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Grammar Schools & the 'Mayritocracy': A Critical Discourse Analysis of Social Justice in/ through Education

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Synopsis

Representing a rhetoric of meritocracy in-keeping with neoliberal logic, the endorsement of grammar schools by Theresa May has been promoted as a solution to issues of class disparity in education, where 'selection exists if you're wealthy – if you can afford to go private – but doesn't exist if you're not' (May 2016). However, this intended policy has been met with considerable resistance. Highlighting a divergence in conceptualisations of a socially just society and understandings of class inequalities, the grammar school debate is used as a prism for investigating the hegemonic discourses surrounding social justice in/ through education.

Gramscian theory is used to develop an argument for social justice, which is characterised by a complex and dialectical understanding of structure and agency; a struggle of political hegemonies. Using Fairclough's Dialectical Relational-Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis, representations of class, the State, the role of education, social actors and, ultimately, social justice in newspaper reports are critically analysed. The conclusion is drawn that, through the rationalisation of equality of opportunity, the binary distinction of social actors and the reappropriation of human rights discourses, a neoliberal discourse remains hegemonic. However, where Theresa May and her supporters have struggled to unify common sense, a strong counterhegemonic discourse of human rights does exist, which could be exploited to develop a more equitable social order; a new superstructure.

Acknowledgements

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Preface

Vicki Gardner's M.Sc. Education Dissertation research is being published posthumously in the Bristol Working Papers in Education Series.

Vicki studied at the School of Education fulltime 2016-2017. Academically, she was an outstanding student, remembered for her quick dry humour and the friendships she forged with fellow students from across the world. Vicki had hoped and the staff, who worked most closely with her had known, that the Masters programme would be the start of a long academic career. She had plans to publish an article out of her Masters dissertation. Sadly, it was not to be. In her unexpected absence, we are publishing her dissertation in its entirety not just to remember Vicki, but because it is a piece of research, which deserves wider readership.

Critical policy sociologists, worried by growing inequalities and increasing corporate interest in the English public education system, will read Gardner's work with interest. The sudden resurfacing of the grammar school debate in 2016, championed by the Prime Minister Theresa May, whose name is cheekily incorporated into the title, came as a surprise to many British education academics. Gardner states her own reasoned and unequivocal position on the 'myth of meritocracy' that underpins selective schooling very clearly. However, the main focus in this dissertation is not to argue her own position on grammar schools but rather to critically analyse the notions of social justice deployed in the popular debate triggered by May's policy. By taking a specific contemporary debate as the "prism" through which to identify and analyse enduring discourses of global reach, Gardner produced a piece of research that was relevant beyond time and place. In short, she made a contribution to theoretical scholarship on social justice in education. The sophistication and theorisation of her arguments are remarkable for a researcher in the very earliest stage of her academic career.

Gardner was centrally interested in the battle ground of ideas, ideas concerning what is a socially just education and the relationship between school and society. She viewed meritocracy as a version of "the myth of the enterprising individual" (Apple 2001, 421), an assumption that is central to the neoliberal argument for the pseudo-marketisation of public education. To understand the rules and parameters of the battlefield, she drew on Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony. Gramsci, a philosopher, sociologist, linguist and political activist, produced his most influential writing during 11 years of imprisonment by Mussolini's Fascist government. His theory of hegemony explained how political elites use cultural power, alongside violent coercion, to control the masses. Cultural hegemony is created through discourse, i.e. verbal and written texts and associated practices that carry, create and promulgate ideologies. Discourses are hegemonic when they exclude other ways of reasoning. Schools are key institutions for transmitting discourses and hence creating public consensus around the world view of the ruling class. However, Gardner also argues that education has the potential to be the site for the reversal of hegemony when it is used for the development of critical consciousness. Education then is a site of contestation, complicit in the historic formation, deconstruction and reconstruction of public consensus or common sense.

Mass media is another site of hegemonic contestation where competing ideological discourses vie to represent and shape common sense. Gardner turned to broadsheet newspapers to find texts representative of the grammar school debate. Her analysis covered a total of seven articles from publications associated with the political Left and Right (The Guardian, The Times and The Daily Telegraph) published within two separate one week periods when the grammar school debate was hitting headlines. She used the analytical tools of Fairclough's Dialectic Relational Approach to dissemble and deconstruct the intent and messages of the newspaper articles. Using these tools, Gardner identifies strategies of legitimation and interrogates how social actors are represented in the articles. For example, she showed how authors on both sides of the debate named policies after the individuals, who champion them to imply that policy positions are nothing more than a personal agenda with no basis in research evidence or relation to broader public consensus.

Gardner's analysis reveals the semiotic and deontic moves made by grammar school champions to represent them as a necessity, a democratic and counter-hegemonic redistribution of resources. She shows how proponents assert a horizon of possibilities for education in English constructed by a neoliberal world view of increasing economic competition. "Thence, the promoting message is that selective schooling is needed for every child to fulfill their potential and contribute to the knowledge economy" (p. 33). Another strategy deployed by proponents of grammar schools is to represent May and her cabinet as " 'new' intellectuals" (Gramsci 1999, 818), her 'socially representative' cabinet a contrast to David Cameron's privately-educated elite. The grammar school policy is then presented as a virtuous 'politics of interruption' (Apple 2013, 66). By contrast, Gardner argues that the central rationale of meritocracy, that it expands opportunity for low income families, neglects the systemic and sociocultural dimensions of disadvantage and hence oversimplifies social class:

> by exacting a problem-solution relationship that conceives of the problem as selection dependent on income, common sense is limited to the economic realm. (p. 40)

She finds that whilst social mobility is understood by commentators on the Right as a matter of individual human rights, on the Left it is understood as a structural issue or class formation. Both sides, however, reduce social justice to social mobility, treating the two as synonymous.

Ultimately, the discursive moves "to recontextualize concepts such as democracy, class equality and even social justice itself and, as such… disguise itself as counterhegemonic" (p. 41) did not win the grammar school policy argument in 2016-2017. Yet for intellectuals on the Left engaged in the "war of position" it was not a hopeful time. Gardner wrote her dissertation mere months after the Brexit vote in UK and the start of Donald Trump's presidency in the US. Within her dissertation, Gardner holds onto and repeatedly returns to two concepts from Gramsci's work. These tell us much about her hopes for herself and society. First is the notion of an 'organic intellectual', i.e. an intellectual engaged with civil society, affiliated with a class or group and who may assume a hegemonic or counterhegemonic stance. Gardner identifies herself as a "subaltern organic intellectual" (p. 4). The second concept is the

'cathartic moment' and captures the utopian vision that steered Gardner's work. The cathartic moment is the point where purely economic reasoning is superseded by ethical and political reasoning, so that:

> structure ceases to be an external force which crushes man …; and is transformed into a means of freedom, an instrument to create a new ethico-political form and a source of new initiatives. (Gramsci 1999, 691-2) (cited on p.15)

And so,

> the organic intellectual, be that journalists or the researcher herself - now needs to stand up from their desk and find a means of connecting this theory with practice. (p 44).

Angeline M. Barrett

November 2018

Biography

Vicki Gardner was a research associate at the School of Education, University of Bristol. In this role she worked on a review of secondary science, technology and mathematics education in sub-Saharan Africa. She completed the M. Sc. Education in 2017 specialising in Policy and International Development. Her first degree was in German and Russian languages and she worked for four and half years as a German language teacher in secondary schools in Devon and the Bristol area.

Chapter 1: Introduction

With David Cameron pitting the 'skivers' against the 'strivers' (Williams 2013) and Theresa May (2016) proposing a vision for 'a truly meritocratic Britain', the notion of social mobility through education has been reinvigorated. Paying particular attention to the grammar schools debate, I am interested in analysing how this supposition has been represented in public discourse during a time when anti-establishment sentiments and class differentiation have become ever more apparent.

1.1   Rationale

Since the latter half of the twentieth century, neoliberalism has arguably become the dominant discourse in the UK. With its claim to values of 'flexibility, openness to societal demands, incentives for innovation, and efficiency' (Verger 2012, 118), a 'culture of choice' (Ball 1993, 3) has been institutionalised, with the educational landscape increasingly claimed to be characterised by school autonomy, parental preference and diversity of provision. With the education system now explicitly subject to the disciplines of the market, the antagonism between the understanding of education as a human right as opposed to a tradeable service has been at the forefront of public, political and academic debate.

Alongside the processes of academisation and opening of free schools, the recently proposed re-establishment of grammar schools has enlivened debates on the role of education and its ability to both reproduce and overcome inequality. Whilst approximately a quarter of all secondary state school pupils attended grammar schools in the mid-1960s, this number has since declined significantly, with a total of only 167,000 pupils attending the remaining grammar schools by 2015 (Bolton 2017). During this time, a push towards comprehensivisation and the establishment of a quasi-market rendered the grammar school debate no longer relevant, as 'the wholesale reintroduction of grammar schools on a national level, mandated from a central government level… did not fit within this focus on independence and autonomy' (Morris and Perry 2017, 4). However, in a bid to rebrand the Conservative Party and to establish herself as Prime Minister following the European Union referendum, Theresa May proposed a vision of a 'truly meritocratic Britain that puts the interests of ordinary, working class people first' (May 2016), which included the proposal to

reintroduce grammar schools. Promoted as a solution to issues of class disparity in education, 'where selection exists if you're wealthy – if you can afford to go private – but doesn't exist if you're not' (May 2016), this intended policy contributes towards a rhetoric of meritocracy – a sine qua non of neoliberalism, where the 'myth of the enterprising individual' (Apple 2001, 421) is endorsed and celebrated, albeit with considerable resistance.

In reference to Gramsci's theory of *historic bloc,* Apple (1986) refers to the production and reception of national educational reports and subsequent policies as contributing to the disintegration of the social democratic consensus; 'one critical aspect in the formation of such an historic bloc is the ability of dominant groups to integrate under one discourse the perspectives of other class fractions and groups, to rearticulate these elements into a compromise under the dominant groups' own emerging tendencies' (Apple 1986, 187). Where the 'ideological blueprint' of IQ + Effort = Merit has been adopted as the ideal (Bloodworth 2016, 6), meritocratic policies are viewed as the solution to classed inequalities and social justice becomes synonymous with social mobility. However, where the government no longer creates a blueprint for schools, the question arises as to how the intended policy of grammar schools informs or constitutes such an *historic bloc*.

> 'Ideologies are representations of aspects of the world which contribute to establishing and maintaining relations of power, domination and exploitation. They may be enacted in ways of interacting… and inculcated in ways of being or identities' (Fairclough 2003, 218).

Acknowledging that ideologies are formed rather than imposed, Gramsci 'reminded us to pay close attention to two things: the very real complexities of people's understandings of everyday life; and the elements of "good sense" as well as "bad sense" embodied in these understandings' (Apple 2013, 130). The ascendance of neoliberalism has been established by engaging with, and possibly exploiting, the "good sense" of the general public. However, the debate over grammar schools attests not only to potential deviation from neoliberal discourses but also the changing role of government and governance. With critics viewing meritocracy as a prescription for social inequality, it would seem that Theresa May and proponents of grammar schools have been unable to tap into the public's "good sense"; where meritocracy is understood to 'contradict the principle of equality… no less than any other oligarchy' (Arendt 1954), the structures of the knowledge economy and neoliberal conceptions

of a socially just society are being questioned. Highlighting a divergence in conceptualisations of class, the State and democracy, the grammar school debate will thus be used as a prism for investigating representations of social justice and to discover whether meritocracy, as a form of neoliberalism, continues to be hegemonic; as Gottesman (2012, 573) states, 'Intellectual tools, such as the idea of hegemony, can be useful in illuminating the relationship between school and society and the possibilities of social change'.

1.2   Aim

To critically analyse representations of social justice in/ through education in public discourse, as highlighted by the 'grammar schools debate' in the UK context.

1.3   Research Objectives

- To review literature on the role of education in reproducing/ overcoming class inequality;

- To examine Gramsci's theory of hegemony with regard to education-based meritocracy as a form of social justice;

- To critically analyse the discourses surrounding the proposed reintroduction of grammar schools in UK newspaper articles;

- To contribute to the academic debate of hegemonic discourses surrounding social justice in/ through education.

1.4   Research Questions

- How has Theresa May's proposal of reintroducing grammar schools in the UK been presented in public discourse?

- How has social justice in/ through education been portrayed in the UK media in the coverage of the grammar schools debate?

- What are the hegemonic discourses surrounding social justice in/ through education?

1.5 Theoretical Overview

According to Gramscian theory (1999), the power of the State is assured through a process of hegemony and coercion. Positioned within civil society, education becomes part of the hegemonic apparatus and thus mediates and manages the struggle of political hegemonies through the articulation, disarticulation and rearticulation of *common sense*. In the case where *common sense* is rearticulated as knowledge of the powerful, education is able to develop a *false consciousness* and is an instrument of the State. However, through a *philosophy of praxis* education has the potential to demystify structure and agency and, in doing so, embodies powerful knowledge (Young 2013). At once a coercive and transformative force, education is thus instrumental in the formation of an *historic bloc* as well as the *war of position*.

The expansion of grammar schools, as a form of meritocracy, has been proposed as a means of confronting class disparities in education. In order to mediate the inequalities between the *classe dirigente* and *classi strumentali*, selective schooling is being promoted as a means of improving equality of opportunity and increasing social mobility (May 2016). However, informed by a reductive and essentialist understanding of class, the policy of grammar schools fails to observe the dialectic of the politics of redistribution and recognition (Fraser 1997). A functionalist perspective on achieving equality of participation and equality of outcome suppresses class consciousness (Goldthorpe 2003) and as such the expansion of selective schooling is indicative of an attempt to inculcate an *historic bloc.*

By allowing for a complex and heterogeneous notion of *common sense* that recognises the contributions of subaltern *organic intellectuals*, education may be able to circumnavigate or contest the hegemony of neoliberalism and neoliberal conceptions of social justice. However, in their definition of merit as relating to performativity, accountability and individualism, grammar schools are involved in the dispersion of 'knowledge of the powerful' (Beck 2013). By tightening the 'epistemological grip' (Amsler and Facer 2017, 1) of neoliberalism, grammar schools are a hegemonic force representative of the state.

1.6 Overview of Methodology

Citing Wodak and Meyer (2009, 7), critical discourse analysis aims 'to produce and convey critical knowledge that enables human beings to emancipate themselves from forms of domination through self-reflection… Such theories seek not only to describe and explain but also to root out a particular kind of delusion'. As such, in order to demystify hegemonic discourses of social justice in/ through education, the methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis was adopted, as it 'aims to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, constituted, legitimized, and so on, by language use (or in discourse)' (Wodak and Meyer 2009, 10).

As an embodiment of social reality(ies) as well as a site of struggle, text – specifically newspapers in this case – 'show traces of differing discourses and ideologies contending and struggling for dominance' (Wodak and Meyer 2009, 10) and therefore provides the data for exploring and determining representations of social justice in the current UK context. Using the online database Lexis®Library, an archive search was carried out, selecting national newspapers dated in the week surrounding 9 September 2016, when Theresa May announced her intention to re-establish grammar schools, and 8 March 2017, the date of Phillip Hammond's budget announcement, which allocated £320 million to grammar schools.

Fairclough's Dialectical Relational Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis provides a framework for critically analysing hegemonic discourses on social justice in/ through education in the selected newspaper reports. Adopting a realist ontology, Fairclough's concepts of *genres, discourses* and *styles* were adopted as a means of analysing the interdiscursivity of semantic relations and discourse. As Apple (2013, 33) states, '[language] can be used to describe, illuminate, control, legitimate, mobilize, and many other things' - and therefore CDA as a methodology is able to provide an insight into hegemonic (and potentially counter-hegemonic) representations of social justice.

1.7 Overview of Dissertation

Informed by Gramsci's (1999) theory of hegemony, education-based meritocracy as a form of social justice will be examined in Chapter 2. Drawing upon the Gramscian conceptualisation of the State and the role of education in the articulation, disarticulation and rearticulation of *common sense*, 'a fluid yet structured analysis of

the control of knowledge in the social order' (Gottesman 2012, 582) will be undertaken to examine the role of education in the formation of an *historic bloc* as well as the *war of position.* Thereafter, a methodological framework, which draws upon Fairclough's Dialectic-Relational Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis, will be outlined in Chapter 3, in order to explain and justify the research design for investigating hegemonic discourses of social justice in/ through education. In Chapter 4, the research findings will be presented with reference to the methodological framework and literature review. Data from the selected newspaper reports will be used to highlight and explicate the discourses surrounding selective schooling and the ensuing representations of social justice. Finally, a conclusion will be drawn in Chapter 5, which reflects on the research and suggests implications for further study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Gramsci's (1999) theory of hegemony is discussed and interpreted in this chapter as a means of developing and conveying a deeper understanding of the research question at hand. With reference to Gramsci's conceptualisations of the State, the role of education, class and 'common sense', it is argued that they actually conform to the neoliberal logic of performativity, accountability and individualism and, as such, constitute an 'historic bloc'. Though grammar schools are represented by Theresa May and her supporters as a modification of the ideological panorama, the researcher contends that they are complicit in the promotion of economic reductionism and epistemological homogeneity. According to a Gramscian perspective, the argument is thus developed, which construes grammar schools and meritocracy as State-appointed instruments in the hegemonic apparatus and thus conceives of them as socially unjust.

2.1 An Epistemological Grip of the State

'The state is the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules' (Gramsci 1999, 504).

Despite decades of uncertainty, corruption and deepening inequality as a consequence of neoliberal logic, whose reliance on the free market has resulted in multiple recessions, a societal order of human capital, trickle-down effect and public-private partnerships prevails, leading critics to lament this 'age of stupid' (Blewitt 2010, 3469). Austerity measures and the subsequent dismantling of the welfare state, alongside threats to national security, have led to an increasingly vocal anti-establishment rhetoric, though ambivalence and apathy to these appeals is still prevalent. In which case, why is it that the status quo of neoliberalism continues to thrive?

Explicating the 'epistemological grip' of neoliberalism, Amsler and Facer (2017, 1) identify three major forms of power and powerlessness: 'a hegemony of political monoculture…; the "undoing" of democratic forms of political agency…; and the "political construction of hopelessness" in challenging… [the] ideological consensus'. Similarly, albeit under a different regime, such subordination of the masses led Gramsci to theorize that a combination of force and consent is required in order to

secure political leadership and to establish 'an order in which a common social-moral language is spoken, in which one concept of reality is dominant, informing with its spirit all modes of thought and behaviour' (Femia 1981, 24). This rapprochement between the repressive and ideological – 'the twin heads of Machiavelli's centaur' (Mayo 2014, 388) – saturates the consciousness of society, thus popularising the intellectual, moral and political views of the ruling classes to the point where they become fundamental, or hegemonic.

Where 'State = political society + civil society, in other words hegemony protected by the armour of coercion' (Gramsci 1999, 532), consent is created and exerted through a dialectical and reflexive process involving 'all those private organisms' (Bates 1975, 106) belonging to civil society, such as schools, churches and the media, and public institutions, comprising of the government, police and army, defined as political society (Jones 2006, 34).

> 'The totality of forces organised by the State and by private individuals safeguard the political and economic domination of the ruling classes... entire political parties and other organisations – economic or otherwise – must be considered as organisations of political order of an 'investigational' and preventive character' (Gramsci 1999, 466).

Thereupon, the State is conceived of as 'the condensation, the crystallisation, the summation of social relations' (Mann 1984, 208), where there exists 'a dialectic between state and society, not a separation' (Moran 1998, 160).

2.2 The Role of Education in the Hegemonic Process

Defined by Gramsci (1999, 630) as the 'folklore of philosophy', *common sense* is the articulation of a worldview according to an individual's social and cultural environment; that is to say 'a way of thinking about the world that is grounded in material realities' (Jones 2006, 54). Manifested in social practices and enriched by scientific ideas and philosophical opinions, *common sense* constitutes 'a chaotic aggregate of disparate conceptions' (Gramsci 1999, 773), and is hence heterogeneous and often contradictory in nature.

Conceptualising the dyad of 'powerful knowledge' versus 'knowledge of the powerful', Young (2013) highlights the epistemological complexity inherent in *common sense* and its (perhaps even more complex) role in consolidating and/ or dismantling hegemonic power. With reference to the notion of ideological mystification, whereby 'a range of dominant institutions transmit discourses (and related practices) through

which people (of all social classes) "misrecognise" both the exploitative relations that lie at the heart of capitalism and also their own relation to them' (Beck 2013, 180), knowledge of the powerful is conceived of as an instrument of the State, where the ruling classes appropriate *common sense* in order to adjust civil society to the prevailing economic structure; as Marx and Engels (1974, 64) famously stated, 'the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas'. Conversely, powerful knowledge seeks to subvert the hegemonic depiction of *common sense,* by developing an understanding of 'the epistemic as well as the social relations of knowledge and hence "its powers"' (Young 2013, 196).

Gramsci views the construction of hegemony as an historical process, rooted in tradition and influenced by past political regimes, social stratifications, former state practices and cultural hierarchies, all of which have institutionalised unequal power relations in society. Instrumental in the diffusion and popularisation of collective orientations and political views, education thus 'plays a strong part in the process of ideological work that prefigures the transformation of the State' (Mayo 2014, 388). Accepting that the basic premise of hegemony is 'that man is not ruled by force alone, but also ideas' (Bates 1975, 351), education is positioned as fundamental to the ideological state apparatus and, by providing a link between civil society and the State, may be implicated in the formation of an *historic bloc*, that is to say 'the unity between nature and spirit (structure and superstructure), unity of opposites and of distincts' (Gramsci 1999, 337). In denying the spontaneity of consent – 'the parthenogenesis of an absolutely free, uncontaminated will' (Carlucci 2012, 5) – education is, in these conditions, not merely reflective or representative of the dominant social order; rather, it is positioned as a key actor in achieving public consensus and is therefore actively involved in the maintenance of hegemony.

Where education functions as an *historic bloc*, it is able to intervene with *common sense*, through a combination of fracturing and manufacturing of social relations and discourses, and manipulate it for the purposes of the ruling classes. In such a case, the educative role becomes 'the adapt[atation of] "civilisation" and the morality of the broadest popular masses to the necessities of the continuous development of the economic apparatus of production' (Gramsci 1999, 502). Exemplified by the 'fascinating and contradictory… ways in which dispossessed groups disarticulate

ideological positions from these positions' original site and then rearticulate them for use for their own purposes' (Apple 2015b, 173), *common sense* – as knowledge of the powerful – assures the hegemony of the neoliberal agenda by creating a *false consciousness*. By 'extend[ing] the world view of the rulers to the ruled' (Bates 1975, 106), education is associated, in this circumstance, with epistemological homogenisation and the '[prevention of] class solidarity and the formation of radically oriented counterhegemonic movements' (Apple 2015a, 311); the reproduction of injustice.

However, through its position in the 'arduous process of demystification' (Femia 1981, 56), education is also a protagonist in the formation of political divisions and cultural development existing in society. As an agent in the creation of an intellectual élite and, correspondingly, the development of a critical self-consciousness, education plays a totemic role in the passive revolution – the *war of position*. Informing the 'gradual shift in the balance of social and cultural forces' (Femia 1981, 53), education becomes instrumental to the reversal of hegemony. Opposed to the uncritical reproduction of knowledge or, in Bordieuan (1984) terms 'cultural arbitrary preferences', Gramsci (1999, 641) deduces that 'critical understanding of self takes place… through a struggle of political "hegemonies" and of opposing directions, first in the ethical field and then in that of politics proper, in order to arrive at the working out at a higher level of one's own conception of reality'. Where education embodies a *philosophy of praxis* and is characterised by powerful knowledge, the dominant conception of *common sense* may be superseded and a critical consciousness may emerge. As follows, education becomes part of the larger process of reshaping hegemonic discourses and is consequently imbued with the revolutionary potential to overcome societal injustice.

Gramsci (1999, 285) himself determines two principal routes in the assertion of hegemony:

> '1. a general conception of life, a philosophy, which offers to its adherents an intellectual "dignity" providing a principle of differentiation from the old ideologies which dominated by coercion, and an element of struggle against them;
>
> 2. a scholastic programme, an educative principle and original pedagogy which interests that fraction of the intellectuals which is the most homogeneous and the most numerous, and gives them an activity of their own in the technical field'.

The assumption, therefore, of a 'monocultural logic' (de Sousa Santos 2003) amongst civil society has been critiqued as 'an empty, abstract idea' (Carlucci 2012, 6).

Recognising that 'there does not exist an independent class of intellectuals, but every social group has its own stratum of intellectuals, or tends to form one' (Gramsci 1999, 217), a multitude of counter-hegemonic discourses is apparent and the production and preservation of a public consensus becomes an historical process characterised by struggle and compromise. With its dialectical relationship in both the formation of an *historic bloc* as well as the *war of position*, it can thus be surmised that education is a site of contestation necessary to the hegemonic process; as articulated by Stoddart (2007, 201), 'hegemony and counterhegemony exist in a state of tension; each gives shape to the other'.

> 'It is but a short step to see education as a set of institutions that are not necessarily neutral, as implicated in the reproduction and contestation of relations of dominance and subordination' (Apple 2011, 25).

Where *organic intellectuals* 'either support the existing state of affairs and hegemonic bloc…, or challenge or renegotiate the relations that keep this set of hegemonic arrangements in place' (Mayo 2014, 387), education, as a component of the economic, social and cultural apparatus of society, is understood to be involved in the construction, destruction and reconstruction of hegemony; as a creator, preserver and destroyer of the 'ideological unity of a whole social bloc' (Gramsci 1999, 634).

2.3 The Issue of Class: Education-Based Meritocracy & Social Justice

As a 'pivot around which social relations operate' (Moran 1998, 162), class is conceived of by Gramsci (1999, 202) with respect to 'the organic relations between State or political society and "civil society"'. In contradistinction to the *classe dirigente* – the ruling class – who realise historical unity in the State, the *classi strumentali* – the subaltern – 'are not unified and cannot unite until they are able to become a "State"' (Gramsci 1999, 202). As follows, class is an ontological phenomenon, which operates as a mechanism of control, whereby 'subaltern groups are always subject to the activity of ruling groups, even when they rebel and rise up' (Gramsci 1999, 207).

A 'viable and important problematik' (Goldthorpe 2010, 313), class continues to inform a structure of feudalism or social Darwinism in the neoliberal age, which is manifested and exemplified within the education system. In its (re)production of *common sense,* education is situated 'at the center of struggles over a politics of recognition' (Apple

2015a, 307), whereby the amorphous mass element is divided and categorised according to the dynamics of power. By granting particular groups status, whilst simultaneously ignoring, minimising, or marginalising others, boundaries of class, gender, race/ethnicity, sexuality, ability, religion (to name a few) may be perpetuated, negotiated or even transcended through educational policies, practices and institutions. In understanding education as both an ideological and political act – a form of 'symbolic politics' (Apple 2008, 245) – it becomes instrumental in the (trans)formation of class.

As 'the zombie stalking our classrooms' (Reay 2006), the structural realities of class have been reflected in analyses of educational attainment as well as participation in post-compulsory education (Carter-Wall and Whitfield 2012, Goldthorpe 2014, Reay 2006), and as such cannot be denied. Though the causes, effects and amplitude of class disparities are contested by practitioners, academics and policy-makers alike, such empirical evidence does suggest that 'schools are distinctly class biased, marked by an ingrained "institutional classism" working systematically through various organisational procedures and teacher expectations for the interests of some and against those of other categories of children' (Ball 2010, 157-158).

The recognition of class differentials in education has informed the recent proposal to reinstate grammar schools as a means of providing equality of opportunity for the 'hidden disadvantaged' – that is 'children whose parents are on modest incomes, who do not qualify for such benefits [as free school meals] but who are, nevertheless, still only just getting by' (May 2016). Based on a theory of education-based meritocracy, May (2016) claims that 'for far too many children in Britain, the chance they have in life is determined by where they live or how much money their parents have' and as such she aims to correct this injustice by increasing access to selective schooling for those 'from lower income households' (May 2016). The expansion of grammar school places for children from the 'just about managing' families (JAMs) relates to a 'politics of redistribution', whereby the mediation of material inequality is presumed to weaken the correlation between class origin and educational attainment. Concurrently, by replacing ascription with achievement in the belief that 'la carrière ouverte aux talents' (Young 1998, 378), it is claimed that the connection between educational attainment and class destination is strengthened. Ultimately, the overall association between

class origin and class destination is thus said to diminish; 'what is envisaged is that as we get closer to the ideal of education-based meritocracy, social mobility steadily increases and, where it doesn't it will be for legitimate 'meritocratic reasons' (Goldthorpe 2003, 235).

Such a policy could be said to adhere to a (neo)liberal explananda of class theory, whereby social justice becomes synonymous with social mobility and it is assumed that 'class formation gives way to class decomposition as mobility between classes increases and as class-linked inequalities of opportunity are steadily reduced' (Goldthorpe 2010, 312). Where the State is conceived of as 'the instrument for conforming civil society to the economic structure' (Gramsci 1999, 448), class may be defined according to monetary wealth. In such a case, the formation of the *classe dirigente* and the *classi strumentali* – or, in contemporary terms, the Plutocracy and the Precariat (Chomsky 2012, 32) – are understood to be the cause and consequence of the maldistribution of resources and opportunities or capitals. Pursuant to the logic of industrialism, the decline of class may be advanced through the reconciliation of social efficiency and social justice (Goldthorpe 2003, 235).

However, as Apple (2015a, 302) argues, a reductive understanding of class 'as a whole rather than as composed of fragmented identities' fails to acknowledge the complex and contradictory nature of power relations, structures or dynamics; such economic reductionism and class essentialism ignores 'the complexity and autonomy of cultural-ideological factors, and the difficulties of converting material presence into political power' (Moran 1998, 162). Though founded on the principles of the free market, neoliberalism extends beyond the economic realm and constitutes a paradigm, a phenomenology; as Ambrosio (2013, 328) contends, 'By harnessing cultural values and beliefs about individual initiative, self-reliance, and personal responsibility to its political agenda, the Right has successfully advanced its political project by linking the rhetoric of accountability to classical liberal values and ideals'. In reinventing education as 'an aspirational project for the self' (Reay 2013, 665), the values of performativity, accountability and individualism are promoted and regulated as a means of mediating mobility chances and classed inequalities may be elided or justified as meritocratic.

The transcendent universalist assumptions (Hewitt 1993) of behaviourist individualism and performativity that underpin meritocracy have been condemned as perpetuating and legitimating inequality (Apple 2011, Bourdieu 1998, Chomsky 1999, Lynch 2001, Reay 2012). Represented as a neoliberal policy, grammar schools are critiqued as prescribing to a 'weak' liberal definition of justice, where 'equality of opportunity is viewed as being dependent upon the existence of equal formal rights, equality of access and equality of participation' (Gewirtz 1998, 472) and as failing to confront what Lynch (2001, 407) refers to as 'the hierarchical relations of dominance and subordinancy'. As such, grammar schools are characterised by a 'decoupling of the cultural politics of recognition from the social politics of redistribution' (Fraser and Naples 2004, 1103) and amount to an *historic bloc.*

As a form of transcendent universalism, which 'applies principles of equality, rights and justice to individuals, treating their needs as commensurable and providing social provisions characterised by their sameness' (Hewitt 1997, 1 in Gewirtz 1998, 476), recognition is reduced to redistribution. Hereupon lies what Fraser (1997) terms the 'redistribution-recognition dilemma', whereby 'recognition claims… take the form of calling attention to, if not performatively creating, the putative specificity of some group and then of affirming its value… [whereas] redistribution claims… call for abolishing economic arrangements that underpin specificity' (Fraser 1997, 16).

> 'Although it is certain that for the fundamental productive classes (capitalist bourgeoise and modern proletariat) the State is only conceivable as the concrete form of a specific economic world, of a specific system of production, this does not mean that the relationship of a means to end can be easily determined or takes the form of a simple schema, apparent at first sight. It is true that conquest of power and achievement of a new productive world are inseparable, and that propaganda for one of them is also propaganda for the other, and that in reality it is solely in this coincidence that the unity of the dominant class – at once economic and political – resides' (Gramsci 1999, 304).

Where class consciousness is 'the product of an ideological struggle led by the intellectual "officers" of competing social officers' (Bates 1975, 360), the hegemony of neoliberal logic is representative of a victory of the ruling-class intellectuals according to Gramscian theory. In his discussion on the nexus between free-trade ideology and theoretical syndicalism, Gramsci (1999, 371) claims that 'the former belongs to a dominant and directive social group; the latter to a group which is still subaltern, which has not yet gained consciousness of its strength, its possibilities, of how it is to develop, and which therefore does not know how to escape from the primitivist phase'.

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In order to confront entrenched social problems and become a *philosophy of praxis*, education policies need to recognise the manipulative practices of the dominant classes inherent in today's society of 'reactionary postmodernity' (Freire 2016, 84); as Gramsci (1999, 552) states, 'The lower classes, historically on the defensive, can only achieve self-awareness via a series of negations, via their consciousness of the identity and class limits of their enemy; but it is precisely this process which has not yet come to the surface, at least not nationally.'

In order for social justice to prevail, education constitutes a 'politics of interruption' (Apple 2013, 66) or the establishment of a *cathartic moment*; 'the passage from the purely economic (or egoistic-passional) to the ethico-political moment… [so that] structure ceases to be an external force which crushes man, assimilates him to itself and makes him passive; and is transformed into a means of freedom, an instrument to create a new ethico-political form and a source of new initiatives' (Gramsci 1999, 691-692). However, by undermining the dialectic relation between cultural recognition and social inequality, selective schooling fails to recognise the socio-cultural and socio-economic tensions and complexities associated with class. In striving for 'the disappearance of ideologies and the emergence of a new history without social classes, therefore without antagonistic interests, without class struggle' (Freire 2016, 84), grammar schools limit *common sense* and disavow the development of a critical consciousness.

2.4 Grammar Schools & Definitions of Knowledge: A Modification of the Ideological Panorama?

As Beck (2013, 183) states, with reference to Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 1986), 'so-called 'high' culture derives its status not from any intrinsic characteristics but rather as a result of the distribution of power and positions within… the 'field' of culture, whereby 'cultural legitimacy' is conferred upon certain cultural objects and activities, and withheld from others'. With the 11+ positioned as a condition for entry, grammar schools prescribe to an uncritical and uniform (mis)conception of intelligence as cognitive ability, whereby knowledge is (mis)recognised as both static and objective and conforms to a neoliberal understanding of the purpose of education. With standardised tests set as an entry requirement, grammar schools become a form of *educativity* and are part of the process in the formation of the *gorilla ammaestrato*. By

diluting progressive practice and ideas and limiting access to knowledge of the powerful, grammar schools thus constitute an hegemonic – if not coercive – force.

Where knowledge is presented as an abstract, disconnected from the historico-political relations of wider society, a neoconservative epistemological stance – that is, knowledge of the powerful – becomes normative and 'education is manoeuvred into a position where it contributes to a *domestication* of the citizen – a "pinning down" of citizens to a particular civic identity' (Biesta 2011, 142). Exemplifying Apple's (2001, 415) contention that 'marketized systems in education often expressly have their conscious and unconscious raison d'être in a fear of "the other"… [and that] the differential results will "naturally" be decidedly raced as well as classed', Harris and Rose (2013) found that fewer than 7% of the pupils who were eligible for free school meals (FSMs) attended grammar schools, compared with 38% of non-FSM pupils in their case study of the education system in Buckinghamshire, England (where grammar schools have remained).

> 'While it is not preordained that those voices that will be heard most clearly are also those who have the most economic, cultural and social capital, it is most likely that this will be the case' (Apple 2008, 244)

'By accounting for knowledge entirely in terms of the interests of its originators, in effect it reduced all knowledge to knowers and the power relations between them' (Young 2013, 195), thus legitimising a foundationalist claim to knowledge and depicting the working classes as 'an unknowing uncritical tasteless mass' (Reay 2006, 295).

In their research into the opportunities and outcomes for pupils in selective LEAs, Atkinson et al. (2006) discovered a paradox, whereby children from low-income households, indicated by their eligibility for FSMs, were under-represented in grammar schools, but that for the minority, who did make the grade, the advantage this bestowed was in actual fact greater than that of more affluent children. In such a case, grammar schools could be considered as a mechanism for the emergence of the *organic intellectual*. In order to modify the *ideological panorama* of the age, that is 'to work incessantly to raise the intellectual level of ever-growing strata of the populace, in other words, to give a personality to the amorphous mass element' (Gramsci 1999, 651), Gramsci argues for the production of 'élites of intellectuals of a new type which arise directly out of the masses, but remain in contact with them' (Gramsci 1999, 652).

By developing its own *organic intellectuals*, the subordinated classes are able to direct their own ideas and aspirations in the configuration of *common sense* and thus 'the proletariat can escape from defensive corporatism and economism and advance towards hegemony' (Gramsci 1999, 133). As 'the whalebone in the corset' (Gramsci 1999, 652), meritocratic policies and practices – such as that of grammar schools – may thus be promoted as a means of rectifying issues of disparity through the creation of a new élite.

However, *organic intellectuals* may be rendered as traditional intellectuals, when '[their] activity appear[s], deceptively, to be devoid of any social moorings' (Mayo 2014, 387). If the activity of becoming socially mobile necessitates the accumulation of middle-class conceptions of economic, social and cultural capitals, then the hegemony of the dominant groups not only remains in place, but is cemented. With liberal policies bolstering and maintaining a society increasingly construed as 'open' and 'meritocratic', the working classes are encouraged to abandon revolutionary class action in favour of a more 'democratic translation of the class struggle' (Goldthorpe 2010, 313) and thus civic electoral politics are replaced by the illusion of choice through a policy of school selection. According to Reay (2013, 665), such policies - forged on the premise of social mobility - constitute 'an effective form of symbolic violence', not only as a justification for increasing inequality but also as a mechanism of disconnect between class membership and identity. As a 'wrenching process', she claims (Reay 2013, 667), social mobility 'rips working-class young people out of communities that need to hold on to them, and it rips valuable aspects of self out of the socially mobile themselves as they are forced to discard qualities and dispositions that do not accord with the dominant middle-class culture'.

Situated amongst civil society, education plays a role in the articulation, disarticulation and rearticulation of 'common sense' and is instrumental to Gramsci's fundamental 'notion of hegemony as deeply saturating the consciousness of a society' (Williams 1973, 8). By extending the worldview from the rulers – the 'classe dirigente' – to the ruled – the 'classi strumentali', class consciousness may be subverted and education may constitute an historic bloc. However, grammar schools – as a form of education-based meritocracy – are being promoted as a means of confronting classed disparities and advancing social mobility, by providing equality of opportunity. Informed by the concepts of performativity, accountability and individualism, selective schooling is however representative of neoliberal logic. By

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employing a 'politics of redistribution' in place of a 'politics of recognition' (Fraser 1997) and reframing 'powerful knowledge' to that of 'knowledge of the powerful' (Beck 2013), grammars are complicit in the suppression of class consciousness and are therefore a form of social repression rather than social justice.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, the research design for answering the question, 'What are the hegemonic discourses surrounding social justice in/ through education?' is outlined. Following a detailed explanation of the data selection process, Fairclough's Dialectical Relational Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis is interpreted by the researcher. With respect to 'genres', 'discourses' and 'styles', a framework for the analysis of semantic relations is then explicated. In applying this framework to selected newspaper articles on the grammar school debate, the researcher intends to demystify both hegemonic and counterhegemonic representations of class, the State, the role of education, social actors and, ultimately, social justice. Thereafter, ethical issues and considerations are discussed.

3.1   Epistemology of Critical Discourse Analysis

> 'Between the organic public sociologist and a public is a dialogue, a process of mutual education… The project of [organic] public sociologies is to make visible the invisible, to make the private public, to validate these organic connections as part of our sociological life' (Burawoy 2005, 8).

Through understanding that 'the foundation of a directive class is equivalent to the creation of a *Weltanschauung*' (Gramsci 1999, 711), the unveiling of ideology is necessary and vital to the elimination of class struggle; as Apple (1971, 38) proclaims, 'Yet it is crucial to remind ourselves that while, say, Marx felt that the ultimate task of philosophy and theory was not merely to 'comprehend reality' but to change it, it is also true that according to Marx revolutionizing the world has as its very foundation an *adequate understanding* of it'. Adopting a critical research position, a process of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) will be undertaken by the researcher as a means of explaining, interpreting and critiquing hegemonic representations of social justice in/ through education in a bid to contribute towards the advancement of both a politics of redistribution and a politics of recognition, by 'bear[ing] witness to negativity' (Apple 2015b, 177) and highlighting both contradictions and spaces of possible action. As Gramsci (1999, 410-411) states:

> '… the most important observation to be made about any concrete analysis of the relations of force is the following: that such analyses cannot and must not be ends in themselves, but acquire significance only if they serve to justify a particular practical activity, or initiative of will. They reveal the points of least resistance, at which the force of will can be most fruitfully applied; they suggest immediate tactical operations; they indicate how a campaign of political agitation may best be launched, what language will best be understood by the masses'.

3.2   Data Collection & Sample Selection

'In many societies today, it is the popular media that attempts such an integration of the diverse strands of common sense… for Gramscian analysis, such condensed expressions of common sense are a cynical exercise in leadership, since they simply mimic the unevenness of popular consciousness with the intention of shaping its 'crudely neophobe and conservative' attitudes in a politically conservative direction' (Jones 2006, 54).

Though 'any text can be regarded as interweaving 'ideational', 'interpersonal' and 'textual' meanings [and] their domains are respectively the representation and signification of the world and experience, the constitution (establishment, reproduction, negotiation) of identities of participants and social and personal relationships between them, and the distribution of given versus new and foregrounded versus backgrounded information' (Fairclough 2013b, p.94), the critical analysis of newspaper articles has been deemed most appropriate for this research. Ascribing to the Gramscian notion of the *organic intellectual*, education policy is developed and enacted not only by practitioners, academics and policy-makers, but also by a broader array of stakeholders and cultural workers. Where it is acknowledged that 'civil society is the sphere in which intellectuals operate, whether in cooperation with the state or in opposition to it… whatever "ethical" content a state may have is to be found in this sphere, not within the state proper' (Bates 1975, 357), the press operates simultaneously as an architect and as a mediator in the formation of the state apparatus, of which education policy is undeniably a component.

In understanding the language of the mass media 'as a site of power, of struggle and also as a site where language is often apparently transparent' (Wodak and Meyer 2009, 12), newspaper reports are representative of *common sense* and function as both a coercive and hegemonic actor in the formation of the State; to cite Paltridge et al. (2014, 105), the media operates as 'a site where ideological discourse is used to construct social reality(ies) and shape public opinion through its opinion-making and shaping role'.

In order to look at texts from a representational point of view, it is necessary to analyse articles from the same time period covering the same event; as Fairclough (2003, 136) states, 'Rather than seeing such a procedure as comparing the truth about an event with how it is represented in particular texts, one can see it in terms of comparison between different representations of the same or broadly similar events'. As such, an archive search was carried out, using the university-recommended database

Lexis®Library, in order to select newspapers dated in the week surrounding 9 September 2016, when Theresa May announced her intention to re-establish grammar schools, and 8 March 2017, the date of Phillip Hammond's budget announcement, which allocated £320 million to grammar schools. The responses to these two events are expected to provide an insight into how social justice in/ through education is represented within the wider, civil society at a time when a renewed focus by the Conservative Party on meritocracy has been declared as the preferred form of social justice. In analysing the responses to two different social events that occurred six months apart, it is hoped that developments in the representations of social justice may be observed as the debate around grammar schools has unfolded over the course of Theresa May's inaugural leadership.

Within these timeline restrictions, the Boolean query with the term 'grammar' was used in order to find national newspaper articles in the UK. So as to ascertain that the data found is representative of a debate, a further specification was made with regard to the type of newspapers selected. With their dominance of soft topics and prominence of visual elements (Uribe and Gunter 2004), tabloid newspaper sources were removed from the data set and broadsheet newspapers were selected instead. Additionally, articles with fewer than ten results for the Boolean query 'grammar' were excluded, as a means of ensuring that the focus is centred on the aforementioned events and the development of the proposed grammar school policy. Duplicated articles appearing in several search result lists along with identical articles in multiple newspapers were discarded and reports from magazines, local newspapers and peer commentaries were also excluded, since their political stance cannot be clearly determined.

Thereafter, the resulting listed items were scanned for suitability of topic, before a more calculated selection of data was able to take place. In total, seven newspaper reports were selected from three different broadsheets; The Daily Telegraph, The Guardian and The Times, each of which correspond to differing points on the political compass. As a consequence of their affiliations with different political parties, the articles selected diverge in their stances on the reintroduction of grammar schools and the establishment of a meritocracy. The methods of data collection and selection are therefore designed so as to include the differing representations of the State and social justice in/ through education within hegemonic discourses.

The newspaper reports analysed are outlined below:

(Hope)	The Daily Telegraph	8th September 2016	
(Hurst)	The Times	17th March 2017	*Henceforth, collectively referred to as the 'proponents'*
(Montgomerie)	The Times	8th September 2016	
(Rayner)	The Daily Telegraph	7th March 2017	
(Collins)	The Times	16th September 2016	*Henceforth, collectively referred to as the 'opponents'*
(Weale)	The Guardian	8th September 2016	
(Weale)	The Guardian	9th March 2017	

3.3 Fairclough's Dialectical-Relational Approach: *Discourses, Genres & Styles*

'The whole of language is a continuous process of metaphor, and the history of
semantics is an aspect of the history of culture; language is at the same time a living
thing and a museum of fossils of life and civilisations' (Gramsci 1999, 814)

As a 'metalanguage that instruct[s] people how to live as people' (Thrift 2005, 24), discourse is both socially constitutive and socially conditioned. Accordingly, discursive practices have the ability to produce, reproduce, negotiate and challenge power relations in ideological processes and ideological struggle; as Fairclough (2013, 130) states, 'Discourse is itself a sphere of cultural hegemony, and the hegemony of a class or group over the whole society or over particular sections of it… is in part a matter of its capacity to shape discursive practices and orders of discourse.'

In adopting a realist ontology, a dialectical view of the relationship between structure and agency is taken, whereby social changes internalise and are internalised by changes in discourses (Fairclough 2012, 452-453). Fairclough's Dialectical-Relational Approach (DRA) to CDA conceives of the production and interpretation of text as an articulation of order(s) of discourse, where elements of social practices are intertwined and dialectically-related; the production and interpretation of a text is interdiscursive, in that it is the articulation and amalgamation of the particular discourse, to which it belongs. Fairclough differentiates between discourse as semiosis – that is to say 'the

broadly semiotic elements of social life' (Fairclough 2012, 453) and *discourse(s),* which he defines as 'a category for designating particular ways of representing particular aspects of social life' (Fairclough 2012, 453). The foundation of Fairclough's approach to CDA rests on the belief that the dialectical relationship between semiosis and social practices is evident not only in *discourses*, but also in *genres* – as a part of the social activity – and *styles* – in the constitution of identities (Fairclough 2012, 454)

When analysing a text in terms of *genre*, 'we are asking how it figures within and contributes to social action and interaction in social events' (Fairclough 2003, 65). Individual *genres* are differentiated with regards to Activity, Social Relations, and Communication Technology, though these are not necessarily always well-defined; rather, *genres* conform to various levels of abstraction and may be blended, or 'disembedded' within a text (Fairclough 2003, 67-70). With a generic structure that routinely stages events according to the generic structure of 'headline + lead paragraph (summarizing the story) + 'satellite' paragraphs (adding detail)' (Fairclough 2003, 17) and a marked preference for narrative as *pre-genre,* the Activity of news reports does have a tendency towards an 'explanatory intention', which attempts 'to make sense of events by drawing them into a relation which incorporates a particular point of view' (Fairclough 2003, 85). As such, *genres* – that is, text as action – 'are important in sustaining the institutional structure of contemporary society' (Fairclough 2003, 32) and thus are pivotal in the maintenance of hegemony.

Discourses, or text as representation, pertain to the Gramscian definition of *common sense,* in that they are often in dialogue, or even competition, with one another and usually hybrid and contradictory in nature; 'in any text we are likely to find many different representations of aspects of the world, but we would not call each separate representation a separate discourse… A particular discourse can… generate many specific representations' (Fairclough 2003, 124). As 'nodal points in the dialectical relationship between languages and other elements of the social' (Fairclough 2003, 126), *discourses*, like *genres*, depict the processes and relations of the social world differently in accordance with the group of people and the social position to which they are affiliated, be that the *classe dirigente* or the *classi strumentali*; specific *discourses* 'lexicalize' the world in distinct ways so as to represent the social world from a particular perspective or point of view. As follows, *discourses* are complicit in the

processes of classification that control and regulate social relations and interactions (Fairclough 2013, 189). With reference to Laclau and Mouffe (1985), Fairclough (2013, 188) suggests that texts, as a form of social interaction, are 'an ongoing work of articulation and disarticulation'; through the simultaneous operations of a 'logic of difference' and a 'logic of equivalence', social groups, institutions and activities may be differentiated and/ or subverted in order to create a specific Bordieuan (1989)'vision' or 'division' of world, otherwise known as hegemony .

Through its definition as 'the means of expression and of knowledge' (Gramsci 1999, 172), language, as a form of exchange, becomes a representation of the Self and thereupon *discourses* are 'inculcated as ways of being, as identities' (Fairclough 2002, 164). Fairclough (2003, 160) defines the 'representational' and 'identificational' meanings inherent in texts as *styles*, arguing that 'what people commit themselves to in texts is an important part of how they identify themselves' (Fairclough 2003, 164); the polemic and dialogic nature of texts is evident in *semiosis* through expressions of modality and evaluation, due to the fact that they connote the author's relationship with respect to truth, value and obligation (Fairclough 2003, 164). In the words of Gramsci (1999, 629):

> 'If it is true that every language contains the elements of a conception of the world
> and of a culture, it could also be true that from anyone's language one can assess
> the greater or lesser complexity of his conception of the world'.

This is of particular pertinence in the study of class consciousness, which, as a form of self-consciousness, is not only 'a precondition for social processes of identification, the construction of social identities' (Fairclough 2003, 160) but also instrumental in the *war of position* and the contestation and eventual displacement of hegemonic practices and ideologies. As social identities are construed according to their relationship with structure and agency, situated agents may also be limited and constrained by *styles,* under which circumstances texts are associated with the 'epistemological grip' of the State and knowledge of the powerful*.*

3.4   DRA Framework for Data Analysis

A three-dimensional method of discourse analysis, in accordance with DRA, will be undertaken, which will include 'linguistic *description* of the language text, *interpretation* of the relationship between the (productive and interpretative) discursive processes and the text, and *explanation* of the relationship between the discursive processes and

social processes' (Fairclough 2013, 132). In recognition of the dialectical relationship between text, discourse practice and sociocultural practice, it is understood that 'the nature of the discourse practice of text production shapes the text, and leaves 'traces' in surface features of the text; and the nature of the discourse practice of text interpretation determines how the surface features of a text will be interpreted' (Fairclough 2013, 132). Pertaining to the concept of the 'hermeneutic circle' (Wodak 2011, 624) for the interpretation of textual meanings, a systematic and critical investigation of the interdiscursive connections between semiosis and social practice in the context of *genres, discourses* and *styles* will be deployed, so that the 'reshaping of subjectivities' (Fairclough 2013, 128) may be revealed.

Where 'every such system of authority attempts to establish and to cultivate the belief in its legitimacy' (Weber 1978, 213), various discursive methods may be utilised as a means of authorising and naturalising specific relations, procedures and actions. With reference to Van Leeuwen, Fairclough (2003, 98) identifies four strategies of legitimation:

- '*Authorization*

  Legitimation by reference to the authority of tradition, custom, law, and of persons in whom some kind of institutional authority is vested;

- *Rationalization*

  Legitimization by reference to the utility of institutionalized action, and to the knowledges society has constructed to endow them with cognitive validity;

- *Moral Evaluation*

  Legitimation by reference to value systems;

- *Mythopoesis*

  Legitimation conveyed through narrative.'

Though legitimation strategies are not necessarily explicit within a text, they may be realised semiotically in their references to authority and utility; as Gramsci (1999, 626) states, 'Language… is a totality of determined notions and concepts and not just of words grammatically devoid of content' and accordingly textual analysis is a substantial resource for researching the justification of a particular worldview or ideology.

Although the media often professes to be objective and attempts to present its reporting of social events as neutral, transparent and factual, CDA – and DRA in particular – contests such an assertion in its definition of discourse as socially

consequential and contends that contemporary culture (of which the media is indubitably a constituent) functions, at least in part, as a 'promotional culture'.

> 'News is making stories out of series of logically and chronologically related events. One way of seeing news is as a form of social regulation, even a form of violence: news reduces complex series of events whose relationship may not be terribly clear to stories, imposing narrative order on them… Producing news stories is more fundamentally a matter of construing what may be fragmentary and ill-defined happenings as distinct and separate events, including certain happenings and excluding others, as well setting these constructed events into particular relations with each other' (Fairclough 2003, 84-85).

By recognising that interdiscursive relations between *genres, discourses* and *styles* are realised in semantic relations, be they Causal (Reason, Consequence and Purpose); Conditional; Temporal; Additive; Elaboration; Contrastive/ Concessive (Fairclough 2003, 89), which in turn are characterised by particular patterns of grammatical structures and lexical relations, the researcher will be able to discern the 'promoting message' of a text, which Fairclough (2003, 113) interprets, with respect to Wernick's (1991) view, as 'one which simultaneously represents (moves in place of), advocates (moves on behalf of), and anticipates (moves ahead of) whatever it is to which it refers'. For example, the following report represents May's policy as lacking, advocates for improved access to education, but anticipates that grammar schools will not fulfil their goal.

> 'Of course, the argument will be that the 'new grammars' will be different (ELABORATIVE) and (somehow) give greater access to children from more deprived backgrounds. (CONTRASTIVE) Yet there are no details of the mechanisms that could be put in place (PURPOSE) to prevent them having the same access issues as the existing schools' (Weale 2017)

As a form of social regulation, the media plays an active role in the formulation of knowledge of the powerful and the institution of state hegemony and, ergo, is involved in the processes of marginalisation, subordination and class formation. Narratives, of which newspaper reports are an exemplar, are inclined to present details about social events using Additive, Elaboration and Temporal relations and consequently clauses are usually paratactically related through the use of coordinating conjunctions (Fairclough 2003, 87-92). A prevalence of parataxis is indicative of an hortatory report, which Fairclough (2003, 96) describes as 'descriptions with a covert prescriptive intent, aimed at getting people to act in certain ways on the basis of representations of what is' and may be seen as the textual enactment of hegemony. Pertaining to 'the new global order', such hortatory reports portray the socio-economic order as presupposed; 'an unquestionable and inevitable horizon which is itself untouchable by

policy and narrowly constrains options' (Fairclough 2003, 95). This 'logic of appearances' is often betrayed in its depiction of the 'problem-solution' relation, which situates processes of change within 'a timeless, ahistorical present' (Fairclough 2013, 247) and uses depoliticised and technological discourses to construe statements about the new economy 'categorically and authoritatively as unmodalised truths' (Fairclough 2013, 247).

The modality of a clause or sentence signifies the author's values and judgements and connotes the author's commitment to what is true and what is necessary. Distinguished as either ''epistemic' – the modality of probability – or 'deontic' – the modality of necessity and obligation' (Fairclough 2003, 167-168), the modality of a sentence will be analysed with reference to speech functions and types of exchange. In the case of epistemic modality, the primary speech functions of Statement and Question are employed as a form of Knowledge Exchange, whereas Demands and Offers distinguish the Activity Exchange inherent in deontic modality. The modalisation of speech functions, which may involve the use of modal verbs, modal adverbials or participial adjectives, acts as 'an intermediate between Assertion and Denial' (Fairclough 2003, 168), or prescriptions and proscriptions, and signals degrees of certainty or doubt in the author's commitment to truth and obligation. For example, in reporting that 'the priority locations *should* be poorer urban neighbourhoods' (Montgomerie 2016), the author's commitment to obligation is median, whereas in the statement 'it's *certainly* true there will be less pressure on individual schools' (Weale 2016), the reporter's commitment to truth is high.

These relations to truth and obligation, or values, link to the concept of text as identity, or *styles,* and will be determined by focussing on the organisation of 'realis' statements, 'irrealis' statements and evaluations. Such grammatical metaphors, or 'process metaphors' (Graham 2001), have the power to present potentiality as actuality and enable participants in language to act simultaneously throughout the antithetical but overlapping realms of human experience: 'the abstract world of relations' (being); 'the world of consciousness' (sensing); and 'the physical world' (doing) (Graham 2001, 767-768). The slippage between fact and value, or fact and prediction – 'the movement of 'the 'is' of the economic to the 'ought' of the political' (Fairclough 2013, 247), characteristic of hortatory reports concerning the 'new world

order' – may be instated in the blending of statements of fact (realis) with predictions and hypothetical statements (irrealis) and may function as a means of abstraction. Similarly, evaluations make declarations on what is 'desirable or undesirable; good or bad' (Fairclough 2003, 164) and are able to camouflage Knowledge Exchange as Activity Exchange; 'values are motives for action, and while there is clearly a difference between Demands and evaluations, there is a sense in which the latter covertly invite action as mere statements of fact would not' (Fairclough 2003, 112). For example, in his assessment of private education, Montgomerie (2016) blurs fact and evaluation and, in doing so, calls the author to reject the dissolution of public schools:

> 'We could order the wealthy to stop spending their money on their children and become more hedonistic (IRREALIS: HYPOTHETICAL) … As well as being totalitarian (EVALUATION DISGUISED AS REALIS STATEMENT), such a prohibition would only repeat the error (IRREALIS: PREDICTION) … We would destroy another successful part of British education (IRREALIS: PREDICTION).

In order to circumvent certain semantic elements such as tense and modality, the grammatical metaphors of passivation and nominalisation may also be exploited as a means of presenting processes as entities; 'by deploying *process metaphor* and by exercising the *potentiality* embedded in certain nominals, such as *opportunities*, policy authors strenuously, though almost invisibly, exercise the tense system to portray future and imagined states as if they actually existed in the here-and-now' (Graham 2001, 767). Additionally, these grammatical structures exclude the subjects of social events and, as a form of generalisation and abstraction, are subsequently involved in the erasure or even suppression of difference and the obfuscation of structure and agency (Fairclough 2003, 144). The representation of social actors will be analysed according to the following variables, as identified by Fairclough (2003, 145):

- 'Inclusion/ exclusion: suppression
   backgrounding;

- Pronoun/ noun;

- Grammatical role: as a Participant in a clause
   within a Circumstance
   as a Possessive noun or pronoun;

- 'Activated'/ 'passivated';

- Personal/ impersonal;

- Named/ classified;

- Specific/ generic'.

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As illustrated in the sentence below, the agency of middle-class parents in the decision to close grammar schools is contrasted with that of Margaret Thatcher through the analysis of the representation of social actors:

> 'Grammars… were closed by Margaret Thatcher (NAMED AFFECTED PASSIVATED ACTOR) because of middle-class parents (NOUN ACTIVATED CLASSIFIED SPECIFIC ACTOR) complaining to local authorities' (Collins 2016)

The inclusion, exclusion and prominence of social events and the social actors involved may omit responsibility and elide social division. In such a circumstance, texts constitute a coercive force and may be conceived of as 'part of the apparatus of governance' (Fairclough 2003, 85); the mystification of class consciousness and denial of contingency in order to conceal social hierarchies and social distance. With respect to political hegemony, Fairclough references Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) theory of a 'logic of difference' and a 'logic of equivalence', which he considers 'an aspect of the continuous process of classification' (Fairclough 2003, 88). These systems of classification – ''di-visions' through which people continuously generate 'visions' of the world' (Fairclough 2003, 130) – are operationalised through the semiotic processes of hyponymy (meaning inclusion), synonymy (meaning identity) and antonymy (meaning exclusion). For example, in reporting on the critique of private education as inequitable, Montgomerie (2016) simultaneously establishes a logic of equivalence and a logic of difference in the following quote:

> 'We would destroy another successful part of British education which is so important to national competitiveness, (CONTRASTIVE) while doing nothing to make the other parts of the system better'

By equating success with national competitiveness and differentiating the success of the private sector from the failure of the state sector, a distinction is made, whereby those that attend public school are better able to contribute towards national development than those that do not.

3.5   Ethical Issues & Considerations

As the data collected is in the public domain, neither issues of informed consent nor data storage are applicable with regards to ethical considerations in this research. However, it is important to note that the researcher intends to be inclusive in the data collection procedure and it is for this reason that the database Lexis®Library was used as it enabled all UK national broadsheet newspapers will be included in the search, regardless of the researcher's personal reading preferences. Additionally, in using the

simple Boolean query of 'grammar' it is assured, to the best of the researcher's ability, that data is neither omitted nor distorted so as to give preference to any one newspaper or point of view.

In spite of the researcher's preference for specific newspapers in her personal life, all data collected will be treated equally. All newspapers will be treated fairly, sensitively, and within an ethic of respect and freedom from prejudice regardless of political affiliation, academic status, cultural identity or any other significant difference. Robust analytical tools and techniques within the context and boundaries of Fairclough's Dialectical-Relational Approach to CDA will be employed by the researcher. According to Wodak and Meyer (2009, 32), the concept of context should take four different levels into account:

1. 'The immediate language – or text-internal co-text;

2. The intertextual and interdiscursive relationship between utterances, texts, genres and discourses;

3. The extralinguistic (social) level… [i.e.] 'context of situation'…;

4. The broader socio-political and historical contexts'

By referencing all four levels of context and evaluating the findings from these different positionings, the risk of bias should be minimised. Though the researcher recognises that her position on grammar schools is somewhat skewed, having attended one herself, this research is not informed by an autobiographical tale of personal social mobility. Rather, in utilising academic literature and theory, the inferences drawn from the findings, as well as the data itself, will be reliable, valid and generalizable.

However, the researcher recognises that objectivity is necessarily unachievable by means of CDA, as 'each 'technology' of research must itself be examined as potentially embedding the beliefs and ideologies of the analysts and therefore prejudicing the analysis towards the analysts' preconceptions' (Wodak and Meyer 2009, 32). As such, the researcher realises the importance of reflexivity in the reporting of the research and will therefore be open about her own position and value basis. The researcher endeavours to communicate the findings, and the practical significance of the research, in a clear, straightforward fashion and in language judged appropriate to the intended audience. The trustworthiness of the research and the researcher herself

will be ascertained through ensuring that the chain of reasoning is transparent and visible in the report.

Pursuant to Fairclough's Dialectical Relational Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis, the interdiscursive relations between semiosis and discourse will be analysed and evaluated, using the following checklist:

- *Hyponymy, synonymy and antonymy and the logic of equivalence/ difference;*
- *Semantic relations between clauses and parataxis/ hypotaxis;*
- *Knowledge or Activity Exchange, through the blending of irrealis and realis statements, evaluations, and modalisation;*
- *Grammatical metaphors and the problem-solution relationship;*
- *Strategies for legitimation;*
- *Passivation and nominalisation and the representation of social actors.*

Through an analysis of these features in the texts, the hortatory intent and promoting message of the reports may be identified and the hegemonic discourse(s) of social justice in/ through education may be revealed.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

The hegemony of neoliberalism in the newspaper reports supporting grammar schools is made apparent in the identification of a problem-solution relationship, the classification of social actors and the moral evaluation of selective schooling. However, the hortatory intent of proponents, who promote the logic of neoliberalism as requisite and just, is refuted by both Weale (2016, 2017) and Collins (2016), who oppose the expansion of selective schooling on the basis that it is harmful to the principles of liberal egalitarianism. As such, a binary differentiation of social justice is apparent, with the individual social mobility rhetoric of neoliberalism wrestling with a human rights discourse, which represents a structural understanding of social mobility. Throughout this chapter, these opposing discourses are explicated and analysed with reference to the research data to answer the research question, 'What are the hegemonic discourses surrounding social justice in/ through education?'

4.1 The Problem-Solution Relationship: Situating Grammar Schools within the Knowledge Economy

As is so often the case in policy texts, Theresa May's speech announcing the expansion of selective schooling is built upon the 'problem-solution relationship', where the problem is identified as unequal access to quality education as a result of the fact that 'selection exists if you're wealthy – if you can afford to go private – but doesn't exist if you're not' (May 2016) and the solution is the broadening of selection, which 'giv[es] our most academically gifted children the specialist and tailored support that can enable them to fulfil their potential' (May 2016). In his report on May's announcement, Hope (2016) endorses this diagnostic equation and, with 'characteristics of both the 'moral tale' and the 'cautionary tale'' (Fairclough 2003, 99), legitimises the reintroduction of grammar schools through mythopoesis. Using empirical evidence to authorise the argument that unequal access to education is the result of catchment areas and its consequent effects on the property ladder, Hope (2016) warns that the best state schools have become 'the preserve of wealthy families' and prescribes increased access to selective schooling as the solution.

Though reporting some six months later, Rayner (2017) employs a similar tactic in his headline to conclude that a reversal of the ban of grammar schools would allow the

education system to become more inclusive. The lack of inclusivity and meritocracy in education is represented as a failure to compete nationally within the 'the unquestionable and inevitable horizon' (Fairclough 2003, 95) of the new world order. An extensive use of nominalization and stative verbs with regard to the problem of '*selection* by house price' (Hope 2016) succeeds in presenting the current socioeconomic and sociocultural order, where the education system is characterised by '"the brutal and unacceptable" truth of selection by income' (Rayner 2017), as a given. Positioned within the globalised world, the exclusivity of the current education system is presented as contrary to national development, as evidenced in Rayner's (2017) citation of May (2016):

> 'If we are to give our children and grandchildren a fair chance to succeed in an ever more competitive world, we have to build a future where every child can access a good place.'

Using a process metaphor to represent the future as an 'ever more competitive world', and thus construe times as spaces (Graham 2001, 768), the reinstatement of grammar schools is promoted as contingent for the improved access to quality education and, in turn, the future success and advancement of the nation. Likewise, Hurst (2017) states that grammars will be expected 'to support more able students and... raise standards and the aspirations of children and parents' in low-income areas in particular, whilst Montgomerie (2016) evaluates selective schooling as a 'successful part of British education', which he argues is instrumental to 'national competitiveness'. Representing grammar schools as '*beacons* of academic excellence' (Montgomerie 2016), envisages them as leading the country through an anticipated future of global threats and obstacles. Thence, the promoting message is that selective schooling is needed for every child to fulfil their potential and contribute to the knowledge economy; 'the implication is that certain good things will happen if 'we' do implement the 'inevitable' policies, and certain bad things will happen if 'we' don't' (Fairclough 2003, 99).

The incumbent Conservative cabinet is purported to be 'more socially representative' (Montgomerie 2016) than before, with the inference made that grammar schools enabled many ministers, including the prime minister herself, to become socially mobile by providing them with equality of opportunity. It is claimed that 'today, without a thousand grammar schools competing with them, feepaying schools… dominate the

top echelons of British society', which are defined using a logic of equivalence as 'top judges and military officers', 'leading doctors' and 'prominent print journalists', and consequently the expansion of selection is rationalised using the argument of performativity. The increased competition in education as a result of recent reforms is reported to have minimised the attainment differentials in the private and state sector, and it is predicted that 'as time goes on we may see… that medicine, the military and the law are catching up with Theresa May's cabinet' (Montgomerie 2016). The slippage between fact and prediction, supported by a pattern of elaborative and additive semantic relations, has the hortatory intent of persuading the audience of a need for increased selection and increased competition in education. This blurring of realis and irrealis statements is also evident in the simulated dialogue at the end of Hurst's (2017) report, for example in the response, 'Only 3 per cent of their grammar school pupils are entitled to free school meals so this would represent a big and radical change'. With evaluations disguised as Statements, the hortatory report conceals deontic modality as epistemic, and thus the call for transformation is inferred as a truth.

According to Apple (2008, 244-245), 'the language of educational reform is always interesting. It consistently paints a picture that what is going on in schools now needs fixing, is outmoded, inefficient or simply 'bad'. Reforms will fix it. They will make things 'better'.' Testifying to this statement, the grammar school policy is lexicalised in such a way so as to give it the appearance of being progressive; an 'element of selection' becomes a prerequisite for 'a 21st century education system' (Hope 2016) and a 'new generation' of grammar schools is deemed to be the 'next step' towards 'build[ing] a school system that works for everyone' (Rayner 2017). With concerns over the nation's economic status following the results of the European Union referendum, grammar schools are endorsed as having revolutionary potential; as 'a shake-up' (Hurst 2017) or 'an overhaul' (Rayner 2017) of a failing system and a movement towards inclusivity and meritocracy.

Whilst the struggle to deal 'with considerable change in an education landscape that is continuing to evolve' (Weale 2017) is acknowledged, neither Weale (2016, 2017) nor Collins (2016) consider the expansion of selective schooling to be an improvement of the education system; rather selection itself is problematised as a potential mechanism in the production of inequality. In contrast to proponents' representations

of selective schooling as a progressive and modern solution, Weale (2016) portrays grammar schools as retrograde:

> 'The prime minister has said she wants to create a new generation of grammar schools, arguing that selective schools could return to British education and make the system more inclusive, rather than exclusive'

The reinstatement of grammar schools is no longer referred to as 'tak[ing] the next step' (Rayner 2017), but rather as a 'return' to a system, whose remnants are struggling 'to improve social diversity in their intake' (Weale 2016), whilst Collins (2016) denounces the policy as an 'exhumation'. In retorting, 'The pertinent response to Mrs. May is not hysteria about a return to the 1950s but simply this: is that all you've got?' (Collins 2016), it is clear that the regressive qualities of grammar schools are, however, not the primary concern. Instead, Theresa May's announcement is represented as an obligation in the game of politics, where the 'sorry policy' of grammar schools is saddled to the 'grand vision' of meritocracy.

4.2 The Classification of Social Actors & Competing Concepts of Social Justice

Support or opposition to the grammar school proposal is represented largely, though not exclusively, as aligning with political party affiliation and consequently the 'Left' and 'Right' are pitted against one another. This binary distinction is a form of classification and has a significant impact in how or whether political processes and relations are represented, understood and acted upon (Fairclough 2003, 88); the proliferation of difference establishes particular boundaries and insulations between discourses (Fairclough 2013, 185) and, in doing so, plays a part in shaping or even subverting *common sense*.

Championing both the policy and the incumbent Conservative government, Montgomerie (2016) represents grammar schools as a counter-hegemonic movement, which is antagonistic to the political hegemony of the two dominant 'socialist' parties; 'While two thirds of parents would welcome the opportunity to send their child to a grammar school, Labour and the Liberal Democrats are *united* in opposing them'. Theresa May is represented as an activated actor, struggling against the political forces of the 'Left', who hold a majority in the House of Lords, to improve equality and access in education. Furthermore, May is depicted as being in direct

opposition to the previous prime minister, David Cameron (Montgomerie 2016), who approved of the ban of grammar schools. As such, May and her 'socially representative' cabinet are construed as a rupture with the old system, which was dominated by a privately-educated élite, and grammar schools are presented as a 'politics of interruption' (Apple 2013, 66).

> 'Every new social organism (type of society) creates a new superstructure whose specialised representatives and standard-bearers (the intellectuals) can only be conceived as themselves being 'new' intellectuals who have come out of the new situation and are not a continuation of the preceding intellectual milieu. If the 'new' intellectuals put themselves forward as the direct continuation of the previous 'intelligentsia', they are not new at all… but are a conservative and fossilised left-over of the social group which has been historically superseded' (Gramsci 1999, 818)

In contrast, the former Labour MP Tony Crosland is portrayed as a hypocrite, due to his having capitalised on the opportunity to attend a private school and yet denying others that same privilege; it is his 'ruinous reign' that is held to account for the ban on state selective schooling. Opening with the quote, 'If it's the last thing I do, I'm going to destroy every f***ing grammar school in England. And Wales. And Northern Ireland' (Montgomerie 2016), the one-time Secretary for Education and Science is presented from the outset as a vulgar character with a personal – and presumably therefore unsubstantiated – vendetta. Where 'discourses are inculcated in identities' (Fairclough 2003, 159), the representation of Crosland pertains to *styles* and the author's alignment with the political Right. In his evaluation of Crosland as 'too clever by half' and as a 'socialist intellectual', Montgomerie (2016) depicts Crosland as an ideological figure, whose intelligence is obscured by his wilful, determined and authoritarian attempts to 'abolish' private education and 'eliminate' grammar schools.

In a similar vein, Hope (2016) too depicts those that disagree with the expansion of selective schooling as irrational. With reference to Sir Michael Wilshaw, the outgoing head of Ofsted, who has rebuked the claims that grammar schools will be beneficial to those from disadvantaged backgrounds, he quotes Lord Nash as saying, 'There is no clear evidence to support his views but we are keeping an open view' (Hope 2016). The establishment of the 'We-community' here positions Wilshaw's 'unfounded' opinion against public consensus, whilst simultaneously comparing his parochialism with a more objective and democratic way of thinking.

Likewise, opponents discredit the counter-argument as a personal rationale. Reporting that 'the prime minister has said she *wants* to create a new generation of grammar schools, *arguing* that selective schools *could* return to British education and make the system more inclusive, *rather than* exclusive', Weale (2016) portrays the policy as the personal desire of Theresa May, who is having to convince the general public that the exclusivity of grammar schools is a misconception and goes on to contrast the policy with research findings to conclude that, 'Given the dangers, and the lack of evidence of any benefit at all, selection by ability is currently the very antithesis of an evidence-informed policy' (Weale 2016). In addition, Collins (2016) criticises Conservative MPs and columnists for 'elevating their autobiographies to the status of policy writ. There really is no more firmly established body of evidence in all of education,' he continues, 'So why does it have to be said over and over again? Are these Tories so arrogant that they are impervious to evidence? No, they just don't know what they're talking about.'

Both sides accuse the other of unsubstantiated arguments and objectivity is, regardless of political stance in the articles, equated to truth. The binary distinction between Right and Left is made to establish a relationship of antonymy between the neoliberal conceptualisation of social justice and a liberal egalitarian approach, with each side of the debate representing the counterargument as neglectful and inequitable.

4.3 A Moral Evaluation: Selective Schooling & Equality of Opportunity

Within a meritocratic framework, selection according to academic ability is proposed as a means of ensuring social justice in education by proponents of the grammar school policy.

> 'Under the new plans grammar schools will be expected to encourage many more candidates to sit entry tests, offer lower pass marks for poorer pupils and let children sit the tests in primary schools or familiar venues near their homes.' (Hurst 2017)

Updated grammar schools are promoted as socially just, as they will make allowances for social disadvantage and therefore provide equality of opportunity for 'children from deprived backgrounds' and 'ordinary working class families', who are synonymised with 'poorer children' and 'children from lower-income families'. Through a process of

differentiation according to economic wealth – a 'politics of redistribution' no less – it is perceived that the subaltern will be able to advance and become socially mobile. However, the *classi strumentali* are not always explicitly referenced. In Hope's (2016) article, grammar schools are reported to increase equality of opportunity for 'children from all backgrounds' and to cater for the 'different needs of all children'. Where hegemony is 'a universalization of a particular' (Fairclough 2003, 46), this denial of class constitutes an obfuscation of agency and neglects the 'politics of recognition' required for social justice to prevail.

The strategy of passivation is also used in relation to parents, though with differing results. In order to characterise the current system as a denial of parental choice, a subordination of agency is simulated through the representation of parents as affected or passivated actors; 'It is no good *being told* that you can choose a better school for your children by moving away to a different area or paying to go private' (Rayner 2017). It is surmised that parents are socially constrained by the current system, but that lifting the ban on grammar schools will generate a new potential, a new set of possibilities. Grammar schools are morally evaluated as democratic by the proponents, where democracy is characterised by parental choice. As demonstrated in Hope's (2016) article, where Theresa May is reported to have said that 'she didn't want a situation where parents wanted a selective school only to be told they couldn't have one', the policy of grammar schools is justified as a response to the will of the people. Montgomerie (2016) makes the same claim, when he states, 'when localism, specialism and choice have become watchwords in education, driving higher standards, it is perverse that the only new schools parents cannot choose are, according to all survey evidence, among the ones they most want.' The denial of parental choice is presented as a totalitarian measure, detrimental to quality improvement and contrary to *common sense*.

In reference to the neologism, the JAMs or 'just about managing' families, Weale (2017) observes, 'These families have featured so prominently in Theresa May's rhetoric since she became prime minister, and yet so few make it into grammar schools' and represents the policy as a failure to acknowledge the systemic and socio-cultural issues associated with class. 'The bloodless jargon of social mobility' (Collins 2016) in the prime minister's speech presents the policy as a feeble and insensitive

attempt to confront social injustice and, as a form of class rhetoric rather than class consciousness, May's proposal is repudiated as lacking.

It is argued that the post-war golden era of social mobility was the consequence of a change in economic structure and should not be attributed to the widespread existence of grammar schools. Individual mobility, where 'my stupid child has to fall down a snake as your poor one climbs' (Collins 2016) is likened to a juvenile and reductive understanding of class, and then contrasted with an understanding of mobility as structural (Bloodworth 2016, 36).

> '[T]he cause of social mobility in the 1960s was the conversion of Britain… from an essentially blue-collar economy into a mostly white-collar one. Suddenly there was more room at the top' (Collins 2016).

According to Weale (2016), 'Even when there were large numbers of grammar schools they never achieved high levels of participation by students from poorer backgrounds.' The underrepresentation of working-class children in selective education rebuts its claims of inclusivity and equality and, as 'an attempt to salvage selection from the jaws of this yawning disaster' (Collins 2016), the government green paper is represented as a desperate measure to maintain hegemony.

In order to mediate the class differentials, which prevail in access arrangements for grammar schools, proponents advocate for a 'tutor-proof test'. As a mechanism for 'reduc[ing] the unfair advantages that tutoring provides' (Montgomerie 2016), an entrance examination akin to an IQ-test, 'with a strong emphasis on reasoning' (Hope 2016) is promoted as a means of assuring equality of opportunity. Using the King Edward VI Foundation (which offers lower pass marks for disadvantaged children and has, as a consequence, seen a rise in the number of disadvantaged pupils) to illustrate how access to selective education can be equitable, Hurst (2017) states that new grammar schools will be different. However, as a functionalist policy, the systemic causes and complex nature of class is not recognised in this instance.

Through a combination of modalisation, evaluation and contrastive relations, Weale's (2016) representation of the King Edward VI Foundation differs somewhat to Hurst's (2017):

> 'It decided to set a slightly lower qualifying score for those children who may have been held back by social disadvantage, but still have the ability to thrive in a competitive grammar school environment.'

The dialectic between the sociocultural and socioeconomic aspects of class is represented in the above report, as well as by Collins (2016), who writes, 'Educated parents are marrying their own kind and talking to their children… By the age of three a poor child would have heard 30 million fewer words at home than one from a professional family'. The ability to foretell a child's academic performance and attainment from as young as three, indicates that access to selective schooling is neither meritocratic nor equitable; where children 'from wealthier backgrounds start to pull away in terms of their test scores and achievement, so that by the age of 11 there is already a gap' (Weale 2016), the conditional access to grammar schools based on academic performance fails to acknowledge the complexity of class formation. Consequently, selective education is represented as a reappropriation rather than an enactment of social justice.

4.4 Discussion – Grammar Schools & The 'Mayritocracy': An *Historic Bloc*?

Theresa May's decision to expand the provision of selective schooling has come at a time of particular political insecurity, where a call for a change of governance and the structures of the State are particularly heightened. As demonstrated by recent voting patterns, the divergence between the *classe dirigente* and the *classi strumentali* has become more and more apparent, and it would seem that the hegemony of neoliberalism is being contested. As a response to the anti-establishment rhetoric that has informed the political climate as of late, the pronouncement of 'the great meritocracy' and its associated grammar schools has been put forth as a new superstructure; as a transformation beyond 'the worm eaten integument of old history' (Gramsci 1999, 818). With the 'new generation' of grammar schools depicted as progressive and the incumbent Conservative party construed as 'new' intellectuals, the 'vision for a truly meritocratic Britain that puts the interests of ordinary, working class people first' (May 2016) is represented as a discontinuation of the old order and as a 'politics of recognition and redistribution' (Fraser 1997).

By exacting a problem-solution relationship that conceives of the problem as selection dependent on income, *common sense* is limited to the economic realm. Subsequently, the proposed solution of the redistribution of resources (with resources equated to selective schooling) represents the State as a source of material production and the

sociocultural tensions and complexities of the state structure and class formation are mystified.

> 'Common sense applies the principle of causality, but in the much more limited fact
> that in a whole range of judgments common sense identifies the exact cause, simple
> and to hand, and does not let itself be distracted by fancy quibbles and pseudo-
> profound, pseudo-scientific metaphysical mumbo-jumbo' (Gramsci 1999).

By framing education-based meritocracy as a programmatic idea, that is to say 'technical ideas that provide the interpretation of a policy problem and prescribe a precise course of action to solve it' (Verger 2012, 110), selection and competition in the education system are purported not only to be neutral but also as existing in the realm of necessity, with its allies of performativity, accountability and individualism constituting a 'cognitive lock'. By recontextualising neoliberalism as meritocracy, 'dominant institutions transmit discourses (and related practices) through which people (of all social classes) 'misrecognise' both the exploitative relations that lie at the heart of capitalism and also their own relation to them' (Beck 2013, 180) and thus are able to rearticulate *common sense* and hinder *class consciousness.*

As 'a strategy for change which can effectively be operationalized in real change' (Fairclough 2012, 463), meritocracy operates as a nodal discourse for the proponents of the grammar school policy. However, for the opponents, the simplifications of the complex socioeconomic and sociocultural relations are, at least to some degree, contested. By declaring the policy 'an attempt to salvage selection from the jaws of this yawning disaster' (Collins 2016), grammar schools are represented as an element of neoliberal discourse, which is 'associated with particular strategies for change, and therefore with particular interested representations and imaginaries of change, whose epistemological and practical value may be difficult to unravel from their rhetorical value (and perhaps their ideological value)' (Fairclough 2012, 460-461).

Though the ideology of selective schooling as democratic is refuted by both Collins (2016) and Weale (2016, 2017), who both argue that it is a system of exclusion rather than inclusion, the hegemonic position is able to recontextualise concepts such as democracy, class, equality and even social justice itself and, as such, is able to disguise itself as counterhegemonic. Through the disarticulation of human rights discourses, the political 'Right' have been able 'to situate neoliberal ideology on moral terrain and to connect their ideological prescriptions to powerful philosophical and

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cultural currents' (Ambrosio 2013, 327), to the point where democracy has become a 'sliding signifier' (Apple 2008, 245). By mobilising particular language systems and promoting the concepts of performativity, accountability and individualism, the discourse of meritocracy is legitimised as rational, authoritative and just and the hegemony of neoliberalism prevails.

The hegemony of neoliberalism in the newspaper reports supporting grammar schools is made apparent in the identification of a problem-solution relationship, which prescribes selection and competition as requisite within the globalised economy. Using the language of reform and human rights, selective schooling is promoted as progressive and democratic, albeit pertaining to neoliberal rationale; as such the hegemonic agenda is disguised. The binary distinction between the political Left and Right is made via the classification of social actors, and their divergent position on grammar schools is repudiated as subjective and irrational, highlighting a parallel commitment to objective truth. The synonymy of social mobility and social justice is also a commonality between both discourses. However, an individual understanding of social mobility on the Right is contrasted with the structural understanding on the Left, exposing the contradictory understandings of class formation. The counterhegemony of a liberal egalitarian, or human rights, discourse is thus positioned within and against neoliberalism and, in order to establish a 'cathartic moment', now needs to work beyond the hegemonic forces to create a new superstructure with new potential and new intellectuals.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Contributions to Theory & Knowledge

Though this research does not necessarily determine the emergence of a new discourse or demonstrate the existence of a new concept, it does contribute to the ongoing counterhegemonic push by intellectuals – be they organic or academic – to analyse, explicate and dismantle the current state apparatus in favour of a more socially just structure that allows for a broadening of agency.

In order for the hegemony of neoliberalism to be dismantled and a *war of position* to occur, human rights discourses need to work within, against and beyond the State. Unfortunately, as evidenced in Collins's (2016) and Weale's (2016, 2017) news reports, 'all too much of the Left has dealt with the very real crises we are experiencing in a largely rhetorical way, but with a less than satisfactory understanding of the balance of forces we face and a none too subtle analysis of the strategic actions and alliances that the Right has built and of the counter-hegemonic actions and alliances that need to be built to interrupt them' (Apple 2015b, 174). By highlighting one strategy of how the 'Right' is attempting to appropriate education as a means of replacing social justice with the values of performativity, accountability and individualism, this research contributes towards Apple's (2013) lifelong debate on whether education can change society.

The reappropriation of human rights discourse, as evidenced in this research, pertains to a voluntarism that theorises itself 'as an organic form of historico-political activity and [celebrate] itself in terms which are purely and simply a transposition of the language of the individual superman to an ensemble of 'supermen' (celebration of active minorities as such)' (Gramsci 1999, 443-444). However, with Theresa May seemingly unable to fully subvert *common sense* in the grammar school debate, this definition of voluntarism has not yet been achieved. As such, the possibility for a *cathartic moment* has, once again, emerged and the potential for a voluntarism defined 'as the initial moment of an organic period which must be prepared and developed; a period in which the organic collectivity, as a social bloc, will participate fully' (Gramsci 1999, 443-444) is visible.

5.2 Limitations & Implications for Further Study

In order to legitimise their arguments, the proponents cite statements from ministers and government sources, whereas the opponents reference the research of reputed academics to authorise their position. Though the point of authority differs according to stance, both sides represent their views as reflective of civil society, rather than of the State. However, where the positioning of the *organic intellectual* indicates a hegemonic or counterhegemonic stance, the agency awarded to these social actors – none of whom belong to the *classi strumentali* – is of particular significance. As a consequence, the data collected in this research could be limited by its overt connection to the *classe dirigente.* Further study should therefore involve data collected from the *classi strumentali* itself, perhaps in the form of questionnaires or interviews, which could well reveal different results. The binary distinction between 'Left' and 'Right' may not be as pronounced outside the media, which does have a tendency to overstate the conflicts in social events in order to create a more dramatic narrative, and as such further counterhegemonic discourses may be revealed.

Furthermore, I believe that this research is somewhat limited by the fact that it is largely based on theory rather than practice. Gramsci makes the distinction 'between the notion of intellectual élites separated from the masses, and that of intellectuals who are conscious of being linked organically to a national-popular mass' and claims that 'In reality, one has to struggle against the above-mentioned degenerations, the false heroisms and pseudo-aristocracies, and stimulate the formation of homogeneous, compact social blocs, which will give birth to their own intellectuals, their own commandos, their own vanguard – who in turn will react upon those blocs in order to develop them, and not merely so as to perpetuate their gypsy domination' (Gramsci 1999, p.444). In order for research to effectively contribute towards the inculcation of a *war of position* and help develop a critical consciousness, 'decentred unities' – that is 'spaces that are crucial for educational and larger social transformations that enable multiple progressive movements to find common ground and where these different groups can engage in joint struggles without being subsumed under the leadership of only one understanding of how exploitation and domination operate in daily life' (Apple 2015a, 302-303) – must be detected or created. As such, the *organic intellectual*, be that journalists or the researcher herself - now needs to stand up from their desk and find a means of connecting this theory with practice.

5.3   Reflections on Learning Journey

Though I do believe that I would not be here now, studying for a Master's in Education at a prestigious university, if I had not attended a grammar school, the research conducted on the conflicts between social justice and the new world order of neoliberalism have opened my eyes to the false concept of merit. Whilst, in a previous life, I was of the opinion that intelligence and effort were worthy of recognition, I am now more aware of the structural and historico-political complexities of inequality. Though I was always drawn to teaching for its potential for transformation, the true power – be it negative or positive – of education has been increasingly revealed to me over the course of my career and, of course, studies. Convinced that recent educational policies have inculcated a culture of accountability, performativity and individualism, all of which I believe to be inherently unjust, I have become increasingly disillusioned with the profession. However, on completing this research and this course, I believe that I have developed a better understanding of the forces and structures in place that have allowed neoliberal logic, to which I am deeply opposed, to prevail in education and society at large. As such, I am hopeful that I may now be in a better position to contribute more positively to the counterhegemonic debate and practices.

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