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SOLERTIA

'The ability to understand, in perception, the archetypal and intelligible forms that define perception itself'
– Robert Grosseteste

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Foreword

Credits

Particular thanks go to James Duke and Dr Claire Thomson from the Centre for Enhancement in Learning and Teaching and Stephen Macdonald from BGU Library Services, for their support in the production of this publication.

According to Lewis & Short, *The Latin Dictionary* (1879)[1], the first declension Latin noun, *Solertia*, is translated as 'skill, shrewdness, quickness of mind, ingenuity, dexterity, adroitness, expertness, etc.' How apt that this should be the name of the new Bishop Grosseteste University (BGU) journal that will become an outlet for students to share their research, scholarship and creative writing.

Solertia replaces the University's previous journal and will be available online and in 'hard copy'. This first edition features papers from different parts of the Faculty (i.e. initial teacher education, the humanities, education and lifelong learning) and I'm sure that the applied social sciences will feature prominently in future editions.

The launch of this refreshed journal with its wider scope represents an important landmark for research and knowledge exchange at BGU. It is an initiative driven by the Faculty in collaboration with the Centre for Enhancement in Learning and Teaching as well as Library Services. It will show-case students' work and in some instances act as a springboard for emerging research careers. It also signals our maturity as a research provider.

On our collective behalf I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in making *Solertia* become a reality. Without contributions, of course, there wouldn't be a journal – so grateful thanks also to the students and their supervisors / collaborators who have contributed to this edition ... and to those who will contribute in the future.

Professor Scott Fleming
Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Bishop Grosseteste University

December 2021

[1] Lewis, C. & Short, C. (1879). *A Latin Dictionary*. Oxford University Press

Editorial Policy

Articles Submitted for consideration in *Solertia* originated as work submitted as part of programme of study on an undergraduate or postgraduate degree at Bishop Grosseteste University. The original submissions achieved a first class honours award. Enquiries relating to submissions in future editions of *Solertia* should be directed to a member of the editorial team.

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McMindfulness or elixir to life's ills: What are the implications of practicing mindfulness in a secular context?

Author
Thomas Barton

Of the numerous mindfulness practices and courses currently available in the West, few encapsulate the full spectrum of teachings in the Buddhist Noble Eightfold Path from which they were spawned. This study investigates the original situation of mindfulness meditation within Buddhist psychology, sewn up as it is with ethical conduct and wisdom. This is juxtaposed with the way mindfulness is now often presented and practiced in the West as a standalone treatment, particularly for mental disorders. While research into the application of mindfulness to treat mental disorders has given some promising results, the depth and quality of current research is questioned and complicated by varied definitions of the term mindfulness. The lack of research into the relationship between mindfulness and morality is noted, as is the difficulty science has in understanding morality. The door has thus been opened for neo-liberal organisations to appropriate mindfulness practices for their employees to improve efficiency and save money, in disregard of the employees' wellbeing. Nevertheless, there are examples of secular mindfulness courses that do incorporate morality and wisdom both implicitly and explicitly, with further research into their relationship required.

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Describe how atheism is under threat from postmodernism

Author
Ryan Eccles

This paper examines the ethical constitution and historical contextualisation of Atheism in Western Europe and the United States today. The legacy of the enlightenment on 'Western' conceptions of Atheism will reveal that the desire for totalising truth is as often found within theism as it is in Atheism; this paper will demonstrate through postmodernism that truth is anything other than absolute. Secondly this paper will bring under scrutiny the leading thinkers of 'New Atheism' as they stand in opposition to theistic truth claims and the rise of fundamentalism. Finally, Postmodernism will reveal within this binary of atheism and theism faulty historiographies, stagnant conceptions of the method of science and the characteristics of a secular faith.

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Decolonising the secondary drama curriculum: an investigation into the effects and barriers of diversifying the play texts used in the classroom of a predominantly white school. What are the first steps for drama teachers in beginning this process of change?

Author
Paul Robinson

This action research project explores the potential barriers and solutions to constructing an inclusive and representative curriculum within Drama. This was achieved by capturing the lived reality of a teacher in a predominantly white secondary school. This study also provides evidence of best pedagogical practice when teaching diverse performance texts by acquiring student opinion on the most effective teaching methods, following the practical exploration of the 2019 play Small Island.

Findings suggest that a mixed methods embodied pedagogy, using both teacher-in-role and more traditional theatre-centric practices, was found to be the most effective way of exploring play texts. Not only does this form of practice negate accessibility issues stemming from confidence when using 'Process Drama', but through the distanced engagement of a liminal brave space open discussions can occur. The sharing of personal and fictional narratives through this uninhibited dialogic examination can therefore engage decolonised perspectives, safely confront White hegemony and allow students to re-evaluate their own epistemologies.

Drama departments are prioritising the use of tried and tested 'pale, male and stale' texts that are being perpetually plucked from the cupboard simply because they achieve high grades within limited lesson time. Evidence suggests the linchpin for decolonisation is personal action. Self-motivation and not enforced targets is the only vehicle for effective change.

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Challenging Victorian Heteropatriarchy: Reclaiming Muted Voices in Sarah Waters's *Tipping the Velvet* and *Fingersmith*

Abstract:

The "women's stories" (Yates, 2016, p.174) written by Sarah Waters explore in great depth topics which were deemed unthinkable in the nineteenth-century. Lesbianism, sexual expression, pornography and patriarchy form the central themes in Waters's novels Tipping the Velvet (1998) and Fingersmith (2002), in which she is committed to reclaiming the voices muted by rigid social structures. Waters situates her reclamation of nineteenth-century taboo subjects in a society heavily controlled by the social conventions which restricted contemporary writers. This essay examines heteronormativity and heteropatriarchy within Victorian society and how such structures oppressed women. Furthermore, it will explore Waters's characters, themes, and plots, giving emphasis to how she uses historical fiction as a way of challenging austere ideas of female sexuality and oppression.

Author

Freya Louise Robinson

BA (Hons) English & History

Sarah Waters has always been 'unequivocal about the fact that she writes "women's stories"' (Yates, 2016, p.174). Her historical novels explore taboo subjects of the nineteenth century, such as patriarchy, female oppression, sexual expression, lesbianism, and pornography. Central to Waters's fiction 'lies a concern with the varied effects of inequality and prejudice [...] and how that which is deemed "normative" frequently oppresses alternative ways of being' (O'Callaghan, 2017, p.2). Her works examine how the oppression of the 'alternative' transpires into shame, exclusion, and silence. Yet at the same time, as O'Callaghan (2017) suggests, the subjects Waters covers, 'primarily female, and often lesbian, are united by their shared resistance to patriarchy and heterosexist ways of being' (pp.2-3). Through this, a recurrent theme throughout her novels is the reclamation of these taboo subjects (Yates, 2016).

This essay will look at Waters's first published novel *Tipping the Velvet* (1998) and third novel *Fingersmith* (2002) and how both historical fictions sit at the intersection of feminist and queer theory. 'When feminism meets queer theory, no introductions seem necessary' (Weed, 1997, p.vii) because, as O'Callaghan states, 'both theories seek to emancipate gendered and sexual minorities from the trapping of heteropatriarchy and oppression' (O'Callaghan, 2017, p.4). Both *Tipping the Velvet* and *Fingersmith* present stories full of female voices muted by oppressive heteropatriarchy, shame, and social expectations. But Waters's novels suggest she is 'keen to debunk gendered and sexual stereotypes' (Jones & O'Callaghan, 2016, p.2) in favour of reclaiming those muted voices and allowing them to take centre stage.

Waters is able to reclaim these voices through her use of historical fiction. This creates a 'back door' (Jones & O'Callaghan, 2016, p.4) for her female characters, allowing her to explore the taboo subjects that contemporary Victorian literature often failed to acknowledge. The 'back door' of historical fiction links to the central argument of Waters's PhD thesis (1995), in which she expresses the importance of highlighting the social conventions and expectations which oppressed women.

Chapter One of this essay will explore the centrality of heteropatriarchy and heteronormativity in Victorian society and the ways in which these social conventions controlled the lives of women. It will also examine the ways in which Waters uses these norms in her novels to set the stage for her reclamation of female oppression. While this chapter will introduce these topics, Chapters Two and Three will explore the ways in which Waters refutes gendered and sexual stereotypes. Chapter Two will analyse the significance of shame and the ways in which *Tipping the Velvet* and *Fingersmith* acknowledge, yet ultimately refute, this shame. The final chapter will consider Waters's focus on female same-sex relationships and how they are fundamental in her deconstruction of Victorian heteropatriarchal norms.

Challenging Victorian Heteropatriarchy

Yates (2016) places Waters in 'cohort of writers who use historical fictions to call into question a presumed hetero-, Anglo-, phallocentric historical narrative' (pp.176-177). By confronting these heteropatriarchal themes, the novels *Tipping the Velvet* and *Fingersmith* become 'resistance' writing (Yates, 2016, p.176). Heteronormativity is the supposition that the natural expression of sexuality is heterosexuality and that a heteronormative society is built on this. Heteropatriarchy is an extension of this assumption; suggesting that the normal, and most accepted, definition of heterosexuality is the marriage between a man and a woman (Castree, Kitchin, & Rogers, 2013). 'Victorian society validated two gender identities: heterosexual male and heterosexual female' (Wilson, 2006, p.296) and these were accepted as 'normal'. What was considered to be normal was habitual and engrained within Victorian society; heterosexual relationships, courtships and marriages were the social institutions which formed the basis of normative sexuality. So, as Kitzinger (2005) notes, same-sex relationships were considered 'deviant'.

Heteronormative Victorian society is echoed in Waters's *Tipping the Velvet* and *Fingersmith*, particularly through the obstacles the female protagonists encounter in regard to both their sexualities and the opportunities available to them. Waters highlights marriage as a normative social institution in *Tipping the Velvet* through Nancy and Kitty's relationship. Kitty's fear of discovery, and subsequently being labelled a 'tom', results in a same-sex love affair that is strictly hidden from society. Her constant doubting shows her understanding that her relationship with Nan goes against the heterosexual normative. Kitty's paranoia is finally resolved by her marriage to Walter. Here, Kitty seeks out the Victorian heteronormative institution, as suggested by Wilson (2006), against her feelings for Nancy.

Heterosexism was deeply rooted within Victorian society, and Waters (1998) demonstrates this as Nancy reflects on Kitty's decision; 'they walked together, and the world smiled to see it! They embraced on the street, and strangers were glad!' (p.190). The language Waters uses suggests complete acceptance and reinforces heteropatriarchy. Nancy shows an awareness that heterosexual marriage is Kitty's affirmation within society. She sees Walter as an adversary; 'he was my rival; and had defeated me, at last' (Waters, 1998, p.173) as she is left to live 'pale as a worm, cast out from pleasure, from comfort and ease' (Waters, 1998, p.190). It is not only Kitty's heart Nancy is cast out from, however, but their double act also. Upon Kitty's engagement to Walter, Nancy is entirely removed from the picture; she placed their marriage photograph in front of her own face in the mirror, symbolising her exclusion. 'We are now all too familiar with the Victorian beliefs that women and men were essentially opposite sexes, and that marriage to a man was the chief end of a woman's existence' (Marcus, 2009, p.1). It can be suggested that Kitty's life with Walter will suffer under the oppression of Victorian marriage, but it is also Nancy who believes her own life is ended by this marriage.

Waters also focuses on heterosexual marriage in *Fingersmith*, and the Victorian belief that it is the fundamental objective in a woman's life. Throughout the novel, it is Maud's prime intention to escape her oppressive life at Briar house, and she is led to believe that marriage is her only option. Maud spends years of her life under the watchful eye of her uncle until Mr Rivers arrives, offering her a way out and a share in her fortune. The idea that marriage to Mr Rivers is Maud's sole chance of 'freedom' is representative of the very nature of Victorian marriage for many women. Before marriage, women were under the constant governance of their fathers, or the male head of the family. Their marriage was subject to the approval of these men, and, once they were married, women became the property of their husbands. Maud may achieve freedom from her uncle through her elopement with Mr Rivers, but her marriage provides a prison of its own. As Mr Hawtrey is keen to remind Maud as she seeks liberation from Mr Rivers, 'you cannot leave a husband, as you may leave an uncle' (Waters, 2002, p.383). Both Kitty Butler and Maud Lilly seek out marriage as a means of remedying something, be it a lack of security within society or escape. Here, Waters illustrates Kitzinger (2005) and Marcus's (2009) arguments that Victorian heterosexual marriage was considered the most central social institution, but also the most controlling.

Waters's novels do not only seek to 'demonstrate the structural mechanisms that enable patriarchy's stranglehold' (Jones & O'Callaghan, 2016, p.2) but rather she 'wanted to give life to the Victorian women she saw in her mind' (Wilson, 2006, p.295). The heteronormative aspects of Victorian society founded certain expectations and

limitations for women, and from these expectations came anxieties about those who deviated from the normative. Women who refused to conform to traditional female roles were often identified by contemporary feminists as the New Woman. The New Woman brought with her apprehensions about the 'redefinition of gender through her increased participation in intellectual and athletic endeavours, formation of politically active clubs and organizations, and rejection of traditional feminine roles' (Wilson, 2006, p.294). Such intellectual undertakings are present in *Fingersmith* through Maud's education at Briar, and more importantly in the anxieties this raises, particularly in men. Mr Huss raises objections to Maud's role as her uncle's secretary, suggesting that 'girls' eyes should not be worn out with reading, nor their small hands made hard through the gripping of pens' (Waters, 2002, p.211). He implies that the very nature of education would damage women, rather than advance them. This is echoed through Doctor Christie's diagnosis of Sue in the asylum; 'We have a name for your disease. We call it a hyper-aesthetic one. You have been encouraged to over-indulge yourself in literature' (Waters, 2002, p.421). The qualities of the New Woman (Wilson, 2006) are similarly evident in *Tipping the Velvet*, most notably in Florence, the socialist activist Nancy meets in London and later falls in love with. Florence's role as a volunteer at the Women's Cooperative Guild highlights her dedication to the 'politically active [...] organizations' (Wilson, 2006, p.294) that women were still fighting for a place in. Her activism serves as part of Nancy's social education in the latter half of the novel. Nancy describes Florence as 'marvellously bold and frank and ready' (Waters, 1998, p.435), refuting the traditional ideals of reserved, uneducated femininity in exchange for a powerful, politically aware woman. By illustrating the qualities of the New Woman in her novels, Waters demonstrates both the woman who stood against certain social expectations and the obstacles which sought to mute her.

One way in which Waters is able to 'give life to the Victorian women she saw in her mind' (Wilson, 2006, p.295) is through the genre of historical fiction. In her PhD thesis, Waters (1995) explores the importance of historical fiction, particularly in allowing muted voices to take centre stage; 'repeatedly, over the past century, historical representation has allowed lesbians and gay men to speak when more obviously contemporary deviant voices were being publicly silenced' (p.9). Likewise, in *Tipping the Velvet* and *Fingersmith*, Waters is able to 'recuperate lost or elided women's histories' (Jones & O'Callaghan, 2016, p.4)

Tiernan (2005) discusses how heterosexual, white males who populated heteropatriarchal society were represented throughout history and literature. *Tipping the Velvet* and *Fingersmith*, as Jeanette King suggests, attempt to rewrite these historical narratives from marginalised female perspectives, in order to liberate the voices muted in contemporary literature (as cited in Jones & O'Callaghan, 2016, pp.4-5). Discussing the inspiration for her works, Waters expressed in an interview that she had been observing 'London's queer underworld' and noticed how it was rarely examined outside academic works (as cited in Mitchell, p.125).

Her texts cover subjects considered taboo or unnatural in Victorian society, such as same-sex desire and love, which she would not have been permitted to cover as a contemporary Victorian writer. Jeremiah (2008) writes that Waters's text 'reflect Victorian reality more authentically than "genuine" Victorian literature' (p.135) because they examine the lives of women outside the heteropatriarchal sphere. She uses what de Groot calls the 'disjunction of "real" and "fictional" history' (2013, p.64) to allow her female characters into literature through the 'back door' (Jones & O'Callaghan, 2016, p.4).

Deconstructing Shame

Morrison (2015) discusses the relationship between sexuality, shame, and the role of heteronormativity in constructing this shame. She describes her father's reaction to her own homosexuality: 'some things are better left unsaid' (Morrison, 2015, p.17) he told her, demanding her 'silence' (p.17) rather than the expression of her identity. The similarities between this confession in the 1970s and Waters's novels are astounding. Morrison implies that her father's response was 'an attempt at censoring me or imagining the erasure of my sexuality and, from his position of power (as father, man, heterosexual, etc.), shutting me out for my differences' (2015, p.17). This emphasises the incomparable position of heteropatriarchy and its part in promoting the 'normative' and rejecting anything considered 'deviant' (Powell, n.d.).

The 'dominant notions of womanhood [...] placed narrow parameters on the way in which women experienced their lives' (Jones & O'Callaghan, 2016, p.3). This 'stranglehold' (Jones & O'Callaghan, 2016, p.2) of heteropatriarchy not only created expectations for women in regard to education, opportunities and appearance but also sexuality. As previously stated, the only tolerated sexuality in the nineteenth century was heterosexuality; male homosexual acts, both public and private, were criminalized, most especially after the introduction of the Labouchere Amendment in 1885 (Powell, n.d.). Interestingly, the same was never implemented for what was then labelled 'female sexual inversion' (Parkes, 1994, p.434). But the absence of any legislation against lesbian acts did not mean it was tolerated within society, in fact, it meant quite the opposite. It has been suggested that those who composed the amendment omitted women for fear of promoting the idea of lesbianism (Powell, n.d.). Both the Labouchere Amendment and the anxieties around lesbianism reinforce the centrality of heteropatriarchy within Victorian society. The voices of non-heterosexual men and women were muted both socially and through criminal law, demonstrating the far-reaching grasp of heteropatriarchy.

These social anxieties surrounding lesbianism are evident in the reception and treatment of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (2014). Though written after the Victorian period, the critical and social reception of Hall's novel reflects the resentment of 'female sexual inversion' (Parkes, 1994, p.434) that carried through into the twentieth century. The trial and judgement of the novel and subsequent destruction of many copies epitomise the widely held view that the subjects Hall's novel addresses were viewed as 'obscene' (Parkes, 1994). The Attorney General berated *The Well of Loneliness* as 'more subtle, demoralising, corrosive, corruptive than anything that was ever written' (Parkes, 1994, p.434), accentuating the belief that lesbianism was entirely abnormal.

The reception of *The Well of Loneliness* demonstrates how historical fiction allows writers to explore taboo subjects such as lesbianism without many of the repercussions of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century social beliefs. In her PhD thesis, Waters writes that Hall's novel 'forges a bond between lesbians across the hostilities and intolerances of history' (1995, p.177). In her own novels, Waters covers many of the same topics as Radclyffe Hall, as we shall see, but with the added privilege of historical fiction.

Morrison (2015) suggests that the recurrence of 'scorned sexuality' is the primary reason why 'same-sex lovers have had to live so long in a distinctively "other" world' (pp.20-21). This is echoed within *Tipping the Velvet*, particularly through the shame Nancy encounters with regards to her sexuality. During her time on the stage with Kitty, Nancy experiences first-hand the shame which surrounds her profession as a male impersonator. The central feature of their singing act is their male attire and this in itself completely contradicts traditional Victorian ideas of femininity. Public shaming of female sexuality is perhaps most present when Nancy and Kitty are called 'toms' during a performance. By this time, the reader is aware of Kitty's uneasiness surrounding her sexuality, but the true shock comes to Nancy, who is more upset by Kitty's embarrassment than her own public harassment (Wilson, 2006, p.298). This demonstrates how Nancy and Kitty's same-sex relationship depends on secrecy above all else, rather than their affection for one another. Shame becomes the defining aspect of their time together and this is most notably addressed at the end of the novel; 'what would your neighbours say, if I came visiting you? You'd be too afraid to walk upon the street with me, in case some feller called out!' (Waters, 1998, p.468). The public harassment of Nancy and Kitty, as well as Kitty's reactions, demonstrate the social anxieties that were still evident in the treatment of *The Well of Loneliness*, decades after Waters's novel is set.

Shame is likewise presented in *Fingersmith*, particularly surrounding Maud and Sue's relationship. Readers get the chance to experience their connection from both perspectives, which sheds light on their own interpretations of same-sex desires. Maud is constantly doubting her feelings towards Sue on account of both the nature of a lesbian relationship and her overall involvement in Sue's unfortunate fate. When Gentleman (Mr Rivers) discovers Maud's attachment to Sue, he mocks her, saying 'she would laugh in your face if she knew [...] she would laugh in mine, were I to tell her' (Waters, 2002, p.276). By referring to her desires as amusing, Gentleman ridicules Maud, just as Nancy is ridiculed on stage as a 'tom'. Gentleman's taunting leads Maud to question Sue's affections for her later on, 'would she laugh, as he said she would? Would she shiver? It seems to me she lies more cautiously beside me now, her legs and arms tucked close. It seems to me she is often wary, watchful' (Waters, 2002, p.279). Sedgwick suggests that 'shame is a primary affect we cannot excise from our bodies' (2009, as cited in Morrison, 2015, p.17) and this can certainly be applied to Maud's doubts towards Sue after Gentleman chastises her.

Furthermore, Sue's treatment in the asylum, most notably at the hands of the nurses, serves to pathologise her lesbian identity (Jones, 2016, p.127).

'Then she did this. She pushed herself up on her hands, so that her face was above me but her bosom and stomach and legs still hard on my own; and she moved her hips. She moved them in a certain way. My eyes flew open. She gave me a leer.

> "Like it, do you?" she said, still moving, "No? We heard that you did."
>
> And at that, the nurses roared. They roared, and I saw on their faces as they gazed at me that nasty look I had seen before but never understood.' (Waters, 2002, p.442)

By parodying Sue's desire, the nurses reinforce the shame associated with lesbianism in the Victorian era. Both Gentleman and the nurses' responses serve not only to mock the desire of Sue and Maud but also their identity. Historian Mike Dash suggests that Queen Victoria, along with a vast percentage of the Victorian population believed that acts of 'female sexual inversion' (Parkes, 1994, p.434) were quite simply impossible (Powell, n.d.). Although the 'impossibility' of lesbian desire is not shown in *Fingersmith*, the lack of tolerance and respect for such desires is.

Love and Sexuality

O'Callaghan (2017) states that Waters's writing has a 'continued focus on figures, plots and themes that disrupt and challenge dominant ideas concerning gender and sexuality' (p.2). Feminism and queer theory are perhaps most evident in Waters's exploration of female sexuality same-sex love within Victorian society. In terms of 'resistance writing' (Yates, 2016, p.176), by centring both her novels around female same-sex relationships, Waters challenges Victorian heteropatriarchal norms. The widely held belief that the only sexuality was heterosexuality is both criticised and denounced in the novels. Shame, as previously discussed, is a central theme within these two novels, and this is often maintained through a continued focus on sexuality. But Waters confronts this shame by placing a lens over the romantic connections between her female characters, most notably Sue and Maud's relationship and Nancy's encounters with love. These themes are present in Hall's heavily censored *The Well of Loneliness*, but Waters is able to explore them through historical fiction and therefore without much of the stigma that surrounded non-conforming sexuality in the 1920s.

In *Tipping the Velvet,* Nancy experiences love and desire with other women frequently throughout the novel. Waters expresses how Nancy 'is led by love, by desire and by the search for community and identity through a range of distinctly lesbian worlds' (2002). Her feelings towards Kitty are expressed from the first time she glimpses her, and at their first meeting, Nancy thinks to herself 'I am in love with you' (Waters, 1998, p.33). The fact that Nancy is able to admit this to herself so early on demonstrates her confidence in her emotions. She is not unaware of the social conventions which prevent her love from being accepted in society, in fact, she shows a continued understanding of this; 'I know that this ain't wrong, what we do. Only that the world says it is' (Waters, 1998, p.131). However, as Waters (2002) suggests, Nancy is driven by her love for other women through the novel, rather than the shame associated with her love, as Kitty is.

Nancy's relationship with Florence arguably challenges heteropatriarchal norms even more so than with Kitty. Florence serves as the New Woman figure in *Tipping the Velvet*; her keen social awareness allows her to express her lesbian identity in a way Nancy has not encountered before. She openly criticises Kitty's treatment of Nancy; 'to think she kept you cramped and guilty for so long, when you might have been off, having your bit of fun as a real gay tom' (Waters, 1998, p.434). It is almost as if Waters's own voice echoes through Florence's in this moment, as she epitomises the central arguments about Victorian homosexuality and tolerance in *Tipping the Velvet*. Florence not only takes issue with the hidden nature of Nancy and Kitty's relationship, but she also reclaims the word 'tom', a label which struck so much fear in Kitty she sought 'heterocentric protection' in Walter (Yates, 2016, p.184). Florence comes to represent 'hope and the possibility of change' (Jones & O'Callaghan, 2016, p.4);

> Women do things today their mothers would have laughed to think of seeing their daughters doing, twenty years ago; soon they will even have the vote! If people like me don't work, it's because they look at the world, at all the injustice and the muck, and all they see is a nation falling in upon itself, and taking them with it. But the muck has new things growing out of it - wonderful things! - new habits of working, new kinds of people, new ways of being alive and in love (Waters, 1998, p.391).

Her speech not only reflects the endeavours of the New Woman, as discussed by Wilson (2006) but also shows her genuine belief in the acceptance of all sexualities. Waters rejects the stranglehold of heteropatriarchy (Jones & O'Callaghan, 2016, p.2) through Florence's confidence in her sexuality, something which she and Nancy share at the end of the novel. Her reunion with Kitty in the final pages inspires Nancy's confession; 'I belong here, now: these are my people. And as for Florence, my sweetheart, I love her more than I can say; and I never realised it, until this moment' (Waters, 1998, p.467). The remembrance of Kitty's shame prompts Nancy's final understanding of true happiness and her choice to remain with Florence defies her earlier statement that she was 'a solitary girl, in a city that favoured sweethearts and gentlemen' (Waters, 1998, p.191).

The relationship between Sue and Maud in *Fingersmith* likewise challenges the heteropatriarchal norms of Victorian society. Victorian pornography is a central theme in the novel and formulates much of Maud's understanding of desire, but it is the arrival of Sue who 'challenges Maud's understanding of the relationship between gender, sex, and desire, and particularly female same-sex passions' (O'Callaghan, 2015, p.560). The pornography Maud is exposed to throughout her youth is explicitly male dominated; her uncle owns the library and collection, and she is forced to transcribe and read these texts aloud to entirely male audiences. O'Callaghan (2015) explores the feminist 'sex wars' of the late twentieth century and the conflicting views surrounding pornography. Many feminists adopted the anti-pornography approach, which examined pornography in relation to female oppression and exploitation (O'Callaghan, 2015). This argument was refuted by 'anti-censorship perspectives' which suggested the real problem lay in sexual ideologies and the social beliefs and assumptions that constructed them (O'Callaghan, 2015, p.561). This links to the heteropatriarchal social structure of the nineteenth century

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and the assumption that sexuality was limited to different-sex relations.

Waters has commented that Victorian pornography portrayed lesbian sex as a 'precursor to heterosexual intercourse', in other words, a prelude to the 'real thing' (O'Callaghan, 2015, p.567). But in *Fingersmith*, she challenges the dominance of male sexuality through Sue and Maud's relationship, demonstrating that female intercourse existed beyond the purposes of pleasing men. Their moments of intimacy occur without the presence of men, 'I forgot to think about Gentleman after that, I only thought of her' (Waters, 2002, p.142), exceeding the boundaries of heteropatriarchal relationships entirely.

Miller (2008) suggests that *Fingersmith* demonstrates how 'female-controlled writing and reading creates an erotic literature of love, inclusion, and equality rather than female degradation' (para. 2). This is evident in the conclusion of the novel. As Maud returns to Briar, she is not only free from her uncle's oppression, but she writes her own erotic fiction to support herself financially, reclaiming the once male-dominated profession. The final moment between Sue and Maud completes this reclamation as they sit among the pages of Maud's fictions, '"What does it say?" I said, when I had. She said, "It is filled with all the words for how I want you…Look."' (Waters, 2002, p.547). Between the words on the paper and their unspoken confession of love, the two women unite in their passions for one another, alone in a house now free from the 'structural mechanisms that enable patriarchy's stranglehold' (Jones & O'Callaghan, 2016, p.2).

Sarah Waters' use of historical fiction allows her to explore the lives of Victorian women, such as Sue, Maud, and Nancy, with the absence of many social conventions which hindered contemporary writers. The central themes in *Tipping the Velvet* and *Fingersmith* are inequality and the oppression of women in societies predominantly structured around heteropatriarchy. Waters constructs narratives and characters that challenge and overturn the social expectations of Victorian women, allowing muted voices to take centre stage. Through this, feminist theory and queer theory are both evident in Waters's novels. Waters emphasises how much of the stigma surrounding female behaviour stems from heteropatriarchy and heteronormativity, which she embodies in male characters such as Walter, Maud's uncle, and Gentleman. By creating characters like Florence, Waters not only brings to light the muted voices of contemporary Victorian literature, but she also creates hope for the future of her characters. Her exploration of same-sex desire and love directly oppose traditional social institutions of heterosexual marriage and courtship. Nancy's relationships with Kitty and Florence in *Tipping the Velvet*, as well as Sue and Maud in *Fingersmith*, refute the 'normal' depictions of Victorian romance. Furthermore, Waters's exploration of Victorian lesbian pornography is also part of her reclamation of traditional beliefs about female sexuality. *Fingersmith* challenges the idea that lesbianism was only present in the absence of heterosexual intercourse, whilst simultaneously concluding with a woman dominating the field of erotic literature. Waters's dedication to these themes characterises her work as 'resistance' writing (Yates, 2016, p.176), as she confronts and deconstructs the heteropatriarchal norms from which female oppression stems. ■

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In what ways can concrete resources support the learning and progress of children in maths, who are lower ability or have SEN?

Abstract:

The purpose of this research paper was to investigate how children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and children who are lower ability use concrete resources to support their learning and progress in mathematics. The small-scale survey was carried out in a large, three-form entry junior primary school in Lincolnshire. Three separate, non-participant observations were conducted of 6 children – 2 children with Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and 4 children on the SEN register for cognition and learning and social, emotional, and mental health difficulties– whilst they completed pure calculation tasks without concrete resources, with the use of concrete resources and concrete resources with support from the class teaching assistant (TA). This was triangulated with an online questionnaire which gathered the views of Key Stage 2 (KS2) teachers on the use of concrete resources and whether they thought it supported children's learning. The research findings show that concrete manipulatives are an effective tool to support learning. Though successful, instructional variables showed differences in children's performance, suggesting that this could cause inconsistencies with the study. Most questionnaire responses showed that concrete resources are highly valued as a tool to support children's mathematical learning, but also recognised that they could cause a distraction.

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Introduction

Mathematical manipulatives are considered to increase attention of children with SEN (Jimenez & Stanger, 2017) if they are introduced in a sequence framework that is gradual (Bouck, Satsangi & Park, 2018). There is a strong connection between the use of manipulatives with a framework of instruction, across the literature; however, limited research exists of the use of manipulatives in isolation. Virtual manipulatives are mentioned consistently throughout literature, with studies that compare virtual and concrete manipulatives to support children with SEN (Burns & Hamm, 2011; Satsangi et al., 2016; Hunt et al., 2011).

My research question asked: In what ways can concrete resources support the learning and progress of children in maths who are lower ability or have SEN? The word 'concrete' caused difficulties in the search for literature and perhaps this was because concrete resources were defined as tools, paper or everyday materials, used to provide a teaching aid (Drews & Hansen, 2007) which suggests it could apply to other areas of the curriculum such as line guides in English and a word bank in Science, and not objects designed to show abstract mathematical problems (Moyer, 2001). Therefore, the search was altered to include the word 'manipulative' as this term was used commonly in literature focusing on the use of concrete resources within a framework such as Concrete, Pictorial and Abstract (CPA). This was possibly to avoid confusion between concrete resources and the concrete step of instruction. Griffiths et

al., (2017) define manipulatives as items that can be touched and moved to develop understanding in mathematical concepts. This definition starts to distinguish the possible difference between concrete resources and manipulatives, with concrete resources being used in a set way and maths manipulatives being used in different contexts. This small-scale project involved children and staff in a large, three-form entry junior academy in Lincolnshire.

Literature Review

The literature review explores and examines existing literature on the use of manipulatives to support the learning and progress of children in maths, with a particular focus on those who are lower ability or have SEN. Manipulatives are objects that can be touched and used for instruction (Liggett, 2017) Despite Ofsted (2012) emphasising greater focus on children's mathematical concepts to rely on less teaching by rote, coupled with a requirement for learners to move fluently between representations of mathematical ideas, using manipulatives (Department for Education, 2013), some schools have been criticised for not using manipulatives well enough to aid conceptual understanding (Ofsted, 2012). Guidance in the National Curriculum (DfE, 2013) mentions the use of concrete objects in Key Stage One (KS1) which differs from the KS2 recommendations, with the use of arrays and number lines as representations, but not manipulatives (Griffiths et al., 2017). This shows that the guidance provides little clarity for the use of manipulatives for children in KS2. Furthermore, the UK government supports the Shanghai approach to mathematics which uses a higher number of visualisations, as opposed to the Singapore method which relies heavily on the CPA method. This conflicts with current policies influenced by Teaching for Mastery (2015) with funding from the National Centre for Excellence in Teaching Mathematics (NCETM). This possibly suggests the use of manipulatives is not new and perhaps the heightened exposure of using them is due to influence by other high-performing countries such as Shanghai, who use the CPA method successfully (Lindorff et al., 2019).

The correlation between using mathematical manipulatives and the CPA approach is very common across the literature (Bouck et al., 2014; Bouck, 2015; Bouck, Park & Nickell, 2017; Cass et al., 2003; Flores, 2009; Flores et al., 2014; Root et al., 2017; Satsangi & Bouck, 2015; Satsangi et al., 2016). The CPA model helps to bridge the gap between conceptual and procedural understanding, and this can be achieved by teaching a procedure such as addition with regrouping using manipulatives like place value counters and fading these scaffolds until children can fluently use numbers only (Flores et al., 2014). The 'Mastery' approach to teaching mathematics became central to UK policy in 2015, which was influenced by the Singaporean approaches to maths involving the CPA approach (Boylan et al., 2018). However, this approach was informed heavily by Bruner's work (1966), as he believed the abstract ways of learning mystified children; therefore, used the CPA method, as a means of scaffolding learning, so the children were able to build on each stage to reach a better understanding of the concepts used. At first glance it seems like the theory is quite recent owing to the increased coverage; however, this shows that this theory was already well established (Hoong et al., 2015).

Virtual manipulatives are representations of concrete manipulatives in digital form that can be used on handheld devices, interactive whiteboards, and computers (Bouck et al., 2018) and are commonly used on technologies that are readily available for primary school children to use (Satsangi & Miller, 2017). A systematic review into literature on mathematics manipulatives to support children with disabilities highlighted an emerging trend in the use of virtual manipulatives (Bouck & Park, 2018). However, it is worthy of note that four out of the six studies on virtual manipulatives, referred to by Bouck and Park (2018), were written by Bouck and associates (Bouck et al., 2014; Satsangi & Bouck, 2015; Bouck et al., 2015). Furthermore, Bouck (2012) teaches assistive technology and is active in the Technology and Media Division of the Council for Exceptional Children, which suggests the use of virtual manipulatives is of interest to her, potentially affecting the reliability of this claim. This outlook is now more enhanced due to more than 1.3 million devices being provided to schools in the UK, to aid with online learning delivery during COVID 19 (DfE, 2020) together with children's increased confidence in using technology (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2020), highlighting that there could be potential scope for this within the primary classroom. It is argued the use of virtual manipulatives offers children with learning difficulties options to differentiate an application to suit their needs (Satsangi & Bouck, 2014) such as changing the colour of the screen which is suitable for children with Irlen Syndrome, for example. This, combined with built in scaffolds in applications such as Maths Bot, allows the children to drag and drop place value counters, exchange, and regroup, without the support of an adult to enable independence (Satsangi & Miller, 2017).

There is an exploratory link between the use of virtual manipulatives combined with the CPA approach (Strickland, 2017; Satsangi et al., 2016; Moyer-Packenham & Suh, 2012); however, for the virtual manipulatives to take on a dual role, within the CPA process, children must be able to physically manipulate an object, by moving it with a mouse or using a finger on a touch screen device, in addition to being provided as a visual representation on the screen (Bouck, 2017). It is argued, however, guided practice and explicit instruction is needed to help embed the use of virtual manipulatives (Shin, 2017) which corroborates with a

study by Meyer et al., (2019) who claim pretraining of manipulatives significantly reduced cognitive load, when it came to using them, because the children had already had experiences with them alongside adult instruction.

Carbonneau et al., (2013) argue there is a significant inconsistency in the literature based on children with learning difficulties, using manipulatives to support their learning, due to instructional variables that could possibly affect the overall outcome of the research. For example, the type of manipulative used, the sample size and the amount of adult support. Lafay (2019) conducted a similar systematic review of literature however, focussing on children with mathematical learning disabilities (MLD) instead of children with a range of disabilities, a criticism expressed by Lafay (2019) towards the work of Bouck and Park (2018), which may question the generalisability of the research. However, on further inspection, the studies looked at by Carbonneau et al., (2013) were outdated, questioning whether the inconsistency claim is reliable. A recent study by Bouck et al., (2020) showed explicit modelling by the teacher was used with lots of opportunities to practise application-based manipulatives, whereas in a study by Satsangi, Hammer and Hogan (2018) scaffolds and prompts were only given to children who struggled with problem solving during the session, highlights inconsistent methods were used across two comparable studies.

It is reasoned that mathematics manipulatives are sometimes not as effective due to contextual variables (Donovan & Alibali, 2021) with some lessons not connecting the manipulatives and the concepts properly when taught without a framework such as CPA (Furham, 2017). It is thought manipulatives that are as simple as possible, such as coloured uni-fix cubes without unnecessary mentions of the real world, promotes the best learning (Laski et al., 2015), as research shows if the manipulative is interesting to play with, it creates a distraction and prevents children from making relevant connections with the manipulative and represented mathematical concept (Donovan & Alibail, 2021). This was shown in a study by McNeil et al., 2009 who set up an experiment with two conditions, one group were assigned play notes and coins and the other group did not have any resources, and both groups were asked to answer some money problems. It was found that the realistic money notes, despite being aimed to activate real-world knowledge, hindered performance. It was argued that the notes and coins looked like play money, which could hinder performance in schoolwork, as the children's knowledge of play activities would be active (McNeil et al., 2009).

Despite the steady increase in literature advocating children's use of finger-counting over the last 20 years, Stegemann and Grunke (2014) are cautious in their assessment of this because it causes children to complete arithmetic at a slower pace. The importance of finger-counting in calculations is thought to be emphasised by neuroscience studies; however, using fingers to calculate can become a habit and be relied on too much (Moeller et al., 2011). A qualitative study asked 34 teachers for their views on finger-counting in which participants reported that the children in their classes, who used finger-counting as a tool for learning, had poor memory and high anxiety, but also recognising that finger-counting should be used until children have understanding behind arithmetic operations (Mutlu et al., 2020). The generalisability could be questioned in this study, as most of the participants were special educational needs teachers, but this provided an interesting insight into why some teachers encourage or discourage children to use their fingers.

After closely reviewing the literature regarding lower ability and SEN children using maths manipulatives to support their learning, there are several factors involved which possibly creates complexity. The strong correlation between the use of manipulatives as part of the CPA approach was evident in research, with limited research looking at maths manipulatives in isolation, which influenced my own research project. The emergence of virtual manipulatives perhaps gives teachers' alternatives in their classrooms, as the research shows they have benefits for SEN children. However, it was found that contextual and instructional variables could affect the reliability of some studies into the use of manipulatives, because the instruction from adults, type of manipulatives and the sample sizes varied considerably.

Methodology

This research project was a small-scale survey which concentrated on two samples in one key stage in the same school. The decision was influenced by Blaxter et al., (2010); Bell and Waters (2018) because I wanted to collect quantitative data by analysing the task completed by the children and qualitative data from my observation notes and the questionnaire completed by sample two, which provided me with the same information about all the cases in one sample. I did consider a case study as my methodology, as it shared some similarities with a survey, in that it seeks to study an individual or a group (Cohen et al., 2018); however, a case study often focusses on an existing problem (Blaxter et al., 2010) whereas the research question was designed to identify the current situation (Flick, 2015) and this shows how methodology approaches can differ. A survey methodology enabled standardisation, by asking the same questions in precisely the same way and provided the same task for participants to complete (Sapsford, 1999). This is a clear strength because it provided consistent answers, even though this limited the generalisability of my overall findings (Samuel et al., 2001), I was able to look at the use of maths concrete resources in KS2 in greater depth.

Setting

The project was carried out in one, large junior academy in Lincolnshire, where a mastery maths approach has been used since September 2019. The setting consisted of thirteen classes, with three-form entry in three-year groups and four-form entry in Year 6. The number of children with special educational needs (SEN) is above average and the proportion of children who are supported by pupil premium funding is well above average, at 51% (Ofsted, 2018).

Sample

Sample one of the project comprised of the KS2 teachers with thirteen teachers in total. Three teachers within the sample held a Teaching and Learning Responsibility (DfE, 2020), in addition to their class responsibility. One teacher in the sample

had taught in the school since 2001, three teachers joined the school in 2019 and the rest of the sample had taught at the school for five years or more. Sample one were approached through an email to their work email address, with an explanation of the project, in line with Ethical Guidance for Educational Research by The British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2018) and an attached link to the questionnaire.

Sample two of the project consisted of six, year five children of varying ability. Child P and Child C had Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) and were entitled to twenty hours of support, as stipulated in their personalised plans. The two children were working significantly below aged related expectations for year five. The remaining four children in the sample were on the school SEN register for cognition and learning and social, emotional, and mental health difficulties. The children were secure at Year 2 and working towards Year 3 expectations in maths.

Methods

Triangulation of two methods was considered and applied in the research in an attempt to show validity and reliability (Guthrie, 2013; Bell & Waters, 2018; Daniel & Harland, 2017). Sample one were provided with the same questions to answer and sample two were given the same tasks to complete at the same time. This agrees with Alridge and Levine (2001) who argue that a survey methodology has a distinct strategy, as it is used to collect the same data, on the people in a sample. This shows that my chosen methodology fitted within my two methods; non participant observation and questionnaire.

Non-participant observation

Firstly, I had planned to conduct a participant observation, where I would take an active part in the activity, whilst observing at the same time. My initial thoughts were shaped by Sharp (2012) who believes participant observations provides the observer richer opportunities to gain additional insights, by experiencing things first-hand. However, Newby (2014) offers part criticism to participant observations as he believes when the observer is actively involved, the way the observer views an issue could change and influence the interpretation of collected data. The decision to conduct a third observation, as the children completed a task with support from a teaching assistant (TA) was to collect some qualitative data without taking an active part myself. Nonetheless, the viewpoint shared by Newby (2014) was balanced with his suggestion of a non-participant observation, which proved to be a viable alternative, as the group already knew me and were aware they were being observed; however, this idea differed from Sharp (2012) because the observation was conducted at a distance from the group. As I knew the group well and already had a bond and trust with them (Newby, 2014), I decided to conduct three, small-scale non-participants observations across three consecutive days. By observing in this way, I was able to be socially invisible, as I did not engage with any of the participants during the activity (Denscombe, 2014); however, during the first observation two participants put their hand up to tell me they had finished. This suggested that the participants were seeking approval and still viewed me as an active part of the activity, despite being sat away from the group (Denscombe, 2014). A limitation of collecting qualitative data in observational research was the difficulty of collecting data in real time (Queiros et al., 2017); thus, I found writing notes, whilst observing and listening, more of a challenge than I first anticipated.

Questionnaire

Due to the questionnaire being accessible online, participants were able to complete it at a time that suited them (Graham, 2008), which was a clear strength when comparing this method against an interview, as this would require a specific time for it to take place. Interestingly, Denscombe (2014) emphasises the strength of a questionnaire that has been created on a website, due to its simplicity, as once completed, the participant presses submit and it is finished. Despite highlighting this as a strength, Denscombe (2014) does raise a valid limitation that the participant must come to the website themselves, instead of completing a questionnaire directly in an email response. This possible limitation was addressed by sending a website link in an email to the participants, so they could click on the link and be taken directly to the questionnaire. Another limitation of an online questionnaire is potential bias for those participants without the use of a computer (Arthur et al., 2012); but a device at the setting was readily available for the participants to use, so this was not an issue.

A further limitation was the low number of responses to my questionnaire, which had potential to affect the validity of my research (Arthur et al., 2012). Upon reflection, allocating more time to the data collection phase of the research could have potentially elicited more responses. In the initial email sent to participants, I asked for it to be completed within 5 days; therefore, with teachers' heavy workload, perhaps more time would have been an advantage. Possibly another limitation, which is closely linked with the response rate, is anonymity. Without knowing who had responded to the questionnaire, I was unable to send an individual reminder to participants who had not yet responded (Graham, 2008). However, attempts were made to overcome this limitation by sending a polite reminder email to all participants and managed to receive one more response. Counteracting this limitation is the ethical considerations I have made to ensure participants remained anonymous. Providing anonymity allowed the participants to share their experiences in confidence (Curtis et al., 2014) which was an overall strength of the questionnaire.

Ethical considerations

As the non-participant observation involved observing children in the classroom, it was important to be compliant with the research by (BERA, 2018), particularly being sensitive to children who may have wanted to opt out the study at any time. I reassured sample two, in child friendly terms, about their right to withdraw from the task at any time. Permission was gained from my research tutor before starting the project to ensure it followed the guidelines contained within the Bishop Grosseteste University (2019) Research Ethics Policy. The Executive Headteacher granted me permission to carry out the research within the setting, without the need for parental permission.

Analysis and discussion of findings

Pupil non-participant observation

During the first observation, where no manipulatives were made available, four

children used their fingers to support them to answer the pure calculations – this consisted of two 3-digit additions and two 3-digit subtraction problems and two children used their 15cm ruler as a number line to count on and back. The use of a ruler was interesting because it was an example of an everyday item (Drews & Hansen, 2007) suggesting this is a concrete resource because it can be used across other subjects and not just maths. Comparisons between finger counting and using a ruler showed that the finger counting was in fact a quicker process. Child C and Child E, who both used their fingers to count, were the first to finish the task. This differed from the literature, as finger counting was seen as restrictive, as it slowed down children's ability to complete arithmetic (Stegemann & Grunke, 2014).

The children were provided with a set of manipulatives (laminated number squares, counters, number beads, cubes and a Google Chromebook with the Maths Bot website loaded) but with no adult instruction. Interestingly, Child J still used his fingers, and when children reminded him about the manipulatives, he said 'Fingers' whilst wiggling them. Child P immediately grabbed a handful of counters and started to stack them on the table. During wet play activities, I have observed children using the counters to draw around and stacking them up into large towers. Although the counters did not have connotations of the real world (Laski et al., 2015) the counters were a distraction towards Child P's learning because she was interested in playing with them. As the counters had dual uses in the classroom, Child P was possibly unable to make connections with the counters and what they represented as a mathematical concept (Donovan & Alibail, 2021) and consequently, she attempted two questions and answered both incorrectly. The children did not interact with the virtual manipulative during this observation, opting to use concrete manipulatives instead. This was surprising as research showed that built in scaffolds within virtual manipulatives like Maths Bot, supported independent learning (Satsangi & Miller, 2017) which suited the conditions of the observation. Research suggests that virtual manipulatives need to be introduced alongside explicit instruction and opportunities for guided practice (Shin, 2017), which could suggest why the children opted to use the concrete manipulatives instead because they already have experiences of using them, thus reducing cognitive load (Meyer et al., 2019).

Participants	Manipulatives (out of 4 marks)	Manipulatives and TA support (out of 4 marks)	Difference in scores
Child O	2	3	+1
Child J	1	2	+1
Child P	0	2	+2
Child C	0	1	+1
Child E	2	3	+1
Child L	3	3	=

Table 1: Summary of data showing the difference between scores with manipulatives and manipulatives and TA support.

Table 1 shows the children's scores when completing a set of four pure calculations using manipulatives, compared with their scores when answering another set of pure calculations with manipulatives and TA support.

The literature review debated the idea that instructional variables could result in inconsistencies – something that was argued by Carbonneau et al., (2013). This agrees with my observation, as Table 1 shows five out of six children in the group performed better in the task when they received support from the TA – ranging from scaffolding through modelled steps and verbal feedback. Furthermore, Child O used cubes in the first observation and scored 2 marks, whereas Child E used a number square and scored 2 marks also. This possibly highlights another difference in instructional variables, adding inconsistency to the results.

Table 2 shows a comparison of data between Child J, who consistently used finger-counting across the three observations, and Child P and Child O who used a range of manipulatives. The findings agree in part with Mutlu et al., 2020 because the observation looked at the use of manipulatives in isolation and it is argued that finger-counting should be used until children have understanding behind the arithmetic operations used; however, it is argued that a framework such as CPA can help to bridge the gap between conceptual and procedural knowledge (Flores et al., 2014); however, this claim was not tested due to the nature of the observation. The results do not draw conclusive thoughts about finger-counting being more effective than manipulatives; however, the fact Child J still used finger-counting during observations when manipulatives were available implies that it has possibly become a habit (Moeller et al., 2011) and the reliance on finger-counting has not produced better results.

Participants	Observation 1 No manipulatives Scores out of 4	Observation 2 Manipulatives Scores out of 4	Observation 3 Manipulatives and TA support Scores out of 4
Child J	0	1	2
Child O	1	2	3
Child P	0	0	1

Table 2: A comparison of data between Child J, Child P and Child O, showing the difference between scores when using finger-counting and manipulatives.

Manipulative	The number of teachers' who reported that this type of manipulative was used in their classroom
Number squares	6
Number lines	6
Dienes	6
Counters	3
Place value counters	6
Lego	0
Numicon	6
Beads	5
Cubes	5
Other	3

Table 3: A summary of responses, by 6 teachers, on the use of manipulatives in their classroomses and TA support.

Teacher questionnaires

Table 3 shows the types of manipulatives used in teachers' classrooms to support learning in maths lessons. It was reported that manipulatives designed specifically for maths were used the most by teachers' (number squares, number lines, dienes, and Numicon) in comparison to counters and Lego which have dual uses (Drews & Hansen, 2007) which could explain why these options were chosen less. The sample for this questionnaire was in a school where a Mastery Maths approach was followed and the teachers are expected to incorporate manipulatives within their lessons; therefore, this data could be questioned as the teachers may be answering in line with school expectations.

Three teachers opted to provide alternative manipulatives that are used in their classrooms which included items such as: fraction walls, straws, pasta, wooden sticks, smarties, buttons, lollypop sticks and food items. I was surprised to see no mention of virtual manipulatives, despite research suggesting that it can support children with SEN (Bouck & Park 2018; Satsangi & Miller, 2017) However, this is perhaps because teachers at my setting use virtual manipulatives to model concepts on the Interactive Whiteboard and the children replicate this with concrete manipulatives, as they are readily available for all classes to use.

When asked how the children used manipulatives in maths, the comments were mixed. One teacher commented that the maths resources were kept next to the maths learning wall for the children to use as and when; however, interestingly, this teacher currently teaches in Year 6 which possibly suggests that the older children could have autonomy when choosing manipulatives because they are confident in using them. In some cases, there was a correlation between how the manipulative was used by the children and the teachers' view of manipulatives in general. For example, two Year 5 teachers stated that manipulatives do distract children's learning but when answering how the children use manipulatives, they both said the children did this independently. Although the generalisability could be questioned here due to it being views from the same year group, it does possibly suggest that the distraction could be because the children need more opportunities for guided practice, before using the manipulatives independently (Shin, 2017).

Conclusions and recommendations

Including existing literature with analysis of my research findings, provides quite a clear view that concrete manipulatives can have a positive impact on SEN and lower ability children's learning and progress. The findings from the research project have highlighted several implications for my own teaching practice in the future.

I will strive to ensure children have opportunities to use manipulatives during maths but being mindful that opportunities for guided practice are planned in, so that children can learn how to use them effectively. With the hope that, once the children have used the manipulatives for a sustained period, they will be able to use these with increasing independence, something that a Year 6 teacher stated in the questionnaire. The findings showed that concrete resources, which have dual purposes such as counters, could act as a distraction. I am now aware of this and would possibly replace counters with Cuisenaire rods. Despite low engagement with the virtual manipulative during my non-participant observation, I would trial alternative virtual manipulatives, as research suggests there is scope to differentiate this, and I would be interested to test this further.

As the literature review highlighted, there were strong links between the use of manipulatives and an instructional framework such as CPA. Although the activity did not follow a framework, I think the children were competent at using the manipulatives because manipulatives are a key component to Mastery Maths lessons which is taught throughout the setting. From experience at two placement schools, where a Mastery Maths approach was not used, manipulatives were not actively used by children. Therefore, introducing manipulatives at a setting which does not use a Mastery Maths approach would help to explore this topic further.

Upon reflection, this research could have been improved by increasing the focus group to possibly include children with a range of abilities, to make comparisons between children who were working at age related expectations, against lower ability children, Currently I can only tentatively suggest that manipulatives are effective for children who are lower ability or have SEN, due to the sample size of my study. I could have explored and compared KS2 with KS1 by asking teachers at the infant side to

complete the questionnaire to make further comparisons.

Despite the questionnaire generating positive comments on the use of manipulatives, it is important to point out that only six members of teaching staff completed the questionnaire. Teachers are expected to use manipulatives in the setting, as part of each maths lesson, so their answers may have been influenced by the expectations set by the school. Although the questionnaire provided anonymity, perhaps the question which asked for the current year group you teach may have prompted teachers to write what they think I wanted to hear. If I was to do this research again, I could possibly just ask the participants to name the Key Stage they worked in.

Nevertheless, my research has emphasised the need to consider the use of manipulatives carefully, ensuring that the children know how to use them effectively, with the possibility of introducing virtual manipulatives to support individual needs. ■

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In what ways have primary school teachers used technology differently to support children's learning during remote education and how might this inform their future practice?

Abstract:

This small-scale survey examined how primary school teachers used digital technology differently to support children's learning during remote education forced upon teachers and schools by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. It examined the barriers teachers faced in using technology to deliver online teaching and learning and identified how their experiences of using technology differently informed their future practice. Data were collected from teachers at three small rural village primary schools in Lincolnshire, resulting in 11 questionnaires being scrutinised and triangulated with five semi-structured interviews before analysis was completed and conclusions drawn. The results from this research have indicated most teachers had their first online teaching experience during the current pandemic, necessitating teachers to swiftly develop Technological Pedagogical Knowledge (TPK) in using virtual platforms and software to deliver pre-recorded and live lessons to children at home. This experience has allowed teachers to realise the potential benefits of using digital technology when children returned to school and in future practice, with many intending to put homework online and pre-record lessons for delivery to children in the classroom on occasions when they cannot be with them to provide consistently high-quality teaching whilst providing opportunities for children to develop digital skills essential for adulthood.

1. Introduction

Whilst Gillen et al. (2007), Selwyn (2007, 2008) and Convery (2009) highlighted the use of technology to support children's learning, this has been widely debated since the first computers were driven into schools by a government initiative in the 1970s. McFarlane (2015) argues no clear generalisable vision for how technology can be used to improve outcomes has been established, resulting in technology being inconsistently used in education. However, the ongoing coronavirus pandemic has forced children not to attend school on occasions to reduce the transmission of the highly infectious disease, posing significant challenges in educating children using conventional teaching methods (Department for Education [DfE], 2020b). The Coronavirus Act (2020) and associated continuity directive therefore made it compulsory for schools to provide education remotely for all pupils during periods when children must stay at home (DfE, 2021b; The Gazette Official Public Record, 2020).

As a result, many teachers who were previously reluctant to move away from traditional teaching methods have been forced to adopt new teaching strategies incorporating technology to deliver digital remote education (Dhawan, 2020, p.5). Starkey et al. (2021) indicate technology has played a critical role in supporting education during these forced periods of school closure

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and self-isolation. Ofsted (2021b) suggest schools may seek to continue to use aspects of digital remote education in the long term, having invested in it substantially in terms of finance and time, and having recognised it brings benefits to supporting children's education. I believe it is a necessity for teachers to incorporate the regular use of technology into the classroom for children to become familiar with and safely use a range of technology to enhance their learning whilst developing the necessary life skills to prepare them for living in what Sumardi et al. (2020) describe as a 'digital age'. This is consistent with the National Curriculum (DfE, 2014), which indicates schools and teachers should provide children with an educational experience that fully prepares them for adulthood (p.5). Additionally, literature suggests if children are not able to appreciate and use the complicated digital landscape safely and purposefully, they will be prohibited from participating fully in society, limiting their life chances (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2015). Therefore, it can be argued it is imperative teachers continually provide opportunities for children to use technology in a purposeful way in education to develop competence for later life.

This small-scale survey sought to identify in what ways primary school teachers used technology differently during remote education, identifying how technology was used to support children's learning when schools were closed because of the coronavirus pandemic, what barriers teachers faced in using the technology and how they intended to use this technology to support children's learning in future practice, offering professional development ideas to the wider profession, and informing my practice. It involved the teachers from three primary schools within one academy trust in Lincolnshire

3. Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

'Digital remote education' includes the use of technology to facilitate schooling when teaching or learning must occur away from the school premises (National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers, 2020; Ofsted, 2021b). According to the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) (2019), digital technology refers to the devices, software and virtual learning platforms used to enhance learning (p.1). Owing to the uniqueness of the circumstance and research focus into the impact remote education has had on children's learning, there is limited literature specific to primary education upon which to draw when exploring the use of technology to deliver digital remote education during the coronavirus pandemic. Therefore, whilst analysis in this thematic literature review has identified key uses of technology in delivering digital remote education, the barriers faced and how technology could be used in future practice in schools, the findings are not specific to primary education and will be cross-examined later in my research analysis before conclusions are drawn.

3.2 Theme 1 - Technology during digital remote education

Since schools were forced to close on 20th March 2020 to curtail the spread of the coronavirus (Sharp et al., 2020), existing literature suggests digital technology has played a developing but vital role in remote education. Microsoft (2020) identified four out of five teachers stated online digital lessons have been fundamental to children's learning during this period. Although the findings of this research should be treated with caution as they may have been influenced by corporate bias, they are supported by the School Education Gateway (2020), who identified at least two thirds of teachers had their first experience of teaching online during this pandemic, and the EEF (2020b), who established digital technology has been used in most cases to deliver remote education. Consequently, although teachers lacked experience and Technological Pedagogical Knowledge (TPK) (König et al, 2020) in using technology to deliver teaching, existing literature suggests it has been used by majority of teachers to support children's learning during the pandemic.

The DfE (2020a) identified many schools used existing, familiar technology to deliver digital remote education for a smooth transition, but Breslin (2021) indicated even if the technology was familiar, it had not been used previously in every lesson in the manner as was required during remote education. Digital technology has been used during this period to deliver live, synchronous, and recorded, asynchronous lessons (EEF, 2020a; Ofsted, 2021a) and the DfE (2021b) suggested schools should use a single, interactive platform such as 'Microsoft Teams or Google Classroom' to provide a central area for all online lessons and materials, even though over half of teachers had never used online digital platforms before lockdown (Microsoft, 2020). Nevertheless, literature suggests such virtual platforms have played a vital part in learning outcomes, allowing teachers to work directly with classes and small groups which would not have been possible without digital technology during school closures (Brown, 2021). However, Ofsted (2021b) noted teachers must be aware of an exceptional need for clarity and explanation in recorded lessons to tackle misconceptions which would normally be addressed in face-to-face teaching. Additionally, many teachers have realised the potential of using digital software such as Google Forms, Kahoot, ClassKick, Socrative and Edpuzzle (DfE, 2021b) to conduct formative assessment during remote education, allowing children and teachers to get instant feedback, supporting early identification of learner needs and informing the planning process in an efficient manner (DfE, 2020a).

Therefore, although online teaching using digital technology was new to most teachers at the start of the current pandemic, literature suggests it has played a critical role in supporting children's learning during remote education, allowing teacher-led sessions to be delivered through either live or pre-recorded lessons, allowing pupils to collaborate during learning and enabling teachers to continue to assess pupil progress and provide feedback, even when not in the same room as the children. However, the literature is not specific to the primary sector and, therefore, required further investigation to identify relatability to primary education, which my research sought to determine.

3.3 Theme 2 - Barriers to using digital technology during remote education

The success of digital remote education has been reliant upon teachers having access to appropriate technology and support to utilise it effectively and fully (EEF, 2020b). However, Sharp et al. (2020) identified over a third of teachers provided their own

laptop to conduct remote education (p.30). Additionally, School Education Gateway (2020) and Promethean (n.d.) identified teachers' access to and unreliability of technology had been a barrier to effective remote education for over a third of teachers, hindering the quality of education offered. Furthermore, a lack of digital teaching experience meant training on how to use the technology to support children's learning was paramount for teachers during remote education (EEF, 2020b; Schleicher, 2020). However, Sharp et al. (2020) suggested almost two fifths of primary teachers had not received any training on using technology to help them provide digital remote education, negatively impacting pupil progress with the teachers having received less training seeing their pupils falling most behind. Although DfE (2021a) advocated schools should conduct an audit to assess staff's access to and capability in using digital technology, it was not statutory. Therefore, it could be argued a need still exists to identify if teachers continue to perceive their access to and training in how to use technology to support children's learning as barriers to delivering effective digital remote education, which my research aimed to address.

3.4 Theme 3 - The future of technology in primary schools

Continuing to use the technology discovered in remote education regularly in class and at home is important to ensure technology becomes and remains familiar, developing independence, confidence and skills for both teachers and children, better preparing individuals for today's digital society, in turn supporting employment prospects and appropriate online social integration (Microsoft, 2020).

The Edge Foundation (2020) identified over half of teachers developed TPK by delivering digital remote education during school closures, which they wish to continue to use in their future teaching practice (p.18). Whilst the small number of participants in this study from across all education sectors mean the statistics must be treated with caution, other research supports the findings, with two thirds of teachers suggesting they would use more online learning than before Covid-19 when schools returned (School Education Gateway, 2020) and over eight out of 10 educators specifying technology would be a core part of learning in the future (Promethean, n.d.). Ofsted (2021b) also identified schools may seek to continue to use more digital technology now that majority of children have returned to classroom teaching. However, Nick Gibb, the school standards minister, suggested the continual use of digital technology in education must be justified, highlighting careful consideration should be given to where it can enhance high-quality provision (Media Officer, 2021).

The DfE (2021c) stipulate any child who is well but is not able to be in school because of the continuing pandemic should continue to receive recorded or live guided teaching time, complemented by additional learning tasks (p.44), indicating teachers will need to use digital technology in ongoing practice. The EEF (2020b), The Edge Foundation (2020) and Ofsted (2021b) also indicate schools may use digital technology to improve homework delivery and engagement.

Additionally, Sharp et al. (2020) suggest digital technology may play a greater role in classroom practice as teachers continue to be restricted in their movement around the classroom to maintain social distancing requirements, making the assessment of children's independent work difficult. Therefore, a need for new approaches to formative assessment and feedback may be required to maintain effective learning strategies, which digital technology could support by using online self-quizzes during classroom lessons (EEF, 2020b).

Finally, digital technology may have a role to play in ensuring continuity in children's learning when a teacher is absent from the classroom. Recorded lessons could be used when staff are absent from school, reducing the need for supply teachers, ensuring continuity in learning and maintaining high-quality provision (Ofsted 2021b), although this suggestion came from leaders and not teachers and requires further research to identify teachers' attitudes towards the use of recorded lessons to cover their absences from the classroom.

3.5 Literature Gap

It is evident existing research has identified many teachers across the education sector have used digital technology to support children's learning during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. However, there is a gap in the knowledge which my research sought to fulfil in terms of examining specifically how primary school teachers have used the technology, what barriers they faced and how they plan to use any new technology they have discovered in the future to enhance practice and children's learning outcomes.

4. Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This research was a small-scale survey as it gathered data at a specific moment in time with a view to identifying the nature of recent practices (Cohen et al., 2018), ascertaining in what ways primary school teachers had used technology differently to support children's learning during digital remote education since the start of the coronavirus pandemic. A survey provided a fitting methodology, allowing me to answer my 'in what ways' question by enabling me to collect rich data through the questioning of professionals (Bell & Waters, 2018; Denscombe, 2017), establishing a comprehensive, detailed picture of teachers' ways of working with technology. A mixed method approach was used to collect data to develop a better understanding of the research topic than would have been possible if only one approach had been used (Biesta, 2017; Plano Clark, 2017). Closed questions produced quantitative data and allowed for greater statistical comparison during data analysis (Creswell, 2014), whilst the predominant use of open-ended questions produced abundant qualitative data to allow for deeper exploration of the topic over breadth (Austin, 2016). However, being a single small-scale survey means it is not appropriate to generalise the findings of this research as the conclusions may not be representative of the wider profession (Rapley, 2014). Nevertheless, to improve the validity of my research and make the results more transferable, the survey triangulated two methods of data collection and included three schools to broaden the sample and add depth, improving reliability and increasing understanding (Bell & Waters, 2018; Burton et al. 2014). Online methods of data collection were chosen to adhere to guidance from the research sector which advocates digital methods be used as suitable alternatives to face-to-face methods during the continuing pandemic, minimising

potential risks to participants' health and safety (The Market Research Society, 2021).

4.2 Sample

The research was undertaken in three rural village primary schools who share the same Executive Headteacher, all located in Lincolnshire and from one academy trust, with school A and school B being much smaller than average-sized, resulting in children being taught in mixed-aged classes (Ofsted, 2019a, Ofsted 2019b), whilst school C is smaller than averaged-sized but has a single class in each year group (Ofsted 2014). I intentionally chose these sites as a purposeful sample for the valuable information they would offer (Creswell, 2014, p.228) having previously established from the Executive Headteacher each school had used technology to conduct digital remote learning during the pandemic. School A has three teachers, school B has five teachers and school C has seven teachers, all of whom were approached to participate, providing a sample size of 15.

4.3 Method 1

I devised and distributed online questionnaires using Jisc software to begin the data collection in a manner compliant with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (JISC, 2021), after completing reading of the existing literature on my research topic, allowing me to begin my exploratory work (Tymms, 2017, p.231) in a timely, cost-effective manner, asking all participants the same questions to ensure consistency (Denscombe, 2017). This was particularly important given the lack of funding and project timescale of just 11 weeks for completion of the whole project. Although I predominantly used open-ended questions, providing text boxes to collect qualitative data, which Dawson (2015) suggested allows for free responses to catch authentic, rich answers from participants, some quantitative, closed questions were included where responses fell into predetermined categories to identify key information (Newby, 2014) such as length of time teaching, location of job and age of children taught, allowing for greater comparison during data analysis. However, Cohen et al. (2018) suggested questions can be misunderstood or misinterpreted, or participants may lose interest or disengage whilst completing questionnaires, producing unreliable or negligible responses. Additionally, once questionnaires have been distributed, their completion cannot be controlled, and people may confer or lie when completing them, and there may be no opportunity to identify the truthfulness of the answers (Denscombe, 2017). These limitations were realised during data collection in my survey as having received replies from 12 participants in the specified week-long time slot, it was apparent during data analysis some responses were minimal or inappropriate. In hindsight, this issue could have been reduced by piloting the questionnaire before distribution to final participants to ensure it was not too long and to ensure each question was clear (Bell & Waters, 2018). Additionally, two respondents from the same school appear to have completed the questionnaire together with similar worded answers in free text boxes and having submitted responses just 1 minute apart. Although the realisation of the limitations of questionnaires diminishes the validity of the findings, this was partly overcome through triangulation of methods, as the questionnaire offered participants opportunity to participate in a follow-up interview for further discussion, allowing some answers to be checked and clarified.

4.4 Method 2

Following data analysis of the questionnaires, I determined further open-ended questions to put to five participants who had volunteered to participate in an individual semi-structured interview, providing clarity and expansion on initial answers whilst allowing further qualitative information to be gathered to enhance data analysis through triangulation (Burton et al., 2014; Dawson, 2015). Two of the participants were from school A, one from school B and two from school C, ensuring the sample represented each setting. To ensure data collection was of the highest standard, I sought permission from all participants to produce a video recording of the online interview on Microsoft Teams, practice Clough and Nutbrown (2012) advocate is best to adhere to ethical guidelines and to ensure all data is safely documented. However, Denscombe (2017) indicates being recorded may prevent participants from speaking openly and honestly about their experience, casting doubt on the reliability of the data collected. However, this method of live data collection allowed me to flexibly probe participants with first-hand experience for further answers (Austin, 2016), gaining valuable insights from teachers which I had not previously established, allowing my research to explore the topic in depth. As soon as the interviews had been completed, I transcribed the recordings and deleted the video files to protect participants' anonymity.

However, a possible limitation to this method must be acknowledged as interviews can be subject to potential interviewer bias (Austin, 2016; Cohen et al., 2018; Denscombe, 2017), where subconsciously I may have sought answers to support my own beliefs and ignored information which did not. Although I tried to overcome this by pre-determining open questions, Powell et al. (2012) suggest the interviewer must be skilled in adhering to such questions which may come with interviewing experience, a practice I lacked initially but have developed across the course of the interviews, questioning the validity of the findings and therefore, overall reliability of conclusions of my project.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

I conducted this research in an open, respectful, professional manner throughout, maintaining well-being and integrity by adhering to ethical policies and guidelines (Bishop Grosseteste University [BGU], 2019; British Educational Research Association [BERA], 2019). I gained ethical approval from my university research tutor before starting the project, followed by gatekeeper permission, verbally from the Executive Headteacher followed by full written consent from the three Heads of School. Teachers were then approached regarding their participation via a well-defined information sheet, providing full details of the project and an explanation of their right to withdraw up until the point of data analysis, before informed consent was gained from participants (BERA, 2019; Denscombe, 2017).

Throughout this research, careful planning and design, including the use of alphabetical coding of participants and schools to protect identities, has ensured anonymity and confidentiality has been maintained, in line with the BGU Research Ethics Policy (2019) and Data Protection Act (2018). All collected data have been stored securely online to ensure only I had access to it in line with GDPR requirements (Information Commissioner's Office, 2018), and on completion of my research, I have deleted it all.

4.6 Limitations

The reliability of this survey may subconsciously have been negatively affected

by researcher subjectivity as Schumm (2021) indicates all individuals have biases which will influence social science research. I have decided what to code, how to theme and how to present my findings in this project and it should be noted this could be different to how someone else may have reported the findings if they had been presented with the same data. Therefore, the conclusions of this research should be compared against similar projects to critically test the validity.

5. Analysis and Discussion of Findings

5.1 Introduction

Given much of the data collected were of a qualitative nature, a comprehensive method of repetitively reading responses whilst applying a thematic coding system (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Guyan, 2018) enabled a robust analysis to be completed, allowing for a critical discussion of findings.

5.2 Questionnaires

I received responses from 12 of the 15 potential participants - two out of three from school A, three out of four from school B and seven out of eight from school C. Therefore, each school had a fair representation of participants. However, one of the responses from a participant at school B indicated they were on maternity leave during the period of remote education and although they provided some answers, the validity and reliability of these data were questionable. Therefore, given the participant did not agree to interview and their responses could not be clarified, their data were omitted from the analysis to uphold reliability of my research findings, resulting in 11 responses being analysed (n=11).

Analysis has shown that regardless of how long they had been teaching, whether they were newly qualified or had more than 20 years' experience, nine out of 11 participants had not taught online prior to Covid-19 (see Table 1). This finding is broadly in line with the literature from the School Education Gateway (2020) which identified two thirds of teachers had their first experience of teaching online during this pandemic, although the data would suggest the figure of primary teachers experiencing their first online teaching was slightly higher than existing literature indicates.

Therefore, the data show participants were inexperienced in using technology to support children's learning during remote education, although further analysis identified participants believed technology had played a critical role in supporting children's learning during remote education, with nine of the 11 stating it supported children's access to resources and teacher-led learning (see Appendix 2, Table 2). One participant stated:

> 'If it was not for technology children would not have been able to access and complete certain tasks without the modelling teachers were able to do via videos.'
> Participant 2

My findings are in line with the literature by Microsoft (2020) which suggested the use of technology was fundamental to support children's learning during remote education.

When asked what technology participants had used to support children's learning during remote education, 10 stated they had used Microsoft Teams for the first time, with only participant 8 not mentioning it (see Appendix 2, Table 3). Although the participant may not have used it, it was recognised this could be a realisation of the limitations of using open-ended questions in a questionnaire, as perhaps the participant just failed to mention it (Cohen et al., 2017). As participant 8 had volunteered to be interviewed, I was able to establish during interview they had used Microsoft Teams, allowing triangulation of the data to be achieved.

> 'We did all learning on TEAMS.'
> Participant 8

Therefore, all participants (n=11) stated they used Microsoft Teams, which they had not used before, to support children's learning. However, further analysis of the data also showed participants had used other collaborative virtual learning platforms in addition to Microsoft Teams, with six having used Zoom and five having used Padlet. This contradicted the literature which suggested schools should use a single interactive platform such as Microsoft Teams to conduct remote learning (DfE, 2021b). Therefore, I developed a question to ask during interview to investigate how and why the virtual platforms of Zoom and Padlet had been used in addition to Microsoft Teams (see Appendix 3).

When asked how existing technology had been used differently to support children's learning during remote education, all participants (n=11) mentioned using the laptop for delivering lessons via either pre-recorded or

Participant n=11	Years Teaching	Experience with online teaching
1	0-1 years (I am in my NQT year)	First experience during Covid-19 pandemic
2	0-1 years (I am in my NQT year)	First experience during Covid-19 pandemic
3	0-1 years (I am in my NQT year)	Some experience with online teaching having used it occasionally even before Covid-19.
4	2-5 years (I am in my RQT years)	First experience during Covid-19 pandemic
5	5-10 years	First experience during Covid-19 pandemic
6	2-5 years (I am in my RQT years)	First experience during Covid-19 pandemic
7	2-5 years (I am in my RQT years)	First experience during Covid-19 pandemic
8	0-1 years (I am in my NQT year)	Some experience with online teaching having used it occasionally even before Covid-19.
9	10 – 20 years	First experience during Covid-19 pandemic
10	0-1 years (I am in my NQT year)	First experience during Covid-19 pandemic
11	More than 20 years	First experience during Covid-19 pandemic

Table 1: Table to show how many years each participant has been teaching and their previous experience with online teaching.

live sessions or both (see Appendix 2, Table 4), verifying the findings of the EEF (2020a) and Ofsted (2021a), indicating they are applicable to the primary sector. Additionally, analysis showed four participants had adapted the use of Powerpoint software to include narration or videos or both, and participant 6 mentioned a need for more detail than usual on the Powerpoint slides. However, four of the five volunteers for interview had not mentioned Powerpoint in the questionnaire responses. Therefore, I devised a question to ask at interview to triangulate the data further before conclusions were drawn on how Powerpoint had been used to support children's learning (see Appendix 3).

From analysing the data to identify what barriers teachers faced in using technology to support children's learning during remote education, it was apparent my research contradicted the literature, identifying all primary school teachers surveyed (n=11) had received some training in the form of live or recorded video training (see Appendix 2, Table 5), whereas Sharp et al. (2020) indicated two fifths of primary teachers had received no training whatsoever. However, one participant in my survey suggested the training may not have been sufficient, especially at the beginning.

> '...lack of training was a barrier initially, but we got through that by sharing practise within school...'
> Participant 11

Therefore, I used the interviews to examine participants' perceptions in more detail to establish if training on the use of technology was still a barrier in using it to support children's learning. Analysis of the questionnaires also showed five of the 11 participants identified reliability of technology including network and software issues had been a barrier in using technology to support children's learning remotely, although another participant had made a point of stating:

> 'Most of the time the reliability of technology was good.'
> Participant 2

Therefore, although reliability of technology had been an issue for some when delivering remote education, this was not the case for all. Additionally, although five participants also remarked that children's access to technology had proven a barrier to them delivering teaching and learning remotely, no participants mentioned their own access to equipment was a barrier to delivering remote education, contradicting the literature which had identified over a third of teachers had supplied their own laptop (Sharp et al., 2020).

When asked how teachers intended to use any new or adapted technology discovered during remote education in the future (see Appendix 2, Table 7), analysis showed two common uses. Eight of the 11 participants indicated they were still using it for homework, whilst nine also indicated they were using it ongoing to pre-record lessons for children to access in class for a variety of reasons. These included to cover times when they cannot be in the room, to teach a group of children in a mixed-age class when learning intentions do not align, to provide adult support to groups of children when an additional adult is not available and to deliver interventions for specific children. These findings are in line with existing literature by The Edge Foundation (2020) and Ofsted (2021b) who indicated schools may continue to use the technology to support homework delivery, and the EEF (2020b) who also indicated schools may use it to deliver pre-recorded lessons when a teacher cannot be in the classroom. Only one participant mentioned the technology was being used ongoing to teach children who are absent from school, contradicting the literature which stipulates this should be ongoing during the continuing coronavirus pandemic (DfE, 2021c). Therefore, further investigation is required to identify if teachers are continuing to use technology to deliver remote education to children forced to stay at home, which should have been addressed in the interviews but was not. Curiously, no participants mentioned continuing to use technology for assessment and feedback purposes which had been identified in the literature (EEF, 2020b), therefore, I used the interviews to triangulate the data and examine this topic further.

The main theme identified from the data when participants were asked what benefit they hoped to achieve by using the technology ongoing was to provide children with consistently high-quality teaching (n=4) (see Appendix 2, Table 8), verifying the existing literature by Ofsted (2021b) which identified this was what leaders were also hoping to achieve. Additional benefits also identified during data analysis included developing children's independence in learning (n=2) and preparing children for later life (n=1), supporting the claims made by Microsoft (2020).

5.3 Interviews

Having completed individual semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 3 for pre-determined questions) with five volunteer participants (n=5) from the questionnaires, analysis of the data identified Zoom had been used in addition to Microsoft Teams for recording lessons (n=2) and holding registrations (n=1) and Padlet had been used to provide a separate platform for children to socialise with each other (n=1).

> 'I used Zoom to record my lessons before I attached them to Teams. This was the way a colleague showed me.'
> Participant 1

> 'I didn't use Zoom or Padlet.'
> Participant 2

> 'We used Padlet like the playground for wellbeing where children could socialise with each other.'
> Participant 8

> 'I preferred Zoom for recording lessons as it is very easy.'
> Participant 10

> 'We had Zoom registrations as this was shown to me by a colleague.'
> Participant 11

Therefore, together with data analysis from the questionnaires, this identified all participants (n=11) had only used Microsoft Teams as the single, interactive platform to conduct remote learning, suggesting Government recommendations had been followed (DfE, 2021b), using other online platforms to complement their personal pedagogy and support children's wellbeing. Additionally, during interview, I established all five participants had used Powerpoint in almost every recorded lesson to support children's learning during remote education, with all teachers indicating they used it more

frequently than they would and with more detail either on the slides or via the voiceover to provide clarity and address misconceptions they believed children may hold, consistent with the literature (Ofsted, 2021b). However, all participants (n=5) stated they have gone back to only occasionally using Powerpoint in the classroom to support learning now children are back in school, having found the slides time consuming to compile and not having recognised a significant benefit in using them to support children's learning.

When asked how they felt about the amount of training received on using the technology, four participants stated there was ample available to get them started, although participant 11 commented the training was delivered too late into the start of lockdown after they had already been trying to use the technology. However, a direct link can be made with the literature as all participants (n=5) suggested they would be more confident using the technology to support children's learning in the long run having gained a significant amount of experience and developed TPK (The Edge Foundation, 2020), indicating they no longer perceived training to be a barrier.

Finally, when asked how participants had conducted assessment and feedback during digital remote education, all (n=5) stated they commented on work children had posted online. Although four of the five participants stated they regularly used online quizzes such as Kahoot and Classroom Screen as part of everyday classroom practice to conduct assessment prior to school closures, only participant 11 used online quizzes during remote education, and only occasionally, stating it was difficult to make accurate assessments when the children were not present because of the unreliability of the work.

> 'You don't know how much help they've (the children) had, and you don't know if it was them or their big brother and sisters doing it.'
> Participant 11

This differed from the literature which suggested many teachers had realised the potential of using online quizzes to support the assessment process during remote education (DfE 2020a, DfE 2021b), and requires further detailed exploration before conclusions can be drawn.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Although digital technology has previously lacked a clear vision for how it can improve learning outcomes (McFarlane, 2015), following careful analysis of my findings and comparison with existing literature, it is evident digital technology has been fundamental in facilitating teacher-led learning for children being educated at home during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. My research supports existing literature by the School Education Gateway (2020), recognising majority of teachers have had their first experience of online teaching during this pandemic, requiring them to learn quickly how to use virtual platforms such as Microsoft Teams and software such as Powerpoint to teach in ways they have seldom done before via pre-recorded or live online lessons.

Although my research would suggest primary school teachers have received more training and have more access to the devices needed to deliver online learning than in other education sectors (Sharp et al. 2020), given the small scale of my survey and questionable validity owing to issues such as researcher subjectivity and interviewer bias, further research is necessary to confirm all findings in my survey before they can be generalised.

However, my research identified primary school teachers are intending to draw upon new TPK (König et al., 2020) acquired during this unprecedented period to use digital technology in their future practice in new ways. The majority are now posting homework online as well as pre-recording lessons to be delivered to children in the classroom on occasions when as the teacher, they cannot physically be with the children, aiming to provide consistently high-quality teaching (Ofsted, 2021b). By providing children with such opportunities to use digital technology regularly in the classroom and at home to access and complete learning, teachers are fulfilling the requirements of the National Curriculum (2014), providing opportunities for children to develop the skills they require for successfully living and working in a digital age (Microsoft, 2020; Sumardi et al., 2020), preparing them for adulthood. However, although these findings are useful for me to consider for my future practice, further research is required to examine the practicability and morality of continually delivering homework online given my research identified five participants commented children's access to technology had been a barrier to them achieving learning during remote education, suggesting not all children may be able to access homework online, raising ethical concerns I wish to investigate further before developing such practice myself. ■

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McMindfulness or elixir to life's ills: What are the implications of practicing mindfulness in a secular context?

Abstract:

Of the numerous mindfulness practices and courses currently available in the West, few encapsulate the full spectrum of teachings in the Buddhist Noble Eightfold Path from which they were spawned. This study investigates the original situation of mindfulness meditation within Buddhist psychology, sewn up as it is with ethical conduct and wisdom. This is juxtaposed with the way mindfulness is now often presented and practiced in the West as a standalone treatment, particularly for mental disorders. While research into the application of mindfulness to treat mental disorders has given some promising results, the depth and quality of current research is questioned and complicated by varied definitions of the term mindfulness. The lack of research into the relationship between mindfulness and morality is noted, as is the difficulty science has in understanding morality. The door has thus been opened for neo-liberal organisations to appropriate mindfulness practices for their employees to improve efficiency and save money, in disregard of the employees' wellbeing. Nevertheless, there are examples of secular mindfulness courses that do incorporate morality and wisdom both implicitly and explicitly, with further research into their relationship required.

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Introduction

The mindfulness practices that have been proliferating in the West over the past few decades are born out of Buddhist practices and psychology. In this assignment, the original cultural, psychological, and practical paradigm in which mindfulness took place is explored, clarifying what mindfulness means in Buddhist terms and where it fits into the Buddha's teachings. Contemporary secular applications of mindfulness in the West and its benefits will be summarized as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the supporting research. The varied extent to which those secular courses include ethical practices that formed part of the original Buddhist context is also investigated, and the varying implications of this relationship, or lack of, are considered. This includes the possibility that the cultural appropriation of mindfulness practices divorced from its original context, and being employed in neo-liberal corporations to relieve stress and improve productivity, is now helping to perpetuate the structures that are causing the very suffering mindfulness was designed to dissipate. Conversely, examples of secular courses that attempt to walk the narrow tightrope of shedding religious dogma and retaining the power inherent in the Buddhist path are given.

What is mindfulness and how does it fit into Buddhist psychology?

In the Buddhist tradition, mindfulness is the English translation of a Pali word, *sati* (Shaw, 2020, p.9). Early translations of the word mindfulness associated it with memory or recollection (Gilbert, 2017, p.69). This would be an accurate translation of the term when applied to its usage before or outside of the Buddha's teachings, since it described the memorization of certain texts (Shaw, 2020, p. 9). However, the Buddha used the word differently, altering its meaning. *Sati*, or mindfulness, in Buddhism refers to an activity

which can only be experienced, not understood, and therefore cannot accurately be described since language works on a symbolic level, not the experiential (Gilbert, 2017, p.69; Shaw, 2020, p. 9). Nevertheless, Shaw (2020) attempts to describe what is implied through the Buddhist use of the word, 'mindfulness': 'It now becomes a quality needed for the awake and free mind, a way of relating to the world that seems to have a sense of presence, apparently more than, and even instead of memory' (p. 28). Neves-Pereira, Carvalho and Aspesi (2018, p. 221; Grossman & Van Dam, 2011) propose that, with mindfulness being a noun, which suggests a fixed attribute, 'to be mindful' might have been a more appropriate translation of sati, as it better describes the meta-cognitive awareness of oneself. According to Buddhist psychology, the mindful state is a result of training that transforms the student on all levels of their being, from the physical to the emotional, cognitive and spiritual, impacting on their instantaneous and distant reality (Neves-Pereira, Carvalho & Aspesi, 2018).

The goal of mindfulness in Buddhist teachings is to free oneself from suffering, or *dukkha* , and reach the state free from suffering known as *nirvana* (Nhat Hanh, 1975). However, mindfulness is not presented as a solitary practice or quality required to reach that goal (Kingsland, 2016, p. 12; Nhat Hanh, 1975). The Buddha taught the Noble Eightfold Path, which can be split into three stages: *sila*, ethical conduct; *samaddhi*, mental discipline; and *panna*, wisdom (Goenka IN Hart, 1987). All eight aspects of the path are essential for the attainment of the goal of *nirvanna*, and mindfulness, which comes under the *samaddhi* stage, is an essential but interdependent part of the whole. In Buddhist traditions, mindfulness would not, and indeed should not, be taught as a standalone practice (Neves-Pereira, Carvalho & Aspesi, 2018).

How is mindfulness being used in the West?

Since the latter stages of the 20th century, an outpouring in interest in mindfulness in the West has thrust it into the limelight and includes a wide variety of mindfulness meditation courses, self-help books, in-company group practices, talks and online courses (Purser, 2019; The Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group, 2015). Nevertheless, in the fields of psychology and science, ambiguity persists around the semantics of the word. According to Kabat-Zinn's (1994) formative definition, mindfulness means, 'paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally' (p. 4). Mindfulness meditations, extricated from Eastern religious philosophy and practice, have attracted increasing attention in the fields of Western psychology and medicine, with thousands of papers published to date (Greco & Hayes, 2008; The Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group, 2015). Mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs), the most recognized of which are Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) (Kabat-Zinn, 1990) and Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) (Segal, Williams & Teasdale, 2013), are secular courses intended to treat psychological conditions.

According to the Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group (2015), there is great potential in the use of mindfulness to alleviate suffering, particularly for those with mental health disorders and those who undertake the responsibility to treat them. There is currently a mental health crisis in the UK (Flores et al., 2018), one that has only been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and related lockdowns (Bao et al., 2020). Several clinical randomized controlled trials have been undertaken for both MBCT and MBSR, with both returning some positive results suggesting the courses can be effective in treating depression, particularly relapses for those who have already experienced depression, and stress (Seagal, Williams & Teasdale, 2013). Considerable evidence now suggests that mindfulness-based interventions can successfully prevent relapses of depression (Michalak & Heidenreich, 2018; Seagal, Williams & Teasdale, 2013). However, though there is an abundance of research into the effects of mindfulness on subsections of society, such as school children, there is still a distinct lack of depth (Dimidjian & Segal, 2015).

Existing research into MBIs

There are concerns about the quality and reliability of research into mindfulness. Purser (2019, p. 14) is critical of the fact that much of the available research is conducted by those with a vested interest in the field: authors of mindfulness literature; teachers on mindfulness courses; and researchers in search of grants (Purser, 2019, p. 14). However, this argument appears to ignore the stronger aspects of the current research, for example that mindfulness interventions prevent relapses in patients with depression is now considered strong (Michalak & Heidenreich, 2018). In the case of the MBCT course, the authors themselves recognised the early deficiency in their work, since they conducted the research, however, a subsequent independent RCT supported their findings (Seagal, Williams & Teasdale, 2013). Purser's (2019) observation about the potential for bias present in current mindfulness research are noteworthy, nevertheless, that is not evidence in itself that secular mindfulness courses are not effective.

An ever-increasing amount of research in the fields of psychology, education and science into mindfulness are being undertaken. However, many of the research projects returned inconclusive results and are further complicated by the plethora of definitions of mindfulness and scales used to measure mindfulness (Dimidjian & Segal, 2015; Grossman & Van Dam, 2011). Furthermore, being inextricable from the other conditions of the Buddhist path, mindfulness is difficult for conventional scientific methods to study (Grossman & Van Dam, 2011, p.220). Grossman (2011, p. 220) argues that new non-linear models for measuring mindfulness, which take into account the coactive relationships between mindfulness and qualities such as compassion and equanimity,

are necessary for a scientific understanding of how mindfulness works and should be applied.

Mindfulness and morality, ethics and conduct.

In Western psychology, the idea of mindfulness as a powerful tool for improving lives in all manner of ways has gained a foothold, often distinct from its context within a greater Buddhist psychology and spirituality, including ethical, behavioural, cognitive and social dimensions (Grossman & Van Dam, 2011, p. 220; Purser, 2019; Shaw, 2020). Some mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) do acknowledge the Buddhist roots of mindfulness and its entanglement within the other aspects of Buddhist teachings, from which, according to Grossman & Van Dam (2011, p. 220) it is likely impossible to separate the practice. Gilbert (2017, p. 70) asserts that the ethical basis of Buddhist teachings is implied in the terms 'non-judgement' or 'acceptance' employed on some courses, but that emphasis is given to mindfulness meditations over qualities relating to ethics. Many other Western courses, seemingly unaware of the origins of mindfulness, may be looking to exploit the current trend and overlook questions of morality and compassion altogether (Purser, 2019; Van Dam, 2020).

An overabundance of courses has appeared in the West, many of which cater for those who are being overstimulated, overworked, and stressed by the capitalist society they find themselves in (Purser, 2019). While Buddhist traditions emphasized the 'renunciation of pleasures', Western society is the antithesis of renunciation (Shaw, 2020, p. 29). Many of the behaviours that are acceptable in contemporary Western society, such as consumption of mind-altering substances or consumerism, are perceived as harmful within Buddhist psychology, and counterproductive in the journey to end suffering.

This emphasis on attention over compassion is often related to the Theravada school of Buddhism, while an emphasis on compassion can be found in Mahayana Buddhism, yet both schools stress the need for a combination of attention and compassion (Tan, 2020). Whether accentuating the cognitive or emotional schools, the shared assumptions about mindfulness practice in the West are that it is 'individualistic' and distinct from culture or morality (Tan, 2020, p. 4). A common critique of the Western approach to mindfulness is that the cultural paradigm that fashioned and supports mindfulness in the East is discounted in favour of a 'non-evaluative and normatively neutral approach' (Tan, 2020, p. 4; Shaw, 2020, p. 15). This refers to unskilful cultural appropriation that attempts to find benefits in a practice without looking at the paradigm with which it is practiced. The general attitude is that mindfulness is 'the ability to dispassionately observe the experience of the present moment with non-judgemental openness' (Sauer et al. 2013, p. 3). Yet, it should not be dismissed that mindfulness is rooted in a spiritual tradition with moral and ethical foundations. This extraction distorts the original aims of Buddhism: freedom from attachment, cravings, and aversions (Gethin, 2011, p. 268; Hart, 1987; Nhat Hanh, 1975). The problem with this approach, according to Kirmayer (2015), is that the exclusion of spirituality, and morality from mindfulness practices potentially risks becoming a tool for pursuing harmful goals. This is not, however, implying that mindfulness must be tied to dogmatic or religious systems, but that, for its benefits to come to fruition, mindfulness must be applied alongside an ethical code of practice and compassion (Tan, 2020).

The mindfulness courses most directly associated with research in the field recognise the necessity of a quality of compassion being present when practicing awareness. Those behind the MBCT and MBSR courses, the most widely disseminated secular courses, do insist that compassion should be incorporated into practice and even that not to do so is harmful (Seagal, Williams & Teasdale, 2013, p. 137; Gilbert, 2017, p. 72). According to modern science, compassion is an 'inner strength', that improves mental health and can be heightened through practice (Gilbert, 2017, p. 72). Though not explicit, its inclusion is a positive example of Buddhist psychology being employed in a secular mindfulness course and, in the convergence of contemporary psychology and traditional Buddhist practice, compassion is the next logical step (Gilbert, 2017, p. 72; Kingsland, 2016, p. 12). Yet, MBCT falls short of offering specific practices designed to cultivate loving kindness, over fears they could trigger vulnerabilities in students, many of whom are suffering from depression (Seagal, Williams & Teasdale, 2013; Gilbert, 2017, p. 72). Instead, the course relies on the embodiment of loving kindness in the instructor and the environment which they create on the course (Seagal, Williams & Teasdale, 2013). No code of conduct is incumbent on students undertaking either MBCT or MBSR courses, both of which last for eight weeks. The founders of these more recognised mindfulness programmes, supported by RCTs, realise the necessity of including an ethical element to their courses, but fall short of providing significant, overt practices to support that quality.

The significance of morality in conjunction with mindfulness is so comprehensive that each student's level of piety is the biggest indicator of their ability to cultivate mindfulness (Hart, 1987).

> The more selfishly driven a practitioner is, the harder it becomes to control one's own mind, since his or her desires or fears are more intensely present in it. The ethical dimension is not only a realm of social refuge against the effects of ignorance and egotism, but is also a source of support to practice. The quality of a person's relations is inseparable from his or her meditation (Neves-Pereira, Carvalho & Aspesi, 2018, p. 150).

Here it is clear that the ability for a student to cultivate mindfulness is in fact incumbent on them sustaining a pious and selfless attitude.

The therapist must decide whether their commitment is to treating the dysfunctional human being, or, together, to question the inherent dysfunctions in 'normal' society (Neves-Pereira, Carvalho & Aspesi, 2018, p. 151). However, this leads the practitioner to conflict as questioning established views on the nature of self and of scientific understanding goes beyond the paradigmatic limitations of many schools of psychology and science, and causes tension within their theoretical basis (Neves-Pereira, Carvalho & Aspesi, 2018, p. 151; Taylor, 2018). Yet, this inability to include the underpinning psychology behind mindfulness practices leads to comparatively superficial results (Neves-Pereira, Carvalho & Aspesi, 2018, p. 151). According to Neves-Pereira, Carvalho and Aspesi (2018, p. 151), at the centre of this incompatibility between Buddhist and Western psychology is the concept of 'inner-peace' and of 'ego'. Within

Buddhist schools of thought, regular, prolonged, and intensive mindfulness practice should lead to peace and wisdom, both of which lie beyond the limits of scientific understanding (Neves-Pereira, Carvalho & Aspesi, 2018, p. 151). Equally, the Buddhist attitude towards ego, to think of others' wellbeing over one's own, leading to experiences of compassion, is incoherent with the Western attitude, which tends to attempt to refine the functionality of the way one experiences themselves (Neves-Pereira, Carvalho & Aspesi, 2018, p. 151). The process by which Western schools of psychology are incorporating Buddhist mindfulness practices is ongoing, and current limitations in the scientific understanding, rooted in materialism, need to be overcome before the amalgamation can be complete (Taylor, 2018).

Research into the relationship between mindfulness and morality

There is currently a dearth of research investigating the relationship between mindfulness and morality, despite the growing body of literature on mindfulness itself (Tan, 2020). According to Tan, (2020, p. 1) in a recent literature review, only two papers explicitly analysing the relationship between ethics and mindfulness were found. Kabat-Zinn's early representations of mindfulness were explicit in their reference to the original context within which it was practiced (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). However, as the practice was taken from one cultural paradigm and school of psychology and practiced within another, there is reason for further scrutiny of this 'appropriation', despite the benefits being observed in the field of mental health (Neves-Pereira, Carvalho & Aspesi, 2018, p. 151). Significantly, there are concerns that the Eastern practice of mindfulness is being manipulated for more sinister purposes.

McMindfulness

The neo-liberal project to transform socio-economic forms into structures acquiescent to a competitive, 'free-market' ideology (Wilson, 2017) has appropriated mindfulness practices (Purser, 2019; Smallen, 2019). The consequences of neo-liberal policies that focus of privatization and short-term profits are unstable and hostile social systems and increased inequality (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Recent years have seen a sharp increase in the use of mindfulness practices being employed to reduce stress and promote wellbeing in neo-liberal organisations and has become known by its critics as 'McMindfulness' (Purser, 2019; Smallen, 2019).

According to Purser (2019, p.17-18), this 'laissez-faire' attitude to mindfulness enables the neo-liberal narrative to dominate and dictate the narrative of what is ethical and unethical behaviour. Purser (2019) goes on to argue that the assumption that the teacher's modelling of compassionate behaviour will in turn lead participating students to behave in an ethical way, or that changes in moral judgement necessarily follow from mindfulness practice is flawed. Nevertheless, though, it is unilaterally agreed across Buddhisms that mindfulness must be accompanied by other traits, because of the centrality of mindfulness within Buddhist psychology, there is an argument that the cultivation of mindfulness necessarily cultivates qualities such as compassion (Nhat Hanh, 1975). Purser's criticisms here are directly aimed at the MBCT and MBSR courses, which, we have seen, do acknowledge and, to an extent, apply Buddhist psychology. Because of the centrality of mindfulness withing, Buddhist psychology and the implicit presence of ethics and compassion within the course, Purser's argument holds less weight than when applied to mindfulness courses and teachings that are entirely disconnected from Buddhist traditions or are specifically designed for a corporate clientele.

Some scholars argue that the cultural appropriation of mindfulness practices from a tradition where austerity and piety are sacred into a neo-liberal society in which, consciously or not, success is associated with and consumption, is incompatible. Neves-Pereira, Carvalho and Aspesi (2018, p. 151) explain that, even if offered as purely a health practice associated with mindfulness, there exist a contradiction relating to the Buddhist attitude to material wealth. Rather than breaking down the destructive human relationship with pleasure and addiction, which Buddhists believe are aspects of *dukkha*, or suffering, this form of appropriation of mindfulness is working to help sustain the structures and way of life that create suffering in the first place (Grossman & Van Dam, 2011; Purser, 2019).

> Since mindfulness is an organic part of an understanding about how to live the human life, the attitude of selecting some of its aspects such as attention, presence, concentration and breathing and then applying them to interventions that are coherent with a reductionist paradigm, as if they were a specific remedy for a specific disease, is not only problematic from an epistemological standpoint (Neves-Pereira, Carvalho & Aspesi, 2018, p. 151).

Greater sensitivity is needed in the West in the application of mindfulness and other associated traits within Buddhist psychology.

At the heart of this argument is the assertion that, applied in the context of a corporation, mindfulness practices are putting the responsibility on the individual to foster their wellbeing in the service of increased efficiency, yield and harmony within the a company or society, notwithstanding the socio-political structures that impact on the individual's wellbeing (Purser, 2019; Smallen, 2019, p. 122). By encouraging employees to self-regulate their stress and improve wellbeing, these courses can strengthen the existing conditions that contributed to poor mental health in the first place, (Purser, 2019; Smallen, 2019). This, according to Smallen (2019) and Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), includes the reinforcing of gender inequality through neo-liberal hegemonic masculinity, woven into mindfulness courses through complex structures and disguised by neutral, non-gendered language. The context of mindfulness here has become a neo-liberal corporation and the goal, the company's increased productivity. The impact may be a short-term reduction in stress and increased wellbeing; however, it is in the name of an economic and political system that effects suffering, inequality, and ecological destruction at the causal level. According to Buddhist psychology, this brand of mindfulness practice therefore lacks the ethical underpinnings, or *sila*, thought necessary for a true mindful state and the cessation of suffering to occur (Hart, 1987; Nhat Hanh, 1975; Kornfield, 1994).

Purser (2019) asserts that the issue is not mindfulness practice itself, which, reduced to a basic form of mental training, still offers some mental health benefits. The issue is the way mindfulness has been packaged and sold by many as a cure-all, yet cut off from the ethical cord that once sustained it as a way of dissolving attachments and nurturing compassion for all

beings (Purser, 2019). Neoliberalism has been surreptitiously imposed over the past half a century resulting in greater inequality (Wilson, 2017). According to Purser (2019), if the mindfulness movement were truly the radical and innovative force it claims to be, it would work to break down those neo-liberal structures. Instead, stress has been pathologized and treated as a psychological condition prevalent in capitalist corporations and mindfulness courses are employed as a treatment. Purser (2019, p. 18) argues that mindfulness is just one of a number of examples of spirituality being used by capitalist institutions dating back to the reconciliation of faith with science. Over time, the Asian wisdom traditions were colonised and commodified, resulting in an individualistic form of 'spirituality', meticulously adapted to the dominant Western values and therefore necessitating no change in lifestyle and resulting in limited benefits (Purser, 2019, p. 18).

Secular mindfulness courses that provide a balance of mindfulness and morality

There are examples of secular courses that better reflect the breadth of Buddhist psychology (Van Dam, 2020). In the 1970s, the renowned Burmese meditation teacher, S. N. Goenka, began teaching ten-day mindfulness courses in India (Hart, 1987). Goenka claims that the courses teach students the original undiluted teachings of the Buddha, free from unnecessary dogma (Hart, 1987). Students are expected to strictly adhere to the five precepts; indeed, nine of the ten days are in silence in order to ensure the precept of abstaining from false speech is upheld (Hart, 1987). This is because, according to Goenka (cited in Hart, 1987), 'Anyone who wishes to practice *Dhamma* must begin by practicing *Sila*. This is the first step without which one cannot advance. We must abstain from all action, all words and deeds, that harm other people.' (cited in Hart, 1987, p. 21). This is not just mindfulness training; it is an induction into the Noble Eightfold Path. Serious students cultivate ethical behaviour and must stick to a code of conduct, which means a strict monastic code for monks and, for lay people, means keeping the five precepts: not killing, stealing, indulging in harmful sexual practices, lying, or becoming intoxicated (Shaw, 2020, p. 50-51; Hart, 1987).

Goenka's ten-day retreats are not the only secular courses offering a balanced induction into the Eightfold Noble Path, the late Thich Nhat Hanh and many others have set up similar courses. Since the original Buddhist teachings are indeed secular, not pertaining to a deity but more a psychology, the true Buddhist teachings are secular (Hart, 1987). As we have seen, mindfulness appears to enjoy the presence of other aspects, to the extent that they are in fact inseparable from mindfulness (Shaw, 2020, p. 29). While this sounds religious, it is not. Though Goneka's course uses the Buddha's teachings, there are no physical representations of the Buddha necessary and people of all faiths and denominations are welcome, encouraged to and do attend; it is a secular course of which there are now over 300 centres in 94 countries globally (Dhamma.org, 2021). Here is a secular mindfulness course that stringently applies the full spectrum of Buddhism teachings within a paradigm familiar to its origins, yet available to all. Other, more westernized course could look at incorporating more of these features and conducting further research.

A new relationship between spirituality and science

Over the past century, the stewardship of knowledge, once the domain of religion and philosophy, has been passed to science. This growing authority given to science had all but ended the communication and investigation between science and religion (Neves-Pereira,

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Carvalho & Aspesi, 2018; Taylor, 2019), yet psychologists are now reopening these investigations, enabling the testing and evaluation of spiritual practices. Taylor (2018) points out that many believe what remains is a choice between an 'orthodox materialist' world view or and orthodox religious view. This is a false dichotomy. Taylor (2018, p. 3) argues that a paradigm that recognises the limitations of materialism yet is free from the dogmatic assertions of religious belief, is possible. Post-materialism proposes that more fundamental than matter is 'spirit', otherwise known as 'mind' or 'consciousness' (Goff, 2019; Taylor, 2018, p. 3). In this paradigm, spirit, or consciousness is the fundamental quality of all beings and indeed the whole universe.

This understanding is entirely consistent with the Buddhist notion of *dharmakaya*, the fundamental reality of the cosmos from which everything arises, and the idea of compassion for all living things (Taylor, 2018, p.44). Though incompatible with a neo-liberal, materialist paradigm, according to Taylor, is not beyond the limits of scientific understanding, and is particularly popular within the field of quantum physics (2018, p. 48; Goff, 2019). Concerning the application of mindfulness, a new relationship between spirituality and psychology is possible, in which the materialist and dogmatic belief systems are discarded and a fuller spectrum of ethical teachings are incorporated (Taylor, 2018). Yet, in many cases, the opposite is currently happening in the West; the appropriation of mindfulness as an instrument in a futile attempt to douse the flames of a mentality in crisis (Neves-Pereira, Carvalho & Aspesi, 2018, p. 151).

Conclusion

Western psychology is beginning to appreciate that Buddhist teachings offer a powerful tool for overcoming suffering in many forms. Mindfulness has been extracted from the Buddhist Eightfold Path and applied to improve wellbeing or treat a growing number of conditions in a wide range of settings in the West. The field of research into Mindfulness is growing fast and has offered some positive results, however, despite the large number of studies, much of the research lacks depth or is complicated by bias. Further, in depth research could help, but a broader appreciation of the context of mindfulness practice within Buddhist teachings is necessary. According to Buddhist psychology, mindfulness should not be applied as a standalone 'treatment' but combined with the other aspects of the Eightfold Path, notably *sila*, or morality, a strong foundation of which is necessary to cultivate mindfulness and enjoy its benefits. Many western mindfulness courses or teachings have ignored or are ignorant to this, while the more prominent courses, such as MBCT and MBSR include ethics only implicitly. It is likely that these courses are not offering the full benefits of the original Buddhist teachings. Science and psychology have further struggled to understand this relationship between ethics and mindfulness, because the materialist scientific paradigm that emerged in the 20th century hinders the understanding of ideas such as compassion. Significantly, a popular movement of mindfulness teachings within corporations is aiding workers in managing stress and being more productive, but in doing so reinforcing the very structures that create their suffering in the first place. Some in the mainstream world of science are beginning to transcend this barrier (Goff, 2019; Taylor, 2018). There are examples of Eastern secular mindfulness courses that teach the full spectrum of the Buddha's teaching unincumbered by dogmatic beliefs or customs. As Western fields of psychology and science increasing understand Buddhist psychology, it is likely the West will offer more complete versions of mindfulness courses, that fully encompass the Eightfold Path. ■

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Describe how atheism is under threat from postmodernism

Abstract:

This paper examines the ethical constitution and historical contextualisation of Atheism in Western Europe and the United States today. The legacy of the enlightenment on 'Western' conceptions of Atheism will reveal that the desire for totalising truth is as often found within theism as it is in Atheism; this paper will demonstrate through postmodernism that truth is anything other than absolute. Secondly this paper will bring under scrutiny the leading thinkers of 'New Atheism' as they stand in opposition to theistic truth claims and the rise of fundamentalism. Finally, Postmodernism will reveal within this binary of atheism and theism faulty historiographies, stagnant conceptions of the method of science and the characteristics of a secular faith.

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Modern conceptions of atheism in the West are under threat from postmodernism on account of its modernist character. Most atheists today in the West are either modern or humanists because they are constituted by modern philosophical presuppositions and are made intelligible by a modern epistemology. Modern atheism in the West is a positive atheism that actively refutes the varying 'proofs' of an Abrahamic God and sometimes goes as far as taking on an evangelical spirit from its preachers. If modernism disappeared, modern theism and modern atheism would radically reformulate themselves from their present condition in dialectic opposition to each other. Postmodernism subverts and deconstructs the notion that modern atheism can be in binary with modern theism and attempts to uncover the 'shifty terrain that lies between and beyond theism and atheism' (Hyman, 2014, p. 174). Unlike the modern atheist, the postmodernist does not believe in 'right' or 'wrong' answers predicated upon an objective truth, but instead endless subjectivities and relativities based upon location (Hegel, 1975), ideology (Marx, 2001) and linguistics (Austin, 1962; Derrida, 1988). Hegel and Marx were modernist, but their observations can be appropriated by the postmodern tendency. It will be made clear that the 'New Atheists' are anything but new and are in fact derivative modernist by-products of the enlightenment project.

Since postmodernism is averse to the metanarratives of atheism and theism which typically entail a utopian telos (Lyotard, 1984). Modern atheism finds its roots in the enlightenment and scientific revolution which often made universal and objective claims about human beings and their societies. The modern atheist relies on a metanarrative of the Western scientific revolution against the Reformation and fundamentalist religious wars and the enlightenment which came from it which facilitated the political birth of liberalism and conservatism. This is problematic in several ways. The first is that both the scientific revolution and enlightenment were typically composed of deeply religious Western men, rather than atheists. The second problem is that this 'truth' of science, or 'truth' of enlightenment, is based on a Western location, Western capitalism and the abstract language of the enlightenment. Lyotard (1984) would argue we are reluctant to question the truth of the truth of science. Harris (2006) points to Islamic fundamentalism as an example of religion's propensity to violence.

However, McGrath (2011) writes that the 'twentieth century has made clear that the violence and cruelty of God-fearing societies is more than adequately matched by ... their godless counterparts' (p. 40). Despite this subjectivity made clear in three capacities, the 'four horsemen' of atheism, Dawkins, Harris, Hitchens and Dennett, have been either unable or unwilling to formulate a response to this, which could be mistaken for a chauvinism of the West towards other cultures (an implication we bear the torch of truth for the rest of the world). Or indeed the West's estrangement from the rest of the world. It may also reflect the single-minded atheistic-theistic binary in the West against the Abrahamic God, rather than any Hindu deity for example.

Despite this shortcoming of the modern atheists of the West, we see that atheists based in other regions of the world rely on different subjectivities based upon their location, ideology and linguistics, China being one such example. An officially atheist state, with Marxist doctrine and a radically different history and language. The Chinese atheists by virtue of existing disprove any conflation the 'New Atheists' or humanistic atheists might make between their 'objective' science and reason that contributes to societal advancement and religious tolerance, democracy and egalitarianism.

Modern atheism has historically had a syncretic ideological element to it, be it the 'race science' of the 19th century, Marxist continental progressivism or even an Anglo-centric, science based moral consensus in conjunction with liberal democratic, capitalistic values at the '*End of history and the last man*'. Just as an atheist may refute religion through rejection of its various 'proofs' and begin deconstruction of religion, i.e. Dawkins arguing it was a patriarchal, sexist, misogynist. Atheism as a social movement has taken upon itself shared norms and values that go along and are a part of, that atheist worldview. These moral values Dawkins argues, should be drawn from a broad 'consensus' of the general public. But since the origin of this consensus is based on a Christian worldview, it takes on a modernist character that it is the singularly 'correct' form of a scientific society. However, as Derrida (1988) explains, postmodernism fundamentally rejects the notion of a central or objective truth. This means that an atheist declaration that there is no God and we must base all ethical decisions around consensus is in itself an metanarrative that inherits from philosophical (the enlightenment and its religious roots) and religious tradition (the Bible), that there is an objective, singular worldview that is valid. Emotional responses are equal to rational ones in the postmodernist view as the rationality is based upon a major assumption. The ethical foundations of Judeo - Christian thinking, with God at the centre of this moral bedrock created the conditions for a humanistic Christian, and then later humanistic atheist egalitarian worldview, with an ambiguous mixture of both found in the utilitarian and egalitarian John Mill who sought to create a 'religion of humanity'. However, with the rejection of an Abrahamic God, Nietzsche 'had little patience with the idea of an inevitable progress of reason or the idea that a natural morality must be humanistic and egalitarian.' (Saarinen, 2019, p. 2). There is an implication therefore that if the new atheist's egalitarian values aren't coming from God, what rationalistic basis is there for them to be universal? This implies that some atheists rely on faith and this equivocation implies their view to be equal to, and not superior to that of a theist. Hyman (2014) puts it succinctly 'theism against which atheism reacts in relation to which it negatively defines itself is likewise a specifically modern species of theism' (p. 155).

Harris (2006) has claimed that atheism makes people more self-actualised and healthy to lend credence to the idea of the 'new atheist' movements expansion as both desirable and inevitable. However, there are scientific studies to the contrary that point to theists being happier overall (Habermas, 2008 p. 826-827). Therefore, would not Harris as a rational, scientific 'New Atheist' reconsider converting more people to atheism considering the science? Would this undermine his entire argument for a 'New Atheism'? If the purpose of 'New Atheism' is not to make you happier, but to pursue a claimed objectivity, what good is that objective truth other than to promote a more unitary cohesive society? Finally, by making the explicit connection between the 'New Atheists', humanism and the enlightenment, it becomes clear how postmodernism deconstructs its erroneous binary with theism. In a most fundamental sense, Taylor (1984) argues that the modern atheism fails to 'question the notion of truth that lies at the heart of the Western theological and philosophical network' (p. 175). Postmodernism as a tendency can threaten our modern concern for reason and rationality by championing the diverse voices of the 'other'. This is important because for the postmodernists such as Murray (1998) 'All human experiencing and knowing is contingent upon the particular (socio-linguistic) practices and (ideologically slanted) perspectives pertaining to each knower (p. 161).' Therefore, different life experiences are valued equally which undermines the kind of modernist objectivity that Dawkins and Harris would be in favour of.

The 'New Atheists' inherited from the enlightenment a Neo-Kantian notion of using reason to construct morality. Kant famously used reason to justify categorical imperatives that must be carried out. Dawkins argues along these lines but perhaps with more room for utilitarianism, that morality must come from societal consensus. Therefore, both groups (German idealists and empiricist neo-positivist atheists) agree on the use of western reason to construct morality. However, it is worth remembering that Kant was a Christian, so the line between reason, faith, science and morality have a long history that is difficult for the 'New Atheists' to distance themselves from without creating myths. The modern atheists also must consider that the concept of secularism that they champion was developed by German idealists such as Hegel with the intention of an creating a more inclusive civic society (Perkins, 1970). Dawkins and Harris (2006) argue that a society without religion

of any description is one where humans tend towards an almost utopian scientific society where people are fundamentally healthier.

Some postmodernists, such as Taylor (1984), argue that many modern atheists are humanist atheists, who declare the death of God but not the death of the self. This constitutes an anthropocentrism which can only be considered a 'partial nihilism' which fails to address that the idea of the self was born from Augustine's *City of God* and concluded with Hegel's reflexive *Phenomenology of spirit*. The self is born theologically from the idea of the *imago dei*, and with the death of god there is the 'loss of the stable centre that had been believed to be the basis of unique individuality (p. 134)'. Therefore, why do humanist atheists continue to define themselves along these lines as Western rational individualists who are so deeply concerned with cultivating an atheistic multitude? Given the polemics the 'four horsemen' often produce much to the entertainment of their followers Habermas, (2008) writes that the 'four horsemen' have been described as 'atheistic evangelicals, secular fundamentalists, preachers and so on (p. 1)'. Could it be that the 'New Atheists' are in fact a religious phenomenon with their meetings, events and need to preach the objective truth of their gospel, '*The Selfish Gene*'?

Lyotard (1984) wrote of 'common conception of the social: society is a unified totality, a 'unicity' (p. 9). Lyotard describes how the West is composed of self-regulating societies that desire and work towards optimised, totalising truth. 'One can decide that the principal role of knowledge is an indispensable element in the functioning of society... only if one has decided that society is a giant machine'. Adorno (2016) adds to this by stating 'Enlightenment is totalitarian. Enlightenment has always taken the basic principle of myth to be anthropomorphism, the projection onto nature of the subjective' (p. 6). Secularism is conceptualised as the progress of humanity in terms of advances in science, knowledge, law and so forth and an ever-decreasing (and ever more private) role for religion functions as a 'grand narrative of emancipation' (Lyotard, 1984) among secularists ideologically.

According to Cimino and Smith (2012), 'today's secularists are not content to merely be represented or reading with one another; they also desire to present themselves to the public' (p. 24). Modern atheism is concerned with using rhetoric to persuade people to join the theological debate over the existence of God, it uses provocative speakers such as Dawkins to stir the crowd and to create enough noise that the 'New Atheists' then used to gain more followers, who in America are sometimes persecuted for their non-belief. This might be considered therefore a second wave of secularism beyond a legal tolerance of non-belief, towards a social tolerance. However many atheists would not define themselves as 'New Atheists' but appreciate the spreading of awareness in the significantly religious American public. Yet it could be argued by postmodernists that there is a degree to which 'New Atheism' attempts to weaponise science as a battering ram for its non-belief while disregarding any scientific study that would jeopardise that concern.

This scientific emphasis is based on a liberal worldview, some atheists historically attempted to construct a religion of science or monism such as Comte (1973). Comte has been thought of by scholars such as Wernick (1999) as a 'cross-over' point for positivists and the atheist movement given his recognition that religion provides solidarity, albeit 'demystified' (p. 29). Later thinkers in Britain such as Francis Galton were among many who proposed eugenics and framed their values as being scientifically sound that 'races' were distinct from one another. This serves to highlight the role ideology can play when attempting to be objective about science and the dangers of not being observant of our own biases. Atheist movements claim liberal values can be scientifically claimed as universal values. Postmodernism disputes this claim. Friedrich Nietzsche has asked the question, which morality should an atheist adhere to Saarinen (2019)? In any case it has typically been a masculine privileging argued Irigaray and Oberle (1985) who highlight in '*Is the subject of science sexed?*' that men have historically

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dominated the 'sciences, philosophy, religion and politics' (p. 77). It should also be observed that within the 'New Atheist' movement' it is led by and primarily adhered to by, white men, which within a postmodern framework highlights the privileging of certain points of view over others. Dawkins (1998) has criticised Irigaray's work, dismissing her and postmodernists as 'intellectuals with nothing to say' (p. 1), and implying the humanities have less value than the hard sciences. This however begs the question of why the 'New Atheists' might value the hard sciences over the humanities and could actually be argued to strengthen Irigaray and Oberle's argument rather than weaken it as even today the hard sciences are the domain of primarily men.

Milbank (2008) argues that secular discourse is constituted by its opposition to orthodox Christianity. But that secular reason is also complicit with an ontology of violence, starting with Hegel and Marx in the 18th century and in the 19th the growth of sociology and positivism as a new 'Comtean-Kantian religion of humanity' (p. 67). The 'New Atheist' in the 21st century seeks its very own 'religion of science' postmodernists argue in which religion may disappear entirely given it's argued barbarism and propensity to violence post 2004. However, Harris (2006) said 'Western powers will continue to spill blood in what is, at bottom, at war of ideas' (p. 54). Which echoes what McGrath (2011) pointed out about the secularist tyrannies of the 20th century. But it also highlights the foreign policy objectives of the antitheists as anything but scientific or rational, but rather ideological and based upon enlightenment metanarrative. The 'New Atheist' seeks therefore to create a cohesive whole, atheistic society rather than allow a coexistence of objective truth claims. The movement frames itself in objective dressing. However, this secular transitory framework we find ourselves in within the West is according to Berry and Wernick (1992) 'composed out of rearranged fragments of religious discourse which are not its subtexts, but rather make up its whole substance'(p. 37).

Lyotard (1984) argues that our perception of knowledge is changing as we entered an age of computing, that we should be mindful of knowledge as a contingent phenomenon that is based upon context. New Atheism attempts to anchor our perception of knowledge in an empiricist framework but is arguably reactionary in its understanding of knowledge and science as it is based primarily on enlightenment thinking and is unaccommodating of any science that paints Abrahamic religion in a positive light. Feyerabend (1993) has criticised this narrow-minded science of the neo-positivist, empiricist atheists writing 'variety of opinion is necessary for objective knowledge. And a method that encourages variety is also the only method that is comparable with a humanitarian outlook' (p. 46). He also stresses how the method of conducting scientific inquiry changes historically not by accident but because sometimes ad hoc hypothesises further knowledge even if they break the rules of scientific methodology.

Modern Western atheism struggles under the scrutiny of postmodernism precisely because it refuses to acknowledge its historical indebtedness to theistic, early modern thinkers. With its failure to address that its fundamental arsenal of scientific enquiry and liberalism is born from specific historical contextualisation it is open to attack from Nietzsche up to the present day. If modern theism is a bravado celebration of this history from Augustine, to the enlightenment, then modern atheism is simply in denial of its influences, and so when it claims objectivity, we know that its scientific objectivity has changed with the times, just as the modern theistic truth-claims have shifted in response to scientific discoveries. For the postmodernist, and even the average person, it could be argued it is becoming clear the polemic binaries of both camps are becoming increasingly disassociated from reality. By privileging the views of white western scientists, postmodernists argue that the 'new atheists' are but a mirrored inversion to the theists. By examining the West's deepening crisis of faith, it becomes clear that postmodernism has left a legacy of self-doubt within both theists and atheists, which may promote future dialogue. ■

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Decolonising the secondary drama curriculum: an investigation into the effects and barriers of diversifying the play texts used in the classroom of a predominantly white school. What are the first steps for drama teachers in beginning this process of change?

Abstract:

This action research project explores the potential barriers and solutions to constructing an inclusive and representative curriculum within Drama. This was achieved by capturing the lived reality of a teacher in a predominantly white secondary school. This study also provides evidence of best pedagogical practice when teaching diverse performance texts by acquiring student opinion on the most effective teaching methods, following the practical exploration of the 2019 play Small Island.

Findings suggest that a mixed methods embodied pedagogy, using both teacher-in-role and more traditional theatre-centric practices, was found to be the most effective way of exploring play texts. Not only does this form of practice negate accessibility issues stemming from confidence when using 'Process Drama', but through the distanced engagement of a liminal brave space open discussions can occur. The sharing of personal and fictional narratives through this uninhibited dialogic examination can therefore engage decolonised perspectives, safely confront White hegemony and allow students to re-evaluate their own epistemologies.

Drama departments are prioritising the use of tried and tested 'pale, male and stale' texts that are being perpetually plucked from the cupboard simply because they achieve high grades within limited lesson time. Evidence suggests the linchpin for decolonisation is personal action. Self-motivation and not enforced targets is the only vehicle for effective change.

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Introduction

It is a requirement for all teachers to adapt their classroom practice to meet 'the needs of all pupils' (Department for Education [DfE], 2013, p.11) and for schools to offer a curriculum that prepares pupils for later life (DfE, 2014). As a consequence of the global Black Lives Matter movement educators have begun to re-examine such claims of diversity and inclusivity held within current curricula. Independent organisations such as 'the Black Curriculum' have identified that the National Curriculum for England (DfE, 2013) and its definition of 'essential knowledge' of British History rejects the contributions of Black and ethnic minorities (Arady, 2019). The existence of a 'Black History Month' (as well as LGBT+ and Women's History months) where schools are encouraged to celebrate unrepresented communities *in addition* to their normal curriculum, is another clear

indicator that the needs of *all* pupils are not being met.

Bishop Grosseteste University, as part of its Initial Teacher Education [ITE] programme, holds an annual 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Week' [EDI Week] to examine diversity in new ways, provoke student teachers into challenging curriculum content and reshape their pedagogical praxis in the process (Puttick et al. 2021). During EDI Week I took part in a project to create 'real-world teaching resources for schools' that would be distributed by *Black History Month Magazine* (Peart et al., 2020). The resultant outcome was a sequence of Drama lessons exploring the themes and narrative of the National Theatre play '*Small Island*' (Edmundson & Levy, 2019). EDI week also allowed me time and space to begin de-colonializing my understanding of British history.

My current placement school is a non-selective Academy in North Lincolnshire with a student body that is mixed-gender and predominantly white. Following the transformative experience of 'EDI Week' and with the knowledge that Lincolnshire is 'one of the least ethnically diverse counties in the UK' (LCC, 2017, p.8) I re-examined the content of the Drama curriculum at said school with a decolonised lens and found it to be 'pale, male and stale' (Bain, 2018, p.15) where exclusively white playwrights/practitioners were being studied, it contains a definite gender bias and that the same plays had been chosen for study every year.

The creation of a truly representative and inclusive curriculum is an important career aspiration of mine (as well as central to my own personal values) but I recognise that there are many factors affecting the choice of play texts and wider curriculum considerations. With a view to developing my own professional practice I therefore wanted to investigate the reasons behind the curriculum content choices at my placement school and thus gain valuable insights to help me overcome any barriers when I begin the process of constructing my own curriculum. Also in preparation for teaching inclusive play texts I require some experiential knowledge of successful pedagogical techniques. To this end the aims of this research project are threefold:

1. To identify barriers that might hinder the construction of an inclusive and representative Drama curriculum

2. To identify possible solutions to eliminate or circumnavigate these barriers

3. To provide evidence of best practice as to how inclusive texts might be taught in the drama classroom.

Literature Review

Decolonising the curriculum

If the colonisation of a curriculum is the 'lack of representation of black and ethnic minority groups' and the prioritisation of a traditional canon of works by White Eurocentric authors (Keele, 2020), decolonisation could be considered a purposeful, ongoing and holistic deconstruction and reconstruction of knowledge, inclusion of representative content, an acceptance of colonial bias and a decentring of Westernised narratives (Meda, 2020, pp.89-92). Keele University developed a manifesto for decolonisation: it 'requires the creation of 'spaces and resources for dialogue' where knowledge 'could and should be open to challenge and question' and it concerns not only *what*, but *how* knowledge is taught (Keele, 2020, p.110). These core areas of focus will be used by this study to inform the research and are explored below in relation to the subject of Drama.

Academic literature relating to the decolonisation of educational establishments in Britain chiefly falls into two categories: higher education and the contents of reference libraries. Classroom-based research involving decolonisation of the Secondary Curriculum in England is severely lacking. Ironically academic studies are abundant from previous British Colonies (Australia, South Africa and the USA) and it is to these countries that this literature review will now depend.

What we teach…

Drama is a non-compulsory 'entitlement' subject in the National Curriculum for England, thus free from a prescribed programme of study (DfE, 2014). At Key Stage 3 [KS3] there is no guidance provided for curriculum content in Drama whereas at GCSE and A Level curriculum content is determined by the exam boards through a selection of plays to study, classified as 'set texts'. Plays chosen by teachers for practical exploration are classified as 'performance texts'. Out of the 27 set texts offered by the four main exam boards at GCSE in England only one is by a Black author (three exam boards have no Black or ethnically diverse representation) and out of the four main AS/A Level exam boards in England two out of 61 plays are by Black and ethnically diverse authors (two boards have no diverse representation) (Bradley & Nichols, 2020, p1).

Like Bradely and Nichols (2020) identified with their analysis of current set texts, Smith (2020) and Gardner (2005) found a significant under-representation of women and people of colour in performance texts within English and American classrooms. Gardner found that 72.3% of Drama departments were using 'one or more anthologies' of plays as a teaching resource (2005, p.7) suggesting that a large proportion of what is taught is due to an externally curated collection purchased for cost saving and convenience purposes. Smith also found convenience as a motivator for text choice concluding that teachers reach continually into their 'tired Key Stage 3 stock cupboards' (2010. p.33) because

such texts 'provide the resources for learning about cultural capital' (2010. p.33). Whilst teaching 'what's in the cupboard' is easier than buying new texts and delivers the base requirements of 'cultural capital', the outdated texts are not representative of an ever-changing modern multi-cultural Britain.

Kempe (2014) conversely found that all Drama departments he surveyed purchased performance texts based on the opportunity for practical work and inherent theatricality rather than cost or an adherence to prescribed set texts (p.37). This suggests that engaging with the art form is core to decision making rather than the thematic content of the play. A far more pressing issue, Kempe (2014) suggests, is the factor of 'playing it safe' which infers limited subject knowledge (teach what you know).

Hennessy (2016), a Head of Drama, states that when choosing performance texts she tries to find a play that teaches about 'theatre forms', 'social issues' *and* also meets the 'assessment requirements of this GCSE syllabus' (p.81) which provides an all-in-one solution. Interestingly when identifying four essential elements of a Drama curriculum 'gaining qualifications' is considered separate from 'learning *about* drama (skills)', 'learning *through* drama (issues)' and 'context' (2016, p.82) suggesting that teaching to the test is a priority at KS4. She advises though, that due to the 'lack of a nationally structured curriculum' Drama teachers feel isolated and therefore teach 'old fashioned and outdated stories, characters and texts' because there is no statutory body requiring you to 'update and refresh your practice' (p.80). Hennessey adds that the only individuals likely to scrutinise curriculum content is drama teachers themselves (2006, p.80). If Drama teachers, through comfort and apathy, do not make the decision to review curriculum content regularly and improve their subject knowledge then change will never happen.

When interviewing Black and mixed-race students in the UK, Joseph-Salisbury (2017) highlighted that the lack of representation in the curriculum is a barrier that dissatisfies and disengages students from mainstream education. 'Positive identity formation' precipitated by a curriculum change alone, he suggests, will not bring about an improvement to the lives of minority groups, but it is a first step to breaking down historic barriers (2017). Joseph-Salisbury recommends for change to be permanent and holistic, a diversification of racially appropriate resources should be 'implemented at policy level rather than being the responsibility of individual teachers' (p.456); a top-down initiative mandating renewal rather than localised content reviews affecting a single subject or the output of individual practitioners.

Early Career Teachers, Kempe argues, might not want to challenge the status quo of the school regarding curriculum content, even if there 'is a mismatch between home and school values' (2009, p.426), due to Drama's tentative position. By 'playing it safe' for the sake of employment Drama curricula could be considered 'more resistant to new curriculum models and teaching methods' (2009, p.427) than most. Hennessey postulates that the senior leadership in her school are unaware of her curriculum content and she has never faced any opposition to the running of her department (2006, p.84). Seemingly with Drama given lower status, but having restriction free choice of content, there is confusion as to whether to follow personal values or continue with the tried and tested content through fear.

...and how we teach it

Gandolfi (2021), in a reflective study about decolonising the secondary science curriculum suggests it is a two stage process: 'theorising endeavour' and 'practical enterprise' where teachers 'translate scholarship' into 'teachable resources'. The 'curriculum maker' under examination did not feel confident or prepared to undertake the process of re-evaluating knowledge (despite extensive subject specialist scholarship) but it was only when planning lessons, taking 'the plunge' into practical enterprise, did he adopt the position of 'knower' (2021). For him the essential point was teachers actively engaging with the task and not inaction. As with Meda (2020,) Gandolfi stresses that decolonising does not simply mean using ready-made resources to 'add-on' content in a tokenistic manner; teachers have to translate the material for themselves (2012).

The study by Gandolfi (2021) focuses on science but her findings are equally helpful when thinking about pedagogical practice in Drama. She found that decolonised planning unexpectedly 'adopted a storyline strategy' and learning was therefore achieved through storytelling and discussion (Gandolfi, 2021). Mohamud (2020) also had equated learning with writing in class but found that when race was being examined the key to meaning-making was discussion, or the ability to 'speak back' against the 'correct interpretation' (p.390). An important point Mohamud makes is that, despite the personal and potentially uncomfortable nature of the discussion, teachers must 'abandon the authoritarian roles' of 'control, distance and professionalism' (2021, p.388) and shift from teacher-led to teacher-mediated discussion. This allows students to use their own knowledge and identity to comment on the topic, validating who they are outside the classroom, within the classroom (p.391).

The narrativisation of content and reflective discussion not only affirms the validity of the Keele manifesto (2020) but also aligns with a particular form of applied drama pedagogy known as 'Process Drama'. Process drama facilitates distanced experiences where both teacher and students adopt roles within the veil of a fictional reality. By 'living through' these embodied experiences participants learn about the world around them and fundamentally about themselves (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995). The concept of liminality is central to embodied drama: a theoretical context 'betwixt and between' where participants can be separated from reality and freely engage in 'playing' with elements of that reality (O'Neill, 1995, p.66). On exiting the liminal space students can reflect on the universality of the themes having explored the particularities of the drama (Heathcote, 1990).

Studies from ex-British colonies have found process or embodied drama to be a highly successful method of addressing race in the classroom: Hradsky (2017) and Crilly et al. (2020) in Australia, Gallagher and Riviere (2007) in Canada and Sutherland (2013) and Athiemoolam (2018) in South Africa. Key to exploring race through process drama is the ability to embody people different from yourself (Hradsky, 2017) where the liveness

of performance interrupts the colonial gaze (Sutherland, 2013) and offers multiple ways of seeing (Athiemoolam, 2018). Using drama conventions to slow down and manipulate fictional narratives subverts traditional ways of teaching (Athiemoolam, 2018), appealing to all students no matter what ability, by 'physicalising and making dialogic' the problem (Gallagher and Riviere, 2007, p.323). Gallager (2013) however stresses that reflective discussion is integral to this method of learning as the dramatic conventions act only as 'stepping-off points' (2013, p19). The drama therefore becomes a common language from which to communicate and because of the shared embodied experience the 'natural inclination to dismiss opposing views' is disrupted because students have listened and repeated 'othered' viewpoints (Forgsen, 2017, p.156). In order to ensure open and unrestricted discussion teachers must foster 'brave spaces' by setting clear rules and boundaries (Crilly et al., 2020).

Methodology

The methodology chosen for this project was action research: a systematic investigation and improvement of personal practice where claims to knowledge are justified through 'authenticated and validated evidence' (McNiff and Whitehead, 2005). Action research is inherently cyclical where 'initial findings generate possibility for change which are then implemented and evaluated as a prelude to further investigation' (Denscombe, 2010, p.126). Dubbed a 'practice-changing practice' (Kemmis et al., 2014, p.464) this process works best for teachers when they themselves have identified a problem (Cohen et al., 2018, p.441) and are 'native to the field' under investigation (2018, p.443).

The research design consisted of two methods of data gathering collected after a sample group of students had engaged in two drama lessons exploring the performance text *Small Island*. To investigate the pedagogical effectiveness of introducing diverse texts in the classroom a variety of 'dramatic and theatre conventions' (as categorised by Neelands & Goode, 2015) were utilised for these lessons including teacher-in-role, still-image, voices in the head, improvisation, active script work and stimuli-driven reflective discussion.

The research participants were a mixed-ability Year 10 Drama class (11 students) and a teacher of Performing Arts (Teacher A). The choice of sample group was acquired through 'nonprobability purposive' or 'judgement sampling' where a deliberate group of students were identified due to their traits as a collective, their willingness to participate and ability to articulate their opinions (Etikan et al., 2016, p.2). This sample group was not chosen at random, therefore the data could not be considered truly representative of the population. Out of the available Drama groups in the study school Year 10 were deemed the best choice due to their honesty, overall ability and motivation. The choice of teacher for interview is representative of the school, being the only subject specialist, but of limited value due to the single perspective within a single context.

The two methods of data collection were: 1) a semi-structured post-lesson student questionnaire and 2) an in-depth semi-structured interview with a multi-disciplinary teacher of Performing Arts. This mixed-methods approach allowed for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, providing numerical responses for easy comparison and free text answers that add 'supplementary information for the purposes of clarification or triangulation' (Sharp, 2012, p.73), increasing the validity of evidence.

A semi-structured questionnaire (Appendix B) was chosen as the best method to investigate student opinion of the content and techniques used in the *Small Island* lessons. The questionnaire comprised of a rating question, where students were asked to use a Likert-type rating scale of 1 – 6 (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) to measure their agreement to various statements, and open ended questions, where students are invited to give 'honest, personal comment' and explain their opinions in more depth (Cohen et al., 2018, p.475). A Likert-type scale is typically 5 or 7 but this questionnaire used a six-point scale to exclude a midpoint and required that students made a decision. However, with any ratings question there is a 'risk of acquiescence' where respondents 'tend to agree with the statement being made, regardless of its content' (Cohen et al., 2018, p.492). Questionnaires have a 'one shot constraint' (Denscombe, 2010, p. 162) to capture the data whilst memories of the content are still fresh so in order to ensure a high response rate the group was held 'captive' (Gillham, 2008, p.9), whereby time was provided in the lesson for completion. To identify the effectiveness of specific pedagogical techniques the open questions were designed using Brookfield's Critical Incident Questionnaire (2017, p.108) linking moments of learning to moments of teacher action. Attainment data from the school was evaluated prior to distribution to ensure all participants could understand the questions.

Gillham suggests semi-structured interviews are the best method to gather detailed responses to complex topics as 'people talk more easily than they write' (2008, p.13). An interview or 'conversation with a purpose' (Sharpe, 2012) allows participants to 'express how they regard situations from their own point of view' and discuss 'interpretations of the world in which they live' (Cohen et al., 2018, p.506). One major limitation with interviews is the fallibility of memory where participants are 'prone to partial recall, bias and error' (Denscombe, 2010, p. 186). It is for this reason why triangulation with other methods of data collection ensures the criticality of evidence. The interview with Teacher A used a mixture of open ended and closed questions carefully sequenced to minimise stress, ensure fluency of responses and build up to the more challenging or difficult questions towards the end (Sharpe, 2012). The choice of a semi-structured schedule allows the interviewer to stay on track and remain purposeful whilst also allowing opportunity to probe further into issues when required (Cohen et al, 2018). In order to put the interviewee at ease and facilitate honest and unbiased responses the interviewer must adopt a 'non-judgmental stance' (Denscombe, 2010) and avoid leading questions. Particularly for a teacher-researcher an 'even and neutral voice' must be adopted to 'avoid assuming a teacher role'; the conversation aiming to elicit information and not to interrogate or test the interviewee (Sharp, 2012). The interview was recorded using a Dictaphone and transcribed for analysis. Any mentions of people or places were redacted for anonymity.

Teachers, in action research, are also the researchers and must be aware of possible bias due to their personal interest

in the results (Cohen et al., 2018, p.454). To address the ethical impact upon all participants guidelines from the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018) and the Bishop Grosseteste University Ethics Policy (BGU, 2019) were reviewed and permission for data collection was obtained from the University (see Appendix A) as well as those responsible for pupil and teacher welfare. Considering the sensitive nature of the topics being explored and the disclosure of personal opinion written 'informed consent' was required from all participants. This agreement to take part was based upon the knowledge that all data to be collected was proven to be anonymised, each participant at each stage had full disclosure of what was required of them and how their contributions were to be used, and that any participant was free to withdraw their consent at any time (BGU, 2019). Each student questionnaire was prefaced by an information sheet outlining the details of the project. To ensure the questions were both accessible and not harmful in any way the class teacher reviewed and agreed the use of all materials before distribution.

Apart from the limitations discussed above the sample size of students was reduced due to absences following a positive case of Coronavirus. Ideally a larger sample size and more subject specialists would have been involved to increase credibility, confidence and comparability to other schools or similar projects.

Findings and interpretation

Post-lesson questionnaires

The response rate for the questionnaires was 100% with the sample group of 11 students (categorised A–K) completing 90.91% of the five questions posed. Out of the sample group there were three students who self-identified as being of mixed ethnicity. Responses for all questions (Likert-type rating scale and free text) were overwhelmingly positive, reflecting the engagement and the impact of the *Small Island* lessons upon the sample group.

Question 1 sought to gain the opinions from students on both content and the effectiveness of pedagogical techniques using a Likert-type 6 point scale. For the collated responses see Figure 1.

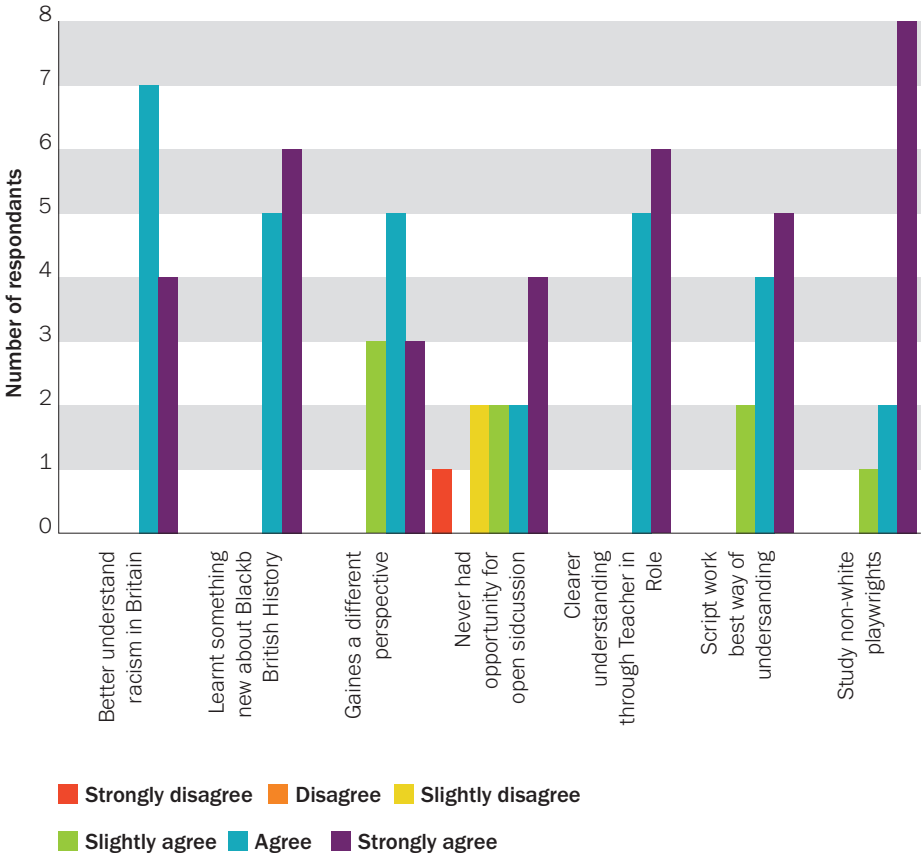

Figure 1: Results to question 1a of the post lesson questionnaire

The *Small Island* lessons were found to be very successful with 63.64% agreeing that they had a better understanding of racism in Britain and 54.55% strongly agreeing that they had learnt something new. Whilst all students were able to see historic and contemporary racism from a new perspective, three students slightly agreed suggesting a prior recognition of the themes/characters explored within the drama. This prior recognition did not affect the impact of or engagement with the lesson content. These conclusions are partially contested as there was no measurement taken of student's prior knowledge, prior conception of racism or how much 'new' knowledge was gained however, pupil progress was definitely made. These results reflect the findings from the plethora of worldwide literature regarding the effect of learning through embodied drama.

Three opinion statements from question 1a, 2 and 3 sought to provide evidence for best pedagogical practice by asking students to identify the most and least effective activities. Whilst the results from the rating scales suggested that open discussions about racism had happened before the *Small Island* lessons, 72.73% of students found the post drama discussion the most effective activity. What the questionnaire answers do not clearly state is that the three students with a multi-ethnic background felt safe enough to freely share their own lived experiences heightening the impact of the discussion: "It hit me hard as I could see people around me has been affected by it" (Student D). Free text responses from questions 1b and 4 corroborate the effectiveness of the open discussion allowing students to draw parallels with historic racism explored in the drama and contemporary racism "racism in the past is more hidden, but still occurring today" (Student G). This corroborates the claims of Mohamud (2020) and Gallagher (2013) in the importance of creating discursive brave spaces having used dramatic conventions as stepping-off points to stimulate open conversation.

Representation of voice was also considered a significant effect of the lessons with Student I commenting "I learnt that I am not alone as a person who has been treated differently". This also translated into 72.73% of students strongly agreeing that studying plays by

non-white playwrights was important. This evidence suggests that students recognise the value of diversity and based on these results visible representation of minorities needs to be prioritised.

The results were inconclusive when comparing active script work against teacher-in-role as a preferred teaching method. While 100% of students agreed or strongly agreed that teacher-in-role was an effective method of learning, active script work was found to be just as effective with no negative answers. Two students slightly agreed that script work was the best technique for understanding the plays themes but this variation only reflects the mixed ability grouping regarding literacy.

Question 3, identifying the least effective activity, was of very limited value considering the completion rate was only 63.4% and of the seven responses five students suggested no activity was ineffective: "each activity helped us understand a different thing" (Student F). There were no trends in the remaining answers with no useful commentary from the free text response, simply reflecting the personal preferences of the students. Clearly the majority of students thought that the sequence and choice of pedagogical techniques sufficiently built the narrative and aided exploration of the content.

If one takes into consideration the fact that process drama is not a teaching method utilised by the department (verified by Teacher A) and that active script work is the standard modus operandi, the only conclusion to be made is that whilst teacher-in-role was found to be a viable method for exploring race and racism, a mixed methods approach of utilising both 'process' and 'product' drama would constitute best practice.

Interview with Teacher A

The school central to this study has a three year KS3. Due to the half-termly rotation of Performing Arts subjects (Dance, Music and Drama) each year group receives only three terms of Drama lessons over the course of three years (approximately 36 lessons). In KS4 the Pearson BTEC Level 2 Tech Award in Performing Arts is being studied where students receive three lessons a week (approximately 200 lessons in total). The performance texts used in the study school's Drama curriculum can be seen in Figure 2. All texts are written by white men and no specifically black or ethnically diverse characters are featured in any of the scripts.

Pre 1945	1970s	1980s	2000s	2010s
The Orestia by Aeschylus *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare	*Bouncers* by John Godber	*Bugsy Malone* by Alan Parker *Teechers* by John Godber *Too Much Punch for Judy* by Mark Wheeller	*Billy Elliot the Musical* by Lee Hall and Elton John	*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time* by Simon Stephens

Figure 2: List of performance texts studied at KS3 and KS4, arranged by decade

Teacher A shared their frustration with the side-lining of the arts in order to benefit subjects featured in the English Baccalaureate e.g. History has three lessons a week in Year 7. Due to the extreme inequalities of timetabling for Drama in KS3 tough decisions were made about curriculum content: "As much as I want to have a curriculum full of depth and breadth, I just don't have the teaching time. Key Stage 3 is all about introducing skills the kids need to pass the BTEC".

When asked about how more lesson time might realistically be achieved Teacher A responded that "It's up to the Trust and it's up to the Principal. I keep raising it at my one-to-ones but there is only me shouting into the wind." Being the sole Drama teacher in a department of just two teachers, whilst also battling against Governmental agenda, means that timetabling won't change if the Arts are not deemed to have more value at the highest level. Results in Dance and Drama are some of the best in the school and Teacher A fears that as soon as attainment levels drop Dance and Drama will be retired from the school curriculum.

Teachers of the BTEC course therefore have free choice of performance texts because no set texts are specified due to the focus on key performance skills (Pearson, 2017). When asked about what criteria Teacher A uses when choosing performance texts for the BTEC course, variety, style and masculinity were the key points, cost was not an issue:

> "They need to be contrasting pieces so they have more to write about in their logbooks and give them enough ideas of techniques when they are devising. Physical theatre with Curious, Brecht with Bouncers, Verbatim with Punch for Judy and so on. I also need something that the boys will get on with and have enough opportunity to show the most skills in workshops and performance"

Form and style of plays have the highest priority in text choice to ensure all students can achieve the highest grades. Like Hennessey (2016) an all-in-one solution is prioritised to make the most of resources. Representation is clearly a key driver in this school, not of marginalised groups however but of white males. Despite the fact that girls make up a larger proportion of KS4 classes the schools 'disadvantaged first policy' focuses on improving results for underachieving males. Teacher A admitted 'I am heavily influenced by plays that the boys can access, enjoy and relate too. Boys are a big focus here.' If you are from a minority group you simply go unnoticed.

Finally specific subject knowledge was found to be a significant factor in text choice. Teacher A works four days a week, has a young family and teaches two subjects at KS3 and 4 – Dance and Drama. Teacher A accepted that as part of her ongoing practice keeping up to date with new plays was essential, however, in the time available to them they relied on plays they knew well and were proven to get results. This fact is reflected in the amount of plays taught from the 1980's (Figure 2), the decade where Teacher A undertook their education and teacher training. Teacher A also mentioned the importance of readily available teaching resources to save time

stating that they don't want to 'spend hours searching through the internet'. As well as the aforementioned factors of form, artistry and masculinity Teacher A admitted that they choose plays that reflect their skill base and also personally enjoy teaching:

"I try and make sure I enjoy what I'm teaching as this helps with student engagement. I also play to my strengths to deliver the *best results. With my dance background doing physical theatre and tap and ballet workshops means I use what I know and the students get a broader experience."*

Teaching 'what is in the cupboard' because it has a track record of achieving results, and making sure the performance texts best utilise the personal skills of the educator is essential in this school. This choice criteria was seen not as a hindrance but as an opportunity to get the full benefit of the teacher's experience and provide the best qualifications for students.

School policy, politics and Drama's tentative position on the curriculum means compromises have had to be made regarding curriculum content to achieve the expected attainment results. In such restrictive circumstances the needs of KS4 and its methods of assessment outweigh the option of a broader education in KS3. At no point was diversity and inclusion ever knowingly considered. When asking Teacher A to reflect on the lack of Black and female representation they said this:

> "I've never looked at these pieces as a collective, only on their individual merits...I've got some homework to do haven't I? COVID has meant everybody is behind so when things are back on track I can look at what plays I use. At least I will have a lesson for Black History Month"

Inclusion and representation are still considered tokenistic and a low priority job with results given more weight than making positive change. Pressure to perform has induced a certain way of working and for progress to be made a culture shift needs to be instigated from the top down.

Conclusions and recommendations

The aim of this study was to identify potential barriers and solutions to constructing an inclusive Drama curriculum, and to provide evidence of best pedagogical practice when teaching inclusive performance texts. By examining the lived reality of a teacher, acquiring student opinions on lesson content and triangulating this data with peer-reviewed academic literature I sought to develop a baseline of knowledge to prepare me for my future career. Partly due to the size of the sample, the scope of the research methods and the specificity of context with a single school the findings have a limited significance however a baseline of knowledge has been achieved for further investigation.

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Through the literature review and the student questionnaires a mixed methods embodied pedagogy, using both teacher-in-role and more traditional theatre-centric practices, was found to be the most effective way of exploring play texts. Not only does this form of practice negate accessibility issues stemming from academic ability, but through the distanced engagement of a liminal 'brave space' open discussions can occur. The sharing of personal and fictional narratives through uninhibited dialogic examination engages decolonised perspectives, safely confronts White hegemony and allows students to re-evaluate their own epistemologies. Discussion was found to be the most transformative event in the *Small Island* lessons as well as a significant finding by Gandolfi (2021) and Mohamud (2020). As a result dedicated time will be built into future planning and further literature sought to effectively facilitate teacher-mediated dialogic spaces.

The findings from the interview did not provide many solutions to overcoming barriers to curriculum design due to the unique timetabling at work in the study school but the experiences of Hennessey (2016) and Kempe (2014) were verified. Gandolfi (2021) discovered that despite institutional and government directives the linchpin to change is personal action. This has not happened and significantly the culture at work in the study school values results over representation, clearly found to be important to the sample group as well as students in Joseph-Salisbury's study (2017). Workplace culture manifested a concern for the survival of Drama within the school curriculum, ultimately resulting in tried and tested performance texts being used.

School leadership teams need to mandate the widespread decolonisation of the entire school curriculum to instigate a communal shift of inclusive practice if all pupils' needs are to be met. School policy is certainly the biggest constraint that cannot be easily effected, particularly due to the size and status of Drama departments, but with a breadth of specialist subject knowledge relevant performance texts can be found. Exam boards are key to breaking the White Eurocentric hegemony, considering much curriculum design is preparing students to achieve at KS4, but with Drama being free from a government directed programme of study the only barrier to choosing diverse texts and practitioners at KS3 was found to be personal.

Decolonising the curriculum is an ongoing task although the hardest step is beginning the process. The resultant message is that if Drama teachers do not make time to do the work, curriculum decolonisation will never happen. Drama teachers must be a vehicle for departmental change and make the theoretical a practical reality; by the act of doing, so shall we learn and do better. ■

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