Working Papers in

Urban Language & Literacies

Paper 144

Negotiating race and belonging in post-apartheid South Africa: Bernadette's stories

Zannie Bock (*University of the Western Cape*)

2014

Negotiating race and belonging in a post-apartheid South Africa: Bernadette's stories

Zannie Bock
(University of the Western Cape)
zbock@uwc.ac.za

Abstract

Post-structuralist perspectives on race view it as a social construct, an outcome of a colonial project which sought to categorise and rank people in a hierarchy naturalising a view of whites or Europeans as superior to other races. Although apartheid officially ended in 1994, the issue of race as a primary marker of identity has continued to permeate many aspects of private and public life in a post-apartheid South Africa. This paper explores how race is discursively constructed through narrative, particularly the quoted speech of others. It focuses on the stories told by a single participant, Bernadette, in a focus group at a South African tertiary institution and argues that despite the fact that she overtly rejects racist ways of thinking and talking, her talk is still structured according to the apartheid logic of racial difference and hierarchy. The analytical framework draws on Labov's seminal work on narratives of personal experience and more recent work by De Fina, Bamberg & Georgakopoulou who argue that people use stories to "create (and perpetuate) a sense of who they are" both in the interactional moment as well as in terms of the broader master narratives which constitute their context.

Introduction

Twenty years after the transition from apartheid to democracy, South Africans are still grappling to come to terms with a history defined by inequality, oppression and racial discrimination. This paper forms part of a larger research project which explores the ways in which young people at two South African tertiary institutions discursively position themselves in relation to this past and to each other. The broader project draws on data gathered from eleven focus group interviews held between 2009 and 2014, seven from the 'historically black' university where I work and three from a 'historically white' university in a different province (Bock & Hunt 2014). The focus groups were facilitated by student researchers who selected their own participants, usually a friendship group. The racial composition of the groups covers the demographic range and includes groups which are both racially homogenous as well as heterogeneous. Thus the data give a rich account of what young people at these two institutions say about the apartheid past, notions of race and their own sense of belonging.

The participants in these focus groups were born in the late 1980's and early 1990's, and raised in the post-apartheid era, a generation commonly referred to as the 'born frees'. Of interest to us was the extent to which they spoke in ways which contested, mobilised, or reworked 'old' and 'new' ideologies and hierarchies of difference and belonging. The aim of the broader project is thus to explore how young South Africans speak about themselves and others, particularly in terms of racial identification, and to probe for the emergence of new discourses which may destabilise the old racial boundaries and suggest new ways of relating and belonging.

This paper focuses on the racial positioning of one participant with the pseudonym, Bernadette, who was part of a focus group interview held in 2013 at the historically black

university. It argues that despite the fact that the dominant narrative of apartheid was officially discredited in 1994, and despite the participant's overt rejection of racist ways of thinking and talking, her talk is still structured according to the apartheid logic of racial hierarchy and difference. In this sense, her discourse is typical of the other racially diverse participants in the larger study who remain similarly trapped within the old apartheid discourses despite their stated desires to 'move on' and leave the past behind (Bock & Hunt 2014). This analysis therefore gives insight into the challenges these young people face as they attempt to make sense of their racial subjectivities.

From a discourse point of view, this paper explores how race is discursively constructed through narrative, particularly through the quoted speech of others, which, in the Bakhtinian sense of double voicing, allows speakers to draw on the voices of others and use these to position themselves in relation to broader social discourses without having to explicitly claim the position as their own. The analysis explores how Bernadette uses the reported speech of others as a key narrative strategy to construct race. It argues that despite her efforts to distance herself from what she perceives as racist talk, she slips into a racialisng discourse which is much less overt than those she rejects, but which has the effect of reassembling the apartheid racial hierarchy as an explanatory framework.

Researching race in a country still steeped in pervasive discourses of difference is a daunting task. Erwin (2012: 94) urges researchers to reflect on how "our current research epistemologies and methodologies are writing future understandings of race". Research which uses race as an analytical lens inevitably runs the risk of further entrenching those same categories and, argues Erwin (2012), researchers should work to critique and destabilise these naturalised classifications. How to 'move on' is therefore a question which this paper raises and which is explored in more detail in the broader project of which it forms a part (see Bock, forthcoming).[1]

Race and identity in South Africa

Post structuralist perspectives on race view it as a social construct, an outcome of the colonial project which sought to categorise and rank people in a hierarchy naturalising a view of whites or Europeans as superior to other races (Harris and Rampton 2003). Although scholars generally agree that there is no biological basis to racial classifications, race, as demonstrated in the data in this paper, is experienced by South Africans as very real. Why this is so can be explained with reference to our history. Deborah Posel (2001) argues that while racial segregation existed prior to 1948, racial labels were more variably and flexibly deployed, but with the advent of the grand apartheid project of social engineering on the basis of racial difference, each individual was assigned an inflexible category legislated by the Population Registration Act of 1950. These classifications were based on signifiers which favoured 'social standing' and 'social acceptance' into a particular racially defined community above notions of biology or scientific rationalism. The arbitrariness of these criteria is nowhere more evident than in the definition of 'white people' in the Act itself, the wording of which shows how questions of community acceptance and social standing are elevated above all other considerations:

> (iii) 'coloured person' means a person who is not a white person or a native; …
> (x) 'native' means a person who in fact is or is generally accepted as a member of any aboriginal race or tribe of Africa; …

> (xv) 'white person' means a person who in appearance obviously is, or who is generally accepted as a white person, but does not include a person who, although in appearance obviously a white person, is generally accepted as a coloured person.
> (*Population Registration Act 30 of 1950*)

The term 'coloured' in South Africa is used to refer to people of complex heritage arising out of a history of colonialism and slavery. Although groups classified 'coloured' under apartheid shared a number of linguistic and cultural commonalities with 'whites', they were accorded 'second class' status. While they were granted some privileges above those of African descent (e.g. in terms of job preferences, limited voting rights) they were discriminated against as people of colour, had no meaningful democratic rights and were excluded from the privileges and resources reserved exclusively for those classified 'white'.

As a result of these categories, which were legitimated by the most powerful institutions in the land, notions of race and difference infiltrated every facet of South African life. Posel (2001) recounts how magistrates and other agents of racial classification made decisions on the basis of criteria such as with whom one socialised, one's choice of school or occupation, whether one was Christian or Muslim or even what kind of alcohol one drank. Taken together with the entire raft of apartheid laws, these classifications fixed one's position within the racial hierarchy, firmly entrenching the association of 'whiteness' with power, privilege and opportunity, and 'blackness' with dispossession, poverty and lack of advancement. Being 'coloured' meant occupying a rank somewhere between these two.

Although apartheid officially ended in 1994, the issue of race as a primary marker of identity has continued to permeate many aspects of private and public life in a post-apartheid South Africa (Lefko-Everett 2012, Seeking 2008). As opposed to the overt and explicit racial classifications legitimated under apartheid, racial identities are still signalled and invoked in many subtle ways. A number of scholars have investigated the ways in which young South Africans in schools and tertiary institutions navigate the complex terrain of racial identity in ways which both perpetuate or destabilise the essentialised apartheid categories of race (e.g. Dolby 1999, McKinney 2007, Wale 2010, Walker 2005). What is common to all these accounts is the recognition of the difficulties young people face when navigating this terrain and the strategic ways in which they deploy their repertoire of identity options to enact shifting alignments and disalignments as demanded by the particulars of a given context.

Narrative analysis

The aim of this paper is to explore how one participant in a focus group positions herself as a racial subject in a post-apartheid South Africa. Given my concern to avoid essentialising positions and to retain a sense of the complexities, I elected to work with stories as my primary unit of analysis. My analytical framework draws on Labov's (1972, and Labov and Waletsky 1967) seminal work on narratives of personal experience and the more recent work by scholars who argue that people use stories to "create (and perpetuate) a sense of who they are" both in the interactional moment as well as in terms of the broader master narratives which constitute their context (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008: 379). Thus, storytelling is a means to structure and make sense of experience as well as being a site for the display of self and identity (De Fina, Schriffin & Bamberg 2006).

Labov's framework for the analysis of oral narratives is well-known. It includes six parts, some of which are optional. A typical narrative may begin with an *abstract*, which summarises the story or encapsulates the main point of the story. This may be followed by an

orientation, which serves "to identify in some way the time, place, persons, and their activity or the situation" (Labov 1972: 364). Orientation clauses may also be dispersed through the story, often for narrative or evaluative effect. Next is the central and most important part, the *complicating action*, a series of events which disrupts the normal order of things set out in the orientation and culminates in a crisis or high point which the *resolution* stage in some way resolves. The *evaluation* of the events, Labov (1972: 366) argues, is what gives the story its significance and makes it worth telling. It may appear in many different forms and at many different points in the narrative, although it typically occurs as a separate stage just after the climax, at the end of the *complicating action* and just before the *resolution.* The final stage of the framework is the optional *coda*, an additional element after the *resolution* which is a "functional device for returning the verbal perspective to the present moment" (Labov and Waletsky 1967: 39) and which "may also contain general observations or show the effects of the events on the narrator" (Labov 1972: 365).

Evaluation, according to Labov (1972: 369), creates a second layer over the narrative action, forming "waves of evaluation that penetrate the narrative". His framework includes a range of evaluative devices, from those moments when the narrator 'steps outside' the narrative action to comment on its significance, to those which are realised within the syntactic structure of the clauses, such as instances of comparison, repetition or intensified lexis. Of interest in this paper is his category of *embedded* evaluation, which includes quoted and reported speech or thought, which, he argues, is a strategy used by narrators to appraise the action thereby expressing their own attitudes and positions.

Although Labov has been criticised for failing to take the interactional context and co-constructed nature of the narrative into account, his work is still regarded as ground breaking in the field (Schegloff 2003). Contemporary scholars of narrative, such as De Fina & Georgakopoulou (2008: 275), have argued for a focus on the narrative context, on the "multiplicity, fragmentation, and irreducible situatedness of [narrative] forms and functions" as well as the ways in which these are shaped by both the micro and macro contexts. They argue that not only are narratives embedded within particular social practices which shape them in unique ways, they reflect and are shaped by broader social concerns. In this way, narratives may illustrate "how shared ideologies and stereotypes about social categories of belonging become a resource for local self and other positioning and identity construction" (De Fina 2008: 422).

The analytical framework in this paper is informed by both Labov's narrative framework and contemporary scholarship's concern with context, as a means to explore how Bernadette uses stories to 'do' identity work and situate herself as a racial subject both within the micro context of the focus group interview and the macro context of the post-apartheid South Africa. In particular, it focuses on how she uses reported speech and other evaluative devices to discursively construct racial subjectivities for herself and others.

Bernadette's stories: the analysis

Bernadette's stories provide telling insight into the complexities of the racial positioning evident throughout the corpus. In 2013, Bernadette was a postgraduate student studying Industrial Psychology. Although she grew up in a working class, historically coloured area of Cape Town and attended local schools as a child, her mother managed to send her and her sister to a better resourced English medium high school in a historically white area nearby. She is a high achiever academically and a dominant participant in this interview, presenting herself as well informed and self-assured. Although she would have grown up hearing and

speaking the local variety of Afrikaans, Kaaps, she chooses in this interview to speak English only, even when the other participants code switch or use predominantly Afrikaans for their contributions. In the analysis, I suggest that this may be because she is careful to present herself as an aspirant middle class professional, which in the South African context, is associated with speaking English (McMillan 2003).

The focus group consists of six friends, all students at the same institution, all closely linked by long standing ties of friendship and family. They all self-identify as coloured, and spend a considerable part of the interview telling anecdotes about their parents' experiences of life under apartheid, the kinds of things their parents said about other races, their own experiences of racism (or what they perceive as racism) and their fears and anxieties about their place in post-apartheid South Africa. All fear exclusion from jobs and political processes on the basis of their race and invoke the oft quoted dictum that as coloureds they are still caught 'in the middle': while they were not white enough under apartheid, they are not black enough now to qualify for job preferences and other redress measures.

In the first two stories, Bernadette refers to childhood episodes which serve to establish the kind of overt racism from which she is anxious to distance herself. The third story refers to the recent past and is, I would argue, the most complex and interesting. The last story refers to an event which would have taken place several years before she enrolled at university, when she went to work in a bank for a year. Taken together, these stories give us a sense of Bernadette's experience of race as well as the kinds of racial discourses she is negotiating.

In Story 1, Bernadette recounts how she first became aware of race through the stories of her parents and grandparents. Here, the innocence of childhood is equated with 'not seeing' race, these categories only becoming 'visible' when she was inducted into the world view of her parents and grandparents, whom she constructs as suspicious of and antagonistic towards other races and of reproducing a discourse of racial othering.

The transcript has been divided into clauses and arranged, following Hymes's ethnopoetic principles (Blommaert 2007) in a manner which seeks to reflect the equivalences and forms which provide an underlying structure to the narrative. Parallelisms and repetitions are underlined, emphatic speech is presented in caps and the reported speech is in quotation marks. Translations from Afrikaans are given in square brackets and the Labovian stages are numbered and labelled.

Story 1: "Jinne die darkies"

1. (Orientation)

1. My first my first two primary schools were coloured
2. and my third one we had uhm BLACK kids as well
3. but at that point I didn't …
   and we had white kids
4. so I didn't KNOW that it was
   that <u>they were</u> black
   and <u>they were</u> white
   <u>they were</u> just . my friends
   like <u>they were</u> just THERE

2. (Complicating Action)

5. but then you start listening to the way <u>your parents talk</u>

your grandparents talk,

6. and my gran would be like "jinne die darkies" [gosh, the blacks]
7. [all laughing]

3. (Evaluation)

8. Bernadette: and I would be like "you don't use these" [2]
9. Heather: DIT is so! ander woorde ook [It is like that! other words as well]
10. Bernadette: and they STILL USE IT
    they still use it like
11. Paulo: ons gebruik dit ook [we also use it]
12. Bernadette: ja hey it is how it is… and
13. but it never really resonated with me
14. and I never thought much of it

This story recalls her becoming aware of how the adults in her environment spoke about other races, in this case, 'blacks'. The expression *jinne* is a mild Afrikaans expletive with an equivalent meaning to 'gosh' or 'crikey' in English. The term, 'darkies', however, is a racist term for 'blacks' which would have had the effect of interpellating black people as inferior in the racial structuring of the young Bernadette. Note that the reaction of the focus group participants is to laugh – perhaps because they recognise this discourse as that of their own parents, or even themselves but that Bernadette is as pains in lines 8 and 10 to reject it and to position herself as different to her grandmother. She achieves this through the overt evaluation of this discourse, "you don't use these" words, coupled with her rejection of her elders' stance, the strength of her refutation signalled by the loudness and repetition in, "they STILL USE IT/they still use it". Heather, however, indicates that in fact people do still use this discourse (line 9) and Paulo admits that it is not only confined to the older generation but that "we also use it", where 'we' can be assumed to be a reference to himself, his family and friends (line 11).

While Bernadette acknowledges this practice as common (line 12), she continues to distance herself from it (and the shared stance of her co-participants) with the statement, "but it never really resonated with me". In other words, in this story, she constructs herself as a young girl who made friends with all classmates irrespective of race and was unaware of the differences until she was discursively inducted into racist ways of talking by her grandmother. She concludes this story with an explicit rejection of this discourse (lines 13 & 14) and, by implication, the underlying ideology of racial difference and black inferiority. In this story, then, she is at pains to construct herself as 'not racist' and as having moved beyond the prejudiced mindset of her elders.

Stories 2 and 3 are told in sequence by Bernadette in response to a question posed by the facilitator as to whether they felt being coloured had 'hindered' them in any way. The participants understand this question as 'have you ever felt racially discriminated against' as it triggers a long discussion, including a recount of an incident at a public fair where a number of them were at the receiving end of overtly racist behaviour at the hands of white playground owners who made it uncomfortable for them to join one of the rides.

In Story 2, Bernadette adds her contribution to this topic with a story of how she and her mother were also subject to the blatant racism of whites: it recalls an event which probably took place in the early 1990s when race relations were very strained due to the fact that a process of political change had irrevocably begun with the release of Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC).

Story 2: The racist white woman

1. (Abstract)

1. Bernadette: may I just say something ...
2. [everyone laughing]
3. there nuh I was…
4. two stories

2. (Orientation)

5. when I was a child
6. when we came from the hospital
7. and we were going
   and this is a largely white area
   it's in Wynberg where the military uhm families live
8. and my mommy decided
   "it's so hot
   we're going to swim"
9. she's gonna take me to the pool there
10. but it's a WHITE area
11. but because my father is in the navy
    we have access
    we can go and explore

3. (Complicating Action)

12. and then this we walking past this lady's yard
13. and I said something about the dog
    because the dog is so cute
14. and then she came out with her
15. sy kom met haar besemstok = [she came with her broom]
16. Dwayne: = oh snap
17. Bernadette: = and she's like "fokof hiervandaan" ["fuck off from here"]
    because uhm "kom vat julle nou hier ook oor" ["are you coming to take over here as well".]

4. (Evaluation)

18. [Heather gasping]
19. Bernadette: like YES
    and we were just walking by
    we weren't even doing anything
    we were just on our way to the pool

5. (Resolution)

20. so my mommy's like "let's rather go home
    because if this is the type of people who live HERE
    then what can we expect
21. [Dwayne mumbling]
22. Bernadette: ya at the pool"

6. (Coda)

23. but then [laughing] then again you don't
24. as a child you just so like shocked
25. like why would she go on like that?
26. [Interviewees grinning in agreement]
27. Bernadette: <u>you didn't notice</u> that this woman is white
    <u>you know</u> that she's white
    but <u>you didn't understand</u> what was going on.

In the first stanza, Bernadette claims the speaking turn with an indication that she wishes to tell two stories. According to Toolan (1998), bids for turns can be considered part of the abstract. In stanza two, her story begins where she again introduces herself as a young girl, this time in the company of her mother, who wishes to take her to swim in a public pool in a suburb of Cape Town called, Wynberg. During the apartheid years, Wynberg was declared a 'whites only' residential area. However, as Bernadette explains, her family had certain privileges as her father worked in the navy and so they "had access" to the whites' only public pool. Her narrative purpose here is to emphasise that this is a "white area" (repeated in turns 7 and 10), the normalness of their desire for a swim ("it's so hot") and the rights that they had to be in this otherwise racially exclusive area ("we have access/we can go and explore"). It is also significant that she switches into the historical present in line 7 when she mentions that Wynberg is a white area as though it is this point that she is caught up in the drama of her telling (Schiffrin 1981).

In the third stanza, the complicating action unfolds as Bernadette stops to admire a cute dog – an action which frames her as young, innocent and simply enjoying a day out with her mother – and is accosted by the dog's owner who comes out of her house with a broom and shouts obscenities at the girl and her mother, sparking, in Labov's terms, the crisis or high point of the narrative. Note that she does not need to mention the race of the woman: from her careful setting up of the scene in the orientation, this information is immediately evident to her audience. Similarly, her shift into Afrikaans at this point is also interpreted as indexing whiteness as Dwayne immediately responds with "oh snap", with the meaning here of "oh gosh". Bernadette then switches between English and Afrikaans for the rest of this stanza, reserving a particularly crude and offensive Afrikaans for the white woman, thereby characterising her as offensive and rude, and identifying her with a discourse associated with white racists who feared the advent of a black government and the dismantling of the apartheid laws which privileged whiteness.

The act of switching into Afrikaans at this point, as well as the continued use of the historical present tense, enables Bernadette to create narrative immediacy and authenticity, thereby positioning her current audience as observers of the event, even though it had happened some twenty years before and of making her story more exciting and memorable (Schiffrin 1981). The code-switching also functions here as a distancing mechanism, helping to set up a contrast between Bernadette and her mother, on the one hand, and the racist white woman on the other.[3]

In stanza 4, this event is evaluated by Heather's reaction of horror and disbelief (gasping) and Bernadette's reiteration of their innocence accentuated by the syntactic parallelism of clauses in line 21: "<u>we were just</u> walking by/<u>we weren't even</u> doing anything/<u>we were just</u> on our way to the pool". Against the normalcy of this assertion, the behaviour of the woman is construed as unmotivated by anything other than racial hatred and mistrust. The background 'mumbling' at this point indicates that her co-participants share this evaluation. Bernadette's

evaluation also serves to suspend the action, thereby heightening the narrative tension at the point of crisis in classic Labovian style.

In stanza 5, her mother resolves the crisis by suggesting that they leave the contested white space and return home as they are clearly unsafe and unwelcome, her mother's voice providing a rational and respectable counterbalance to the voice of the white woman. Here the reasonableness of her mother's voice is set in contrast to the blatantly racist voice of the white woman, a narrative choice which allows Bernadette to clearly distance herself and her mother from the white woman's racism. Note also how the high point of the complicating action in both narratives is realised through the quoted speech of either her grandmother or the white woman and how she explicitly distances herself from this kind of racist talk in the subsequent evaluations.

Stanza 6 acts as a coda in that the narrative perspective changes from the immediacy of the telling to a more distanced evaluative perspective on the events signalled by her laughter, the shift into the past tense and the use of the generic 'you' (as opposed to the 'we' of the previous stanzas). Bernadette recalls her incomprehension of this event as a child, once again, asserting, as in story 1, her inability to understand race as significant or meaningful. Her evaluative emphasis is once again marked, as in line 19, by the parallelism in the syntactic structure ("you didn't notice that this woman is white/you know that she's white/but you didn't understand what was going on").

In both stories 1 and 2, then, Bernadette recounts how race is discursively constructed by adults in her environment, both in her own home and in the broader society. In both cases, she constructs her childhood self as innocent and unseeing of the racial positions these discourses perpetuate, and is at pains to reject or distance herself from these ways of speaking. She does not, however, question the racial categories as such and reproduces them uncritically in her own discourse.

In story 3, the beginning of which follows on from Story 2 without a pause, her positioning is more complex and difficult to read. It is clear from the start of Story 2 (see line 4) that Bernadette planned to tell both stories 2 and 3 in response to the facilitator's question, 'has being coloured hindered you in any way', as they both, in her mind, enable her to say something about how she has felt negatively positioned as a racial subject at different points in her life. She uses these stories, I would argue, to try and present herself as having moved beyond the old apartheid ideologies of race.

Story 3 is set in the recent past and recounts an incident in the bank when Bernadette again felt discursively positioned as a racial subject by another, a positioning which she also contests and rejects. As for Story 2, she quickly shifts into the present tense (line 3) as she becomes caught up in her role as narrator. Once again, the story can be analysed as a full narrative of personal experience. In the transcript below, the stanzas boundaries follow the Labovian structure with stanza 1 providing the orientation, stanzas 2 and 3 recounting two episodes in the complicating action, stanza 4 offering the evaluation, stanza 5, the resolution and stanza 6, the coda.

Story 3: In the bank with my cousin's daughter

1. (Orientation)

1. Bernadette: then the other day I was in the bank
2. and I was sitting and waiting for my sister
3. and my cousin's daughter is with me

4. and she's like two years old
5. BUT . she looks WHITE
   she has blue eyes
   she has that curly blonde hair
   and she's very very very fair
   she looks like WHITE
6. but she's coloured
7. Heather: mhm
8. Bernadette: and I'm playing with her

2. (Complicating Action)

9. then this young white guy comes
10. and sits next to me
11. and he's like red as a tomato but anyway
12. and he's talking to me
13. and we're having this lovely conversation just like about random things

14. and then this black woman comes
15. and she stands
16. as the line is moving forward she ends up standing next to us
17. and her daughter goes and sits opposite us
18. and she tells her daughter
    I think they call it *itomisane* something like that
19. and then she like uhm "mmm, look it's nice hey, it's nice"
20. [Participants laughing]

4. (Evaluation)

21. Bernadette: basically saying that it's nice
    that I'm with this WHITE guy
    and we have this WHITE child
22. Heather: oh
23. Bernadette: that's what she was THINKING

5. (Resolution)

24. I was like he looks at me
25. and I look at him
26. and we just start laughing
27. because we know what she's saying=
28. Heather: =uh=
29. Bernadette: =and she was looking at me smiling like the happiest like broadest smile ever
30. [Dwayne laughing]
31. Bernadette: "did you SEE, mmm it's nice" [laughing]

6. (Coda)

32. so they attach this thing to the white person
33. where it's almost as if you have to feel … so grateful=
34. Paulo: =ja
35. Bernadette: or how can I say you should feel *kwaai* [cool] like we would say

36. because you're with a white guy
37. Dwayne & Paulo: [mhm]
38. Bernadette: or when you with a white girl
39. when in actual fact it's … really not
40. [all laughing]

The orientation introduces Bernadette again as the main character, but now the time period has shifted to "the other day" when she, now a young adult, is old enough to be mistaken for the mother of her cousin's daughter. She uses this orientation to set up a contrast between the coloured identity of her cousin's daughter (and by implication, herself) and the 'whiteness' of the child's appearance. These details recall how, in story 2, Bernadette also used the orientation to set up a contrast between the whiteness of Wynberg and the presence of her mother and herself as coloured people in this contested space. Just as she and her mother had certain privileges which blurred the boundary between coloured and white in the apartheid era, so too the racial categories in this story are presented as 'not clear cut'. The reiteration and emphasis of 'white' and its classically European features (blond hair, blue eyes) in line 5 signal the ambiguity inherent in the historical positioning of many people classified coloured under apartheid, as well as, perhaps, an aspiration on the part of Bernadette to move beyond these categories and claim a more 'privileged' or even 'post racial' position in the present. Although she appears to be trying to deconstruct the categories (by drawing attention to their arbitrariness), the analysis shows how she in fact moves back into them as the story progresses.

The beginning of the complicating action is signalled by the use of the adverbial, 'then', as she recalls how a "young white guy" comes into the bank and sits next to her. Unlike the white woman of story 2, however, he does not abuse her with racist invective; rather he appears to enjoy talking to her as "we're having this lovely conversation just like about random things". Although the casual nature of the conversation signals a conviviality and social equality which was completely absent in the previous encounter, Bernadette is careful to reject any suggestion that she might have found the young man (and his white skin) in any way desirable with her disclaimer: "he's like red as a tomato".

The arrival of the "black woman" and her daughter initiates a new episode in the complicating action signalled discursively again by 'then' (line 14). Bernadette takes the equivalent of five clauses to describe how the woman and her daughter move up the line towards them, allowing for a suitable build up to the climax of her story, which is the words of the woman quoted as: "mmm, look it's nice hey, it's nice". She double-voices these words by mimicking a stereotypical black accent for the woman, thereby caricaturing her as a 'typical black subject' imbued with values indexing lower economic and social standing. She also expresses her distance from the woman with the aside, "I think they call it *itomisane"*, both through her choice of 'they' and 'it' – which serve to depersonalise and devalue the woman and her daughter and position them as 'other' – and through her obvious inability to pronounce the child's African name, which was probably *Ntombazana*, an isiXhosa name for a girl. At this point, her fellow participants laugh, perhaps at the caricature of the black woman, or perhaps because they themselves recognise this kind of situation. Either way, their laughter expresses alignment with her stance.

Why she takes such offence at this statement becomes clear in the next stanza, the evaluation, which suspends the narrative at the high point of the story and allows the narrator to reflect on its significance. According to the interpretation she offers in line 21, she reads the woman as signalling that she, Bernadette, has done well for herself by marrying 'up' the racial hierarchy and producing a child who looks white. Her repetition of 'white' in the same line

serves to reinforce her reading of this statement. Just as she felt interpellated as a racial subject by the white woman of Wynberg, so too, in this story, she feels positioned in a racial hierarchy by the black woman. Her positioning in both stories 2 & 3 is achieved through the weaving together of competing voices, with quoted speech used to construct a racialised identity for both women. In both cases, these quotations mark the crisis in the complicating action and serve to suspend and evaluate the narrative action.

It should be noted, however, that this event could be interpreted in other more obvious ways. For example, the black woman was probably simply pointing out a cute little girl to her own child, as any mother might. If she had been referring to their race, it is far more likely that she would have been commending Bernadette and her companion for being a mixed race couple in the new 'rainbow nation'.[4]

In the resolution, she recounts how she and the young man shared her evaluation of the event, although it is probably only an *assumed* shared interpretation as there is no record of its co-construction. Her description of how they look at each other and laugh knowingly indicates that for her the racial alignment has shifted. No longer is the binary white versus coloured as represented by story 2; now her 'we' includes her and the 'white guy' united in laughter at the black woman. Towards the end of this resolution, she reiterates her caricature of the woman as foolish and somehow childish ("she was looking at me smiling like the happiest like broadest smile ever") and again mimics the offending words to laughter from her co-participants.

In the coda, Bernadette again reflects on the event and returns the narrative to the present. She once again reiterates her rejection of the imposed hierarchy which elevates whiteness, but in doing so now generalises the significance of the event to include racially held positions. Her generalisation of the values 'they' attach to whiteness, where 'they' presumably refers to black people in general (line 32) prepares the ground for the racial polarising that continues in line 35 where she explicitly claims a coloured identity for herself with her insertion of *kwaai*, a local Kaaps word for 'cool', and her use of the inclusive pronoun, 'we', where 'we' refers to the users of the word, *kwaai*.

The reading that Bernadette gives the event is quite unusual and points, I would suggest, to her own anxieties and sensitivities about her race and class. The way in which she aligns herself with 'the white guy' but rejects the 'black woman' can be read as a desire on her part to associate with the middle class privilege still indexed by whiteness in the new South Africa and to disassociate with the poverty and inferiority associated with blackness. As noted earlier, her insistence on speaking English only in this focus group suggests a middle class aspiration. As Block (2014) argues, social identities are multifaceted and race interacts with other social variables such as gender and class in complex ways.

In her analysis of the same data, Van der Merwe (2013) argues that throughout the interview, the participants tend towards 'idealising whiteness and discarding blackness' and that this position arises from the coloured experience of marginalisation, voicelessness and feeling 'caught in the middle', both in the apartheid era and now also in the new democratic order. One of the ways in which these youth still experience discrimination is illustrated by Story 4.

Here Bernadette tells a story which points to a recent event when she was once again at the receiving end of racial discrimination, this time in the name of affirmative action or Black Economic Empowerment (BEE). She recounts how a colleague of hers at the bank was overlooked for a permanent position despite her greater work experience because she was 'not black enough'. In terms of South Africa's employment equity policy, racial quotas are

applied in many jobs. Bernadette uses this narrative to support her argument that coloureds are discriminated against.

Story 4: Not black enough

1. (Abstract)

1. Facilitator: So the thing we're moving towards is basically you are employed because you are a BEE applicant and not because of your skills
2. Bernadette: No it's the TRUTH
   let me tell you this
   it's the TRUTH
3. Dwayne: mhm
4. Paulo: mhm
5. Bernadette: it's proven
6. I had to – I
7. Well look here my friend couldn't get the permanent position right?

2. (Orientation)

8. both working in the bank
9. and then we find the person who got the permanent position
   she has NO EXPERIENCE …
10. my friend has all the experience
11. we had three years' experience
12. and she couldn't get the permanent position

3. (Complicating Action)

13. they brought in this person
14. and then we asked our manager
    look what can she do right for next time to get to make sure she gets the position
15. "sorry we had to choose someone who's black"
16. THAT was exact words
17. [["SORRY we had to choose someone who is black"]]
18. Dwayne: [[hoekom is dit so?]] [why is it so?]

4. (Resolution)

19. Bernadette: THEN I have to train this person…
20. but … knowing that I would never qualify for that position
21. because I'm not black

In this narrative, the Labovian stages are less clear cut as Bernadette moves back and forth between her evaluation of the event ('my friend couldn't get the permanent position') and the narrative action in lines 8, 13, 14 and 15. She offers her story as evidence to support the facilitator's statement that "basically you are employed because you are a BEE applicant and not because of your skills". In the abstract, she claims the floor with an emphatic repetition of "it's the truth" and "it's proven" in relation to this statement and sums up the key evaluation of her story, namely that her friend "couldn't get the permanent position" because she was "not black enough" even though she had the necessary experience. The orientation introduces herself and her friend as colleagues at a bank, but focusses again on her evaluation

of the outcome of the story and the fact that the person who did get the job had "no experience". As with her previous stories, the evaluation works with repetition and syntactic parallelisms. The complicating action describes them asking the manager what they should do to ensure they were considered for the next available position, the climax of which is realised, as with her other stories, through the quoted speech of another, this time the manager, who explains that racial criteria have disqualified them from the position ("sorry we had to choose someone who is black") to which Dwayne responds, "why is it so?". In the resolution, she describes how the narrative ends, with her having to train the new appointee, and the difficult position this places her in. Thus with this story she provides evidence of her own recent experience of racism and her frustration at the fact that the racial hierarchy, now 'reversed' in an attempt to undo the long term effects of apartheid, has had the effect of reinserting her into a position of disadvantage.

Conclusion

Bernadette's stories, then, illustrate the complexity of racial positioning for young people in South Africa today. The analysis draws attention to the ways in which the narrative structure enables her to this achieve this complex dialogic positioning. Not only is Bernadette an artful story teller, who uses repetition and parallelisms to build up the narrative tension, she uses quoted speech and at times code-switching as evaluative devices to weave a complex web of racialising perspectives into her story.

Her stories are very different, both in terms of their historical contexts as well as how she represents herself as 'seeing' and 'understanding' her experiences. Story 1 is told as an acknowledgement that racism is prevalent even in her own family, but her evaluation of both this and Story 2 indicates her desire to present herself as having 'moved beyond' this kind of racism. The racist talk in both stories is easy to identify – it is carried by overtly racist terms and code-switches which locate it within the discredited discourses of apartheid. However, in Story 3, the positioning is far more complex: here she feels negatively interpellated as a racial subject, a positioning she resists by overtly challenging and rejecting the apartheid hierarchy, which privileges whiteness. However, in seemingly rejecting this hierarchy, the analysis shows how she slips unnoticed back into these very frames. Whilst attempting to distance herself from the discourse of race and its associated ways of 'seeing', she re-inscribes the apartheid hierarchy as an explanatory framework.

As the analysis of the broader corpus shows, Bernadette is not alone in reassembling this discourse (Bock & Hunt 2014). The continued salience of racial categories is not unexpected in a country which has reinvigorated them in the name of redress. Even though political transformation has been achieved since 1994 and the legal framework completely overhauled, a lot of work remains, particularly in terms of reducing poverty and in achieving social integration (Seeking 2008). Within a context of high unemployment and social instability, it is hardly surprising that racism persists in many different forms. And while South Africans may have become more careful of the way they speak, racist discourse, argues Walker (2005: 140), 'mutates but does not disappear'. Becoming aware of how race is perpetuated discursively is one aspect, I would argue, of the broader project of social transformation, as is the need to search for new discourses which destabilise these categories.

Acknowledgements

This research was made possible by funding from the National Research Foundation of South Africa. Opinions, findings, conclusions and recommendations expressed in the article are those of the author and the NRF does not accept any liability in this regard.

My sincere thanks go to Chanel van der Merwe and her participants for permission to use their data. Thanks also to Brigitta Busch and Jim Collins for their insightful comments on this data and an earlier draft of this paper.

Notes

1. I am aware that my own subjectivity as a white, middle class, female South African is written into the analysis in complex ways. I have, however, worked at the university where this data was gathered for eighteen years and discussed this analysis with students and colleagues from across the racial spectrum in an attempt to understand the many sensitive issues. All failings to do so, however, remain my own.
2. Research indicates that 'like' is commonly used as a quotative to signal reported speech in (American) oral English (Jones & Schieffelin 2007).
3. Bock (2011) explores how this kind of code-switching was used in the testimonies of victims of human rights abuse given before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to characterise the white apartheid police as offensive and brutal.
4. These are the interpretations a group of young 'coloured' students gave to the incident when I discussed it with them.

References

Bamberg, M. & Georgakopoulou, A. 2008. Small stories as a new perspective in narrative and identity analysis. *Text and Talk* 28(3): 377-396.

Block, D. 2014. *Social class in applied linguistics*. Oxon: Routledge.

Blommaert, J. 2007. Applied ethnopoetics. In Bamberg, M. (ed.) *Narrative: state of the art*. Amsterdam: John Benjamin Publishing.

Bock, Z. 2014. Code-switching – an appraisal resource in Truth and Reconciliation Commission testimonies. *Functions of Language* 18/2: 183-209.

Bock, Z. (forthcoming). Entangled identities: "I want to set colour aside and I don't want that type of thing anymore". In Kerfoot, C. & Hyltenstam, K. *Entangled discourses: south-north orders of visibility*. Routledge.

Bock, Z. & Hunt, S. 2014. "It's just taking our souls back": Apartheid and race in the discourses of young South Africans. Working papers in Urban Language and Literacies, Paper 132. Available at https://www.academia.edu/7559914/WP132_Bock_and_Hunt_2014._Its_just_taking_our_souls_back_Apartheid_and_race_in_the_discourses_of_young_South_Africans

De Fina, A., Schiffrin, D. & Bamberg, M. 2006. *Discourse and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dolby, N. 1999. Youth and the global popular: The politics and practices of race in South Africa. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 2(3): 291-309.

Erwin, K. 2012. Race and race thinking: reflections in theory and practice for researchers in South Africa and beyond. *Transformation* 79: 93-113.

Harris, R. & Rampton, B. 2003. *The language, ethnicity and race reader*. London: Routledge.

Jones, G. & Schieffelin, B. 2007. Enquoting voices, accomplishing talk: uses of *be+like* in instant messaging. *Language & Communication*. Doi:10.1016/j.langocm.2007.09.003.

Labov, W. 1972. *Language in the Inner City*. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press.

Labov, W. and Waletsky, J. 1967. Narrative analysis: Oral versions of personal experience. In J. Helm (ed). *Essays on the verbal and visual arts: Proceedings of the 1996 Annual Spring Meeting of the American Ethnological Society* (pp.12 – 44). Seattle:University of Washington Press.

Lefko-Everett, K. 2012. Leaving it to the children: Non-racialism, identity, socialisation and generational change in South Africa. *Politikon* 39(1): 127-147.
McKinney, C. 2007. 'If I speak English, does it make me less black anyway?' 'Race' and English in South African desegregated schools. *English Academy Review* 24(2): 6-24.
McMillan, W. 2003. "I feel that I get by with what I do" – Using narrative as a conceptual tool for the understanding of social identity. *Journal of Education* 31: 111-115.
Population Registration Act 30 of 1950. Pretoria: Government Printers. Available at: http://www.disa.ukzn.ac.za/webpages/DC/leg19500707.028.020.030/leg19500707.028.020.030.pdf (accessed on 30 November 2012).
Posel, D. 2001. What's in a name? Racial categorisations under apartheid and their afterlife. *Transformation* 47: 50-74.
Schiffrin, D. 1981. Schiffrin, D. 1996. Narrative as self-portrait: sociolinguistic constructions of identity. *Language in Society* 25(2): 167- 203.
Seeking, J. 2008. The continuing salience of race: discrimination and diversity in South Africa. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 26(1): 1-25.
Soudien, C. 2001. Certainty and ambiguity in youth identities in South Africa: Discourses in Transition. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 22(3): 311-326.
Steyn, M & Foster, D. 2008. Repertoires for talking white: Resistant whiteness in post-apartheid South Africa. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31(1): 25-51.
Toolan, M. 1998. *Narrative: a critical linguistic introduction*. London: Routledge.
Van der Merwe, C. 2013. *"Die bruinmense is steeds in die middle": the discourses of young coloured South Africans*. Unpublished Honours paper, Linguistics Department, University of the Western Cape.
Wale, K. 2010, Policing Racial Boundaries: University students' interpretations of race relations in South Africa. *MMG Working Paper 10-10*. Available at: https://www.google.co.za/search?q=Policing+Racial+Boundaries%3A+University+students%E2%80%99+interpretations+of+race+relations+in+South+Africa&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=t&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a&channel=sb&gfe_rd=cr&ei=Xe0NVNOnPO2o8wevgoDQAg
Walker, M. 2005. Rainbow nation or new racism? Theorizing race and identity formation in South African higher education. *Race Ethnicity and Education* 8(2): 129-146.
Walker, M. 2005. Race is nowhere and race is everywhere: narratives from black and white South African university students in post-apartheid South Africa. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 26(1): 41-54.