to be proud of being white, often resulted in polite silence. Participants desire to express pride in themselves when it included whiteness, seemed to be interpreted as “not polite”. Requests that explicitly invited the participants to discuss their racialisation, were frequently followed by polite silence. They appeared to struggle to find words that didn’t implicate any complicity with what they perceived as “racist talk”.

Intentional silences

Apart from my own intentional silences that I used during the interviews, the forms of intentional silence that were most obvious were evident in the narratives that participants recounted about their own intentional silences. This strategy of storytelling was often used as a credentialing device by the participants to represent themselves as antiracist and appeared to persuade themselves and me that they were reasonable and had a right to make a judgement.^{xxvi} Interviewees reported that they made use of these silences when they were knowingly interacting with someone that they identified as overtly racist. Diane, a health worker and counsellor was relating how she managed a “discussion” about Māori that developed with some friends at a dinner party. She was emphasising how her approach to such situations has changed from her past behaviour. The discussion had deteriorated, with racist comments about Māori. Previously Diane said she would have got really heated about it. But she realized that it was a waste of passion on her dinner guest *‘because he’s so bigoted. And so down the line - no matter what I said. I felt part of my argument [was good] because I was able to base it on a lot of facts that have happened over time. Legislation, all those kind of things, and he didn’t have facts at all. He was trying to trip me up even though he had no argument. I said “look we can’t do this. This is getting us nowhere let’s agree to differ.” And we went on and had a game of cards and had a good time.’*

Diane had initially spoken up and presented her position but as she could see that her friend wasn’t listening to her, so she initiated an end to the discussion. Diane made a conscious choice to be silent as her point of view was not heard. Other participants talked about being

intentionally silent in the presence of others, in particular friends or relatives that they identified as “racist” especially when participants believed that they were being provoked to speak.

Marilyn, a young woman, was with a group who had been discussing a Māori Powhiri that they had attended as part of their course at a tertiary institution. Some members of the group who knew her antiracist stance were making particularly racist comments. Marilyn was intentionally silent in the group situation but did speak to some people about her views afterwards. Diane and Marilyn both used silence intentionally as did other participants in their accounts of their interactions with relatives and friends usually when they were in situations where they didn’t believe that they would be heard or when they were feeling vulnerable. In particular, participants described how they were intentionally silent when they felt that they may not be able to articulate adequately what they knew to be a justifiable challenge to the racist positioning of friends or relatives.

Simultaneous Silences: Privileged and Veiled

The voice that covers the silence will tend to sound beneficent. ^{xxvii}

I became more fascinated with Robert Scott’s suggestion that silence can not only be sequential but also simultaneous with speech. He suggests that in these situations, “there is a sort of doubleness: a flow of speech behind which, so to speak, a silence continues”. The attentive listener must deal with that doubleness. Silence is not only active but has symbolic value. ^{xxviii} There were many instances of simultaneous silences throughout the interviewing, and both the participants and I used them in varying forms. The operation of simultaneous silence, although much harder to “hear”, provided the opportunity for me to uncover the privileged and veiled silences that were often covered with a colour blind, or in the reasoning of the participants, beneficent discourse. ^{xxix}

This colour-blind/power evasive discourse underpinned a particular problematic that the participants and I faced. There was a lack of discursive space for us as Pākehā women to talk about whiteness, which at times brought the interviews close to an interactional impasse. ^{xxx} The dominant colour blind/power evasive discourse is based on the belief that “race”/difference **shouldn’t** matter and since it shouldn’t, everyone should act/speak as though it **doesn’t**. An important rationale associated with this discourse is that anyone who **does** act/speak as though “race”/difference matters, is racist and divisive. This discourse works powerfully to inhibit the possibility that Pākehā women can/will engage in such talk and constitutes whiteness as **uninterrogateable** space. ^{xxxi}

Privileged Silence

Privileged silences were the most pervasive discursive strategies of whiteness that the participants' and I deployed throughout the interviews. These silences spoke of our inability to see and articulate our racialised locations and the significance of our racialised locations in a hegemonic form. Those participants who had completed Treaty workshops could clearly identify and articulate their understanding of, and commitment to challenging the historical and present-day social injustices in relation to Māori. However, in a manner similar to the remaining participants, Treaty educated participants were unable to speak about their racialisation and how that location is manifest within social inequalities.^{xxxii} There seemed to be no words for any participants to describe, their racialised whiteness, despite some participants' recognition that they were positioned in a social system that advantages them.

An example of how a colour blind/power evasive discourse was deployed using privileged silence is evident in my interview with Susan who grew up in Otago. Immediately after the passage I quote below, Susan talked about how she had a lot of contact with, and worked for Chinese people who were market gardeners in the area. She talked quite easily about this and that her grandmother was very racist against Chinese and Catholics.^{xxxiii} Yet, despite her ability to discuss these radicalised interactions, when I asked about her awareness of *her* whiteness, she was unable to articulate her racialised location. The following passage is an example of her colourblind/power evasive discourse:

Researcher. Can you remember when you first became aware that you were white? Susan: No not really um I have never really, at that stage I was never really classed as a white person and it didn't really occur to me. R. Can you recall any instances in relation to this - sometimes people talk about school, something happened to trigger their awareness? S. No. No, not really. R. Right have you ever been in a situation where you have become aware that you were white and that you were different or that you were in a minority? S. Um no not necessarily as a minority, no.

Susan's colourblind view seemed to limit her ability to address the subject of Whiteness and it inhibited her from expressing herself in an "acceptable" manner. The frameworks of understanding that she had available to make sense of, and discuss what we were exploring, underpinned her interpretation that the questions were eliciting "racist talk". By deploying this discursive strategy Susan avoided engaging in the conversation, unable to claim it as a lens through which she filters the world. "White privilege remains elusive,

unintelligible, and silent. If we don't agree that we experience privilege or are unable to identify this privilege, then we are also unable to speak about this privilege" ^{xxxiv}.

Participants often gave conflicting accounts depending on the context of the question. In Susan's case, her "silence" about discussing her whiteness was clear, yet when she was specifically asked about "Other" she had quite a lot to say. These seemingly contradictory expressions of her understanding of her positioning, revealed Susan's reluctance to implicate herself with racism when talking about herself. In a context of disassociation, when she was specifically talking about "Other", she was able to use explicit "race" talk quite freely. As can be reasoned from Susan's accounts, silences were deployed differently in various contexts, and seemed related to the perception that participants had about the content of the questions. Participants' silences usually related to their perception that some questions were eliciting "racist talk".

Veiled Silence

In one of the early questions in the interviews I asked the participants to talk about the important aspects of who they were as people; how they'd like to be seen by others. I was interested to explore the conscious identifications that the participants' claimed and the relationship of those positionings to social power. Interestingly, Lisa Mazzei asked a similar question of her participants, and the responses of her participants and mine were similar. My participants used a number of descriptors that were gender specific, with most of them referring to their role as mothers. They also used words like kind, honest, trustworthy. What was absent from their responses was any reference to their whiteness ^{xxxv} Veiled silence reveals the resilience of whiteness and its ability to maintain its invisibility.

The only way that participants were able to articulate what it means to be "white" was by expressing their own views or their family's views about Māori or those whom they considered were their racialised Other. Ronald Jackson II maintains that "The discourse of whiteness always presumes the element of "race", blackness or Otherness. Moreover, to discuss racial self-definitions is to evoke conversations of otherness, and presupposes that the agency in defining Others' identities has been arrested by Whites".^{xxxvi} This discursive strategy, a veiled silence about whiteness, came through strongly in the interviews. Most participants responded to these questions initially with long silences and their "coming into whiteness" was often recounted in contexts of overt racist talk. Others expressed their understanding of becoming white in more straight forward declarations of acknowledging Others' differences.

Deborah, a secondary school teacher who grew up in the South Island, responded to the question concerning her first memories of being white, with a long silence (12 seconds) and then replied: *I'm not sure that when I was a little kid, I knew I was white as such. I knew that there were people that weren't white. So, I suppose I began as a little kid from that kind of negative aspect of other people in a way because we had Māori neighbours across the road so I knew that they were brown and I knew they were Māori and I knew that the father, probably the first person I ever knew who spoke another language - he spoke Māori. There were Italians in our town also who looked a bit like Māori if you're talking about looks.*

Jacinta, another secondary school teacher, who lived in the North Island most of her life articulated her response in a similar way.

Jacinta. *No. No. (Long Pause- 8 seconds) I think where I grew up - things are very different now in P... than when I grew up most people there were European, there were a few Māori's. But it wasn't - we knew they were Māori's, we knew we weren't Māori's but it was never an issue we still went to play there they came to our place to play.*

These excerpts reveal a strong tendency for the silences throughout the interviews to be transformed from sequential silences to simultaneous silences which confirms Scott's assertion that silences change. The participants' silences frequently changed from initial sequential silence to simultaneous silences, to silences that were often privileged or veiled.

In attempting to discuss their whiteness, the participants, on the whole, made genuine attempts to answer these questions. Their silences seemed to result from the women searching for words, and they often showed some level of frustration as they obviously cast around in their minds for words to describe what they wanted to communicate. A combination of our formless Pākehā ethnic consciousness and the constraints that whiteness as uninterrogateable space placed on the participants and me, contributed to the silences.

An assumption that most participants communicated was that they live in a white world that most didn't think about until an experience of contact with someone from another culture. For the majority of the participants this awareness developed at primary school but for some not even until adulthood. There appeared to be an option available to them that they could attend to difference or not.

An example of this view is given by Andrea an academic in her 40s: *Well, I mean you can think that you haven't thought about it because it's just taken for granted, that it's in everything, the socialization of our culture you're the majority and that this is the world and everything else is different, um so why even think about it!*

Mazzei writes that white people's ability to choose to attend to difference or not, is a privilege that remains elusive, unintelligible to us and silent. When I asked Dorothy, the youngest participant, if she could explain why Pākehā have difficulty in describing what it means to be white, she responded thoughtfully: *I think that a lot of Pākehā people have the privilege of not actually ever been forced to think about their culture.*

A significant aspect of participants' silences was their inability to talk about how racism as a power system creates privilege for some people as well as disadvantages for others. In fact, all participants consistently represented themselves as heterogeneous complex individual selves with little acknowledgement of the likelihood that their realities were enhanced in any way by racialised social structures. In particular, culture and matters cultural were "somewhere else" such as Māori who were often referred to as a homogeneous group constrained by their culture.^{xxxvii} These perspectives maintained and reproduced an individualistic lens that inhibited participants' ability to recognise the power of racialised social structures in their lives.

The Dialectic of Speech and Silence

The participants and I made use of silence as strategic discursive practices throughout the research. Many of these silences were at the juncture of contradicting discourses of speech. The most consistent theme as already discussed was participants' predisposition when talking about "race", to talk about "Others" not themselves. At times the participants seemed to be struggling for words. Ruth Frankenberg offers a helpful explanation for this, claiming that "White women have to repress, avoid and conceal a great deal in order to maintain a stance of "not noticing colour".^{xxxviii} The following excerpt shows how powerful the prohibition against noticing colour/difference can be maintained by strategies of speech and silence including privileged and veiled silences.

Charlotte, who was brought up in the Christchurch was adamant that she had never come across anyone other than white. She was recounting one of the major events that triggered her awareness that she is white and different:

Charlotte: Oh, I tell you what, I tell you when I can remember the first time when I realized that I was white. There were Māori at our wedding I had never been with a group of Māori people before and at our wedding suddenly M's relations were there. And I had never met anyone before. It was funny - they wanted to stand around the piano and my mother wanted something else to happen, speeches or something. Oh it was - I was so young then, I didn't really know, but I do remember that that was the first time that I had ever been with a group of Māori doing everything different than any other social occasions that we had ever had.

(H. Yes, yes.) Cos even when I met M, I would never have thought - I didn't know he was a Māori. I never thought of him as being a Maori I thought of him as being catholic. (H. Laughter). That's the first thing Mum said is you can't marry a catholic. There was never anything about Māori, never ever!

Charlotte's accounts reveal the work that is done to maintain a colour/difference blind perspective. Marilyn Frye asserts this is often a matter of attention and that those located within this discourse, work against all odds not to notice, or acknowledge that they notice, what is clearly before them. She adds, this is because the discourses available in a colour/difference blind perspective restrict the acknowledgement difference except in vertical terms. Frye continues "If one wonders at the mechanisms of ignorance, at how a person can be right there and see and hear, and yet not know one of the answers, lies with the matter of attention..."^{xxxix}

Charlotte was later talking about her children and whether they claimed a Māori identity. I hadn't heard what she had said and asked for clarification.

Helen: Oh, right right, do they identify as Māori did you say?

Charlotte: No, I don't think I have ever heard B (her son) [say anything]. I don't think I would have ever heard B say that. But I remember A (her daughter) coming home from her first job saying that someone had called her a black something or other and um I couldn't believe it, you see. And I said to Anna but you're not, or something silly as that, but she said, Of course I am! That was Anna.

Charlotte's prohibition against noticing racialised difference was so ingrained she was unable to comprehend that her daughter could be seen as Māori by others.

An important insight of this analysis for me is that as the participants and I attempted to talk about difference we were also talking about ourselves even when speaking of about a racialised Other. Amy Best suggests "that any attempt to articulate difference is part of an identity claims-making process" and she reiterates, that of course, includes the researcher.^{xi} Best's point identified some of the tensions that I felt as researcher. At the outset of this research, I became aware of the challenge that Aida Hurtado and Abigail Stewart make in their writing about the implications that studying whiteness has for employing feminist methods. Their argument centres on the problems of using feminist methodology for researching hegemonic locations. Hurtado and Stewart urge researchers to "provide whites with the opportunity to express their views about race *while being held accountable for them*" so as to inhibit the potential for recounting overtly racist opinions.^{xii} I was conscious of these researchers' recommendation during the interviews and my role as researcher became a challenge for me, especially how I interrupted some silences throughout the interviews.

Covering the Silences

What became apparent to me in the process of analysing the data was the powerful role that I played as researcher, in doing “whiteness” in my interactions with the participants Crenshaw (1997).^{xlii} Some of these strategies, as already pointed out, were quite deliberate so as to encourage the flow of talk. I frequently made spontaneous decisions whether to insist on or to resist pursuing a particular line of discussion. At times I found myself unconsciously filling the gaps to cover the potential embarrassment that participants may experience at “not having anything to say”. I was mindful of how prolonged silence in most Western contexts can “force” speech; it is a strategy that I have used for many years as an educator. I did not want the participants to feel consciously coerced into speech. In retrospect I have some reservations about the tendency that I had at times to intervene and “assist” participants using a number of prompts. An example is during Rosemary’s interview. She was trying to articulate how she felt in a situation up North where for the first time she and her husband were the only Pākehā in sight. She was having difficulty finding the words and I kept interrupting her:

H. What sort of feelings did that bring up for you what did that feel like?

Rosemary: Oh, probably you would appreciate how they’d feel in a way, You sort of thought crikey this oh well you just thought there might (long silence)

H: What were your feelings, can you identify what the feeling was?

Rosemary: Yeah, well you certainly felt in the minority so um I guess you slightly thought well that must be how they feel sometimes especially back where I live. .(H. Mm, yeah) You know (....talking over)

H. So what I am trying to understand is, you are saying right, there were less of you (R. Mm, mm) Can you identify what the feeling was?

Rosemary. Well, you might as well, I know now, it was only a swimming pool I mean it wasn’t as though [they were] going to talk to you, in fact you know, they were only having a swim. I suppose it was slightly... no I just... (H.Uncomfortable?) Yeah, probably yeah, yeah probably - probably was a bit uncomfortable. (H. I am just trying to get at the feeling) that would be the word actually.

This interaction between Rosemary and me highlights that I sometimes had an inclination to finish participants’ sentences. What I struggled with in many instances was participants’ tendency to not complete their sentences and to leave a possible “offending” word not said. I had become discouraged at times. My positioning within the terrain of whiteness, my familiarity with these strategies of silence and my enthusiasm to “get the data” - the words-meant that I missed many opportunities to “hear” the silences. It has become evident in the

process of analysing these interviews that the interactional strategies of whiteness that the participants and I deployed were at times contradictory. Despite my understandings of the theoretical requirements of a “race” cognizant analysis, my “insider” position constrained my ability to negotiate and manage whiteness as it actually arranged our social interactions in the interviews.^{xliii}

Many of the symbolic silences passed me by as I struggled with the lack of explicit whiteness talk. The elusiveness of the forms of symbolic silence that we inhabited intermingled so seamlessly with our talk that they were extremely difficult to capture and understand. Most participants used a colour blind, power evasive discourse that was not overtly racist and it became apparent that participants were monitoring both how they were representing themselves as they strived to talk about being white, and when they were expressing their views of their perceived cultural ‘Others’, in particular Māori. Participants’ use of the polite, intentional, privileged and veiled silences, worked invisibly but powerfully to maintain a colourblind/power evasive discourse which participants appeared to conceive as polite, tolerant and rational. Marjorie De Vault warns us that the context of overlapping colourblind and power evasive discourses can be usefully critical of earlier essentialist understanding of “race” but this is achieved by obscuring the dynamics of group differences related to culture and power.^{xliv}

Conclusion

Whiteness must be marked, investigated, and understood if whites are to be effective antiracists, but unless the political content of that project is kept clear and central, the study of whiteness is likely to become a form of self-help for white people in an identity crisis.^{xlv}

Silences are difficult to describe for they have no clear boundaries, no hard analytical edges of definition, but they are real nonetheless, enveloping us even though we are sometimes unaware. The importance and power of the discourses of silence to maintain and reproduce whiteness that the participants and I deployed almost passed me by. There were significant recourses to silence during the interviews that often revealed a lack of discursive space for us to meet as Pākehā women and to talk about whiteness. But more significant were the ideologically based simultaneous silences, that signified that to be white is the natural condition, the assumed norm that so effectively diverts our attention away from its existence and consequently its importance.

This essay uncovered some of the persistent and considerable work that the research participants carried out to maintain a colourblind discourse, and also the challenges for me as researcher, to maintain a counter hegemonic presence in all our interactions. We all

inhabited the discursive terrain of whiteness and deployed both sequential and simultaneous silences. Despite the participants' difficulty in explicitly articulating their whiteness, this discussion shows that it is within these varying forms of silence that the power of whiteness is invoked and maintained.^{xlvi}

As an educator who was searching for pedagogical strategies to expose the limitations of the dominant colourblind discourse of whiteness, an exploration and analysis of symbolic silences can facilitate three outcomes: an opportunity for Pākehā to understand that our experiences, perceptions, and economic positions have been profoundly affected by being constituted as a white; and that by getting in touch with whiteness and its attendant privilege, we can identify and reduce/eliminate our racism.^{xlvii} Once the space of whiteness is exposed, culturally positioned, delimited, rendered visible, and deterritorialized, then, whiteness will lose its power to dominate.^{xlviii}

ⁱ Wildman, S., & Davis, A. (1996). Making Systems of Privilege Visible: How language Veils the Existence of Systems of Privilege, *Privilege Revealed: How Invisible Preference Undermines America*: New York University Press. p.316.

ⁱⁱ Human Rights Commission: <https://www.hrc.co.nz/resources/race-relations-day/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://waitangitribunal.govt.nz/publications-and-resources/>;
<https://e-tangata.co.nz/comment-and-analysis/moana-jackson-decolonisation-and-the-stories-in-the-land/>

^{iv} DiAngelo, Robin
<https://theconversation.com/robin-diangelos-white-fragility-ignores-the-differences-within-whiteness-143728>

^v Moraga, C., & Anzaldúa, G. (1983). *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. Watertown: Persephone Press.

^{vi} Gibson, H. (2006.) The invisible Whiteness of Being.
https://ir.canterbury.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10092/1050/thesis_fulltext.pdf;sequence=1

^{vii} Moraga, C., & Anzaldúa, G. Op. cit.

^{viii} I interviewed twentyeight Pākehā women with two questions in mind. first, what being seen as white means to them. I was particularly interested in the racialised discourses that participants had available to them during our discussions. Second, can an examination of racialised discourses be useful for antiracist and Te Tiriti learning.

^{ix} Scott, R. L. (1993). Dialectical Tensions of Speaking and Silence. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. 79,(1), 1-18. (p. 10)

^x Bedggood, 1998; Be11, 1996; Dupius et al, 1999; Mead, 1982; Nairn & McCreaner, 1990, 1991; Pearson and Sissons, 1998; Tilbury, 1998; Wetherell & Potter 1992.

^{xi} Frankenberg, R. (1993). *The Social Construction of Whiteness: white women, race matters*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

^{xii} Moon, D. (1999). White Enculturation & Bourgeois Ideology: the Discursive Production of “good (white) Girls”. In T. M. Nakayama, J. Martin (Eds.). *Whiteness: The social construction of social identity*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. (p.179).

^{xiii} Awatere 1984, Hill Collins 1990, hooks 1984, Irwin 1992, Lorde 1984, Moraga & Anzaldúa 1983.

^{xiv} LeCompte, M. D., & Preissle, J. (1993). *Ethnography and Qualitative Design in Educational Research* (2nd ed.). New York: Academic Press. p 54.

^{xv} Scott, Op. cit (p.15).

^{xvi} Crenshaw, C. (1997) Resisting Whiteness' rhetorical silence, *Western Journal of Communication* 61 (3) 253-278

^{xvii} Scott, Op cit. (p.17).

^{xviii} Mazzei, L. (2003). Inhabited silences: In Pursuit of a Muffled Subtext *Qualitative Inquiry* 9 (3), 355-368.p.355.

^{xix} Crenshaw Op. cit.

^{xx} Mazzei Op Cit included unintelligible silences in her framework and these were numerous in the initial stages of my analysis but as I began to “hear” the silences behind the words in the simultaneous silences, many of these silences became intelligible. I do not wish to convey here that all silences in the interviews were captured and explained as I know that many remain undetected and to quote Mazzei’s words, “What I know is that within these silences exist the traces that continue to reveal” (p.366).

^{xxi} Mazzei identified a fifth form of Silence, unintelligible silence and my interviews were littered with these. There were many silences that I believe would continue to reveal as long as I kept rereading the interviews! I was inside the discourses of whiteness as much as the participants.

^{xxii} Mazzei, Op. cit.

^{xxiii} The questions included: Can you remember when you were first aware that you are “white”; what do your families understand about being white? Was it ever discussed, if not how was it communicated? Do you see your education as having had any impact on your understandings of being white? How do you see your family as having had any impact on your understandings of being white? What ways do you act or interact that is white? If you yourself have not thought about this much before, have you any thoughts as to why?

^{xxiv} DeVault, M. (1995). Ethnicity and Expertise: Racial-ethnic knowledge in sociological research. *Gender and Society*, 9(5), 612-631. (p.628).

^{xxv} Tilbury, F. (1998). 'I really don't know much About it But.': A typology of Rhetorical Devices Used in Talk About Māori/Pakeha Relations, *New Zealand Sociology*, 13(2), 289-32

^{xxvi} Tilbury, Op. cit. Tilbury, F. (1998). 'I really don't know much About it But.': A typology of Rhetorical Devices Used in Talk About Māori/Pakeha Relations, *New Zealand Sociology*, 13(2), 289-32

^{xxvii} Scott Op. cit. (p.10).

^{xxviii} Scott Op.cit, (p.14).

^{xxix} Frankenberg Op. cit. presents manifestations of three discursive repertoires that are central insights for this study. First, the primary origins of understanding about ‘race’, are based on a sense of biological superiority, for that reason, other discourses are forced to engage with this *essentialist* discourse by rejecting aspects of it, **but at the same time not being able to separate difference from domination**. Consequently, the first two discourses, that of a belief in biological superiority followed by the assimilative discourses, are commonly manifest in a closed binary opposition in the thinking of ‘white’ people or those located within the terrain of Whiteness. Many international researchers have shown that ‘white’ people believe that they are restricted to the options of being racist, or being *colourblind* (*power evasive*). This binary opposition is closed because difference is conflated with domination and ‘white’ subjects are forced to deny difference, so that they will not be seen as legitimising their domination. Second, despite the sequentially historical appearance of the three discursive repertoires Frankenberg identified, the discourses were all available and in play in Frankenberg’s participants’ narratives.

^{xxx} Best, A. (2003). Doing race in the context of feminist interviewing: constructing whiteness through talk. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 9(6), 895-914.

^{xxxi} Jackson II, R. (1999). White Space, White Privilege: Mapping discursive inquiry into self. *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 85(1), 38-54.

^{xxxii} Gray, C., Jaber, N. & Anglem, J. (2013). Pakeha Identity and whiteness: What does it mean to be white? *Sites: new series*,10(2), 82-106. <http://dx.doi.org/10.11157/sites-vol10iss2id223>

^{xxxiii} There were a number of accounts of participants' family's racism against Chinese and Catholics and these are discussed in Chapter three of my thesis. accessed at:
https://ir.canterbury.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10092/1050/thesis_fulltext.pdf;sequence=1

^{xxxiv} Mazzei. Op. cit. (p. 365).

^{xxxv} The prologue to this thesis explores the problematic of the relationship between identity claiming and hegemonic relations. Put simplistically, People are more conscious of those aspects of their identification that are discriminated against, marginalised and oppressed.

^{xxxvi} Jackson. Op.cit. (p.41).

^{xxxvii} Rathzel, N. (1997). Gender and Racism in Discourse. In R. Wodak (Ed.), *Gender and Discourse* (pp. 57-80). London: Sage.

^{xxxviii} Frankenberg. Op. cit. (p.33).

^{xxxix} Frye, M. (1983). On Being White: Towards a feminist understanding of race and race supremacy, *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* (pp. 110-127). Trumansburg, N.Y.: Crossing Press. (p120-121).

^{xl} Best, A. (2003). Doing race in the context of feminist interviewing: constructing whiteness through talk. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 9(6), 895-914. (p. 907).

^{xli} Hurtado, & Stewart. (1997). Through the Looking Glass: Implications of Studying Whiteness for Feminist Methods. In M. Fine & L. Weis & L. C. Powell & L. M. Wong (Eds.), *Off White: readings on racism power and society*. London: Routledge. (P.309). Hurtado and Stewart (1997) suggest that quoting hate filled sentiments is seldom justified and that "thick analysis" as in using minimal documentation and maintaining a very high standard of analytic depth is necessary, when work carries such a high risk of causing suffering in those already the objects of daily racism (p.308). This discussion is explored in the methodology chapter of my thesis.

^{xlii} Cranshaw. Op. cit.

^{xliii} Best, Op.cit.

^{xliv} De Vault Op. cit. (p.628).

^{xlvi} Kaufman, C. (1996). The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness. *Socialist Review*, 26(314), 195-201. (p.200)

^{xlvi} Scott. Op. cit.

^{xlvii} Alcoff, L.M. (1998), What Should White People Do? *Hypatia*, 13: 6-26. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.1998.tb01367.x>

Marty, D. (1999). White Antiracist Rhetoric as Apologia. In T. Nakayama & J. Martin (Eds.). *Whiteness: the Communication of Social Identity* (pp. 51-68). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications

^{xlviii} Nakayama, T., & Krizek, R. (1999). Whiteness as a Strategic Rhetoric. In T. Nakayama & J. Martin (Eds.). *Whiteness: The Communication of Social Identity* (pp. 87-106). Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage Publications.