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Classroom as heterotopia: English lessons as a space to problematise war

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ABSTRACT

The incorporation of peace and war into the curriculum poses problems to teachers, especially in an examination-focussed school system. Whilst recent research concerning conflict has considered conflict-resolution within schools, and difficulties teachers face teaching about terrorism, little has been written on teaching 21st century war without the high-profile deployment of UK troops. In this article, I examine how peace and war are taught in an English school. After identifying the school's overall war-focussed discourse, I focus on the practices of an ex-services English teacher and his techniques to debate, discuss, and ultimately problematise war creating a space akin to Foucault's heterotopia. I argue this 'other space' allowed him to develop his practice and there is evidence of the heterotopia 'leaking' further afield. I suggest that although there are limitations to the classroom-as-heterotopia, it can nevertheless provide a space for practitioners to disrupt the wider discourse within their schools.

Introduction

Most people in the UK have little direct experience of war; however, commemoration events for the centenary of World War One (WWI) and recent terror attacks bring violence to the forefront of people's minds. These events enter classrooms and affect the lives of those who teach and learn within them. Teachers often report having trouble covering current issues in the classroom (Oulton et al. 2004; von der Lippe 2021), and those issues involving violence are no different. Although there has been recent research on both teaching about terrorism (Quartermaine 2017; Jerome and Elwick 2020) and the WWI centenary (Einhaus and Pennell 2014), there has been little investigation into the ways in which the military and contemporary war are taught in British school. Using the lens of Foucault's heterotopia, this article explores the practices of an ex-services English teacher, Sam, in a multicultural secondary school in the north of England and how he navigates the teaching of peace and war in his classroom. The consideration of his perspective as someone who has experienced war first-hand is illuminating, and by contrasting his 'other' space with that of the wider school, the latter's mainstream 'common sense' messages of war as inevitable are unravelled and revealed.

The paper begins with a consideration of the concepts of peace and war, and then examines previous literature on teaching about peace and war. Following a discussion of the methodology used, the lens of 'heterotopia' is considered, including previous applications to educational settings. It then goes on to outline the dominant discourse at the case-study school and how the heterotopic classroom exposes and disrupts this. Next, it discusses how the classroom can 'leak' to an extent into other areas of the school and then, finally, it moves on to the limits of the heterotopic space. Further, it is posited that the heterotopic classroom's 'other space' can be an opportunity for practitioners exploring other issues that might run contrary to the main discourse of their schools.

Educating on peace and war

I have drawn upon the work of Galtung (1969) and Kaldor (2015) to frame the research reported here. Galtung identifies a distinction between 'negative peace' and 'positive peace' and in turn between 'direct' and 'indirect' violence. A direct act of violence is one that causes physical or mental harm, such as the dropping of a bomb. Structural violence (part of indirect violence) is societal, and 'built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as un-equal life chances' (1969, 171). For Galtung, the absence of 'direct/personal violence' is 'negative peace' and the absence of 'structural violence' is 'positive peace'. He later added a third category of violence, 'cultural violence', which he described as legitimising the other two (Galtung 1990). In order to understand current concepts of contemporary war, I have referred to Kaldor's definition of 'new wars', described as '…more omnipresent, more directed at civilians, involv[ing] the blurring of the distinctions between war and crime, and… serv[ing] to foment diverse identity politics…' (2015, 90) with terrorism given as an example. She argues that these wars are more based on identity rather than the geopolitics of the 'old wars' between nation states. This is relevant when analysing the ways in which peace and war were considered by my participants in the study. Previous studies have not considered terrorism as 'new war' in this way when discussing how it is taught in the classroom.

As terrorism can be considered part of the conceptualization of 'new wars' it is important to understand how this is approached by teachers. Researchers have argued that teachers face difficulties when covering the topic, often feeling ill-equipped (Quartermaine 2016), unsupported by their schools (Anker and von der Lippe 2017), and uncertain about how to students will react (Toft 2020). However, it is also suggested that it is necessary to teach around terrorism. Zembylas (2021) argues that teachers should encourage students to cultivate critical affective skills to gain a deeper understanding of a terrorist event; Toft (2020) suggests that teachers frame attacks in different ways to include in their lessons and Jerome, Elwick, and Kazim emphasise that '…there is a role for education in transforming the way students understand terrorism and extremism and the responses to them, the way they ask questions about these phenomena and the kinds of answers they are looking for' (2019, 109–10), underlining its importance.

In the field of peace education, a distinction is often made between education *about* peace and education *for* peace, with the former dealing with the gaining of knowledge and the latter more focussed on attitudinal and behavioural change (Brock-Utne 2009, 213). Education *for* peace is prominent in the rich research conducted about peacebuilding in conflict-affected societies, for instance in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Clarke-Habibi 2018); Cyprus (Zembylas et al. 2011); Northern Ireland (Reilly and Niens 2014); Sierra Leone

(Smith Ellison 2014); and Israel-Palestine (Bekerman 2009). However, as England has not recently experienced direct violence in this way, education for peace often focusses on conflict resolution and peer-mediation within schools to create 'positive peace' (Harber and Sakade 2009; Cremin and Bevington 2017). Yet, McCorkle (2017) has called for a return to the origins of peace education, where war is problematised within schools. Such an approach will be considered in this article.

Studies on teaching about war and peace include work by Standish and Kertyzia who analysed the National Curriculum finding '…limited evidence that the English National Curriculum contains content conducive to creating positive peace' (2014, 96). History is often a focal point when discussing teaching about conflict, peace and war in schools (see for example Araújo and Maeso 2012; Harris and Burn 2016; Paulson 2015; Stoddard, Hess, and Hammer 2011; Zembylas 2013) as is Religious Studies (RS) (Jackson and Fujiwara 2007; King 2007). However, I differentiate these from 'peace education' where the purpose is teaching for, or about, peace rather than imparting curriculum content. Additionally, unlike previous studies where data was collected during a high-profile conflict such as the second Iraq war (Blankemeyer, Walker, and Svitak 2009; Yamashita 2006), my research was conducted without such a high-profile deployment of British troops and thus without the media coverage this brings, therefore providing a new context.

Methods and research design

The wider research was a case-study of an ethnically diverse larger-than-average sized comprehensive school, located in the North of England. The case-study method was chosen as it provides a way to 'get close to reality' (Flyvbjerg 2001, 133). The project received approval from Leeds Beckett University's ethics committee and the school was given the pseudonym 'Alderfield School'. This article provides a case-within-a-case by looking in more detail at the classroom of one particular English teacher, Sam, who was chosen due to his atypical approach to teaching issues surrounding peace and war as well as his personal experience as an ex-solider.

Data for the larger case-study were collected from interviews, focus groups, photographs of the classroom, curriculum documents and resources produced by Sam and his colleagues. Sam was interviewed twice, once in February 2016 and once in March of the same year. Several of the other teachers interviewed are also included in this paper: Mel, head of RS; Fred, a history teacher; Richard, the headteacher; Oliver, head of humanities; Lucas, head of geography; and Johnny, another RS teacher. Whilst these teachers were also interpreting the curriculum in their own ways, the focus here is on Sam due to the experience that he brought to the classroom and his unusual practice.

I employed a thematic analysis based on the framework provided by Braun and Clarke who describe the process as '…a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data' (2006, 76). My analysis was also influenced by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which allowed me to uncover the central messages of the school and displayed a contrast between this and Sam's classroom. Mullet argues that 'CDA is a useful approach for educational researchers who explore connections between educational practices and social contexts' (2018, 117) and I followed her suggestion to explore the background of the texts I used. As my research sits in the context of a society witnessing global conflict and the pressures of an examination-focussed education system, this seemed appropriate.

Theoretical lens: heterotopia

Foucault describes a heterotopia as being a kind of counter-site or 'other space', explaining that heterotopias have 'the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect' (1986, 24). In this article, I am using the concept to examine how Sam's classroom exists as an 'other space' within Alderfield school. Examining how his practice contrasts with others' shines a light on the wider practices, and discourse, of the school. It does more than simply provide a comparison; it unravels what is taken for granted, what is seen as common-sense, and what is thinkable within the current context. The heterotopic space also becomes a lens to consider what 'could be' and furthermore provides a space for a different way of doing things (Hetherington 1997). When examining the space of Sam's classroom, I build on Foucault's 'heterotopia of deviation', which he identified as spaces 'in which individuals whose behaviour is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed' (1986, 25). Although he referred to psychiatric hospitals and prisons as examples, I shall be arguing that the same notion can be extended and inverted to apply to a more positive setting where a heterotopia of deviation can be used constructively for addressing issues that may be seen as controversial, such as the problematisation of war.

Heterotopia has been used to understand educational settings before, such as an art classroom where it was explored as a place for teachers to explore 'alternative behaviours' and pedagogy (Wild 2011), and the community drama room where Szatek suggests it acts as an 'other space' for the teenage girls who attend the theatre club, which is 'both deeply ensconced with and isolated from other sites' (2020, 11) helping them to develop agency connected to the 'everyday' world such as school.

Other school spaces have been considered using this lens, with Ingrey identifying the heterotopic school washroom as a space to 'invert, clarify, and illuminate' gendered relations (2013, 1) and Kjaran (2017) discussing a 'heterotopic queering' of spaces in school for LGBTQ students to destabilise areas of dominant heterosexual space, creating a safer 'counter-space'. Additionally, Hope and Hall (2018) describe the heterotopic potential of LGBTQ-affirming schools as a form of resistance. The concept has also been used in studies with educational practitioners. Barron et al. use heterotopia to understand an early years' continuing professional development (CPD) project that brought together academics and practitioners 'to create not only "real" but imaginary spaces…' (2017, 73). Similarly, Ryan (2011) sees pre-service teacher education as a 'space of possibility' where trainees can develop reflective practice.

More closely related to the topic at hand, Zembylas and Ferreira (2009) used the idea to refer to a space within conflict zones to perform 'heterotopic pedagogies' which encourage recognition of the suffering of the 'Other'. Interestingly, Gur-Ze'ev (2001) draws on Foucault and uses the term 'negative utopia' in the context of problematising peace education itself. Here, I shall be using the lens of heterotopia as it enables us to look at Sam's classroom both as a site of difference and as opportunity.

The discourse at Alderfield School

The concept of the heterotopia is inextricably linked to Foucault's theory of 'discourse'. For Foucault, discourse '…constructs the topic. It defines and produces the objects of our knowledge. It governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about'

(Hall 2001, 72). I argue that Sam provides an alternative to the mainstream discourse within the school compared to his colleagues, which is revealed through using the lens of the heterotopia. This discourse will be briefly discussed here and expanded upon in the sections below.

There are several intersecting factors that produce the overall discourse operating in Alderfield School. As an overview, a large part of this discourse is 'negative peace' in subject teaching, where peace is the absence of direct violence, guided by the content on the curriculum and exam board specifications, indicative of the discourse outside of the school where a more 'positive' approach to peace is deprioritised. Furthermore, when asked in interviews how peace and war relate to their subject area, most teachers mention the curriculum or exam board specifications early on, indicating the prioritisation of assessment, a key feature of a system with competition at its core and where this is individualised to students and teachers (Apple 2006; Torrance 2017). This can be illustrated by the fact that when Lucas mentioned the A-level[1] module he teaches, Fred talked about the Norman Conquest and RS teachers Mel and Johnny mentioned their GCSE[2] unit. Additionally, all teachers interviewed immediately spoke about war when asked the question, suggesting its dominance in the curriculum over peace. Most of them also talked about terrorism in relation to war, indicating an identification of the changing nature of war as discussed by Kaldor. This is specifically mentioned by Mel, who explains that students are confused by terms such as 'war on terror' and war is different from when she was at school. As Kaldor notes, new wars are more related to identity than older ones which further affected the discourse at Alderfield. The presence of a high proportion of Muslim students in the school caused concern for some teachers due to external perceptions that perpetrators of acts of Islamist extremism share an element of identity with the students and they were afraid of offending them which is discussed more below.

Staff at Alderfield also often lamented the lack of time they had to cover issues around peace and war due to the above pressures, which reflects what Ball (2003) refers to as the 'terrors of performativity' with teachers having to set aside personal approaches and concerns when teaching. For example, regarding choosing wars to study at GCSE, Mel explains 'maybe if we had more time, we would maybe go into it in more detail'. This is something that has also been noticed by the students, with an A-level student commenting that when it comes to learning about peace and war.

> A lot of the times, teachers, because they've got so much stuff to cover in such an amount of time, they focus more on getting you the grades rather than… Sometimes it's more about the grades than expanding what we know about these kinds of issues.

This lack of time has also been reported elsewhere in relation to teaching about WWI through English and History lessons (Einhaus and Pennell 2014). Fred also cites the limited amount of time that have for PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education), explaining that 'you only get about 20 minutes so it's really really difficult to have a decent conversation or decent discussion with them'. Further issues, which will be discussed in more depth later, included teachers feeling a lack of knowledge and confidence in tackling topics relating to contemporary wars, such as the conflict in Syria, and terror attacks in Europe.

There are also narratives within the school which have the effect of 'normalising' war. For the centenary of WWI, the school had a remembrance event heavily focussed on the commemoration of British soldiers, to which war veterans were invited and money was

raised for military charities. This was described by the headteacher as contributing to the school's promotion of Fundamental British Values as part of the contentious[3] Prevent duty, which aims to counter violent extremism. Elsewhere I have described this as a 'red-poppy remembrance' discourse (Liddle 2019). Sam identified these practices as glorifying war, albeit unintentionally, and refused an invitation to put on his uniform and march in the event for this reason. Additionally, the army visited the school on 'personal development days', and according to Oliver 'were just doing some physical activities out there. I wouldn't say it's recruitment, but I guess it's part of just career options; "Have you considered a career in the Armed Forces?"', however it has been argued that the two can be 'scarcely uncoupled' in this type of youth engagement (Rech 2017, 46). I suggest the involvement of the army in school activities, without problematisation, adds to a discourse of the normalisation of the military and thus war.

Many of the teachers in this study were constrained by the discourses within the school to some extent, as will be elaborated. However, Foucault has suggested that 'where there is power, there is resistance' (1978, 95). I shall suggest that Sam's heterotopic classroom space can explain his ability to disrupt the discourse of the school.

Sam's classroom as heterotopia

In the sections below I shall explain how the heterotopic classroom enables Sam to disrupt the wider discourse of the school as this 'other space': accommodates those who are deviant; allows him to tackle current issues that are considered controversial; and ultimately, problematise war.

It is a space that accommodates deviance

Sam can be considered a deviant within Alderfield as the only member of teaching staff to have served in the armed forces. Furthermore, whilst in the army, Sam became increasingly critical of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, stating that he felt that their presence in the countries was 'making things worse'. After leaving the military, he became involved with an organisation called Veterans for Peace which describes itself as '…work[ing] to influence the foreign and defence policy of the UK, for the larger purpose of world peace' (Veterans for Peace 2021). He is also a published poet, writing about his experiences whilst deployed. All this sets him apart from his colleagues. Sam developed a scheme of work for Year 9 (13-14-year-old) pupils based around the theme of conflict, linking the poetry on the curriculum to a more detailed discussion of war.

Sam's experience enables him to construct this space, this heterotopia of 'deviance' which allows him to engage in a different approach. His deviance is noted by colleagues, such as when Oliver discussed the aforementioned army activity day, stating 'then there's Sam who represents a different side of the argument, having been in the forces and is now against the armed forces' involvement'. In this setting, Sam is being portrayed as a counterweight to other activities. He is also mentioned by the headteacher who tells me that Sam 'served in Afghanistan… and has had war poetry published'. Richard neglects to mention that Sam has changed his perspective on the military, something about which he is aware due to the latter's refusal to march in the centenary commemorations. I suggest this is due to Richard's narrative of the school supporting military charities as a way of promoting Fundamental

British Values, and Sam's opinions and activity may be seen as counter to this. Although arguably being a 'deviant' in the school, in contrast to Foucault's assumption of passivity, Sam is not 'placed' in this space as originally defined, he is the architect of the heterotopia, and has created a place where war is explicitly problematised through his scheme of work and practices.

It is a space where current and controversial issues can be tackled

In Foucault's conception of the heterotopia, the function is not static but changes over time as 'history unfolds' (1986, 25). This can be seen in Sam's classroom as he was willing and able to change his lesson plans when history was unfolding outside of his classroom. Shortly before I interviewed Sam, terror attacks in Paris and the vote in Parliament on whether the UK should take part in the international campaign of airstrikes on Syria occurred. Sam's classroom changed to reflect this. He provided students with newspaper articles covering the Paris attacks from both the Metro and the Guardian to compare the coverage. When the parliamentary debate was happening, he explained what activities he did in his classroom:

> We did the agree/disagree line and we argued and argued and argued from there and I think it went on about three lessons to the point where…they went off into groups and sorted their arguments out and I made them think about what the other group might say and how they're going to shoot it down…it was absolutely great; just the power of feeling behind it. I had to step in a couple of times to stop them shouting each other down and getting quite angry. But they were angry for a reason and it wasn't just, 'Oh, you shut up'.

Here, Sam stands in contrast to other members of staff when dealing with issues occurring outside of the classroom. He does not shy from classroom conflict and instead encourages and structures it. By contrast some teachers within the school fear 'angry' debate, for example, one teacher avoided discussing Palestine due to the 'high-running feeling' (Mel), with another (Fred) expressing concern that his Muslim students would be offended by a balanced view on the topic. He also explained that he used a scheme of work in his previous school on terrorism, but it was not something that he would do at Alderfield 'due to the sort of make-up of the kids'. However, as we can see in Sam's classroom, he deliberately engages them in such discussions.

Other colleagues struggled to talk to their classes about the terror attacks on Paris, feeling uncomfortable in case they offended the Muslim students by linking their religion to acts of violence. Oliver, who felt more confident, described his experience of being 'bussed in' to cover these lessons and lead the conversations, saying that 'at the end of the day if you cause offence, it's not deliberate and we're human beings and we make mistakes'. Concerns around causing offense is something that is often raised in literature surrounding teaching controversial issues (Davies 2008, 2019; Hand 2013; Savenije and Goldberg 2019; Buchanan 2015).

Sam's heterotopia is also significant when it provides a contrast to how other teachers select which wars to teach when encountering them on the curriculum. They are often chosen in a way that enables students to pass the exam, with several teachers suggesting current conflicts or 'new wars' are too complex to describe in an exam, including one teacher saying that they could not teach about Palestine as it 'can't be summed up in four marks' (Mel). This leaves a disproportionate amount of time teaching older wars, which another

teacher described as having 'clear boundaries between good and bad' (Johnny), giving the Falklands as an example. This teacher also mused 'if you ask me "Who are the good guys in Syria?" How am I supposed to answer that question?', voicing concern that this was not a topic where he could easily refer to evidence. In contrast, Sam had an activity in his 'conflict' scheme of work where a list of wars (WWI, WWII, Falklands, Iraq and Afghanistan) were on a slide with the question 'Who were the "good guys" in the following wars? Why?'. By putting 'good guys' in inverted commas, he is questioning the language and beginning a discussion with his students which then leads on to a study of war poetry, both historical and contemporary.

Journell (2010) identified three categories of teacher when it comes to teaching current events: curriculum-first, disciplined-inclusion and opportunity-first, arguing that high-stakes examinations have an effect on the incorporation of such issues into their teaching. Sam is most closely aligned to the third category which Journell describes as when the '… teacher often appeared content to let conversations continue until issues had been resolved or all students had a chance to voice their opinions' (2010, 120). Many of Sam's colleagues appeared to fit into the first two categories, with several feeling the pressure of exams limited them from exploring the issues further. Johnny is an example of the 'curriculum-first' approach, saying 'the lesson objectives are the ones they have to do in order to pass the exam, obviously'. Part of his concern about discussing Syria is that they could become 'side-tracked' and one of the sixth-formers I interviewed commented that teachers do not have enough time to go off on a 'tangent' as they need to prioritise the exams. In terms of the 'disciplined-inclusive' approach, Oliver's approach is a good example. He says that he advises his A-level students that it would be 'smart' to follow what was happening in Syria because 'the examiners will be expecting them to make the connections between things which are currently going on and the theory that they're doing'. Here we can see that the current events are included, linking back to the exams. Journell suggested that teaching experience has an effect as to which of the approaches they take. However, in my study there did not seem to be such a correlation, yet *life* experience does seem in Sam's case to have an effect as the only teacher who has experienced war first-hand, leading in part to his 'deviant' status.

Sam is not immune to pressures faced by his colleagues regarding an examination-focussed education system. He is concerned that a more holistic side of teaching is being pushed out

> because of the pressures of the exams; just time. Nobody has any time for anything anymore really. Anything that's not this, 'What's the mark scheme? Let's get that mark target for the kid. Next assessment.' Anything that's not that is what gets nudged out because we're never judged on this. In part of a lesson observation form it will be mentioned, but it's never part of your feedback; it's not part of your performance management; it's not part of your day-to-day pressures.

However, he has created his scheme of work *despite* rather than *because* of the curriculum. He does it with a Year 9 (age 13–14) group, the year before most GCSE courses begin, allowing him some more scope. War poetry is on the curriculum for this age-group, but he has gone further to deliberately bring it up to date with reference to contemporary war. As is discussed below, his conversations about the military also extend beyond this particular scheme of work.

Interestingly, Sam is also unusual in that he appears to focus more on humanity as a whole, rather than 'sides' of a conflict as some of his colleagues do. I suggest that this is linked to his personal experience of being in a position where he and those around him were on very divided 'sides'. This is apparent when he reports how he told his students when discussing Syria that 'people like us might die'. Here he is disregarding nationality, instead aligning himself and the students with Syrian civilians over the British military and its allies. In this way, the heterotopic classroom is being related to the wider space and includes relating it to those experiencing war in a different part of the world.

It is a space that allows the problematisation of war

In Sam's classroom, war is critically discussed and connected to the present day in a way reminiscent of Foucault's description of the heterotopia as 'capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible' (1986, 25). As discussed above, this is seen when Sam incorporates discussion of current events in the media within the setting of a curriculum where these opportunities are perceived by other teachers as limited due to the pressures they face from time and exams. One way in which the space is used in the heterotopic classroom is a large display on the wall, which Sam refers to jokingly as his 'vanity board', featuring a large image of him when in the army, in his uniform, carrying a gun with helicopters overhead. Alongside this image are other items: a photo of Sam as a child playing dress-up in military costume (which he uses to explain 'my journey into the army and out of the army'); the poems studied as part of the unit (both historical and contemporary); images of both civilians and soldiers in conflict zones; the logo of Veterans for Peace; students wearing WWI helmets; and remembrance poppies, both red and white. Sam explained that he had previously received a negative response from wearing the white 'peace' poppy in the main space of the school as it was perceived by some as 'going against our soldiers', reflective of the main discourse of the school as mentioned above. Sam ultimately decided to stop wearing any poppy, but the heterotopic space allowed him to still display both and engage in conversations about his reasoning with the students.

Sam explains that this display provokes discussion with students that he might not have been able to otherwise, indicating the effectiveness of the heterotopia. It is in the classroom all year round and is something that does not exist in the main space of the school. Sam remarked that

> It's there to grab, I was going to say kids' attention, just people's attention really, but quite often I'll see them stood there reading the board in the classroom; really intently staring at it at the beginning or the end of a lesson, and I enjoy seeing that because I don't often see that in classrooms; people really picking apart a display; and I just think it's eye-catching at first; that it's me; I'm in uniform with a gun, so they want to look at that, but then that draws their eye to the other bits of it and they start asking me about the poems that I've got up on there.

This is also reflective of the power of the space; whilst other teachers' discussions seem to be limited to the modules they are teaching to their classes at that time, Sam is reporting seeing something uncommon, and uses it as a tool for engagement outside of his specific conflict module.

In Sam's practice, war is problematised, as called for by McCorkle (2017), and furthermore the military itself is interrogated within the classroom, such as around the parliamentary debate surrounding Syria. Military intervention is not taken as a given and he encourages students to think critically about the armed forces. He also connects his students to the contemporary world through the linking of the past and present, for example, by asking them to compare recruitment posters. Sam explains:

> …[students] pick out those elements from [WWI posters] and say that it's a blatant push to swell the forces and send them off to war. And then it's interesting when you come to the modern ones where they can see that's obviously a similar thing.

Sam then provides students with the opportunity to produce their own posters, either for or against military recruitment, which empowers young people to assess war from a variety of angles. He reported that there were equal numbers on each side.

The findings from my study also show that when teaching about peace and war, the discourse of war as natural and inevitable and its existence as 'common-sense' is visible throughout the curriculum and classroom practices in the main part of the school. This is seen in some teaching documents, such as an RS teaching booklet created by the school that includes a section on 'Why do wars happen?'. This use of passive language suggests war is an inevitable, natural phenomenon, with human agency removed, although, as Francis says, 'wars do not hit us like meteorites' (2004, 57). This language is reflective of that of the exam specifications, and is what Gavriely-Nuri (2018) calls strategies of 'naturalisation' and also 'impersonalisation'. Although within the RS teaching resources, students are encouraged to question if war is wrong, this is put in the context of an exam question in the resources and the necessity to score points for the exam is the aim, rather than a more thorough understanding of the issues. Mel also feels that the changes in the specification have limited the discussions she wished to have, such as on nuclear weapons, and laments that these will now have to be shortened to fit with the new requirements.

The heterotopic classroom manages to create what Carter (2004) described as a 'pocket of peace' by deliberately expanding on the issues when they appear in the curriculum. An example of this is when Sam is teaching the well-known war poem *The Charge of the Light Brigade* which includes the lines:

> Theirs not to make reply,
> Theirs not to reason why,
> Theirs but to do and die.

> > (Tennyson 1854)

Sam used this quote as an opportunity to question the students' beliefs, explaining that:

> I'm always aware that I don't want to make it obvious that I'm questioning because I've got an idea about it: I want to know what they're thinking. But I think if you keep interrogating it, 'What about in this situation?' 'What about in that?' When you relate it to a specific situation, they'll generally always say, 'They should reason why,' but when you just generalise it like that, they say, 'No, soldiers should just do what they're told.'

By pressing further and making the students question themselves through discussion in this space, the problem of the lack of opportunity to do so in the curriculum is in part resolved. Sam credits his ability to have successful debate in his classroom to his experiences

of having 'held both views', relating back to his experience of armed conflict. His reflection on the sharing of his own views is indicative of what Hess (2005) calls the 'disclosure dilemma' and is commented on by other teachers regarding their own teaching. Interestingly, Johnny states that he 'stays away from my own opinion as much as possible', although he also says that he encourages students to join the Army Reserves at university, as he did, for some 'cash in hand' and that 'it's not the same as joining up properly'. Here, like with the uncritical fundraising for military charities, is indication of the main school discourse where the armed forces are not seen as in need of problematising.

Another way that Sam enabled the questioning and examination of war was through the invitation of a speaker from Veterans for Peace who left the army in 2005 as a reaction to what he called the 'illegal' tactics of the coalition forces and the illegality of the war itself. Sam explained that this story had parallels to his own, but it was still important to get the speaker in as

> I can show them as many photos as I want, but I'm a teacher. But… he's a man they'd met as a veteran of the war, so they were really engaging; it was powerful for them.

This veteran stood in contrast to the others who had been invited in for Remembrance Day commemorations who did not problematise war. Regarding the visit, Sam went on to state that there had been a mixed reaction, with one girl taking issue with the speaker's reasons for joining the army, and a boy who was a refugee from Iraq thanking him for his service. The space in the discourse created by Sam allowed both views to stand together and showed his students that there were alternatives to the dominant discourse outside of the school. It should be noted that the talk took place in the hall with all of Year 10 and 11 (14–16-year olds). Whilst not strictly within the heterotopic classroom, this is an example of the heterotopia 'leaking' into the wider school. Whilst I appreciate Cremin's point that heterotopias, although transformative of certain spaces 'cannot, of themselves, be transformative of schools' (2018, 7), the leaking of the heterotopia suggests potential of moving this beyond the single classroom.

The "leaking" of heterotopia: possibilities to expand beyond the classroom

The heterotopic classroom space can provide possibilities for topics and techniques to expand, or 'leak', beyond the classroom. At Alderfield this happens, or has the potential to happen, in three ways. Firstly, there are 'temporary' leaks within the school. This can be seen when Sam told his own story to the whole of Year 9 – including those who were not taught by him -in the school's lecture theatre which is pushing into the main area of the school and similarly when the Veteran for Peace came in to talk to students. It is also glimpsed when one of the sixth-formers told me she had spotted Sam's white poppy and would have liked to have known more. Secondly, Sam's heterotopia leaks into the English department. Although they do not have his background, making it significantly different, other teachers use elements of Sam's scheme of work and teach using the poems he has written, providing a chance for more students to experience his resources. Finally, there is also untapped potential from the heterotopic classroom. There is a possibility for the school to have a more diverse attitude to remembrance, for example, or for teachers – such as Sam - who feel more confident with debate to share their skills and model that conflict in itself, such as in disagreement, does not need to be problematic. Having debate in the class is a way to push at the edges of these discourses and develop skills needed for a participatory

democracy. Overall, by viewing Sam's classroom as an *inverted* heterotopia of deviation, rather than the original concept of a space of enclosure, possibilities come to the fore of an 'other space' where ideas and good practice can 'leak' to further afield. This can also be considered by other researchers and practitioners when examining how issues considered sensitive or controversial are covered in schools.

Limits of the heterotopia: disrupting but not defying the discourse

> What is the point of studying war if not to end it?
> Sam

From this quote, it is evident that Sam is keen to engage his students to a degree to consider an end to war. Although the heterotopic classroom shows us an 'other space' and example of an 'alternate way of doing things' (Hetherington 1997, viii), it is also apparent that despite Sam's classroom being a space to question and problematise the military and war in general, as suggested by McCorkle, there is no evidence of alternative, non-violent, solutions to conflict being taught. His perception of peace seems to largely align with the 'negative' peace model rather than the 'positive' one. I suggest that this is due to the strength of the discourse restricting what is 'thinkable' and the difficulty of working outside of it altogether, despite the keenness of an educator like Sam. Whilst his classroom more closely resembles peace education than any other examples within the school and deviates from the dominant discourse, it is not an example of either education *for* peace or education *about* peace as defined by Brock-Utne above. Nevertheless, he demonstrates to his students that war is not inevitable and models a more open and critical engagement with war, conflict and the armed services, so this could be considered a 'negative peace education'. It should also be noted that Sam himself has not claimed to be a peace educator, although the strength of this discourse meant that when asked if he teaches peace and war as the same subject he replies that he cannot describe peace without war and vice-versa.

Another limitation of a heterotopic classroom is its reliance on an individual practitioner. As aforementioned, Carter discusses the idea of 'pockets of peace' in the context of social studies in the USA, arguing that 'school personnel can identify pockets of peace in which to train students through their modelling of peaceful processes as well as use formal lessons about how peace can or has happened' (2004, 85). Furthermore, she provides examples of how peace could be incorporated throughout the curriculum. However, she is working on the assumption that teachers will be motivated to undertake these changes on a personal level, something that I argue appears unlikely unless there is a shift by senior management and a relaxation of the pressures of curriculum and examination, especially when peace is an 'absent presence' (Apple 2017), with war emphasised. However, despite these limitations, I maintain that the heterotopic classroom provides opportunities. Despite constraints of the discourse, as mentioned above discourses can also enable, and as Foucault argued that there can be a 'plurality of resistances' (1978, 96). Heterotopia can be a means to resist this power.

Conclusion

Overall, it is possible to take three things from this paper. Firstly, the heterotopic classroom has successfully been used as a space where war is problematised. Sam is able to challenge

the overall discourse through his practice in the space he has created, where discussion flows all year round, and there is evidence of this beginning to 'leak' beyond the initial classroom. The school's current discourse, with the involvement of the armed forces, militarised remembrance practices and a restricted curriculum, makes the actions of the military common-sense and natural. It has taken a 'deviant' ex-services teacher to bring his experience into this 'other' space to highlight this and showcase alternatives. Although it is recognised that this is a case study of one teacher, in one school and does not seek to generalise, it does allow a glimpse of what can be achieved when there is a chink in the armour of the discourse. This paper has inverted the concept of the 'heterotopia of deviation' to illustrate how this can be conceptualised.

Secondly, the paper has highlighted the anxieties that teachers outside of the heterotopic classroom face when addressing issues relating to violent conflict, be that involving UK troops, terrorist incidents or other 'new wars' such as Syria, indicating a need for training and support. I am keen here to emphasise that I am not 'blaming' the other teachers for covering issues differently to Sam. Their difficulties are the embodiment of a restrictive discourse in the wider school and beyond, where the military is seen as 'normal' through the army's participation in schools and the focus of remembrance on British military personnel. It is also reflective of a discourse within an education system where examination results are a focus, with students and teachers feeling the pressure of examinations (Connell 2013; Journell 2010; Ball 2003).

Finally, it suggests that the lens of heterotopia can be used both theoretically to understand the discourse of the wider school, but I further suggest that it can also be used in practice for teachers to understand how their own classrooms can act as a heterotopic space to explore issues that may be considered controversial or uncomfortable in their schools. It could stand as an 'other' space, hosting discussions that may not fit elsewhere. The idea of 'heterotopic pedagogies' (Zembylas and Ferreira 2009) do not have to be limited to a country that is experiencing conflict. Further research is required to understand to what extent other classrooms covering controversial issues could be considered heterotopic and the potential this could bring.

Notes

1. A-Levels [Advanced levels] are qualifications taken by typically 18-year-old students in the UK (excluding Scotland) after a two-year programme of study. Those who study them are often known as 'sixth-formers'.
2. GCSEs [General Certificate of Education] are qualifications taken by typically 16-year-old students in the UK (excluding Scotland) after a two-year programme of study.
3. For more discussion on the contentious nature of the Prevent Duty, see for example Busher and Jerome (2020), Crawford (2017), Farrell (2016), O'Donnell (2017)

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