**Negotiating Afrikaner subjectivity from the post-apartheid margins:
One student's subject positions in the discursively constructed classroom space
at an elite English high school**

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> ABSTRACT: The contemporary South African subject English classroom is a
> complex space requiring ongoing attention to issues of cultural and linguistic
> diversity, and frequently manifesting the need to work across historically
> constructed differences in race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status. This
> article reports on one aspect of a broader research project, which explores the
> relationship between identity/subjectivity and pedagogy in a high school
> subject English classroom during a time of ongoing social change in South
> Africa. Specifically, it places under scrutiny the multiple subject positions that
> a selected student, Sonia, takes up in relation to a unit of work that invites
> students to historicise their identities. This is empirical classroom-based
> research which, for the purposes of this article, has its focus narrowed to
> extracts of lesson transcripts where Sonia participates in whole-class
> discussion, a multimodal artefact she produces collaboratively, and excerpts
> from a student focus group. Sonia is one of five girls who self-identify as
> Afrikaans in a Grade 11 subject English classroom at an elite girls' school,
> where the normative position is that of an English, white, South African
> student of Anglo-Saxon descent. Using poststructuralist theories of discourse
> and subjectivity, I analyse a number of pedagogic moments when Sonia's
> classroom interactions enable her multiple and sometimes contradictory
> subject positions to become visible. The argument made is two-fold. Firstly, I
> argue that Sonia's ethnic affiliation with the Afrikaans-speaking community in
> South Africa produces shifting and contradictory positionings influenced by
> the repositioning of Afrikaner identity in the social and political landscape
> post-1994. Secondly, I argue that the discursive manoeuvres made by Sonia
> could offer insights into the ways in which marginal(ised) subjectivities
> operate in the discursively constructed classroom space. The implications for
> discussion-based subject English classrooms are then touched upon.

> KEYWORDS: Identity/subjectivity, pedagogy, discourse, South Africa, post-
> apartheid margins, English classroom, Afrikaans.

INTRODUCTION

> The different moments of the school experience … offer intensely
> complex opportunities for young people to receive and make identity.
> This process of receiving and making … generates identities that are
> profoundly heterogenous, contradictory and susceptible to change.
> (Soudien, 2001, p. 313)

Classrooms are complex discursive spaces and have long been recognised as key sites
in the production of subjectivity (Walkerdine, 1990; Baxter, 2002). And, as we know
from Hall, "[identities] are subject to radical historicistion, and are constantly in the

process of change and transformation" (1996, p. 4). Classroom spaces may be discursively constituted, as I shall argue, but they are materially and socially located and thus subject to broader social processes. During times of large scale social change, when shifts in the sociopolitical terrain open up possibilities for the (re)making of new identities/subjectivities[1] (Laclau, 1990), corresponding effects are discernible in the school classroom. The nature of the subject English classroom – characterised as it so often is by discussion-based lessons, where students take up positions in relation to the subject matter at hand – makes it a particularly fertile space for the re-working of subjectivity in present-day, post-apartheid South Africa.

This article reports on one aspect of a broader research project, which explores the relationship between identity/subjectivity and pedagogy in the Grade 11[2] subject English classroom during a time of ongoing social change in South Africa. Specifically, it places under scrutiny the multiple subject positions that one student takes up in relation to a unit of work that invites students to historicise their identities. The selected student, Sonia[3], is one of five girls in the class who self-identify as Afrikaans at an elite girls' school where the normative position is that of an English-speaking, white South African of Anglo-Saxon descent. Poststructuralist theories of discourse and subjectivity are used to analyse the multiple and sometimes contradictory subject positions Sonia takes up in relation to South Africa's recent past and current sociopolitical discourses. The argument made is two-fold. Firstly, I argue that Sonia's ethnic affiliation with the Afrikaans-speaking community in South Africa produces shifting and contradictory positionings influenced by the repositioning of Afrikaner identity in the social and political landscape post-1994. Secondly, I argue that the discursive manoeuvres made by Sonia could offer insights into the ways in which marginal(ised) subjectivities operate in the discursively constructed classroom space. This has implications for the ways in which we as subject English teachers approach potentially uncomfortable subject matter, that could invoke any number of forms of difference which can, in turn, produce marginalisation.

Present-day South Africa is no longer newly emerged from under apartheid. In 1994, the apartheid state, underpinned by white supremacist ideologies and Afrikaner nationalism, was dismantled and replaced by its first democratically elected government – the African National Congress (ANC) headed by the late President Nelson Mandela. Despite significant changes in the social, economic and political landscape over the past two decades, the social identity categories constructed, reinforced and/or policed under the apartheid regime have not ceased to matter, either discursively or materially. Nevertheless their validity is increasingly contested and their fluidity increasingly evident. Indeed, categories of race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, among others, are not viewed as static or self-enclosed but as potentially hybrid and as working in intersection with one another. Class inequalities continue to be racialised, for example, and white cultural practices continue to operate normatively in privileged environments, even when these are no longer racially exclusive. Much has been written about the "identity crisis" in the Afrikaans community in the wake of the dismantling of apartheid (Steyn, 2004; Van der

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[1] Laclau uses the term identity; however, as I explain in the theoretical discussion, I make use of both terms though not as synonyms.
[2] Grade 11 is the eleventh and penultimate year of high school in South Africa; Grade 11 students are usually 16–17 years of age.
[3] All research participants have been provided with pseudonyms.

Westhuizen, 2007; Visser, 2007; Blaser and Van der Westhuizen, 2012). Although this community cannot be seen as homogenous, the ties between Afrikaner nationalism and the Apartheid government are indelible. According to Steyn (2004), the loss of political power and privilege have rendered Afrikaners a disgraced minority group, which is actively engaged in "(de)(re)constructing positionality for the Afrikaner in the new society from a position that is experienced as weak in relation to both the African Other … and the English Other" (p. 162).

Research on identity which has been conducted post-1994 in educational settings suggests that the younger generation of Afrikaners is also caught up in a process of self-(re)definition, even when too young to have any memories of their own of apartheid. Drawing on his work with young Afrikaans students at a historically Afrikaans university, Jansen (2009a, 2009b) has argued that young people who are immersed in white Afrikaans communities in all facets of their lives are predisposed to inherit ingrained prejudices and hardened dispositions and attitudes from their parents and thus continue to reproduce apartheid discourses of racial supremacy. At a different historically Afrikaans university, McKinney (2004a, 2004b, 2007; McKinney & Van Pletzen, 2004) found that while her South African literature students were reluctant to engage with anti-apartheid literature, because they felt interpellated as white oppressors by the texts they were reading, they were nevertheless engaging with race in ways that were shifting, contradictory and thus emblematic of the inbetween-ness of political transition. What these studies and others (Hues, 2011; Walker, 2005a, 2005b) have in common is that they have been done in educational contexts that are not only historically Afrikaans but continue to be fairly racially exclusive and Afrikaans-dominant. This paper instead turns attention to an Afrikaans student who is part of a small minority of students negotiating the discursive terrain at an English private school.

Below I outline key concepts from the poststructuralist theoretical framework on which I draw; this is followed by an explication of the research design and methods. In order to enable a focus on the relationship between the classroom interaction and Sonia's positionality, I preface the data analysis with a brief introduction of Sonia and the group dynamic among the five Afrikaans girls. The analysis itself is then structured around three particular pedagogic moments, which function as snapshots of subjectivity in action, demonstrating Sonia's active negotiation of her multiple, sometimes conflicting subject positions. I conclude by drawing out some of the insights generated about subjectivity and the subject English classroom.

THE POSTSTRUCTURALIST THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The discursively constituted subject and its conditions of possibility

This study is centrally informed by a Foucauldian conception of the discursively constructed subject. Discourses produce subjects through the forms of knowledge associated with them; additionally, discourses provide subject positions from which their particular knowledges and meanings most make sense. While Foucault writes of discourses opening up a number of possible positions for speaking subjects (1972, pp. 119 and 137), he sees discourses as not simply being internally constituted by social

institutions across time but also as subject to external conditions of possibility. He expands on this in the following way.

> [W]e must not go from discourse towards its interior, hidden nucleus, towards the heart of a thought or signification supposed to be manifested in it; but, on the basis of discourse itself, its appearance and its regularity, go towards its external conditions of possibility, towards what gives rise to the aleatory series of these events, and fixes its limits. (1970/1981, p. 67)

While Foucault was looking at processes of subjectification across historical periods, it is possible, with the help of more contemporary poststructuralist theorists (Hall, 1996; Weedon, 1997; Davies, B., 1994, 1997), to focus more closely on processes of subjectification as they play themselves out at the level of the individual subject, and to shift to a more scaled-down focus on everyday discourses in everyday contexts in relation to subjectivity.

Identity/subjectivity as moment/process

Poststructuralism provides a "theory of subjectivity in process" (Weedon, 1997, p. 83). The poststructuralist subject is always under construction and continually reconstituted through discourse – a discontinuous process that is radically historicised because available positions vary across contexts, interactions and even from moment to moment.

Hall (1996) distinguishes between subjectivity as an open-ended process of becoming, and "identities" as "points of suture" along this process when particular subject positions are taken up. Thus identities are "points of temporary attachment" (pp. 5-6) to the flow of available discourses – almost like snapshots that capture and render momentarily visible the processes of subjectification under way. Seen in this way, the term "identity" is synonymous with the term "subject position". It therefore follows that the only access I have to students' subjectivities is through the subject positions (i.e., identities) that they take up in the talk and texts that they produce. This work is based on the hypothesis that an accumulation of subject positions (or identities) over time can generate insights about the much larger and largely inaccessible process of subjectification.

Pedagogy and the classroom space

Pedagogy typically refers to the principles and practices employed in the classroom for the purpose of teaching and learning. The pedagogy of the given unit of work (which is described below) was constituted by its subject matter and by the modes of engagement for which it called. The subject matter focused on historical and social issues; while key modes of engagement were the discussion-based lessons intended to generate maximum interaction and debate, and two tasks which constructed students as actively involved in producing and presenting their own content. Thus the unit of work itself is already a discursive construction, which sets up particular conditions of possibility for its speaking subjects.

What, then, happens when the unit of work is enacted in the classroom space – a space which is not merely physical but socially constituted? The pedagogically structured classroom space is co-constructed by teacher and students alike,

notwithstanding the asymmetrical relations at play. Thus while the pedagogy of the teaching intervention and the way in which the teacher frames it together produce a particular discursive construction of the classroom space, the kind of participation that students offer in turn changes the conditions of possibility from utterance to utterance.

To use Foucault's words, it is the interactions that occur in the classroom space that generate "the external conditions of possibility" for discourse; these are some of the "aleatory series of these events" (1970/1981, p. 67) that continually shape the discursive construction of the classroom space and determine the available speaking positions.

Pedagogic moments

Within this fluid and dynamic conceptualisation of the classroom space, I am defining "pedagogic moments" as instances in the classroom interaction when the pedagogic discourse enables particular subject positions to become visible. A pedagogy which encourages maximum interaction enables glimpses of its participants' subjectivities, most notably when they take up positions as speaking subjects in language[4]. The pedagogic moments selected are instances where Sonia takes the floor and her subject positions become the focus of her utterance (whether intentionally or not). This enables them to be read against the conditions of possibility of the pedagogic discourse with the aim being to arrive at some understanding of how the processes of subjectification play themselves out in the classroom space.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The research presented in this article is part of a broader study which used a qualitative, classroom-based research design to investigate students' engagement with a teaching intervention (or unit of work) carried out in the Grade 11 English Home Language classrooms at two secondary schools in Johannesburg in 2008. The teaching intervention was designed by the researcher and taught by the English teachers at each school. As the researcher, I observed and video-recorded students' sustained engagement with the teaching intervention over a period of approximately three weeks in each school, using the recordings to generate full transcripts of all lessons. Also included in the data collection was a multimodal artefact (a poster) produced by students as one of their tasks. Once the teaching intervention was complete, I conducted, in each school, three focus-group interviews comprising 4–6 students each; these were audio recorded and full transcripts were generated.

For the purposes of this article, the focus is on the subject positions taken up by one student, Sonia, in relation to the teaching intervention as it was taught in her particular classroom. The school is an elite private girls' school located in the affluent northern suburbs of Johannesburg. There were about 500 students at the school and while it is a

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[4] The focus on language necessitated by the analysis of student talk, however, should not suggest that I am using the term discourse in its linguistic sense; but rather that discourse is made manifest in language because it is through language that the discursively constituted subject takes up a speaking position.

racially desegregated school, approximately 80% of the student body is white[5]. The class involved in this research consisted of 22 female students, 16 of whom were white, and all of whom were 16 to 17 years of age. The teacher, Mrs Prada, was an Indian woman in her forties who had been teaching English at the school for a number of years and had over 20 years' teaching experience.

The reason why Sonia was selected for individual analysis is that she was a highly participative member of the class, thereby making it possible to track the subject positions she took up across a range of classroom interactions. Data drawn on includes lesson transcripts of classroom discussion, the multimodal artefact produced by Sonia and her partner, and the transcript of the focus group in which Sonia took part. The analysis is structured around three pedagogic moments, which have been selected because they are instances when Sonia's subject positions become the focus of her utterance. To analyse these moments, I draw on poststructuralist analytical frameworks for classroom interaction (Walkerdine, 1990; Davies, B., 1994; Baxter, 2008), focusing predominantly on identifying the discourses in circulation in the classroom space and the subject positions that they make available.

The unit of work

The teaching intervention consisted of two sections. The first section focused on the work of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)[6], using it as an entry point into the country's troubled past. The students were introduced to the TRC's work in an open-ended way, which sought to provide multiple perspectives on the work of the commission, and were subsequently asked to interview two adult members of their communities or social networks to find out people's memories of and attitudes towards the commission. They then reported back on their interviews, generating open-ended, whole-class discussion that culminated in each student indicating whether or not she believed the work of the TRC was relevant to her generation, and providing her reasoning. The second part of the teaching intervention required students to reconnect with the "now" by considering their contemporary realities. The discussion was facilitated by a handout depicting multiple views of South African youth drawn from the media and popular culture. Students were then tasked with working in pairs to produce a poster which captured in word and image what it is like to be a young person in South Africa today. The teaching intervention concluded by having each pair present their poster to the class, giving them the opportunity to foreground their own meanings and leading to further open discussion.

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[5] Although race is understood as a social construct, apartheid racial categories continue to have both symbolic value and material consequences; hence the need to be explicit about them at times. The scare quotes conventionally used around race terms to question their validity have been omitted for reading clarity and should be understood.
[6] South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), established in 1995 and led by Archbishop Tutu, was mandated to establish as complete a picture as possible of the gross human rights violations committed under the apartheid regime, and to promote national unity and reconciliation through truth-telling. Public hearings were held between 1996 and 1998, where victims or their family members came forward to testify to abuses, and where perpetrators could testify and request amnesty. These hearings were intensively broadcast across all media platforms.

DATA ANALYSIS

Sonia, girl intellectual

In a class that, as I observed, was clearly accustomed to engaging in debate, Sonia stood out as a confident, critical thinker who was able to listen to others' points of view, often introduced topic changes, and seemed comfortable to question prevailing discourses. She was one of the five girls who self-identified as Afrikaans – Calista, Antoinette, Saskia and Adele being the other four. Although these girls did not operate overtly as a group, they gravitated towards one another over the course of the teaching intervention. During pair work, four of these girls formed pairs with each other. It was this dynamic, as well as the sometimes subtle ways in which they took up subject positions based on aspects of their Afrikaans identities, that prompted me to constitute an exclusively Afrikaans focus group[7]. They took up this extra-pedagogic space to position themselves as strongly united around their Afrikaans cultural identities, making a number of observations that I will draw on in the ensuing analysis.

Sonia was a 17-year-old, white, Afrikaans female. Afrikaans was not only the language she spoke at home but, as she made clear in the focus group discussion, it constituted the culture and traditions in which she had been raised. She came from an upper-class family: her father an advocate, her mother an educational psychologist. They lived in one of the most affluent suburbs in Johannesburg; her primary school education was at an elite, private Afrikaans school in Johannesburg. In the first lesson of the unit of work, when students were considering how they would identify themselves, Sonia identified as a "girl" and as an "intellectual", following this up with her identity as a student of this particular school. Later in the same lesson, she referred to herself as a proud South African, expressed support for diversity and said that she took particular pride in being from a developing country as she believed it made one more socially aware.

Sonia conducted her TRC interviews with her parents. Unlike the majority of her classmates' interviewees, her parents seemed to know a considerable amount about the TRC and expressed very favourable attitudes towards its work. Sonia reported that her father saw South Africa's truth commission as unprecedented in scale internationally and as pivotal in assisting the nation to move on from the past. Her mother too was strongly supportive of the TRC's work, believing it had helped individuals reconcile and attain some form of closure.

The analysis which follows focuses on three pedagogic moments that occurred over the course of the unit of work and which demonstrate some of the discursive manoeuvres that Sonia made as she negotiated the tensions among the various subject positions she took up.

Pedagogic moment 1: The TRC vs the tsunami

The extract below is drawn from the discussion which occurred as students were reporting back on their TRC interviews. By this point a considerable number of

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[7] All other focus groups were randomly constituted.

interviews had already been reported on and students had noticed that many interviewees were neither particularly knowledgeable about nor particularly interested in the TRC. A number of students were putting forward the argument that people's lack of interest was because neither they nor any close family members were directly involved in the events pertaining to the TRC.

Extract 1

Antoinette: I think it's like people dying in the tsunami, it's the same thing, like all of us are aw shame, you know, like all those people died, and I really do feel sorry for them –

T: but on a grand scale, not –

Antoinette: Yes, but it's not directly like affecting us so we don't think about it as much, you know, digest it and focus on it as much.

T: One, two, three [to hands up: Sonia, Kathy, Kelsey]

Sonia: All right, but I think that like it *did* affect everyone directly because it's your country, it's where you live. Like if that hadn't happened, who knows where we would have been. Like Susan's dad said, it might have like prevented a civil war – because if you don't know what happened in the world, how can you like start to forgive, or start to move on from something that you have no idea what happened? I think everybody is directly affected by this – it's not the same as a tsunami because it's not a natural disaster – it's people hurting other people. It's like your own race, your own people, hurting someone else. I don't think – I think it's directly linked to everybody in this country and ...

Susan: So much stuff has been like changed due to it ...

Sonia: Ja ...

Susan: Like the BEE thing, and that all affects us directly.

Sonia: Ja, so I don't think that it's fair to say it didn't affect everyone directly because even though you might not have known anyone –

Kelsey: So it still affected you but maybe not on a personal scale – like you've lost someone personally so you're like, oh well I lost my family –

Sonia: Ja, I know but that's no reason not to pay attention to it, just because *I* didn't –

Kelsey: Ja, but I'm saying it's not as personal, as close to home because you personally didn't lose somebody. Say if you lose someone in the tsunami, it is more personal –

Sonia: You can't compare those two. I just think that it's –

Kelsey: I'm just saying, like take an event that people die –

Sonia: Ja, but I think it affects everyone and that even though it might not be *exceptionally* personal, like your brother or whatever, I think that it's your country so you have the responsibility to look out for it and pay attention to what's going on. (Lesson 4)

Sonia actively bids to speak and emphatically opposes the line of argument being put forward by her peers. She begins by reinforcing her belief in the value of the TRC, maintaining that it has been so significant that it is impossible not to have been affected by it – "if it hadn't happened, who knows where we would have been" (9–10).

Central to her stance here, however, is Sonia's outright rejection of the comparison drawn between the TRC and the tsunami that hit South East Asia in 2004, killing over 200 000 people. A natural disaster, she makes clear, cannot be compared to "people hurting other people" (14). She thus foregrounds the role of human agency and

invokes the notion of responsibility for someone else's suffering. By following this up with "it's your own race, your own people hurting someone else" (14–15), she is now directly engaging her own and her classmates' subjectivities – most of whom are, like her, white South Africans – and alluding to their collective complicity in this suffering. Her use of the second person possessive, "your", functions partially as a direct address to her audience and partially as a slightly more generalised, informal, perhaps less risky version of the inclusive first person, as in "*our* own race". Sonia is simultaneously taking up her identity position as a white South African who is implicated in the heinous deeds committed by the white apartheid state and confronting her classmates with their own levels of responsibility by association. However, English whiteness and Afrikaans whiteness are differently placed in relation to the apartheid past, with the latter being historically tied to ethnic and nationalist discourses (Steyn, 2004). Thus Sonia's position here is more complicated than that of her white English classmates. By using the term "your own people" after "your own race", she seems to draw a distinction between race and "people" and to be alluding to ethnicity, but this remains ambiguous and, for the moment, she is not overtly engaging with the Afrikaans aspect of her identity.

Sonia's positioning in this extract centres around her identity as a South African citizen. Through her linguistic choices, she conveys a strong sense of ownership of, belonging to and responsibility for one's country: "it's your country, it's where you live … it's like your own race, your own people … it's your country." She constructs the ideal citizen as someone who is socially aware, has a strong social conscience, and feels affected by and socially responsible for events beyond her/his circumscribed personal life – "it's your country so you have the responsibility to look out for it and pay attention to what's going on" (30–31). In doing so she is, by implication, positioning herself as just such a citizen.

This self-positioning is clear to Bontle, one of her classmates who, slightly later in the discussion attempts to destabilise the position of a morally upright citizen which Sonia took up by asking her what action she took in response to the widespread xenophobic attacks that occurred in and around Johannesburg earlier the same year. Sonia responds, saying: "My mom and I took food to like the police stations and stuff like that because it's your moral responsibility. Like I know like a lot of people didn't do that but like we did, I did and my mom did it on behalf of the family" (Lesson 4, 97). Given Sonia's successful defence of her "good citizen" position and her acknowledgement of some sense of complicity with the actions of the previous government, it is interesting that her levels of social awareness do not encompass the understanding that all white South Africans have benefited from the structural inequalities of apartheid. This notion is noticeably absent across the unit of work as a whole.

Pedagogic moment 2: "Look what you've done!"

The following extract is taken from the lesson in which the content of the unit of work transitions from looking at the country's recent past to considering present-day realities confronting South African youth. The teacher has just read a short extract from an essay by an older student in which the student suggests that young liberated

South Africans growing up in a free society are overly influenced by what they hear from their parents.

Extract 2

Nadia: I totally agree with her.
T: Why?
Nadia: Because like now we've got no restrictions, we mix with other races and that and other people, and the only reason we have an opinion about it [apartheid] is because of what we hear from our parents.
T: Mmm hmm. And what did you want to say, Sonia?
Sonia: Uh I just – I guess like a lot of people ... – but also I kind of disagree with it as well [T: Ok] – because maybe you might not like – like some people like don't talk to their parents a lot, things like that, and a lot of like people in homes, certain homes, you don't discuss things like that because politics is not a topic. And I remember when we came to grade 8 [T: Ja] – because I'm Afrikaans and I remember in my class, like we walked out of history, because we were doing apartheid, and the girls came up to us and they were like "Look what you've done!" and like things like that. And I think it's – I don't think like it might be inherited from our parents but I think it's maybe because of the lack of maybe communication between parents and older people to young children and like telling them that it's like not our fault –
T: ?
Sonia: ...Ja, my forefathers might have done it but you have to understand everything in its context, like you have to understand everything in its time. I don't know, I think maybe that's why there's still all of these [backwards and forwards hand gestures]. (Lesson 9)

In this extract, Sonia narrates an incident that took place three years previously when she was in her first year at this school. I want to focus on two aspects of this narration. Firstly, I look at how Sonia was being positioned at the time of the incident she describes; secondly, I consider how she is positioning herself in this pedagogic moment by choosing to share this experience at this point in the classroom discussion, and in relation to this unit of work.

According to Sonia's narration of the event, she – and, it is implied, her Afrikaans classmates, "us" (13) – were accosted by their peers after a History[8] lesson and were accused of being responsible for the system of apartheid. In the eyes of the students who levelled this accusation against her, her Afrikaans heritage and culture align her with the perpetrators of apartheid and make her guilty by association. To position her as perpetrator or supporter of apartheid by virtue of her Afrikaans heritage invokes a homogenising, essentialist view of white Afrikaans identity – this is the identity that is invoked by the "you" in "Look what you did!" It is also a view of Afrikaans identity that is so common in the public domain as to be considered a stereotype – the Afrikaner as insular, traditionalist who remains a staunch supporter of apartheid, bemoaning a loss of culture and privilege under the new democratic dispensation – a stereotype from which Sonia works hard to distance herself.

The incident provides a powerful example of an Afrikaans student being othered in a schooling environment, where English liberal is the normative position. But why

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[8] "History" is capitalised when it refers to the curriculum subject.

narrate this incident at this point? In the process of making a point about parents and the attitudes and knowledge that they do or do not pass on to their children, Sonia positions herself as the victim of ignorance and prejudice, someone being unfairly blamed for something she did not do – "it's like not our fault" (16).

This is at odds with the position she took up in the previous pedagogic moment. It would seem that in the face of dismissive attitudes towards the injustices of the past, she feels morally compelled to come forward and take up a position of some responsibility for the suffering caused by her "own people". But when her Afrikaans identity is directly threatened (e.g., when she is positioned as a racist, Afrikaans oppressor), she displaces the blame onto her "forefathers", while appearing to partially justify their actions by suggesting they need to be reinterpreted in relation to their historical context.

In the focus group discussion, Sonia and her Afrikaans classmates express a heightened sensitivity to apartheid history as it is represented in the current History curriculum. They speak with anger and frustration about how the curriculum has been re-written with a pro-ANC bias and that Afrikaners are demonised, not only as the villains of history in the curriculum but even in narratives found in public culture, such as theatre productions. The counterproductive nature of the black victim/white perpetrator binary in the apartheid narrative has been recognised by scholars (Jansen, 2009a; Jansen & Weldon, 2009). In the safe space of the focus group the position of aggrieved and wounded solidarity that is forcefully taken up by all members of the group bears this out, and has similarities to earlier identity work on Afrikaans youth (McKinney, 2004a, 2004b; Jansen, 2009b). Sonia talks about "spin doctors coming in and changing the entire history of our country" and about the negative effects of attempting to "wipe out" pre-apartheid Afrikaans history and of constantly hearing about the "the bad white people" during apartheid, contending that "drilling things into us just makes it worse. Because now we feel so patriotic towards being Afrikaans because we're just like sick of it" (Focus Group, 10).

Although Sonia's demeanour was more circumspect in class, she does create opportunities to raise these issues, as in the following extract taken from later in the same lesson, where Sonia says the following to the teacher:

> Ms Prada, in History we get taught about all the injustices of the Afrikaans people and the white people, but we never get told about what like the ANC people did in their camps and like how many people they murdered [S: exactly] for getting – for doing – for getting where they are today. We only get taught about how bad white people, and what they did but we don't get taught – I'm not justifying it in any manner! – but I'm just saying that we should be able to like have two points of view, both their views and then – (Lesson 9)

Sonia's awkwardness in attempting to position herself simultaneously against apartheid discourses while questioning the re-writing of apartheid history is noticeable in her insertion of "I'm not justifying it in any manner! – but I'm just saying…" (5). In the focus-group discussion, the Afrikaans students mention some of the constraining factors in class discussions, which include not being able to question certain issues and feeling particularly guilty when apartheid history is taught by a black teacher or in a class which includes black students. Sonia herself makes the

point that if they voice any kind of critique on history or politics, it is dismissed – "People would be like yoh, it's because you're Afrikaans".

Pedagogic moment 3: "We have English at school but Afrikaans families"

The poster that students were asked to produce constituted another mode of meaning-making in the pedagogy of this unit of work. The task directly engaged identity not only because the topic itself requires it (Topic: Represent in word and image what it is like to be a young person in South Africa today) but because, as Kress argues, in their use of signs, text designers' choices are motivated by their interests, "an interest which is itself a reflection of [their] place in the world, physically, cognitively, socially, culturally, conceptually" (1993, p. 172). In addition, the presentation of the poster by the students to the class introduced a performative dimension that Lillis (2008) refers to as the "talk around the text", reminding us that the pedagogic space shapes the discourses and subject positions taken up during the poster presentations.

The fact that Sonia and Calista chose to work together on this task which called for pair work enabled them to draw on their shared Afrikaans heritage, and it is clear that this becomes a central element of the design and presentation of the poster. The focus of this analysis is on the South African and Afrikaans identities that are projected by the two students both in the poster and the poster talk.

Sonia and Calista covered the poster in newsprint consisting of a number of articles drawn from the press and stuck down in random, sometimes overlapping ways – it is noticeably from the various headlines that some are from the English press and some from the Afrikaans press. Onto this newsprint background, they hand-painted, in muted colours, a South African flag. Towards the centre of this space are two black and white headshots of the two girls[9] which are surrounded by a variety of mostly cut-out images and words, the largest being two poems, one in Afrikaans and the other in English.

Figure 1. Sonia and Calista's poster

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[9] The photographs of the students placed in the centre have been pixelated to ensure anonymity

What follows is a slightly condensed version of their talk.

Extract 3: Poster Talk

Calista: Um, we first started with the background. Now it's, obviously as you can see it's on newspaper, the South African flag. There are Afrikaans like headings and English headings so – because we are like we see it from two sides – there's the Afrikaans... Like we have English at school but Afrikaans families. And them um obviously the South African flag because that is a lot of our influence, where all our influences come from. And then um as you go to the front you can see that like there's a lot of like religion symbols. So we aren't one – narrow-minded anymore because we can look at different... different religions that explore and it's sort of... ja, we are more open-minded these days. And also the rainbow nation as we are the rainbow nation and to like make a better horizon for like South Africa. […]

Sonia: Ok, then we got – because both of us are Afrikaans like at home, we got the two poems of 'Die kind' and 'The child' by Ingrid Jonker – one in English and one in Afrikaans – because it represents us as children, in the two languages that we speak.

[At the teacher's behest, Sonia reads the Afrikaans poem, then at the students' behest, she reads the English version. After a brief commentary by the teacher on the political context of the poem, Sonia continues.]

Sonia: Ja, and then we just chose that because it represents us and as like Afrikaans people we kind of got the raw end of apartheid and those things and that we've moved on *[hand gestures]* – like, we all fine. And then we took like flags from all over which we find important. Like both of us went on exchange last year. I went to Scotland and Calista went to Canada. And like our ancestors are from Germany and from Holland so ... but even though like we have all these different nationalities, we're all one like in South Africa. And um oh we took like a picture of like a sexual scene because we're like influenced by the media like so much. Like the way we grew up is like so different to our parents. Like they kind of – it was also like the fence, they were kind of protected, by the media whereas we are exposed and exploited by the media in a way... um... *[Calista points to something]* Oh and we said "the most important thing you wear is your personality" – it's just like a quote and then on our pictures we do like big lips or big eyes, or whatever, just to like make it our own. And it's just.... Oh yes, and then Paris Hilton and Nelson Mandela. And it's just like the two like totally like different role models that's present today and the kind of confusion that we're in – like who do we follow? Because one's popular and the other one's good... we're not too sure. And... that's about it. […] (Lesson 10)

Both students explicitly foreground their dual English/Afrikaans identity positions in their talk, associating English with their school lives and Afrikaans with their home lives. Calista explains the dual language newspaper headlines as a reflection of the fact that this English/Afrikaans duality enables them to "see [things] from both sides". While the Afrikaans aspect of their identity is made salient, two things are noteworthy: firstly, it is part of a greater whole which includes a national South African identity and an internationalised global heritage; secondly, a very particular *type* of Afrikaans identity is being evoked. It is this second point that I wish to elaborate on.

The two poems included in the poster are in fact two versions of the same poem, one in Afrikaans and one in English – and this is the poem "Die Kind" ("The Child") by renowned Afrikaans poet Ingrid Jonker. Jonker was known for her commitment to human rights and democracy, for her volatile relationship with her father (a member of parliament under the apartheid regime) and for suicide by drowning at the age of 32. The complete title of the poem is "The child who was shot dead by soldiers at Nyanga", and it depicts an event which occurred in 1960, when the South African military shot at protestors in one of the black townships in Cape Town and killed a number of people, including a child. Not only does it evoke sympathy for the victims of the struggle against apartheid but it functions as a powerful critique of the regime. This is probably Jonker's most famous poem. The apartheid government tried to ban it at the time it was written and in 1994 Nelson Mandela read it at the opening of parliament. The students mention none of this but it is clear that the choice of language, the identity of the poet, and the subject matter of the poem work together to mobilise a politicised, Afrikaner identity that stands against racial oppression while simultaneously challenging stereotyped depictions of Afrikaners as racist, culturally insular and politically conservative. Sonia's is a markedly different discourse from that associated with young Afrikaans youths located in closed-in social worlds who are reproducing the apartheid discourses of previous generations (Jansen, 2009b).

But tensions exist in this construction. Sonia indicates that they selected this poem because they too are children but does not explain whether they are therefore identifying with the child simply in relation to chronological age; and then goes on to say that "it represents us and as like Afrikaans people we kind of got the raw end of [the end of] apartheid and those things and that we've moved on – like we all fine." This signals once again the tensions present in Sonia's subjectivity, particularly in relation to its Afrikaans dimension. She seems to shift between clear opposition to the oppression of the apartheid regime on one hand, and feeling victimised post-1994 as an Afrikaner for her presumed political affiliation to the Afrikaans nationalist regime on the other hand. This discomfort though is quickly pushed aside – "we've moved on" and "we all fine". Significantly, this is followed by the construction of an internationalised, globally mobile Afrikaans South African identity (Van der Westhuizen, 2007), structured not only through historical links to various European heritage lines but through the global travel opportunities afforded by their elite school. The different national identities are, however, subsumed into one – "we're all one like in South Africa", ultimately dispatching the discomfort under a neat evocation of rainbow nation discourse.

While many of the other posters are narrow depictions of the personal worlds of the poster-makers, here Sonia and Calista are locating themselves in a social and political landscape and in the process evoking complex subjectivities. This impression is reinforced through an analysis of some of the linguistic elements of their poster talk, in particular the shifting meanings of the first-person personal pronoun, "we":

> "**we** have English at school but Afrikaans families..." – the two of us
> "**we** are more open-minded these days..." – youth, probably Afrikaans youth specifically
> "**we** are the rainbow nation..." – South Africans
> "as Afrikaans people **we** kind of got..." – Afrikaners
> "the kind of confusion **we**'re in..." – the youth
> "magazines give **us** say "love lessons"..." – the female youth

"**we** all matriculate..." – the Grade 11 students at the school
[utterances by Sonia and Calista drawn from their full presentation, Lesson 10]

This demonstrates the range of subject positions these two students take up, their shifting identifications across a variety of group identities, and provides a sense of some of the moves they make in negotiating and inhabiting these multiple subject positions. In choosing to locate themselves within the broader sociopolitical landscape, these students put themselves in the position of having to negotiate and shift between various positions, not all of which are easily compatible.

DISCUSSION

Sonia's multiple and shifting subject positions and the increasing salience of the Afrikaans aspect of her identity demonstrate that she too is engaged in the negotiation of what it means to be Afrikaans in post-apartheid South Africa (Steyn, 2004; Van der Westhuizen, 2007; Visser, 2007; Blaser & Van der Westhuizen, 2012). The complexity of this process of negotiation is evident in the fact that these positions are not only multiple, shifting and, at times, contradictory but that Sonia appears to attempt to hold some of these contradictions in tension. For example, she does employ what Steyn refers to as Afrikaner "white talk" (2004), drawing on discourses that appear to resist transformation and taking up the positionality of victim (see Extract 2), alluding to the construction of Afrikaner identity in post-apartheid South Africa as a form of "subaltern whiteness" (Steyn, 2004). Yet alongside this, she consistently positions herself against the atrocities committed by the apartheid state and speaks emphatically about the need to confront the past and acknowledge some form of responsibility – however undeveloped this idea remains (see Extract 1). Furthermore, in contrast to the trend of depoliticised Afrikaners, who have cultivated a detachment from public life (see Visser, 2007), it is clear that Sonia's focus is not limited to the narrowly circumscribed world of the self; on more than one occasion she takes up the position of a socially aware and engaged citizen, speaking of the importance of doing so.

Although Sonia could be seen as a member of the increasingly globalised Afrikaner elite, for her this is not tied to a loss of "ethnic affiliation" (Davies, R., 2012). In fact, Sonia works hard to dissociate herself from the stereotype of the racist, insular, narrow-minded Afrikaner *without* dissociating herself from her Afrikaans ethnicity. She carefully (re)produces alternative subject positions for herself as a post-apartheid Afrikaans youth who repudiates the static, essentialised Afrikaner identity categories of the past, substituting them with a cosmopolitan, socially engaged, open-minded Afrikaner South African identity.The fact that Sonia positions herself more overtly as Afrikaans as the unit of work unfolds is interesting, since at no point during the unit of work is she, or any of her Afrikaans classmates, targeted or negatively positioned or even addressed as a member of the Afrikaans community by a fellow student or the teacher. In fact, every mention that is made of Afrikaans is done by one of the Afrikaans girls. Instead it would seem that it is the sustained engagement with the discourses of apartheid – particularly in relation to the TRC – that calls up the stereotyped view of Afrikaner identity. And it is this unspoken part of the classroom discourse that Sonia perceives as a threat to her own Afrikaans identity and which, at

certain moments, triggers a defensiveness in her and results in her attempting to police what others can or should say about Afrikaans people.

In this school, where English whiteness dominates, Sonia and her Afrikaans classmates occupy positions of marginality by virtue of their Afrikaans identities – a subaltern whiteness. Marginalisation typically produces silence and is associated with not having a voice. Sonia, however, does not become silent, and in her need to defend and (re)construct her Afrikaner subjectivity, we get glimpses of her sense of marginalisation. However, while she may be taking up a voice as an Afrikaans youth speaking from the post-apartheid margins, the privileged positions she occupies on other axes of power enable her to speak out. Her raced and classed positions have given her access to this elite private school, where she is receiving an excellent education and being groomed for success in the world; she is confident, intelligent and articulate. Remaining silent – rather than speaking from the uncomfortable margins – may be the more difficult option for Sonia. Furthermore, this is the subject English classroom, one in which debate and multiple positions are encouraged. The space to speak is available and it is the ways in which Sonia takes up that space, repeatedly and in different ways, that attest to the complexity and intensity of the discursive work which she is doing.

CONCLUSION

This article has placed at its centre the relationship between subjectivity and pedagogy. The manner in which processes of subjectification play themselves out in the classroom space are contingent on the nature of the space and the nature of the content. The nature of the space of subject English classrooms, which make extensive use of discussion-based lessons is, such that students tend to take up positions in relation to the subject matter. In this case, the unit of work itself invited students to take up historicised and sociopolitically located subject positions. Students' spontaneous moment-by-moment utterances are thus part of the aleatory series of events, which contribute to the discursive construction of the classroom space and influence the conditions of possibility for subjectivity.

As I have shown elsewhere (see Ferreira, 2013; Ferreira, forthcoming), the subject positions that the teaching intervention calls up vary across students and entail an analysis of subjectivities that cut across a variety of social identity categories providing insights into the way different students are negotiating the changing sociopolitical terrain. The focus of this analysis has been on Afrikaner identity, because this has been salient in the positionality of the student whose subject positions are being tracked. While the broader process of subjectification in which Sonia is engaged is not accessible, the subject positions she takes up are discernible in her classroom talk, thereby enabling us to note that the teaching intervention and the discussions it generates call up her Afrikaans positionality and consequently enable us to understand how she is negotiating new discursive positions for herself. Thus a broader point being alluded to here is that during ongoing social change, identities are in flux and being reconstituted, and that these social processes are inevitably part of the classroom discourse.

This type of discursive analysis is deeply embedded in context, given the spatial location of discourses and the radical historicisation of identity/subjectivity. Sonia may have experienced marginalisation as a consequence of her Afrikaans positionality; however, any number of identity categories can become markers of difference and produce marginalisation during class discussions that tackle potentially uncomfortable subject matter. Such discussions have implications for students' identities. In the swift flow of classroom interaction, it is not always possible to notice a student feeling marginalised, or shutting down because of a perceived threat to their identity. What this work points to is the need for us as subject English teachers who draw on a multiplicity of topics and texts and call for engaged debate of controversial issues, to consider more carefully the relationship between pedagogy and subjectivity. Rather than the relative safety of certainty and fixed positions, teachers and students should strive to become comfortable with discomfort and to be able to tolerate contingency and heterogeneity.

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