**Theorising the meso-level space of school ethos and cultural pedagogy in relation to securitisation policy.**

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**Abstract:** This paper looks empirically at how the UK’s policy of securitisation within education impacts on the meso-level space of cultural ethos and pedagogy within two majority non-white secondary schools and one majority non-white further education college. It does so primarily by documenting how British Values and Prevent policies enabled through the British Government’s Counter-Terrorism and Security Act have impacted on institutional ethos both in terms of objective structures and staff subjectivities. It is argued here that the security-curriculum ensemble is a recognition of this meso-level space by central government and represents a development in moves made to restrict access and agency within this space, and even to circumscribe this space through symbolic violence. This paper concludes by urging school/college leaders to exercise their agency at the meso-level; to recognise this space as a place for democratisation and decolonisation as an equitable alternative to enforced cultural ‘upgrading’ and in(ex)clusion presented through securitisation policy that is in reality an instrument of symbolic domination.

**Introduction**

This paper aims to highlight and foreground the meso-level space of institutional ethos and cultural pedagogy as a space for political action, democratic education and cultural equality. The international significance of this space is that it provides a rare opportunity for teacher and student agency within a globalising neoliberal policy discourse (Ball, 2012; Lingard et al., 2013; Biesta, 2015) ascribed to by many national governments in the turn towards authoritarian neoliberalism (Hursh, 2019). The international significance of the meso-level social space has been further highlighted by the impact of Covid-19. Murphy (2020, 492) draws attention to how the global pandemic has led to the logic of exception and that through a discourse of ‘emergency’, securitisation and hence control, *discipline* (Foucault, 2020) can become normalised. Many countries have followed similar securitization polices in regard to schooling as a result of the pandemic (Melnick & Darling-Hammond, 2020). The meso-level space of school ethos and its objective structures could have an important part to play in resisting the potential Covid-drift of securitisation and discipline within the post-pandemic school.

However, this is not suggest that this meso-level space is immune from government securitisation policy, whether that be in the form of authoritarian neoliberalism, the rehearsal of discipline brought about by the global pandemic, or cultural and political securitisation initiated through hegemonic and nationalistic policy discourse. It is in regard to this last point that this paper highlights how England’s security-curriculum ensemble (Winter & Mills 2020) impacts on the meso-level space of cultural ethos and pedagogy within two majority non-white secondary schools and one majority non-white further education college. It does so primarily by documenting how Fundamental British Values (FBV) (DfE 2014a; 2014b) and Prevent policies (HMG 2015a; DfE 2015) enabled through the British Government’s Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (HMG 2011; 2015b) have impacted on this space both in terms of objective structures and staff subjectivities.

While the focus of this paper is on England’s security-curriculum ensemble, it has wider global significance in terms of understanding how the cultural ethos and pedagogy of schools and colleges can be a rare space for agency in regard to resisting ‘racialised governance under neoliberalism’ (Winter & Mills 2020, 51) and the Western retreat from multiculturalism and anti-racism (Gilroy 2005; Halstead 2010; Kapoor 2013; Warmington 2014; McGhee & Zhang 2017; Joppke 2017) in official policy discourse in favour of a reductionist (Keddie 2014) and racist nativism (Smith 2016) across the global North (Winter & Mills 2020). This is all the more important during the rise of the global countering violent extremism policy paradigm (Abbas 2018). England is of particular interest internationally because the country is now seen as an important player globally in the development of securitisation policy (Jerome, Elwick, & Kazim 2019). Other countries have also moved to heighten security, such as Australia (see Stahl et al. 2021), as well as placing greater emphasis on the promotion of centralised values within education, such as France (see James 2021). This paper, through the example of England’s security-curriculum ensemble, will highlight the vulnerability of the meso-level space to government policy if school leaders do not recognise it as a space for agency.

The core polices that make up England’s security-curriculum ensemble are Fundamental British Values (FBV) and Prevent. The context of these policies relates to successive UK government concerns since 9/11 over multicultural drift (Myers 2015) in British social policy during the 1970s, 1980s and into the 1990s. Multiculturalism and anti-racism policies of this period aimed at the provision of a more culturally and ‘racially’ inclusive society, seen especially in education where at one point during the 1980s, two-thirds of Local Education Authorities within England had developed multicultural/ anti-racist policies (Tomlinson 2005). However, Modood (2013) identifies the 2001 terror attacks on New York and riots among Asian youth in England’s northern cities as leading to a turning-point for multiculturalism in the UK. This was compounded further by the 7/7 terror attacks in London in 2005 as sections of the media, politicians, and academics blamed the concept for leading to segregated communities, disunity, and being a challenge to ‘Britishness’.

Conceptual ‘multicultural erasure’ was first demonstrated in the Community Cohesion agenda (Cantle 2001) from circa 2002–2008, which was ‘grounded primarily in ethnicity in policy documentation’ (Cremin and Warwick 2008, 36) rather than in a contextualized understanding of cultural difference. This erasure has continued with securitisation agendas within an environment hostile to non-white cultural diversity (Shah 2017; Meetoo 2020; Winter and Mills 2020), demonstrated especially in FBV and the Prevent strategy. FBV are to be promoted in English schools (DfE 2014a; 2014b). These values consist of ‘democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs’ (DfE 2014b, 5), and ‘Actively promoting the values means challenging opinions or behaviours in school that are contrary to fundamental British values’ (ibid). Furthermore, teachers must not undermine FBV (DfE 2012). Whether schools are adequately promoting these values is assessed by the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) as part of the education inspection framework (Ofsted, 2019). The Prevent Duty (DfE 2015) places an emphasis on schools to identify and report those in danger of being drawn into terrorist-related activities.

Both Prevent and FBV have been extensively critiqued. For a review of the literature around Prevent, see Jerome, Elwick, & Kazim (2019). For FBV, see, for example, Lander (2016), Elton-Chalcroft et al. (2017) and Struthers (2017). However, the focus of this paper is to highlight the meso-level space as a space for agency through demonstrating the impact government security policy can have on this space. It is ironic that central government’s attempts at intervention within this space has made its significance as a site of student and teacher agency more visible (see FBV posters section below).

**Theorising the meso-level space**

The meso-level space identified in this study consists of institutional ethos, cultural pedagogy and social space, rather than the government-directed micro-level space (the formal curriculum) and macro-level space (neoliberal education policy) where room for staff and student agency has been greatly curtailed under the ‘neoliberal epoch’ (Hall 2007): the transition into the discourse, practices and subjectivities of the neoliberal imaginary (Ball 2012). Barnard (2020a) explored whether this meso-level space vacated by neoliberal policies (that establish relations between central government and micro-level institutional control; see Lingard, et al. 2013; Sobe 2015) was leveraged as a way of recognising and valuing non-white cultural capital in order to create an institutional ethos/ cultural pedagogy based on shared cultural production, a collective global multicultural capital (Matas & Bridges 2008). This paper highlighted how the objective structures of this meso-level space – such as the institutional newsletter, the open social spaces, extra-curricular provision, assemblies, school websites and so forth – could be extremely important in recognising non-white embodied cultural capital as an alternative to what many scholars believe to be a colonial curriculum (Kanu, 2006; Tomlinson 2019; Winter 2018; Winter & Mills 2020) that privileges whiteness (Bhopal 2018). While there has been a recent reappearance of interest in decolonising the curriculum (through the Decolonising the Curriculum movement; see, for example, Moncrieffe et al, 2020), this interest is not new. For example, Kanu (2006b, 5) called for ‘changes in action at either the micro or the macro level’, but especially the micro-level of the formal, received curriculum. However, the micro-level of ‘spatial practice’ (Lefebvre 1991, see below) has proved stubbornly unresponsive to calls for decolonisation. Rather, it is suggested that in this age of the dominant neoliberal imaginary, it is in fact the meso-level space where the real possibilities for teacher/ staff/ student agency reside.

This meso-level space is a socially-produced space. However, social space is often taken-for-granted, but as Lefebvre (1991, 154) points out, this is to fall into the trap of viewing space as transparent and innocent because ‘space is never empty: it always embodies a meaning’. Furthermore, groups or classes seek to ‘appropriate the space in question’ (Lefebvre 1991, 57) and the production of space

‘serves as a tool of thought and of action; that in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power’ (Lefebvre 1991, 26).

Expanding on his position, Lefebvre identifies three spatial areas: 1) *Spatial practice*, which is the perceived space and embraces production and reproduction and, in the terms of this project, corresponds to the micro-level space of the formal received curriculum, teaching and learning; 2) *Representations of space*, which is the conceived (planned) space and takes the form of buildings, policy directives, and such like, and in the terms of this project corresponds to the macro-level space of government neoliberal education policy; and 3) *Representational spaces* which are the lived, everyday spaces that for this project represent the meso-level space of institutional ethos and cultural pedagogy. This space is ‘directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols’ by ‘users’ and ‘inhabitants’ (Lefebvre 1991, 39). In the case of non-white majority/ multicultural schools, this means non-white students. This space could therefore be the space where non-white cultural capital is most likely to be found as ‘it overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects’ (ibid). However, as Lefebvre goes on to state, it is also the space that for the most part is ‘experienced passively’ (ibid). This paper argues that it is this meso-level space – representational space – that offers considerable opportunity for the recognition of non-white cultural capital in contrast to the colonial curriculum and neoliberal education policy that has ‘privatised’ racism (Winter & Mills 2020).

However, as Barnard (2020a) has highlighted, the colonial whiteness (Dyer 1997; Bonnett 2000) that occupies (rather than overtly controls) this space can be misrecognised through the ‘illusion of transparency […] with a view of space as innocent’ (Lefebvre 1991, 28). Nonetheless, this space retains its possibilities as a temporal and spatial counterbalance to racial neoliberal governance at the macro- and micro-levels. This is because both macro-level neoliberal education policy (spatial practice) and micro-level institutional control (representations of space) historicise (Chakrabarty 2000) non-white cultural capital. In fact, neoliberal education policy at the macro-level acts as an enabling mechanism for the colonial metanarrative through its ‘free-market’ structures (Barnard 2020b). It is a space controlled by central government from a distance through coercive sanctions (Kelly 2009) as it promotes the idea of the ‘inevitability’ of ‘neoliberal capitalist globalisation’ (Massey 2005, 4) within education policy. It excludes the recognition of non-white cultural capital because

Historicism is what made modernity or capitalism look not simply global but rather as something that became global *over time*, by originating in one place (Europe) and then spreading outside it (Chakrabarty 2000, 7).

Historicism therefore has the effect of promoting capitalism/neoliberalism as superseding non-Western knowledge and practice. However, such ‘modernity’ is intrinsically linked to colonial ‘racial whiteness’ (Dyer 1997; Bonnett 2000). ‘Modernity’ has ‘been naturalised through ideologies of whiteness’ and that ‘it should come as no surprise that the two continue to be intertwined’ (Bonnett, 2000, 145). Therefore, it is the white Westerner who truly *embodies* neoliberal education policy. This macro-level racial governance is enacted at the micro-level through central government’s politicized micromanagement (Kelly 2009) of the formal colonial curriculum that privileges white middle-class cultural capital and continues to historicise non-white cultural capital: it is a space that insists that the story of the world is told through a universalising Western lens (Massey 2005). However, ‘The imagination of globalisation as a historical queue does not recognise the simultaneous coexistence of our histories’ (Massey 2005, 11). But as Bourdieu points out, it is the privileged in positions of power who have ‘a monopoly over the universal’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 88). As a result of this, both in spatial practice and in the representations of space (Lefebvre 1991), and therefore at both the macro and micro-levels, non-white students remain condemned to ‘an imaginary waiting room of history’ (Chakrabarty 2000, 8) through racialised neoliberal education policy.

However, as stated earlier, it is in the meso-level space of cultural ethos and pedagogy – the representational spaces (Lefebvre 1991) – where there is greater opportunity for the recognition of non-white cultural capital: ‘space as the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity’ (Massey 2005, 10). These everyday social spaces – both the physical and the abstract and encompassing extensions to these spaces such as institutional newsletters and websites – have a temporal and spatial vastness that makes the meso-level far more difficult (perhaps impossible) to control in the way that the macro- and micro-levels are controlled. This social space is a ‘multi-dimensional’ space (Bourdieu, 1985) and its localised structures and networks cannot be controlled through macro-level sanctions or directly through the colonial curriculum.

As stated earlier, however, this meso-level space is not immune from Britain’s colonial metanarrative, part of Britain’s ‘taken-for-granted’ cultural system (Hall & Rose 2006) where ‘race’ continues to retain its ‘powerful symbolic force’ (Schwarz 1996, 11) as a marker for racialised and culturally stratified British society. Within this metanarrative, non-whiteness is seen as temporally and spatially at odds with advanced (white) British ‘modernity’ and cultural heritage: ‘dirt in the bedroom’ (Hall 1997) - the other side of a binary position, even a ‘threat’ (Ahmed 2017). Agents (teachers) who contribute to production within this space may well bring this colonial metanarrative into this space and subconsciously bar non-white cultural capital from this space, having themselves ‘internalised’ this metanarrative through ‘the correspondence between social and mental structures’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 13). This may be especially pertinent now that collective multicultural/ anti-racist structures have been eroded in the ‘retreat of collectivism that has come to define the neoliberal era’ (Virdee & McGeever 2018, 1816), and now that hierarchised and racialised understandings of the multicultural environment go largely unchallenged and the categories of colonial thought appear normalised, as ‘self-evident’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992).

Barring access to this meso-level space has been for the most part enacted through micro-level policy in conjunction with macro-level policy (since the Education Reform Act 1988), specifically through the colonial curriculum. The basic ‘universal’ curriculum – with a focus on the all-important core subjects – diverts attention away from the meso-level space or becomes the focus of this social space as institutions work to avoid macro-level sanctions. There may even be ‘seepage’ from the colonial curriculum into the school’s cultural ethos and pedagogy (for example, in WW1 whole-school History curriculum projects that may overlook non-white contributions). That is to say, spatial practice (Lefebvre 1991) at the micro-level may influence practice/production in the meso-level space in similar ways that therepresentation of space (ibid) at the macro-level (a conceived and planned ‘frontal’ neoliberal space) is ‘tied to the relations of production and to the “order” which those relations impose’ (Lefebvre 1991, 33).

But despite there being ‘a logic and a strategy of property in space’ (Lefebvre 1991, 56), an implicit sense of ownership over abstract space (demonstrated especially at the macro- and micro-levels, the representations of space and spatial practice), the meso-level space is too vast to ‘control’ either directly or indirectly, especially if that space is ‘lived’ by a majority/ significant proportion of non-white students. As Bourdieu (1985, 730) states:

If the legitimate mode of perception is such an important prize at stake in social struggles, this is partly because the shift from the implicit to the explicit is in no way automatic: the same experience of the social may be uttered in very different expressions.

Of the three spatial areas identified by Lefebvre, it is the representational space, the meso-level social space of cultural ethos and pedagogy, that most significantly aligns with Massey’s assertion that space ‘is always in the process of being made: it is never finished, never closed’ (2005, 9). While this space may indeed be ‘never closed’, it can in fact be circumvented, obstructed, marginalised, and even ‘occupied’. The following section will demonstrate how British Values and Prevent policies are the more overt attempts by central government to maintain a white ‘flexible positional superiority’ (Said 2003) over this space. It outlines how polices such as Prevent and FBV demonstrate central government’s struggle ‘for the production and imposition of the legitimate vision of the social world’ (Bourdieu 1989, 22).

**The security-curriculum ensemble: British Values and Prevent**

Winter and Mills (2020) describe the security-curriculum ensemble as policies, guidance/advice, and media and political discourse, especially relating to Fundamental British Values (FBV). Indeed, they claim that

whilst BV manifests itself as a ‘new’ curriculum policy, its underlying logic and rationale are symptoms of the much-older colonial education-security relationship, and thus, of white British supremacist subjectivity deployed by Government to defend white privilege (47).

This paper agrees with this statement and connects it to a wider colonial metanarrative of security within Britain; with who symbolically, legally, and culturally belongs in the UK and who does not. It is part of a symbolic system (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992) that emphasises white heritage when it comes to belonging, rather than the ‘active production of culture’ (Hall 1999, 4) that non-whiteness should bring to a multicultural UK. As an historical example, this is witnessed in the barely-concealed racism in government immigration policy from 1960s onwards (Kundnani 2007; Tomlinson 2018):

‘Although implicit rather than explicit, the right to British citizenship and identity became ever more closely aligned with whiteness – not simply in many sectors of public opinion, but now newly enshrined by law’ (Buettner 2016, 270).

In this light, the security-curriculum ensemble can be seen as an extension of central government’s racialised macro-level efforts at controlling symbolic and cultural belonging. The state does this through its role as the ‘supreme tribunal’ of ‘official classification’ (Bourdieu 1989, 22). As with the aforementioned immigration policy, the effect of racializing and marginalising policies such as Prevent and FBV (Miah 2017; Bhopal 2018) is to validate through law a white ‘flexible positional superiority’ (Said 2003). It validates hierarchised and racialised understandings of the multicultural environment. ‘Britishness’ in this sense can be seen as a legitimised ‘symbolic capital’, and

The legal consecration of symbolic capital confers upon a perspective an absolute, universal value, thus snatching it from a relativity that is by definition inherent in every point of view, as a view taken from a particular point in social space. (Bourdieu 1989, 22)

Furthermore, like the aforementioned immigration policy, Prevent and FBV reinforce colonial ideology in regard to non-white culture being temporally and spatially incompatible with England’s white neoliberal ‘modernity’. Non-whiteness is historicised (Chakrabarty 2000), positioned as a threat to this ‘modernity’, and it is this threat, especially after 9/11 and the London Bombings of 2005, that has provided extra impetus for central government to not just control the macro- and micro-levels within education, but *attempt* to control the meso-level of institutional ethos and cultural pedagogy as well (for an example of this, see Smith 2016, and Crawford 2017, in regard to the Birmingham Trojan Horse Affair, and Shackle 2017). These policies have in effect been implemented ‘to set forth the frontier between the sacred and the profane, good and evil, the vulgar and the distinguished’ (Bourdieu 1985, 735).

What is of particular importance is the way that this muscular (Cameron 2014) attempt at nation-building through the security-policy ensemble – unprecedented in terms of similar projects that came before it (Richardson 2015) - has been structured and enacted. It is clear that central government has no direct access or means of direct/ indirect control of the meso-level space of institutional ethos and cultural pedagogy. Perhaps only the most dictatorial regimes can do this, although even here it is doubtful (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992). For central government intent on enforcing white neoliberal ‘modernity’ based on Western (cultural/ historical/ political) supremacy within its national borders, this presents something of a conundrum. Especially when a significant part of the national population has transnational (cultural/historical/political) attachments: this greatly enlarges the abstract space central government feels compelled to control. This is especially pertinent within the UK context where there has been an expansion in faith schools and where there is also a significant level of ethnic segregation (The Challenge 2017). For example, in 2013, over 50% of ethnic minority students attended schools where ethnic minorities were in the majority (Burgess 2013).

As central government cannot control this multicultural space directly or indirectly, a policy to obstruct access to this space and to ‘occupy’ it in a form of reverse, domestic colonisation has occurred through the security-curriculum ensemble and an ‘authoritarian’ (Hursh 2019) white neoliberalism. A linear, white supremacist historical narrative has been established that excludes and historicises (Chakrabarty 2000) non-white cultural capital: a narrative that could be described as a ‘purification of space’ (Massey 2005, 12). This conceptual colonisation of the past is most evidently seen in David Cameron’s (2014) article on enforcing British Values tied to a particular version of British history. It is this white historical account of values such as ‘freedom’ that implicitly disassociates non-whiteness from Britain’s ‘island story’. But as Hall (1999) has argued, this type of selective remembering ‘foreshortens, silences, disavows, forgets and elides many episodes which – from another perspective – could be the start of a different narrative’ (1999, 5). It returns to Massey’s (2005) stance that this particular ‘Western’ historical trajectory must be seen as part of ‘a complexity’ rather than a ‘universal’, otherwise it simply becomes part of the colonising process.

Winter & Mills (2020, 51) are right in highlighting that the ‘BV curriculum policy is not a separate curriculum strand or a discrete subject in the repertoire of the English school curriculum’. This cross-curricular focus makes FBV somewhat ‘uncontained’, nebulous, with a licence to therefore to go beyond the micro-level of the formal received curriculum. It is colonial whiteness made ‘visible’, embodied and located under a muscular assertiveness from central government. But it also has the potential over time to become disembodied, invisible, non-located (Dyer 1997), taken-for-granted and its symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992) misrecognised as simply ‘the way of things’ (ibid) in the representational spaces (Lefebvre 1991). ‘British’ becomes a sort of ‘floating signifier’ as ‘race’ is a ‘floating signifier’ (Hall 1997). The diffuse aims of FBV were emphasised by the then Education Secretary Michael Gove (2014) in a speech to Parliament where he stated that ‘we will put British Values at the heart of what every school has to deliver’. This statement very much suggests a concerted effort at infiltrating the cultural ethea and pedagogies of schools. Further evidence of their pervasiveness is evidenced through Ofsted’s monitoring of these values in schools. It is for this reason that British Values curriculum policy can be seen both as ‘limiting’ (Panjwani 2016; Struthers 2017) and ‘vague’ (Richardson 2015).

Firstly, these ‘British’ values need to be cognitively limited enough to focus attention away from non-white cultural capital and to obstruct non-white-cultural capital from the meso-level, representational spaces, spatially and temporally. Secondly, these values need to be diffuse enough to be enacted symbolically in a school’s ethos and cultural pedagogy – outside of the formal curriculum – through symbolic code (Lefebvre 1991) and symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992). The overall effect of this is to form a policy of ‘cultural upgrading aimed at providing the dominated with access to dominant cultural goods or, at least, to a degraded version of this culture’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 82). Non-white students are presented with this ‘degraded’ version of dominant culture through a basic white, middle-class cultural capital in the form of ‘British’ values and its implicit associations with white ‘modernity’ in order to belong, in a form of conceptual colonisation of values such as ‘freedom’. It is designed to mitigate feelings of ressentiment among non-white students (and staff) in regard to their dominated position while maintaining a white flexible positional superiority (Said 2003). But of course, this enforced access to dominant culture leaves non-white students only half-belonging: ‘included’ through aspiration to these (British) ‘universal’ values, through a yearning to belong, but fundamentally excluded through their non-whiteness, their non-white cultural capital, and thus still condemned to ‘the imaginary waiting room of history’ (Chakrabarty 2000, 8), the ‘historical queue’ (Massey 2005, 11). These ‘British’ values can be seen as ‘aimed at universalizing cultural exigencies without universalizing the conditions that make them attainable’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 88). There is a profound exclusion that lies at the heart of the FBV agenda.

However, it is also clear that central government’s main way in to this meso-level space remains through the micro-level; through the formal curriculum where it is certain of its control over curriculum content – through *Spatial practice* (Lefebvre 1991). This is demonstrated in Cameron’s (2014) focus on the history curriculum (see above), but also in other curriculum areas such as Citizenship (Busher, et al., 2017; McGhee & Zhang 2017), Geography (Winter 2018) and English Literature. It is also clearly demonstrated in the government’s focus on PSHE as its main delivery mechanism for FBV (DfE 2014a & 2014b). The enabling structures for white colonial and neoliberal governance remain, therefore, at the micro-level with the potential to be diffused symbolically into the meso-level.

In order for this to happen, teachers would also need to have their subjectivities shaped by government at the macro-level through an over-arching Teacher’s Standards framework (DfE 2012). It is not enough in this age of white authoritarian neoliberalism to rely on teachers promoting these values through ‘nostalgic imperialist constructions of Britishness’ (Lander 2016, 279), through a self-evident ‘fit between objective structures and subjective structures’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 235). Rather, according to the framework, teachers are instructed ‘not to undermine fundamental British Values’ (DfE 2012), to actively promote British Values (Vincent 2019a). This framework then becomes a way of establishing relations between central government and individual agents. This muscular reinforcement of implicit white supremacy is also enacted through localised training on Prevent policy at the micro-level. But as research has indicated (Farrell 2016; Maylor 2016; Smith 2016; Sant & Hanley 2018), there is no guarantee that teachers will uncritically promulgate central government’s colonial metanarrative and ‘symbolic strategies’ of domination (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992).

**Methodology**

The data presented and analysed in this paper formed part of a wider critical ethnography (Fitzpatrick & May 2016) focused on three sites of research which are briefly detailed below. This study encompassed the methods typical of holistic ethnographic research, including spatial observations; observations of participants in their normal institutional lives; listening to what is said; informal conversations; formal semi-structured interviews; and collecting documents and artefacts within/ related to the sites of research (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007). The data was collected over six months of repeated visits to the research sites.

There were two concurrent phases to data generation. The first phase relied upon two main sources of data in interpreting each institution’s cultural ethos and pedagogy: documentary and observational data. Documentary data often transmits ‘the received values of the school’ (McCulloch, 2012, p. 212). In particular, data generated from institutional newsletters provided a ‘longitudinal’ perspective on how non-white cultural capital is institutionally positioned and represented. These newsletters can ‘constitute a significant record on behalf of the institution itself, with detailed information on everyday life and interests’ (ibid). They are valuable for seeing what has been officially sanctioned as legitimate institutional culture.

The physical traces of each school’s multicultural ethos were also observed. This can be found in objectified cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) such as artefacts, words, pictures, documents and actions. For example, displays of student work pertaining to this objectified cultural capital were sought and observed. As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:135) point out, ‘if we want to make sense of many social worlds, we ought to take account of how they are physically constituted’. This phase of the research sought out the institution’s ‘visible philosophy on multiculturalism’ (Matas & Bridges, 2008:11) as well as to observe its spatial codes (Lefebvre, 1991) in regard to power imbalances.

The second phase of the research involved semi-structured interviews with staff leaders and group interviews with student leaders. In total, 31 semi-structured interviews were conducted with staff leaders as well as 7 group interviews involving 63 students across the three institutions.

This study was theoretically based on Bourdieu’s sociology (Bourdieu 1986; Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992) aligned with the socio-historical postcolonial literature (for example, Hall 1999; Schwarz 1996; 2011; Said 2003; Buettner 2016). This paper extracts the data associated with the security-curriculum ensemble (Winter & Mills 2020) generated from this study and analyses how this ensemble impacts on the meso-level representational spaces (Lefebvre 1991) both subjectively and objectively through a postcolonial/ Bourdieuian/ spatial theoretical lens.

***Research Sites***

*Institution A*

Institution A is a secondary school situated in an affluent suburb of Leicester. It is rated as ‘Good’ by Ofsted. At the time of research, all 5 members of the SLT were White British. Of the 10 Heads of Department, 2 are non-white. 15% of the student population is White British. The large majority of students are of Indian and Pakistani heritage. It is not part of Leicester LEA and is part of an academy chain. Its institutional ethos is essentially one of ahistorical respect for the individual with a focus on individual academic success.

*Institution B*

Institution B boarders open countryside but its student population is mostly from inner-city Leicester rather than from the surrounding suburban and rural localities. It is part of Leicester LEA. It was, at the time of writing, classed as ‘Requires Improvement’ by Ofsted. It is larger than the average secondary school according to this report. Over 37 languages are present within the institution, although the vast majority of students are of Indian sub-continent heritage, including Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. Of the 7 SLT positions, all are occupied by White British staff. At the next level down, all 5 Hub Leaders are White British. On the pastoral side, 3 out of the 5 Year leaders are non-white. Proportionally, the number of White British students here is much smaller than in Institution A.

*Institution C*

Institution C is a post-16 education provider located within the city of Leicester. It is rated as ‘Good’ by Ofsted. At the time of research, all the SLT posts were occupied by White British staff. Out of the 12 Curriculum Leader posts, 4 were occupied by non-white staff. Much greater non-white representation was observed in the pastoral leadership posts. 4 out of the 7 Personal Supervisors were non-white. 4 out of 4 Welfare and Progress leaders were non-white. It has students arriving here from schools all over Leicester, from the county, but also abroad. As one SLT member stated, the college has ‘students with backgrounds from all over the planet’.

**Objective structures**

In the three institutions studied, the main structure for enacting security-policy ensemble was the formal curriculum at the micro-level, through spatial practice (Lefebvre 1991). This was mainly done through a cross-curricular ‘mapping exercise’ as a way of promoting FBV – a cognitive response. It was also largely promoted through PSHE and this chimes with research conducted by Busher, et al (2017) that saw a significant curriculum response to FBV and Prevent. This paper argues that these micro-level objective structures are designed to obstruct the recognition of non-white cultural capital at the meso-level; to keep ‘diversity’ issues at the government-controlled micro-level. In Institution A, for example, as well as cross-curricular FBV mapping, the (white) Head of Pastoral said:

We link British Values in in every sort half-termly work of PSHE. So, so this one is all about mutual respect and tolerance. And in each one the children are reminded about British Values.

The emphasis on ‘mutual respect and tolerance’ ensures that cultural diversity issues are limited to a basic understanding of difference based on the desocialised and ahistorical (Bourdieu 1998) individual as promoted through neoliberal spatial practice (Lefebvre 1991): it is not a positive or contextualised recognition of non-white cultural capital. In fact, since arriving at this school, she claimed that she had done quite a lot of work around diversity, ‘particularly in regard to extremism and Prevent’.

In Institution B there was a greater emphasis on ‘including’ students within the security-curriculum ensemble discourse in a sort of damage-limitation exercise (Vincent 2019b; Jerome et al. 2019). A (white) Hub-Leader in this school was tasked with putting together a booklet on Global Citizenship for PSHE which had to be linked to British Values:

And I find, unless that it’s handled really, really carefully…You’ve got to be really careful how you teach that, so it’s not these historical white British values, colonialism etcetera.

While this could be seen as a worthy attempt at trying to expand British Values to include non-white cultural capital, it can also be seen as an inadvertent form of what Bourdieu terms ‘symbolic denegation’ (Boudieu & Waquant 1992) which is ‘the fictious bracketing of the relation of power [which] exploits this relation of power in order to produce the recognition of the relation of power that abdication elicits’ (Boudieu & Waquant 1992, 143). It is this white leader who has the power to control the narrative – to ‘give’ power away to non-white students – through white colonial objective structures such as British Values and within the limits of these structures. And while she (perhaps commendably) wants to avoid ‘historical white British values, colonialism’, she does not recognise that ‘it is not two persons who speak to each other [through this document, this structure] but, through them, the colonial history in its entirety’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 144). In many respects this teacher’s efforts at mitigating this structure have only led to the same outcome as in Institution A. That is to say, the FBV structure that maintains white flexible positional superiority (Said 2003) focuses attention away from the representational spaces of institutional ethos and pedagogy where the possibility for equal control over cultural production (Hall 1999) remains unrecognised.

This was also evident in Institution C and the vice-principal’s (teaching and learning) focus on British Values in terms of leading on cultural diversity: ‘Last year we managed to create an actual booklet that said all the things that all the subject areas have been doing within their subject teaching which were promoting this aspect’.

This focus on the micro-level of the formal curriculum, on spatial practice (Lefebvre 1991) can be effective in closing access to the representational spaces through a focus on ensuring Ofsted requirements on FBV (DfE 2019) are met through neoliberal accountability and performance governance. Not only this, but spatial practice production and reproduction (Lefebvre 1991) can carry over, occupy, and set the terms for symbolic (re)production in the meso-level representations of space through ‘spatial codes’. This was most strikingly observed in Institution C, in its lived, everyday (Lefebvre 1991) spaces.

The symbolic codes were all too clear. Along the corridors of the building were posters depicting faux-superheroes. Each one promoted a particular ‘British’ value. Each character was muscular, pictured in an aggressive ‘action’ stance, seemingly bursting from the posters themselves, enforcing ‘British’ values. There were further posters proclaiming that the college promotes ‘British Values’. There was also a ‘British Values’ display where the Union flag was prominent. It increasingly felt like propaganda, or at the very least an uncritical deployment of imagery (see Moncrieffe & Moncrieffe, 2019, for more on this) and what Bourdieu would describe as an enforced ‘cultural upgrading’ (see above) through ‘a basic set of coercive norms’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 112). These faux ‘superheroes’ seemed to symbolically guard access to the meso-level’s spatial and temporal possibilities in regard to ‘space as the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity’ (Massey 2005, 10). This degraded version of white middle class culture clearly demonstrated ‘the social uses of culture as a capital and an instrument of symbolic domination’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 154).

This symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992) of the security-curriculum ensemble was less pronounced in Institutions A and B. In Institution A it took on a more nebulous form, becoming incorporated into the school’s official, pre-existing core values, as also seen in a study by McGhee & Zhang (2017). This was despite the Principal finding these values ‘patronising’ and the Deputy-principal claiming that ‘I don’t like the term British Values […] But you have to make sure you tick the box, and you have to make sure you’ve done what Ofsted want you to do in that regard’. Indeed, this Deputy-principal claimed that the school had tried to link FBV to global values in order to make them more palatable but were then criticised during a mock Ofsted inspection because the students did not refer to these values as specifically ‘British’ values. It is a clear example of the ‘monopoly over legitimate symbolic violence which belongs to the state or to its representatives’ (Bourdieu 1989, 21). While these attempts to mitigate the more muscular aspects of the security-policy ensemble (through linking FBV to global values) may be seen as commendable – as McGhee & Zhang (2017) suggest – it is argued here that the effect of this is to further obstruct the meso-level space for non-white cultural capital, promoting an abstract global that silences the very real local. The effect of this manoeuvre is that colonial notions of white Britishness begin to symbolically occupy (potentially) locally-produced institutional ethos and cultural pedagogy through a ‘realignment’ with school values, as seen in McGhee & Zhang’s study (2017) where FBV had been strongly aligned with Christianity.

**Subjective Structures**

It was stated earlier that there is a danger of staff subjectivities reproducing colonial metanarratives in the meso-level space through the internalisation (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992) of racialised and colonial objective structures. The reproduction of these structures is possible with ‘the collaboration of agents’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 140). The evidence presented in this paper suggests that this can happen through the internalisation of the security-curriculum ensemble at both the micro-level (the formal curriculum, localised Prevent training) and the macro-level (central government’s FBV/ Prevent guidance, teacher training, Ofsted monitoring) which is itself a product of historically racialised and culturally-stratified wider society. This section of the paper will look at staff subjectivities in relation to FBV/ Prevent policies and the impact this could have in regard to obstructing non-white cultural capital from the meso-level space – the lived, everyday representational spaces (Lefebvre 1991).

The enactment of British Values in a practical sense, within these spaces, seemed to fall on the ‘Heads of Houses’ within Institution A. These four Heads of Houses were all non-qualified teachers and paid considerably less than qualified teachers. As one (White British female) Head of House stated in regard to FBV:

When we’re talking to students, if, erm, we’re putting them back on the right track, we’ll perhaps use, you know, our, our values at school, because our values at school link to British Values.

Furthermore, these values were accepted as universal. They were seen as somehow transcendent to ‘other(ed)’ values, as *meta*: ‘But it’s not necessarily anything to do with cultural diversity, but it is following the values of life which include the British Values of life’. It was clear that the uncritical internalisation of restrictive British Values by these Heads of Houses had become ‘normalised’ and that these values were projected – perhaps even ‘enforced’ - within the meso-level space of cultural ethos and pedagogy. As a Black male Head of House said: ‘My values are British because I was born here’. This comment demonstrates how non-white people can be eager to associate with FBV in order to ‘belong’ in a form of codified ‘cultural upgrading’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 82). This uncritical internalisation of FBV was seen in another Head of House, this time a Muslim Woman:

We just take it as this is what we need to do, this is the curriculum, this is the PSHE lesson, and, and, and we just do this. There’s no debate about why. This is what we’re told and we get on with it, because we accept those values, we understand where they’re coming from.

It reinforces the idea of school staff being positioned as state security agents (Lander 2016; Panjwani 2016; Elton-Chalcroft et al. 2017) through an unquestioning (Elton-Chalcroft et al. 2017) internalisation of objective security ensemble structures: ‘the system of relations between mental structures and social structures’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 140). As highlighted earlier, this may in large part be a result of trying to meet Ofsted requirements (see Principal/ Deputy-Principal comments above) – ‘playing the game’, as it were. As Bourdieu points out, ‘People are not fools’, and that ‘they know how to “read” the future that fits them […] what unquestionably imposes itself as that which “has” to be done or said’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 130). However, when a space opens up to question the FBV agenda, it was clear that some Heads of Houses took this opportunity. When asked whether the label ‘British’ makes these values exclusive or inclusive, the Muslim HoH stated:

Exclusive, I imagine. Especially when you’re struggling, and when you’re new and your, your family is vulnerable and perhaps going through any sort of racism, from whichever angle you’re looking at. Erm, you know, or, or feel erm, I don’t know, erm…targeted, at any angle. I think they’ll find it hard to fit in.

This realisation of how ‘British’ Values makes it harder for non-white cultural capital to ‘fit in’ despite the carrot of ‘cultural upgrading’ suggests a realisation of FBV as an instrument of symbolic violence and domination within the school’s everyday representational spaces. It suggests she has realised the presence of otherness at the very heart of her subjectivity (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992). It also suggests a moment of subjective ‘displacement’. It points to a fleeting moment before internalised coercive norms have to be re-remembered, re-internalised within everyday practice/ enactment of FBV. There is an interesting comparison here with the hub-leader (see Objective Structures section, above) in Institution B. Despite her attempts to make FBV more palatable for non-white students, there is no sense of ‘displacement’ on her part. Instead, her ‘certainty’ over her ‘control’ of this objective structure shows how deceptively internalised it had become, because it is fundamentally a ‘white structure’ that she feels confident operating within..

But without structures that could act as access points to equality of cultural production within the meso-level space of cultural ethos and pedagogy, staff internalisation of the security-curriculum ensemble could act as a block to the democratisation of this space. This was demonstrated in Institution B where the English as an additional Language (EAL) Coordinator said she did a ‘questioning assembly’ in regard to the centenary of the First World War: ‘Erm, didn’t go down very well. It went down very well with the kids, but I had some complaints because it wasn’t fitting in with the British Values’. These complaints came to her as a surprise – a form of ‘displacement’ – because she had no idea that her assembly would provoke such a response from other teachers. It can be seen here how some teachers become agents for the security-curriculum ensemble and take it upon themselves to ‘police’ and territorialise the meso-level space and its objective structures. This is a result of having wider racialised and colonial understandings of ‘Britishness’ validated through government micro- and macro-level education policy that legitimise ‘nostalgic imperialist constructions of Britishness’ (Lander 2016, 279) within the representational spaces (Lefebvre 1991).

However, such conceptions of ‘Britishness’ can also provoke resistance in the meso-level space. Bourdieu states that ‘*The dominated, in any social universe, can always exert a certain force*’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 80). The EAL Coordinator, in response to a question on the effect of labelling tolerance, respect, democracy and so forth as exclusively ‘British’ had on her students, replied:

‘I think that they think that people…think they’re lesser…lesser beings. That they’re not the same. In fact, one [mainstream] student did also complain about the library display, same as mine [her group of students], and said this has got nothing to do with being British. We think this as well’.

The library display was subsequently removed from the meso-level space. It is a clear demonstration of how – if symbolic violence is *recognised* – these spatial codes ‘guarding’ and occupying the representational spaces can be removed.

However, in Institution C it was clear that this symbolic violence was for the most part misrecognised ‘as the way of things’. Bourdieu explains symbolic violence as ‘the *violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity’* (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 80). This was most clearly seen in the Pastoral and Welfare leader (middle management) who is of South Asian heritage. He is responsible for the frontline implementation of Prevent policy at the college. When asked if he was now an agent of the state, he replied: ‘I think I probably am. […] For me, this is about Safeguarding, and nothing more’. However, a quick look at the Prevent public website (<https://www.ltai.info>) undercuts this somewhat. All 5 cartoon characters on the homepage seem to have the appearance of being Asian – or ‘off white’. On the ‘About’ page, all 7 characters were Asian-looking or ‘off-white’. It was further undermined in his whole-college Prevent training presentation when he stated that Leicester is in fact a ‘high priority area’ for the police and security services. He stated that it was a high priority area because of the city’s cultural diversity, not because Leicester was particularly associated with terrorism.

Despite (somewhat uneasily) internalising Prevent through a ‘safeguarding’ perspective, the result was still the same: Prevent and FBV (and statutory equality and diversity requirements) remained the only structures in the meso-level space for recognising and engaging with cultural diversity. In line with the institution’s neo-liberal service-provider ethos, the college seemed to have ‘outsourced’ all cultural responsibility for this space to central government. This was demonstrated in the Vice-principal’s (Academic) comments on British Values: ‘It felt offensive at first to be told that we had to teach all the students to have British values, in a way, like as in, like almost as if that was racist in a way’. But now teachers were ‘more comfortable’ and ‘really on board’ with it because ‘British Values doesn’t mean White British values, it means what is it to be a person who lives in Britain’.

Through staff subjectivities and the incorporation of external objective structures, the representational spaces (Lefebvre 1991) seemed almost entirely obstructed to the recognition of non-white cultural capital and production. Instead, this capital remained in a ‘historical queue’ (Massey 2005, 11) as Western flexible positional superiority (Said 2003) was maintained. Non-white students had been ‘gifted’ a white ‘cultural upgrade’, designed to simultaneously ‘include’ as well as exclude, a codified and tantalising but never-achievable sense of belonging. That is to say, exclusion lurks deep within the heart of this universalising ‘inclusion’, both objectively and subjectively, in what can be termed ‘in(ex)clusion’.

But this does not mean that there is no resistance to this in(ex)clusion within the college. One Black (male) Pastoral Supervisor at the college said the following in regard to whether Prevent marginalises groups:

Yes. Having had to deliver those Prevent sessions as workshops you can- you’re sitting there and you can see people just switch off. I think the video that we had, had this intro, and as soon as those planes went into the Twin Towers you’d lost certain groups within the class, and it’s difficult to bring them back.

Rather, it was his own personal experiences of marginalisation and exclusion that marginalised students responded to:

I told them a story about how I got punched by a policeman and called the N-word when I was about twelve or thirteen, and the anger I had…erm…within me. And then – I don’t know – 1980, you’ve got the riots, you know? 1980/ 1981 you’ve got the riots and I’ve got anger. I’m out there on the streets, you know? So…That, that sort of, that triggered them, me giving a personal account of my own anger and things like that.

It is certainly a very different approach to Prevent and British Values than envisioned by its policy authors. This pastoral supervisor had transformed this ‘cultural upgrade’ of in(ex)clusion into addressing (although perhaps incidentally) issues of cultural and ‘racial’ exclusion. But unlike the security-curriculum ensemble, his efforts had no presence in the lived, everyday space of cultural ethos and pedagogy. The meso-level space had been blocked as a space in which legitimate grievances over cultural/ ‘racial’ inequality could be addressed. Instead, the security-curriculum ensemble has created a form of self-censorship within this social space among students and staff. As the same pastoral supervisor wondered, in the current climate, ‘Are you going to say anything controversial?’

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this paper was to foreground the meso-level space as a rare space for agency and political action in schools globally. It also demonstrated how securitisation policy could impact on the meso-level space of cultural ethos and pedagogy in schools and colleges through providing a country specific example. This paper argues that securitisation policies - as demonstrated by Prevent and FBV - are a recognition of the importance of this meso-level space by central governments. The British Values and Prevent agendas aim to circumvent, block, and occupy this space in order to ensure a Western flexible positional superiority (Said 2003) in the everyday representational spaces (Lefebvre 1991). It does this through a form of ‘cultural upgrading’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 82) and in(ex)clusion, where a ‘degraded’ and basic white middle-class cultural capital is used as ‘an instrument of symbolic domination’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 154) in a form of conceptual colonisation. This is implicitly targeted at the UK’s significant number of non-white majority schools and schools with very significant non-white populations. Indeed, it forms part of a wider central government policy of targeting urban centres with large non-white populations (see above) in a form of domestic colonisation of these ‘high-risk’ centres.

Prevent works in ways to permeate the meso-level social spaces so that non-whiteness and non-white cultural capital is framed within a narrative of ‘threat’ (Ahmed 2017) to white neoliberal ‘modernity’. It works to marginalise, curtail, and historicise (Chakrabarty 2000) non-white cultural capital in the representational spaces. Furthermore, this structure has a perceived ‘legitimacy’ because it arrives from central government. British Values, on the other hand, provides a softer (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992) form of racialised symbolic violence. This agenda provides an ‘antidote’ (Winter & Mills 2020) to extremism and non-white cultural deficiencies. Through these values being exclusively labelled as British, and therefore through a form of cultural ‘upgrading’, it superficially provides a path to belonging for non-white students. However, in reality, it is a form of in(ex)clusion intended to ensure white flexible positional superiority in the meso-level space: it closes the possibility for equality of cultural production through the attempted territorialisation of the representational spaces in the form of incontestable values. As has been demonstrated in this study, it has the licence to become diffused within an institution’s cultural ethos and pedagogy through both subjective and objective structures. As a whole, this security-curriculum ensemble can be seen to impact on this space through symbolic violence, through acts of ‘cognition and of misrecognition’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 171), through ‘coercion and consent, external imposition and internal impulse’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 172), as well as the weight of ‘self-evident’ and legitimised colonial and racialised ideology.

This study has also demonstrated that the extent to which British Values can obstruct the recognition of non-white cultural capital from the meso-level space depends to a large extent on the institution’s existing cultural ethos and pedagogy. It depends on how democratic its existing structures in this space already are, and the extent to which these structures recognise a collective multicultural capital (Matas & Bridges 2008) in the first place. For example, FBV could simply be uncritically added/ incorporated into a list of individualised, desocialised and ahistorical values in a ‘box-ticking’ exercise within objective meso-level structures that do not recognise non-white cultural capital in the first instance. Alternatively, FBV could be made more palatable by taking a more ‘inclusive’ approach (although this has its own problems, see above) while ensuring FBV remains largely ‘contained’ within the micro-level of the formal curriculum, within spatial practice (Lefebvre 1991). As demonstrated in this study, an institution could also take a much more unreserved response to the security-curriculum ensemble by ‘outsourcing’ its ethos and cultural pedagogy to central government’s colonial/ racialised ideology (Bhopal 2018; Tomlinson 2019; Winter & Mills 2020) so that FBV, Prevent, and statutory equality requirements become the only official structures for engaging with cultural diversity. However, this paper concludes by urging school/college leaders to exercise their agency in the meso-level space; to recognise this space as a space for democratisation and decolonisation as an equitable alternative to enforced cultural ‘upgrading’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 82) and in(ex)clusion presented through securitisation policy that is in reality an instrument of symbolic domination (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992). It is in the meso-level space where fleeting moments of ‘displacement’ can be expanded and coercive norms questioned: that crucial moment before internalised norms are re-remembered and re-inscribed. This paper therefore urges leaders to democratise the representational spaces, to live this space actively rather than passively (Lefebvre 1991) and to use this space as a way to resist the colonial metanarrative supported through neoliberal ideology.

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