

*Journal of Trainee Teacher Education Research***Rule Britannia?: An insight into pupils' perspectives  
on the fundamental British values****Catrin Osborne**

(PGCE General Primary, 2021-2022)

email: [catrinosborne21@gmail.com](mailto:catrinosborne21@gmail.com)**Abstract**

*In 2014, the Department of Education outlined expectations and methods for schools to incorporate a chosen set of fundamental British values. Since their conception, the discourse around the values has been varied through both praise and criticism. Despite a range of valuable research into teachers' views, the academic studies on the topic seldom acknowledge the opinions of schoolchildren. This research proposal to be carried out during the PGCE which aims to achieve this by exploring six Year 6 pupils' perspectives through a poster-creation activity, semi-structured interviews, and a scenario-based group task. In turn, this study is intended to address the contentious but crucial concept of Britishness through the voices of the country's next generation.*

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# **Rule Britannia?: An insight into pupils' perspectives on the fundamental British values**

**Catrin Osborne**

## **Introduction**

The fundamental British values (FBVs) are a set of overarching concepts intended to capture the nation's spirit and vision, which are outlined in the 'Teachers' standards' (DfE, 2011) and subdivided into: democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs. The Department for Education (DfE, 2014) released the non-statutory guidelines titled 'Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools', with SMSC referring to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which was introduced as part of the Education Act 2002 (c.32). Within the guidance, the DfE (2014) offered tactics to promote the FBVs such as school councils, mock elections, and utilising resources from multiple faiths. Additionally, the document stated that the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) will inspect how schools incorporate the FBVs (DfE, 2014). Therefore, schools nationwide began to interweave the FBVs into both their taught and hidden curriculum (Moncrieffe & Moncrieffe, 2019), the latter referring to the unwritten ideas formed throughout the wider school environment.

The FBVs can be praised for revolving around the concepts of personal freedom and group cohesion, which suggest a multicultural portrait of Britain that accepts each Briton's right to manifest their own identity. However, as will be explored in this paper's Literature Review, the FBVs have been criticised when they are wrongfully utilised to purport an Anglocentric, exclusionary conception of "Britishness" (this term will be used to refer to the sense that something is characteristic and belongs to the nation of Great Britain). Reflecting on these concerns, this present research proposal outlines a study that aims to revisit the FBVs, offering a further insight into how to integrate the values in a way that celebrates Britain's diversity and multiculturalism. Throughout my school placements, I have observed the FBVs being harnessed in this inclusive practice which has sparked an interest in how to discuss British identity with pupils. Since the FBVs' genesis nearly a decade ago, there have been significant political debates surrounding British identity, such as Brexit and the Black Lives

Matter protests during June 2020 (Moncrieffe, 2020a). With Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee this year, Britishness is under the spotlight once more. Hence, it is vital to consider how the FBVs have shaped British pedagogical practice.

Marlon Moncrieffe, a leading voice in diversifying British education, argues that "Cultivating knowledge about cross-cultural encounters between the peoples of multiethnic and multicultural Britain must begin with teaching and learning history in the primary classroom" (Moncrieffe, 2020b, p.6). Likewise, this study begins in "the primary classroom" to amplify pupils' perspectives about Britishness before considering how the FBVs are and could be incorporated into their school experience. By consulting pupils themselves, this study seeks to evoke an understanding of how to continue responding to the framework and teach the FBVs in a positive, inclusive approach. To achieve this purpose, this research proposal will follow the process outlined by Denscombe (2012). To begin, this proposal provides an overview of the existing literature surrounding the FBVs. Drawing upon this discourse, the intended methodology will be outlined with space to address ethical considerations. To conclude, I will consider the implications for my future practice.

## **Literature Review**

The debates surrounding the FBVs are immensely multifaceted. However, due to the limited scope of this research proposal, not all arguments and events can be explored in detail. Therefore, a brief but highly relevant summary of the FBVs and the important perspectives associated with them will be provided in this Literature Review to offer an overview of the topic and the value of this intended study (Denscombe, 2012).

### **Formation of the FBVs**

The FBVs were introduced as part of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government (2010 to 2015) as a specific means to promote SMSC in schools. By introducing the FBVs, the DfE attempted to create one clear vision of Britishness to teach the next generation of young Britons about how to adhere to this shared perspective. Furthermore, education practitioners were informed that "Actively promoting the values means challenging opinions or behaviours in school that are contrary to fundamental British values" (DfE, 2014, p.5). The FBVs' influence permeates through primary

schools in classroom displays, school councils, and in the taught curriculum, such as PSHE lessons about democracy (Moncrieffe & Moncrieffe, 2019).

The FBVs' origins are subject to debate but they arguably predate the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition to Tony Blair's New Labour government, during which many politicians stressed an urgency for a clear, shared perception of Britishness (Maylor, 2016). Britain is a culturally varied nation, comprising of England, Wales and Scotland which became increasingly diverse over the course of the twentieth century after the 1948 British Nationality Act; this made provision for British nationality status for all individuals across the United Kingdom and the country's now former Colonies. Through the Education Act 2002 (c.32), the New Labour government introduced the concept of SMSC to facilitate community-cohesion due to anxieties about cultural divisions that could form in Britain's ever-growing multicultural society (Kapoor, 2013). Likewise, the decade following the 2002 Education Act saw further nationwide debates surrounding the topic of Britishness, evoked by events such as 9/11, the London 7/7 attacks, and the refugee crises (Richardson, 2015; Smith, 2016), after which the DfE (2014) released the official FBVs guidance.

### **Criticism of the FBVs**

Before exploring academic studies on the topic, it is imperative to acknowledge the existing scholarly enquiries into some of the possible concerns linked to the FBVs and the broader political debates surrounding them. As a result, the need for further studies into the FBVs, especially into pupils' perspectives, will be paramount. In 2014, the publication of the guidelines catalysed a media frenzy with a substantial amount of backlash emerging from multiple points on the political spectrum: major news outlets such as the Daily Mail and the Guardian branded the FBVs as condescending and vague, whilst the National Union of Teachers argued that schools require a culture of open discussion rather than prescribed ideas (Richardson, 2015).

#### *Criticism of how the FBVs are connected to the Trojan Horse affair and the Prevent strategy*

Over the years following the FBVs' formation, one of the prominent critiques is that the FBVs have been labelled as politically charged due to the alleged connection to the Trojan Horse affair (Farrell, 2016; Lander, 2016; Smith, 2016) and the Prevent strategy (Kapoor, 2013; Panjwani, 2016; Revell & Bryan, 2016). The former was a scandal beginning in 2014 when an anonymous letter was sent to Birmingham City Council suggesting a plot to infiltrate the governing bodies of Islamic schools

(Arthur, 2015; Richardson, 2015). The incident drew mass media attention with many news outlets labelling the event as a “Jihadist plot” intended to radicalise British pupils (Richardson, 2015). Despite the panic, the letter was found to be a hoax as “no evidence of ‘extremism’ was found, but five of the 21 schools were placed in special measures” (Banks, 2015, p.152), to investigate concerns arising from their faith-centred practice such as allegations of gender-based discrimination (Arthur, 2015). The Trojan Horse affair remains highly contentious to date, highlighted by a recent deep dive conducted by the investigative journalism podcast Serial (Syaed & Reed, 2022) which has garnered praise alongside criticism, such as a prominently shared Guardian column (Sodha, 2022).

Kapoor (2013) posits that after this scandal erupted, the Government utilised the FBVs as part of their counterterrorism programme titled the Prevent strategy; within the guidance extremism is defined as “vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values” (DfE, 2015, p.5). Due to this, academics (Arthur, 2015; Farrell, 2016; Lander, 2016; Richardson, 2015; Smith, 2016) have suggested that the FBVs could be wrongly used to exclude a perceived “Other”, cultural groups who lie outside of the teacher’s specific vision of Britain, rather than as values that promote “an acceptance that other people having different faiths or beliefs to oneself (or having none) should be accepted and tolerated, and should not be the cause of prejudicial or discriminatory behaviour” (DfE, 2014, p.6). For instance, Banks (2015) contends that the FBVs could be incorrectly utilised to exclude Muslim pupils, such as the pupils in the Islamic schools involved in the Trojan Horse affair, which will create alienation and be counterintuitive to the FBVs’ theme of inclusivity. Moreover, “the Prevent duty is not intended to stop pupils debating controversial issues” (DfE, 2015, p.5), which suggests that the FBVs are intended as a means to promote free speech. Hence, the research suggests that there is an apparent disconnect between the DfE’s vision and public opinions regarding the FBVs’ formation. Therefore, reflecting on this, it is vital to revisit how the FBVs have manifested within schools themselves by consulting pupils.

### *Criticism of the FBVs from the Decolonising the Curriculum movement*

Another element of the FBVs’ contentiousness, and a reason to review them, arises from the Decolonising the Curriculum movement. The decolonisation approach seeks to decentre the British Empire’s colonial legacy (Kwoba et al. 2018; Moncrieffe, 2020b), which permeates modern Britain from street names to our vocabulary, through words such as “shampoo” and “bungalow”, to the objects that adorn our museums (Sanghera, 2021). One of the main institutions still crafted by the

legacy of colonialism is education, therefore the Decolonising the Curriculum movement aims to progress beyond arguably superficial gestures such as Black History Month (Charles, 2019) and to “dismantle the dominance of ‘Whiteness’ in all phases of education” (Moncrieffe, 2020b, p.1). After beginning in higher education, the movement has begun to trickle into secondary schools (Kwoba, Chantiluke & Nkopo, 2018). However, primary education is yet to be thoroughly examined, possibly due to the gravitas of the concepts bound to decolonisation.

One of the first academics to delve into this minefield is Moncrieffe (2020b) who has reflected on the 2014 revamp of the National Curriculum. Haydn (2014) contends that former Conservative Education Secretary Michael Gove and his fellow party members designed the National Curriculum with a degree of imperial nostalgia or a “longing for the past” (Haydn, 2014, p.16), drawing inspiration from Henrietta Marshall’s *Our Island Story*; a children’s book written in 1905 during the peak of the British Empire which represents Britain as a heroic conquering force. In turn, Moncrieffe (2020b) argues that, without clear guidance about how to use the FBVs to promote multiculturalism, they could incorrectly purport an Anglocentric, neo-colonial ideal of Britain.

To inquire into this further, Moncrieffe (2020b) criticises the FBVs by applying Gramsci’s theory of hegemony which is when an elite, ruling class promote their specific ideas and characteristics as the normative, accepted ideology (Gramsci, 1975). The FBVs could be wrongfully warped to promote a specific hegemonic, exclusionary vision of Britishness that is arguably white, elite, and neo-colonial. In turn, some primary state school pupils from minority backgrounds could feel alienated if they do not feel that they align with this concept of Britishness (Moncrieffe, 2020b). Multiple decolonisation scholars echo this idea, such as the Rhodes Must Fall movement positing that if “the ‘British Values’ agenda works within the divisive colonial framework of norms [...] this agenda functions solely in relation to the ‘spiritual, moral social and cultural’ development of white students at the expense of their non-white counterparts” (Kwoba, Chantiluke & Nkopo, 2018, p.121). In light of the FBVs’ hegemonic potential, it is essential to explore how the FBVs can be incorporated into primary education without promoting an archaic, imperial ideology.

### **Educational studies into the FBVs**

As suggested by the debates covered in this Literature Review, it is complex but vital to navigate how the FBVs operate in Britain’s ever-shifting society. When discussing national identity, one must avoid promoting a blind version of patriotism and instead seek to create a nuanced, balanced discussion

(Archard, 1999). Considering this topic, a plethora of research projects have delved into teachers' perspectives on employing the FBVs to form a stronger understanding of the opinions and practice surrounding the values. Research into the FBVs has been overwhelmingly qualitative due to the intricate, abstract subject matter. Although this is not as generalisable as quantitative data, the studies have elicited a range of interesting and important perspectives which are worth exploring. Additionally, by collating a range of teachers' perspectives, the following studies combine to provide a holistic image of the existing attitudes towards the FBVs in education.

One of the earliest projects was Keddie's (2014) interviews conducted in a large, culturally diverse comprehensive school which found that many of the teachers were sceptical about the DfE releasing a specific archetype of Britishness. However, multiple teachers, including the school's head teacher, expressed anxieties regarding the pupils from ethnic and cultural minority backgrounds and their perceived lack of affiliation with British culture, suggesting desires for a shared, communal British identity within their school (Keddie, 2014). Therefore, this study highlights how the FBVs have been divisive amongst teachers since their formation. Due to the school's diversity, the study provided a collection of responses from different members of British society which creates a more valid approach when considering a topic as personal as national identity.

Two years after the establishment of the FBVs, the *Journal of Education for Teaching* released further studies through a special addition in 2016 collecting a range of responses about the values. Due to their large collective sample sizes, the studies from this journal are reliable and form a helpful collage of the differing opinions amongst teachers. For instance, when considering the wider history of teaching Britishness, Maylor (2016) conducted a systematic literature review revisiting a range of teachers' ruminations about British values during the New Labour era; there was little consensus between the teachers about what British values are and how to implement them, with occasional instances of exclusionary, Anglocentric conceptions of Britishness. Through this retrospective insight, Maylor (2016) highlighted the contentious history of British values within education, as mentioned prior, which provides qualitative evidence to suggest why the Government introduced a clear framework for the FBVs.

To consider the perspectives of modern trainee teachers, Smith (2016) completed an audit of PGCE students' surveys on the FBVs; despite identifying no explicit racial or cultural Othering, the study suggested a recurring "us vs. them" dichotomy which implies that an unintended exclusionary

rhetoric can possibly become connected to the FBVs as explored earlier in this paper. Likewise, Revell and Bryan (2016) investigated teachers' perceptions of the FBVs in response to the 'Teachers standards' (2011) by providing examples of educational scenarios and enquiring into whether the teachers thought that these scenarios undermined the FBVs, such as if a teacher expressed that they did not support the monarchy in a citizenship lesson. The findings suggested that there was not a unified consensus about these scenarios, but more primary school teachers advocated for keeping political debates away from the classroom than secondary teachers (Revell & Bryan, 2016). This detail is crucial to consider for this present research proposal because it is focusing on primary pupils' perspectives, so the results provide an insight into how complex topics, such as debating nationality, may be excluded from primary pupils' education. Additionally, although the study detected instances where the FBVs were beginning to be put into practice via school-specific guidelines, over two-thirds of teachers deemed the FBVs to be tokenistic and somewhat inconsequential in the planning process (Revell & Bryan, 2016). Both these studies provide suggestions of the debates amongst teachers which may influence pupils' views on the FBVs.

Additionally, it is vital to consider the views of people from minority backgrounds who may feel excluded from the FBVs if they are used to purport a white, British, elite hegemony. A handful of studies focused on specific types of teachers' perspectives; McCully and Clarke (2016) surveyed Northern Irish PGCE students who expressed complex conceptions of British values with only 54% identifying their nationality as "British". However, a small-scale research project into Muslim teachers' perceptions was more positive as most participants believed that there exists no inherent conflict between the FBVs and what they felt are Islamic values, but the perceived connection between the FBVs and Prevent raised tension due to allegations of Islamophobia (Panjwani, 2016). Farrell (2016) employed a subject-specific lens, surveying Religious Education (RE) student teachers' views; most participants argued that RE's foundations are rooted in free discourse which could be hindered by pre-existing confinements set from the FBVs. Although these studies are more small-scale, they provide a rich insight into the thoughts of specific teachers. Likewise, this proposal intends to explore the perspectives of pupils who are another often silenced social group.

Most relevant to this research proposal is the thematic analysis (TA) of 27 primary schools' FBVs displays conducted by Moncrieffe and Moncrieffe (2019). These boards were found on the internet from across England which provides greater generalisability. However, it must be acknowledged that not all schools would provide images of displays online so this caused a limited sample which affects



validity. The analysis found that the displays mostly portrayed a homogenous, white-centric vision of Britain primarily including: elite cultural icons such as Queen Elizabeth II and Winston Churchill; symbols of national identity such as Union Jack; and cultural symbols from the Houses of Parliament to fish and chips. To gauge further understanding, the TA was followed by three primary school teachers' perspectives on the displays through interviews: they questioned the prominence of monocultural symbols and agreed that the image of hands from multiple cultural backgrounds joining over a Union Jack best captured the FBVs (Moncrieffe & Moncrieffe, 2019). As developed in the Methodology section, this study aims to continue exploring the FBVs' implementation through a comparison of pupils' with teachers' perspectives.

Research on the FBVs overwhelmingly focuses on the opinions of practitioners and there is a recurring gap in the literature which is the perspectives of the pupils themselves. Prior to the formation of the FBVs, there have been studies into pupils' conceptions of Britishness. Carrington and Short (1995) interviewed 128 British primary school pupils aged 8-11 by providing them with a scenario in which the participants were asked to explain British life to a hypothetical new student moving to Britain from New York. Subsequently, the researcher applied volunteer sampling to interview various pupils on their conceptions of being British; their perspectives were deemed to be rarely patriotic, instead the children primarily viewed Britishness as merely being born in Britain (65%) and speaking English (42%). However, some of the older pupils showcased a burgeoning understanding of migration, both empathetic but also some brief instances of xenophobic language (Carrington & Short, 1995). Due to the large sample size and child-centred task, this study possesses high validity. Over a decade later, Hand and Pearce (2011) carried out a mixed methods study into secondary teachers and pupils' views on patriotism and found that the opinions were immensely varied; in turn, they recommended an approach to discussing patriotism in schools which requires balanced, sensitive, and unbiased delivery. These studies provide a glimpse into pupils' perspectives on Britishness prior to the nationwide introduction of the FBVs. Thus, this research proposal intends to further these pre-existing studies and elicit a current understanding of pupils' perspectives on Britishness since the FBVs' genesis.

### **The value of exploring pupils' perspectives on the FBVs**

In the twenty-first century, the topics of race, nationality, culture, and the identity politics bound to these have become increasingly complex and contentious (Wade, 2015). Last year, the Commission

on Race and Ethnic Disparities stated that “We do not believe that the UK is yet a post-racial society which has completed the long journey to equality of opportunity” (Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, 2021, p.9). This commission recommends that Britain implements an inclusive curriculum, thereby pupils “can identify themselves as a part of British history” (Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, 2021, p.89). In turn, this evokes the need to positively incorporate the FBVs to celebrate Britain’s multiculturalism.

Due to this imperative, this study aims to contribute to the research surrounding teaching Britishness by exploring primary pupils’ opinions. There is an unjustified tendency to discount pupils’ ability to comprehend abstract concepts (Bucknall, 2012), such the themes of nationality, patriotism, culture etc in this study. However, studies suggest that pupils are an inquisitive, opinionated group (Black et al. 2006; Burke, 2007; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Hanke, 2014; Pointon & Kershner, 2000; Rudduck, n.d.; Rudduck & Flutter, 2000), therefore there is seldom reason to doubt that they will not be teeming with thoughts regarding a topic as important as the country that they live in. As mentioned prior, current British primary pupils have grown up amidst a myriad of alterations to the concept of Britishness. Therefore, it is essential to gain a concept of pupils’ perspectives about what British values mean to them. Although my intended research proposal is a small-scale project, the study should produce thought-provoking data which encourages further research into this pressing matter.

## **Methodology**

This research proposal outlines a small-scale study intended to explore six Year 6 pupils’ perspectives on being British, the FBVs and how the values have and could be part of their primary educational experiences. As this study focuses on abstract, multifaceted concepts, the research will adopt a qualitative approach to provide developed, nuanced data (O’Reilly & Dogra, 2017; Taber, 2013). Moreover, the study will lean towards a constructivist approach by implementing a student-centred process (Taber, 2013). The study will complement the research by Moncrieffe and Moncrieffe (2019), seeking to triangulate data from varied participatory methods to elicit a holistic portrayal of children’s opinions on the FBVs.

## **Research questions (RQs)**

The research methodology has been selected to meet these three exploratory RQs to provide a clear vision of the study's aims (Denscombe, 2012; Taber, 2013), which may require alteration as the project unfolds (O'Reilly & Dogra, 2017):

1. What are pupils' perspectives on the concept of British values?
2. What are pupils' perspectives about the FBVs as part of their educational experience?
3. How do pupils think that the FBVs can be incorporated into schools, both in the formal as well as hidden curriculum?

## **Research participants**

As made evident, there exists a missing gap in the literature the FBVs, showcasing why it is crucial to use a pupils' perspectives study which will amplify the voices of education's primary consumers (Morgan, 2009; Morgan, 2011; O'Reilly & Dogra, 2017; Rudduck & Flutter, 2000). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child drawn up in 1989, which highlighted the value of listening to young people, catalysed the shift towards pupils' perspectives in pedagogical research (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000). Over the last few decades, pupils' perspectives studies have grown (O'Reilly & Dogra, 2017) and this small-scale project is intended to join this tradition. Participants from Year 6 will be utilised because they are the oldest pupils in the primary cohort which means that they should: be able to comprehend more complex topics; have more developed spoken language skills to articulate themselves; possess an understanding of the FBVs as their experience in primary education has been since the formation of the FBVs in 2014; and have a more holistic understanding of Britain's multicultural history.

Although generalisability is not an expected requirement of small-scale research (Bucknall, 2012), it is essential for this study to form a sample that is not homogenous and instead begins to reflect Britain's diversity to gauge a myriad of children's perspectives. Therefore, the research will be conducted in a large, diverse primary school. Prior to the study, I will calculate the proportional representation of the entirety of Year 6 and then implement a stratified sampling approach (Taber, 2013) to create a sample of six pupils, three male-identifying and three female-identifying participants, who represent the population of the cohort. To achieve this, the research sample will be allocated into different categories based on their ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds,

subsequently these groups will be sorted into gender divisions according to what gender identity the pupils identify with.

Before acquiring access to the school's data, it cannot be determined exactly what these categories will be, but they will be discussed through a brief conversation with the head teacher. Additionally, the discussion will provide a brief overview about the teachers' perceptions of their pupils' pre-existing education regarding the FBVs which will benefit the study if it needs to be altered to match their understanding. The categories are likely to follow the ethnic and socioeconomic classifications used throughout official statistical research (DfE, 2021; HM Government, n.d.; HM Government 2020). Once categories are determined, I will employ a computer-generated randomisation software to choose six pupils from across different subdivisions. In turn, this sampling method should provide a degree of randomisation whilst also ensuring that the sample are more representative of Britain's population (Taber, 2013).

## **Research methods**

Taber (2013) suggests that researchers should not implement a broad mixed methods approach in which the separate parts do not correlate; instead, researchers must seek alternative ways to elicit complimentary data. Therefore, this study will take a MM-T, mixed methods techniques, approach which combines several different techniques (Taber, 2013, p.112), inspired by the "Mosaic approach" (Clark, 2007; Clark & Moss, 2011), combining a poster-making activity with semi-structured interviews followed by a scenario-based group task. By blending three different participatory methods, the study will be able to capture children's complex minds by providing both visual representations and vocabulary as means of expression (Brooks & Kempe, 2014; Rudduck & Flutter, 2000). As a result, the data will be triangulated together to achieve a "mosaic" of the participants' views (Clark, 2007; Clark & Moss, 2011). With practicality in mind, the study has been created so that it could take place in one day to not disrupt the school's routine and the pupils' learning.

O'Reilly & Dogra (2017) stress the importance of tailoring a study to be child-centred because feeling comfortable maximises participants' confidence when communicating. Therefore, the activity scripts (see Appendices 1, 2 and 3) are written in accessible language. Moreover, to facilitate a flowing conversation, the interviewer will build a rapport with the participants by: introducing themselves; explaining the study's purpose; welcoming questions at any point, dressing in casual clothes; wearing name badges to encourage personability; as well as practising an amiable persona through eye

contact, supportive utterances, and a reassuring presence. Both the interviews and group tasks will be video recorded, with the interviewer alerting the participants to this at the beginning of the activity, so that the participants' facial expressions and hand gestures are captured (O'Reilly & Dogra, 2017). Throughout the study, the interviewer will follow a guided script (see Appendices 1, 2 and 3) to maximise internal reliability. Additionally, for accessibility purposes, each participant will have access to an adapted printed form of the script, so they can hear and read the terminology involved in the project.

### *Poster-creation activity*

To begin, pupils will be instructed to create a poster that represents their ideas about the term "British values" (see Appendix 1). In turn, the study should produce complimentary data to Moncrieffe and Moncrieffe's (2019) exploration of teachers' perspectives on FBVs displays. All participants will be in the same room to aid rapport-building as the pupils will feel more confident beginning the study together (O'Reilly & Dogra, 2017). The participants will be provided with 30 minutes to complete this activity, access to a laptop/computer depending on the school's resources with a Microsoft PowerPoint document (chosen for familiarity purposes) and an age-restricted internet search engine (Google). Furthermore, the participants will be encouraged to use a combination of text and image to provide multiple insights into their perspectives. Online images have been selected rather than a drawing task because children may become anxious and fixated on their ability to draw which could halt the creative process (O'Reilly & Dogra, 2017).

### *Semi-structured interview*

Next, the pupils will participate consecutively in individual interviews in a suitable quiet room. Semi-structured interviews have been chosen because they enable a degree of standardisation but employ open questions to provide room for elaboration depending on when the interviewer perceives that this would benefit the project (Bucknall, 2012; Taber, 2013). The script (see Appendix 2) provides child-centred definitions of unfamiliar terms because pupils in this age bracket will still be developing abstract thinking skills (O'Reilly & Dogra, 2017). To begin, the interviewer will evoke a discussion about the participant's poster which will be physically provided, therefore the participants can verbally elaborate on their visual representations. Then, the interviewer will introduce the FBVs and

use prompts to create a conversation about how they have been and could be incorporated into the pupils' school environment.

Despite the fact that a structured interview has greater internal reliability, the perspectives surrounding the FBVs are nuanced so require the ability for the interviewer to expand on answers. For the same reasoning, the interviews will be conducted on a one-to-one basis. Although interviewing children in groups can enable a more comfortable environment, it is crucial that all participants can discuss their own thoughts without being swayed by other pupils' views and falling into social desirability bias (O'Reilly & Dogra, 2017).

### *Scenario-based group task*

To finalise the study, the participants will be brought together at the end of the day for 30 minutes to participate in a group activity. This scenario is inspired by Carrington and Short's (1995) research into 8-11 year olds' perceptions of Britishness, explored in this paper's Literature Review, in which they asked pupils to explain British life to a new pupil. Likewise, the interviewer will explain that a hypothetical new pupil is joining the school from China and wants to know about British life, especially the country's values (see Appendix 3). China has been chosen because it is a well-known but culturally distinct country compared to Britain, but this will be altered depending on the demographic of the participants. All participants will be provided with a pen to write down ideas on a communal A2 mind-map. This scenario task is intended to provide another child-centred way for the participants to express their opinions because child participants can feel more confident when discussing topics in groups (O'Reilly & Dogra, 2017). As this group scenario will take place after the more personalised interviews, the participants should all bring their individual ideas about Britishness to converge together in thought-provoking debates.

### **Data analysis**

After the data is collected, I will conduct a TA to provide flexibility and because this type of analysis is apt for qualitative data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). All of this section is following the advice and procedure outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006). This study will utilise a primarily inductive analysis ("bottom up" approach) by discovering themes from analysing the data rather than setting pre-existing expectations because it is likely that unpredictable, unique opinions will be generated from the pupils (Taber, 2013). Yet, there could be similarities between the themes produced in this study

and those in the research of Moncrieffe and Moncrieffe (2019) which were: ethnic nationalism, monocultural representations of 'whiteness', Othering, assimilation, multicultural British identity, civic nationalism. Moreover, the analysis will be primarily semantic (concerning the data's explicit meanings) rather than latent (drawing conclusions about the subconscious factors driving the data). This is because, due to the complexity of national identity, it is important that pupils can voice their own opinions rather than have an adult researcher project their perspective onto the responses.

Prior to the TA, all the video recordings will be transcribed verbatim, including any syntactical errors, to best represent the pupils' perspectives. All the data from the study, will be collected into a data corpus and subsequently examined to collect a data set of the relevant data. For a detailed TA, the researcher will immerse themselves within the data set by repeatedly re-reading the data set throughout the project. Once familiarity is created, the researcher will complete the coding process for data reduction (Bucknall, 2012) by systematically reviewing the data set and creating codes which will then be used to create potential themes. To code, the data set will be reviewed digitally with highlighting and commenting tools used to organise the data. Ideally, the coding process will elicit five to ten separate themes with clear definitions and lack of overlapping for ease of analysis, tracked using a thematic map.

A table has been created (see Appendix 4) with blank rows that will be filled in with the confirmed themes and used to tally the number of times these themes emerge in the analysis. There is a possibility that themes will appear multiple times in each participant's poster. The poster-creation task involves images which are arguably more subjective than verbal and written expressions. Therefore, guidelines for how specific images will be interpreted will be decided before the TA; drawing inspiration from Moncrieffe and Moncrieffe (2019) who identified the Union Jack as a national symbol and interpreted cultural icons, such as Winston Churchill, connected to British elitism and monocultural representations of whiteness. Next, the qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews and group task will undergo the same TA. Both the discussion and A2 mind map will be analysed in the latter to provide a rich data set. By triangulating the data (Taber, 2013), the study will provide a well-rounded portrayal of the participants' perspectives on the FBVs.

## **Ethical considerations**

Throughout this study, a consistently ethical approach will be employed following the relevant BERA guideline (British Educational Research Association, 2018). To begin, the researcher will seek voluntary fully informed consent from the school's head teacher. The head teacher (or another designated member of staff) will be assigned the role of "gatekeeper" to support the study's ethical process (O'Reilly & Dogra, 2017; Taber, 2013). As part of this role, a brief interview will be held with the head teacher to ensure that pupils who are deemed unable to participate in the study will be omitted from the process; possibly due to Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs or Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Although this will reduce the project's generalisability by limiting the sample, it is essential that pupils' wellbeing is prioritised and that pupils are not included if pre-existing conditions would cause them to experience distress (Bucknall, 2012).

Once the participants have been chosen, voluntary fully-informed consent will be sought from all their parents/guardians/carers via a letter that has been adapted from the University of Cambridge's sample letter. Moreover, it is important that the pupils provide "assent" which is confirmation of their approval of the parental consent (Bucknall, 2012; O'Reilly & Dogra, 2017). Additionally, the interviewer will be required to address their own possible unconscious biases before completing the study by completing unconscious bias tests due to the politically complex nature of the topic (O'Reilly & Dogra, 2017).

The study will be strictly anonymised by using pseudonyms and omitting any personal information that could evoke the risk of the participants' identities being discovered. As some of the themes may catalyse emotional responses due to the fraught nature of Britishness, there will be a debrief at the end of every interview to support the participants' mental wellbeing (Taber, 2013). Also, the participants are developmentally vulnerable (Denscombe, 2012), therefore it is essential that they have the time to express their opinions and are not emotionally harmed by the study, hence the use of open questions. Following General Data Protection Legislation guidance, the data will be kept in secure, password-protected online files or physical containers, and destroyed.



## **Implications for future practice**

Completing this research proposal has enabled me to advance my knowledge of the complexities of British identity. I have gained a nuanced understanding of the intricacies involved in utilising education to decentre a hegemonic presentation of Britishness. The FBVs arguably promote inclusive, accepting ideas but can be misconstrued to align with a xenophobic, hegemonic ideology. As Britain is an increasingly diverse society, which has become increasingly more politically divided, education is an essential instrument to tackle political divides and to promote an accepting, diverse vision of Britain. Reading studies on teacher trainees, like myself, alerted me to how essential it is that teachers are well-informed about how to discuss British identity without perpetuating an exclusionary rhetoric (Smith, 2016). Therefore, I will utilise my greater knowledge to create an open, inclusive atmosphere in my future classrooms

I had the opportunity to explore these themes in my placement school where I was situated in a Year 5 class with children from multiple cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. By completing the SMSC log (a means to track how the guidelines were carried out in the placement schools) as well as observing and teaching PSHE lessons, I obtained an awareness of how the FBVs can be incorporated into a school's environment. For instance, one PSHE lesson focused on a poem that explains Britain's complex multicultural history through the digestible concept of a recipe. Seeing my class create their own version based on their cultures provided an optimistic example of how to interweave the FBV of mutual respect and tolerance into lessons without promoting an archaic British hegemony. Additionally, I taught most of the History lessons which focused on the unit of Victorian childhood, involving an immersive Victorian school experience. Through conversations surrounding how empire shaped Britain and the country's increasing diversity, I now recognise the missing gaps in children's awareness of Britain's colonial legacy. One aim for my career journey is to discover an informative, inclusive technique when teaching primary-aged children about Britishness to decolonise my future classrooms.

Moreover, I will delve into this vital field of emerging research next year as I will be completing a Master of Education course in 'Critical Approaches of Children's Literature'. Building on my undergraduate dissertation and this research proposal, I intend to explore the intricate links between imperialism and children's literature and how to utilise literature as a lens for decolonisation. From completing this research proposal, I have a firmer grasp of the theory and practice behind research

methods which will equip me with skills that I will bring to this further postgraduate research. Through this assignment, I have garnered an awareness of how teachers can use both published and their own personal research to craft their classroom into an ideal learning environment. Throughout my career, I intend to be a reflective practitioner by continuing to study academic literature and adopting an unbiased approach when reflecting on my pedagogical experience. Most vitally, I now recognise that there is no greater source of suggestions than those that come from within the classroom walls themselves in the form of my future pupils.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Brief for poster-creation activity**

The poster-creation task will be conducted first in a room with the researcher and all six participants, all of whom will have a laptop/computer. They will have access to Microsoft PowerPoint and an age-restricted version of Google. All written parts in italics will be spoken by the interviewer:

*Hello, my name is \*insert name here\*. Thank you so much for joining this activity today. As your parents may have explained to you, I am trying to find out what pupils like you think about British values. Throughout today, you are welcome to ask me questions at any point and anything you have to say on the topic will be valued. If you feel stressed or upset at any point, you are welcome to leave the room or end the project.*

*To begin today, you will be making a poster using Microsoft PowerPoint about the term “British values” and what this means to you. “British” means something relating to the country of Great Britain and “values” are general principles and expected standards of behaviour like your school’s mantra/motto/golden rules. However, it is important that you think about your own definition of British values for this poster-making activity.*

*The poster is not meant to be an amazing piece of art, but it is a way for you to show me what you think about the term British values. You have access to Google Images to find photos that match your ideas. Also, you are welcome to use words and phrases as well as images.*

*You will have 30 minutes to create this poster starting from now. I will be here throughout if you want any help using PowerPoint, finding images, and writing words/phrases. Please feel free to ask me any further questions. Do not worry about each other’s work as the posters are meant to reflect your ideas.*

## Appendix 2

### Interview schedule

The semi-structured interviews will be conducted individually with each participant consecutively after the poster-creation task. All written parts in italics will be spoken by the researcher with room for elaboration depending on the direction of the interview.

#### Introduction:

*I am researching children's ideas about the fundamental British values because we recognise that you deserve a say in your learning. Thank you for taking part in this research and for creating the poster in the earlier task. It was really interesting to see what you think about British values.*

*We will now have an open discussion about the fundamental British values. Please answer with whatever comes to your mind and you are welcome to ask any further questions, such as for definitions of any words you do not understand. This chat will be recorded on video so I can remember every interesting thing that you have to say. If you feel the need to stop the interview or leave the room at any point, you are more than welcome to.*

RQ 1: What are pupils' perspectives on the concept of British values?

1. Discussion about the poster.

*We will start by chatting about your poster that you made earlier. \*With the participant's poster in front of them\*. Please tell me why you chose these images and words, and how they show what you think about British values.*

Possible prompts are as follow:

- *Why have you chosen this image?*
- *Why have you chosen this word/phrase?*
- *Is there a reason why you have presented it in this way?*
- *What do these images and words have to do with your understanding of being British?*
- *What does being British mean to you?*

RQ 2: What are pupils' perspectives about the FBVs as part of their educational experience?

2. Question prior to discussing the FBVs.

*The fundamental British values are four ideas that are meant to give a view of what British people find to be important and, they are like school mottos or golden rules. What do you think these four values could be?*



3. Question about the FBVs.

*The Fundamental British Values are:*

- *Democracy = This is the form of Government used in Britain which means that everyone in Britain who is over the age of 18 can vote for who they want to be in our government and run the country. An election is held at least every five years so that British people can decide who they want to represent them in the decision-making process. For instance, Boris Johnson is Britain's current Prime Minister who is in charge of the Conservative party which are the group of powerful people that won the last election.*
- *Rule of law = Laws are the official rules of our country such as how it is illegal to steal from a shop. This value means that all British people are expected to respect and follow the law.*
- *Individual liberty = Liberty is the freedom to choose who you want to be whilst still following the laws of our country. For instance, you are allowed to choose what you want to do for your job or where you want to live or who you want to marry and more – as long as you don't break the law.*
- *Mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs = This final value means that British people are expected to respect that everyone is allowed to choose their own religion and beliefs, as long as they are not harming other people by breaking the law. We need to treat everyone with kindness and not force our ideas on them.*

*Do you think that these four values represent what you think it means to be British? Feel free to ask for any more explanation about what these words mean.*

4. Question how the FBVs are in their school in the present.

*The fundamental British values are meant to be taught in primary schools for all pupils like you. Can you think of examples of how your school has talked about the fundamental British values? This could be in assemblies, during a range of lessons (such as history, PSHE, RE and more), in clubs around school and in your school's motto.*

RQ 3: How do pupils think that the FBVs can be incorporated into schools, both in the formal as well as hidden curriculum?

5. Question how the FBVs are in their school in the future.

*Imagine that you are the head teacher at this school and you are teaching the fundamental British values. Can you think of ways that you might try and teach these both in lessons and throughout the whole school day?*

6. Final question.

*Is there anything else you would like to tell me about this topic? I am interested to hear any of your opinions so please let me know.*

## Appendix 3

### Brief for scenario-based group task

The group task will be conducted with all the participants in the same room. All written parts in italics will be spoken by the researcher as the start of the activity.

*Once again, I would like to thank you for being part of this study today. You have all been very helpful and I will definitely tell your teacher about your brilliant answers. Like the chat earlier, this session will be recorded on video and you are all welcome to leave at any point if you feel upset or stressed.*

*To end today I would like you all to imagine that a new student is joining your class and they are moving here from China. This student has never been to Britain before and does not know much about the country. How are you going to introduce them to the country of Britain and its values?*

*I'd like you to reflect on your posters and interviews, but also to add any other ideas that come to mind. You all have pens to write ideas down on this A3 piece of paper. I want you to discuss these ideas with each other and I will be here throughout the activity if you would like to ask me any relevant questions.*

## Appendix 4

### Table of themes

Theme:	Number of times this theme was featured in a participants' poster:	Number of times this theme appeared in a participants' interview:	Number of times this theme appeared in the group task:
Theme 1:			
Theme 2:			
Theme 3:			
Theme 4:			
Theme 5:			
Theme 6:			
Theme 7:			
Theme 8:			
Theme 9:			
Theme 10:			

