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A “Matter of the Whites”? Contemporary Textbook Portrayals of Former African Colonies in WWI

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1 Introduction

Today’s world is one much shaped by globalization and migration, and one permeated with ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity which has increasingly come to characterize our societies as a result of transnational dynamics. With diversity having time and again emerged as both a challenge and an asset within societies, knowledge of “the other” has been widely considered crucial for intercommunal and international understanding (Bergmann 2016, 38–39; Stradling 2003, 11). Such knowledge has proved particularly important against the backdrop of histories of conflict fought either within or across communities, the memories and impact of which often outlive those directly affected.

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The school, as a prominent institution for the socialization of citizens, has increasingly assumed a pivotal role in nurturing knowledge of “the other”. One of its commonly recognised tasks today is to prepare young people to appreciate and navigate the plurality of often contested identities, experiences, memories and views which students may encounter especially in divided post-war as well as post-colonial contexts.

Such societal preoccupations and educational responses to them have been accompanied by the concomitant emergence of a distinct scholarly concern for portrayals of a collective “self” and “other”, and their historical and contemporary relations and interactions, including conflict, in educational media. History textbooks, as sources typically serving as conveyors of dominant, government-authorized narratives and discourses circulating in a given society at a particular point in time (Apple 1993; Apple et al. 1991), have been at the centre of numerous studies. A solid and expanding body of research has thus emerged which draws attention to the ways in which these powerful school media have portrayed identity groups and (conflictual) intergroup relations, and the role such portrayals—through their particular representations, interpretations, emphases and omissions—(may) have played in either contributing to or hindering societal and international understanding (e.g. Alayan et al. 2012; Bentrovato 2017; Bentrovato et al. 2016; Korostelina and Lässig 2013; Müller-Saini 2011). In investigating such discourses and their implications, this scholarship has demonstrated how, time and again, history textbooks have been part and parcel of “memory wars”, functioning as battlefields for differing views and agendas, and as mirrors of (a)symmetrical power relations, as well as primary sites of the politics of memory and recognition (e.g. Cajani et al. forthcoming). In post-conflict and post-colonial contexts around the world, textbooks have been battlegrounds of the struggle by non-dominant groups for equal rights and recognition. Where effective, these endeavours have led to the reconsideration and reframing of mainstream narratives to acknowledge the voices and experiences of marginalized groups, including their historical ordeals, struggles, achievements and contributions.

Embedded in the growing literature on textbooks and “memory wars”, this chapter sets out to examine such practices through a case

study of contemporary European and African textbook representations of World War One (WWI), a defining international political crisis of unprecedented global scope and destruction which fundamentally reshaped international relations and affected millions of lives around the world. WWI, being a watershed event in world history that is taught across the globe, represents a prominent example of a historical conflict of worldwide significance, discourses around which can offer critical insights into the interplay of knowledge and power visible in inherently political practices of cultural representation in post-colonial societies. Educational discourses around it can further illuminate the role of such practices in either perpetuating or challenging relations of power and domination in today's increasingly globalized world (Foucault 1972).

This chapter will therefore examine textbook representations of the role of the colonies in WWI, particularly in Africa, against the backdrop of the continent's pivotal yet largely unacknowledged involvement in this global war. As has been increasingly highlighted in historiographical research (e.g. Killingray 1998; Michels 2009; Page 1987; Paice 2007; Samson 2013; Schneider 2010; Strachan 2004), WWI did not spare Africa and in fact significantly marked the continent's historical trajectory and its people's lives and memories. The war reached the colonies very soon after its outbreak in Europe in 1914 and lasted, in East Africa, as long as until November 1918. Across Africa, numerous battles were fought by Britain, France, Belgium and their colonial armies against German troops, while thousands were recruited, often forcedly, throughout the continent, most notably by France, to fight or support the war effort on the European front. Approximately two million Africans are believed to have actively participated in WWI as soldiers or carriers in both Europe and Africa, while more than 200,000 are reported to have died or to have been killed in action. Many more perished of famine and disease, this war consequently taking a heavy toll on African societies and economies.

Methodologically, this chapter will compare perspectives presented in selected European and African school textbooks on the place of Africa within the history of WWI in order to discern the knowledge, narratives and discourses that appear to dominate the teaching of this global war across the two continents. It thereby seeks to ascertain the extent to

which their representations echo the growing interest within academic circles in the experiences and agency of formerly colonized peoples during this war. In doing so, it will assess, notably through the lenses of critical and postcolonial theory, the possibilities and limitations these educational media currently present to international understanding rather than serving to instil and perpetuate prejudice and marginalisation through biased historical representations.

This chapter aims to augment the existing literature on textbooks and war by making a specific scholarly contribution to a largely Eurocentric body of textbook research on WWI (e.g. Bendick 2003; Bode 2015; Cochet 2006; Kuhn and Ziegler 2014; Müller and Wagner 2010; Socolow 1993; Spiridon 2016). It also more broadly complements closely related scholarship on colonialism and images of Africa (e.g. Cole 2008; Grindel 2012; Kemme 2004; Marmer and Sow 2015; Poenicke 1995, 2003, 2008; Zagumny and Richey 2012). Located within this literature, this study is conceived of as a much-needed response to the paucity of textbook studies examining perspectives from former African colonies (Bentrovato 2015) and an addition to existing analyses of the portrayal of a range of aspects of WWI in European textbooks, which, with few exceptions (Christophe and Schwedes 2016; Schneider 2010), have typically lacked a global perspective while being at times comparative in nature.

2 Data and Methods

This study draws on the analysis of 93 textbooks produced since 1990 from both formerly colonizing and formerly colonized countries.¹ This constitutes the largest and most varied sample of contemporary African and European textbooks used to date to qualitatively analyze depictions of WWI in educational media. The sample from Africa includes 33 history and social studies textbooks from 15 countries which are either former British, French, German, Belgian, Portuguese and Italian colonies, or which were never formally colonized by European powers. These textbooks were produced in accordance with national curricula, either by local or international publishers, for both primary and secondary

level. The sample from Europe comprises 60 history textbooks for secondary level from the six above-mentioned European countries which formerly held colonies in Africa.¹

In analyzing these textbook contents, we have focused on investigating the perspectives and inherent emphases and omissions presented in textual and visual material in relation to the circumstances and effects of Africa’s involvement in WWI. Starting from the premise that the history of WWI is entangled and interconnected, the analysis seeks to identify long-marginalized African perspectives on this historical event, and the particular focus and nuance seemingly dominating across European and African textbooks in this respect. In recognition of Africa’s legitimate place in this history and its representation, this study ultimately reflects on issues of power, and processes of empowerment and disempowerment, involved in cultural representations of the “self” and “the other” and their interconnections.

3 Textbook Representations of Africa in WWI

3.1 Circumstances of Africa’s Involvement in WWI

The analysis of the circumstances of Africa’s involvement in WWI as depicted in European and African textbooks reveals both different degrees of attention to this matter as well as discursive communalities in emphasis and interpretation. European textbooks show only few references to this aspect. For the most part, the colonies in Africa are treated as objects of competition between European powers and crucial stakes both before and during WWI. Within the context of colonial rivalries, some authors make reference to violent conflicts on African soil as part of a description of the antecedents to WWI. They mention, for instance, the Moroccan crises between France and Germany (*GCSE Modern World History* 2001, 10), the Sudanese crisis between Great Britain and France (*Geschichte - Geschehen* 3, 2005, 217) and the Anglo-Boer Wars (*Racines du Future*, 2000, 188).³ One German textbook further visualizes such dynamics by illustrating the so-called scramble for

Africa with a world map also showing areas of imperial crisis that characterised the pre-war period, both in Africa and elsewhere in the world, as is partly outlined in the accompanying subtext (see Fig. 1). The text itself however does not explicitly discuss the crises which appear encircled in red on this worldmap; it instead limits itself to summarizing the outcomes of the Berlin Conference that “marked the apex of the ‘Scramble for Africa’”.

The analysis also found some national trends in explanations of the events leading to the war and Africa’s place therein. Belgian textbooks, for instance, typically summarize colonial rivalries in North Africa as one of the triggers of the war (*Racines du Future*, 2000, 188; *Nieuwste Tijd*, 1985, 60). Italian textbooks, for their part, point to European prospects of colonial expansion as an important impetus for engaging in the war, emphasizing the promise made by the Allied forces to grant Italy a share of German colonial territories as compensation for

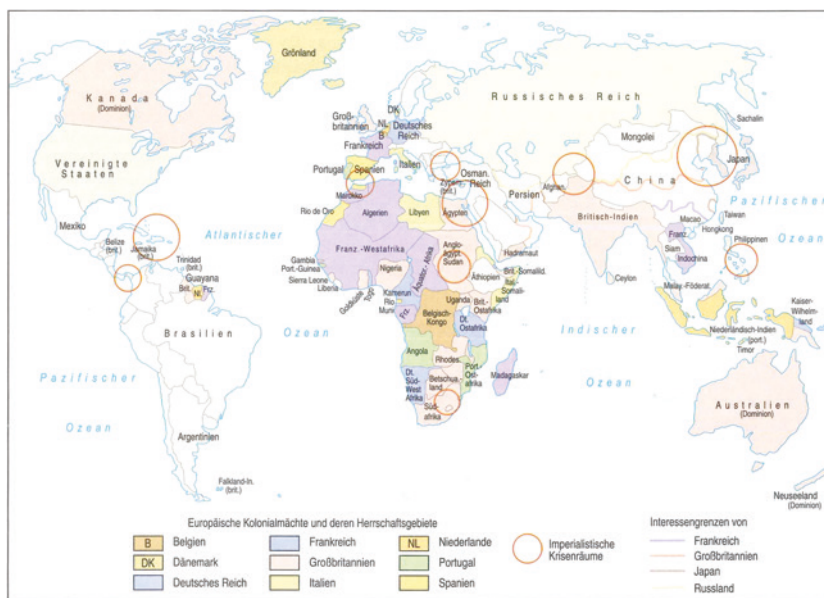


Fig. 1 Colonial partition and areas of crisis in the pre-war period (Source *Geschichte - Geschehen, Oberstufe Gesamtband*, 2012, 314)

its participation in WWI (*Tempi & Temi della Storia*, 2013, 63; *Eventi e Scenari*, 2012, 85; *Capire la Storia*, 2011, 77; *Incontro con la Storia*, 2010, 107). Two Portuguese textbooks rather stress the colonial interest in defending and holding territorial possessions in Africa as they describe the German attacks against Portuguese colonies as the reason for Portugal’s entry into WWI (*Cadernos de História*, 2011, 34; *Viva a História*, 2008, 21). As evidenced by such references, Eurocentric perspectives dominate textbook accounts of the war’s outbreak. The involvement of other parts of the world in a conflict that started as a European war only appears relevant where it overlaps with European interests. This choice is possibly dictated by the didactic complexities involved in dealing with the causes of the war within Europe alone as well as a concern for space and for “overloading” students with alternative perspectives.

African textbooks, while more attentive to the place of Africa in the history of WWI, provide similar explanations. They typically describe Africa’s involvement in WWI in terms of an inevitable extension of an originally foreign war, which some label as a “purely European affair” (*Ordinary Level History for Cameroon Schools*, 2006, 176) and “a matter of the whites” (*Histoire 3^e*, 1995, 66; *Histoire Géographie, 3^e*, 1999, 46). African textbooks often portray Africa as an appendix to Europe and Africans as colonial subjects with little choice but to join the fighting on the side of their colonial masters. One Cameroonian textbook, for instance, argues that

the war broke out in Europe and did not concern the people of Cameroon in any direct way. Fighting started in Cameroon mainly because the territory was a colony of Germany, an enemy to Britain and France. (*Ordinary Level History for Cameroon Schools*, 2006, 49)

In such accounts, Africa is also depicted as a commodity and a trophy for European powers in the context of their rivalries. Among the strategic reasons for Africa’s involvement mentioned in the textbook is the Allies’ intention to capture and exploit German colonies (ibid. 49) and to use the conquered lands as possible bargaining chips with which to recover European territories occupied by the adversaries (ibid. 176).

3.2 The Nature of Africa's Involvement in WWI

The comparative study found more variation in relation to the nature of Africa's involvement in WWI across European and African textbooks. The analysis identified five different ways in which European textbooks portray this involvement, two being primarily passive and three primarily active. The first category of these portrayals, referring to a passive form of Africa's participation in the war, relates to references to the involvement of European colonies in the war, both in Africa and elsewhere, as an illustration of the global dimension of WWI. This dimension is strongly present in French textbooks (*Histoire, 1^{re} L, ES, S*, 2007, 196; *Histoire: 1^{re} L-ES-S*, 2007, 200; *Histoire 1^{re}, série L-ES*, 2003, 208; *Histoire 1^{re}, L-ES*, 2003, 192, 210). The centrality of the colonies is less evident in their German counterparts, which instead typically emphasize that the war developed into a global event especially following the entry of the USA as a non-European power (*Geschichte Plus, Berlin, Klassen 9/10*, 2007, 50; *Das waren Zeiten 3, C*, 2004, 177; *Geschichte Erleben 4*, 2003, 91). One British textbook similarly explains the global designation of the conflict:

The war that began in July-August 1914 was not a world war. For a long time the conflict was known as the "European War" or even the "Great War". The phrase "World War" became common later, when the entry of the USA turned it into a genuinely global conflict. (*Causes and Consequences of the First World War*, 2003, 32)

Such representations, which implicitly neglect the involvement of Africa in the war, starkly contrast with a statement found in one German textbook, whose authors exceptionally affirm that the conflict assumed a global dimension as early as August 1914, "when Great Britain decided to attack German colonies in Africa and Asia" (*Geschichte für die Wirtschaftsschule, Jahrgangsstufe 8*, 1997, 132). Similarly, a Belgian textbook mentions the occurrence of "grave conflicts in the colonies, such as in South-West Africa", as a manifestation of the geographical expansion of the war (*Racines du Future*, 2000, 191).

The second passive category of portrayals of Africa’s involvement in WWI found in European textbooks involves the visual representation of the colonies as allies of the Entente through the use of (world) maps. One Belgian textbook indicates the involuntary nature of the colonies’ alliances in the authored text. Its authors echo the argument made in the Cameroonian textbook mentioned earlier as they state that the colonies, not explicitly African, automatically entered WWI as a consequence of their motherlands being at war (*Passages*, 2009, 213). Also echoing the Cameroonian textbook, a French textbook stresses the extraneous stakes of the colonies’ embroilment in a war “that did not concern them directly” (*Histoire 1^{re}, L-ES*, 2003, 194).

The three remaining categories of textbook portrayals of Africa’s involvement in WWI in European textbooks address descriptions of active forms of engagement in the war. These are primarily limited to the European warfront. European textbooks falling into the third representational category make reference to African soldiers having fought in Europe. They do so by mentioning these soldiers in the authored text, by showing them as numbers in statistical tables or by presenting postcards, photographs or other visual depictions of these combatants, some of them detailing in the accompanying captions how many were mobilized in the war or killed in action.

Across the European sample, French textbooks appear comparatively more attentive to the experiences of colonial soldiers, one particular textbook dedicating a distinct subchapter to the mobilization of the colonies, thereby indicating the soldiers’ nationalities and the numbers of war victims (*Histoire: 1^{re} L, ES, S.*, 2007, 222). In referring to these troops, another French textbook exceptionally addresses the issue of compulsory military service (*Histoire 1^{re}, L-ES*, 2003, 111), thus presenting one of the few examples in European textbooks where the idea of force is conveyed in representations of the recruitment of Africans in the war. Conveying a local perspective, yet another textbook adds the dimension of persuasion, further characterizing mobilization practices in the colonies. It quotes a Senegalese politician explaining how the French recruited many young Africans by appealing to their honour and promising white people’s respect in return for military assistance (*Histoire, 1^{re}*, 2007, 229). In this context, French authors explain the term *tirailleurs*

sénégalais, which was applied to all black soldiers from African colonies fighting in a certain military corps, regardless of whether they came from Senegal or other African countries (*Histoire 1^{re}*, S, 2003, 87; *Histoire 1^{re}*, L-ES, 2003, 190; *Histoire 1^{re}*, L, ES, S, 2011, 226). Some authors refer to the good reputation of these soldiers as valiant combatants, while also mentioning the prejudice they faced (*Histoire 1^{re}*, L, ES, S, 2011, 226; *Histoire*, 1^{re}, 2007, 229). In almost all examples, only soldiers enrolled in the French and British colonial armies are presented; a notable exception is a German textbook which presents a photograph showing the training of African Askari soldiers fighting in German East Africa on the side of Germany (*Geschichte für die Wirtschaftsschule, Jahrgangsstufe 8*, 1997, 133).

In addition to the involvement of Africans in combatant roles, several European textbooks mention the contribution of African workers to the war industry and their material support of warfare (*Geschichte - Geschehen, Oberstufe Gesamtband*, 2012, 335; *Histoire 1^{re}* L, ES, S, 2007, 222; *Histoire, Première ES/L/S*, 2003, 182). These portrayals fall into our fourth category. Several French books show propaganda posters and texts depicting the colonies as warehouses of economic and human capital (*Histoire*, 1^{re}, 2007, 228; *Histoire 1^{re} série L-ES*, 2003, 209; *Histoire 1^{re}*, L-ES, 2003, 116). In a similar vein, one Italian textbook emphasizes that the nations who won the war were those who had made the “best use of colonial resources” (*Scoprire la Storia*, 2010, 99). In such cases, these depictions oscillate between showing the colonies as either active or passive, yet pivotal, places from where Europeans could draw the means they needed for the war.

Only few European textbooks include portrayals of active warfare in Africa; these constitute the fifth category identified in this study. While some refer to battles between European powers in their colonies in general (*Histoire 1^{re}*, L-ES, 2003, 194; *Histoire 1^{re}*, L-ES-S, 2011, 100; *Zeitreise 3*, 2006, 56; *Viva a História*, 2008, 20), others mention specific conflicts in Africa or show them in a map, sometimes in conjunction with selected war activities in other parts of the world (*Racines du Future*, 2000, 191; ‘*N Kijk op Nu & Toen 5*, 1983, 130; *Geschichte für die Wirtschaftsschule, Jahrgangsstufe 8*, 1997, 132–33; *Viva a História*, 2008, 21, 25; *Histoire: 1^{re}* L-ES-S, 2007, 194; *Histoire*

I^{res}, *ES/L*, *S*, 2007, 189; *Histoire: 1^{re}*, *L*, *ES*, *S*, 2011, 63; *Histoire 1^{re}*, *série L-ES*, 2003, 208; *Histoire 1^{re}*, *L-ES*, 2003, 192–93). A French textbook, for instance, presents a world map with the dates of the capitulation of the German colonies (*Histoire: 1^{res}*, *L/ES/S*, 2011, 75), while a Portuguese book devotes an entire subchapter to the attack of German troops from East Africa on the Portuguese territory in Mozambique in 1914 (*Cadernos de História*, 2011, 34). One German textbook includes a short paragraph giving a succinct, though partial, representation of war fronts in the colonial territories. Referring to military campaigns in German colonies in Africa and Asia, the book underscores that “[b]eside British and French soldiers, troops from India, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Japan participated in the fights”, whereas “indigenous people served as carriers and helpers” (*Geschichte für die Wirtschaftsschule, Jahrgangsstufe 8*, 1997, 132–33). This narrative, which is remarkably contradicted by the visual portrayal of Askari soldiers in the same textbook mentioned above, thereby erroneously reduces the contribution of the colonized to a marginal role on their home front. The predominant silence on the explicit pivotal participation of (black) Africans in the war efforts on their own continent is also notable in a British textbook. Speaking of “hard-fought campaigns” in Africa, its author explains that “[b]y November 1918, British imperial troops had overrun German East Africa” whilst “South African forces took German South-West Africa (1914–1915), an Anglo-Nigerian army occupied Cameroon (1915–1916) and an Anglo-French army took Togo in 1914”, eventually leading to a situation whereby “[i]n effect, Germany had now disappeared from Africa as a colonial power” (*Causes and Consequences of the First World War*, 2003, 35).

In African textbooks, descriptions of how Africa was involved in WWI also vary, with depictions of active involvement, however, generally prevailing over more passive portrayals. The latter include representations of the continent as a battleground of WWI, via illustrations of main frontlines and battles on the continent and maps of Africa distinguishing neutral countries, the colonies of the Allies and German territories, and only occasionally showing troop movements (e.g. *Histoire 3^e*, 1995, 66–67; *Histoire Géographie, 3^e*, 1999, 47). Further descriptions depict Africa as a crucial reserve from which Europeans

drew or, in more active terms, as a provider of human and material resources needed to support the European war effort. As such, Africa and Africans are often presented as either willing or unwilling agents, and as both valiant and victimized participants, in WWI. This distinction is reflected in the different nuances used in African textbooks to recount the entry of African colonies into the war. These range from accounts inferring a voluntary decision to participate, to accounts more strongly emphasizing and critically exposing the exploitative, opportunistic and forceful nature of the deployment of Africans in the war. An example of less critical accounts which stress African agency while obscuring African submission to European force can be found in a textbook from Tanzania which states that people in the colonies had “joined” the war to “support” and “protect” the colonial masters (*African History from 19th c. to 21st c. A.D.*, 2008, 87, 91). A more critical tone, which instead highlights African subjection to European exploitation, is noticeable in an Ethiopian textbook underscoring that “[c]olonial powers used Africa’s resources and Africans to support their war efforts” (*History. Student Textbook, Grade 10*, 2005, 118). A denunciatory tone is also apparent in one Rwandan textbook unambiguously stating that “[b]oth sides forced Africans to fight for them” (*Primary Social Studies. Pupil’s Book 6*, 2006, 51). One Ivorian textbook as well as another widely used in Francophone Africa both go as far as to speak of “a veritable manhunt” to describe the nature of recruitment in some areas in Africa and further underlying the forced exaction of raw material and food requisition imposed on the continent (*Histoire 3^e*, 1995, 66; *Histoire Géographie, 3^e*, 1999, 46).

Despite these different nuances, African textbooks generally highlight the varied nature and important extent of the African active and valiant contribution to the European war efforts. In contrast to the more passive nuances found across European textbooks, African textbooks stress the material contribution made by Africans in providing resources, and refer to the hundreds of thousands of Africans who “fought alongside their colonial masters” both on African and European soil (*Ordinary Level History for Cameroon Schools*, 2006, 177). They recognize Africans as having widely served as soldiers as well as in auxiliary roles, such as as “carriers of heavy war loads” (*The History of Rwanda*, 2010, 74),

guides and interpreters (*Ordinary Level History for Cameroon Schools*, 2006, 51). Stressing the important, if subordinate, role of Africans in the war, one Congolese textbook points out that, in Africa, “[t]he so-called French, Belgian and British troops, when lined up, consisted of African recruits, except for the officers” (*Histoire Classes Terminales*, n.d., 165–66). As for African participation in the war efforts in Europe, the Ivorian and Francophone textbooks mentioned above emphasize how “[e]verywhere their courage and loyalty drew the admiration of their officers” (*Histoire 3^e*, 1995, 66; *Histoire Géographie, 3^e*, 1999, 46). This comment is echoed in *Ordinary Level History for Cameroon Schools* (2006), which stresses that “Europeans’ respect for Africans increased after seeing the bravery with which the Africans fought in the war” (178). Occasionally however, the textbooks also mention the concern in Europe at the time that waging war in the colonies and employing African troops might compromise the perceived authority of white people. According to the Rwandan teacher guide *The History of Rwanda* (2010), such reservations were based on a European wish “not [...] to expose the faults and weaknesses of the white man to the Black people” and to ensure that “[a]t all costs the Black people [...] should never be given an opportunity to defeat or kill white people” for the sake of “the future of colonial Africa” (74–75).

While generally stressing the agency of Africans, textbooks from different African countries vary in their emphasis of the specific role and position of their own people in the war. The analysis discerned at least four different narratives in this regard. Textbook narratives in the first category emphasize African loyalty towards the colonial metropole during WWI, often reporting stories of bravery and heroic sacrifice in fulfilling their military duties. Tanzanian and Rwandan textbooks, for example, refer to the collaboration of their respective countries with the “colonial masters”, “defending the Germans” (*History for Primary Schools, Standard 6*, 2009, 2–3), and doing “all that was possible to help [them]” (*New Junior Secondary. History Book 2*, n.d., 79). Congolese textbooks exalt the role of their soldiers in support of the Allies, celebrating Congolese successes “in opposing the invaders but also in helping the British in the East, where it gains the victory of Tabora [...and in] help[ing] France in Cameroon [...where it] participates in

the taking of Yaoundé” (*Histoire 6^e Primaire. Le Congo (rd) en Afrique et dans le Monde*, 2004, 129; also in *Histoire Classes Terminales*, n.d., 165). Similarly, South African textbooks highlight the mass voluntary participation of South Africans in the war, further reporting two iconic events that, in 1915, tragically marked the country’s participation in WWI and evidenced the sacrifice and bravery of both white and black South Africans who lost their lives while serving overseas. They mention the valour and victory of (white) South Africans at the costly Battle of Delville Wood on the Somme, and the bravery of hundreds of (black) South Africans in non-fighting roles “as they faced death” following the sinking of their troopship SS Mendi in the English Channel (*Oxford Successful Social Sciences. Grade 8*, 2010, 160–61; *Oxford - Op Soek na Sosiale Wetenskappe. Graad 8*, 2008, 165–66).

Starkly contrasting these narratives of loyal support, the texts in our second category focus on cases of local resistance, desertion and betrayal of the colonial administration during WWI. One Namibian textbook, for instance, mentions how the Herero, a community which a few years earlier had been victim of genocide, had “deserted their German employers [...] to help the South Africans” (*Discover History. Grade 9*, 2011, 66). Similarly, a textbook from Mozambique focuses on two iconic and unprecedented instances of patriotic anti-colonial resistance sparked by the increased exploitation and abuse that followed Portugal’s involvement in WWI, namely the Barue rebellion and the strike in Lourenço Marques (*História 10^a Classe*, 2002, 20–23).

While the two categories of textbook narratives mentioned above emphasize unity in the struggle either in support of or against the colonial rulers during WWI, a third category refers to internal divisions among the colony’s peoples, with different groups either supporting or betraying their colonial masters. *Ordinary Level History for Cameroon Schools* (2006), for instance, highlights that Cameroonians had “found themselves fighting either for the Germans or for the Allies”, resulting in a situation whereby “during battles, indigenes were killing indigenes on the enemy side” (5). South African textbooks also nuance their narratives of national and racial unity in the war by briefly drawing attention to the opposition among some white Afrikaans-speakers to the idea of supporting the former foe Britain by whom the Afrikaners, or Boers,

had been bitterly defeated a few years earlier (*Social Sciences Today, Grade 8, 2008*, 176; *Oxford Successful Social Sciences, 2010*, 159; *Oxford - Op Soek na Sosiale Wetenskappe, Graad 8, 2008*, 164).

The fourth, and final, category of textbook narratives emphasizes regional divisions and conflict having emerged across the continent. They stress how Africans were forced to fight against each other during WWI, thus affecting relationships between neighbouring African countries at the time. A Tanzanian textbook, for instance, explains that “[t]he British, French and Belgian colonies were fighting against the German colonies”, and that the German colony of Tanganyika, specifically, “had to fight against Kenya and Uganda that were under the British rule” (*African History, 2008*, 92, 87).

3.3 Consequences of the War and Its End for Africa

The majority of the European textbooks analyzed in this study fail to address the consequences of WWI for Africa. The consequences of the war for Europe, on the other hand, seem to be considered far more important. As the previous section has indicated, some European textbooks limit themselves to mentioning the number of the victims from French and British colonies, mostly through charts mentioning in footnotes that colonial troops were also among the dead and injured. No textbook refers to the victims fighting for the German colonizers. Even the German textbook mentioned above, which shows the African Askari fighters, only implicitly refers to African victims by suggesting that “especially in German East Africa the fight was long and involved heavy losses” (*Geschichte für die Wirtschaftsschule, Jahrgangsstufe 8, 1997*, 133).

The Treaty of Versailles is a central topic through which European textbooks address the consequences of WWI. This is generally dealt with as a European issue, however, whereby the loss of German colonies appears rather as a consequence for Europe than for the respective African territories. Textbook narratives of the peace treaty and its consequences for colonial rule in Africa show different emphases across the European sample. One German textbook associates the end of WWI with the beginning of decolonization as the German colonies

came under the mandate of the League of Nations (*Geschichte für die Wirtschaftsschule, Jahrgangsstufe 8*, 1997, 112–13). A British textbook, on the other hand, interprets the mandate as effective control of the lost German territories by France and Britain (*GCSE Modern World History*, 2001, 86). Several European textbooks indeed convey the impact of preceding military campaigns in Africa on Europe by stressing, in the words of a Belgian textbook, that the war developed “favourably for the Allies” as they managed to conquer all German colonies in Africa (*Van Verlichting tot Wereldoorlog*, 1993, 197). Another Belgian textbook explains that the German attack on Belgian colonial troops had resulted in the latter conquering German East Africa and taking control of Tanzania (*Histoire du Temps Présent*, 2007, 9). Similarly, a British textbook stresses Germany’s “loss of all land in Africa” to the benefit of the Allies following the attack on German colonies by Britain and France and Germany’s defeat (*The First World War 1*, 1988, 83).

While one German textbook mentions the rising demand for self-determination in the colonies after WWI (*Geschichte - Geschehen, Oberstufe Gesamtband*, 2012, 335), it is the French textbooks in particular which explain the consequences of this global war in terms of the weakening of European power in Africa. They point to the increasing resistance to European domination and the rise of national awareness that eventually supported emancipatory projects (*Histoire 1^{re}, L-ES*, 2003, 116–17, 120; *Histoire, 1^{re}*, 2007, 83). One of these French textbooks makes explicit reference to both the hopes of African soldiers when they were recruited and the fall of the myth of superior, invincible white people when these soldiers returned to their countries after the war (*Histoire, 1^{re}*, 2007, 100, 229).

In stark contrast to the European examples, African textbooks often draw attention to the pervasive socio-economic and political consequences of WWI for Africa and its people. The textbooks frequently highlight the great human and material cost of a war that had been imposed on the continent, although only few estimates of African casualties are provided. The Congolese textbook *Histoire Classes Terminales* (n. d.), for instance, emphasizes that the victory of the Allies “was won at the price of enormous suffering endured by the African people” (165–66). These accounts report that many Africans had been killed

or injured. *The History of Rwanda* (2010) further adds that many had also been displaced due to “fear of missiles and [...] the obligation and burden of carrying war materials” (75). Other textbooks highlight the widespread and often strategic destruction of homes, schools, hospitals, farms, mines, roads and railways to prevent their use by enemies (*MacMillan History for Southern Africa. Namibia Edition*, 2012, 105). They also mention the disruption of and decrease in food production caused both by deliberate destruction and by forced and massive military recruitment of Africa’s active population, including young farmers (*African History*, 2008, 93; *Ordinary Level History for Cameroon Schools*, 2006, 52, 177–78). According to several textbooks, such war-related disruption resulted in a deadly famine as well as the increased price of basic necessities, which compounded the suffering of Africans caused by WWI (*The History of Rwanda*, 2010, 75; *A New History of Sierra Leone*, 1990, 168). To make things worse, as added by the Tanzanian textbook *African History* (2008), WWI also resulted in a more “intensive exploitation of the African people [...] to overcome war losses” in Europe, and to rebuild its economy, notably through increased land dispossession aimed at producing cash crops for European markets and at resettling white soldiers (93). Several textbooks, however, also recognize the economic benefits deriving from the war, including the development of local industries, such as the coal industry (*Ordinary Level History for Cameroon Schools*, 2006, 177; *História da 9ª Classe*, 2014, 43).

African textbooks also describe some of the political consequences of WWI for the continent, such as the redistribution and de facto re-colonisation of African territories ratified in the Treaty of Versailles and frequently illustrated through brief outlines in the narrative or in maps. In contrast to European textbooks, several African books underscore the undemocratic and arrogant nature of this action. A Namibian text, for example, highlights that “[t]he indigenous African people of these colonies were never asked their opinion” and that “it was insulting to say that they were not ready for independence” (*Discover History Grade 9*, 2011, 67). Others, such as the textbook *Ordinary Level History for Cameroon Schools* (2006, 177), emphasize the resulting territorial losses and separation of communities caused by the new partition.

Most of the African textbooks analyzed here stress that the Allies' victory and the end of German colonial rule in Africa had not resulted in the change in governance that had been hoped for by the African people and that, in fact, "[c]olonies of the defeated nations [...] were seized and administered like colonies by the victorious powers under the cover of the mandate of the League of Nations" (*Ordinary Level History for Cameroon Schools*, 2006, 288). Many textbooks from former German colonies, such as Cameroon, Rwanda, Namibia and Tanzania, emphasize the new rulers' failure to fulfil their obligation towards the League of Nations mandate and commonly underscore a general dissatisfaction in the colonies with a continuation or even a worsening of the previous state of affairs under German rule (e.g. *Ordinary Level History for Cameroon Schools*, 2006, 288; *History for Primary Schools, Standard 6*, 2009, 4). Referring to Belgium as Rwanda's "Trustee", one Rwandan textbook, for instance, comments that "Trustees were supposed to rule their territories for the benefit of the local people. They were also supposed to be preparing the territory for independence. The Belgians did neither of these two things" (*Primary Social Studies, Pupil's Book 6*, 2006, 46). Similarly, one Namibian textbook affirms that South Africa, which administered Namibia on behalf of Britain after WWI, in fact "continued the oppression and exploitation that the Germans had introduced and added new exploitative measures" (*Understanding History in Context. Grade 9*, 2007, 47). Not dissimilarly, textbooks from countries that had fought on the side of the Allies, such as Côte d'Ivoire, DR Congo and Sierra Leone, highlight the trampled hopes for a "softened" colonial regime and for "a greater say in the management of their own affairs", which Africans were expecting in return for their loyal support and sacrifice (*Histoire 3^e*, 1995, 66, 68; *Histoire Géographie, 3^e*, 1999, 46; also in *História da 9^a Classe*, 2014, 40; *Histoire 6^e Primaire*, 2004, 130–31; *Histoire Classes Terminales*, n.d., 168).

Finally, African textbooks also widely highlight the impact of the war experience on the growth of African nationalism and the struggle against colonial rule. They often portray WWI as a major turning point in African history on account of its having destabilized colonialism as well as awakened a "spirit of self-realisation" among Africans after their war experience of courageous combat (*Ordinary Level History*

for *Cameroon Schools*, 2006, 179). African textbooks describe WWI as a war that crushed “the myth of th[e] invincibility” of the white man (*Histoire 3^e*, 1995, 68; *Histoire Géographie, 3^e*, 1999, 46; also in *MacMillan History for Southern Africa*, 2012, 3). An Angolan text hints at the simultaneous dismantling of another myth—that of European moral superiority—by arguing that the war had further laid bare the “inhuman character of the so-called civilized” (*História da 9^a Classe*, 2014, 41).

4 Discussion of the Findings: European and African Textbooks Compared

The comparative analysis of the place of Africa in lessons on WWI in European and African textbooks allows us to assess and make sense of the extent to which historically dominant Eurocentric perspectives have ceded to postcolonial perspectives in history education. The analysis has mapped a heterogeneous landscape of cultural representations of this prominent conflict in world history, discerning several national and transnational patterns in the space and points of emphasis afforded to textbook portrayals of Africa in this war. This chapter has thereby uncovered a number of similarities in the depicted dimensions relating to Africa’s involvement in WWI as well as striking differences in the extent to which these dimensions are presented.

One trend emerging from the comparative analysis relates to the representations of the context and circumstances of Africa’s involvement in WWI. While African textbooks typically introduce the interpretation of this war as an imperial conflict which also marked the beginnings of decolonization and the end of empire, European textbooks show only limited attempts to help students locate and understand Africa’s involvement in WWI within the context of imperialism and a longstanding history of colonial subjugation. In some countries, such as France, the failure to link chapters on colonialism, which often deal with Africa, to the topic of WWI is exacerbated by the chronological structure of textbooks, which places colonialism much earlier than WWI and is

indicative of a widespread incapacity of textbooks to forge connections across thematic demarcations. Even where these themes are combined, however, as is the case in German textbooks, direct links between WWI and colonialism in Africa remain elusive. A related trend is found in the disinclination of European textbooks to link pre-WWI conflicts in Africa to WWI activities on this continent as part of their discussions of the causes and circumstances of Africa's involvement in this global war.

Another trend emerging from the analysis relates to the large exclusion of African experiences and perspectives in descriptions of the course of the conflict in European textbooks. This silence is a manifestation of a tendency among European textbooks to only partially explain the term "World War" by reducing the war's global dimension to the involvement of world powers beyond Europe, notably the United States. Many European textbooks provide details on war strategies, war fronts, the expansion of the war and the recruitment of soldiers without necessarily acknowledging the role the colonies and colonized peoples played in the events. African textbooks, conversely, give voice to the variety of combatant and non-combatant roles in which the colonial subjects served, hence providing recognition of the participation and contribution of African colonial troops within both textual and visual representations of military campaigns and battles, both in Europe and in colonial territories.

A further trend identified in this study relates to the predominantly mono-dimensional nature of the given explanations for African participation in the war. Most textbooks fail to present a complex picture of African agency as manifest in the different responses and motivations of highly heterogeneous African societies vis-à-vis recruitment into the war. As the analysis of diverse African textbooks has shown, explanations of African participation include not only the forceful imposition by the colonial powers, with textbooks across the board generally presenting African countries and peoples in a passive context, as being involved in this conflict because of their colonial status. They also include references to the voluntary participation of colonized peoples motivated by loyalty towards the metropole, desire for economic gain and/or hope for recognition. African textbooks demonstrate further opportunities for integrating different nuances of African involvement

and participation in this war, including stories of bravery, sacrifice and enormous suffering and loss, as well as of loyalty and cooperation, betrayal and resistance, and of internal unity or divisions in the response by colonial societies to European recruitment. In addition, African textbooks show efforts to include perspectives that are able to convey not only the global reach, but also the worldwide consequences of a war which extended beyond Europe. They do so by depicting Africans as active historical agents in a ravaging and exploitative war that both greatly involved and affected Africa, and which consequently marked a watershed in African history, initiating processes of both continuity and change in Africa's post-war relations to Europe. Only a minority of European textbooks show similar efforts towards incorporating African perspectives. A notable case reported in the analysis is a French textbook which, in a separate chapter, discusses the relationship between France and its colonies during WWI, the number of soldiers and workers as well as the amount of raw materials extracted from the colonies, the role of local authorities and intermediaries in supporting the recruitment of African soldiers by appealing to their honour, the hopes of these soldiers for more dignity and equality, the prejudice they faced from their French comrades, and the fading of Africans' infused beliefs in white superiority and invincibility as a result of WWI (*Histoire, 1^{re}*, 2007, 229).⁴

What the European and African textbook samples appear to have in common, however, is a general lack of attempts to facilitate complex, pluralistic and nuanced understandings of the role of the colonies in WWI. The analysis uncovers their overall limited efforts to nurture a diversified knowledge of the actors engaged on different fronts and in different capacities, of the complex constellation of the colonies' responses and their interrelations with the colonial masters, as well as of the war's varied effects and ramifications, including the colonies' persisting subjugation as well as growing self-realization. The rather simplistic approach of the textbooks to the study of WWI largely derives from their reliance on still predominantly national analytical frameworks, which are unlikely to encourage a multi-layered understanding of this historical conflict and of its local and global scope, impact, significance and implications. In this respect, this study identified a general

lack of micro-historical African perspectives conveying everyday experiences and local manifestations and ramifications of this global conflict. It also found a lack of global and transnational perspectives allowing the critical exploration of similarities and differences of experiences among and between (former) colonizers and the colonized through historical comparison while also considering these relationships through an analysis of wartime cross-border movements, contacts, and reciprocal perceptions and influences. Furthermore, the study has pointed to limited opportunities to scrutinize intercultural relations, notably by exposing the racism and prejudice that prevailed in western discourse about the colonial “other” and which largely marked African wartime experiences.

5 Conclusion

Interpreted through a critical theory and postcolonial lens, the transnational analysis of textbook representations of Africa in WWI presented in this study has revealed dynamics of knowledge and power at play via the representational discourses in contemporary European and African educational media. In this respect, the analysis points to a discursive gulf between the two continents, with textbooks either reproducing or contesting dominant, and historically hegemonic, Eurocentric discourses, which have long justified and supported unequal power relations and hierarchies between “the West and the rest” (Ferguson 2011). It has uncovered such dynamics by exposing varying cultural practices of empowerment and disempowerment expressed in textbook discourses through the (mis)recognition and (mis)attribution of voice and agency.

On the one hand, Europe has long claimed to be, and acted as, the authoritative producer of knowledge about both itself and what postcolonial theorists have widely referred to as the “subaltern other” (Spivak 1988). The cultural practices Europe seems to be pursuing do not break with this tradition by empowering “cultural others” in granting them opportunities for self-expression and self-representation. While the study has found variation in the degree to which African experiences are included in European textbooks, it illustrates a tendency among European textbook authors to privilege European experiences and

perspectives while overlooking Africa as both a significant theatre of war and a pivotal contributor to the war efforts. The analysis thus exposes the persisting Eurocentric bias inherent in the dominant European textbook representations of WWI, and in what remains unsaid and silenced. More specifically, it has exposed underlying dominant discourses on the colonizer and the colonized which evidence the predominance of European epistemology and related representational practices that at best side-line the voices, experiences, memories, knowledge and worldviews of the formerly oppressed. The findings display evidence of the formerly colonized appearing as marginalized actors, largely stripped of voice and agency, within a Eurocentric grand-narrative which thus appears to be sustaining distorted images of the (formerly) colonized as silent and passive. The noted predominant lack of engagement with African perspectives, also a manifestation of the slow adaptation of textbooks to emerging historiographical discourses, testifies to the still elusive ramifications of struggles for recognition in relation to this war in European education systems. The limited presence of such voices in textbooks may be a reflection of the marginalization of minority and diasporic groups, predominantly coming from former colonies, within institutions involved in knowledge production in multicultural Europe. More generally, the disinclination of mainstream textbooks to include the points of view of the formerly colonized can be interpreted as a cultural legacy of colonialism, which both reflects and perpetuates understandings of unequal power relations through the reproduction of discursive constructions of the world into “centre” and marginal(ized) “periphery”, and of asymmetries in recognition of this war as a global experience that touched upon the lives of millions in a multitude of ways. We therefore argue that the implications of inherently selective processes of textbook writing in relation to WWI in Europe encompass the sustaining of cultural practices of what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) has called “epistemic violence”. This refers to the continued suppression or marginalization of non-western perspectives as subaltern voices, which, by extension, is likely to result in the possible alienation of certain communities in Europe’s increasingly diverse societies.

African textbooks, on the other hand, in this respect more in line with emergent scholarship, show exemplary attempts to incorporate

the voices of Africans into representations of the latter as both greatly affected by and active historical agents of Europe's Great War as opposed to mere footnotes. In so doing, the coverage of WWI in African textbooks evinces a move towards contesting and subverting the historical "cultural hegemony" (Gramsci 1985, 2011) of Eurocentric perspectives through de-centring and re-centring historical narratives. The analysis has pointed to emerging counter-discourses in African textbooks, which show a concern for acknowledging, engaging and increasingly asserting and foregrounding the perspectives and voices of the formerly colonized. In comparison to mainstream European textbooks, the African sample presents alternative emphases, meanings and explanations of the history of WWI as viewed from the vantage point of the formerly colonized, now elevated to a self-asserted role of equally legitimate producers of knowledge. Such discourses are evidence of attempts by the formerly colonised to reclaim historical and epistemic agency, and thus ownership over their destiny. They need to be understood as part of a broader "project to dismantle the cultural and epistemological heritage of Eurocentrism" (Powell 2003, 152), which has been central to an emancipatory, nationalist politics in post-colonial Africa and related endeavours undertaken by the formerly colonized towards asserting their distinct identities.

Ultimately, this study points to the significance of critical introspection and further dialogue on the role of present-day educational media as means through which individuals and groups may be able or unable to assert their voices and gain representation within society and the larger community of nations in today's post-colonial, multicultural and globalized world. Its significance today inevitably extends beyond academia. With a wealth of new literature having emerged on WWI on the occasion of its centennial, scholarship can encourage and guide the debate on how schools should address the history of this war. For teaching this war may not only challenge bias and single perspectives but also harbours the danger of reinforcing these at a time of increasing intolerance and bigotry in the face of perceived threats resulting from processes of globalization and migration. While ostensibly ambitious in light of legitimate concerns for space constraints and content overload, the integration of multiple and global perspectives can be considered

both justifiable and desirable if one of the purposes of education today is to orient younger generations towards a more inclusive, democratic perspective in an intimately connected, yet divided, world.

Notes

1. The sample exceptionally also includes a few textbooks from the 1980s. Examples are a Belgian textbook published in 1983, selected due to the availability of a very small number of Belgian textbooks in the Dutch language, and two British textbooks published in 1987, sampled because they exclusively deal with WWI in and outside Britain.
2. The African sample, encompassing textbooks from Angola, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and South Africa, includes between one and four books from each of the above-listed countries, depending on different degrees of availability of and access to textbooks dealing with WWI. The European sample includes 19 German, 11 French, 1 Franco-German, 7 British, 9 Belgian, 8 Italian and 5 Portuguese textbooks. Note that all textbook quotations in this chapter, where necessary, were translated by its authors.
3. The first Moroccan crisis took place between 1905 and 1906 as Germany and France competed for this North African territory; the second was in 1911. After the Germans threatened France with naval force, it was decided in a conference that France would take control over Morocco while Germany was granted land in central Africa as compensation. The Sudanese crisis of 1898 was resolved through a contract between the two powers defining the border between the British Sudan and French Equatorial Africa; this peaceful solution is regarded as the basis for the later alliance between the two empires. The Second Anglo-Boer War referred to in the textbooks was fought between Great Britain and the two Boer Republics of Transvaal and Orange Free State between 1899 and 1902 and resulted in the annexation of these territories by the British Empire.
4. Another example of presenting the perspective of the colonized when teaching WWI was found in a German textbook which gives the word to Senegalese writer Cheikh Hamidou Kane (1961) to convey the view

that opting for a war alliance with France had not spared the Senegalese from being divided, colonised and conscripted into the army (*Geschichte - Geschehen* 3, 2005, 222).

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