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Disrupting colonial discourses in the geography curriculum during the introduction of British Values policy in schools

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this article is to expose and disrupt discourses dominating global development in an English school geography textbook chapter. The study was prompted by a teacher's encounter with cultural difference in a geography lesson in South Korea. I investigate the issues raised through the lens of a new curriculum policy in English schools called 'Promoting Fundamental British Values' which forms part of England's education-securitisation agenda, a topic of international attention. Following contextualization across research fields and in recent curriculum and assessment policy reform, I bring together theoretical perspectives from curriculum studies and Continental philosophy that do not usually speak to each other, to construct a new analytical approach. I identify three key themes, each informed by colonial logic: 'development', 'numerical indicators' and 'learning to divide the world'. The inquiry appears to expose a tension between the knowledge of the textbook chapter and the purported aims of the British Values curriculum policy, but further investigation reveals the two to be connected through common colonial values. The findings are relevant to teachers, publishers, textbook authors, policy-makers and curriculum researchers. I recommend a refreshed curriculum agenda with the politics of knowledge and ethical global relations at its centre.

Introduction

I begin with Kim's story. Kim was one of my PhD students—a former High School Geography teacher in South Korea. His classroom experiences led him to select his thesis topic of global citizenship education in the South Korean Geography curriculum. This is an example: Kim was teaching a lesson attended by a recently-arrived Mongolian student he calls Saran. Kim writes:

> I was convinced that school geography would open an equal space of understanding and acceptance for everyone, from different cultural, ethnic and racial contexts. This expectation, however, turned into disappointment and pessimism. In most geography textbooks [South Korean], reference to Mongolia was missing. A few books depicted Mongolia as an 'undeveloped' country

in which people live a nomadic life in tents made from animal skins. The entire class of Korean students expressed interest in the different culture and nature of Mongolia, while Saran remained still with her face flushed. Through their geography lessons, I felt that students were learning about 'superiority' or 'pity' rather than reciprocity or justice towards global others. Throughout, Saran remained silent. (Kim, 2015)

As a white, British curriculum researcher who has taught Geography in secondary schools and teacher education in England, Kim's story made me wonder if English Geography books might have similar effects, especially given the seemingly explicit spurning of otherness manifest in our post-Brexit, Trump world. The potential for social unrest associated with the rise in xenophobia, nationalism and protectionism globally makes this inquiry timely. I aim to investigate school curriculum discourses about relationships between students and global others by reading disruptively a chapter in a school Geography textbook through these questions:

- What political and ethical discourses about global development and justice underpin the English school curriculum in Geography?
- How can we tease them out?
- With whom does the responsibility to identify, engage with and address these global issues lie?
- How to imagine curriculum and pedagogy otherwise?

I engage with the questions in five parts. The first two parts contextualize the inquiry, first across a broad interdisciplinary field relating to anti-/post-colonialism, global citizenship education, school geography in England and textbook analysis and second, to the English education policy system, its dominant performative culture and the introduction of a new policy 'Promoting Fundamental British Values' (DfE, 2013, 2014a, 2014b). In the third part, I integrate four theoretical perspectives to build the analytical approach with which I disrupt a geography textbook case study of Malawi as an example of global knowledge. I also present the limitations of the inquiry. In part four, I discuss first, the implications of the textbook inquiry for teachers' work in the current performativity-driven educational culture in England and address each research question in turn, before returning the focus to the BV curriculum policy and its relationship to the textbook inquiry. In part five, I suggest a decolonising approach to curriculum and how the analytical approach might be carried forward.

Contexts

The inquiry arises from the research fields of illuminary anti- and post- colonial theorists as Fanon (1967, 2008); Said (1978) and Bhabha (1994, 2008) in the sense that I investigate Spivak's question 'Can the subaltern speak?' (1988) regarding Malawians associated with the text under analysis, and those studying it. Adding the educational dimension to the term 'global citizenship', significant international research of a critical kind by Willinsky (1998), Banks (2004, 2008), Abdi (2012), Andreotti (2006, 2011) and Andreotti and de Sousa (2012) inform the inquiry. Likewise, undergirding the current investigation are critiques of colonial discourses of global citizenship education found in the rich critical studies forming the 2011 Special Issue of *Globalisation, Societies and Education*. Whereas UK research by Osler (2008), Osler and Starkey (2003, 2005), Davies, Evans, and Reid (2005) aligns with a cosmopolitan perspective, this work differs by adopting a Continental philosophical stance in accord with

Todd (2009, 2010) and Langmann (2011). Geography's historical contribution to 'the imperial gaze' pre-1950 is recognized by Madrell (1996) and Matless (1996). More recently, Geography educator Alex Standish rejects critical global education in favour of traditional academic geography on the grounds of the former's purported lack of objectivity and its capacity for political indoctrination (Standish, 2009, 2012). In sharp contrast, I concur with the long tradition of UK Geography educators who critique Eurocentrism and racism in Geography textbooks (Hicks, 1981; Winter, 1997; Morgan & Lambert, 2003 and Lambert & Morgan, 2011). International researchers who engage post-colonial analysis of textbooks, include UNESCO, 2010; Bryan (2012: Ireland); Kibble, (2012: Palestine and Israel); Kim, (2015: Korea) and Kim, Moon, and Joo (2013: South Korea); Liu (2005: China); Myers (2001: Africa). I take, however, a different epistemological route by drawing on Continental philosophy to bring school geographical knowledge up against recent curriculum policy to expose the complicity of one textbook chapter's reproduction of what Tickly (2004) and Pashby (2012) call 'the new imperialism'.[1] In so doing, I attempt to push geography education into a new philosophical space to reflect critically on its assumptions about the ways in which it 'writes the earth' (Winter, 2006)

The ethnic diversity of schools is increasing globally. Two hundred and forty five million international migrants lived in the world in 2015, comprising 3.3% of the total population (OECD, 2015). Reasons for migration include violence and conflict, weather and geo-physical disasters, human trafficking, forced and unforced labour (IOM, 2014). In England, between 2006 and 2016, the proportion of school students from minority ethnic origins[2] has risen steadily. Minority ethnic students made up 71% of the increase in numbers attending English primary schools between 2015 and 2016 (DfE, 2016a). Focusing on a specific group of students, in 1999, in Sheffield, England, 100 Roma students attended schools. By 2014, this figure was 2100, Ofsted, 2016) and by 2016 was 2500.[3] Raised levels of reported racial hostility have been recorded in the UK following the 2016 Brexit vote in the EU referendum as emboldened racists taunted and physically attacked Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) persons, homes, businesses and community centres (National Police Chief's Council [NPCC], 2016). Under conditions of increased political tensions created by migration, religious extremism and poverty at a time of global economic austerity, such events create a pressing issue for teachers in all schools (not only those with ethnically diverse populations, and not only those in England), that is: how students relate to global others.

At the same time, teachers in England have additional problems to think about. Following an international agenda of education reforms in Australia, Canada, Scandinavia and global south countries (Sahlberg, 2015, p. 143), the British Government reasserted its uniform, prescribed curriculum and assessment policy regime to facilitate accountability through competitive comparison of school standards. As a result, teachers currently experience considerable pressures to raise student attainment under a very public accountability agenda—with league tables of examination performance published annually for each school. If a school's grades slip below a certain level, the school is put into 'special measures', is subject to regular short-notice inspections; teaching staff may be dismissed and school governors replaced by an appointed executive committee. If poor performance continues, the school may be closed (Perryman, 2006, p. 149). These pressures of performativity, under such a high-stakes regime, lead, inevitably, to teachers teaching to the test; avoiding innovative and challenging teaching strategies and deploying reductive, low-risk subject knowledge and technical assessment approaches (Ball, 2003; Ball, Maguire, Braun, & Perryman, 2011;

Lingard, Martino, & Rezai-Rashi, 2013). This contemporary imperative, of time-consuming emphasis on assessment results and compliance with official school knowledge in school texts and examination board specifications, deflects teachers' (and possibly policy-makers') attention from identifying and challenging colonial discourses that lie within the texts with which they engage.

Looking now at the newly emerging policy context, the British Government recently published anti-terrorism curriculum policies described as Promoting Fundamental British Values (BV) (DfE, 2013, 2014a, 2014b) which arise directly from anti-terrorist legislation, 'The Prevent Duty' (DfE, 2015). Significantly, similar policies have been introduced internationally, in Norway (Norwegian Ministry of Justice & Public Security, 2014), Australia (Australian Government, 2015) and European countries (Butt & Tuck, 2014; Danish Ministry of Refugee, Immigration & Integration Affairs, 2010). Extremist attacks, for example in Paris 2015 and Nice 2016, the global rise in popularity of anti-immigration groups and increase in Islamophobia, treated in a less than moderate fashion by the popular press, have propelled British Government action. Awareness of 'homegrown' British terrorists, such as the London 7/7 bombers, the Islamic State executioner Mohammed Emwazi, together with the recruitment of three young Muslim women by ISIS led to fears about English schools becoming sites of extremism and radicalization. In the 2014 Trojan Horse affair, claims were made that Muslim fundamentalists influenced school governance (Clarke, 2014; Richardson, 2015). In response, the Department for Education published the new BV curriculum policy where British Values consist of 'democracy', the 'rule of law', 'liberty', 'mutual respect' and 'tolerance of different faiths and beliefs'. Schools are required by law to actively promote BV and teachers are required to identify, monitor and report students considered as vulnerable to radicalization to the authorities. But BV are conceptually unclear, interdependent and limited (Pangwani, 2016); they marginalize non-Western epistemologies (de Sousa Santos, 2014); imply an 'insider'–'outsider' distinction (Elton-Chalcraft, Lander, Revell, Warner, & Whitworth, 2017) and cannot be described as 'British' since they can be applied to other countries (Tomlinson, 2015). Richardson argues that they lack definition, explanation, justification, discussion or examples (2015, p. 41). In spite of these critiques, British Values curriculum policy seeks to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils through, amongst other goals, 'further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures' and 'encourage respect for other people' (DfE, 2014a, 2014b).

Also relevant is the requirement that '[the proprietor] precludes the promotion of partisan political views in the teaching of any subject in the school' (Standard 5(c), DfE, 2014a, p. 11).[4] School proprietors[5] are required to take 'such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that where political issues are brought to the attention of pupils … they are offered a balanced presentation of opposing views' (DfE, 2013, p. 9).[6] In the DfE, 2013 document, 'balanced' is defined as 'fair and dispassionate' (ibid., p. 10). This inquiry examines the textbook chapter for concepts of othering that may contradict these guidelines by reproducing white privilege and colonial logics, promoting partisan political views and thereby failing to promote tolerance and harmony between diverse cultural traditions.

Curriculum language and concepts in classroom texts and relationships are informed by political and ethical discourses that affect student and teacher thinking about who they are and how they relate to people and places globally. In other words, the school textbook may not be as 'balanced', 'fair and dispassionate' as it seems … I test this argument by analysis of

a school Geography text. I turn now to bring four theoretical lenses together to construct a new approach to guide the analysis.

Theoretical/analytical approach

The first theoretical perspective is the challenge to the idea that the school curriculum is politically neutral. Michael Apple explains his proposal about the politics of curriculum:

> The curriculum is never simply a neutral assemblage of knowledge, somehow appearing in the texts and classrooms of a nation. It is always part of a *selective tradition*, someone's selection, some group's vision of legitimate knowledge. (Apple, 1996, p. 22).

In 2011 I took up Apple's stance in demonstrating how three different Geography curriculum policy texts legitimated and promoted three different configurations of curriculum knowledge: 'cultural restorationist' (Ball, 1993, p. 195); competency-based (Bayliss, V./RSA, 1999) and concept-based (QCA/DCSF, 2007). Since 2010 in England, the policy-preferred curriculum knowledge is 'core knowledge', derived from the work of neo-Conservative cultural literacy guru E.D.Hirsch (Winter, 2013). Each aforementioned policy text assumes an authoritative tone to proclaim a supposedly unquestionable account of knowledge, whilst the very diversity of knowledge configurations between 1991 and 2010 tells a different story.

My second theoretical lens arises from the work of Sharon Todd. She presents education as the act of 'becoming' (Todd, 2001), arguing that curriculum and pedagogical relations play an important role in constituting student subjectivity by demanding that students '… alter themselves, to become different people from what they were prior to the learning encounter' (ibid., p. 431). The individual thus *becomes* a subject or self through the learning process and curriculum 'lends substance' (ibid., p. 446) to a person's being and becoming. Todd reminds us that we should not assume a deterministic relationship between curriculum and what students learn or become:

> From the perspective of the learner, curriculum comes via the Other that is the teacher in the form of new ideas, concepts and texts,; yet the meaning he or she makes out of such material can never be secured beforehand … [Curriculum] is the symbolic raw material that students use, discard or re-write in making meaning for themselves (ibid., p. 446).

Todd confirms Apple's view about the politics of curriculum when she argues 'curriculum can become a tool for the most oppressive ends, to which any colonial education will attest' (2001, p. 446). The History curriculum in England provides an apt example. By providing a sense of identity through a national story, the subject of history informs students' sense of who they are and who they will become. Harris (2013) understands the danger of an exclusive mono-cultural curriculum that dwells on great events and figures from dominant social groups, warning against a potentially nationalistic stance and neglect of 'misdeeds from the past'[7] (p. 406). Such a curriculum requires 'outsiders' to accept the national story as their own story and as such, the curriculum is disrespectful of student diversity and serves to alienate. Reporting on the emotional responses of African-Caribbean students to what is considered to be an 'inclusive' topic in History—the Transatlantic Slave Trade, Traille identified unconscious negative stereotyping by teachers to be interpreted by some students as 'personal attacks on their identity' (2007, p. 33), as this quote from Shaniqua, a student of African-Caribbean heritage demonstrates:

I think every black child should know their history. At my old school they made me feel bad about being black when we did the slave trade. They talked about all the diseases that the slaves had. You should be proud about your history. They made me feel ashamed (ibid., p. 33).

The thinking about language, meaning, politics and ethics of two philosophers enlists Apple's politics of curriculum and connects it with Todd's relational process of becoming. The first philosopher is Jacques Derrida. His disruptive approach, which is informed by the three tenets of Derrida's work proposed by Winter 2006 follows. Philosophical tenets are followed by disruptions highlighted in italics. The disruptions are put to work in the inquiry to follow.

In the first place, Derrida shows how language denies accurate representation of the object it attempts to describe. Language is unstable. Instead of a memetic relationship between a word (signifier) and its meaning (signified), words are related to meanings through deferral, dissemination and undecidability (Derrida, 1976). In other words, language is slippery, words can never be understood definitely or accurately, there is always something else going on with respect to meaning behind the author's back. In contrast, in educational texts, especially those relating to school curriculum subjects, language and meaning are assumed to correspond, words are defined and considered to have stable meaning, leading to the pre-supposition that the school text is the harbinger of truth. *Methodologically, to challenge such a stance requires a continuous questioning of assumptions underpinning the meanings of words, a 'disruption' or 'reading otherwise'. The role of reader is to attend closely, to inspect the textbook language carefully to identify the meaning assumed by the author. The reader does not then accept the author's offer of the legitimised rendition, but engages further thought, and thereby avoids the conservatism of reproducing that meaning. The reader does this by looking for and puzzling over the cracks in the argument, the sleights of hand, the tensions and loose threads in the language and concepts dominating the text.*

The second tenet suggests that the language of school texts is underpinned by universalising concepts that confer meaning through totalising modernist tropes. The Enlightenment search for the '"true" order of the world' (Winter, 2006) assumes a pre-existing unity of knowledge that is founded on a fundamental scientific scheme, and is subject to certain universal laws and rules which produce and explain patterns and processes. An example is the categorization in school geography of countries considered to be at different 'stages' of development.[8] Such thinking imposes a framework on knowledge about the world through a masterful, totalising stroke by allocating countries into what appear to be one or the other seemingly logical and indisputable categories. *The methodological task is to dislocate that stroke by asking: why this framework and with what effects? Who authorized it? When? How? What alternative ways of thinking does it exclude? (Winter, 2006). The reader draws on her knowledge of the provenance and politics of the framework to unpick its pre-suppositions in order to release the play of difference of language and meaning from its ties to reveal what the framework conceals.*

According to the third tenet, the disruptive move cracks open the assumedly stable definitions of words and frameworks in order to show their diffuse and dynamic deferral and *différance*, revealing what Derrida calls 'traces'—conceptual histories, totalising powers, histories and legitimators. Disruption allows us to draw on our deep knowledge of our disciplines in order to see beyond their embedded and limited pre-suppositions, to read and understand the disciplines through different, more inclusive lenses. Only then can we transgress the text to fathom out what it 'omits, forgets, excludes, expels, marginalises, dismisses,

ignores, scorns, slights, takes too lightly, waves off …' (Caputo, 1997, p. 79), opening a space for other meaning to emerge through a thoroughly fresh and inventive move. Inviting in the other prepares the way for other people, ideas, places to arrive, and in so doing, ushers in a 'justice to come' (Derrida, 1992, p. 27). *As disruptors, our methodological engagement is to trouble and unsettle the colonial language and concepts underpinning modernist school geography and to 'think outside the box' of metaphysical assumptions, cracking open the nutshell of totalised frameworks. The reader bears a responsibility to keep everything under review towards transgression and the arrival of politically and ethically just ways of engaging with curriculum.*

To take stock: I propose to inquire if, by subtle movements of pinning down meaning and engaging totalising, yet subtle, frameworks of systemic racism, a school text harbours the potential for student (and teacher) alienation, exclusion and division. School textbooks carry a political authority which is rarely questioned, since the proof of their worth lies in the ability of students to demonstrate their engagement with the definitions and conceptual meanings these texts communicate by responding 'correctly' to tasks, examination and test questions. Furthermore, in an assessment-driven, high-stakes school culture, pressures to 'teach to the test' stifle incentives towards intellectual curiosity or alternative ways of thinking on the parts of student, teacher or school text author. Derrida offers a perspective with which to engage with words in a more open, dynamic, politically astute and ethical way.

The fourth tenet advances my 2006 framework. Emmanuel Levinas (1996) holds that the ethical relation to the other comes before everything. He is interested in how humans are (their being), how they become and the importance of language and goodness in shaping their subjectivity. He argues that language is not only the means of so-called transparent communication of information through existing conceptual frameworks or universal laws (he calls this 'the said'), but is also an opportunity for something new and inventive to arise (Strhan, 2012, p. 26). The assumption of the transparency of language in conveying meaning overlooks the alterity of the other. In other words, I and the Other are not equals, not 'on the same plane' (Strhan, 2012, p. 26); I do not know the Other as I know myself. This absence of symmetry is important because the key to the relationship is through alterity. The other is outside my language. The other's language comes from her unique vulnerability which is something I do not know. The other's language becomes the site of my ethical subjectivity where I receive her language, become an ethical subject and am taught about her otherness. Here new senses of being, and fresh meanings arise through the vitality and instability of language ('the saying') (Paul Standish, 2008, pp. 62, 63). In this 'space of inter-subjectivity' (Egea-Kuehne, 2008, p. 30) I encounter the Other face-to-face, and this encounter is a pri-mordial, infinite and ethical relationship that reaches back beyond what I know about what is: it involves awareness of my unavoidable, unreciprocal, asymmetrical responsibility towards my comrade being:

> …consciousness and moral conscience are developed through the face-to-face encounter with the other, through an interpersonal relationship, through the responsibility and the respect one must develop for the Other as other (Egea-Kuehne, 2008, p. 31).

The Other puts me in a position of ethical obligation to respond to her needs.

But, how are politics, 'becoming', totalising tropes and ethical relations connected to school text analysis? Paul Standish sees curriculum content as one form of relation to the other through language. Since Levinas understands the encounter between the I and the

other to be expressed through language, and curriculum is expressed through language, Standish argues that 'curriculum is one way in which the relation to the other can be realised' (2008, p. 64). As he further observes, in the contrary case, curriculum can be a way in which the ethical relation to the other may be denied. The language of curriculum, as found in its policies, texts and images may open up or close down that space of intersubjectivity where being and becoming take place. Having considered these theoretical/analytical perspectives, I turn to the inquiry itself.

Justification for this new analytical approach lies, theoretically in the advantages gained by curriculum studies embracing Continental philosophy in order to challenge modernist regulatory regimes of power embedded within school texts which are, consciously or unconsciously, put to work with the effect of perpetuating racialised neoliberalised epistemologies and ontologies. As an imaginary, curriculum constitutes students' and teachers' selves through social, political, psychological and ethical relations. The approach shows how, at a time of increasing curriculum control by governments globally and the dissemination of neoliberalism through curriculum reform, the operation of power relations in text books can be punctured and opportunities created to represent the world more inventively and justly and to stimulate impact through transformation of curriculum policy and practice.

The inquiry: 'Measuring development in Malawi'

In this inquiry, I read disruptively pages about global development focusing on 'Development Dilemmas' in a school textbook published by Oxford University Press (Dunne, Holmes, Warn, Cowling, & Hurst, 2013, pp. 202–211). My decision to deconstruct an English Geography textbook arose from my concerns about and research into issues of representation in English geography texts (Winter, 1996 and Winter, 1997). Prior to recent GCSE [9] curriculum and assessment reforms, the textbook under examination was a popular Geography text in UK schools for students aged 13/14–16 who were studying for the GCSE Edexcel examination. [10] Although the textbook was published before the introduction of BV policy (2014), it was still in use after 2014 and illustrates aptly the issues raised in the research literature. Close reading reveals the subtle operation of the language of geography's 'imperial gaze'. At the same time, this text about Malawi resonates with the very conditions of Saran's vulnerability and shame in the space of inter-subjectivity under the symbolic violence of the depiction of Mongolia in geography texts and students' reactions in the South Korean classroom.

The analysis is based on three key themes identified in ten pages comprising Chapter 12, 'Development Dilemmas' (Dunne et al., 2013): the concepts of development, numerical indicators and 'learning to divide the world'. Each theme is discussed through the lens of each of the four tenets described earlier.

'Development'

I begin by questioning assumptions underpinning the meaning of 'development'. The textbook defines it as '… change economically (in terms of income and the economy) and socially (affecting people)' (p. 202) and later as '… the use of resources to improve the standard of living of a nation' (p. 329). The first definition understands 'development' primarily as a change process with an implicit hint of economic and social improvement, the second assumes

development to bear national benefits. In contrast, post-development theorists hold a radically alternative and negative view of development, as a discourse for exercising global power and domination (Power, 2003). The source of the development discourse is US President Truman's speech of 1949 when he announced the birth of the binary categorization of 'developed-underdeveloped' countries and began the process of constructing people's subjectivities of who they are accordingly (Esteva, 2010 pp. 1, 2). The effect was to construct the West as powerful and the 'Third World' as powerless, and thence to assume that responsibility to displace and then manage the economic and social life of 'Third World' countries rested with the West. Interventions, such as agricultural programmes introduced by the West were driven by what Escobar describes as a 'fictitious construct' of underdevelopment, to lead these countries towards 'forms of life created by industrial civilisation' (Escobar, 1988, p. 429). A closer reading reveals particular constructions of Malawi as an 'underdeveloped' country.

The authors report problems faced by small farmers in Malawi, such as rising fertiliser costs, falling crop prices, water and food shortages. Later pages (pp. 278, 279) describe the country's dominant agricultural structures of cash crop plantations (tea, coffee and tobacco and subsistence farming). Poor conditions for workers, low wages, child labour, ill health and poor housing, described in terms of plantation ownership by large UK and US corporations, construct a deficit discourse of the country. Expression of Malawi's powerlessness and failure to manage itself normalizes further its portrayal as 'lacking development' and 'poor' and symptomatic of 'Third World' poverty in general (Yapa, 2002). Missing from this account are the colonial causes of these problems. Such de-politicisation permeates subjectivities at all scales through the internalization of discourses (Escobar, 1995). The developmentalist response is to introduce interventionalist programmes which 'map people into certain co-ordinates of control', regulating and disciplining people and their environments (Escobar, 1995, p. 156).

In deconstructive vein, post-developmentalist Gudynas (2011) argues for a politically radical alternative to developmentalism that shifts thinking about the 'Third World' beyond Western economy, culture and power. For example, the Buen Vivir movement, with its roots in Latin America, focuses on indigenous knowledge, community (people and nature) and cultural pluralism. Such a movement marks the transgression of Western-driven developmentalism and the opening of spaces for just political and ethical relationships between individuals, communities and the physical environment. Members of the international peasant movement La via Campesina argue:

> … we must implement new initiatives aiming at changing the model of production. Local production and people based protection of resources should be encouraged because it uses less fossil energy and it maintains livelihoods and local communities. Small farmers around the world defend food sovereignty as a way to overcome the climate crisis. It is the people's right to define their own food policies, with a priority to local food production and sustainable small scale agriculture. (Vía Campesina (2009)

The four Malawian intervention projects described in subsequent textbook pages 280–283 (mushroom and fish farming, soil conservation and cane growing) fit the developmentalist category, with respect to each project being externally funded and the cane-growing project supplying UK and US markets (under Fairtrade conditions). The authors report on the advantages of each scheme, ignoring drawbacks. No information is offered about: what local agricultural practices these new practices replaced; local people's responses to the

projects; energy use; environmental impact; project sustainability beyond their funding period or project flexibility for operation in different locations. The accounts of these projects fall short of engaging students as morally-informed, critical agents who are guided to pose insightful questions about geographical knowledge which empower them to understand, experience and transform their world. The second textbook theme associated with development to be considered is the use of statistical indicators.

Numerical indicators

A range of statistics illustrates different ways of 'measuring Malawi's development' in Chapter 12. Questions in the text focus students' attention on deploying these statistics to compare, for example, Malawi to the UK; other African to European countries and the five top Human Development (HDI) countries in the world to the bottom five (the latter are all African, as are the ten 'poorest' countries on p. 207). Numbers, global indicators and comparisons dominate six out of ten pages in the chapter. In describing numbers as an 'inscription device', Rose (1999, p. 198) indicates how numbers operate as a kind of language, which is, I argue, subject to deferral and *différance*—in slightly different ways from words. 'Reading (numbers) otherwise' (the first tenet) involves questioning the assumedly neutral and objective form of numbers, and pre-supposes numbers instead to be constituted from political and technical decisions about what, why, how and how often to measure, how to classify measurements and how to present the numerical results (Porter, 1995, p. 205). In other words, numbers are configured from political and technical decisions, but at the same time hide this origin, thus 'depoliticis[ing] areas of political judgement' (ibid., p. 198).

The second tenet is the role of the totalising concept, in this case, the global numerical indicator (population, health, HDI, corruption perception and poverty, etc.). Indicators 'point' (as with the index finger) towards something, but do not claim to measure it (Porter, 2015, p. 34). They 'consolidate complex data into a simple number or rank …' (Merry, 2011, p. S86), creating commensurability to allow comparison and ranking. Espeland describes how indicators are paradoxical in the sense that they on the one hand, unify phenomenon within a metric (standardisation) in such a way that allows distinctions to be made between units (differentiation) but, on the other hand, give no attention to specificity and context (2015, p. 59). In Porter's words 'indicators offer truth or validity in an abstracted or even fictionalised form, always presuming a sufficient degree of resemblance to partly accessible reality' (2015, p. 36).

The textbook portrayal neglects to reveal the power of global indicators as purveyors of neoliberalism. Since the 1980s the global spread of neoliberalism has been paralleled by the rising tide of statistics and widespread use of indicators and ranking procedures in articulating knowledge about countries (Rottenburg, Merry, Park, & Mugler, 2015). But this trend of metricisation is not politically innocent, since global indicators, configured, as Merry, 2011 argues, in the West, constitute certain kinds of new knowledge about countries, national identities and places. Thus, seemingly objective, innocent statistical indicators which are undergirded by social, political and ethical configurations of power, become naturalized and contribute to both knowledge formation and governance: 'indicators replace judgements on the basis of values or politics with apparently more rational decision-making on the basis of statistical information' (Merry, 2011, p. S85).

Global indicators represent reality through 'power of the single figure' (Rose, 1999, p. 205). Their simplified form brings about what Espeland calls 'the erasure of narratives' (2015, p. 56). Complex political and ethical relations associated with people and places are hidden behind a totalising number. Standardizing and simplifying knowledge under the unifying metric of the indicator removes from view the singularity and uniqueness of people, places and lives of Malawians. Whilst appearing to be transparent, global indicators obscure the very political and ethical decisions that constitute them and allow the indicators themselves to re-constitute new knowledge through colonial and white supremacist thought.

'Learning to divide the world'[11]

All ten pages of Chapter 12 of the textbook are unequivocal: 'Malawi [is] extremely poor'; 'one of the world's 25 poorest countries' (p. 202). Every numerical indicator in the chapter, both social and economic, emphasizes this fact. The authors explain that poverty is related to illiteracy, hunger, low life expectancy, high infant mortality and poor access to clean water (pp. 202, 203). They explain Malawi's poverty through its lack of economic investment; trade and trade routes to a port; AIDS/HIV and high tariffs on exports to the EU and USA. Yet, reading the chapter otherwise demonstrates a different story. Biccum, 2005; Yapa, 2002 and Willinsky, 1998 understand the promotion of this dominant discourse of poverty and 'lack' used to represent 'Third World' countries in texts through the lens of a two-edged 'new imperialism'. By promoting the answer to 'Third World' poverty as 'development' of a Western kind, the discourse perpetuates colonial rule through 'both a beneficently moral and simultaneously self-interested obligation …' (Biccum, 2005, p. 1007).

When conditions in 'Third World' countries are compared with those in the West, the former seriously and inevitably 'underperform', bringing a particular division of the world into play. This 'narration of difference' (ibid., p. 1013), without colonial–historical analysis, contributes towards the construction of Malawi as responsible for, and unable to cope with its problems, hence its dependence upon Western-style development aid to 'catch-up'. The authors report on Malawi's large international debts without explaining their origin or the Western market in debt trading. The textbook explains how some debts are reduced by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, … 'but it [Malawi] still depends heavily on aid', without acknowledging that colonialism focused on creating economic dependency to maintain colonial commitment to Western markets. Instead, the text draws on the trope of dependency in terms of the benevolence of the West (Jefferess, 2012). The only reference (albeit indirectly and opaquely) in the chapter to 'Third World' colonialism states: '… historical trade was what had made countries poor in the first place' in relation to Frank's dependency theory (p. 211).

The totalising development narrative normalizes Western neoliberalism as the obvious solution to 'Third World' poverty (Biccum, 2005, p. 1010). At the same time as 'selling' Malawi's poverty to English school students as a moral challenge for the West to embrace and address, the discourse enlists support for the neoliberal project, whilst neglecting to address the historical–political roots of Malawi's condition, the over-consumption of the earth's resources by the West, the standard-setting by the West, the deflection of attention from non-economic, home-grown, environmentally sensitive alternative solutions (Yapa, 2002, p. 36) and the absence of teaching about helping as 'an elegant exercise of power' (Gronemeyer, 2010, p. 55). Yapa writes:

> … the discourse of the text having created the less developed other, also creates the under-grad-uate [school student] reader in the image of the more developed self. Surely such texts must take some responsibility for producing the patronizing ethnocentric attitudes our students have towards the people of Asia and Africa. (2002, p. 43)

Thus, the 'new imperialism' rests on a presumption of moral need for pity and help for 'Third World' countries in the form of a discourse that survives as legacy of colonialism, but without exposing Western complicity in constructing the very problems that orthodox devel-opmentalism and humanitarianism aim to alleviate. To transgress such self-serving concepts, privileged material life styles and white supremacy involves profound self-critical reflexivity and considerable discomfort on the parts of educators and students in the global north (Jefferess, 2012). Jefferess describes the consternation, outrage and frustration felt by his students when he engaged them in a proposal to redistribute a third of western US territory between the Canadian and Mexican borders to indigenous people (ibid., p. 40). The students gradually realized that, as non-indigenous people they occupied unceded indigenous land in British Columbia, and were 'the beneficiaries of a nearly identical process of colonial expro-priation and dislocation to that proposed …' to that which they had objected (ibid., p. 41). A 'productive unsettling' on the parts of students and teacher arose from the bringing to light of the inadequacy of the benevolent perspective in relation to the Other and the need, instead, for political and ethical critique and changes in the ways we look at and live in the world with others.

The limitations of a textual analysis of this kind need to be stated, however. This is a one chapter extract from a single textbook - only ten pages—what about the rest of this text? What about other school Geography and/or History textbooks? These are empirical questions which should be tested beyond this pilot study through further inquiries. My analysis does not reveal how teachers actually engage with the text and students in the classroom—teach-ers may encourage their students to analyse the text critically, they may supply additional material to challenge negative stereotypes and imperialist sentiments. Never-the-less, some questions remain: Is this school textbook knowledge 'fair and dispassionate' and 'politically non-partisan' as the Promoting British Values curriculum policy requires it to be? In an eth-nically diverse classroom of students learning from this textbook in England, how does the ethical relation between the I and the Other play out? When teachers wish to teach their students to think critically, to debate openly and confidently, to encourage their students to become ethically responsible global citizens, how do teachers wishing to avoid inflicting systemic violence on their students, respond to such texts?

Discussion

Focusing first on the text book, the analysis reveals how tightly framed Eurocentric colonial knowledge obscures and thereby denies an openness to responsibility for ethical engage-ment and conduct. In the current political context of accountability and performativity in English schools, the teacher, responsible for students' examination scores, pressurized to teach-to-the test and to impart formulaic algorithms in order to maximize grades, is in no position to resist. Meanwhile, awarding bodies cooperate with authors and publishers to produce textbooks which correspond directly with relevant examination syllabii.[12] Teachers can use the textbook as a pre-packaged curriculum and a source of programmatic responses to examination questions likely to increase marks. Totalising knowledge within an oppressive

curriculum straightjacket leaves few spaces for thinking beyond standard textbook representations.

Teachers may unconsciously perpetuate dangerous deficit messages about the 'Third World' at a time of increasing xenophobia, racism, anti-immigration sentiment and social unrest. These important issues have arisen recently, at a time when teachers in England are required to identify and report to the authorities extremist behaviour and thoughts amongst the students they teach (DfE, 2015). Meanwhile, unquestioning engagement with statistical indicators in school texts may lead to conclusions about 'Third World' countries that hide the spread of neoliberalism. Comparison between 'developed' and 'Third World' countries according to the standards of living of the former creates a 'narration of difference' that divides the world on the basis that 'West is Best' with Western neoliberalism, charity and benevolence as seemingly obvious solutions to 'Third World' problems. I propose that, in both ethnically diverse and homogenous classrooms, discourses conferred through the school text infuse teachers' and students' subjectivities as they accept, revise or reject nuanced messages of cultural/ethnic inferiority/superiority (Todd, 2001).

To return to the research, questions guide the inquiry. The first asks 'What political and ethical discourses about development and global justice underpin the school curriculum?' The analysis shows how uncritical engagement with established orthodoxies concerning development and statistical indicators may promote a sense of difference in race, culture and nationhood that perpetuates powerful messages about global superiority, inferiority and who belongs where (Willinsky, 1998, p. 8) and facilitate the unfettered global spread of neoliberalism. 'How can we tease them out?' is the second research question. The inquiry deployed a novel analytical approach to interrogate a seemingly innocent and harmless school geography textbook. With whom does the responsibility lie (third question)? Peake and Kobayashi (2002) argue how geography's legacy of racism is subtle, pervasive, dangerous, difficult to root-out and address. University Geography researchers are well-placed to deal with these issues, but institutional pre-occupation with accountability for both researchers and school teachers, conservativism on the part of curriculum policy-makers and institutionalized racism possibly inhibit collaboration. A de-colonizing mindset featuring ontological and epistemological refurbishment is required on the part of curriculum researchers and practitioners to imagine curriculum and pedagogy otherwise (question four).

The second focus is on BV curriculum policy. By cracking open the nutshell of assumed political and ethical neutrality in curriculum texts, at first glance, the analysis illuminates an incompatibility between the white curriculum of the Geography text and BV policy aims of tolerance, harmony, appreciation of and respect for other cultures. Thus, something unhelpful to the development of positive inter-cultural relations in schools, and more broadly in society, appears to be at work. This disconnect may not only inhibit BV policy implementation but, since its central purpose is anti-radicalization and social cohesion, the textbook may even induce the very cultural alienation the policy aims to deter.

Further probing of the BV curriculum policy, however, evaporates this disconnect, since the policy signals another example of white colonial power. Revival of 'civic nationalism' (Jerome & Clemitshaw, 2012) and the exacerbation of racial and cultural tensions and alienation and stigmatization of Muslims as a result of the BV policy (Struthers, 2017; Richardson, 2015; Tomlinson, 2015) arouse suspicion of benevolent BV policy language. Both Gillborn's (2005) demonstration of the normalization of white supremacy through education policy

in England and the author's (Winter and Mills, under review) research that evidences the embeddedness of racism in BV policy, raise questions around the comforting myths of BV policy language of 'mutual respect', 'tolerance', 'appreciation of', 'harmony' and 'respect for their own and other cultures' (DfE, 2014a, 2014b). The conferring of respect, tolerance and appreciation by powerful towards less powerful groups in a universalising conciliatory tone of harmonious domestication ignores the need for political critique and racial justice (Gillborn, 2006). Furthermore, there remains the curriculum policy requirement that 'partisan political views in the teaching of any subject' are forbidden in schools (Standard 5(c), DfE, 2014a), p. 11) and that a balance of opposing views about political issues should be presented (DfE, 2013, p. 9). The analysis indicates that the textbook chapter under investigation defies these guidelines, first by promoting partisan political views of white privilege, colonial logic and neoliberalism and second by failing to present alternative political views. The language of both the textbook chapter and BV curriculum policy, infused by the same white colonial values bears implications for teaching, learning and race relations in an increasingly multi-cultural society.

Conclusion

The fourfold analytical approach (questioning assumptions, investigating and transgressing totalising tropes and generating ethical responses) has facilitated political and ethical critique of the assumedly neutral stance of the textbook authors' representations of Malawi, with the intention to move educators' and learners' thinking beyond Eurocentrism. Acknowledging the effects of colonialism and a supposedly neutral-universalist develop-mentalist perspective will open minds to other, more ethical ways of being and knowing (Andreotti, 2014, p. 392). Kapoor (2006) draws on Spivak's work to present de-colonizing activities by which educators can challenge such oppression. These include disrupting the dominant discourse of global relations without repudiating it entirely, whilst addressing our complicity in constructing it. We should shake off our arrogance, be it academic elitism, ethnocentricity, racism, sexism and/or classism to 'Learn from below' (Spivak, 2004, p. 551) by 'suspending my belief that I am indispensable, better, or culturally superior' (Kapoor, 2006, p. 641–642) and to open myself to the difference and agency of the other. Vigilance about our 'blind spots' where we might overlook our abuse of power (ibid.) is called for.

With the aim of investigating the occurrence of Eurocentric universalist tropes, a first step for curriculum researchers is to test the analytical approach beyond this pilot inquiry on a range of curriculum texts (policies, textbooks, classroom resources, examination specifica-tions, questions and mark schemes) in order to confirm or repudiate these findings which relate to a single textbook chapter and policy extracts. If confirmed, this approach can be applied to curriculum texts in other Humanities subjects, such as History, Religious Education and Citizenship, in England and globally. In the current climate of migration, racism and nationalism, teaching students (and teachers) how to challenge, at face value, the knowledge they encounter through schooling will prepare them to transfer such deconstructive skills to family, press, social media, marketing and government policy contexts. A critical reading of school text and policy language, in which attention to the politics of knowledge and the ethical relation to the Other will hopefully lead to more just inter-cultural relations and a better world.

Notes

1. 'The New Imperialism' is defined by Tickly (2004) as 'the incorporation of low income countries and regions that were previously subject to older forms of European imperialism into a new regime of global governance which serves to secure the interests of the USA, its Western allies and of global capitalism more generally'.
2. 'Those pupils of compulsory school age and above who have been classified according to their ethnic group and are of any origin other than White British are defined as being of minority ethnic origin' (DfE, 2016a).
3. Personal email from Sean Ashton, Senior Analyst, City of Sheffield, 06-02-17.
4. The equivalent legislation for Local Authority maintained schools is located in Education Act, 1996 c 56, Part V Ch IV section 406 para (b) (HM Gov, HM Government Education Act, 1996a).
5. 'School proprietors' are individuals or those acting as chair or equivalent of formally constituted board of governors, directors or trustees, a trust or limited company responsible for the management of an independent school (DfE, 2016b, p. 17). Independent schools include academies and free schools.
6. The equivalent legislation for maintained schools is located in the Education Act, 1996 c 56, Part V Ch IV section 407 (HM Gov, HM Government Education Act, 1996b) where the wording is: 'Duty to secure balanced treatment of political issues … where political issues are brought to the attention of pupils (1) … they are offered a balanced presentation of opposing views' (1b).
7. The expression of historical events as 'misdeeds from the past' underplays systematic acts of violence perpetrated at the time as rational and justified action in line with colonial logic (Mills, C. 2017, personal communication).
8. Terms used to categorize countries change over time and space, for example, 'economically developing countries', EC and USA, Japan and USSR (DES, 1991; Winter 1996); 'two countries in significantly different states of economic development' (DfEE/QCA, 1999; p. 24; Winter 2006, p. 222; Yapa, 1999, p. 153, 2002, p. 42; low, middle, high income countries World Bank, 2016).
9. General Certificate of Secondary Education.
10. In 2013/14 Pearson Education, owner of Edexcel achieved second place in percentage of GCSE geography certificates awarded (28%) Ofqual Statistical Release, Annual Qualifications Market Report England, Wales & N Ireland 2013–2014 p. 17. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/498009/2015-10-08-annual-qualifications-market-report-england-wales-and-northern-ireland-2013-14.pdf
11. Willinsky, 1998.
12. In this case Edexcel B 2012 specification. Puttick, 2015 argues that the relationship between awarding bodies and textbook publishers limits the scope of geographical knowledge available to teachers and students.

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