

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DISCOURSE SURROUNDING THE 2013 DRAFT ENGLISH HISTORY CURRICULUM AND A COMPARISON WITH CURRENT HIGH SCHOOL PRACTICE

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Abstract

The following article describes the context, planning, execution and findings of a small scale critical comparison between the Draft 2013 History National Curriculum and current practice in schools. The article opens with a critical analysis of the discourse surrounding the announcement of the draft in the context of ongoing debates about curriculum ideology before going on to look at the curriculum itself in greater depth.

The research uses Critical Discourse Analysis to expose the hegemonic intentionality of the new curriculum. Using an intertextual approach, it contrasts this document with the existing practice of schools (Northern Comprehensive and Southern Grammar) and finds significant points of difference. These differences are expressed in terms of modality, selectivity and representation each of which shows the two schools' curricula to be more progressive in terms of Santome's tests of progressiveness (2009). The study argues that the most significant difference between progressive and conservative curricula is not the selection or omission of topics, but the way in which topics are presented.

The article closes with a critical reflection on the process which argues for the efficacy of intertextual CDA as a tool for this kind of study.

Keywords

Progressiveness, Critical Discourse Analysis, 2013 English National Curriculum, Hegemony, Intertextuality, Gramsci, Gove, Hirsch

I will no longer tolerate this insidious attack on history [and] challenges to the traditional core of this crucial subject.

Prime Minister John Major, 2nd October 1992,
Letter to *The Times* (cited in Sylvester, 1994)

The current approach we have to history denies children the opportunity to hear our island story Well, this trashing of our past has to stop.

Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education,
Conservative Party Conference, Tuesday 5th October 2010

1. Contextual Background

In February 2013, the Coalition Government released its Draft revision of the history National Curriculum (DfE, 2013). In the weeks that followed, strident positions were taken by commentators from riotous support (Ferguson, 2013; Times, 2013a) to pointed criticism (Evans, 2013 Schama, 2013; Sheldon, 2013; Husbands, 2013). Such raucous debate was not unexpected – since the introduction of the first National Curriculum for England and Wales in 1991, the history curriculum has been contested and debated in the public sphere to a much greater extent than any other subject (Crawford, 1994; Phillips, 1998a; 1998b;

Guyver 2013). The English history curriculum has been revised several times since its introduction (1994, 2000, 2007, 2013) and on each occasion accusations of political bias have greeted its announcement.

In England, opinions about history teaching fall into two broad and antagonistic camps, which should not be confused with the tired dichotomy between the teaching of 'skills' and 'content' which is so lazily reproduced in public discourse. The first approach is known as 'New History' which had its origins in the late 1960s. Working separately, Martin Booth (1973) and Mary Price (1968) argued that school history, as then taught, was in crisis. Observing lessons and surveying pupils, both argued the subject was dull, repetitive and of little apparent relevance to pupils. Both Booth and Prince urged a radical rethink of both the content and pedagogical approaches used in school history. These ideas were given their fullest exposition in the School's Council for History Project's *A New Look at History* (1976). Using Bruner – and anticipating the rediscovery of Vygotskian constructivism – the authors argued that 'if teachers were to adopt a methodology which reinforced pupil acquisition of ideas about history by introducing pupils to the same ideas at different ages, say at 8, 11, 13 and 14, then the ability of pupils to do 'real' history may well mature earlier' (p. 6). This reassessment of the pedagogical assumptions went alongside an epistemological reassessment of history as a discipline. The Council argued that history was a series of processes and went much further by pronouncing that 'history is not a body of knowledge structured on chronology' (p. 24). Instead, the authors suggested several concepts Evidence, Change, Causation, Anachronism, Empathy and Judgement (pp. 39-42) which – with varying nomenclature – have formed the basis of each iteration of the History National Curriculum from its inception until the aborted February 2013 draft. Following the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979, there appeared a significant backlash against this approach. Contributing to the neo-liberal and neo-conservative paradigm (Knight, 1990; Jones 2003) organisations such as the Campaign for Real Education and the History Curriculum Association argued for a return to a curriculum based on a core of historical knowledge and more traditional pedagogical approaches.

Politicians' adherence to these positions predictably divided along party lines as the Conservative administration (1979-1997) placed emphasis on knowledge in the 1991 and 1994 curricula, while the Labour administration (1997-2010) produced two curricula (2000 and 2007) which were broadly welcomed by new historians. Thus, for much of the twenty-first century there existed a consensus about history teaching between Labour policy makers and school teachers, a consensus which was shattered by the election of a Conservative-led coalition in 2010 and the appointment of a Conservative Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove.

On February 7th 2013, the Coalition government announced draft proposals for the National Curriculum. It quickly became clear from the discourse that neither exponents of New History nor traditionalists had softened their positions. Fifteen historians (including Anthony Beevor and Niall Ferguson) wrote a letter to *The Times* arguing that the new curriculum was, 'a golden opportunity to place history back at the centre of the curriculum', (Abulafia et al, 2013) while Professor Sir Richard Evans (Evans, 2013) described it as 'a pub quiz curriculum', while a spokesperson for the Curriculum for Cohesion Group told BBC News that it amounted to 'crass ideological nation-building' (BBC News, 2013).

Strangely, at least two commentators who had earlier supported Michael Gove in drawing up the proposals withdrew their support when the final document was released. At the Hay Literary Festival in May 2013 historian Simon Schama called it 'a ridiculous shopping list' and '*1066 and All That* without the jokes' (Schama quoted in Furness, 2013). Fellow consultant, Steve Mastin implied there had been political interference in the document,

'Between January and the publication of this document – which no one involved in the consultation had seen – someone has typed it up and I have no idea who that is', (quoted in Boffey, 2013).

Perhaps rather surprisingly, given Gove's earlier defiant attitude, in July 2013 the government's response to the consultation seemed to accept many of the criticisms that had been levelled at it. The final framework document (DfE, 2013b) was well received by critics of the draft. The Historical Association, which had said of the draft, 'More than twenty years of thoughtful and sophisticated approaches to curriculum development have been thrown away in this document' (HA, 2013a¹⁶), now said that it was a curriculum which gave 'greater scope for choice and respect for teachers' expertise' (HA, 2013b).¹⁷

2. Research in Context

Despite the wholesale rewrite of the curriculum, the draft document is still of considerable interest as it reveals one discursive actor's ideal position in a political discourse. This research is predicated on the idea that any engagement with the debate on the nature of the history curriculum is a political act. There is, quite simply, too much history and so selection and omission is an inevitable feature of history curriculum design, but this selectivity in itself can never be apolitical. In a political context where labels have become unfashionable contributors to the debate rarely defend their own positions in political terms, preferring instead to describe their curricula in terms of academic rigour or historical best-practice. In contrast to such apolitical rhetoric, this research sets out to evaluate the debate surrounding the history curriculum in explicitly political terms.

The theoretical underpinning for this research will borrow from Gramsci (1971)¹⁸. While the new Curriculum is an attempt by the hegemonic elite to cement a mono-cultural narrative of national greatness, this should be seen in the context of an ongoing hegemonic/counterhegemonic intertextual discourse between that elite and a critical history-teaching community which seeks to stress historical controversy and the histories of the disadvantaged. Many history teachers are instinctively distrustful of excessive control of curriculum content from the centre; their training has made them acutely aware of the ways that totalitarian regimes have used history education to justify barbarism and to indoctrinate future generations. In the past, History teachers have shown great adroitness in mediating and subverting central curricula while paying lip service to the documents; whatever the curriculum states, history teachers have found ways of continuing to deliver polythetic, diverse and bottom-up history. This subversive creativity is a source of considerable annoyance to the New Right¹⁹, especially since teachers as individuals are assisted in this endeavour by counter-hegemonic organisations such as the Schools History Project and the Historical Association. Thus the Draft was not incoherent or ill-thought-out (as some critics argued) rather it was an attempt to create a "subversion-proof" hegemonic account of the past. It is the latest word in the discourse of hegemony and counter-hegemony which has marked the curriculum wars of history education.

The Draft Curriculum was particularly criticised for its prescriptiveness as it listed 63 events that students should be taught at Key Stage Three (11-14). This is in keeping with Michael

¹⁶ http://www.history.org.uk/news/news_1722.html

¹⁷ http://www.history.org.uk/news/news_1830.html

¹⁸ It is interesting that Michael Gove (Gove, 2013a) has cited Gramsci as one of his political inspirations for his insistence that children should acquire a 'baggage of concrete facts'. Gove's interpretation of Gramsci's work is, however, based solely on Gramsci's chapter on education from the *Prison Notebooks* and divorces these thoughts from their position in the wider schema of Gramscian thought.

¹⁹ See Phillips 1998 on the 'curriculum wars' of the National Curriculum's first incarnation.

Gove's view that 'the accumulation of cultural capital – the acquisition of knowledge – is the key to social mobility' (Gove, 2013a). Gove supports this view by E.D. Hirsch's argument for 'cultural literacy' as a core of canonical knowledge (1987). Clearly, to be politically transparent any such list of historical events needs to make its selection criteria explicit. Since all history syllabi require selectivity, there must be a pedagogical or epistemological reason why one event is included at the expense of another – the Draft curriculum offers no such criteria. Hirsch's work does at least offer something of a framework – in compiling his 63 page list (p.152-215) of 'what every American needs to know' Hirsch stated that items were omitted if they were deemed, 'known by both literate and illiterate persons, too rare or too transitory' (p.146). These criteria seem unsatisfactory. Quite apart from the fact that they are subjective qualitative judgements rather than criteria as properly understood, they are applied inconsistently. For example, the inclusion of items such as Muammar Qaddafi (p.198) qualify only in the context of the 'transitory' bombing of Libya which took place at the time the book was authored. Another Arab leader, Saddam Hussein, who, at the time Hirsch was writing, was receiving US military aid in his war against Iran is oddly excluded.

Thus Gove's defence of certain knowledge in terms of its benefits to social mobility is questionable. The argument is that some knowledge allows access to the ruling elite, but this is only the case *because it is* the knowledge of the ruling elite. This is a circular argument which goes unchallenged. It has long been argued by 'new sociologists of education' (Young, 1971; Whitty and Young, 1976; Apple, 1976; Weis et al, 2006) that the content of the school curriculum is an attempt to reproduce the cultural values and norms of the ruling class and delegitimise those of the majority. Gove and Hirsch might be right that some knowledge has more cultural capital than others in practice, but there is no epistemological basis for asserting delineating and venerating that knowledge. Hirsch attempts to address this challenge by asserting that the goal of 'cultural literacy' is simply to create 'shared symbols [so] ... we can communicate more effectively with one another in our national community' (1987: xvii); but if this is the case, there is no reason why these ought to be the symbols used by a wealthy ethnically-homogeneous minority. Furthermore, an argument based on social mobility breaks down when one considers the limits of what can be taught in school. As Bourdieu argued, 'The more outlandish areas of extra-curricular culture are not taught in schools but ... can often yield high symbolic profit' (1979: 63.)

Nevertheless, once the cultural supremacy of certain knowledge is asserted, it is possible to construct a 'moral panic' (Cohen, 1972) about children's ignorance. In an article in the *Daily Mail* Gove argued,

Survey after survey has revealed disturbing historical ignorance with one teenager in five believing Winston Churchill was a fictional character while 58 per cent think Sherlock Holmes was real. (Gove, 2013b)

After a Freedom of Information request, it was revealed that this claim was based on four methodologically dubious surveys including one which was commissioned by a hotel chain (which accepted the children's responses were facetious) and another which surveyed respondents of all ages, not just children (Morse, 2013²⁰).

In common with all moral panics, this is intended to be politically useful. The common sense conclusion is that if children do not know what they ought to know, then they are being in some sense failed by current education practice (as Hirsch argues) and a traditional conservative position is presented as a solution to this apparent decay. The fallaciousness

²⁰ http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/05/13/michael-gove-surveys-history-poll-education-foi-n_3264981.html

of this 'ignorance panic' is skewered by Wineberg (2001: vii) who cites a study from 1917 which similarly bemoans high school students' ignorance. Besides which, it is not clear why children should know one piece of information (for example Sherlock Holmes) and not another. As Wineberg has argued in a US context, commentators proceed seamlessly from the discovery that 'students don't know what we want them to know to the conclusion that they don't know anything at all' (Wineberg, 2001: viii).

Interestingly, Gove's concentration on listing events reveals a fatal misunderstanding about what New History is about, for in history teaching pedagogical questions are arguably more significant than questions of content. In this sense, New History's criticism is not so much of the specific events mandated by a central curriculum, but the epistemological arrogance that such a list implies. Most studies of the sociology of the curriculum (e.g. Vulliamy, 1978) have tended to focus on the role of canonical knowledge in the reproduction of bourgeois culture and the consequent delegitimisation of working class culture. In history curriculum studies, the familiar question 'whose knowledge?' obscures the more important 'how do we gain knowledge?' That is to say, much of the criticism that New History makes of 'traditional' teaching is not over the merits of the inclusion or exclusion of a given event, but of the implication that this content is uncontested; over its attempt to smooth over controversy by presenting a simplistic narrative. In this sense, the debate should be seen as argument not over which knowledge is of value, but over the right to assert the value of a given piece of knowledge. This point is better illustrated with reference to the Foucauldian concept of power-knowledge (1977). Foucault contends that power determines not just what knowledge is of value (i.e. the canon) but that power also determines the veracity of that knowledge.

The concept of school history as a politicised discourse has a large and transnational tradition. Foster and Crawford (2006) and Ferro (1981) both studied the history curricula of different countries as attempts to impose an elite narrative on the nation's past. The history of the school History Curriculum in England and Wales has been given much attention by Sylvester (1994,) Cannadine et al (2011) and Guyver (2013). All of these writers see the English History syllabus as a site of conflict between policy-makers and history educators and although this process is apparent in public discourse, this noisy debate can sometimes obscure what actually happens in school classrooms. On the subject of teaching professionals as the passive recipients of politicised curricula Michael Apple has shown how curricula are not simply the imposition of ruling class ideas; rather they are mediated and dialectically determined by political forces: 'what counts as legitimate knowledge is the result of complex power relations and struggles among identifiable class, race, gender and religious groups' (Apple and Christian Smith, 1991 p.2). Furthermore, Apple has shown that there is a significant disconnect between what curriculum planners or textbook authors believe teachers are teaching and what they do teach.

It is possible for teachers to use the text in ways undreamed of by [the publishers]. Texts can be and are subject to oppositional readings. They can be, and are, made the subject of analyses in classrooms of their silences – of whose stories are included and excluded. (Apple, 2003, p.14).

In other words, Apple questions the extent to which what happens in classrooms can be controlled from the centre. Vulliamy and Webb (1993, 1996) make this point more generally – 'teachers' abilities creatively to interpret and resist policy ... should not be underestimated' (1993: 22.)

3. Outline of the Study

The discourse surrounding the draft curriculum must be seen in intertextual terms. Policy and practice are locked in a dialectic in which each contribution to the debate is both a response to previous contribution and a new contribution in its own right. Therefore, although the draft curriculum was the last document to be produced, it makes a sensible starting point since it is a statement of one discursive actor's 'ideal curriculum'²¹. The curriculum was analysed using Norman Fairclough's dialectical relational approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (2001) which starts by identifying a social wrong. In this example, the social wrong is the extent to which the new curriculum accepts power arrangements uncritically and the implied corollary that Britain's unique greatness has been brought about through the genius and Britain's white Protestant ruling class. This politicised starting point is not accidental; as Britain's relative significance as a global power declines inexorably, so stories of Britain's historic global dominance become more important to the ruling class mindset. This process, what Gilroy (2005) calls 'post-colonial melancholia', is a historically verifiable phenomenon. Samuel (1999²²) argued that attempts to create certainty through history (of which the draft Curriculum is surely one) are closely mapped with periods of uncertainty in wider society – clearly the upheavals of capitalism seen after 2008 makes wallowing in a British colonial past seem somewhat more attractive.

The next step was to analyse the existing programmes of study of two history departments. These programmes of study are devised by school Heads of History whose responsibility it is to implement the National Curriculum. Unlike the draft curriculum, these documents do not represent the discursive actor's 'ideal' position, but rather a mediated compromise between their ideal position and the 2007 National Curriculum document. Nevertheless, this analysis will give us a keen understanding of current practice and so reveal what the new curriculum is aiming to challenge. Differences between the draft and school practice are indicative of a difference of emphasis and approach. We should, of course, not conclude that all differences are politically motivated and so politically significant differences can be identified using Santome's (2009) tests of criticality were used to make this judgement.

Participants for this study were obtained through an appeal in the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust's bi-monthly newsletter, Radar. The SSAT is an organisation which aims to share good practice between schools in England and Wales. Three volunteers came forward from which the two with the most detailed schemes of work were chosen. One (referred to as Southern Grammar School [SGS]) is a high performing selective all-boys school in the south-east of England. It was given the highest grading of Outstanding in its most recent school inspection and in 2012, 100% of its students achieved 5 A*-C grades at GCSE. The other (referred to as Northern Comprehensive) is a mixed comprehensive school which was described as 'Good' in its most recent inspection. 61% of its students achieved 5 A*-C grades at GCSE in 2012 (this is broadly in line with the national average). Both schools teach history up to the age of eighteen, but only their Key Stage 3 curricula were analysed.

²¹ It is worth noting, however, that the curriculum was mediated through debate even before its release. When a leak suggested Mary Seacole was not to be mentioned in the new curriculum, a well-orchestrated and ultimately successful campaign for her reinstatement was organised. This campaign for reinstatement was so powerful, it did not seem to matter to either side that Seacole's name was never included in the 2007 curriculum!

4. Analysis of Findings

Julia Kristeva (1996) defines inter-textuality as ‘the insertion of history into a text and of this text into history’ (p39.) That is to say, documents should be seen as communicating with one another in an ongoing discourse where each reveals something about the other. Intertextual critical discourse analysis includes another layer of complexity – as well as oscillating between discursive texts, CDA necessitates oscillating between the texts and the social structures in which they were produced (Fairclough, 2012). These interlinked dimensions pose a problem for the analyst – how can he avoid a narrative account which simply recounts his journey through the texts? The solution is to identify points of comparison and explore the intertextuality within each. These findings will address three areas of comparison between the three texts:

- Modality
- Selection of Content
- Representation.

Modality

The modality of a speech act conveys the extent of obligation, and can be broken down into relational modality (which assesses the power differential between addresser and addressee) and expressive modality (which assesses the syntactical structure of the instruction.) In a relational sense, the National Curriculum is not comparable to schools’ schemes of work – one is issued from a position of legal authority, the other is a school-based document. More light is shone, by comparing the expressive modality.

Both Southern Grammar’s Scheme of Work and the National Curriculum draft of February 2013 contain an introductory page explaining the rationale for the contents. Northern Comprehensive had no comparable preamble. Southern Grammar’s preamble (see appendix 4) begins ‘The History Curriculum has identified key processes, concepts and themes that need to be addressed’, and goes on to say, ‘SGS has also identified two areas of the ‘Big Picture’²³ KS3 [Key Stage 3 approx ages 12-14] NC [National Curriculum] that we need to implement²⁴. The use of the first person plural here implies that learning is a cooperative endeavour. Elsewhere, SGS uses enquiry questions such as ‘Was the Reformation about religion or politics?’ to encourage students to challenge orthodox interpretations of events and to reach their own judgements, an approach it shares with Northern Comprehensive (see appendix 5.) In contrast to this cooperative form, the draft National Curriculum uses the imperative form: ‘pupils²⁵ should be taught about ...’. This construction places the emphasis on teaching rather than on learning and, as Gee (1996) has argued, reduces education to the process of ‘transmitting bundles of information’. In contrast to the two schools, the draft curriculum is about delivery rather than uptake.

²³ This is SGS’s name for whole school cross-curricular objectives.

²⁴ See appendix three for an example.

²⁵ The use of the rather old-fashioned term ‘pupil’ is also revealing here. Southern Grammar uses the similarly paternalistic ‘boys’ while Northern Comprehensive uses the terms ‘student’, ‘learner’ and ‘pupil’ in a range of different contexts which implies the author sees them as interchangeable.

Selection of content

As discussed earlier, selection and omission are the most controversial aspects of curriculum design. As a first step, the draft curriculum and the curricula that Northern and Southern teach were analysed using orthodox content analysis²⁶. The intertextual discourse can then be gleaned from the relationship between the documents.

As discussed earlier, the draft document asserts a core of power knowledge and draws its intellectual support from E.D. Hirsch. Interestingly, in a recent speech to the Social Market Foundation, Michael Gove also marshalled Antonio Gramsci in support of his views, pointing out that Gramsci had been critical of the child-centred curriculum reforms of Giovanni Gentile and implying that Gramsci would have agreed that that history should have 'space for the study of heroes and heroines whose example is truly inspirational' (Gove, 2013a) presumably because learning about the great would inspire students to be great men or women themselves.

This is a grotesque misuse of Gramsci's theories on education. It is true that Gramsci believed in a working-class possessed of the power-knowledge of the ruling class, but this knowledge was possessed in order that the class (qua class) could formulate a counter-hegemony to challenge the ruling class, not so that aspirant individuals could break free from that class. Gove's reading of Gramsci implies that education is a tool for the sharp-elbowed and individualistic to triumph over their classmates. There is also a lack of appreciation that the 'inspirational' heroes and heroines such as Nelson, Churchill and Wolfe are only inspirational if one can identify with them, in other words if one is already ruling-class and 'native' British. The narrowness of the draft curriculum's view of the 'clear narrative ... [of] British and World history' is explored below.

4.2.1 Anglocentrism

The 2007 National Curriculum mandated a study of 'past European and world societies', but schools were allowed freedom over how this was interpreted. In both schools, other countries are principally studied in terms of their relationship with Britain. The only exceptions to this are the American and French Revolutions (in the SGS) and America in the 1920s (in Northern Comprehensive.) Neither curriculum offered a detailed study of a country in the developing world.

The draft National Curriculum seeks an even greater marginalisation of non-British history. Every mention of other countries is related to Britain: the American Revolution is discussed in relation to Britain's Empire, the French Revolution is coupled to the Napoleonic wars and even the Russian Revolution is relegated to a footnote in the study of World War One. Perhaps the most egregious example of this is the requirement to study the English (but not the European) Enlightenment as though the Enlightenment were a peculiarly British phenomenon. Overall, the narrative of national greatness is reminiscent of the 'Whig Interpretation of History' which was so decisively buried by Herbert Butterfield (1931). This similarity has been noted by Richard Evans (2011) who echoed Butterfield in describing 'The Tory Interpretation of History' which he subtitled, 'The Wonderfulness of Us'. In actuality, it seems the inspiration for the draft curriculum is not so much Trevelyan, Macaulay or other notable Whigs but Henrietta Marshall whose 1905 children's book, *Our Island Story* is regularly cited by both Michael Gove (Gove, 2010) and Prime Minister David Cameron (Hough, 2013) as a personal favourite. Quite aside from questions about whether a

²⁶ See appendix one for a comparative grid and appendix two for an explanation of comparative methodology.

children's book is an adequate basis for a school curriculum it should also be remembered that Marshall's book comprises not only factual stories, but also myths and legends.

4.2.2 Date Range

The most glaring difference between the two schools and the draft curriculum is the time span covered. Whereas Northern Comprehensive begins its KS3 course with a study of the Romans and SGS begins with Anglo-Saxon England, the draft curriculum mandates 1750 as the start of the KS3 syllabus. From this we are able to infer that the new curriculum is dissatisfied with the scope of the existing KS3 curriculum. Clearly, any start-date for a curriculum is arbitrary, but we must nevertheless question the selection criteria for these dates. Both the schools' curricula begin with examples of the conquest and colonisation of the British Isles by outsiders (Romans, Anglo-Saxons, Normans) helping to shape the idea in children's minds that nation states are historically and politically constituted phenomena rather than timeless features of the earth. This approach goes some way to satisfying Santome's injunction that 'cultures should be seen as the result of historical processes'. In contrast, the draft curriculum opens in 1750²⁷ with Britain as a homogenous political entity and has the establishment of 'Britain and her Empire' as the first topic of study. This start date also ensured that Primary school history finished with a study of the 1688 Glorious Revolution, evidently implying that Protestantism and the rule of parliament laid the foundations for Britain's future greatness. It is interesting, too, to notice how closely this structure reflects the archetypal Whig book, Macaulay's *History of England*. This book, which ran to five volumes, only began its study in 1685 with England's brief unsuccessful flirtation with Catholic restoration. The subtext of the book is that it was 1688, Protestant governance and the rule of law which allowed England to emerge as the pre-eminent global power. From a critical perspective, it is clear that although periods of study are arbitrary, they are not accidental and not without significance²⁸.

More problematically, the draft curriculum insists that its list of topics be taught 'sequentially,' presumably in the misguided belief that this will help cement children's chronological understanding²⁹. This approach means that events are substituted for processes so that 'gunboat diplomacy' becomes the very specific example of mid-nineteenth century gunboat diplomacy rather than a catchall term for power projection by any vastly superior military force. The effect of this atomising approach to curriculum design is best illustrated in the analysis of representations of the British Empire below. In contrast, Northern Grammar uses its opening study of Rome as case study for exploring timeless themes such as 'power and protest', 'empire' and 'migration' which are subsequently revisited throughout the curriculum. Gove has dismissed this approach as 'a disconnected set of themes and topics' (Gove, 2013a) seemingly unaware that this structure was enshrined in the original 1991 curriculum written under the Conservative governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major.

4.2.3 Working class and labour history in the nineteenth century

The new curriculum borrows heavily from the great-man school of historiography which struggles to incorporate working-class movements into its narrative for two reasons: not only are they examples of collective action, but they disrupt the narrative of inevitability by showing how events were mediated and contested. When the preliminary outline of the new curriculum was leaked to the *Daily Mail* in December 2012, there was no coverage of labour

²⁷ It should be noted that this is conveniently soon after the 1707 Act of Union which might throw doubt on the idea of the concept Britain.

²⁸ It is worth pointing out, however, that early leaks of the curriculum (see appendix 3) had the secondary curriculum opening with Medieval England.

²⁹ See the work of Dennis Shemilt to expose the fallacy of this common sense myth.

history (see appendix 3), but in the draft curriculum released the following February there was explicit reference to the Chartists, Tolpuddle Martyrs and Annie Besant. This change is curious, but we must remember that texts are never entirely rationally constructed. Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of heteroglossia reminds us that texts are not perfect expressions of their author's views, but instead show 'traces of different discourses contending and struggling for dominance' (Weiss & Wodak, 2003, p.15). Through the inclusion of labour history in the new curriculum allows us to see an example of intertextual discourse in action – the initial hostile response to the leak generated a partial rewrite, obviously prefiguring a later, more significant rewrite for similar reasons.

According to the methodology outlined in appendix 2, the draft National Curriculum recommends roughly double the time to be spent on nineteenth century social conditions and working class protest than the two sample schools (12.5 hours compared to 6.) However, it is important to remember that the draft curriculum covers a much shorter chronological period than that of the two schools. In that sense, this is a quantitative reduction in teaching time given to the study of progressive working class movements and the social upheaval caused by industrialisation. In the draft, Social history represents just one-quarter of the total teaching time set aside for nineteenth century British history compared to one-half of SGS's and three-quarters of Northern Comprehensive's.

Representation

Representation is a less dramatic – but perhaps more pernicious – feature of a hegemonic curriculum than selectivity. That is to say, it is not *whether* a topic is included that is significant, so much as *how* that topic is presented. While concentrating on selection of content made the two schools appear similar, in opposition to the draft curriculum, an approach focused on representation allows us to see Northern Comprehensive as the outlier school while the draft curriculum and Southern Grammar are similar.

4.3.1 Representation of human migration

The draft curriculum makes explicit reference to migration at just one point, mandating study of 'the Windrush generation, wider new Commonwealth *immigration*, and the arrival of East African Asians'. Thus the concept *migration* (the movement of people to and from a country) is reduced to immigration (the arrival of people to a country). Thus, there is no mention of emigration from Britain and there is no attention paid to pre-1948 migration. In representing migration in this way, the new curriculum taps into what James Gee calls cultural models 'simplified prototypes of the world which are betrayed in language' (Gee, 1996). Gee gives the example of 'bachelor' as commonly understood which implicitly excludes priests and homosexuals. But in this example we can see that migration is simplified in terms of the 'arrival' of non-white populations. This approach seems intended to separate 'native' Britons from new arrivals, as though migration were not a timeless feature of human behaviour. Representations such as these which exclude 'white immigration' – such as the Huguenots and Irish – are dangerous for the way in which they feed the extreme nationalist myth of an ethnically-homogeneous pre-1948 population. Although it covers a longer span of time, SGS's curriculum made even less reference to migration with only the key question, 'How did the Angles and Saxons gain control of England?' challenging the notion that Britishness is a timeless concept. This is particularly surprising since SGS is comparatively ethnically-diverse; its Ofsted report stating that, 'just over a quarter [of boys are] from minority ethnic backgrounds the most significant of Indian origin'.

In contrast, in Northern Comprehensive, we can see how a wider date range can be used to create a more polythetic understanding of migration. Northern Comprehensive uses its

study of the Romans to teach, 'Why did people move around the empire?' Similarly, its study of 1920s USA begins with the question, 'Why did people leave their own countries for the United States'. This inversion of the issue – focusing on emigration instead of immigration – humanises the topic by presenting the choices migrants make. This more progressive approach to studying migration is followed despite the fact that Ofsted said of the school's ethnic make-up, 'a very small minority of students are from minority ethnic groups and virtually no students speak English as an additional language'.

4.3.2 Representation of the British Empire

The three curricula spent varying amounts of time on a study of the British Empire. If the Transatlantic Slave Trade and the Empire are taken together then the nominal teaching hours are Draft: 22, Northern: 10 and SGS 2. In all cases, the wording of the curricula suggested a British perspective. Northern Comprehensive is the only school to take the perspective of the colonised, teaching one lesson on 'Africa before the Slave Trade' which explores the cultures of the Songhai and Benin Empires and uses contemporary African sources to build up a picture of functioning and thriving pre-European civilisations (see appendix 5).

The draft curriculum suggests 7.5 hours be spent on 'on independence for India and the Wind of Change in Africa'. But it is interesting that these topics fall under the soubriquet 'retreat from Empire'; as though independence were granted because of British munificence rather than through the colonies' own struggles for self-determination. A more striking example of the Anglocentric approach to independence movements is the new curriculum's reference to 'The Indian Mutiny'. This title – which implies that the revolt was somehow criminal sedition rather than a war of liberation – has been abandoned by most historians in favour of 'The Indian Rebellion' or the 'First War of Indian Independence'.

The three curricula's approaches to the slave trade differ markedly. In the draft curriculum it merits just one mention as a sub-topic under the title 'The struggle for power in Britain'. Using the methodology described in appendix two, teachers should spend just 2.5 hours on 'the slave trade and the abolition of slavery, the role of Olaudah Equiano and free slaves'. This is significantly less than the 10 hours spent by Northern Comprehensive, but significantly more than SGS which ignores it completely³⁰. Slavery must take centre-stage in any serious discussion of the industrial revolution as part of a wider discussion about trade, industry and empire. In the draft curriculum the two are separated. Students are to learn about cotton mills without ever questioning why Britain was so well placed to take advantage of cheap cotton. It is fair to say that none of the three curricula communicate the interdependence of empire, slavery and industrialisation effectively, but Northern Comprehensive stands out in terms of the time spent on the slave trade.

5. Critical Reflection and Looking Forward

This was a small-scale study and, consequently, there was an inevitable trade-off between depth and breadth of comparison on which I struggled to find a balance. The scope might have been limited by over-interrogating one point of comparison; say, non-white history. Again, this would have narrowed the scope of the study, but would have produced an account which understated the influence of hegemony by reducing it to the most obvious manifestations of ideology. As Raymond Williams writes, 'Hegemony ... is truly total ... [it] saturates society to such an extent [that it] even constitutes the limits of commonsense for most people under its sway' (Williams, 1976: p.204). Hegemony is most insidious, therefore,

³⁰ It is worth pointing about Slave Trade was one of only six events named in the 2007 curriculum.

in those 'common sense' areas where it is hardest to identify rather than the most obviously ideologically-motivated aspects of the curriculum.

The principal problem with critical discourse as a method is the way in which it elevates the researcher's interpretation without regard for the author's intention. While it is true that there is frequently a disconnect between the intended (illocutionary) and actual (perlocutionary) effect of a text, that does not mean that we should simply disregard the author's stated intention as disingenuous or a product of false consciousness. The aspiring semiotician may feel that only he can uncover the true significance of a text, but there is always a danger that – as Stephen Ball points out – 'theory [can] become a mantric reaffirmation of belief rather than a tool for exploring and thinking otherwise' (Ball, 2006). Throughout the research process I was concerned that my inferences were unfair and I wanted to give the authors the opportunity to speak for themselves.

Ultimately, I feel that CDA is an appropriate tool to analyse the history curriculum because the debate so often takes place on the wrong level. Popular commentators fulminate about the inclusion or exclusion of this or that period of history without looking at the more significant question of how the past is represented and for whose purposes. As this study has shown, we must look at the words that are used and what these words are intended to signify, because it is in language that unequal relations of power are constituted and reproduced, and in language that social injustices may be challenged and overcome.

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• Appendix 1

Content Analysis of the Draft Curriculum and the curriculum of the two schools.
Numbers indicate nominal teaching hours.

	Draft NC	Northern Comp	Southern Grammar
Roman Empire		10	
Pre conquest England		2	5
Norman conquest		6	10
Medieval Kingship		10	6
Crusades			12
Edward I		1	6
Medieval society		6	8
Black Death		4	4
Peasants revolt		2	4
Tudors		14	16
Reformation		4	8
Stuarts and Civil War		14	16
Charles 2		2	4
1688			4
American Independence	1.875		6
English Enlightenment	7.5		
French Revolution	7.5		6
Industrialisation	7.5	2	6
19C Social conditions and social reform	12.5	6	6
Slave Trade	2.5	10	
High Victorian Era	7.5		
British Empire	20.625		2
Britain 1900-14	7.5		
World War One	7.5	16	16
Britain in the 20s and 30s	7.5		
America in the 1920s		10	
World War Two	5.625	6	14
Holocaust	1.875	12	4
Cold War	15		
Post war Britain	37.5		
Assassination of JFK		10	
	150	147	163

Appendix 2

Explanation of the methodology for calculating curriculum time

Both Northern Comprehensive and Southern Grammar teach 3 lessons of history in a two week period. Over the course of a 39 week school year this gives 175 hours of lessons. In reality, much of this teaching time is lost and so the number (approximately 150) of lessons outlined by each scheme of work is appropriate. IN both SGS's and Northern Comprehensive's Schemes of Work, the amount of time spent on each unit was detailed so that assessments could take place at regular intervals.

Since the National Curriculum is a policy document rather than a teaching document, it makes no recommendation about timings. The draft curriculum outlines 20 topics but gives no indication of the amount of time that should be spent on each topic. Assuming a 150 hour teaching year, we can divide the 20 topics into equal blocks of 7.5 hours teaching time. It is acknowledged that this is an imperfect methodology which assumes equal teaching time for each topic. The draft curriculum states that "The teaching of the content should be approached as a combination of overview and in-depth studies", but offers no suggestions about which topics are more important than others. In practice a teacher would manipulate this time in a way that this methodology takes no account of. But since we have no indication about how a given school would do this, we have to proceed on the notion that each topic is given equal weight.

Appendix 3

Leak of the Draft Curriculum to Daily Mail on 29th December 2012

From

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2254705/Gove-faces-war-equality-activists-axes-Labours-PC-curriculum-dropped-greatest-figures-history-lessons-Leaked-drafts-new-history-curriculum-emerge.html>

Accessed 10 April 2013

THEY'RE HISTORY...

PAST IT: From left: Mary Seacole, William Wilberforce, Amy Johnson, Olaudah Equiano and Florence Nightingale

...AND THEY'RE HERE TO STAY

THEIR TIME HAS COME: From left: Oliver Cromwell, Lord Nelson, Charles I, King John and Winston Churchill

From 5 to 14, what pupils will be taught

THIS is what pupils will be taught under the new curriculum:

KEY STAGE 1 (age 5 to 7)

- Pupils should be taught to place events in chronological order.
- Significant individuals such as explorers, scientists, rulers, saints, artists and inventors.
- Key events such as the Gunpowder Plot and the history of the Olympic Games.

KEY STAGE 2 (age 8 to 11)

- Ancient Greece, covering myths, culture and individuals including Alexander the Great.
- Rise and fall of the Roman Empire, including the conquest of Britain and aspects of daily life.
- Anglo-Saxon and Viking settlement; changes in religious belief (pagans and Christians); The Venerable Bede; development of a united English Kingdom including early Kings such as Alfred, Athelstan and Ethelred.

KEY STAGE 3 (age 11 to 14)

- Church, State and society in the medieval period, including the Norman Conquest, the feudal system and the growth of towns; Henry II and Becket; King John, the Barons, Magna Carta and the development of Parliament;
- Edward I and wars with Wales and Scotland; Hundred Years War; Black Death; Peasants' Revolt and Wars of the Roses.
- The Renaissance and Reformation in Britain; Henry VIII, Wolsey, More and the break from Rome; Elizabeth I; the English Civil Wars, trial and execution of Charles I; Cromwell; the Acts of Union.
- The emergence of Britain as a global power, including industrial growth; Reform Acts; the early British Empire in America and the Caribbean, expansion of Empire in Asia, Africa and Australia; the abolition of slavery.

- Foreign events: The French Revolution and Republic; the American War of Independence; Napoleonic France, including Nelson and Wellington.
- 20th Century: Developments in democracy, suffragettes and early liberal reforms; the First World War, the Armistice, the impact of the war on British society; the rise of the dictators Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin; Second World War including Churchill and the Holocaust; post-war creation of the Welfare State, immigration, the change from Empire to Commonwealth; Cold War; the emergence of the EU.

Appendix 4

Introduction to Southern Grammar School's Scheme of Work

All references that may help identify the school have been modified to provide anonymity.

*Southern Grammar School History Dept
Year 7 Scheme of Work reflecting new KS3 NC
Start Date: Sept 2008*

The new KS3 National Curriculum will start for Year 7 in Sept 2008 and this proposed scheme of work incorporates the key areas for development outlined in the History specific curriculum and also the aspects of the wider KS3 curriculum that SGS has chosen to focus on in the first three terms.

The History Curriculum has identified key processes, concepts and themes that need to be addressed and they are as follows

Processes

Enquiry
Using Evidence
Communicating

Concepts

Chronological Understanding
Cultural, Ethnic, Religious Diversity
Change and Continuity
Cause and Consequence
Significance
Interpretation

Themes

Power
England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales (EISW)
Movement and Settlement
Beliefs and Ideas
British Empire
Everyday Lives
Conflict

Full explanations of these titles are contained in the History curriculum attached and can also be found at <http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/index.aspx>

SGS has also identified 3 areas of the 'Big Picture' KS3 NC that we need to implement in Year 7 – thematic ideas that we need to include in lessons when appropriate. These are as follows

Sept to Oct 08

School Ethos Statement

Oct 08 to Feb 09

Identity and Cultural Diversity

Feb 09 to May 09

Healthy Lifestyles

Appendix 5

The only example of teaching the history of the developing world. From Northern Comprehensive Year 8 SoW.

<p>Year 8</p>	<p>41</p>	
<p><u>Objective:</u> <u>Key Question:</u> What was Africa like before the Slave Trade?</p>	<p><u>Continuation</u> What difference did the Slave Trade make to Africa? Read PPT slides and Case Study on Songhai Empire... How did the Slave Trade affect Benin? How did the Slave Trade affect Songhai?</p>	<p><u>Plenary</u> “In the broad field and long duration of negro life, not one civilisation has existed.” Josiah Nott Discussion: Is Josiah Nott right? Why do you think he said what he said?</p>
<p><u>Starter</u> What makes things makes us today more civilised than a cave man?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Arts • Trade • Currency • Religion • Law • Justice 	<p><u>Development</u> What were the main African civilisations?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Put the title <u>Africa before the Slave Trade</u> 2. Stick in your maps 3. Mark Benin on your maps. 4. Copy the table into your books. 5. Read Source A by <u>Leo Africanus, A history and description of Africa, 1526</u> <p>Q. What does this source tell you about the Songhai empire before the Europeans came? Use examples.</p> <p>Pupils should compare Songhai and Benin to the definitions of civilisations established in the starter.</p>	<p><u>Homework</u> None Set</p>