Decolonizing Journalism Education to Create Civic and Responsible Journalists in the West

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ABSTRACT
This paper sets out a case to decolonize journalism curricula to produce civic-minded journalists who are better prepared to report on multicultural societies. Through the examination of reading lists and module descriptions on UK accredited journalism degrees it is revealed, that the subject is dominated by journalism experiences grounded in western nations and that non-white perspectives are largely neglected. There is a discussion of what decolonizing the curriculum entails and a critique of journalism practice in the UK. Finally, there are recommendations to make journalism curricula inclusive based on findings from a project to narrow the attainment gap at De Montfort University. While there have been calls to make journalism education more international in its outlook, the terminology decolonizing is specifically used to denote the undoing of colonial legacies in creating ethnically and racially divided societies. There is a call to educate trainee journalists about racism and structural racism, and the ways it advantages some groups and disadvantages others. This would enable journalists to challenge longstanding biases and omissions that restrict the audience’s understanding of politics, histories and societies.

KEYWORDS
Decolonizing; journalism education; pedagogy; inclusive curriculum; diversity; whiteness

Introduction
Discussions about racial equality and injustice came to the fore in the wake of the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests. The United Kingdom featured some of the largest demonstrations outside of the USA and as a result, there has been a renewed effort to examine racial parity in education and employment. Highly publicized movements such as “Rhodes Must Fall,” initiated at the University of Cape Town to remove the statue of Cecil Rhodes and enacted at Oxford University in 2016 and 2020, and “Why is My Curriculum White?” have drawn attention to teaching practices which have marginalized knowledge generated in the Global South. This paper sets out the case to improve journalism education by embedding diversity and inclusion into the curriculum and
purposely decolonizing learning resources, so that future journalists are educated about multicultural communities and racism. Journalism education is considered to shape the way new journalists practise their skills (Josephi 2019). This research studied module descriptions on UK university websites and accessed online reading lists to see if texts about race, racism and journalism practice in the Global South are included as learning materials. Predominantly, the reading resources offered on the programmes examined were written by western authors and present western case studies. Meaning, journalism education in Britain has the tendency to privilege this practice as being universal. Equally, concerns have been raised in non-western universities about the merits of importing journalism models and textbooks from abroad to teach their students (Teferra 2001; Obijiofor and Hanusch 2011; Ullah 2013; Ezumah 2019)

Although the number of minority ethnic students attending university and studying journalism in Britain is increasing, the Office of Communication (Ofcom), which oversees television and radio, has urged news organizations to do more to recruit and retain greater numbers of diverse employees. Post the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests this issue has become salient. Critiques of journalism practice have demonstrated that it fails to expose how societal structures, institutional policies and practices contribute to racialized outcomes for minorities (Lehrman and Wagner 2019). The way in which journalists source facts, interpret them, make sense of the world so that they can present accessible information for their audience, works to normalize the exclusion and marginalization of minority ethnic communities in the news. Journalism education can inadvertently reinforce the use of negative stereotypes and values pertaining to race when replicating standard journalism industry practices. In this paper, I draw on my involvement in a project funded by the Office for Students, to narrow the attainment gap between 2017 and 2019 at De Montfort University and a follow-up initiative, Decolonizing DMU. The attainment gap, also called the awarding gap, refers to the difference between the number of white students achieving a first class or upper second outcome compared to students from minority ethnic backgrounds (Office for Students 2020). Negative stereotypes that ethnic students lack sufficient knowledge, understanding of academic English, or are admitted to university with lower grades has been challenged by the application of the Value Added (VA) metric, as a means to understand student performance on programmes (McDuff et al. 2018). Decolonizing DMU is an institutional endeavour at De Montfort University that seeks to reduce racial disparity in terms of the staff composition, teaching and learning and the student experience. The process of decolonizing in education works to centre white identity and systems of knowledge production. Therefore, it is strongly associated with democratizing knowledge production and encouraging intercultural knowledge to flourish.

While there have been calls for journalism education to embrace global issues and practices (Deuze 2006; Ezumah 2019), this paper urges that journalism education is inclusive of minority cultures, and their lived experiences. This is necessary because journalists have a social responsibility to their audiences, and multicultural societies can challenge their understanding of communities. The knowledge and understanding journalists have about other cultures, ethnicities and their subsequent representation of those communities are interlinked (Deuze 2001). The news media play a significant role in helping audiences to understand race and inequality in society. However, it is challenging for journalists to understand sensitive and difficult subjects if issues pertaining to
race and racism are confined specifically to theoretical modules or worse excluded all together.

**Decolonizing in Education**

There is no singular definition of what decolonizing means. Within higher education decolonizing is conceptualized as activity that seeks to make structural change at all levels, including the learning resources to improve experiences and outcomes for minorities (Bhambra, Gebrial, and Nişancıoğlu 2018, 29). The concept of decolonizing shares some similarities to Critical Race Theory; both recognize the application of differential racialization is deeply entrenched in society (Delgado and Stefancic 2001), and that racism does not only operate in crude forms but is ingrained in processes, enacted in nuanced ways and evidenced in terms of outcomes (Rollock and David 2011; Bonilla-Silva 2021). There are also differences between the two notably, decolonial theory places an emphasis upon colonialism and post colonialism. Whereas CRT is grounded in the contemporary understanding and challenging of racial inequality in society. Cupples and Grosfoguel (2018) present the case that the western model of universities continues to be:

> Sexist and racist institutions in which the knowledges and worldviews of indigenous, African and Muslim people as well as scholarship by women and female perspectives, especially working-class ones, are either excluded completely or kept on the margins of curricula, modes of governance and institutional practice. (Cupples and Grosfoguel 2018, 4)

Conclusions such as this sit uncomfortably with many universities who are keen to recruit both diverse students within the UK, and increasingly international students, but are often unwilling to re-examine the curricula to be inclusive. Historically, the concept of race was used to frame some ethnic groups as being inferior (Walton and Caliendo 2010). As a consequence, negative stereotypes pertaining to minority communities continue to be applied across society. For example, in higher education differential racialization occurs when Black students are perceived to have “pronounced social and cultural deficits” due to their ethnic heritage (Bhambra, Gebrial, and Nişancıoğlu 2018, 59). Meaning, educators expect less from them. Learning resources often do not pay attention to how colonialism continues to shape histories, pedagogies, and societies because curriculums present events and history from Eurocentric perspectives which masks the brutality enacted upon the colonized (Bhambra, Gebrial, and Nişancıoğlu 2018, 23). The consideration of how colonialism has influenced and shaped people’s understanding of minority communities is also absent. This omission is significant within journalism and media education. Shome (2016) has argued that media studies would benefit by incorporating post-colonial theoretical frameworks. However, she also notes that post-colonial studies, and relatedly decolonial theory, challenge dominant assumptions about media histories and the role of media in informing and influencing people’s viewpoints, especially on minorities, immigrants and refugees. One impact of colonialism has been that some societies have evolved to favour the dominant white group by giving them greater power. This is referred to as White Privilege. McIntosh (1989) describes White Privilege as having invisible advantages due to the colour of your skin. This enables one group to be confident and comfortable and their lives are
portrayed as the norm, but it also makes them “oblivious” to the fact that “other groups were likely being made unconfident, uncomfortable, and alienated” (1989, 3).

Mignolo and Tlostanova (2006) have demonstrated modern knowledge excludes non-western viewpoints. Instead, there has been greater emphasis upon knowledge produced in the Global North at the expense of Global South scholars. In part, this is due, to prevalent beliefs that knowledge from the Global South is unstable, not to the same standard, and often simply not relevant, or significant. Traditionally, an education that privileged European languages and knowledge production was perceived as superior. Thus, the dominant tendency within western universities elides multiple perspectives or non-western viewpoints in curricula and theoretical understanding. The term “de-westernize” has also been used to signify how teaching pedagogy is trying to embrace innovative approaches to learning and research. There is acknowledgement that the western hemisphere plays a dominant role in the production and dissemination of knowledge and information (Ullah 2014; Shome 2016; Bhambra, Gebrial, and Nişancioğlu 2018). This is especially pertinent within journalism education and practice, both considered as “western phenomenon” (Curran and Park 2000; Ezumah 2019; Josephi 2019). The Decolonizing DMU project focuses upon:

Diversifying structures, cultures and practices; decentring dominant knowledge production; devaluing hierarchies and revaluing relationality; disinvesting from power structures; and, diminishing predominant voices and magnifying those made silent. Our starting point is the cultures within which whiteness operates. (Hall et al. 2021, 907)

Most British universities are addressing the attainment gap by changing curricula to better reflect and include minority lived experiences in the learning materials. Gabriel (2019) has recommended that race is considered when understanding discriminatory behaviour in higher education. She also urges that equality diversity and inclusion, are incorporated into teaching across all subjects because the consideration and critique of these topics allow students to study positions of power and dominant culture. This is extremely relevant for would-be journalists, who are expected to understand and challenge power and structures of governance while contributing to democracy by informing and educating audiences.

Although social and political scientists have furthered their understanding of structural racism and the interconnected frameworks, policies and practices that lead to racialized outcomes for minority ethnic groups, the controversial UK Race report, published in 2021, dismissed racism as an explanation for differential experiences (Bonilla-Silva 2021; Crenshaw et al. 2019; Lehrman and Wagner 2019). The report recommended that the UK should be viewed as a model for other countries due to achievements in racial equality in education and employment.

The evidence shows that geography, family influence, socio-economic background, culture, and religion have more significant impact on life chances than the existence of racism. That said, we take the reality of racism seriously and we do not deny that it is a real force in the UK. (Commission on Race and Ethnic 2021, 1)

There are underlying disparities in the UK which indicate the existence of inequality particularly in education and the media industries. For example, in March 2021 the chief executive of the Society of Editors squared was forced to resign after he defended the UK press following accusations by the Duke and Duchess of Sussex in an Oprah
interview that the UK press was bigoted. Journalists of colour in the UK articulated the problems of misrepresentation in an open letter.

While Meghan’s comments shone a light on her own personal experiences of discriminatory treatment, they reflect the depressingly familiar reality of how people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds are portrayed by the UK press on a daily basis. (Siddique 2021)

Media research has consistently found minority ethnic communities are depicted as being a problem, or a threat to dominant values and goals (Gans 1979; Van Dijk 1987; Cottle 2000).

Ethnic events are consistently described from a white majority point of view, in which the authorities are given more space and credibility than minority spokesperson. Racism is systematically underreported, reduced to incidents of individual discrimination or attributed to small right wing parties and located in poorer city areas. (Van Dijk 1987, 44, 45)

Furthermore, ethnic journalists working in mainstream or ethnic media are perceived to lack objectivity due to having discernible allegiances to specific communities (Husband 2005). In part, this is because journalism practice in the Global South includes advocate, radical and constructive models of journalism which are viewed as less superior to the western liberal model of journalism which emphasizes objectivity. American journalist, Chowdhury (2020), published an opinion piece about the role objectivity played in her journalism studies, outlining she had to work “twice as hard to be considered a fair journalist, lest I be accused of bias by way of my ethnicity and faith.”

Objectivity as it was presented to us seemed to be tailored for a specific type of person, one whose capacity to be dispassionate about certain issues came from a place of privilege that was unfamiliar to me. (Chowdhury 2020)

Schudson (2001) has pointed out that not enough research has been done to understand the process by which a practice becomes an accepted or dominant norm. He suggests norms may become prevalent depending on how they are articulated and portrayed by organizations such as the media. This paper, therefore, questions the norms that are routinely presented in the news? And asks what norms are marginalized? Critics of objectivity have posed that news organizations use it as a defence, because they are reluctant and resistant to understand or address equality and social justice issues (Callison and Young 2020).

Journalism Sector in the UK

The lack of ethnic diversity in British journalism has been described as a “chronic failure” (Thurman, Cornia, and Kunert 2016, 4). The National Council for Training of Journalists (NCTJ) an industry-approved body that promotes journalism education has found that 92 per cent of journalists in the UK are white (Spillsbury 2021). Despite comprising 3 per cent of the UK population (2011 census) Black Britons account for just 0.2 per cent of working journalists in the UK (Thurman, Cornia, and Kunert 2016, 11). The non-white population in the UK according to the 2011 census is approximately 14 per cent of the population.3 Within the BBC journalists have been encouraged for some time to pitch content featuring minority communities to enhance the representation of minorities. However, the labour and burden of either decolonizing or diversifying the media
representation have thus far tended to fall upon the marginalized employees as opposed to being a collective effort (see Saha 2018; Aujla-Sidhu 2021). Furthermore, discussions about inclusion focus upon recruitment of minority ethnic staff into entry-level roles to fix the problems of mis-representation.

Broadcasters such as Channel 4 and the BBC have established recruitment targets to make their staff composition diverse. Channel 4 want to ensure 20 per cent of the staff are derived from Black Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. The prevailing belief is that the recruitment of minority journalists (ethnic, disabled, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT)) will help to diversify news production and democratize the viewpoints featured. Although this is a step in the right direction, diversity data reveals women and other minority groups do not occupy senior editorial or management roles where decisions are made. This enables situations where junior staff may in fact pitch and frame content that features diverse perspectives but may be blocked from pursuing those stories by senior staff who lack understanding of the issues. Black staff are especially under-represented in senior management roles, accounting for just 1 per cent of staff in TV and Radio (Ofcom 2020). This becomes significant when the diversity of reporters, presenters, and expert guests on-air or on the front page of newspapers is studied. In a single week in July 2020, during which the Black Lives Matter protests in the UK was the principal story just 6 front page articles were written by minority reporters and none of them were Black (Warsame et al. 2021, 2). Visible diversity cannot solve all the issues because there is a need to address the underlying structural issues that enable contemporary racist and stereotyped representations within the news. At best, increased visibility of minorities makes a superficial impact, but can place minoritized students and journalists in vulnerable positions. In addition, although media organizations in the UK publish data on the gender or ethnic backgrounds of their employees, such statistics need to be understood within their own context and not necessarily celebrated as achievement by contrasting one organization with another.

Thus, whiteness remains an unstated reference point in the practice of journalism (Gans 1979; Aleman 2014). Gans (1979, 61) found the “news reflects the white male social order” and as such, encourages audiences to assimilate white dominant norms rather than challenge them. Furthermore, the normative convention of unwritten processes in newsrooms tend to favour white middle-class audiences and employees because white racial frames are used to explain events (Gans 1979; Hesmondhalgh and Saha 2013). Feagin (2010, 3) has described the white racial frame as offering “an overarching worldview, one that encompasses important racial ideas, terms, images, emotions and interpretations.” This frame is applied across society and supports capitalism, bureaucracy and views racism as deviant behaviour and not necessarily as a structural issue. Therefore, protest, activism against capitalism, colonialism, racism and patriarchy can be presented by the media in frames that makes these issues appear deviant to the norm (Kilgo and Mourão 2021). This enables the maintenance of whiteness and eurocentrism. The dominant hegemonic position is presented by the media as being logical or the common-sense position (Hall 1990). The application of a critical race lens to study news content reveals inequality in society, particularly racial, but also class and gender are politicized (Lehrman and Wagner 2019).

Hesmondhalgh and Saha (2013) argue that journalism studies have failed to sufficiently ground research in social theory to explain why some patterns of discrimination and
marginalization continue to reoccur in the news production. They also suggest the response to the issue is problematic because there is a failure to tackle the “entrenched ways in which racism operates in contemporary society” (185). The term “racist” for example, is rarely used in the news, and when applied, it denotes activity perpetrated by the far right or is “belittled” (see Charles 2015). The media also fails to acknowledge racism is not solely bias or prejudice and is instead embedded within systems and frameworks that have an adverse impact on minority audiences. Bonilla-Silva (2021) argues that systemic racism and other systems of domination endure because there is inaction and neutral or colourblind behaviour.

Methods
To understand how journalism courses in UK universities are addressing diversity, inclusion, racism and Global South journalism practice in their curriculums, I studied module descriptions and reading lists on 15 Bachelor of Arts (BA) Journalism programmes, accredited by the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ). Accredited journalism programmes were selected because they are perceived to be superior by news editors. 105 universities in the UK offer journalism-related undergraduate education in some form according to the UK Universities and Colleges Admissions Service 2022.4 These include joint honours degrees, where students study two subjects, sports journalism, magazine journalism and PR and publishing relating courses. The NCTJ journalism programmes are underlined by an emphasis upon vocational skills required for employment. Accredited journalism programmes offer core skills as stipulated by the NCTJ and additional units of study depending upon the University’s expertise. In total, the NCTJ accredits 21 undergraduate journalism-related programmes including, sports journalism and magazine journalism. An accredited journalism degree means students undertake additional exams to achieve the NCTJ Diploma in Journalism, alongside their degree outcome. The Diploma in Journalism is required for roles in the British newspaper sector and is desirable for roles in broadcast and digital. The NCTJ requires universities to include learning in four mandatory areas: news writing skills, media law and regulation, ethics and learning opportunities to create an e-portfolio of real-world stories. Students undertake exams or assessments which they must pass to secure the diploma.

A critical race theory (CRT) lens was applied to review module descriptions on the 15 university websites. CRT centres race, a social construct, as being a key component in the structure of contemporary society (Delgado and Stefancic 2001). This was supported where possible, by a review of reading lists available through Talis Aspire, to see what resources are included. Eight of the 15 university courses examined offered external online access to their reading lists.

Analysis of Accredited Journalism Reading Lists
The examination of reading lists reveals that journalism resources are predominantly Eurocentric. By this I mean the authors tend to be male and either UK or USA-based and predominantly present case studies from these contexts. Journalism studies historically emerged in the USA and these findings indicate that journalism education continues to centre western knowledge, case studies, practices and experiences. Some of the
authors do concentrate on international journalism practice but are employed in Global North universities. One consequence of the dominance of western knowledge is that the liberal model of media, as defined by Hallin and Mancini (2004), is considered to be superior because it emphasizes the notions of “objectivity” and political neutrality. Journalists are expected to serve the public as opposed to economic or political interests and perform their duties according to a set of shared and agreed norms. This is referred to as the “professionalization” of journalism (Hanssitzsch and Ornebring 2008). As such, the notion of objectivity has become central to debates about journalism in the west and elsewhere (Tuchman 1972; Schudson 2001). Objectivity, a contested term, is widely understood as a requirement to be “detached” and to report the facts from both sides without the journalist’s personal perspective influencing the story. Within British journalism the notion is assumed but not necessarily practiced according to Hampton (2008) and Tuchman (1972).

Accredited undergraduate journalism degrees are largely offered by post 1992 Universities. In Britain, these higher education institutions were formerly referred to as polytechnics, known internally as technological universities. Polytechnics traditionally concentrated on professional vocational degrees such as engineering, business, accounting and journalism. The NCTJ education framework emphasizes skills such as writing, filming and media law and also enables individual universities to offer modules that critically examine the role of journalism in society or study global/international journalism and increasingly modules on lifestyle journalism. A 2016 survey of UK journalists indicated the greatest influences on their work were: ethics, media law, editorial policy and their editors (Thurman, Cornia, and Kunert 2016, 7). This indicates there is broad support for the occupational ideology of journalism (Deuze 2006).

Nottingham Trent University, Bournemouth University and Teeside University offer Global Journalism as an elective. This unit of study has the potential to include race, racism and the explicit consideration of journalism practices aboard, or the challenges journalists face worldwide. The Journalism degree webpage at Nottingham Trent describes the module as an opportunity to “gain an appreciation of the journalism industry from an international and global perspective in terms of both contemporary realities and theoretical concepts.” It also emphasizes teaching is supported with visiting speakers including international practising journalists. The reading list is dominated by texts edited or produced by western authors examining global journalism issues with some non-Global North authors. Books that explicitly examine race are notably absent. A similar picture emerged with Bournemouth University’s Global Current Affairs, and Professional Perspectives and Global Voices modules; while there is some diversity in terms of international case studies the authors are largely based in Global North institutions.

In contrast, Teeside University and Lincoln University demonstrate greater diversity from the first year of study. Teeside’s reading list for Journalism and News Culture, an introductory compulsory module that examines the themes of industry, audience and ideology in news production includes resources that examine gender, class and Islam. The University of Lincoln first-year module, Intro to Journalism Theory, includes books on the African diaspora. The University of Essex reading list for History of Journalism module, compulsory in the first year, is described as the history of journalism in Britain. Although the reading list does not offer histories of journalism aboard, there is a
section entitled Press and Empire, which includes texts featuring Global South perspectives. There is also the option to study Black Lives Represented: Writing, Art, Politics and Society. Deuze (2001, 2006) has indicated that multicultural societies create challenges for journalists in Europe and the USA because minority groups are not fully understood by individuals or media organizations. One reason is that topics such as race, racism, inequality and white privilege are traditionally not core within the traditional journalism curricula.

Two media industries modules offered in the first and second year by Glasgow Caledonian University, include resources from a range of international authors, but these resources are broad and examine the sector in general as opposed to focusing upon news production. Overall, there were similarities in reading resources for modules teaching newswriting, radio and video skills, with many of the books produced by scholars based in British universities. This is unsurprising, as journalism education seeks to produce skilled graduates ready for employment in the British media. However, it also suggests graduates are taught key skills in the same way which can lead to the exclusion of alternative points of view in their stories. Lehrman and Wagner (2019) have outlined journalists have limited time so they focus on a person or a group of people to explain an issue, and as a result, the perspectives selected offer a view that does not deviate from the dominant standpoint. This style of journalism can reinforce existing prejudices pertaining to race, age, or class because it promotes a deficit model that blames minorities for the problems they face.

Gans (2011) has pointed out that news gathering is shaped by special attention on authoritative sources to demonstrate the story is credible. This is supported by Stuart Hall et al. (1978) who argue news is the consequence of journalists filtering and selecting topics from socially constructed categories, referred to as news values, which are supported by official or powerful voices to reinforce the message. News values are not written or published by the news organizations themselves, they allow editors and journalists to determine what is newsworthy and what is not. New recruits are expected to internalize this culture. Journalists work in a high-pressure environment with hourly deadlines; therefore, an order and routine has been established. The seeking of institutional sources for news stories requires less labour and energy to secure. This means the search for non-institutional voices and a range of diverse view.

Although this is a small study limited to 15 accredited journalism degrees in the UK, it does reveal journalism students use similar resources and practice journalism skills according to prevalent western conventions. One limitation of the research design is that a reading list and description of units of study on websites cannot conclusively reveal what is taught on a week-by-week basis in the classroom because educators often change learning materials in response to news and current affairs events, for example George Floyd’s murder or the pandemic. It is striking that reading materials that examine journalism in the Global South, and race and racism are largely missing. Deuze (2004) has set out that the ongoing misrepresentation of minority groups is the consequence of the practice and ideology of journalism which presents one way of viewing the world. Yu (2016) has argued that cultural identity is urgently required within newsrooms, because this type of identity defines individual journalists, their lived experiences and their perspectives, all of which are brought into the newsroom and influence news production in positive ways. Gans has urged news organizations to
focus on stories about ordinary people impacted by Government decisions and stories about the activities of people to show their diversity and problems in the country. He recommends this would help to combat mis-representation and stereotyping of minority communities.

Discussion – Recommendations for a Decolonized Journalism Curriculum

Last Moyo has called for a decolonial turn in the study of media and communication studies. Building upon Moyo (2020) argument, the uncritical acceptance of the liberal model of journalism as the universal standard requires critical attention in journalism education. There is an urgent need for would-be journalists to learn inclusive practices to amplify stories from individuals who have faced different social conditions and lived experiences. Papoutsaki (2007) has called for journalism curricula to highlight social and cultural local knowledge from all over the world. One consequence of colonialism is that western knowledge has been positioned as being universal through subtle and invisible means in news content. This means there is a tendency to concentrate on injustice or oppression abroad while ignoring problems in the UK. Journalism students need to not only understand the causes for oppression or inequality but also learn how journalists can play a role in enacting social change within society. This requires educators to ensure constructivist models of journalism, advocate or campaign journalism have a valid place in the curriculum and are not bolted on.

The BA Broadcast Journalism degree at De Montfort University (DMU) was intentionally modified during the attainment gap project in 2017–2019 to be inclusive. It is important to note that BA Broadcast Journalism was not accredited but shared modules with BA Journalism which was accredited by the NCTJ at the time. De Montfort University is also a post 1992 institution, and like other British universities is trying to reduce the attainment gap. The student composition at the university is 52.8 per cent Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. Academic staff are offered training, mentoring and support to consider how to adapt their teaching materials to include other perspectives and embed diversity and equality. For example, Decolonizing the Reading List is a regular monthly workshop to support staff to find diverse scholarship for their modules. Alongside teaching journalism, I mentored programme teams with the biggest attainment gap in the Faculty of Computing, Engineering and Media between 2017 and 2019. Over the period of the project the attainment gap was reduced by almost 3 per cent to 9.7 per cent in 2018–2019 (Hall et al. 2022). A number of changes were made to the assessment design, module content and reading list on BA Broadcast Journalism modules. For example, a second-year module Professional Practice, was re-focused to explicitly include the consideration of marginalized audiences. Learning resources were restructured to offer context on why some groups are marginalized or excluded by media organizations. The assessment, a video presentation, required students to select one marginalized group and illustrate how they would initiate contact, build trust with the group to source original news stories. This encouraged students to consider how they can highlight and promote unheard voices. The intention was to increase the student’s social awareness and create empathy and a connection to communities they may not ordinarily mix with. These are important people skills; journalists are required to make connections and build trust with individuals, to listen to their stories and re-tell them
authentically. Often in a job interview for a journalist role there will be questions to probe a candidate's knowledge of communities and their contacts.

The 3D Pedagogy Framework (Gabriel 2019) seeks to decolonize, democratize, and diversify curricula within higher education so that the learning experience is enhanced, and students of colour are reflected in learning materials. Gabriel (2019) has recommended that assessments are viewed as opportunities for students to critique normative rules, power structures and understand inequality. These are transferable skills for trainee journalist who will be required to question and convey a diverse range of issues as part of their job. The onus for creating inclusive learning environments that reflect multi-cultural society falls upon educators. After participation in a 3D workshop in 2017, I redesigned an assessment on a radio journalism module to encourage students to engage with issues such as inequality through documentaries and podcasts produced to an overarching theme of social justice. First students were asked to share their understanding of social justice and their experiences to co-create their definition of social justice. Individually they select topics that are both relevant to the theme and personally interest them to produce a podcast episode. Lessons allow collaboration and discussions on for example the title of the podcast, the tone, style of episode and the music. This allows students to not only produce real-world journalism but also consider and explore podcast branding and social media promotion.

It is imperative students are offered opportunities to produce real-world content as part of their studies. Most universities and colleges in the UK include Newsdays to replicate the newsroom environment. Newsdays tend to emphasize local news due to ease of access to interviewees. However, thematic Newsdays can produce equally good results, for example, humanitarianism, social justice, sustainability, or communities. Universities with large cohorts of international students could use the Newsday to empower students to showcase specialist international knowledge through global themes of education, development and climate change. Or they can simply seek to amplify the voices of communities (local, LGBTQ, ethnic minority, etc) residing close to the university or college, especially, if those voices are underrepresented in mainstream media. Some of assessments on the Broadcast Journalism degree at De Montfort University apply the UN Sustainable Development Goals as one way to embed wider societal issues into journalism coursework.

The study of social justice naturally includes racism and structural or systemic racism. This issue should be included in journalism curriculums in recognition that it pervades society and impacts prospective trainee journalists. In the UK racism is understood to be an activity perpetrated by the far right, meaning subtle, structural racism and micro aggressions have become so deeply ingrained that they are overlooked by everyone but the victim who may have experienced systemic racism and prejudice throughout their education. Moreover, critical race theory, white privilege and the impact colonialism has had on perceptions and understanding of different ethnic identities should be critically examined (Gabriel 2019). However, these topics appear to be absent on most journalism modules and reading lists examined for this study.

The concept of truth is traditionally placed in the heart of curricula, students are taught they should not misquote or edit material to alter the meaning. However, journalists have no special powers to obtain the truth, they cannot for example draw upon rights under the law to be granted access to information. Therefore, the pursuit of truth is found
through requesting interviews with witnesses or victims, through conversations with confidential sources, by visiting the crime scene, the town or home of the key characters of the story, through photos or video footage recorded or obtained and evidence in the form of reports or financial records. This is best described as “anecdotal storytelling,” (investigative journalism does differ). The process of interviewing, the writing up of the article or the editing for radio, TV, or digital media, is the point where the “production” of the news occurs. This is where journalists emphasize the angle of the story to suit their news organization’s agenda. The choice of soundbites, the order the information is presented, the tone and style are all significant. It is important to question the production process and query whose perspectives were excluded from the story? Who was not interviewed? And what questions were not asked? Educators should require journalism students to critically reflect upon the construction of their work. This benefits trainee journalists as they not only critically view their work to improve it but the process supports them to feedforward to other coursework. A sympathetic assessment design can make students feel supported and empowered to seek out a diverse range of interviewees. Students naturally pitch diverse story ideas which may not always conform to the educator’s preconceived notion of what “news is.” Many journalism lecturers have significant experience working as journalists, often in senior roles and this has shaped their individual understanding of what is newsworthy. However, this is one way in which white privilege and Eurocentrism can manifest itself in journalism education. If educators simply continue to pass on their skills without the inclusion or consideration of alternative ways of creating content or the inclusion of other perspectives, then the system will continue to perpetuate problems.

Journalism curricula need to include greater context about problems in societies, power frameworks, law and history so that journalism students learn not only how they operate but also how they contribute to oppression and inequality. The history of journalism is taught in numerous undergraduate programmes but has a tendency to study only Western media. This requires a refresh to embrace other histories and knowledge. Educators could seek out guest speakers who not only reflect the students in terms of gender, race, or social class but also include speakers from “alternative” or community news organizations to enhance learning and to showcase the depth and range of opportunities. The inclusion of diverse speakers offers inspiration and role models for students and is a feature of inclusive curricula (Gabriel 2019). The reflection in learning materials of a range of lived experiences exposes students to diverse cultures and perspectives. This can help in producing civic journalists who are interested in the communities they serve. Relegating Black issues or having Black guest speakers in October for Black History month (in the UK) does not adequately embed diversity and inclusion into the curricula.

There is also a need to acknowledge within the curriculum that journalism is not a western concept. This is difficult given that parts of the Global South rely upon foreign or external media training which promotes western universalism (Papoutsaki 2007; Obijiofor and Hanusch 2011). For example, across Asia many journalists observe development or advocacy models of journalism and consider themselves to be agents and advocates of social change (Ullah 2014). Development models are difficult to define, but are viewed as a form of journalism that contributes to nation building or sustenance of society. This is in opposition to a western model that emphasizes detached modes of operation. The impact of a universal hegemonic model of journalism does mean that journalists can lack the
confidence to promote local or community stories or simply not see their value or place in the news hierarchy. There also is an urgent need to understand the different situations and contexts within which journalists function and operate across the world. Appraisals of Hallin and Mancini (2004) three models of media find that they are not applicable for emerging democracies and that media systems are in fact heterogeneous as opposed to homogenous (Obijiofor and Hanusch 2011). Hadlan (2011) has questioned if it is possible to find homogenous modes of practice in Africa, noting the individual countries are socially diverse and complex and journalists are subjected to a range of legislative, political and regulatory conditions, influencing what is reported. Thus, notions of autonomy, self-regulation systems and accredited qualifications are not as relevant. Therefore, there are concerns in non-western countries over how journalism is being taught in their institutions (Ullah 2013).

Conclusion

This paper has tried to draw three topics together, decolonial theory, critical race theory and the attainment gap in higher education in British Universities with reference to journalism education. Journalism education plays an important role in shaping future journalists’ and ultimately the way society is reflected back through their work. The review of reading lists on accredited journalism programmes in the UK demonstrates that the subject remains predicated with concepts and evidence generated within western experiences (Curran and Park 2000; Josephi 2019). This paper has proposed decolonizing journalism education to allow new journalists to be informed and prepared to report on a range of communities. Journalists who have experienced an education that directly engages with race and the production of inequality in society should be prepared to showcase the unique diversity of their audiences. The onus on producing news content that is diverse should be on all journalists because it is imperative that journalists understand the multi-cultural society they inhabit. A curriculum that embeds equality, diversity, considers CRT or white privilege and seeks to reflect ethnic students can enrich the educational experience of all students and enhance their practice, knowledge and ultimately improve media representations of marginalized groups.

This paper has made some initial recommendations for changes, but institutions and educators are best placed to holistically examine their teaching and learning materials to decolonize. There is no one size fits all model. Decolonizing journalism practice is equally as important as adapting the academic aspects of the curriculum to be more culturally and globally inclusive. If educators and the media are serious about tackling inequality and social justice, then there is an urgent need to educate prospective journalists about the legacy and impact colonialism has had upon diverse communities. The potential impact of decolonizing journalism practice is that news is democratized, inclusive and representative.

Notes

1. Module - refers to a unit of study on a degree programme in UK universities, for example, Media Law would be one unit of learning with assessment at the end.
2. The Society of Editors is a media industry body in the UK. They campaign for a free press and media freedom and represent key national newspapers. Post the interview they claimed the UK Press was not “bigoted”.

3. Population of England and Wales - GOV.UK Ethnicity facts and figures (ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk).

4. The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service is a UK-based organization whose main role is to operate and process applications to British universities to study undergraduate and post-graduate education.

5. https://www.ntu.ac.uk/course/arts-and-humanities/ug/ba-hons-journalism#what-you-will-study

6. DMU Access and Participation Plan https://www.dmu.ac.uk/documents/university-governance/access-participation-plan-2020-2025.pdf

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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