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**IDENTITY, DIFFERENCE AND POLITICS:
A POSTSTRUCTURALIST INVESTIGATION**

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the ways in which concepts of binary opposition are elaborated in some of the key contemporary theories on difference and identity. This project contributes to the emerging scholarship on the notion of emancipation and empowerment in educational theory. It explores discourses of difference and identity that are engaged with constructions and re-construction of the notions of *Self* and *Other*. This thesis develops a systematic analysis of texts with arguments on political performance of representation and agency.

The thesis begins with an examination of Hegel's thesis on the relationship between the lord and the bondsman which is implemented in the political discourses of John Rex and Paulo Freire. It continues to examine political theses with emphasis on the relationship between the mind and the body; examinations include theses offered by Robert Miles and Frantz Fanon. This thesis also explores the methodological value of concepts of binary opposition; it explores Claude Lévi-Strauss' theory on cultural differences and examines Iris M. Young and Chantal Mouffé's discourses on the 'politics of difference'. This thesis further explores Jacques Derrida's notions of deconstruction and *différance* together with analyses and critiques of Homi Bhabha's and Gayatri Spivak's reconstruction of concepts of binary oppositions.

This thesis calls for a consideration of Derrida's thoughts on the political as an approach to the understanding difference and identity. I propose a double reading of the texts examined in this thesis: on the one hand, they are genealogical analyses to understand and criticise the ways in which knowledge on (racial and cultural) difference and identity have been constructed. On the other hand, they are given affirmations of political significance with their performative effectiveness that language allows them to achieve.

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