Negotiating multiple identities between school and the outside world: A critical discourse analysis

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ABSTRACT: This article examines interview talk of three students in an Australian high school to show how they negotiate their young adult identities between school and the outside world. It draws on Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism and heteroglossia to argue that identities are linguistically and corporeally constituted. A critical discourse analysis of segments of transcribed interviews and student-related public documents finds a mismatch between a social justice curriculum at school and its transfer into students' accounts of outside school lived realities. The article concludes that a productive social justice pedagogy must use its key principles of (con)textual interrogation to engage students in reflexive practice about their positioning within and against discourses of social justice in their student and civic lives. An impending national curriculum must decide whether or not it negotiates the discursive divide any better.

Introduction

Contemporary approaches to identity formation support the understanding that student

identities or subjectivities are constructed through their engagement in discourse

worlds both inside and outside school. The ongoing and dynamic processes of

subjectification which shape these identities are woven from both social and

individual spheres, each informing and sometimes contradicting the other. There is a

growing interest in the implications for students' wellbeing in the world if they

experience an overload of contradictory discursive positioning. Recent work, based in

Canada (Jabal & Rivière, 2007), "highlights the need to recognize the performity of

student behaviours in relation to educational 'stage directions' (e.g., curricular

expectations, outcomes and assessment), which demand that students 'act' identities

that are consistent with particular (arguably narrow) kinds of academic success" (p.

211). This article extends this work as we show how Australian students in a high

school setting negotiate contradictory discourses in the enactment of the social justice

English curriculum. We use critical discourse analysis (CDA) within a

poststructuralist framework which draws upon Bakhtin's (1981, 1994) notions of dialogism and heteroglossia, to explore the complex intersubjective processes which shape the ways that young people discursively construct their student and civic identities. By explicitly examining broader texts which in some way influence or inform the young adults within this study alongside their talk in interviews, we aim to highlight how powerful social and cultural discourses and individual appropriations of discourses intersect and overlap in the (inter)subjectification processes of young people in school. We argue that these contradictory discursive positionings pose a significant challenge to teachers who are trying to affect the middle class consciousness of young people in the enactment of a social justice curriculum. Consequently, accounting for these intersubjective processes should be integral to social justice pedagogies.

Intersubjectivity: Social and individual embodiment

Bakhtin's (1994) philosophies of dialogism and heteroglossia are useful to consider the ways in which the *individual* and the *social* interact to constitute the diverse, multi-faceted identities or subjectivities of individuals as they construct and express meaning. These *intersubjective* understandings about how self is both socially constructed and individually experienced sees individuals drawing upon an intricate and continuous interplay between self and the ideologies of society. 'The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance, it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue' (p.76).

Bakhtin (1981, 1994) suggests that active understanding, whereby one assimilates words into one's conceptual system, necessarily involves establishing a

complex interrelationship of agreements and disagreements, contradictions and understandings of the words, while enriching them with new elements. This continuous dialogic struggle between and across discourses is inherent in any text, as both the producer and the consumer of the text draw on multiple resources in its design and interpretation. These intersections between multiple (often conflicting) social discourses within any text or context constitute what Bakhtin refers to as "heteroglossia". Bakhtin is not concerned with a simplistic pluralism, but rather with the sophisticated and complicated intertextual relationships between the general and the specific, between the whole and the parts, between the individual "I" and "the other".

In this sense, any words (discourses) that individuals appropriate are always already somebody else's (discourses); they have been sedimented with socio-historical meanings and ideologies, thus notions of agency are limited (Butler, 1997). Foucault (1977) similarly finds that there is no fixed meaning of text or context, but rather that there are only other interpretations which have been created and imposed by other people, not by the nature of things.

This view of textual engagement emphasises the historicity of texts and contexts through intertextual chains. We suggest that such intertextual chains are not formed merely through linguistic and cultural appropriations of knowledge, but also through the body and its diverse multi-modal articulations of discourse, after Butler's (1990; 1993) performativity. Davies (2006) elaborates on Butler's understandings of the ambivalence of subjection or subjectification in her theory of performativity as she highlights the paradoxical conditions through which subjecthood is accomplished. She suggests that 'the subject might resist and agonise over those very powers that dominate and subject it, and at the same time, it also depends on them for its

existence' (p.426). Understanding this very paradox as offering a way for subjects to unsettle, resist or re-inscribe the powers that work upon them and that they work upon (after Butler, 1997) has major implications for education (Youdell, 2006). In this way, a *productive* social justice curriculum that takes account of these subjectificating processes can offer generative potential.

Understanding intertextual chains, and issues of performativity as a paradoxical simultaneity of submission and agency, are particularly significant for today's young adults, as their worlds are characterized more than ever by rapidly changing technologies, hybrid texts and smorgasbords of "edu-tainment" possibilities (Kellner, 2002; Lankshear & Knobel, 1997; Tyner, 1998), along with new forms of "acceptable" social behaviour, which are woven through the texts that they both consume and produce. They are encouraged, through electronic media, to combine and recombine their knowledges and ideas to construct new and different texts and to push the limits of what is acceptable "school practice" by drawing from the corporate and social pedagogues such as Microsoft, Disney and Sony (Giroux, 2000). MacNaughton (1998, p. 160) suggests that at any point in time "contradictory discourses about what is normal, right and best circulate and compete with each other", so it is not so much about what is "true" or "right", but rather which is dominant at a particular time.

The context
This research was conducted at a state secondary school in Australia, chosen because of its reputation for offering subject English work programs informed by critical pedagogy, particularly in relation to visual and multimodal text. Students at this school are expected to critically analyze and problematize texts and language choices,

and speculate about alternative meanings, as they particularly study historical materials, film and narrative (School English program, de-identified).

The participants were drawn from a group of white, middle class, male and female students for whom emancipation or issues of social justice were *not* immediately or personally relevant in their lives. These participants were identified by their English teacher as being competent in visual and critical literacy, so the possible transfer (according to their accounts) of their classroom abilities into their middle-class civic lives could be studied. This article focuses upon the talk in interviews of three Year 11 (16-17-year-old) students (pseudonymed Paul, Ellen, and Matt) who formally consented to participate in the larger study on critical pedagogy and youth.

Methodology: Critical discourse analysis and intersubjectivity

We found that the use of CDA to draw attention to both the broader discourses surrounding the study and to the specificity of texts within the study highlighted the intersubjective processes which shape the identities of the youth participants. Analysis moved within and across these social, interdiscursive and linguistic elements as we worked with the data. We used a "top-down" approach consistent with poststructural theory as outlined by Miller and Fox (2004, p. 36) to impose our research questions upon the data and to locate broader social and institutional discourses, yet we oscillated between this approach and a "bottom-up" approach (2004, p. 36) whereby social realities are built up from ordinary social interactions, as we developed the detailed coding topics from the talk of the participants in the study. Miller and Fox argue for the mutuality of these two approaches and suggest that building analytic bridges can make visible the constructedness of social realities as embodied performances of broader social discourses.

Three broad overarching discourses that we located in the data were labelled: *discourses of youth*; the *intentional discourses of schooling*; and the *discourses of society*. The *discourses of youth* included students' talk about their own practices, investments, values and beliefs, and talk about their peers and influential adults. The *intentional discourses of schooling* (the term intentional was included to indicate participants' perceptions of the expectations of the school and school personnel) included students' talk about subject hierarchy or mind/body dualism at school, curriculum issues including intellectualization, school performance and expectations, positioning of teachers and students, and collusionary behaviour (Fuller & Lee, 1997). The *discourses of society* included student talk about multiliterate everyday practices, social issues, positioning of and by parents, and societal expectations of teenage behaviour and characteristics. Consequently, we decided to use these three distinct yet overlapping discourse worlds indicated by the participants, as organizing areas within the data analysis.

Tools of analysis for the participants' accounts

Our methods of analysis are informed by the work of Kamler (1997b) and Threadgold (1997), which deal with notions of embodiment and performance, and Fuller and Lee's (1997) emphasis on the interpersonal functions of language interactions that constitute textual collusions. Additionally, Fairclough's (1992) notion of intertextuality (after Bakhtin's heteroglossia and dialogism) is useful as we explore how these young adults draw upon other texts, contexts, dialogue and modes of meaning during their talk. This approach is helpful in our analysis of how their subjectivities are shaped and how they position themselves and others through their talk as they take up multiple discourses.

We utilize Fairclough's reference to Hallidayan (1978) linguistics, which is concerned with the social character of text and the relationship between language and other elements of social life, to examine the ideational, or what Fairclough (2003) terms "representational", functions of language. Our analysis here is specifically focused upon the transitivity processes and their participant realizations within the clause, as well as the use of modal adverbs, so that we can determine how and to what extent the participants account for their practices: which practices are afforded value or are criticized, and how their accounts fit with broader social discourses of youth, schooling and society. The representational function of language is also interested in the relationship between text and context (lexis). Therefore we look to the lexical choices made in the data to indicate how the participants describe themselves and others in certain contexts through language, particularly the ascription of attributes. Analysis of the specificities of the texts in this way allowed us to explore how the participants' language is used to position themselves and others, and to legitimize their dominant cultural maps (Hall, 1996) or hegemonic assumptions.

We have also drawn extensively from Fuller and Lee's (1997) application of Halliday's interpersonal (or intersubjective) function of language, which is concerned with the interactions within and between texts, or the enactment of social relations, and how this can be related particularly to dimensions of power and solidarity as part of broader institutional discourses. They suggest that manifest dialogism (after Fairclough's manifest intertextuality) is realized grammatically on a scale from "other-ness" to "own-ness", through quoting, interpolation and probabilization (1997, p. 415). This perspective has been particularly useful in recognizing the participants' changing personae within textual instances, through directing analytic attention to their weaving of other texts into their own, particularly their utilization of

multiliteracies. In this way we determine the success of a collusion or text. We focused here particularly on the use of pronouns, the transitivity processes, and the mood and modality of language functions. This intersubjective focus enabled us to situate our linguistic analyses within the particular discursive events of our data collection, particularly the generic structure, the top-level cohesive structure (Bartlett, Barton, & Turner, 1988), and other cohesive ties within the interview genre and the context within which it was conducted. This approach to the intersubjective or interdiscursive function of language allowed us to explore the possible implications of such collusions on the enactment of a critical agenda.

The other significant focus in our analysis of the data is Kamler's (1997a, 1997b) and Threadgold's (2000) concepts of embodiment and performance. We looked to the language in the data sessions, particularly the transitivity processes and interpersonal use of pronouns, to explore the centrality of descriptions of the body in the participants' accounts of lived experience, multiliterate practices and positioning of self and others as they took up particular subjectivities within the institutional settings of which they are a part. Performative (Butler, 1990, 1993) statements made by these students indicate particular representations of theirs and others' subjectivities, that is, the subjectivities of youth are spoken in some ways but not others (Shultz, 2000). We consciously moved in, out of and through these various levels of analysis as we made sense of the data at the linguistic level.

Social dimension: Intersubjective weaving

We have endeavoured to make visible the textual and contextual links between the participants in the study, and the social worlds that they inhabit. To this end, we have included examples of texts (contained in text boxes) that illustrate some of the broader social discourses that influence these participants in each of the three discourse areas

that were drawn out of the data as key areas of analytic interest. We have interwoven

our analysis of these texts into our analysis of the participants' accounts, to call

attention to the complexities and contradictions which are inherent in the discourse

worlds of these young adults, and to emphasize that individuals make choices, yet

such choices are influenced by broader social discourses (after Bakhtin, 1981, 1994).

We have created intertextual pastiches, whereby we linked textual features and

contexts within and between texts in our analysis of the various data. We juxtapose

analyses of the social texts (in text boxes) against our analyses of the participants'

accounts, much like a hypermedia environment, where the reader can choose multiple

reading pathways (Snyder, 2002). Landow (1999, 2006) refers to a hypertextual

system such as this as an assemblage or a collage, and suggests that it is multilinear

and reallocates the power from author to reader in some way, a reflection on the

Derridian emphasis on discontinuity. We do not suggest that those texts that we have

chosen are fully representative of the social discourses that affect the lives of these

young people or indeed that this is an exhaustive list, however we have made the

choice of text selection very carefully to consider the integrity of the study and the

texts and contexts that have informed it.

Text selection was based upon a number of factors including: widely

distributed and/or available; high potential to be influential and/or deemed "official

knowledge" (Apple, 1993); different modes, platforms (that is via the Internet,

newspaper, brochures and so on) and genres; and produced from different sources

such as mass media, government departments, community organizations and private

companies. Some of the texts were discussed by the participants during their

interviews, for example, X-box games and associated websites (Microsoft Game

Studios: Halo 2 Official Website, n.d.) or SMS chat material (Optus, n.d.); some were

"official" documents such as syllabus and policy documents (Department of Education Queensland, 1994; Education Queensland, 2000; Queensland Studies Authority, 2005) or government websites (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations); and others were public texts such as high profile newspaper articles of relevance at the time to young people's lives (Burchell, 2006; Kerbaj & Megalogenis, 2006).

Tools of analysis for the social texts

Whole texts are not used in our pastiche for reasons of length and time of analysis; however we have chosen snippets from each text (after an initial macro analysis), which reflect particular discourses that are apparent to us within the whole texts. After several readings of the texts, we chose to focus upon the following textual elements: elements of top-level structure and cohesive ties, to determine the ways in which such texts scaffold and appeal to target audiences; mood and modality, to ascertain levels of authority that such texts take on through interpersonal or intersubjective functions of language; information focus and lexicalization, to determine the expectations that are held of young people in terms of what they should know, what is important, how it is described, and links that are made through the language; and patterns of transitivity. We particularly look to the processes and related circumstances or adverbs, along with attributes of participants in the text, which give us some indication of how youth and influential groups are positioned through such texts. We have focused on some of these elements more than others for particular texts, as we approached each text with a view to difference and complexity, and found that some features were more salient in some texts than in others. For each text we have also looked at the genre and platform (for example, brochure, website, report) so that our analysis of the linguistic elements is contextualised within the discursive event, which influences the text itself.

Three snapshots of woven analysis

We present snapshots of analysis under three headings which correspond with the major discourses which emerged from the data of the youth participants. These snapshots are by no means representative of the data corpus; however they provide some insight into our methods of analysis and (re)presentation of the data by weaving together some of the textual and contextual elements competing within the subjectification processes of these youth. The overlapping and often contradictory themes that run through the data in each of these major discourses include: positioning self and others through bodily practices and performative statements; describing self and others in dualistic terms of good/bad; describing youth as negotiating slippery roles and scales of expectation; and describing self and others as individual agents with expectations of agency.

Discourses of youth

Popularity is a term that has different degrees of acceptability and levels of meaning attached to it by these participants. Image is seen as part of teenage culture, as evidenced here through the attributes ascribed to 'cool' media and clothing, from having the latest mobile phones… 'It's all about what it looks like, what attachments you have, even in the phone, what picture messages…like it's not just a communication tool anymore…' (int, 02, E.P), to the latest brands of clothing or footwear '…cause now even Adidas and Nike aren't cool anymore…it changes way too much…' (int, 02, M.C). The changing nature of image and popularity has been described as difficult to keep up with, and as placing unrealistic expectations on teenagers. For example Paul recounts unachievable attributes touted by popular girls' magazines…'Oh man I hate them, cause they're all about how…like they're saying there's this *perfect* way to pick up a guy, and there's this *perfect* way to do your hair,

and that you have to look *socially good*…well not socially good…but you have to look good to be *popular*…' (int, 02, P.H). These participants seem to have taken a stand, to some extent, against such popular media constructions of teenage culture, image and the body by resisting such things as 'brand shopping', which Ellen describes as 'really pointless' (int, 02, E.P), and by using the word

The body is inscribed into teenage culture and image through the interplay between visual and print text in the Optus brochure, whereby it is seen as acceptable to represent yourself as something you are not (presumably because your 'real body' may not be considered an ideal image), when the technology allows you to do so. For example, a large, saggy elephant is referred to as 'QTpie', a tiny, scrawny monkey as 'Solid hunk' and a turtle as 'Speedy'. (Optus, n.d.)

'popular' in a derogatory way by creating a lexical link between that attribute and the embodied attribute 'slutty' (int., 04, P.H) in another interview.

Ellen and Matt resist conformity by buying into music which is not seen as 'popular' (int, 02, E.P). Both of these participants, however, at other times make statements such as… 'I'd still buy what's cool' (int., 04, M.C), and 'It's just accepted that you have a phone' (int, 02, E.P). The modals 'still' and 'just' suggest different degrees of acceptance of popular teenage culture and provide an example of the sometimes contradictory statements regarding their immersion in it.

Youth are constructed variously as having a repertoire of choices, where they choose particular performances of self based on salient needs, expectations and/or desires at particular times. These participants construct individual youth as having the agency to regulate their own behaviour and make the "right" choices. For example, Paul suggests that teenagers should be able to regulate their sexual behaviour.

'The survey findings are important on a number of levels. They will assist Mission Australia and others working with young people, including government at all levels and service providers, to evaluate and improve their programs, services and policies for young people. They will inform parents, carers, family members, teachers and all in the general community who are concerned about the wellbeing of young people. The findings also provide young people themselves with information, and more importantly a voice.' (Mission Australia, 2005, Introduction) This statement positions youth as passive objects of the care, concern, policies and programs for young people in society. The lexical links of 'The survey findings', 'the findings' and 'they' are all placed in the theme position of clauses to indicate that this organization and what it is doing to be the most important thing at play in this text. Youth are being *provided* with a voice, rather than being portrayed as actively using their voices or physically making a difference. By contrast, the organization positions itself as active, whereby 'faith' is not just about beliefs, it is about action.

Text 1
MR: Right, so you're not necessarily just attracted to friends who are into the same sorts of hobbies for example, as you, but you like similar personalities or similar interests?
PH: I like people who are fun to be with, like there's um a girl in my English class, so I sit with her in English, but I'd say I have nothing in common with her in terms of interests and all that, but we get on great. Like she sleeps with people, and I um don't do that…
MR: So you don't approve of that?
PH: Well, I mean if you're careful I think it's fine, but don't go killing yourself at the age of sixteen. It's just a wasted life.
(int., 02, P.H)

Paul suggests that the right

choices can and need to be made with regards to sexual activity, and his choice *not* to

sleep with people is being used as the measure of what is right through his

interpolation of a textual interlocutor (the girl in his class) and his advice to her

through the use of a performative material process 'don't go killing yourself' along

with his use of the attribute 'wasted' to make a judgement that she will ruin her life if

she continues to do what she is doing. By introducing the circumstance 'at the age of

sixteen', he is explicitly foregrounding age as an important factor in choices about

sexual behaviour and that sixteen is obviously too young to be sleeping around, yet it

is old enough to be making the right choices. Paul has previously introduced a story

about 'two slutty girls' who talk about 'breasts' and 'blow jobs' in response to a

comment from the interviewer about his previous comments passing judgement on

female peers. He portrays a familiar social discourse of strong moral judgement about girls or women who talk about or have sex in ways that typically 'other' them (de Castro, 2004) as immoral. Nayak and Kehily (2006) suggest that being a 'proper boy' or 'proper girl' is a 'fantasy that is both hankered after and embodied through an approximation of its norms' (p. 465). Identifying as such runs the risk of losing other identifications such as in Paul's case, that of a stereotypical 'normal' adolescent male who is obsessed with and has sex. Paul gambles on his potentially 'abnormal' positioning in this interaction with the interviewer as an adult educator, who could be predicted to read this as an example of his restraint and his admirable focus on academic matters, rather than as a chink in his masculine teenage identity. He can be seen as disrupting the 'norm' for a higher purpose as opposed to being rejected by potential sexual partners. Further, these 'slutty' girls have previously rejected him as a worthwhile contender for attention (his own admission), thus positioning them as unworthy of any favourable comment.

The social texts juxtaposed above (in text boxes), portray contradictory messages about young people as active agents with the agency to regulate their own behaviour and decisions; or passive recipients of care and community projects.

Intentional discourses of schooling

Choosing to get a part-time job, which extra-curricula activities to become involved in, which subjects will ensure the best final OP (overall performance) school exit measure, and which social issues to care about, are all discussed with different degrees of modality and probabilization by these participants.

> *'A balanced approach to competing values is assured so that democratic and collaborative education is not dominated by the pressures to conform to market values' (Education Queensland, 2000, p. 13).* The 2010 document posits that the participant group 'A balanced approach to competing values' will be 'assured', however the data from the youth participants in this study suggest that 'pressures to conform to market values' are winning this competition of values.

There seems to be an acknowledgement from each of them, however, that it is up to the individual to make the right choices and that if you are marginalized, you only have yourself to blame.

Text 2

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MR:    Have you ever thought about how sometimes those kids
       who aren't doing as well, maybe they don't have
       access to the internet, or maybe they don't have
       access to the sorts of things that you have access
       to?
PH:    Well, the only people I know who don't do well, it's
       either cause they don't try, or…don't try slash
       don't care…
MR:    Or maybe don't care about what's being offered?
PH:    Yeah, so I don't know anyone who's been marginalized
       by all that.
MR:    Do you think there might be people though?
PH:    There could be, but I've no way of …getting into
       contact with them, cause yeah…
MR:    Do you ever think about that, that maybe kids don't
       do well because of other reasons, not just because
       they just don't care?
PH:    No not really, cause I'm just of the belief that you
       can do well if you try. (int.,04,P.H)
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> *'As a powerful social instrument, language helps people to: Negotiate their places in social groups; understand, participate in, and reform aspects of society' (Department of Education Queensland, 1994, p. 8).* Reforming society, as suggested in the English syllabus, seems to be a process that is buried under the pressure to conform and succeed as individuals for these participants.

Paul uses an obvious cause/effect structure, where the blame for lack of success at school is placed squarely on the student. He distances himself from those who 'could be' in that situation (low modality) through this relational process and the physical notion of having no contact with such students and no conceivable way of communicating with them. Through this linguistic manoeuvre, he cleverly places himself in the group that takes pleasure from trying and making the right choices (*plaisir*) (Kenway & Bullen, 2001), with no tolerance or understanding of those who may take pleasure in rebelling against such values (*jouissance*) (Kenway & Bullen, 2001) or those who are unable to compete. It seems that sliding scales in

this instance are not acceptable – either you take control and achieve success or you do not, and suffer the consequences.

Ellen also expresses the view that some kids 'just don't…do work at all' and that 'a person like that would probably say it was all the school's fault…' (int., 04, E.P). She is making a value judgement of people 'like that' which excludes her from such a group, and makes assumptions with the weak modal 'probably' about the character of such people based on the connection between not working and blaming the school. It seems that she doesn't blame the school for not catering to some students' needs, but rather that it is their own fault for not working hard.

Text 3
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MR:     Why do you think you have that value…that hard work
        is important?  What do you think has made you think
        that way?
PH:     I don't know…it seems kind of logical.
MR:     Do you think it's logical?  Do you think it's an
        accepted value?
MC:     Yeah.  It's a true value…it's a proven
        value…Throughout history people who try hard…achieve
        success.
PH:     It's necessary for society…
MC:     That and the combination of luck…
MR:     What do you mean by hard work?  Do you mean hard,
        physical labour?
PH:     No…putting the effort in.
MC:     Putting the effort into whatever you're trying to
        do…
MR:     What about people who seem to achieve success with
        little effort?
PH:     It's not as rewarding if you don't work hard to
        achieve it. (f.g., 05, 11)
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Donnelly's (2006) newspaper article denigrates 'clichés' associated with education, for example that teachers should 'work for social justice' and are 'agents for social change', and that students must 'juggle multiple perspectives', in favour of 'rote learning and mastering the basics'. The climate in education is contradictory and complex, with syllabus and policy documents being severely criticized by mass media texts that purport to express the 'common view'.

These students make it patently clear in Text 3 that they conform to hegemonic school values of: hard work and individual success equals life success. Lexical links such as

'true', 'proven', 'logical' and 'necessary' are used as descriptors of such values, and the comparison made with the alternative option (not working hard) indicates that 'It's not as rewarding'. It is difficult to subvert such a process, as investment and familiarity run deep, indeed even critical dialogue can be assimilated into their cultural maps (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clark, & Roberts, 1978), so oppositional positions or ideologies can be used to strengthen the dominant discourse. The youth in this study are constrained and organized by this school context, as they write, rewrite, and improvise performances of self (Threadgold, 1997) in the formation of the "successful student" subject (Kamler, 1997b).

Discourses of society

The data from the Year 11 participants suggest contradictory accounts about raced, gendered and classed bodies which have been "impressed with the stamp of prevailing historical forms of selfhood, desire, masculinity, and femininity" (Kohli, 1998, p. 519). These students are well aware of "political correctness" in society and they seem to draw upon the knowledge learnt at school which focuses on social justice and equality to assure the researcher that they believe in such ideals. Alongside such unprejudicial claims in these accounts, there are contradictory instances where these participants dismiss racial, gender, class, and sexuality issues as overblown and not worth the amount of attention they get in society. One of the ways of disengaging with such issues is by pleading ignorance.

Text 4

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  MR:    So do you think that whole sense of black people being
         marginalized…have you ever thought about that before?
  MC:    Um, no…well I'm not in the middle of…I don't know that
         many black people or anything, so I wouldn't be as aware
         of the situations that they come across.  Because I'm
         sure if I looked at stuff, yeah there are a lot of times
         when they are marginalized, but I just don't look at it
         from their perspective as much. (int., 03, M.C)
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Matt uses cause and effect here to justify his ignorance of racial issues. He doesn't know many black people 'so' he's not as aware. He concedes that 'if I looked at stuff', which doesn't suggest that he will ever look at such 'stuff'; he would find instances of marginalization. He appears to suggest that if racial issues do not affect him directly then they do not need to be addressed, by him at least.

'As the half-baked reaction of many on the left towards the One Nation phenomenon showed, if you tell disgruntled ordinary people often enough that you think they're a bunch of racist rednecks, you push them further out on their limb. Feeling that their side of the story isn't being told...' (Burchell, 2006). It is intimated in this newspaper article that 'ordinary people' who support racist causes aren't really racist, they are just reacting to being labelled and silenced, however such marginalisation is an ongoing reality for many minority groups. Confronting racist beliefs seems to be too difficult and/or provocative in broader society.

Political statements such as those made by then Prime Minister John Howard in an address to the Australian Reconciliation Convention on 26 May 1997 suggest that no-one in Australia should feel guilt or blame for past wrongdoings in relation to Indigenous Australians, and that it is the future which needs to be the focus, rather than the past (in Luke, 1997). Such discourses invite dismissive or *get over it* attitudes to race issues such as the ones evident here, and they deny the historical emergence of truth in terms of discontinuity and contingency (Foucault, 1988; Harwood & Rasmussen, 2007).

Discussion and conclusion

The tools of CDA which require an analysis of linguistic, interdiscursive and social levels of any text or context have enabled us to make visible the ways in which these young people discursively construct their enactment of socially just practices as influenced by broader social and institutional discourses. The analyses of the social texts indicate contradictory, binary positionings of young people such as: choice and agency versus regulation and control, individualized neo-liberal values versus concern

for the "common good" or collective rights, and learning basic skills and "correct answers" versus exploring multiple perspectives and working for social justice. It is hardly surprising then, that these youth produce multiple and contradictory accounts of self and others.

Bakhtin's (1981, 1994) intersubjective understandings suggest that complex, historical, intertextual relationships must be examined in the contextual worlds of young people at school, if we are to understand their levels of engagement in a social justice agenda. These findings have implications for the ways in which social justice curricula are enacted in schools, and the ways in which teachers are able to affect the social consciousness of middle class students. Butler's (1997) *performative politics* offers hope for change and the subversion of prevailing discourses if students deploy such challenges self-consciously through their discursive practices (Youdell, 2006).

Unless these mediating discourses in students' lives are drawn into critical pedagogies of social justice, students may 'talk the talk' of social justice without personal investment or enactment. Students' self-awareness and reflexivity is crucial as they critically engage with texts and ideologies in the English (and other) curriculum.

Teachers need to encourage students to explore their processes of subjectification, whereby they examine and understand why they make the decisions they do; how historical intertextual chains have shaped, and continue to shape their behaviours, actions and language use; what consequences or outcomes such behaviours or language may bring; how particular behaviours, actions and language can be used in manipulative ways; and what equally viable alternatives there might be. Interrogation of "self" as a dialogic struggle between and across discourses needs to be a strong focus in the enactment of any social justice curriculum, whereby

potential agency is situated within the socio-historical discourses that both shape and are shaped by it.

Finally, Australia is at a cross-road of education policy reformation: a pathway that could very likely lead to a national curriculum that demands narrow indicators of academic success within the individualist discourses of schooling. The research reported here and elsewhere (Jabal & Rivière, 2007) demonstrates the need for policy makers and practitioners to consider the implications of such curriculum frameworks for young adult student identity formation. Policy shifts, especially those away from a multi-perspectival "common good" social justice curriculum, must reflect decisions about whether or not a replacement curriculum enables students to better negotiate the space between what is expected of them in school and the discursive positions expected of them outside school as active, productive citizens.

Notes

1.   The nomenclature used to identify the data refers to individual interviews (int), or to the focus group interview (f.g), the data level (e.g. 04), and the initials of the participant.

Acknowledgement

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