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A GRAMSCIAN STUDY OF WORKPLACE BULLYING AND HEGEMONIC POWER IN A MARKETISED UK PUBLIC SECTOR: AN EXPLORATION OF BULLIED TARGETS' PERSPECTIVES

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'I ask the political economists and the moralists if they have ever calculated the number of individuals who must be condemned to misery, overwork, demoralisation, degradation, rank ignorance, overwhelming misfortune, and utter penury in order to produce one rich man'.

(Almeida Garrett, 1799–1854)

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores workplace bullying and power relations in the UK public sector using a Gramscian theoretical framework. Whilst there have been calls to examine workplace bullying from a critical standpoint, which have been answered by several scholars (e.g. Beale & Hoel, 2007, 2011; Hutchinson, Vickers, Jackson, & Wilkes, 2006; Ironside & Seifert, 2003; Walton, 2005), there remains a paucity of research from a Gramscian perspective. Drawing upon Gramsci's theory of hegemony, this thesis offers insights into the material and ideological forces that have affected the UK public sector since the 1980s, and it explores workplace bullying in this context. The UK public sector environment is complex and the wider historical, political and socio-economic context surrounding it has had fundamental ramifications for public sector governance and management (Exworthy & Halford, 2011; Hood, 2010). Specifically, public sector policies and practices have been impacted significantly by the ascendancy of neoliberalism and New Public Management since the 1980s, and austerity policies since 2010 (Blyth, 2013; Evans & McBride, 2017). This thesis explores UK public sector bullied targets' experiences of workplace bullying in the neoliberal context, and how it is potentially legitimised and morally justified. The theoretical potential of using a Gramscian lens to analyse workplace bullying is empirically developed through qualitative research using semi-structured interviews with 25 targets of workplace bullying. The participants worked in various parts of the UK public sector when they were subjected to workplace bullying, including local government, the civil service, secondary, further and higher education institutions. Their responses were analysed using a combination of Fairclough's (1992) critical discourse analysis (CDA), incorporating key Gramscian concepts, and Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis (TA). The study suggests that workplace bullying can be understood as a manifestation of the reproduction of neoliberal hegemonic power relations in the UK public sector, leading to a marketised and managerialist organisational context. The result has been pressurised environments, exemplified by the imposition of business requirements and commodified public services, wherein management power over workers has intensified to achieve income and metricoriented objectives, creating the conditions for workplace bullying to occur. The thesis offers a theoretical contribution by using a Gramscian framework to analyse material and ideational forces that have impacted upon the UK public sector. In addition, a theoretical contribution to workplace bullying literature is made through the advancement of the notion of the moralistic bully (Zabrodska, Ellwood, Zaeemdar, & Mudrak, 2014), in the context of neoliberalism. A methodological contribution is claimed through combining Fairclough's (1992) CDA with the explicit deployment of Gramscian concepts in the CDA process, and with TA, to enhance analytical rigour. Finally, the thesis adds to critical workplace bullying literature by highlighting the influence of hegemonic power on public sector organisations and institutions, and its role in stimulating bullying.

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LIST OF DIAGRAMS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Description
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
HRM	Human Resource Management
NAQ	Negative Acts Questionnaire
NPG	New Public Governance
NPM	New Public Management
NPS	New Public Services
TA	Thematic Analysis
TU	Trade Union
TUC	Trades Union Congress

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas, and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been sought and approved. Approval was granted by the Faculty Ethics Committee on 18th July 2017.

I declare that the word count of this thesis is **87,495** words.

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Date:

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter One of this thesis presents an overview of the rationale for the workplace bullying thesis, and an outline of how the research has been conducted, exploring the overarching research question:

> What insights does a Gramscian framework offer to the study of workplace bullying and power relations in a marketised UK public sector, from the perspective of bullied targets?

The chapter begins by outlining the reasoning for adopting a critical perspective towards the study of workplace bullying and power relations. The chapter also highlights the academic, professional and intellectual interests that have influenced the thesis, concentrating on five key areas: workplace bullying, critical theory, power relations, Gramscian theory, and the UK public sector. The Gramscian theoretical framework and its key concepts are presented in this chapter. In addition, the organisational context of the thesis is explained. Furthermore, this chapter describes the methodological framework, including the research methods used, and provides a general overview of data analysis techniques. An outline of the overall research aims, objectives, main research question and five research sub-questions, are included in the chapter, as well as an overview of the structure and organisation of the thesis. Finally, the chapter concludes with a synopsis of the remaining chapters of the thesis.

1.2 PURPOSE AND APPROACH OF THE WORKPLACE BULLYING STUDY

This thesis explores workplace bullying and power relations in the UK public sector from a Gramscian perspective. In so doing, the thesis extends research studies on workplace bullying that adopt a critical perspective, thereby enabling a historical, political and socioeconomic contextualisation of the phenomenon. The thesis challenges and eschews orthodox organisational studies on workplace bullying, which are underpinned by two dominant approaches: functionalist psychological studies characterised by the identification of variables associated with personality traits (e.g. Coyne, Seigne, & Randall, 2000; Zapf & Einarsen, 2011); and interpretivist studies that have endeavoured to trace the meaning-making processes or emotional pain associated with workplace bullying (e.g. Baillien, Neyens, De White, & De Cuyper, 2009; Parzefall & Salin, 2010; Strandmark & Hallberg, 2007a; Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik, & Alberts, 2006). Although the range of analyses of workplace bullying from a critical perspective have increased over recent decades (e.g. Akella, 2016; Beale & Hoel, 2007, 2011; Hill & Lee, 2009; Hutchinson et al., 2006; Ironside & Seifert, 2003; Samnani, 2013; Sjøtveit, 1992; Walton, 2005), there remains a paucity of research of a critical theoretical nature. The ensuing research gap leaves potential and

space for critical scholars to analyse workplace bullying as an allegory for, or reflection of, the antagonism between capital and labour, which this thesis seeks to explore further. The historical, political and socio-economic context that overlays the workplace bullying study includes ideologically driven developments, which have been introduced in the UK public sector since the 1980s due to the ascendancy of capitalism, and in particular, the rise of neoliberalism. These ideologically driven developments, which continue to impact upon public sector governance and management to the present day, emanated from the proliferation of the policies of the New Right, associated with the election of Margaret Thatcher in the UK in 1979, and of Ronald Reagan in the US in 1981 (Hood, 2010). Furthermore, in the wake of the 2007–2008 financial, economic and fiscal crisis, this thesis examines the impact of austerity on UK public sector and argues that neoliberal policy has been reinforced through austerity measures, which have also stimulated workplace bullying. Hence, the study uses Gramscian theory to contextualise and position the analysis of workplace bullying and power relations, within the wider historical, political and socio-economic environment in which it occurs.

1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE THESIS

The reasons for selecting a topic for research often emerge from multifarious nuanced sources, including academic curiosities, professional experiences, and political interests. My motivations for pursuing workplace bullying research emanate from a combination of these factors. The rationale for drawing upon a Gramscian theoretical perspective stems from an interest in elucidating and critiquing the ways in which material forces and organisational structures of domination are ideologically produced, reproduced, legitimised and morally justified, and the implications for workplace bullying. Specifically, this thesis explores workplace bullying in the UK public sector utilising two broad concepts, namely hegemonic power relations and moralistic workplace bullying. The critical approach undertaken in this thesis assumes that relationships between these two concepts exacerbate and influence workplace bullying within the capital–labour relationship. This chapter begins to explain the theoretical underpinnings of the two broad concepts. The research participants in this study comprise 25 targets of workplace bullying from the UK public sector, and this chapter describes the methodological framework used to explore their perspectives. The next section extends my reasoning for undertaking this research study by providing a more detailed explanation and justification for analysing workplace bullying, the motivations for adopting an approach supported by critical theory incorporating power relations, an explanation of the Gramscian theoretical framework, and a justification for focusing on the UK public sector. Furthermore, the next section provides a general overview of my academic interests, motivations and self-reflections for analysing workplace bullying and power relations in the UK public sector, from a Gramscian perspective.

1.4 WHY WORKPLACE BULLYING?

Generally speaking, workplace bullying research increasingly falls under the rubric of what is termed 'the dark side of organisational studies', which includes topics such as workplace alienation, toxic leadership, employee rights violations, exploitative workplace conditions, bullying, and harassment (Griffin & O'Leary-Kelly, 2004; Linstead, Marechal, & Griffin, 2014). The dark side of organisational studies is an area that I am specifically interested in because of the way that it challenges dominant and mainstream organisational narratives. In addition, exploring subjects that constitute the dark side appeals to me because I believe societal inequities are replicated, reified and mirrored in the workplace, manifesting themselves in negative employee behaviours, including workplace bullying. Workplace bullying is a complex organisational phenomenon, which has received increasing attention from scholars and practitioners worldwide, predominantly focusing on the detrimental and negative impact it has upon bullied employees (e.g. Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Notelaers, 2009; Leymann & Gustafsson, 1996; Tracy et al., 2006). Specifically, workplace bullying is defined as involving situations where an employee is subjected to mistreatment over a prolonged period of time, from one or more colleagues, which could include managers, peers or subordinates, and where the bullied employee is unable to defend him/herself against the systematic mistreatment (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2011b; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018). Targets of workplace bullying report experiencing significant harm and distress, including a hostile working environment, feeling intimidated, lowered attitudinal strength, social isolation, economic jeopardy, and in many cases workplace ejection (Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts, 2007; Vartia, 2001). A substantial corpus of academic and practitioner workplace bullying research already exists, which has contributed immensely to understanding the individual, interpersonal, situational and social factors associated with bullying. Alternatively, this thesis seeks to address several calls within the workplace bullying literature (e.g. Akella, 2016; Einarsen, 2005; Hill & Lee, 2009; Samnani, 2013) to examine the phenomenon from a critical perspective, within its broader historical, political and socio-economic context, encompassing the role of power relations.

Examining contradictions in life, exploring organisational paradoxes, and analysing ostensibly contrasting ideas, appeals to me greatly. It was for precisely these reasons that I was drawn to the concept of the 'moralistic bully' (Zabrodska et al., 2014), and considered it to be a worthwhile notion to theoretically expand upon and empirically analyse. Moralistic bullying centres around the notion of perpetrators of workplace bullying exonerating themselves as acting morally, specifically by linking their behaviour to the maintenance of organisational norms and edicts (Bandura, 2002; Davies, 2011; Hutchinson, Vickers, Jackson, & Wilkes, 2010; Jenkins, Zapf, Winefield, & Sarris, 2012; Zabrodska et al., 2014). Semantically, I am drawn to the two words 'moralistic bully' juxtaposed, with seemingly

opposite meanings, and thereby driven to analysing more extensively their possible implications for understanding workplace bullying, using critical theory. In addition, the moralistic bullying notion resonates with some of my previous workplace experiences, including observation of colleagues and my personal experience of being subjected to hostile interactions by ostensibly scrupulous colleagues. Indeed, the perpetrators of the negative behaviours appeared to feel justified in their behaviour, and their conduct seemed to be legitimised by the organisation. These factors, coupled with my predilection towards investigating the darker, often veiled aspects of organisational life, as well as my interest in critical theory, have led to a deeper analytical focus on the topic of workplace bullying for this thesis. I also have an interest in examining how 'subjects', that is the targets and actors of workplace bullying, are potentially assimilated into the 'object', in this case the organisation, and seemingly absorb the dictates of external, ostensibly natural norms and narratives. Therefore, this workplace bullying study explores the complex societal processes and dialectical ideological forces that impact upon UK public sector organisations, and whether they stimulate bullying behaviour, and potentially enable actors to justify it as legitimise and/or moral. Approaches to researching workplace bullying remain largely uncritical rather than critical, although perspectives stemming from critical theory have grown (e.g. Akella, 2016; Beale & Hoel, 2007, 2011; Hill & Lee, 2009; Hutchinson et al., 2006; Ironside & Seifert, 2003; Samnani, 2013; Walton, 2005). Hence, this thesis seeks to extend critical perspectives of workplace bullying, incorporating an exploration of power relations.

1.5 WHY CRITICAL THEORY?

Adopting a critical theoretical perspective towards analysing organisational phenomena is a core facet of this thesis. The fundamental starting point of the thesis is that capitalist society is essentially unequal, exploitative, and characterised by asymmetric power relations. Therefore, this thesis is normative through my biases in terms of holding particularly anti-capitalist collectivist values, and a politically-oriented perspective – personal positions that chime with critical theoretical approaches. Critical theory, described in further detail in Chapter Two of this thesis, stems from Marxist theory and the Frankfurt School (Felluga, 2015). Thereby, critical theory provides a critique of dominant, mainstream philosophical and intellectual currents, including positivism, analytical philosophy, technological rationality, and a variety of forms of orthodox conformist thinking (Marcuse, 1964). In addition, it militates against conventional views of the individual, organisations and society, which are generated by ideologically dominant ahistorical, scientific, managerialist, and economically instrumental narratives, designed to maintain unequal power (Kelemen & Rumens, 2008). Critical theorists maintain that a primary goal of philosophy is to deconstruct, understand, and to help overcome the social structures through which people are dominated and oppressed (Adler, Forbes, & Willmott, 2007).

Domination is not considered to be episodic or discontinuous, rather domination is firmly established, often naturalised, taken for granted, and considered to be a fundamental component of power relations (Hearn, 2012). Therefore, a significant aspect of critical theory involves challenging mainstream conceptions, and placing naturalised forms of thought into their historical context (Felluga, 2015). Whilst undertaking undergraduate and postgraduate academic study, I had a penchant for particular concepts including power, ideology, oppression, inequality, exploitation, and resistance, which had the effect of eliciting intellectual excitement from me upon reading about them and propelled my inclination to delve further. Although I did not necessarily conceptualise these areas as constituting critical theory at the time, it is an area of academia that I have always had a proclivity for, and it assisted me to make sense of the world that I occupy, including my socially stratified place within it. Thus, this thesis contains a structural and institutional partiality, as opposed to a purely micro-level analysis, in relation to the analytical frameworks that it employs for the study of workplace bullying and power relations.

Uncritical thinking derives its beliefs, norms and values from existing ahistorical thought, and unchallenged social relations and practices (Marcuse, 1964). Uncontested social relations, in turn, create an un-reflected ordinariness to everyday life that grants power to some and deprives others of an equal, reasonable or viable existence (Butler, 2004; Deleuze, 1990). Adopting critical thinking means acknowledging the existence of material, human, or the socio-economic substratum that lies behind societal relations (Whisnant, 2012). Correspondingly, critical thought seeks alternative theoretical modes of philosophy, concepts and behaviour, from which it creates a standpoint of critique of social relations (Alvesson & Deetz, 2005). Plato's *Apology* tells how Socrates was condemned by the Athenian citizenry for articulating a viewpoint that was critical of the status quo, corrupting the morals of the young, and doubting the Gods (Bronner, 2011). Indeed, Socrates called conventional wisdom into question, subjected long-standing beliefs to rational scrutiny, and speculated about concerns beyond the existing accepted order (Bronner, 2011). I have a strong intellectual leaning towards critical theory, which was built upon this subversive Socratic legacy. Throughout my university education, I have been drawn towards academic writers (e.g. Arendt, 1958; Gramsci, 1971; Marx, 1894) who question the hidden assumptions underpinning orthodox theories, hence the critical perspective contained within this thesis. Although critical perspectives towards analysing workplace bullying are in their ascendancy, generally speaking, there remains a paucity of workplace bullying research emanating from a critical angle. Therefore, this thesis extends critically oriented workplace bullying research, incorporating power relations, particularly through the use of a Gramscian theoretical perspective and framework, which, despite some notable exceptions (e.g. Hill & Lee, 2009), has hitherto remained largely unexplored.

1.6 WHY POWER RELATIONS?

Power is a theoretically broad and conceptually deep concept, characterised by the supremacy of the prosperity of a few, coming at the expense of the oppression of many. Power is embedded in all institutions, language and human relationships, and constitutes a significant component of the way that societies operate (Clegg, 1989). Social relations are exemplified by power relations, but the inherent power is unequally distributed, with prominent groupings exerting power over others (Russell, 2004). The extant literature on power relations is extensive and a number of theorists (e.g. Foucault, 1977; French & Raven, 1959; Gramsci, 1971; Marx, 1894; Weber, 1978) have analysed the phenomenon from functionalist, interpretivist and critical perspectives, the latter of which includes structuralist and post-structuralist notions of power. Functionalist and interpretivist perspectives of power relations focus on agency, and depict power as something that individual subjects possess, wield, lose and gain, leading to an unproblematic embracement of the understanding of power (Acosta & Pettit, 2013). Post-structuralist perspectives regard discourse, power and knowledge as indivisible and anchored in the multiplicity of the micro-practices, which comprise everyday life in modern society (Foucault, 1977; Guillem, 2013). Structural perspectives, on the other hand, conceive power relations as embedded within dominant political and economic systems, within a single totalising socio-political apparatus (Clegg, 1989). Structural analyses seek to explain why individuals consent to systems of collective representations that do not serve their objective interests but legitimise existing power structures (Macey, 2001). Therefore, the focus is on explaining how the ruling class and prominent institutions indemnify, secure, maintain and perpetuate control, and to expose the falsity of internalised value judgements (Clegg, 1989). Chapter Two of this thesis outlines structural perspectives of power relations, encompassing significant contributions from Gramsci and Marx, in order to justify my usage of a Gramscian framework to analyse workplace bullying in the neoliberal context.

I am drawn to exploring how power relations sustain unequal relationships and in whose favour, how power relations detrimentally affect subordinate groups and marginalised subjects, and in what way these issues relate to workplace bullying. Related to these issues, I also seek to understand how organisations reproduce and legitimise societal power relations, and how they in turn engender negative relational interaction between employees, in this case workplace bullying. Although the concept of power has featured significantly in workplace bullying research, power tends to be conceptualised as an individual property (Zabrodska et al., 2014), rather than being analysed from a systemic or structural perspective. In other words, mainstream approaches to analysing power within workplace bullying situations present power as an individual commodity that bullies possess, and targets of bullying do not (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006). Critical research studies

on workplace bullying and power relations have adopted a historical and political emphasis, undertaken from both a Marxian perspective (e.g. Beale & Hoel, 2007; Berlingieri, 2015; Ironside & Siefert, 2003; Sjøtveit, 1992), and a Foucauldian perspective (e.g. Hutchinson et al., 2006; Valentine, 2014; Walton, 2005), which are the current dominant trends. Gramscian perspectives on workplace bullying and power relations, revolving around the notion that unequal systems are reproduced through the complexities of hegemony, however, remain limited – a research gap that I intend to address in this thesis. In this way, the thesis examines the more obscured forms of power that affect organisations and in turn, I argue, stimulate workplace bullying situations.

1.7 WHY ANTONIO GRAMSCI?

Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) was a political philosopher, politician and founder of the Italian Communist Party. Gramsci's considerable intellectual prowess is illustrated in articles he produced as a journalist for various socialist newspapers, and the *Prison Notebooks* (1929–1935), which he is renowned for writing whilst incarcerated in prison by the Italian Fascist regime (Rosengarten, 2015). At his trial in 1928, the prosecutor declared that Gramsci's brain must be stopped from working for 20 years, which signifies the threat he posed to the prevailing dominant power-holders at the time. Gramscian scholars have drawn upon his ideas in the *Prison Notebooks*, to make significant contributions to multidisciplinary academic studies worldwide, including cultural studies, international relations, linguistics, organisational studies, pedagogical studies, political economy, and political theory. Jubas (2010) and Green (2011) argue, as I also contend in this thesis, that Gramsci's work highlights a firm linkage between a theoretical framework, epistemology and methodology for the analysis of a variety of societal phenomena. Gramsci's (1971) original concepts, including that of hegemony, the state, subalternity, civil society, organic and traditional intellectuals, common sense, spontaneous grammar, and good sense, have stimulated academic analysis and debate amongst critical theorists. Gramsci's conceptualisations were given significant impetus and are underpinned by Marxist theory, and this is discussed in more detail in Chapter Two of this thesis. Gramsci's theory emanates from a Marxist standpoint of class struggle, without being forever circumscribed by all aspects of Marx's work (Cox, 1983). Instead, it revolves around the dialectical notion of direction or hegemony, as opposed to Marxist economic determinism. Economically determinist perspectives suggest that material economic forces determine, shape and define all aspects of a civilisation (Jones, 2006). Gramsci's analysis, however, focuses upon both the material and the ideational forces, which maintain social relations (Donoghue, 2017). He argued that the ruling class uses discursive processes within the superstructure to create popular consent for the unequal distribution of material power and wealth (Hoare & Sperber, 2016). Gramsci (1971) used the term 'hegemony' to describe the discursive construction of human consciousness and socially constructed reality.

My justification for using Gramscian theory to study workplace bullying and power relations is predicated upon the position that organisations are influenced by the ideology of the state, and by political and social structures (Bannerji, 1995: Clegg & Haugaard, 2009). Marxist belief conceives the state as above all coercive in character, however, Gramsci focused on states that are putatively democratic, incorporating a dominant ruling class, which governs using hegemonic power (Hawley, 1980). Hegemony is a form of discursive political logic that creates a consensus and naturalises power inequality into everyday reality (Jones, 2006). Instead of using force, the hegemonic power of the ruling class depends not entirely on economic strength but on the deployment of articulation and persuasion techniques, to exert its dominance (Arora, 2015; Machin & Mayer, 2012). Therefore, a distinguishing feature of Gramsci's theory is the suggestion that subordinated groups acquiesce to the moral, social and cultural values of the ruling class, not because they are physically or mentally induced to, or because they are ideologically indoctrinated, but because they have reasoning of their own (Strinati, 1995). In addition, Gramsci contended that power relations in the workplace render it the ideal environment to analyse the complex dialectic between power relations that advantage the ruling class, and reinforce workers' subjugated experiences (Jubas, 2010). Language is viewed as the mechanism through which ruling class ideology pervades society, and the means for establishing and maintaining power relations within organisations (Ives, 2004b). Meaning and practice are thus continually legitimised, sustained or resisted discursively (Green, 2011). Moreover, the more powerful individuals in organisations determine the practices, language and worldview of the workplace, based on societal norms and material forces, hence reifying unequal social relations (Carlucci, 2014).

1.8 WHY THE UK PUBLIC SECTOR?

Neoliberalism led to the prominence of New Public Management (NPM) in the 1980s in the UK public sector and worldwide (Lynch, 2014; Martinez, 2014; Pollitt, 1990). The associated marketisation of public services linked to market rationalities and forces, was supported by managerialism, which has reinforced management power and control over workers (Lane, 2000; Triantafillou, 2017). Subsequently, the UK public sector has undergone significant changes and successive reforms, purportedly to enhance its competitiveness, financial accountability and efficiency (Ball, 2003; Diefenbach, 2009). Changes to the public sector were encapsulated by the move from the UK state's Keynesian demand-led social and economic interventionist paradigm from 1945–1979, to a supply-side approach, incorporating the free market from 1980 onwards (Pollitt, 2010). Thereby, the central tenet of NPM public sector reform has been to introduce a private sector orientation and management culture to the delivery of public services, through a wide variety of quasi-market mechanisms (Ferlie, Ashburner, Fitzgerald, & Pettigrew, 1997). UK public sector service delivery has thus shifted from being premised on

longestablished legal rules and ethics of public service, to being more competitive and business-like (Riccucci, 2001; Ward, 2011). According to Hood (1995), the British experience of NPM has led to the erosion of the autonomy of public sector professionals within a traditionally highly professionalised sector, which has subsequently been typified by more assertive management techniques that mimic private sector approaches. Within this rapidly changing arena, public sector organisations have been increasingly expected to interface directly with the market, and are required to make a financial return from the commercial environment (Exworthy & Halford, 2011; Robinson, 2008; Skelcher, 2000). In addition, the 2007–2008 era of austerity, has resulted in significant budgetary reductions in public expenditure, leading to cuts in public services (Bramall, 2013). Hence, the commercial push has been compounded by the endemic rise of government cutbacks, legitimised by a neoliberal penchant for a marketised public sector, characterised by competition and profit.

Managerialism in the UK public sector has included the implementation of a variety of managerial techniques including explicit employee performance measures in quantitative terms, target setting for employees, an emphasis on competition for profit, and meeting income-oriented indicators (Diefenbach, 2009; Triantafillou, 2017; Ward, 2011). In addition, there has been an upsurge in unitarist ideologies in organisations, pivoting around individualism, as opposed to collectivism, accompanied by the suppression of trade union power (Abbott, 2006; Fox, 1966). Furthermore, the subversion of established patterns of workplace collectivism and decline in trade union membership has led to conformity to unitarist organisational cultures, igniting workplace bullying (Beale & Hoel, 2010; Hoel & Beale, 2006; Ironside & Siefert, 2003). Research studies have demonstrated that there has been an increase in workplace bullying in the public sector worldwide, including in the UK, associated with NPM-oriented changes and austerity (e.g. Hutchinson, 2011; Ironside & Siefert, 2003; Omari & Paull, 2015). Gramsci argued that Marxian approaches should be constantly applied to analyse new historical conditions (Kontinen, 2013). There remains a gap in the study of UK public sector workplace bullying, however, from a Gramscian power relations perspective in the context of the NPM and austerity-propelled changes. To address the gap, I analyse the implications of the imposition of the associated NPM-oriented and austerity policies on the UK public sector, and argue that they stimulate workplace bullying. In addition, I contend that austerity has reinforced the retrenchment of state welfare to justify reductions in the public sector, leading to organisational environments that generate workplace bullying, outlined in Chapter Three. A further incentive for concentrating on the UK public sector relates to my extensive experience of working in public sector organisations, which has enabled access to a research participant pool through my personal and professional contacts. This access would ordinarily be difficult to achieve, given the contentiousness and sensitivity of the workplace bullying issue.

1.9 THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE THESIS

The Gramscian theoretical assumptions of this thesis are that power relations are historicised, socially constructed, systemic, and constituted by material and discursive ideological forces. Additionally, this thesis considers power relations at interconnected levels, that is, societal, organisational and individual levels, to provide a holistic theoretical framework for examining workplace bullying. Indeed, Akella (2016), and Hill and Lee (2009) highlight that if workplace bullying is explored from a macro perspective, better insights regarding why it is enacted within the workplace could be gained. They also argue that examining individual subjectivities of workplace bullying within context and structure, enriches its understanding. Gramscian theory is used to analyse changes to the UK public sector since the 1980s because of its utility in examining the historical, political and socioeconomic context. Gramsci was Marxian in his conceptions of power relations incorporating capital power over labour, exploitative capital accumulation processes and surplus value (Rupert, 2006), concepts that underpin the theoretical framework. Furthermore, Gramsci's concepts of hegemony, the ruling class, subalternity, the state, civil society, organic and traditional intellectuals, common sense, spontaneous grammar, and good sense, outlined in Chapter Two, are drawn upon to analyse the impact of neoliberal policy on the UK public sector, and the implications for workplace bullying. In accordance with the Gramscian framework, the study highlights state power that perpetuates neoliberal material dominance through hegemonic forces, outlined in Chapter Three of this thesis. Therefore, NPM is conceptualised as essentially an ideologically driven, hegemonic political project, propelled by economically instrumentalist narratives, designed to advance neoliberalism, which has altered the public sector in significant ways (Evans & McBride, 2017).

Gramscian theory is argued to be applicable to the workplace, premised on the notion that organisations are not disembodied, or impervious to external ideological and political forces (Bannerji, 1995; Clegg & Haugaard, 2009), outlined in Chapter Two. Gramsci's concepts are used to analyse the implications of neoliberalism on the UK public sector's governance and management, outlined in Chapter Three. Specifically, the power relations analysis concerns both the implementation of neoliberal policy through NPM, and how the marketisation of the UK public sector, predicated upon commercially normative assumptions, and managerialism, have affected workplace bullying situations. Therefore, the critical theoretical lens enables an analysis of how the irreconcilable imposition of private sector practices upon the public sector, within an increasingly pressurised UK public sector, have exacerbated workplace bullying. In addition, the Gramscian conceptual framework with its emphasis upon organisational norms that are socially constructed, facilitates an analysis of how workplace bullying is potentially legitimised within organisations, outlined in Chapter Two. Furthermore, I argue that considering the

dynamics of how hegemonic power relations impact on individual subjectivities, and analysing moralistic workplace bullying in the context of NPM, enhances the concept, also outlined in Chapter Two. Finally, a Gramscian analysis towards workplace bullying and power relations, incorporating the concept of hegemony, is a theoretical approach to examining bullying that has been largely unexplored, hence its adoption in the thesis.

1.10 THE ORGANISATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT OF THE THESIS

The qualitative research undertaken for this thesis included 25 participants who identified as experiencing workplace bullying in the UK public sector, denoted in this thesis as 'bullied targets'. Increasingly, many scholars within the workplace bullying field do not refer to individuals who have experienced bullying as 'victims', which can be perceived as a label that signifies a pathology, and adds to feelings of helplessness (Magley, Hulin, Fitzgerald, & DeNardo, 1999; Zabrodska et al., 2014). The types of UK public sector organisations that the participants worked within when the workplace bullying occurred included local government, the civil service, secondary, further and higher education institutions. The participant pool consisted of a heterogeneous group of targets of workplace bullying with differing professional statuses and occupational groupings, including managers and employees.

1.11 THE METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE THESIS

Due to the thesis being positioned within Gramscian theory, the associated research framework is consistent with Gramscian ontological and epistemological presuppositions, and methodological principles, explored in further detail in Chapter Four. Gramsci's ontological position includes the mediation of the excesses of an overly materialistic or overly idealistic interpretation of reality (Hill, 2008). Gramsci viewed reality as a historical relationship between human beings, and conceived reality as socially constructed, and modified by humans in relation to each other (Femia, 1981). Therefore, Gramsci's ontological position injected human consciousness into the reality of the social world. In addition, he rejected the notion of a singular truth or knowledge in an objective external world (Wolff, 1989). Epistemologically, Gramsci distanced himself from the reductionism and economism associated with classical Marxism in the 1920s (Green, 2011; Phelan & Dahlberg, 2014). Instead, Gramsci suggested a more complex analysis of knowledge, combining ideological, political, cultural and economic relationships (Green, 2011). Hence, Gramsci's epistemological position highlights the historical situatedness of knowledge, conceptualising knowledge as subjective and multiple, rather than objective and singular (Ayers, 2008; Jubas, 2010). Furthermore, Gramsci's epistemological position pivots around the social determination of knowledge (Zanoni, 2008). Accordingly, this thesis adopts a subjective and social constructionist perspective towards the study of workplace bullying. Workplace bullying studies drawing on social constructionism have demonstrated

that workplace bullying does not simply reside at the individual level (e.g. Lewis, 2002). Instead, power relations are conceived of as a dynamic force linked to the ways in which meaning is created, reproduced, and enacted in organisational settings (Zabrodska et al., 2014). The research paradigm used in this thesis is Fairclough's (1992) critical discourse analysis (CDA) due to its focus on the social and political context for analysing a range of phenomena, and its utility for providing a holistic framework for the workplace bullying study. The specific type of CDA that I employ is Gramscian CDA using three readings, described in detail in Chapter Four. Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis (TA) is also utilised to identify, analyse and highlight themes within the primary data. Finally, an inductive approach, which captured the essence of the workplace bullying experience, and an abductive approach, which entailed oscillating between analysing the empirical data and Gramscian theory, were used for data analysis in the research study. Ultimately, this thesis adopts a methodological and analytical approach, which aligns with the critical Gramscian perspective that underpins the workplace bullying and power relations study.

1.12 OVERARCHING RESEARCH AIMS, OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTION AND SUB-QUESTIONS

OVERALL RESEARCH AIM:

- To critically explore workplace bullying and power relations from the perspective of bullied targets in a marketised UK public sector, using a Gramscian theoretical framework.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

- To locate and synthesise the research into a Gramscian theoretical perspective, and to demonstrate the applicability of Gramsci's concepts to the study of workplace bullying and power relations, through a review of existing literature from disparate philosophical orientations.
- To locate the workplace bullying research in its historical, political, and socioeconomic context, through a Gramscian analysis of the impact of neoliberalism on the UK state and public sector.
- To develop an appropriate methodological framework, suitable research methods and data analytical approach in line with the Gramscian philosophical perspective adopted, in order to gather and critically assess the empirical data from bullied targets.
- To undertake effective interpretation, evaluation and representation of data in a way that enables an understanding of the lived experience of bullied targets, reliable contextualisation, and thorough analysis of the research findings.

- To provide original theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions to the study of workplace bullying and power relations in a marketised UK public sector. The research aims and objectives are focused by a central research question:

- What insights does a Gramscian framework offer to the study of workplace bullying and power relations in a marketised UK public sector, from the perspective of bullied targets?

The central research question is supplemented by five research sub-questions:

- In what ways do bullied targets conceptualise workplace bullying?
- In what ways, if any, have ideological forces influenced workplace bullying situations and experiences in the UK public sector?
- In what ways, if any, have power relations affected the workplace bullying situation?
- In what ways, if any, is workplace bullying legitimised by the organisation?
- In what ways, if any, is the workplace bullying justified as acting morally?

1.13 SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS CONTAINED WITHIN THE THESIS

Chapter One has provided an overview of the workplace bullying study.

Chapter Two provides a critical overview of workplace bullying literature, with an emphasis upon workplace bullying studies that utilise critical theory and examine power relations. The chapter culminates in providing a rationale for adopting a Gramscian theoretical and conceptual framework for examining workplace bullying in the UK public sector.

Chapter Three places the thesis in the historical, political and socio-economic context of the ideologically driven changes to the UK public sector since the 1980s, which additionally allows for an explicitly critical approach to analysing public sector workplace bullying. Chapter Three critically reviews the academic literature on the changes to the UK public sector, including their impact on organisational policies, practices and cultures, with a particular focus upon NPM-driven approaches and the politics of austerity. In addition, the chapter provides an overview of workplace bullying research in the public sector worldwide, followed by a focus upon research into UK public sector workplace bullying, and how this study proposes to extend extant research.

Chapter Four outlines the research methodology, research strategy and design, and methods that guide this thesis. It specifically outlines the research philosophy I have adopted, particularly examining Gramsci's ontological and epistemological positions. The chapter includes a justification of the chosen research philosophy; an outline of the chosen research approach and strategy; and a description of the research instrument utilised to

conduct the research, including its benefits and limitations. In addition, Chapter Four outlines the primary data collection research methods used and sources of secondary data. Furthermore, a discussion takes place about the ethical considerations inherent in the research, including how the thesis takes account of and overcomes any inherent ethical issues raised. Chapter Four builds upon the methodological framework by outlining the justification for the usage of CDA and TA as the main forms of analysis of the primary data generated in the research study.

Chapters Five and Six contain the findings of the workplace bullying study, including bullied targets' experiences and accounts. The chapters allow the analysis to highlight how various historical, political and socio-economic factors influence UK public sector organisations, and stimulate workplace bullying. They also provide an outline of the data, elements of convergence and divergence across groups and sites, and key areas of concern. The chapters help to address the main arguments and contribution of the thesis by analysing the influence of market-oriented UK public sector developments on workplace bullying.

Finally, Chapter Seven builds upon the findings chapters by incorporating the main theoretical concern of paying attention to how societal power relations may be reproduced organisationally and stimulate workplace bullying. Chapter Seven recapitulates the overall research aim, research objectives and research sub-questions, and evaluates and interprets the findings from this thesis. Therefore, the chapter synthesises the thesis, and provides explanations by integrating the findings with the empirical research and theory discussed in Chapters Two and Three. In doing so, it establishes the theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions to knowledge of this thesis. In addition, the chapter presents the conclusions drawn from this thesis, emphasising the contribution to knowledge provided by this empirical study. Finally, the limitations of the workplace study are explored, incorporating reflexivity, before considering the significance of the findings for future research on workplace bullying.

1.14 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter One has introduced the author, the research topic, and the rationale for the thesis, including details of the personal, professional and theoretical influences that have shaped its development. The critical approach towards analysing workplace bullying in the UK public sector has been introduced, including the justification for adopting a Gramscian perspective. In addition, the two main concepts of hegemonic power relations and moralistic workplace bullying have been identified. Chapter One also states the overarching research aims, objectives and research sub-questions. The chapter concludes with an overview of the structure of the thesis, incorporating a synopsis of the thesis chapters. Chapter Two is the first of two literature reviews underpinning the study,

including a detailed critical evaluation of the literature on workplace bullying and power relations. Chapter Three outlines the historical, political and socio-economic developments that have impacted upon the UK public sector. In so doing, Chapters Two and Three present the theoretical and conceptual framework shaping the thesis.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW: WORKPLACE BULLYING, CRITICAL THEORY, POWER RELATIONS, AND GRAMSCI

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter critically evaluates the literature on workplace bullying, beginning with an outline of the predominant psychological literature, followed by the importance of researching workplace bullying using critical theory. The chapter subsequently outlines a core concept contained within this thesis – that of the moralistic bully. The focus shifts to discussing the concept of power relations, as well as describing themes that have emerged from studies of workplace bullying from a power relations perspective. A justification is then provided for adopting a Gramscian perspective towards analysing workplace bullying in the UK public sector, within a neoliberal context. Therefore, this chapter contributes towards meeting the first research objective:

> To locate and synthesise the research into a Gramscian theoretical perspective, and to demonstrate the applicability of Gramsci's concepts to the study of workplace bullying and power relations, through a review of existing literature from disparate philosophical orientations.

2.2 WORKPLACE BULLYING ORIGINS, RESEARCH AND TERMINOLOGY

Research on workplace bullying has increased significantly during recent decades, accompanied by a burgeoning recognition that it is a pervasive and injurious feature of modern workplaces (Hutchinson et al., 2006; Nielson & Einarsen, 2018). Over time an international research community has emerged, resulting in an extensive corpus of workplace bullying studies (Leong, 2016). During the 1970s, Brodsky was one of the first researchers to explore workplace bullying in seminal work that described the 'harassed worker' (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018). Subsequently, during the 1980s, Scandinavian researchers analysed the prevalence of negative interpersonal interactions in the workplace, and also investigated the impact of bullying on those subjected to the behaviour (e.g. Olweus, 1978; Roland, 1989; Roland & Munthe, 1989). Until the 1990s, interest in bullying was largely confined to the Nordic countries, with only a restricted number of publications available in English. Public interest in workplace bullying, however, expanded rapidly from country to country (Nielson & Einarsen, 2018). In particular, Leymann's work during the 1990s on workplace conflict and mobbing was pivotal in contributing towards the ascendancy of interest in the phenomenon of workplace bullying worldwide (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2011a). Leymann established the world's first Work Trauma Clinic in Sweden in the 1980s, and documented mental trauma resulting from sustained 'psychological terrorisation' in the workplace (Namie, 2003). Leymann's research was influenced by Olweus (1978, 1993), who undertook large-scale empirical research on

bullying amongst school pupils, originally spurred on by the death by suicide of three adolescent boys who had been the targets of bullying in Norway in 1983 (Namie, 2003). This ignominious event led to the escalation of workplace bullying research globally.

The terminology that has been adopted to describe workplace bullying worldwide is varied, underpinned by commonality in relation to its overall general definition. Leymann (1990) coined the term 'mobbing' to describe hostile, unethical behaviour, which is directed in a systematic way by one or more individuals towards another defenceless individual, who is consequently forced into a powerless position. Examination of the academic literature reveals that the latter definition has retained longevity, thereby forming the fulcrum of understanding in the majority of workplace bullying studies to the present day. The term 'mobbing' has been widely adopted in Scandinavian and German-speaking countries, albeit the term 'bullying' is increasingly being used interchangeably with it, by both academics and practitioners (Hoel & Beale, 2006). The terminology used in the USA and Canadian contexts tends to be 'work mistreatment' or 'emotional abuse', whereas Southern European countries are inclined to refer to 'moral harassment' or 'harassment' (Einarsen et al., 2011a). Bullying is the preferred term in the majority of English-speaking countries, and remains in ubiquitous usage in the UK, the Republic of Ireland and Australia (Hoel & Beale, 2006). That being said, Lewis, Bentley, and Teo (2017) refer to 'workplace ill-treatment' that encompasses bullying, and Sprigg, Martin, Niven, and Armitage (2010) use the overarching term 'unacceptable behaviour', which incorporates a range of negative workplace interactions, including bullying. The term 'workplace bullying', however, has achieved durability and was originally coined by the British journalist Andrea Adams in 1988, who raised awareness about its impact on heightened adulthood stress levels. The work of the Andrea Adams Trust was superseded by several large-scale national surveys, which documented that workplace bullying is a problem in the UK (Hoel & Cooper, 2001; Ironside & Siefert, 2003). Correspondingly, 'workplace bullying' is the terminology that is adopted in this thesis.

2.3 WHAT IS WORKPLACE BULLYING?

Workplace bullying is a complex organisational issue, which has been depicted by numerous researchers (e.g. Aquino & Thau, 2009; Baillien et al., 2009; Fox & Stallworth, 2005; Glaso, Matthiesen, Neilsen, & Einarsen, 2007; Heames, Harvey, & Treadway, 2006), writing often from a psychological perspective. In general terms, workplace bullying is a situation in which one or more persons, referred to as targets, are repeatedly and persistently subjected to negative behaviour, or hostile interactions, by one or several others, referred to as perpetrators or actors of bullying (Zabrodska et al., 2014). Similarly, the conventions adopted in this thesis are 'bullied targets' and 'bullying actors'. The enacted manifestations of workplace bullying include supervisory abuse of employees

(Zapf, Einarsen, Hoel, & Vartia, 2003), horizontal bullying, with peer-to-peer colleagues joining forces against the target (Lewis & Sheehan, 2003), or more rarely 'bullying upwards' where employees abuse a higher-level organisational member (Branch et al., 2007; McCarthy et al., 2002). Several principal hallmarks characterise the workplace bullying phenomenon. Harm is a feature resulting from deliberate or unconscious behaviour perpetrated by bullying actors, incorporating public humiliation, false accusations, criticism, ridicule, gossip, personal insults, social isolation, slander, scapegoating, silent treatment, rumour spreading and condemnation (Einarsen et al., 2009; Fox & Stallworth, 2010; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006). In addition, bullying includes a temporal dimension whereby the negative behaviour is persistent, frequent, and sustained over time (Samnani, Singh, & Ezzedeen, 2013). Workplace bullying also ensues specifically where targets have difficulties defending themselves against negative behaviours or hostile interactions. In other words, the dynamic of two persons of approximately equal strength in conflict does not constitute bullying (Einarsen & Skogstad, 2005). Therefore, bullying differs from one-time aggressive, uncivil, or discriminatory acts where the original target has the capacity to retaliate, and reverse positions with the actor (Anderson & Pearson, 1999; Rylance, 2001). The impact of the negative behaviours is another hallmark, encompassing the stigmatisation, isolation and victimisation of bullied targets (Leymann, 1996; Vartia, 2001). Furthermore, power disparity is a distinguishing feature of workplace bullying, marked by a recognition of the asymmetric power imbalance between actors and targets (Keashly & Jagatic, 2003). Ultimately, the adverse effect of the workplace bullying behaviour includes creating an untenable humiliating, intimidating, or frightening environment for the target (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006).

During the 1980s and 1990s, workplace bullying was investigated predominantly from an individual psychology perspective, comprising a personality trait and individual characteristic outlook, and a social psychology perspective, comprising a situational or interpersonal conflict analysis (Akella, 2016). Consequently, the focus was on the severe psychological problems experienced by the victims, accompanied by an examination of their personality traits as contributory factors (Einarsen et al., 2011a). This approach included explorations of victim pathology, supplemented by therapeutic recommendations in support of bullied targets (Hoel & Beale, 2006). In addition, the early era of workplace bullying research emphasised the negative personality trait typologies of bullies, including emotional instability and susceptibility towards aggression, arguing that these factors predisposed individuals towards bullying (Hutchinson et al., 2010). As research into the workplace bullying phenomenon extended, Leymann (1993, 1996) argued against the focus on individual characteristics, especially when related to the potentiality for target blame, or on actors' personality traits. Instead, Leymann advocated an interpersonal situational outlook, or social psychology perspective, whereby organisational factors

related to leadership ability, poor conflict management, work design and organisational morale, were proposed as salient factors (Einarsen et al., 2011a).

Social psychological analysis of workplace bullying extended the field away towards a relatively wider focus. Indeed, supplementary factors, such as role conflict, toxic leadership, micro-politics and organisational culture, which perpetuate workplace bullying have been considered, including its negative impact on employee health and well-being (Einarsen et al., 2003). Despite the social psychology emphasis incorporating additional layers of analysis beyond that of personality traits, it remains limited. The analytical focus of social psychological research has resulted in an understanding of workplace bullying as fundamentally an interpersonal conflict phenomenon (Akella, 2016). Therefore, social psychology approaches continue to highlight the individual and dyadic levels of the phenomenon. Viewing social relations at the micro-level as a causation factor for workplace bullying, however, obfuscates the reality that external societal factors construct organisational social relations (Berlingieri, 2015). As Smith (2005) highlights, *the social* is not an entity that exists externally separate to individuals; instead, individuals' capacities to act derive from the organisational environment, and social relations that they produce, and are produced by. Contrastingly, the very nature of social psychological research assumes an interpersonal, relational process, and leads to the persistence of workplace bullying analysis at the individual level (Liefooghe, 2001). Hence, there has been an ontological and epistemological disinclination to examine workplace bullying in a world complicated by history, ideology, and power relations (Huddy, 2001).

2.4 WHAT IS CRITICAL THEORY?

Critical theory, stemming from Marxist theory and the Frankfurt School, is a social and political movement founded in 1923, consisting of German philosophers, historians, sociologists and economists, with the aim of advancing Western European Marxist studies in Germany (Bronner, 2011). Horkheimer, who became the Director of the Frankfurt School in 1930, is regarded as the pioneer who brought together intellectuals to construct the interdisciplinary basis for a critical theory of society, serving as an instrument of social transformation (Kellner, 1990). The term 'critical theory' was coined in 1937, which followed the emigration of the majority of Frankfurt School members to the United States due to Hitler's instant dictatorship of Germany as the Führer, a position that he retained until 1945 (Giri, 2009). Initially, critical theory was the code word for the Frankfurt School's Marxism, and its endeavour to articulate a radical social theory rooted in Hegelian-Marxian dialectics, accompanied by a critique of the socio-historical processes associated with the iniquitous power dynamics of capitalism (Kellner, 1990). During the 1930s and 1940s, the Frankfurt School embarked on developing a theory of exploitative capitalist society, which would build upon, update, and extend beyond classical Marxism (Kellner, 1990).

Significantly, Adorno and Horkheimer's publication *Dialectic of enlightenment* emerged in 1944, which signalled the first major indictment and critique of modernity, a historical period characterised by the prioritisation of individualisation, efficiency, and economic rationalisation (Felluga, 2015). Therefore, critical theory adopts a critique of capitalist ideology, which is oppositional in that it exposes the historical roots and vicissitudes of the capitalist mode of production, including the distortions and mystifications that it perpetuates (Kellner, 1990).

Although critical theory was conceived of within the intellectual crucible of Marxism, it became less concerned with Marx's focus on the economic base (Bronner, 2011). Instead, critical theory sought to explain the failings of modern capitalist society in terms of the Marxian notions of alienation, reification, and spiritual impoverishment (Stoten, 2013). Alienation is the contention that modern industrial production under capitalist conditions renders workers estranged from the output of the production process, having putative control of their lives, and as alienated souls, conscious of themselves as divided beings (Roach, 2009). Alienation is supported by the reification of social relations within the ideological dynamics of social production, leading to workers entering relations of production that become naturalised, indispensable, and independent of their will, resulting in the control and manipulation of workers (Felluga, 2015). Consequently, spiritual impoverishment ensues due to the obfuscation and rationalisation of the relations of production, leading to workers lacking an autonomous identity, separate from the production process. Workers are induced to participate in their own oppression, ultimately deflecting attention away from the active promotion of a unified workers' consciousness (Gramsci, 1971; Schmidt, 1981). Critical theory's philosophical impact has extended worldwide, and in broad terms it is a transformative project with a radical imperative that is directed towards universal human emancipation (Klikauer, 2015), and a society without power relation abuses and injustices (Felluga, 2015). This thesis proposes that critical theory enhances the analysis of workplace bullying by contextualising it within its historical, political and socio-economic environment, thereby exposing exploitative working conditions, which potentially generate workplace bullying.

2.5 WORKPLACE BULLYING AND CRITICAL THEORY

The growing body of workplace bullying research draws additionally from a critical theory perspective, developed within a broader societally contextualised approach (e.g. Akella, 2016; Hill & Lee, 2009; Hoel & Beale, 2006; Ironside & Seifert, 2003; Sjøtveit, 1992). Thus, subsequent research has also focused on a historical, political and socio-economic analysis of the workplace bullying phenomenon, analysing it as a deleterious feature of capitalist economic and industrial organisation (Einarsen et al., 2011a). Within the UK, workplace bullying research using critical theory has principally been undertaken in the

industrial relations context, hence locating workplace bullying within the exploitative capital-labour process (e.g. Beale & Hoel, 2007; Ironside & Seifert, 2003; Rayner, 1997). Internationally, workplace bullying research using critical theory has tended to concentrate on bullying within educational settings (e.g. Hutchinson et al., 2006; Valentine, 2014; Walton, 2005), and healthcare services (e.g. Johnson, 2015). Critical theory provides a platform for debating radical alternatives, whilst interrogating established power relations, control, domination and ideology between capital and labour, as well as the relations between society, organisations and workers (Alvesson & Willmott, 2012). Although the developing critical theory standpoint on workplace bullying is relatively new, it accommodates the social and economic inequalities inherent within neoliberal society, as opposed to purely micro-level or interpersonal analyses. Consisting of diverse strands, the common core of critical theory is a deep scepticism towards the moral defensibility and social sustainability of prevailing conceptions of mainstream organisational theory (Adler et al., 2007). That being said, there remains a paucity of analysis on workplace bullying from a critical theory perspective (Samnani, 2013). Therefore, potential and space exists for researchers to analyse workplace bullying as an allegory for the antagonism between capital and labour (Samnani, 2013). Accordingly, this thesis enhances and develops understanding of workplace bullying from a critical perspective.

2.6 PSYCHOLOGISATION, DETERMINISM AND PATHOLOGY

Psychological research has been important in terms of enabling an understanding of the inherent nature of workplace bullying at the micro-level of agency, including its fundamental hallmarks. Psychological theories, however, neglect an analysis of workplace bullying as an endemic feature of the capitalist employment relationship (Akella, 2016; Soylu, 2010). Giddens (1991) uses the term 'psychologisation' to refer to the disembodied analysis of organisational phenomena at the individual level; and Makinen (2014) argues that the associated individualisation draws attention away from structural and political issues. In addition, the majority of psychological research is underpinned by a functionalist, positivist paradigm, whereby social phenomena, which are regarded as real, objective, and observable to individuals, are amenable to empirical scientific analysis utilising reliable, verifiable, and precise research instruments (Comte, 1968). The associated approach to social science is deterministic, through its implication that one variable, for example, personality type, causes another variable, that is, workplace bullying to occur (Samnani, 2013). The determinism also stems from purporting that workplace bullying can be objectively measured through the usage of an inventory of negative pathological behaviour (Fox, Prilleltensky, & Austin, 2009). Indeed, a central focus of traditional workplace bullying research is to provide individualised practical solutions for workplace behavioural issues. Therefore, traditional workplace bullying research has been undertaken at the expense of historical, political and socio-economic contextualisation of

bullying, or an analysis of structural class inequalities, albeit this is an area that has developed (e.g. Akella, 2016; Hill & Lee, 2009; Ironside & Seifert, 2003; Sjøtveit, 1992). An examination of workplace bullying as an endemic feature of the capitalist employment relationship – an approach taken in this thesis – will also enable an analysis of power relations, and is pursued to provide additional insights into the phenomenon.

Pathological approaches render bullying as indicative of psychogenic abnormal behaviour, or personality disorders, whose manifestation includes eschewing the organisation's moral compass or norms. Hence, in broad terms, the workplace bully is regarded as recognisable, possessing attributes that sit outside accepted organisational behavioural standards, often demarcated by evocative adjectives such as 'deviant', 'abhorrent' and 'toxic' (Walton, 2005). The focus on identifiable workplace bullies has positioned the individual as the main unit of analysis, and the organisation conceptualised as acting as the condemning backdrop, rather than an enabler (Liefooghe & Mackenzie Davey, 2001). In turn, this approach has exerted a profound influence on the practices adopted by organisations to counter workplace bullying, including assisting bullying actors to develop empathy for others, equipping targets with remediating assertiveness or social skills, and staging personalised interventions when problems occur (Berlingieri, 2015; Walton, 2005). Research findings have revealed an inconsistent pattern of results, however, specifically little significant change in empathy or assertiveness, when such strategies are implemented (Walton, 2005). The pathological approach includes a traditional conception of overt workplace bullying as consisting of extreme, disturbing, easily identifiable evil deeds and transgressions (Walton, 2005). This is problematic because bullies in the workplace are not necessarily obvious, can be difficult to detect, and may blend into the organisational fabric or culture (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2010; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007). Furthermore, Salin (2003) and Sidle (2009) argue that high internal competition, reward systems, and expected benefits can operate as motivating factors for engaging in workplace bullying. Therefore, workplace bullying could be legitimised by the organisation, a fundamental argument and point of analysis explored within this thesis.

The preponderance of individual and interpersonal analysis in the orthodox workplace bullying literature, operates in terms that abstract individuals from their relations to the external societal environment, and naturalises organisational reality (Berlingieri, 2015; Burge, 1986). Contrastingly, Braverman (1974) highlights that the naturalisation of organisational reality has more to do with ensuring the real subordination of labour to capital. Yet within mainstream workplace bullying theory, the existing order within organisations is largely encapsulated uncritically, and is considered to be legitimise in terms of pursuing the technical efficiency of advanced industrial processes. Within this context, workplace bullying is condemned as an anathema, rather than being conceived of as a generative product of those very processes, a notion explored within this thesis.

Working definitions of workplace bullying that revolve around the pathology of the target and actor, as opposed to a sociogenic focus upon societal forces, are thus limited in their analysis (Walton, 2005). For instance, Boddy (2011) argues that bullying is more prevalent within organisations that have a higher presence of corporate psychopaths, despite psychopaths only representing 1% of the employee population. In other words, the traditional conceptualisations reinforce the notion that bullying is attributed to pathological individuals, who overtly harm their targets, and explicitly abuse their position of power over others due to specific personal characteristics or traits (Davies, 2011; Fanti & Kimonis, 2012). Such perspectives are supported by a notion of workplace bullying that is psychological, behavioural and individualistic, rather than social or political (Walton, 2005).

2.7 THE MORALISTIC WORKPLACE BULLY, EXTERNAL FORCES, AND ORGANISATIONAL

Pernicious conduct can be constructed as personally and socially acceptable, by portraying it to the outside world as serving socially worthy or moral purposes. Researching school-based bullying, Davies (2011) highlights the social world as being exemplified by a normative moral order that imposes prescribed conduct and values, which are regarded by those that bully as universal, and hence not open to challenge. Similarly, rather than viewing bullying as pathological, Bandura (2002) recasts it as an excessive and misguided defence of the dominant normative order, which thereby enables actors of bullying to maintain a self-image of moral probity, despite engaging in negative interactions. Thus, actors operating on a supposedly moral imperative, are able to preserve a view of themselves as organisational moral agents, whilst simultaneously inflicting harm on others (Bandura, 2002). The accompanying portrait of a 'moralistic bully', a key concept analysed within this thesis, differs considerably from conceptualisations of bullying actors as immoral psychopaths (Zabrodska et al., 2014). Robson and Witenberg (2013), examining bullying amongst school pupils, highlight misguided moral justification and diffusion of responsibility as being key attributes of bullying actors, when providing an explanation for their behaviour. Furthermore, Bloch (2012) asserts that actors engage in moral condemnation of bullied targets, typically classifying them as violators of organisational norms; thereupon triggering emotions of contempt, anger and disgust (Haidt, 2003), which consequently become converted into negative actions towards them. The actors' corresponding defences centre on organisational morality, and they justify their actions not only to themselves, but additionally through the approbation of likeminded workplace alliances (Bloch, 2012), or by accessing influential allies (LutgenSandvik, 2006). Consequently, the justification and defence associated with the rationality of the organisational order and norms, further legitimises and normalises the bullying behaviour.

Severe problems occur when critical thinking is constrained to such a degree that individuals become induced to conform behaviourally, in both unethical and harmful ways

(Ammeter & Buckley, 2004; Garrety & Down, 2006; Haslam & Reicher, 2012). Indeed, behavioural conformity is often criticised by critical theorists on the grounds of morality and efficacy, with the greatest human atrocities being portrayed as 'crimes of obedience' (Beu & Buckley, 2004). Correspondingly, the phrase 'the banality of evil' was coined by the political philosopher Hannah Arendt in 1963 (Berkowitz, 2008). The 'banality of evil' concept stemmed from Arendt's writing on two major totalitarian movements of the twentieth century, namely Nazism and Stalinism (Baehr, 2010; Morgenthau, 1977). Arendt argued that Eichmann who was tasked with organising the mass deportation of Jewish people to extermination camps, willingly participated in organising the Holocaust (Brannigan, 2013). Arendt pointed out that Eichmann was not only loyal to the cause of the Nazi Final Solution, but was also motivated by careerism, being involved in an indoctrinated 'historic event', and obedience to the dominant ideology (Huang, 2006). Although Arendt (1958) did not exonerate him from his actions, she concluded that Eichmann, in a terrifying act of totalitarian domination and self-deception, believed his inhuman acts to be marks of virtue in pursuit of a grander Nazi cause, which led him to do anything in its name. The Final Solution represents an extremely ignominious and reprehensible aspect of world history, and it is not directly comparable to moralistic workplace bullying. The resonance with moralistic bullying, however, lies in its implications for an organisational imperative being constructed as legitimise, as well as somehow virtuous, leading to harmful behaviour, which is morally justified by bullying actors.

This thesis intends to enhance the concept of moralistic workplace bullying by augmenting it with an analysis of the impact of neoliberalism on UK public sector organisations, explored in further detail in Chapter Three of this thesis. Neoliberalism describes an ideological paradigm that rose to prominence in the 1980s, built upon the classical liberal ideal of the self-regulating market and economic policy, which places free market capitalism at the root of human experience (Steger & Roy, 2010). The dominance of neoliberalism has been intertwined with its promulgation as an advanced moral order associated with progress, modernisation and competition, purportedly leading to the fullest realisation of individual freedom (Appleby, 2011; Bloom, 2017). Thereby, neoliberalism encompasses politically ideological economic practices, which assert that human wellbeing can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurship, within an institutional framework characterised by the free market (Harvey, 2005). Neoliberalism is exemplified, however, by the domination of capital and subordination of labour, within the capitalist mode of production (Avis, 2016). The neoliberal capital–labour dynamic is supported by legitimised organisational practices and discourses, which perpetuate inequality in the organisational landscape (Wickert & Schaefer, 2014). Indeed, Berger and Luckmann (1966) point out that everyday life is taken for granted as reality. It does not require additional verification over and beyond its simple presence: it is simply there, as self-evident and compelling facticity. Moreover, Hegel (1806) highlights that whilst humans

give themselves their own organisation, human behaviour becomes immersed in the normativity of the times. In contemporary society, neoliberalism represents a renewal of capital's attempts to galvanise its position in society, and fortify its accumulative drive in an intensifying marketplace, directly impacting upon organisations, including the UK public sector (Wrenn, 2014). Furthermore, Hutchinson (2009), and Ironside and Siefert (2003) argue that there has been an increase in public sector workplace bullying due to the implementation of neoliberal policy. Consequently, this thesis responds to Akella's (2016) contention that being cognizant of context and structure, as well as individual subjectivities of workplace bullying, can enhance our understanding of it.

Legitimisation within organisations refers to the process by which specific organisational standards are generated and accepted as a sanctioning feature of interaction in a work setting, within some socially constructed system of norms, values and definitions (Giddens, 1976; Suchman, 1995; Tyler, 2006). Since the interests of the organisation and those of management are regarded as being largely coterminous, legitimacy is perceived as unproblematic, a matter of shared ceremony and ritual (Gordon, Kornberger, & Clegg, 2009). Within the neoliberal context, workplace bullying could be viewed as implementing the associated organisational order, authority and discipline, which could seemingly morally exonerate the bullying from the actor's own perspective. In other words, the external societal context could be viewed as bestowing a form of social normalcy or legitimacy to workplace bullying (Zabrodska et al., 2014). Indeed, several recent studies have argued that workplace bullying can be justified as legitimise by bullying actors, specifically by inextricably connecting it to the maintenance of organisational norms (e.g. Hutchinson et al., 2010; Jenkins et al., 2012). Weber (1978) uses the term 'structure of dominancy' to refer to legitimised socially constituted norms, and the term 'prevailing authority' to refer to authoritative action considered morally efficacious. Hence, the notion of the moralistic bully suggests that actors are able to exonerate themselves for their negative actions, through legitimisations connected to the reproduction and perpetuation of undisputed organisational norms.

Critical theory deems organisations to be the product and manifestation of historical creations, born in conditions of power, struggle and domination, which perpetuate conflict (Alvesson & Deetz, 2001). Therefore, from this perspective, organisations do not operate as hermetically sealed entities and are instead reified by societal complexities, mirrored at the organisational level. Bannerji (1995) emphasises that workplaces cannot be examined as isolated from the wider social structural context, and highlights that oppression is legitimised in organisations precisely because negative organisational practices reflect societal inequalities. She contends that the workplace cannot be viewed merely as a place of economic production, and must be understood as a coherent social and cultural environment. The organisation becomes structured through known and predictable social

relations, practices and cultural norms (Alvesson & Wilmott, 2012). Bannerji (1995) links the individual and socio-structural realms, stating that individual behaviour, workplace relations, and daily organisational life, reflect broader political, social and economic forces, and accompanying norms. Hence, individual workplace experiences cannot be examined as discrete events, which are de-contextualised from their external social space. Similarly, exploring workplace sexual harassment, bullying and violence, Hearn and Parkin (2001) argue that viewing the organisation as removed from external social structural relations constructs the workplace as divorced from society, or disassociated from social divisions. Hearn and Parkin (2005, p. 105) maintain that "structural relations of oppression and mundane experiences of violence are not mutually exclusive". Thus, societally contextualised approaches towards workplace abuse emphasise external social structures as core components, which impact on managerial control and behavioural norms, leading to the perpetuation of abuse within organisations.

The conception of 'tyrannical' behaviour in the workplace being legitimised through organisational norms and values, offered by Ashforth (1994), is another useful adjunct to the notion of the moralistic workplace bully. Ashforth focuses on petty tyrants in the workplace and defines them as exhibiting tyrannical behaviours such as self-aggrandisement, lack of consideration, a forceful style, and non-contingent punishment. He argues that petty tyranny within organisations is brought about by situational facilitators, including institutionalised values, norms, power relations and stressors. Workplace demands are regarded as creating pressures that foster a form of political opportunism or tyranny, which involves exerting inappropriate and exploitative pressure on workers to meet a range of workplace requirements (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007). Through a complex process of socialisation, workers become acclimatised to dehumanised impersonal relations in organisations, and 'institutionalised tyranny' serves to drive home the overriding importance of organisational compliance. Ashforth (1994) considers that organisations facilitate the emergence of petty tyranny, rather than actively promoting it. Critical management theorists (e.g. Alvesson & Deetz, 1996; Fournier & Grey, 2000; Knights & Wilmott, 1989; Mumby & Stohl, 1996) would take a less generous view, arguing that the exploitation of workers, legitimised through organisational norms and values, necessitates the exercise of unequal power. Therefore, the contention of critical theory is that by its very nature, the exploitation of workers stimulates tyranny in the workplace, of varying degrees of overtness or subtlety.

Managerialism represents the organisational arm of neoliberalism, and refers to a doxa of beliefs and practices predicated on a manager's right to manage (Bourdieu, 2005; Lynch, 2014; Pollitt, 1990). Through managerialism, organisations prioritise management interests over those of workers by preserving power relations of managerial control in the workplace hierarchy (Martinez, 2014). Managerialism encompasses the rigorous

imposition of market forces and business discipline across contemporary organisations (Deem et al., 2007). Thus, it is a contested ideological concept embedded in a complex series of historical, political and socio-economic developments, which has reduced collective moral values within organisations to secondary principles (Walsh & Brief, 2008). Collectivism, social justice and solidarity are subordinated to individualism, de-regulation and competition (Hill & Lee, 2009). Given its alignment with neoliberal agendas, managerialism implicitly endorses a concept of the organisational citizen, which is normative and market-led, generating ramifications for negative worker behaviour (Lynch, 2014). The proliferation of neoliberal ideologies has led to the practice of management spreading from private corporations into the professions, the public sector, and the nonprofit sector, thereby reinforcing the power of capital over workers (Grey, 2005). Etymologically, the origins of the term 'management' can be traced back to the Italian word *maneggiare*, translated as 'to handle a horse' (Alvesson & Wilmott, 2012). This is comparable to the management process in which a manager takes responsibility for controlling a valuable, yet recalcitrant resource (Braverman, 1974). Given the importance of securing cooperation from potentially resistant workers, it is doubtful whether total subjugation is unequivocally advantageous for capital (Alvesson & Wilmott, 2012; Knights & Wilmott, 1989). Therefore, some managers and workers collude with negative aspects of organisational cultures and norms in exchange for rewards, resulting in them perpetuating abuse within the workplace (Burawoy, 1979). Consequently, in the organisational setting, they operate as servants of power (Baritz, 1960).

Moral distortion in organisational settings, including the notion of erroneous moral reasoning driven by managerial normativity rather than human motives, leads to harmful behaviour in the workplace. Depicting managers, Macintyre (2007, p. 30) describes them as mistaken in their moral reasoning "the manager treats ends as given, as outside his scope; his concern is with technique, with effectiveness in transforming raw materials into final products, unskilled labour into skilled labour, investment into profits". Indeed, Adler et al. (2007) argue that prevailing organisational structures of domination and hierarchy produce a systemic corrosion of moral responsibility and separation in the workplace environment. Therefore, any concern for workers or the environment requires justification in terms of their contribution to profitable growth or corporate goals (Alvesson & Deetz, 2005). The entrenchment of individuals within organisational systems that are instruments of domination, serves to keep those individuals in mental bondage to the system, which they are complicit in strengthening and perpetuating (Marcuse, 1964). Habermas (1981) contends that social evolution is characterised by an individual who has a distorted ethical moral framework, exemplified by diminished personal autonomy, and serving the interests of contemporary capitalism. Within the context of moral reasoning driven by managerial normativity, the moralistic workplace bully notion resonates, and could be regarded as serving the exploitative interests of capital, accompanied by distorted justification for

negative hostile interactions. Hence, as outlined, critical perspectives that analyse workplace bullying as a feature of the neoliberal system, unlock its examination from a variety of angles including the impact of power relations, which this thesis also explores.

2.8 WHAT ARE POWER RELATIONS?

Power is a profound, variegated and complex concept, which broadly centres around the notion of absolute control or influence over others for varying purposes, by those who are historically, politically and socio-economically dominant (Clegg & Haugaard, 2009). The philosopher Russell (2004, p. 4) once declared that "the fundamental concept in the social sciences is power, in the same sense that energy is the fundamental concept in physics". Power is essentially a disputed concept, however, and there is an acknowledgement within the academic literature that no settled or agreed definition can ever be developed, due to the variety of divergent philosophical and theoretical perspectives surrounding it (Heywood, 1994). For instance, philosophers, political theorists, historians, sociologists, psychologists and anthropologists, *inter alia*, have all explored the subject of power from varying standpoints (Hearn, 2012). Despite this exploration, an all-embracing singularised concept of power *per se* does not exist, yet power has become one of the central concepts of the social sciences, and the principal mainstay across a wide intellectual terrain (Heywood, 1994). Furthermore, Russell (2004) contends that inequality in the distribution of power has always existed in all human communities, as far back as history and knowledge extend, with both international and domestic dimensions. Additionally, Heffer (2011) argues that the concept of power remains the key to all history and highlights four basic tenets or themes, which assemble behind the pursuit of power. The first theme is *territorial*, when a polity seeks to expand or extend its power to enable a better defence of itself. The second theme is *economic*, including the pursuit of wealth for the provision of better standards of living. The third theme is *ideological*, characterised by the determination of the ruling powers to impose their political doctrines and associated values onto wider populations. The fourth theme is *theological*, including war or conquest, undertaken to impose or prescribe a particular religious orthodoxy. Heffer (2011) additionally highlights that the motivational forces behind the pursuit of power alter periodically, with one theme or another dominating different epochs in history. The economic and ideological themes are of particular relevance to this thesis, due to the focus on neoliberalism and the UK public sector.

Power within the social science context has been broadly defined as a pervasive social process, involving a complex dialectic in which some groups possess the domination to carry out acts, which incorporate the absolute exertion of influence over others, encapsulated as power relations (Felluga, 2015). For over a century, critical theorists have attempted to explain why those that lack power consent to dominant hierarchies of political, economic and social power (Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011; Stoddart, 2007).

History is strewn with examples of oppressed human beings acceding to power domination or colluding with their oppressors to support the domination of the oppressed, which has resonance for aspects of the workplace bullying analysis contained within this thesis. Examples include human slavery, with the transatlantic slave trade reaching its peak in the 19th century in the USA accompanied by a pre-Civil War slave population of 4,000,000 (Meltzer, 1993), who co-existed alongside their so-called masters within social arrangements involving substantial degrees of domination, collusion and servility to power (Palmie, 1997). Sharp (1973) argues that power relations are built upon chains of obedience, with the leaders' positional strength dependent upon the level of cooperation within the power pyramid. Therefore, power relations are not only delineated by domination that disallows dissension but are also reinforced by subordination to the dominant power, expressed as obedience, and by both voluntary and involuntary cooperation, as illustrated by the transatlantic slave trade (Giri, 2009). Bullying has not been explicitly theorised in writing about the slave trade or similar historical events, however, it does not seem inconceivable that bullying was actually a component of the dynamic of subjugation.

The implications for this workplace bullying study from the themes discussed in this section of dominant power over subordinated people and the subjugated colluding with powerful people, will be explored in the thesis to analyse the impact of neoliberalism on the UK public sector. Key concepts in Marxist theory such as class antagonism and ideology, and Gramsci's hegemony, have been deployed to explain the perpetuation of power relations (Stoddart, 2007). Although both are underpinned by a notion of power relations as a pervasive aspect of society, they differ in their philosophical, theoretical and explanatory assessments (Hearn, 2012). Marx and Gramsci have contributed significantly towards understanding power relations within contemporary capitalist societies and are considered next, to justify the Gramscian theoretical framework adopted in this thesis.

2.9 MARXIST THEORY

Marxist theory deems capitalism as a structural system of class exploitation and oppression, whereby power is concentrated in the hands of the bourgeoisie, who possess economic power over the proletariat (Heywood, 1994). Marxist theory is premised upon a historical materialist perspective, which asserts that material reality and production are the foundation of all aspects of social consciousness (Stoddart, 2007). Marx (1894) highlighted that class membership is pivotal to social relations, and that it is dependent upon the ownership and non-ownership of the means of production. In other words, Marx's historical materialism, sometimes described as a materialist or economic conception of history, emphasised the economic in the explanation of non-economic phenomena (Cohen, 1978). The base-superstructure is a central component of Marxist theory wherein the economic structure of society, the material base, constitutes the 'real' basis upon which a legal and political superstructure arises (Tucker, 1978). According to Marx, the root of the

bourgeoisie's domination lies in its economic power located in the base – bourgeois ownership of the means of production and wealth production – which gives it control over both workers and their productive output, generating capital accumulation (Heywood, 1994). Capital accumulation leads to the exploitation of workers within the production sphere for surplus value, in excess of their labour cost, which enhances the profit-making income of the ruling class, leading to societal inequalities (Gurley, 1980). Thus, the most important aspects of material reality centre on human productive labour, whereby capital has the power to misappropriate the labour of the proletariat for surplus value, extracted for excess profit by the capitalist (Marx, 1894).

Marx emphasised that the dominant ideas and values of any society represent the distorted beliefs that the ruling class hold, and their conviction in the legitimacy of their own ideas (Eyerman, 1981). Therefore, Marx (1894) did not believe that the dominant economic system rested upon class exploitation and oppression alone. Marxist theory specifically adopts the notion of 'ideology' to describe the process through which dominant ideas within capitalist society reinforce the power relations and interests of the ruling economic class (Stoddart, 2007). Hence, the exploited proletariat are deluded by the weight of bourgeois ideology by becoming both the carriers and the consequences of the economic and social relations, which they enter (Freeden, 2003; Purvis & Hunt, 1993). Ideological power relations explain how the subordinate classes take exploitative relations of production for granted, as something solid and unchangeable (Adler et al., 2007). Engels used the term 'false consciousness' to depict a deceptive perception generated by particular power relations, applicable to all social groupings and classes (Eyerman, 1981; Heywood, 1994). False consciousness refers to a mystified and limited form of knowledge and experience in society, and ideology is applied to explanations offered by the ruling class to legitimise their power over the proletariat (Eyerman, 1981). Through inequalities in material resources, and the pervasive nature of the dominant ideologies of the powerful within capitalism, the proletariat acquiesce to their exploitation within economic class structures (Marx, 1894). Proletariat acquiescence results in power relations and subordination being reproduced, with only minimal resort to direct force (Heywood, 1994).

Marx's highly influential theory of capitalist exploitation, class and ideology has achieved considerable durability amongst countless critical scholars. It has been critiqued, however, for being unitary, totalising, and abstracted from the everyday social interaction of individual actors (Stoddart, 2007). For instance, Marxist theory has been accused of abandoning epiphenomenalism, and for viewing human consciousness as secondary to the totalising economic structure. Therefore, Marxism has been criticised for economic reductionism whereby political activity is determined largely by economic class relations (Leggett, 2013). The economic focus has resulted in Marxist theory being critiqued for impeding an adequate theorisation of the multitude of other manifestations of human

sociality or consciousness (Purvis & Hunt, 1993). That being said, Gramsci's theory was grounded in a Marxian framework, however, he enhanced Marx's theory through his focus on the complex modalities of the state, civil society, hegemony, coercion and consent, common sense, spontaneous grammar, and good sense (Forgacs, 1999; Salamini, 1974). Gramsci was additionally influenced by the philosophical literature of Croce and Machiavelli, and his perspective is often referred to as the 'cultural turn' in Marxism (Boothman, 2008; Holub, 1992; Olsaretti, 2014). Specifically, it was a unique departure because it emphasised the creative aspect of human consciousness in social relations between ruling and subaltern classes, thus transitioning away from the notion of human beings as passive bearers of economic forces (Eyerman, 1981). Table 2.1 contains a general overview of Marxist and Gramscian theories of power relations, and Gramscian concepts are explained in further detail in Section 2.10 below.

Table 2.1. Marxist and Gramscian theories of power relations

Theorist	Location of power	General concepts	Sources of power
Karl Marx (1818–1883)	Base and superstructure. Economic base determines superstructure. Emphasis on economic and material forces.	Economic class antagonism. Capital accumulation and surplus value. Ideology and false consciousness.	Dominant ruling classes termed the bourgeoisie. Single socio-political apparatus. Class exploitation of proletariat.
Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937)	State and civil society. Emphasis on both material and ideational forces.	Hegemony, coercion and consent, common sense, spontaneous grammar and good sense.	Dominant ruling classes using hegemonic power. Deployment of persuasion techniques by state and civil society. Subaltern classes subscribing to inherent inequality.

Source: Adapted from Stoddart, 2007.

2.10 GRAMSCIAN THEORY

Gramsci was unequivocally Marxist in his conceptions of power relations in capitalist economies, incorporating capital power over labour, historical materialism, capital accumulation, and surplus value (Rupert, 2006). Gramsci considered inequality between ruling and subaltern class positions as the primary force, which structure capitalist exploitative power relations (Forgacs, 1999). Gramsci's conception of the ruling class included those that possess class power, such as the owners of the means of production, employers of wage-labour, executives of large corporations, corporate lobbyists, influential journalists, bureaucrats and politicians (Davidson, 2005; Green, 2002). Gramsci identified the subaltern classes as including those without political or social power, such as the exploited classes, workers, women or different ethnic groups (Green, 2002). Philosophically, however, Gramsci ruptured with the materialist, economic determinist and

base-superstructure conceptualisation of classical Marxism in the 1920s (Daldal, 2014; Green, 2011; Nemeth, 1978). Indeed, Gramsci's theory departed from economic essentialism in which economic models of class struggle were identified as the primary historical determiner of ideology, social transformations and identities (Green, 2011; Phelan & Dahlberg, 2014). Instead, Gramsci's originality lies in his conception of a more complex analysis of particular capitalist situations, combining political, economic and ideological relationships, and human consciousness (Burrell & Morgan, 2016). Specifically, Gramsci (1971) not only believed that power and domination in capitalism rested upon the material means of coercion and oppression but stressed its location within human consciousness through 'hegemony'. Gramsci's perspective on power relations placed the hegemony of the state and civil society at the core of his analysis (Mouffe, 1979). In so doing, he replaced Marxian notions of ideology and false consciousness with the concept of a hegemonic organic and relational whole, embodied in institutions and apparatuses. In addition, Gramsci moved away from Marx's ideas concerning the inevitable societal progress towards communism, and a classless society (Plamenatz, 1992). Thus, Gramscian theory loosened the rigidity of orthodox Marxism from its teleological determinism (Lears, 1985; Plamenatz, 1992).

Hegemony involves the coercion of specific social, material and economic structures through ideological persuasion, which systematically advantages the ruling class, and seemingly benefits subaltern classes, leading to their consent (Levy & Newell, 2002). To illustrate, in a non-hegemonic system, capitalist class relations are reproduced primarily through the direct despotic use of coercion (Wright, 2000). In a hegemonic system, however, unequal class relations are sustained in significant ways through the active consent of the subaltern classes (Wright, 2000). Gramsci contended that every nation state requires the ruling class to establish a hegemony, purporting to unify the nation, and directed at resolving its historical and economic problems (Resnick, 2015). Gramsci emphasised the role of both capitalist material forces and ideology, in bolstering ruling class power over subaltern classes (Gill, 1993). In particular, he argued that instead of using physical force, the ruling class use discursive processes within the ideological realm, which manufacture popular consent to the unequal distribution of material power and wealth, and perpetuate capitalist domination (Hoare & Sperber, 2016). Hence, the fundamental premise of Gramsci's theory of hegemony is that power relations involve not only coercion alone, but also consent from subaltern classes to their own subjugation through acquiescence to ideologically persuasive discursive forces (Bates, 1975). Nevertheless, hegemony is a dialectical concept, which simultaneously embodies the dynamic of power and resistance in a tension-filled, contradictory manner, rather than the Marxist conception of individuals as passive carriers of social relations (Burawoy, 2012; Eyerman, 1981; Mumby, 1997). Therefore, regardless of the comprehensiveness of hegemonic power, it must be repeated every day due to its susceptibility to subaltern

resistance, incited by asymmetries between the claims of governing regimes and instability in capitalist societies (Thomas, 2009). Gramsci regarded members of the subaltern classes as their own theorists, with their own source of class consciousness, and hence the most able to resist the forces of hegemony, through a counter-hegemony (Morton, 2007). Indeed, he regarded hegemony as a continuous dialectical process, characterised by the imposition of a unity of political and economic goals, on the one hand, and subaltern resistance, on the other (Davies, 2011).

Gramsci described the state representing the interests of the ruling class in political society, and exerting hegemonic power over subaltern classes, through seemingly symbiotic moral leadership (Lears, 1985). Gramsci (1971) typically viewed the state as the 'protagonist of history', and the realm in which the ruling class or dominant social groups compel society to conform to their conception of the world. In Gramsci's view, the state imposes a general direction on social life that supports the maintenance of ruling hegemonic power and leadership, which consequently becomes legitimised (Green, 2002). Hence, hegemony is a form of political, intellectual and moral leadership, which attempts to create a consensus by displacing and legitimising power inequalities into everyday reality (McNally & Schwarzmantel, 2009). In addition, Gramsci's subalternity concept encompassed subordination in all of its forms, including subordination to material forces, as well as internal subjugation (Crehan, 2016). Nonetheless, Gramsci argued that it would be erroneous to deduce that the state simply manipulates its prestigious ideological direction onto social life, which subaltern classes facilely absorb (Lears, 1985). Instead, he maintained that ideology develops dialectically and reciprocally between the state and the population that it seeks to dominate, thus becoming embedded in the consciousness of subaltern classes (McNally, 2015). Gramsci's concept of the state possesses both cultural and economic solidarity, however, his concept of subalternity departs significantly from homogenous notions of class membership (Haug, 2001). Gramsci advocated a conception of subalternity, which cuts across categories of ownership of the means of production, bound by other ideological ties, as well as economic interests (Lears, 1985). Indeed, Gramsci described hegemony as resulting in some members of the subaltern classes having affinity with the ruling class, leading to the development of social alliances, which intersect and cut across class positions (Sotiris, 2018). He thereby injected the notion of subaltern consciousness being dominated by ideological superstructures, driving a wedge between themselves and true consciousness (Burrell & Morgan, 2016). Thus, a Gramscian-inflected analysis enables a dialectical understanding of the neoliberal state and its powers and structures of governance, which have material consequences, and are ideologically hegemonic (Rupert, 2006).

The distinctive feature of Gramscian theory is the establishment of state hegemonic power in political society also being achieved via the realm of civil society (Cox, 1983; Tester,

2015). In Gramscian theory, civil society is conceived of as the entire complex of cultural, spiritual and social institutions, ranging from workplaces, educational institutions, trade unions, political parties, and the media, to family and places of religious worship, which exist alongside repressive forces, including the army and the police that sustain state power (McNally, 2015; Simon, 2015). Thus, civil society is regarded as reifying the bourgeois order, and as the milieu in which the state takes the form of a moral force, which can regulate the activities of people, without having to use armed or physical force (Fonseca, 2016). Furthermore, Gramsci argued that civil society is permeated by capital to such an extent that it creates an ideological terrain on which subjectivities and identities are constructed (Burawoy, 2012). Successful hegemony operates through state ideologies providing a measure of political and material accommodation to subaltern classes in civil society (Green, 2011). Hence, Gramsci contended that within the realm of civil society, 'coercion' over subaltern classes can be actively given 'consent' as the natural order, legitimising the state, leading to ruling class values becoming the predominant values within society (Green, 2011). He highlighted that 'traditional intellectuals' within civil society, including lawyers, politicians, scientists and journalists, provide leadership as organisers of social hegemony and state domination (Evans, 2005). A critical role is played in organisations by 'organic intellectuals', who are aligned to the ruling class, and perform the task of extending the range of consent by imposing hegemonic views through intellectual reasoning (Clegg & Bailey, 2009). Due to the prioritisation of ruling class interests, however, contradictions accumulate, consent can be fragile, and resistance causes constant friction, resulting in the threat of coercion (Davies, 2013). Therefore, Gramsci conceived of civil society as problematic and representing a potential site of resistance where the creation of counter-hegemonies, represents a live dynamic option (Tester, 2015). Correspondingly, Gramsci (1971) deliberately used the Machiavellian image of the state as a centaur, half beast and half human, representing a dialectical metaphor illustrating the dynamics of coercion and consent. Gramsci (1971) argued that the consensual aspect of power relations is at the forefront, and although state coercion is always latent, it is potent. Diagram 2.1 illustrates Gramsci's conception of political and civil society in relation to state power.

Diagram 2.1. Gramsci's conception of state power, political and civil society.

State Power	
Political Society	**Civil Society**
• • Coercive apparatus of the state. Maintenance of dominance by • hegemonic power. Political, intellectual, and moral leadership. • Repressive forces e.g. Army, police and law enforcement agencies.	• Subaltern consent legitimising the state. • Educational institutions, workplaces, trade unions, political parties, media, religious institutions. • Traditional intellectuals and organic intellectuals. • Place of construction of subjectivities and identities.

Source: Adapted from Chatterjee (2008).

Hegemonic power is reified through 'common sense' and 'spontaneous grammar', which Gramsci described as an amalgam of historically effective doctrines and discursive processes that are principally supportive of state ideologies (Crehan, 2016; Rupert, 2006). According to Gramsci (1971), power inequalities become localised amongst subaltern classes through the adoption of a common sense belief system, which has been formulated by the ruling class, leading to an ideological predominance of bourgeois values and norms. Gramsci regarded common sense as the process whereby ruling class values and morality, which permeate civil society are integrated into subaltern human consciousness (McNally & Schwarzmantel, 2009). Specifically, he argued that popular beliefs articulated as common sense, are themselves material forces, entailing the naturalisation of ideologies (Donoghue, 2017). Gramsci contended that the way many people perceive the world uncritically leads to their philosophy often being chaotic and contradictory, containing a multitude of value-laden ideas absorbed from the past, leading to inequity and oppression being accepted as natural, or unchangeable (Simon, 2015). Closely related to common sense, Gramsci (1971) highlighted that a dominant language and seemingly natural spontaneous grammar also emerges, absorbed by subaltern classes. He suggested that there is a specific conception of the world contained within subaltern language, which is in actuality a politically manufactured narrative that supports power inequities (Ives, 2004b). Furthermore, Gramsci argued that spontaneous grammar has been engineered to differing extents through a dialogic process of legitimising conformist perspectives, and suppressing dissenting narratives, reifying unequal power relations (Carlucci, 2014; Donoghue, 2017). Hence, Gramsci questioned power-inflected systems of language and communication signification, thereby challenging their materiality (Holub, 1992). Additionally, Gramsci emphasised that common sense and spontaneous grammar are areas of political contestation, supplemented by a 'philosophy of praxis', 'war

of position', and 'good sense', which exemplifies a critical conception by subaltern classes of their inequality (Hall, 1986). Therefore, Gramsci's theorisations, encompassing both material and ideational aspects of power relations, provide a unique insight into dialectical forces that exist between ruling and subaltern classes (Finocchiaro, 1998).

Gramscian theory resonates today for the analysis of the inherent exploitative power relations, which characterise neoliberalism (Davies, 2013). Therefore, it is argued in this thesis that Gramscian theory enables an exploration of the workplace bullying phenomenon in the UK public sector within the wider historical, political and socioeconomic context. The Gramscian concepts that underpin this workplace bullying study are outlined in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2. Underpinning Gramscian concepts

Concepts	Meaning
Hegemony	Hegemony incorporates a combination of material forces and ideological persuasion, which leads to subaltern classes colluding with their own subjugation.
Ruling and subaltern classes	The ruling class have possession and control of the state and have state power. The subaltern classes are part of civil society and are disunited. Subaltern classes can take part in their own deception.
State	The state represents ruling class interests by justifying, maintaining and legitimising their power through compelling society to conform to their world conception.
Civil society	Civil society is located at the level of family, educational establishments and organisations. Unequal relationships are naturalised at the level of civil society. Civil society is also the location of resistance.
Traditional intellectuals	Traditional intellectuals include lawyers, politicians, scientists and journalists. They provide leadership as organisers of social hegemony and state domination.
Organic intellectuals	Organic intellectuals are aligned to the ruling class and perform the task of extending the range of consent by imposing hegemonic views through intellectual reasoning.
Common sense	Common sense is the internalisation and normalisation of a particular worldview, which becomes embedded within material relations, framing understanding of those relations.
Spontaneous grammar	Language contributes to the construction of a hegemonic project, which requires social unity in favour of the ruling class. Spontaneous grammar emerges that appears unconscious and natural, however, it is historically and politically situated.
Good sense	Good sense amongst the subaltern classes is the philosophy of criticism, which supersedes common sense, and manifests as struggle and resistance.

2.11 WORKPLACE BULLYING AND POWER RELATIONS

Whilst the issue of power permeates the workplace bullying literature, its conceptualisation is problematic (Walton, 2005). Within orthodox workplace bullying research, power imbalance has been conceptualised as deriving from the actor's organisational position (e.g. Keashly & Jagatic, 2011); the actor's informational power owing to their exclusive access to privileged organisational information (e.g. Hoel & Cooper, 2000); the target's dependency on the actor (e.g. Einarsen et al., 2011b); or the targets' and actors' personality traits (e.g. Aquino & Thau, 2009). Thereby, power is deemed as involving the capacity of an actor to abuse a target who is weaker or deficient, proliferating conventional interpersonal conflict-based interpretations of workplace bullying (Walton, 2005). In other words, power is viewed as being located solely within individual agents, and thereby conceived of within the restricted confines of interpersonal workplace relationships, rather than exploring ostensibly inscrutable workplace issues of power, domination and control, stemming from wider societal forces (Akella, 2016; Samnani, 2013). Schissel (1997) argues that traditional analyses of workplace bullying de-contextualise external factors, and legitimise punitive discourses or policies, which are ultimately limited in terms of ameliorating bullying. The estimation methods utilised to measure workplace bullying, for instance, have been subjected to criticism, such as the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ), which measures the frequency and prevalence of bullying incidents. In particular, the NAQ has been critiqued for being unable to capture other important aspects of workplace bullying, including how it is potentially legitimised, or complex issues surrounding power imbalance in the workplace (Herschcovis, 2011). Analysis of workplace bullying of a micro-level nature, however, continues unabated. As Allen (1971) highlights, there are few things as sacrosanct as conventionally accepted theory, which in turn achieves approval, and hence dominance, not through its capacity to explain social relations, but through its capacity to justify social relations in the context of a given power

structure.

The workplace is an arena that is determined by historical power relations, which have important consequences for material livelihood and personal dignity (Hodson, Roscigno, & Lopez, 2006). Conversely, the examination of workplace bullying and power relations within mainstream approaches is ahistorical (e.g. Keashly, 1998), and overlooks the broader socio-economic inequalities that organisations inevitably serve, perpetuate and reproduce (Bannerji, 1995). Hence, two common and widely unchallenged assumptions of the majority of workplace bullying literature are that it is within the employers' ability to eradicate bullying, and that it is in their interests to do so (Beale & Hoel, 2011). Conceptualising bullying as an abuse of power predicated on socio-economic inequalities, however, provides an explanation as to why employers' attempts to eradicate it are

fundamentally problematic, and inherently contradictory (Beale & Hoel, 2011). Hearn and Parkin (2001) contend that bullying is an integral component of organisational violations, accompanied by management complicity, thereby making it difficult to challenge, precisely because management are involved in its endorsement. In addition, Beale and Hoel (2011) argue that the extent to which employers gain from workplace bullying might be contingent upon the particular organisational context and product market domination, and the employer's orientation towards high-performance work practices, which perpetuate workplace bullying. Therefore, whilst there may be costs to employers from bullying in relation to higher levels of attrition, the benefits may outweigh the costs.

Broadly speaking, approaches to examining workplace bullying and power relations have adopted structuralist notions of power, based on understanding the interrelation of elements as part of a larger structural system (Felluga, 2015), and post-structuralist notions of power based on micro-circuits of power and discourse (Walton, 2005). This thesis adopts a structuralist approach to the study of workplace bullying in the UK public sector, contextualised by neoliberalism, and therefore structuralist research is considered next, to justify the Gramscian position.

2.12 STRUCTURAL ANALYSES OF WORKPLACE BULLYING AND POWER RELATIONS

Highlighting the brutalities inflicted upon workers in the emerging capitalist mode of production in early 19th-century Britain, it has been suggested that workplace bullying is not a new phenomenon and has continued due to the ascendancy of capitalism in the 1980s (Einarsen et al., 2011a). Workplace bullying scholars influenced by Marxist interpretations of inherent inequalities between capital and labour within the employment relationship, have contributed towards a power relations analysis of workplace bullying (e.g. Beale & Hoel, 2011; Ironside & Seifert, 2003; Sjøtveit, 1992). Sjøtveit (1992) argues that managers under capitalist conditions exert power to exploit labour by maximising employee output for surplus value, within a contested wage-effort bargain. Due to the human aspect of labour rendering it a peculiar, unique commodity, the wage-effort bargain reflects not merely economic attributes, but also a range of social, political and historical conditions, resulting in workers' exploitation (Polanyi, 1957). More specifically, Sjøtveit's (1992) predominant focus is on horizontal peer-to-peer workplace bullying, which he regards as signifying a disruption in worker solidarity and collectivism. Sjøtveit's interests coalesced into advocating the responsibilities of bystanders and third-party observers for intervention in the prevention of bullying escalation, as well as the role that trade union activists have in its prohibition (Einarsen et al., 2011a). Thus, Sjøtveit (1992) highlights the increase in workplace bullying emanating from worker exploitation for profit, and the capitalist ideological emphasis on individualism, representing a shift away from collectivism in the workplace.

Under capitalist power structures, the products of the social division of labour are owned by capital within an unequal manager-employee bifurcation, generating an imbalance of power by subdividing humans, without regard to their actual capabilities and needs (Althusser, 1971; Poulantzas, 1978). Marx and Engels (1941) highlighted that the social division of labour is tantamount to a powerful social control function related to capitalist status and hierarchy, leading to alienation of workers from the production process. Thus, labour power has become a commodity, which is misappropriated according to the needs of the capitalist, primarily seeking to expand capital, surplus value and profit (Braverman, 1974). Writing and researching within a British industrial relations context, Ironside and Siefert (2003) analyse workplace bullying in the context of profit maximisation, and the centrality of worker exploitation in the capital–labour dynamic. They contend, in conventional Marxist terms, that workplace bullying is a typical component of the power inequality inherent in the social division of labour. Similarly, Hoel and Salin (2003) argue that the source of workplace bullying may not stem from illegitimise use of power but instead from power that is regarded as legitimise related to the capital labour process, and the managerial prerogative to manage. Therefore, there are limits on workers' choices regarding their work and relative financial insecurity, leading to dependency on capital within capitalist enterprises. Pivotal to Hoel and Salin's (2003), and Ironside and Siefert's (2003) analyses are inexorable labour market inequalities, including the power imbalance between workers and employers, which are regarded as generating workplace bullying to meet the demands of capital.

Extending the Marxist interpretation of inherent inequalities between capital and labour, a further focus of structural workplace bullying perspectives concerns the core concepts of the labour process, and the managerial control of labour. Beale and Hoel (2011) also argue that the understanding of workplace bullying is enhanced through its examination as an endemic feature of the capitalist employment relationship. Applying Marxist theory and Braverman's labour process theory, Beale and Hoel (2011) highlight that labour exploitation is necessary to generate profit, creating a conflict of interest between capital and labour, leading to exertion of power and control to suppress labour, whilst simultaneously yielding high levels of productivity. Braverman (1974) defines labour as intelligent and purposive, with an infinite adaptability, producing the social and cultural conditions to enlarge its own productivity, and thus yielding the greatest organisational surplus value. Nevertheless, the position of labour is abject within the dominant structures, and Braverman (1974) critiques management's social and political power in controlling, as well as disciplining labour. Utilising this perspective, Beale and Hoel (2011) contend that workplace bullying is a managerial control tool to ensure organisational conformity, compliance to the existing order, and high levels of productivity. The process, however, is complex, including a plethora of seemingly beneficial management initiatives and differing

worker responses (Spencer, 2000). Consequently, workplace bullying is considered to be a managerial instrument to control workers, to ensure their compliance.

Workplace bullying has also been analysed as being 'institutionalised' by depicting the organisation as the bully, through the oppressive impact of organisational power structures cascading scientific management-oriented approaches (Samnani, 2013). Indeed, Liefooghe and Mackenzie Davey (2001) attribute workplace bullying to the organisation itself, including its policies and practices, distinct from the notion of managers as individual bullying actors. Influenced by Brodsky's (1976) analysis of organisationally embedded harassment, they portray bullying as inherent in the hierarchical management structures of organisations, enacted through systems of rewards, discipline and performance management in organisational environments that focus on profit-induced productivity. Specifically, Liefooghe and Mackenzie Davey (2001) argue that Taylorist scientific management methods have nurtured an organisational cultural dynamic, which has legitimised workplace bullying. Rigid disciplinary procedures, competition to achieve targets, and implacable performance management techniques are components of the scientific management paradigm (Caldari, 2007). Liefooghe and Mackenzie Davey (2001) highlight that the accompanying systems and processes constitute workplace bullying, leading to the routine subjugation and mistreatment of the workforce. Similarly, D'Cruz and Noronha (2009), and Hutchinson et al. (2006) contend that organisational rules and disciplinary practices shape behaviours at work, and powerful organisational interests that underpin workplace rules, perpetuate bullying within the workplace. The term 'institutionalised bullying' is used to denote this depersonalised workplace bullying phenomenon (Samnani, 2013).

Finally, drawing upon the operation of Gramscian hegemonic power relations associated with neoliberal capitalist policies within educational institutions, Hill and Lee (2009) portray neoliberalism as permeating the psyche, and in turn influencing personal values. Adopting Gramscian theory, they contend that the normativity of neoliberal discourse has created a human psyche imbued with a capitalist logic, enabling monetary valuations to be the primary assessment of human worth within educational institutions, which in turn detrimentally impacts upon human relations. Consequently, Hill and Lee (2009) argue that neoliberalism has led to a philosophical deterioration of the relationship between education, democracy and social justice, compounding workplace bullying. As discussed, for Gramsci, hegemony refers to the complex modalities of coercion and consent, which support the operation of oppressive power relations in society, leading to the subordination of individuals by the dominant ideology (Hoare & Sperber, 2016). Hill and Lee (2009) maintain that a citizenry, which is morally submissive to a less-than-ethical status quo will ensure the growth of an unethical democracy, as well as negative workplace behaviours. They point out that the rise of managerialism within educational institutions is the key

ingredient generating incivility and workplace bullying. In addition, Lynch (2014) highlights that commercial values are institutionalised in systems and processes, leading to educational institutions altering from being places of learning to instead being profitdelivery operations with productivity targets. Furthermore, Buitenhuis (2016) and Hajjar (2015) contend that a combination of forces surrounding neoliberal ideology, pedagogy and power relations, and the reinforcing role of educational institutions in maintaining the neoliberal order, have fostered the conditions for bullying to occur. Similarly, Hill and Lee (2009) argue that bullying behaviour within educational institutions is linked to neoliberal ideology, which has led to a commodified interpretation of education, a growing climate of overt intolerance towards anyone falling outside a prescribed neoliberal realm, and a higher propensity for workplace bullying.

Although the aforementioned scholars focus their attention on educational institutions, this thesis examines workplace bullying in the broader UK public sector. This thesis adopts a structuralist position towards the analysis of workplace bullying, incorporating the influence of power relations. In addition, it extends research studies on workplace bullying in the UK public sector through the Gramscian theoretical perspective, justified further in the next section.

2.13 GRAMSCI'S THEORY, EXTERNAL FORCES AND THE WORKPLACE

This thesis argues that societal complexities are reflected at the organisational level, and that workplaces are not isolated from the wider structural context, which incorporates influences from the ruling class and the state (Alvesson & Wilmott, 2012; Bannerji, 1995). Gramscian concepts have been used as a foundation for investigating the political dimension implicit in all aspects of organisational life, and for examining the impact of hegemonic power relations on the workplace (Clegg & Bailey, 2007; Clegg & Haugaard, 2009). This has included research focused on the multi-faceted nature of how subaltern workers' consent to exploitative working conditions is manufactured (e.g. Burawoy, 1979; Clegg, 1989, 1990). Gramsci (1971) emphasised that coercion of workers on its own never works, and consent through discursive processes must always be present to make workers conform to work regimes. Indeed, he contended that coercion is ingeniously combined with persuasion within the workplace, surrounded by material and moral pressure from the state, the ruling class and traditional intellectuals (Wilkes, 2017). Gramsci also argued that hegemonic power relations are ingrained in workplaces, and their exercise needs no more than a minimum quantity of intermediary organic intellectuals to reify them (Davidson, 2005). In addition, he described new forms of capitalist industrialisation forming a socially conditioned human being, by entering the moral and private lives of workers (Wilkes, 2017). In turn, workers' identities are shaped in line with work norms, leading to common sense notions and spontaneous grammar, which support

state ideologies, but also resistance in the form of good sense (Carlucci, 2014). Gramsci proposed workplaces as model research sites because they bring individuals into contact with institutional structures and discourses, allowing for explorations of the complex dialectic between ruling class relations and workers' experiences (Jubas, 2010). Akella (2016), and Hill and Lee (2009) call for critical scholars to adopt a dialectical approach to the exploration of workplace bullying, through the examination of the complex nexus of social, economic, political and institutional elements that surround individuals, stimulating workplace bullying behaviour. Diagram 2.2 illustrates the way in which Gramsci's concepts will be applied to the workplace bullying study to achieve a dialectical analysis.

Diagram 2.2. How Gramsci's theory will be applied to the workplace bullying study

Source: Adapted from Torkington (2011).
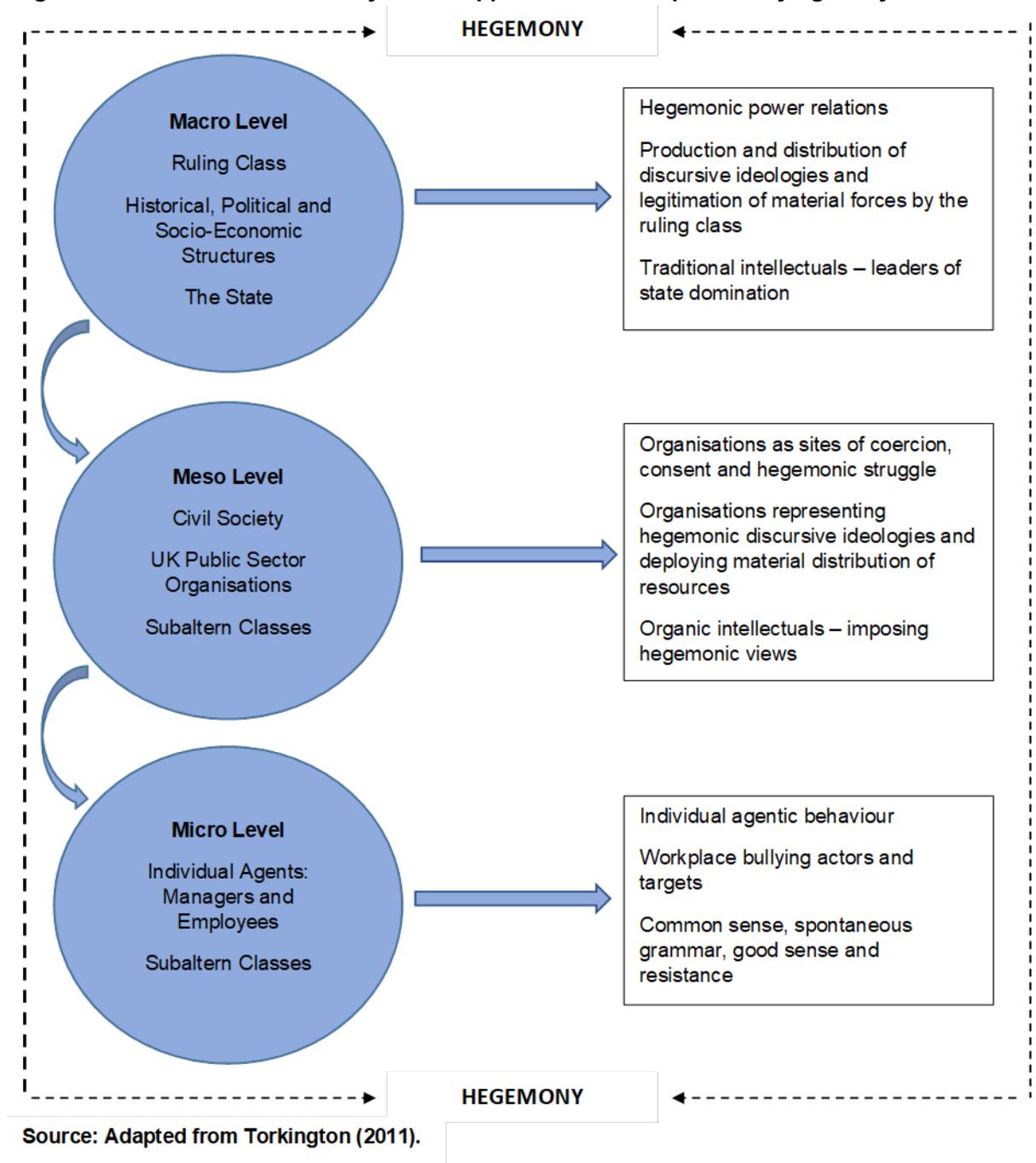
2.14 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has reviewed workplace bullying literature that has been dominated by a micro-level approach leading to an individualised perspective, which is argued to be limited in this thesis. The chapter has also outlined the emerging critical perspective within the workplace bullying field that this thesis intends to extend. The notion of the moralistic bully has been explored, analysing the way in which workplace bullying is potentially legitimised by organisations, and morally justified by bullying actors. Additionally, power relations have been examined, using Marxist and Gramscian theory and concepts. The chapter has also highlighted critical research that analyses workplace bullying through Marxian ideas of organisations as sites of power relations and labour exploitation. Furthermore, a justification has been offered for the choice of Gramsci's work as the theoretical base for the research to offer additional insights into the phenomenon, including a Gramscian conceptual framework. The next chapter explores public sector reforms in detail, and outlines research that reports an increase in public sector workplace bullying, including in the UK.

CHAPTER 3 LITERATURE REVIEW: NEOLIBERALISM, NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT, AUSTERITY, AND THE MARKETISATION OF THE UK PUBLIC SECTOR

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyses the neoliberal context of the workplace bullying study using a Gramscian theoretical framework. In particular, it outlines historical developments that have occurred in the UK state and public sector, thereby placing the analysis of workplace bullying within its historical, political and socio-economic context. The chapter begins by describing the historical character of the UK state and the public sector since 1945, and developments that have occurred since the 1980s associated with the advancement of neoliberalism worldwide. The discussion then revolves around changes driven by New Public Management, leading to the marketisation of the public sector, and the impact of austerity. Subsequently, themes emerging from public workplace bullying research are analysed, including the paucity of analyses from both a critical and Gramscian perspective, reinforcing the applicability of the Gramscian framework for the workplace bullying study. Therefore, this chapter contributes towards meeting the second research objective:

> To locate the workplace bullying research in its historical, political and socioeconomic context, through a Gramscian analysis of the impact of neoliberalism on the UK state and public sector.

3.2 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE UK STATE AND PUBLIC SECTOR FROM 1945

During the period from 1945 to the late 1970s, the UK state had been typified by post-war developments, incorporating a humanitarian desire to establish a minimum standard of life for all, which included the expansion of the welfare state (Clayton & Pontusson, 1998). Alongside these developments, a largely Labour and to a lesser degree Conservative governmental policy programme of Keynesian demand-side state economic interventionism existed (Pugh, 2012). The corresponding objectives included extensive employment and social welfare (Pugh, 2012). The 1942 Beveridge Report was instrumental in influencing these developments, which included recommendations for a comprehensive welfare state, and full employment for every UK citizen regardless of income (Hobsbawm, 1997). The resultant Beveridge recommendations were implemented by the post-war Labour Prime Minister Clement Atlee, and subsequently, during the period from 1945 to 1973, the UK welfare state grew at a remarkable pace (Hobsbawm, 1997). The developments impacted on the public sector, for instance, the National Health Service was created in 1948, accompanied by a corresponding increase in public expenditure on health care and sickness benefits (Pugh, 2012). In addition, the provision of free education at all levels, the strengthening of pension entitlements, and universal coverage of social

security, including unemployment benefits, were declared (Pierson, 1998). Furthermore, there was an extensive programme of nationalisation of the UK's major heavy industries and public utilities, which was a central policy commitment of the Labour government in 1945. Concurrently, the expansion of the public sector, civil service, the nationalised utilities and sundry governmental bodies led to the concentration of the UK state (Habermas, 1973/1975). State concentration included a strong centre and secondary periphery, for example, local government underpinned by a social-democratic collectivist philosophy (Habermas, 1973/1975; Hobsbawm, 1997). Hence, post-war Britain's public sector provision was predicated on principles of social reform and redistributive welfare expenditure, to mitigate the problems of previous market failure.

The enactment of associated legislation, specifically the 1944 Education Act and the 1946 National Health Service Act, led to the emergence and growth of new forms of public sector cadre, and additional categories of public sector occupations (Pugh, 2012). The legislation resulted in public administration being principally based on a legislative, bureaucratic and rule-driven approach to public sector provision. Assessments of population needs were undertaken by public sector professionals, underpinned by the notion of public services as public goods (Rhodes, 1994). During this era, public sector workers remained largely impervious to the purview of corporate-style managerial initiatives. Their resistance was attributable to public sector workers' ability to organise into relatively autonomous and legally protected professionalised consortia (Dunleavey & Hood, 1994). Public sector autonomy was reinforced by workers promoting their interests through trade union representation (Martin, 2009). Indeed, trade unions during the postwar era were particularly robust, and reached a peak of membership, prestige, and political power (Smith, 1995). Public sector workers also consolidated their prescribed expertise, technical competence and knowledge, through membership of relevant professional organisations (Dunleavey & Hood, 1994). Furthermore, the organisation and management of the UK public sector was exemplified by the traditionally well-established organisational paradigms of the public corporation, epitomised by centralisation, as well as a large-scale, standardised, welfare-state-oriented approach. Thus, UK public sector workers were ultimately accountable to the state, through the delivery of prescribed standards, supported by legislation, which contributed towards a thriving and professionalised postwar public sector (Ferlie et al., 1997).

The growth in the public sector salariat was underpinned by principles of public governance and an ethical belief system, as well as central government funding, borne out of the policies of the prominent economist Keynes (Bottery, 1996; Hood, 1991). Correspondingly, the traditional public sector ethos amongst workers entailed the setting aside of personal interests, and working altruistically towards the public good, accentuated by the centrality of ethical behaviour, which enhanced public sector professionalism

(Caraher & Snell, 2012). Underpinned by Keynesian ideals, public services were considered to be universal entitlements for all citizens, provided on the basis of need, rather than on the basis of the ability to pay (Kirkpatrick, Ackroyd, & Walker, 2005). Thereby, the public sector premise that was propagated in public sector organisations was of dedicated public servants with specialised technical knowledge, furthering the delivery of quality services, and heightening the well-being of their service users (McCulloch, Helsby, & Knight, 2000). Furthermore, the traditional public sector ethos was predicated upon impartiality, collectivist values, citizenship, neutrality, welfare redistribution, and social justice (Kirkpatrick et al., 2005).

During the late 1970s and 1980s, proponents of political change across the political spectrum, including another foremost economist, Hayek, argued that the British national economy was being destabilised through state collectivist policies, which in their view directly attacked principles of economic freedom (Eagleton-Pierce, 2016). In addition, the practices of state bureaucracy and perceived public sector professional monopolisation were deemed to negatively dominate political life (Deem et al., 2007). Hayek did not renounce the state, but he believed in using state authority to stimulate a particular vision of political economy where monetary calculation, profit and competition were not restricted to the business sphere, and also extended into the public sector (Eagleton-Pierce, 2016). Therefore, the state and public sector were conceptualised as fundamentally weakening the UK's institutional capacity to compete in an unforgiving global market (Deem et al., 2007). The propelling forward of this ideological agenda represented a phase in the development of the capitalist economic system of 'state regulated capitalism' (Fitzsimons, 2015).

3.3 THE STATE, THE NEW RIGHT AND PUBLIC SECTOR CHANGES SINCE THE 1980s

Since the 1980s, the UK has witnessed a period of dramatic transformation in the ideological, political and socio-economic policies of the state, associated with the ascendancy of capitalism worldwide. Gramsci (1971) understood the state to be the entire complex of theoretical and practical policies through which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominant regime of power, but also manages to win the active consent of subaltern classes. The New Right, associated with neo-conservatism and neoliberalism, emerged in both the UK and the US in the 1970s in response to the historical and political shifts towards the predominance of capitalism in the 1960s and 1970s (Hobsbawm, 1997). In particular, the elections of Margaret Thatcher in the UK in 1979 and Ronald Reagan in the US in 1981, the most prominent figures of the New Right, and the proliferation of their political and socio-economic policies, signified an ideological shift towards neoliberalism (Avis, 2016). Harvey (2005) denotes neoliberalism as a class-based political project creating contemporary means of capital accumulation and profit maximisation, enabling

the expansion of the scope and reach of capital. In Gramsci's view, the state exerts power over subaltern classes not simply through coercion but also through persuasive forces within civil society, sustaining prevailing relations of social forces, resulting in subaltern consent to ruling class ideology (Cox, 1981). Indeed, the political and socio-economic dominance of neoliberalism was bolstered by several factors. This included the collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of centrist and social-democratic social welfare policies, and the coming to power of governments of the ideological right (Bresser-Pereira, 2009). In addition, during the 1980s, there was a reduction in the direct involvement of a collectivist state in many areas of society, which coincided with the adoption of the economic policies of Friedman who prioritised the free market (Hobsbawm, 1997). These various factors were influential in stimulating the shift in the ideological, political and socio-economic policies of the UK state, encompassing Victorian conservative values, neoliberal economics, and the all-pervasive rule of the free market (Mayo, 2015). Gramsci (1971) argued that capitalist states legitimise their ideology by deploying moral libertarian arguments asserting that capitalism creates higher types of civilisation and individual freedom. Through such stirring defences of capitalism, the morality of the broadest popular masses is adapted to the necessities of the economic apparatus of production (Smith, 2010).

During the 1980s, Thatcherite and Reaganite policies manifested themselves in public management and public administration reform initiatives (Hood & Dixon, 2015). The delivery of public services increasingly incorporated a privatised model, whilst a process of rapid de-industrialisation took place. The consequent broad swathe of worldwide public sector reforms followed an ideological denouncement by the New Right of the interventionist and collectivist state conception, which was critiqued as being detrimental towards market self-regulation, costly and inefficient (Pugh, 2012). Furthermore, the public sector prior to the 1980s was epitomised and caricatured as being bloated, bureaucratic, monopolistic, over-centralised, unnecessarily hierarchical, and unresponsive to service users (Russell, Bennett, & Mills, 1999). Indeed, in the UK context in 1980, Heseltine, a leading Conservative government minister declared that a management 'ethos' and market economics must extend all the way through national life (Hood & Dixon, 2015). Private and public companies, the civil service, nationalised industries, local government, and the National Health Service, were required to alter their tenets (Hood & Dixon, 2015). In addition, Thatcher in an interview with *The Sunday Times* in 1981 bemoaned the collectivist society and stated that 'economics are the method: the object is to change the soul' (Bogdanor, 2012). In particular, Thatcher promulgated the 'TINA' neoliberal slogan – that 'there is no alternative' to neoliberal marketisation (Canaan & Shumar, 2009). By Thatcher's third term in 1987, the attack on the heritage, structures and governance of the public sector concentrated on four main areas - local government, education, health and the nationalised industries – promoting neoliberal market solutions to public service

delivery (Pugh, 2012). The government argued that free market competition should dominate the policy agenda, and there was an emphasis on public sector provision becoming accountable to financial bottom lines and prioritising profitability (Peters, 2014). In so doing, the government embarked on bringing market forces to bear on all aspects of economic, social and cultural life in the UK, and endeavoured to privatise as much public service as possible (Harvey, 2005). Hence, the transmission of hegemonic governmental neoliberal philosophies, rendered capitalist interests as purportedly the interests of all (Mayo, 2015).

3.4 THE RATIONALE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Beyond the 1980s, a justificatory schema predicated on the intensification of neoliberalism, and governmental responses to economic and fiscal crises, led to UK public services remaining under sustained pressure for reform. Gramsci (1971) argued that every hegemony requires an ideology, which can be sealed together by articulating universal, material, and symbolic interests that advantage everyone. Public sector reformers utilised ideas and initiatives underpinned by managerialism, collectively encapsulated as New Public Management (NPM) (Ferlie et al., 1997; Russell et al., 1999). NPM represented a paradigmatic break from the traditional model of public management and administration, which relied on a highly professionalised public sector cadre, answerable to the state, for the provision of services (Hood, 1991). In the UK, the NPM doctrine combined two basic precepts, namely, to reduce the collectivist role of the state, and to increase public sector financial performance through market forces, thereby making public sector organisations more efficient, competitive and business-like (Dunleavey, Margetts, Bastow, & Tinkler, 2006; Pollitt, 2007). Thus, the government deployed seemingly rational explanatory arguments, underpinned by an emphasis on consumer sovereignty over state sovereignty, for public sector delivery. The rationale was to legitimise the inculcation of a free market orientation and private sector practices, into the governance and management of public services. In addition, the proponents of NPM argued that public sector organisations were facing increased pressure and competition due to larger epochal societal developments, particularly globalisation, propagating the idea that public sector organisations must adapt to the spirit of neoliberalism (Chiapello & Fairclough, 2002; Habermas, 1973/1975). Furthermore, through NPM, public service delivery became subsumed under what appeared to be legitimise private sector practices (Diefenbach, 2009). The obfuscating, yet plausible language of 'efficiency' became ubiquitous, with efficiency approaching the status of a truth universally acknowledged, despite being ill-defined (Avis, 2005; Hood & Dixon, 2015). Indeed, Gramsci highlighted that language is never a neutral or transparent medium for the transmission of content but is laden with ideology to bolster the interests of the state (Crehan, 2016).

The justifications for the NPM reforms were reinforced through advocates portraying external developments, such as the ideological domination of neoliberalism, as natural forces at work in society, which needed to be accepted by public servants (Jacques, 1996). Gramsci, however, argued that ostensibly natural forces, which appear to be humanly objective, are actually historically subjective and contingent, related to the hegemonic ideology that contextualises them (Donoghue, 2017). Proponents of NPM contend that the reduction of state intervention in the economy is competitively advantageous by opening up new markets for profit in public services (Ward, 2011). In addition, deepening business involvement in the public policy-making process is deemed to create efficiencies, leading to greater freedoms and flexibilities (Ward, 2011). Despite the NPM rhetoric of freedoms and flexibilities in public sector service provision, and the purported reduction of intervention by the UK state in many areas of society, it has also engendered new forms of control over public sector employees. Indeed, Triantafillou (2017) maintains that the neoliberal vision of freedom is paradoxically controlling of public sector employee behaviour but uses legitimisation discourses, which proclaim individual emancipation. Furthermore, Ball (2003) depicts NPM as comprising new forms of entrepreneurial control, through public sector marketisation and competition. The developments have represented an overt challenge to the efficacy of the traditional public management approach, which had a historical monopoly over the delivery of public services (O'Flynn, 2007). NPM advocates contend that due to natural developments, the public sector has transformed into a set of loosely linked, dynamic and efficient businesses, set free from the constraints of centralised political administration and control (Deem et al., 2007). The free market emphasis of NPM renders it a hegemonic political undertaking, predicated on the ideology of competitive forces for capital accumulation, which is inherently exploitative, rather than a neutral endeavour (Farrell & Morris, 2003).

In the UK, NPM has been introduced to all public service sectors, including regional and local government, educational institutions, health services, the criminal justice system, the police force, the legal profession, and professional service organisations (Diefenbach, 2009). Furthermore, it has led to the widespread introduction of market competition throughout governmental departments and agencies, supported by Laffer curve supplyside policies, which have been the primary macro-economic strategies (Peters, 2014). The successive public sector reform efforts in the UK, as well as worldwide, have been accompanied by the associated canons that public sector costs must be reduced, and that it must work better for citizens and users (Hood & Dixon, 2015). Therefore, a central theme has been public sector financial accountability and cost-effectiveness, incorporating the conceptualisation of service users as customers (Exworthy & Halford, 2011).

Consequently, since the 1980s, the public sector has been consistently restructured, either directly through privatisation and outsourcing, or more generally by modelling it along the lines of private business (Peters, 2014). The ideologically driven NPM reforms, however, have failed to account for critical differences between the public and private sectors, by ignoring the premise that public service was traditionally based on longestablished legal rules, ethics and collectivist values, rather than market-driven mechanisms (Riccucci, 2001). Thus, within the NPM paradigm, public sector professionals are no longer independent and autonomous technical experts (Sehested, 2002). Indeed, they have become the conduit for, and servant of, external competitive forces and supposed consumer needs (Hood, 1991). A comparison between traditional public management and the NPM paradigm to demonstrate their differing primary characteristics is illustrated in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. Comparison of traditional public management and NPM

Characteristics	Traditional public management	New Public Management
Purpose	To implement public policy as instructed by the state.	To utilise private sector practice in implementing public policy.
Focus	Accountability to the state via a bureaucratic system of processes.	Accountability to the customer and the state via target-driven system of commercially defined results and output.
Approach	Hierarchical and standardised organisational approach directed by the legal framework and governmental regulations.	Decentralisation of decision-making guided by politicians but flexible to locality.
Role of managers	No autonomy of managers who answer directly to the state, and adhere to procedures prescribed by professional bodies.	Autonomy of managers to define and meet targets in their part of the organisation.
Delivery of services	No competition or choice in service provision; funding provision via the Treasury.	Introduction of competitive tendering market-oriented approach, increasing financial efficiency.

Source: Diefenbach (2009).

3.5 HEGEMONY, NPM AND THE PUBLIC SECTOR

The hegemonic shift towards the rule of the free market in public services spread across the globe under initially the auspices of the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and, in the 1990s - the European Union (Radice, 2013). Hegemony incorporates not only the coercive ideological influence of the ruling class, but also a whole discursive array surrounding the prioritisation of dominant material relationships, supported by the economic nucleus (Gramsci, 1971). Powerful hegemonic ideological processes turn the capitalist economy into a quasi-natural phenomenon, which cannot be infringed, ubiquitously permeating every aspect of human existence, through a complex intertwining of nature, politics and economics (Wainwright,

2013). State ideology, centred on broadening the conditions for profitable capital accumulation and nurturing capital's demand for heightened productivity, has impacted directly on public sector consent to neoliberal practices (Harvey, 2005). That being said, Gramsci (1971) argued that although consent may appear to be natural, manufactured through articulatory practices that establish shared meanings, contradictory consciousness also exists, manifesting itself in resistance. In particular, the subaltern philosophy of praxis, which in discursive terms is the interrogation of orthodox thought and received wisdom, is intimately tied to questions of subaltern political organisation and struggle. Yet an effective public sector counter-hegemony from trade union movements has been forced into submission via successive pieces of anti-trade union legislation, strengthening capital's control over subaltern classes (Spicer & Bohm, 2007). As trade unions become increasingly ossified and workers' engagement becomes incorporated into managerial strategies, business discourses, and is instigated by state policy, subaltern classes are compromised in their ability to act as agents of radical change (Hyman, 1975; Spicer & Bohm, 2007). Indeed, Gramsci (1971) highlighted that the naturalisation of hegemonic ideologies amongst subaltern classes, occurs through the complex process of the ruling class legitimising power relations of domination.

The intensification of neoliberalism has led to public services being delivered, not only by the public sector, but also by commercial businesses, based on private sector models and contracts (Skelcher, 2000). Consequently, NPM has had fundamental implications for public sector structures, practices, cultures and discourses, as well as their constituent sub-sectors and individual organisations, to ultimately promote market competitiveness (Exworthy & Halford, 2011). Nevertheless, ideas that individuals may conceive of as existing unproblematically or naturally in the workplace, can be understood in Gramscian terms as the successful outcome of coercion and consent to hegemonic ideological power, supported by material forces (Clegg & Haugaard, 2009). Gramsci referred to ruling class intellectual and moral leadership leading to the ideational communication of common sense ideas and values (McNally & Schwarzmantel, 2009). Indeed, the philosophical premise of NPM involves transactions between the public sector and 'customers' that reflect individual self-interest, framed by private sector market principles (Robinson, 2008). Furthermore, organisations provide workers with the workplace rules consisting of prescribing ways of working and defining the 'natural' in working life (Jones & Bos, 2007). Hence, NPM places an emphasis on public sector organisations injecting principles of commercialism, competition and private sector management into their functions (Robinson, 2008). A highly problematic aspect of public sector privatisation doctrines, however, is that they do not recognise the importance of institutional rationales (Vabo, 2009). Therefore, schools, hospitals and other public agencies are treated as abstract profit-making categories, without reference to the purposes of those organisations (Vabo, 2009). Instead, the emphasis is on the public sector becoming more business-like through

managing performance and demonstrating accountability, on the basis of quantitative financial targets (Alvesson & Spicer, 2016; Bevan & Hood, 2006). In Gramscian terms, the dramatic developments since the 1980s have both materially and ideationally legitimised the prevailing neoliberal system of capital accumulation. Thus, the interests and ideology of the ruling class have been prioritised above those of the subaltern classes (Mayo, 2015).

The nature of NPM-oriented cultural change is further characterised by significant alterations to public sector nomenclature, exemplified by the lexiconic shift towards public sector service users being referred to as 'customers' or 'consumers' (Exworthy & Halford, 2011). Within the social world, language has always been carefully crafted with a tendency towards the use of euphemisms, aimed at minimising political resistance, and encouraging forms of consensus (Eagleton-Pierce, 2016). Moreover, many public servants nowadays have adopted the state-driven vernacular, and they consequently use business-oriented language in their organisations (Diefenbach, 2009). Thus, the language of targets, action plans, key performance indicators, cost improvements, value for money, incomegeneration opportunities, and customers, permeates the public sector (Diefenbach, 2009). The associated emphasis is on public services being regarded as commodities and products to sell in a competitive market (Exworthy & Halford, 2011). Therefore, by radically reconstructing public sector worker identities in such a way that market-based conceptions of competitive enterprise, entrepreneurialism and innovation are paramount, the dominant mode of public sector rhetoric has altered towards market-oriented forces (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). From a Gramscian perspective, the historical development of language in the public sector is significant, since what are represented as natural discursive developments, are actually historically specific. Gramsci's concept of spontaneous grammar is applicable, highlighting the discursive process of naturalising and legitimising the dominant vernacular, and suppressing alternative expression (Donoghue, 2017). As Lynch (2014) argues, NPM is not only economic but also a hegemonic ideological and discursive project, continually expanding the neoliberal lexicon. In other words, the escalation of an economically instrumental discourse within public sector worker vocabulary reflects the specific historical development of neoliberalism, as well as its perpetuation.

3.6 THE IDEOLOGICAL TERRAIN OF THE CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC SECTOR

Neoliberal hegemony, infused with capitalist interests, has moulded the ideological terrain of the public sector in profound ways (Mayo, 2015). As discussed, the fundamental tenet of NPM is to make the design, organisation and management of public sector organisations more business-like and market-focused – in other words, performance-, profit- and audit-oriented (Diefenbach, 2009). Broadly speaking, the assumptions and elements of NPM have led to a marketised public sector. Public sector changes can be

categorised into three broad areas: management and managerialism; marketisation, business planning and strategic objectives; and performance management and inspection (Diefenbach, 2009). These areas are discussed below.

3.6.1 MANAGEMENT AND MANAGERIALISM

Management as a discourse and social practice emerged in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and since then has been the subject of intense critical analysis and scrutiny (Pollard, 1968). The critique stems from management's power in controlling and disciplining labour (Braverman, 1998). In broad terms, management refers to a set of practices, which are designed to organise, command and coordinate labour (Drucker, 1974; Fayol, 1949). The domination of individuals by individuals remains on an historical continuum, linking pre-managerial to managerial societies (Klikauer, 2013). During the 19th century, however, the establishment of 'management' was indemnified by separating the ownership of capitalist enterprise from the operational worker function, which was the stimulus for the employment of a managerial hierarchy to direct workers (Fitzsimons, 2015; Klikauer, 2013). Contrastingly, in pre-capitalist societies, industrial production was organised according to an apprentice-journeyman-master trajectory (Drucker, 1974). In other words, workplaces were linear rather than pyramidal, premised on the shared knowledge and understanding that the apprentice would eventually become a master (Marglin, 1974). In addition, there was no intermediary between guild workers and the market: the product was sold, not workers' labour, leading to workers' control of the product and work process (Marglin, 1974). Marx (1894) described the establishment of the managerial hierarchy as reinforcing class divisions characterised by their exclusive and sole function of undertaking supervision of workers to extract surplus value and expand capital accumulation. In the last 50 years in the UK, the practice of management has spread from private corporations into the public sector and the non-profit sector (Grey, 2005). Indeed, a critical feature of the realisation of NPM was the establishment of management as a distinct social formation in the public sector workplace, impelled by scientific management ideologies (Ward, 2011). Hall, Gunter, and Bragg (2013) argue that from 1945 to 1979, NPM effectively dissolved the traditional public administration model of public service into management from the 1980s, and more latterly leadership, due to wider ideological agendas. Consequently, the role of the public sector manager has been reconstructed into additional categories of hierarchical power, for instance, senior manager or leader, to reflect entrepreneurial-driven change (Allen & Gupta, 2016).

Managerialism refers to a set of management beliefs and practices underpinned by the rigorous imposition of market forces, business discipline and managerial control, across the full range of public sector service provision (Deem et al., 2007). It legitimises the control of workers, organisations and societies in the interests of capital (Fitzsimons, 2015).

Managerialism justifies the application of managerial techniques to all areas of social relations, on the basis of superior ideology and the possession of exclusive managerial knowledge, which are portrayed as necessary to efficiently run organisations and society (Klikauer, 2013). Therefore, it is a mode of domination, which determines that political and socio-economic issues experienced by populations can be resolved through management techniques (Fitzsimons, 2015). Managerialism exemplifies the legitimisation by capitalism of the disciplinary powers that managers claim over their workers, in order to advance neoliberal NPM reforms (Broadbent, Dietrich, & Roberts, 1997). Hence, it denotes a public sector approach in which public sector professionals are not merely responsible for administering legal rules but are also expected to emulate management techniques from the private sector. The associated objective is to efficiently manage public services and employees, towards market-oriented goals (Ghin, Hansen, & Kristiansen, 2018). Contemporary public sector managers are not only required to be experts in the services being managed but have become re-skilled and re-professionalised into effecting private sector practices (Triantafillou, 2017) Consequently, performance management expertise, budget planning, income generation, and the propagation of corporate missions to compete in the market, have become the required capabilities for public sector managers (Adcroft & Willis, 2005; Triantafillou, 2017). The corresponding pressure on workers to achieve turnover and profit reinforces asymmetrical power relations between managers and workers (Klikauer, 2013). From 1980 onwards, managerialism has reinforced managerial power, and provided the organisational mechanism through which the ideological agenda for public services reform has radically transformed the public sector (Deem et al., 2007; Gunter & Fitzgerald, 2013). Ultimately, managerialism has established a set of market-oriented organisational values embedded in a complex series of historical, political and socio-economic developments, thus legitimising the existing neoliberal order (Lynch, Grummel, & Devine, 2012).

3.6.2 MARKETISATION, BUSINESS PLANNING AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The doctrine of the public sector needing to adapt to neoliberalism has been central to the development of the NPM paradigm, accompanied by the associated marketisation of services, alongside a customer and stakeholder orientation, (Ward, 2011). Marketisation reflects a strong ideological preference of market versus state provision of public service delivery (Ward, 2011). Specifically, marketisation entails introducing market mechanisms into the public sector, alongside the commodification of public services, purportedly increasing efficiencies, through providing cost-effective services (Ferlie et al., 1997). Consequently, a number of market structures have been introduced into the delivery, operation and management of public services, through the implementation of competitive bidding structures for funding, outsourcing of services to generate income, and purchaseprovider splits (Peters, 2014). The outcomes of marketisation include public

sector providers competing for governmental funding, and the aforementioned conception of service users as customers. The applicability of the marketisation doctrine to the public sector, however, has been critiqued for several reasons, including the inappropriateness of the economic market as a legitimise model for relationships in the public sector (Kelly, 1998). The emphasis on service users as customers, for instance, has been problematic, resulting in a movement away from the concept of the societal citizen interested in community affairs (Diefenbach, 2009). Instead, the overriding concern has been on customer expectations of prompt delivery of a 'value for money' service, based on cost criteria, rather than quality (Diefenbach, 2009). A public sector stakeholder orientation has also emerged, which revolves around addressing the needs of a wide range of internal and external stakeholders, through business-focused techniques (Johnson et al., 2006). Such an approach is problematic, however, due to the concentration on meeting the needs of influential external stakeholders with a vested financial interest in the organisation, including funding bodies, at the expense of poorer citizens (Diefenbach, 2009). Public sector values have thereby shifted away from universalism, equity, security and resilience, towards efficiency, profit, competition and individualism (Hood, 1991).

The NPM model, reinforced through the implementation of managerialism, has also been achieved via the focus on managing public services through business planning with market-oriented strategic objectives (Diefenbach, 2009). Capital accumulation through profitable growth has become the guiding principle for public policy, and business plans are required to stimulate competition for services in a marketised sector (Lynch et al., 2012). The development of business plans by managers requires public sector workers to be responsive to consumer-oriented needs, and adaptive to shifting political priorities in their day-to-day work, within restructured public sector organisations (Fitzsimons, 2015; Tolofari, 2005). The business planning strategic framework is endorsed as a means of improving efficiency and reducing costs, against the backdrop of a rapidly changing global business environment, in a change process that is portrayed by the state as inevitable, as well as irreversible (O'Flynn, 2007). Business planning has also resulted in the reduction in the discretion and influence of public sector professionals towards shaping and designing the service delivery, and intensified managerial power (Skelcher, 2000). Managers have a licence to decide how public services should be organised, supported by business planning processes, as opposed to professions legitimisely determining how best to deliver services (Clark, Denham-Vaughan, & Chidiac, 2014). Thus, public sector management practices are now premised on the presumption that private sector management practices are superior to those historically formulated by the professions (Ball, 2003). Criticisms of NPM centre on the ethical change in public sector governance, from the traditional principle of state provision of distributive welfare, to the commercial norm of value for money (Haque, 1999). Consequently, ethical questions concerning the value of public sector professionals' judgements are subordinated or presumed to be

naturally and already resolved by management, in the context of market forces (Adler et al., 2007). Given NPM's alignment with neoliberal capitalist agendas, working people's lives are determined in a tendential manner by world-embracing market relations, whilst, circularly, human nature is subjected to economic discipline, which defines people as commodities (Van Der Pijl, 1998).

3.6.3 PERFORMATIVITY, PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND INSPECTION

Market forces have resulted in the public sector being characterised by performativity, incorporating the establishment of performance management of workers by managers, and a range of external controlling structures, such as financial and inspection regimes (Ball, 2003; Deem, 1998). The result has been a wide range of internal performance management systems, as well as external processes of monitoring, auditing, control, assessment, inspection and regulation (Hood & Dixon, 2015). That being said, bureaucratic layers, systems of monitoring work and hierarchical control, have always existed in public sector organisations (Kirkpatrick et al., 2005). Nonetheless, a contemporary apparatus of inspection, monitoring and evaluation had to be constructed, which ensured that cost-effective 'customer' needs were the dominant considerations in service delivery (Miller, 2005). The apparatuses simultaneously downgraded the power of the public sector professional as an autonomous expert. Miller (2005) highlights that under NPM, central government insisted that public service performance be judged and evaluated from a consumerist perspective, driven by the performativity notion. In addition, Ball (2003) argues that performativity as a mode of state regulation, requires individuals to set aside collectivist beliefs, and live an existence of constant calculation in response to financial targets and performance indicators. Consequently, through NPM, public sector management has been supported by a rigorous culture of performance management, undergirded by the 'measurement of proof' of work output (Hood & Dixon, 2015). The associated organisational apparatuses of inspection, including benchmarking, league tables, customer feedback mechanisms, management information systems and audit, have been integrated into assessing the performance of public sector workers (Diefenbach, 2009). Performance management is also predicated on bringing the financial bottom line and economic rationality into the scrutiny of public sector worker output (Hillman & Keim, 2001; Ward, 2011). Thereby, the NPM model has encompassed specific ideological assumptions about human behaviour, centred on capitalist rationality, competitive forces and economic instrumentality, reinforcing the notion of a businessoriented public sector environment (Fleming & Banerjee, 2016; O'Flynn, 2007). Indeed, Gramsci maintained that organisations are permeated by capital in such a way that an ideological terrain is created on which human identities, cultures and experiences are constructed, making it difficult for individuals to break their subaltern servitude (Resnick, 2015).

Due to the multi-faceted nature of public sector organisations, conceptual dilemmas exist around defining and implementing uniform systems of performance monitoring. The dilemmas are exacerbated by their deployment of market logic and market mechanisms, underpinned by managerialist discourses, which are better suited to private sector operations (Van de Walle, 2008). Intangible traditional values, such as fairness, dignity, equality, justice, or social impact, for instance, are not captured by the contemporary performance radar (Diefenbach, 2009). Further issues include the extent to which the various measurement systems essentially remove public sector professionals from doing their actual job, resulting in them spending inordinate amounts of time monitoring activities and collecting data (Adcroft & Willis, 2005). In addition, the methodologies around the aspects of their roles that are specifically scrutinised are inappropriate and flawed (Fryer, Antony, & Ogden, 2009). Indeed, Hefetz and Warner (2004, p. 174) argue that public sector social values are not adequately addressed by the "economic efficiency calculus of the market". Social workers, increasingly referred to as 'care managers' in the current context, note devoting less time to clients in need, and have more time allocated to paperwork designed to measure their work. Consequently, social workers often leave the frontline service to less-qualified staff, leading to complaints of de-professionalisation (Farrell & Morris, 2003). Many teachers describe undermining duties, such as low-level administrative tasks, copious paperwork for inspections, and labouring under excessive scrutiny of the performance of their pupils, without performance monitoring systems accounting for the societal complexities surrounding pupils' performance (Brown, 2005). Furthermore, police officers have articulated, *inter alia*, the problematic nature of the prioritisation of enforcement statistics that centre on the numbers of arrests made. The police monitoring systems neglect to measure crime prevention work, which results in fewer arrests being made, circularly impacting negatively on enforcement statistics (Fryer et al., 2009). In other words, the performance management systems are bureaucratic, ideologically defined, based on artificially designed private sector concepts of measurement, and paradoxically ill-suited to public service provision (Diefenbach, 2009). Gramsci (1971) referred to such paradoxes as epitomising the corporatist development of capitalism, ultimately aimed at raising the mass of the population to the needs of capitalist productive forces, and hence ruling class interests. Table 3.2 summarises the broad areas of public sector change under NPM that have been discussed in this section.

Table 3.2. Assumptions and core elements of NPM

Assumptions of NPM	Elements of NPM
Management and managers	• Management consisting of a distinct organisational grouping. • Management dominated culture. • Managers comprising promoted individuals who exercise managerial functions.
Business planning and strategic objectives	• Assumption of strong external pressures, including a more challenging business environment, wider trends and forces. • Market orientation and commodification of services accompanied by an emphasis on 'value for money'. • Customer orientation, from a consumer perspective. • Efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity defined and measured in quantitative terms. • Cost reduction, downsizing, competitive tendering, outsourcing, privatisation of services.
Performance management, and inspection	• Systematic measurement, monitoring, and assessment of performance, through explicit targets and performance indicators. • Positive rewards for managers and employees working in a framework of increased efficiency, productivity, customer satisfaction and higher performance, as defined by the measurement system.

Source: Adapted from Diefenbach (2009).

3.7 NEW PUBLIC GOVERNANCE/NEW PUBLIC SERVICE

Recent literature on public sector management outlines that NPM evolved beyond its original policy objectives in the 1980s, and now constitutes a purportedly repackaged paradigm with an extended set of goals (Butcher & Gilchrist, 2016). The terms New Public Governance (NPG), and to a lesser extent New Public Services (NPS), have also been adopted, associated with the election of New Labour in 1997 (Butcher & Gilchrist, 2016). That being said, the expression 'NPM' remains in continual usage and is the preferred term in this thesis. NPG centres on representatives of the population being engaged in the co-production of public services through conceptions of empowered participation, and multi-actor collaboration (Torfing & Triantafillou, 2013). Therefore, NPG has adopted the language of democracy and involvement with a public sector that is embedded in a larger political system, which constantly reacts to people's needs (Torfing & Triantafillou, 2013). Christensen (2012) contends, however, that NPG represents a reactionary attempt to learn from the problematic elements of NPM, and has neither operated as an elixir to the previous NPM narrative, nor led to enhanced public management. NPG purports to rebalance existing administrative systems with putative people involvement, but without altering public service delivery in any fundamental way (Christensen, 2012). Gramsci (1971) argued that the term 'the people' is an abstraction, normally deployed by politicians

for rhetorical, opportunist and populist purposes to erroneously convince subaltern classes that their economic needs are being prioritised.

The discourse relating to models of public service continued to evolve during the Conservative-led Coalition government of Cameron and Clegg (2010–2015), the Conservative administration of Cameron (2015–2016), and is likely to persist under May (2016-present day), as the UK continues to remodel public sector governance during a period of political instability (Ferlie, 2017). In both the NPM and the NPG paradigms, however, there is the recognition that public sector workers have been redefined fundamentally towards the free market, and a business- and profit-oriented approach. McGuigan (2014) argues that the socially constructed neoliberal self has emerged, combining the idealised subject of classical and neo-classical economics, leading to an idealised individual, characterised by entrepreneurship and consumer sovereignty. Furthermore, NPG as a class-conscious, neoliberal hegemonic project, continues to create the conditions for the capital accumulation of profit (Evans & McBride, 2017). Hence, the essence of neoliberal capitalist ideology persists in underscoring contemporary UK public sector governance and management.

3.8 AUSTERITY, THE STATE AND THE PUBLIC SECTOR

In 2007–2008 a worldwide financial, economic and fiscal crisis struck, comprising three connected stages of global recession, and post-war austerity measures. In the first stage of the global recession, the banking or financial crisis resulted in banks and other financial institutions encountering serious problems, and potential bankruptcy (Newman, 2012). The situation was created by a preceding climate of ubiquitous questionable credit, weak financial regulation, and a faith in reckless, uncontrolled markets (Newman, 2012). To avert the collapse of the financial system, governments stepped in and bailed out the banks with large sums of public money (Evans & McBride, 2017). The second stage, comprising the economic crisis, was characterised by falling national product and rising unemployment, factors which led to governments taking stimulus measures such as relieving taxes (Ghin et al., 2018). In the third stage, encompassing the fiscal crisis, governments responded by reducing public expenditure and/or increasing taxes, leading to public sector austerity measures (Ghin et al., 2018). In response to this, in 2009, the British Coalition Prime Minister David Cameron became famous for promising another 'age of austerity' to alleviate the crisis (Ghin et al., 2018). Indeed, the term 'austerity' has evolved to refer to governmental and individual citizens' efforts to reduce budget deficits (Evans & McBride, 2017). In addition, the term has become shorthand for politically virtuous measures, accompanied by an increasing emphasis on frugality, self-sufficiency and fiscal prudence in contemporary political, economic and social life (Macleavy, 2011). In his austerity speeches, Cameron called for a revival of civic society and the responsibilities of citizens, and from 2009 the Conservative Party consistently drew upon popular historical

consciousness of the post-war effort (Blyth, 2013). The political stratagem incorporated a sense of austerity morality, concentrating on public responsibility for obligatory thrift to summon up a united nation pulling together against financial adversity (Bramall, 2013). Gramsci (1971) argued that moral leadership amongst the ruling class is an integral aspect of wielding power over subaltern classes. Therefore, in Gramscian terms, the creation of the hegemonic order of austerity is based on generating subaltern class concession to moral-political leadership (Pentaraki, 2015).

The austerity drive was operating amidst mounting pressure on public sector organisations to take a tough stance on expenditure and alleviate the financial, economic and fiscal crisis, rather than challenging financiers' responsibilities (Macleavy, 2011). To this end, Cameron used post-war moral austerity reasoning as an analogy for the discourse of austerity that emerged in the wake of the 2007–2008 global crisis, despite their differing triggers (Bramall, 2013). Korpi and Palme (2003) argue that austerity is an example of class-based ideological and political manoeuvring, which poses austerity as the only course in times of fiscal difficulty. In addition, Clarke and Newman (2012) emphasise that although the economic problems in the UK are indisputable, austerity became a political tactic for shifting the allocation of blame and responsibility from the bankers to the public. Indeed, Cameron deployed the historical post-war era narrative of 'Austerity Britain' which occurred from 1939 to 1954, for ideological and political purposes (Bramall, 2013). Clarke and Newman (2012) highlight that the recession was ideologically reworked, from a crisis located in the banking and financial sectors, to a distorted focus on an unwieldy, expensive welfare state and public sector. This ideological reworking distracted attention away from the high-risk strategies of banks and financial institutions as the root cause of the global crisis (Clarke & Newman, 2012).

For Gramsci, ruling class power must always be based on a programme of moral leadership in civil society, which has civilising effects by promoting values that have some universal appeal (Morera, 2014). The ideological preference for public expenditure cutbacks was supplemented by a requirement on the subaltern classes to accept reductions to wages, pensions and jobs, and to endure rising unemployment (Berry, 2016). Indeed, the reduction or withdrawal of welfare entitlements, and political appeals to decrease welfare dependency, were articulated as a means of tackling global financial debt (Evans & McBride, 2017). Contrastingly, austerity measures have included spending increases in other areas, encompassing taxation reductions for private enterprises, and further privatisation, thus signifying a deepening of the neoliberal state (Berry, 2016; Evans & McBride, 2017). Therefore, austerity measures have resulted in a substantial transfer of expenditure away from the welfare state and subaltern classes, and nurtured neoliberal pursuits (Forrest & Murie, 2014; Pentaraki, 2015). The Coalition government deployed a highly selective cuts agenda, which was severe in the public sector, and included the

undermining of the employment-generating function of government (Berry, 2016). Subsequently, the Conservative Party that retained power in 2017, continued the neoliberal austerity trajectory, incorporating a moral-political drift towards authoritarianism, and obedience to the state (Evans & McBride, 2017).

Austerity rhetoric epitomises particular values, which pertain to economic and social life, including individualistic common sense notions of the moral, personal and social obligations of citizens (Blyth, 2013). Hence, advocates of austerity policies pronounce a need for individual citizens to bear the burden of economic recovery, shoulder responsibility for their own lives, and facilitate individual self-sufficiency, in conjunction with the reduction in financial support for the state (Blyth, 2013). In other words, responsibilities have been placed on subaltern classes to tackle global debt, including filling the void created by state retrenchment, through the acceptance of welfare cutbacks (Macleavy, 2011). Therefore, Berry (2016) argues that austerity fits the profile of an economic idea applied at a time of crisis, to serve the needs of the powerful. In addition, the media, which Gramsci described as the pretended organs of public opinion in civil society, have played a crucial role in the legitimisation of austerity measures and common sense (Basu, Schifferes, & Knowles, 2018). The common sense that has emerged of individual responsibility for global debt is indifferent to representational truth: it does not matter whether common sense statements are truth or fiction. What matters is that common sense produces and constitutes truth in a socially constructed reality (Campbell, Parker, & Bos, 2007). As Gramsci highlighted, common sense is contradictory and episodic, representing itself as the wisdom of the age (Hall, 1986). Hence, common sense is a historical and sociological phenomenon, determined ultimately by the structural inequalities of capitalist economies, and is an expression of power relations (Crehan, 2016). Thus, in Gramscian terms, the central idea of post-war austerity being resolved by public expenditure restrictions became an economic common sense, with subaltern classes accepting austerity, not unthinkingly, but as a necessity (Berry, 2016).

The contradictory politics of austerity resulted in a political, moral and cultural climate, which generated a specific tough stance on public sector expenditure, rather than critiquing the continued prominence of the neoliberal market. Therefore, there remained a supportive emphasis upon the free market and weak regulation, which paradoxically created the recession in the first place (Ghin et al., 2018). In particular, Evans and McBride (2017) highlight that the Cameronian misappropriation of the post-war austerity intonation, through a political sleight of hand for partisan purposes, resulted in state retrenchment and public sector cutbacks, further fortifying the marketisation of the UK public sector. Indeed, Berry (2016) argues that the most disquieting implication of austerity is its success in generating the illusion of change in fiscal management. Thus, austerity shields from scrutiny the considerable efforts by neoliberal policy-makers to prevent a change in the

way that the UK economy has operated, which itself contributed to the global crisis. The majority of academic commentators and the policy-making community (e.g. Hansen & Kristiansen, 2014; Hood, 2010; Pollitt, 2010) are unanimous on the necessity for the UK economy to alter in the wake of the 2007–2008 financial, economic and fiscal crisis (Berry, 2016). Several austerity scholars (e.g. Berry, 2016; Blyth, 2013; Bramall, 2013; Hood, Heald, & Himaz, 2014; Kickert & Randma-Liiv, 2015; Worth, 2013), however, regard the term 'austerity' as carrying connotations of an ideological preference for public sector funding cutbacks to counteract international debt. In addition, by redefining the financial crisis as one of public sector debt, and quintessentially the wrong kind of state, effectively delegitimised the qualities of the collectivist state. Therefore, contemporary austerity policies preclude an alternative collectivist political and socio-economic framework, which could protect citizens from the vagaries of the market (Newman, 2012). Following the significant impact of NPM on the public sector, austerity measures became additional drivers for change, inducing the decimation of the traditional public sector (Bramall, 2013). It is within this neoliberal context that this thesis focuses its analysis of workplace bullying and power relations in the UK public sector.

3.9 PUBLIC SECTOR WORKPLACE BULLYING RESEARCH

Research has highlighted workplace bullying as a recognised issue in the public sector, with bullied targets being subjected to the principal mainstays of workplace bullying behaviour including aggressive behaviours, intimidation and being forced into powerless, defenceless positions by managers (Einarsen et al., 2011a). Several studies have been undertaken worldwide outlining the prevalence of workplace bullying in the public sector, including in Australia, Sweden, and the UK (e.g. Hallberg & Strandmark, 2006; Hutchinson, 2011; Hutchinson & Eveline, 2010; Ironside & Seifert, 2003; Lewis, 1999; Lewis, 2006; Lewis & Gunn, 2007; Mawdsley & Lewis, 2017; Omari & Paull, 2015; Shallcross, Sheehan, & Ramsay, 2015; Strandmark & Hallberg, 2007a; Strandmark & Hallberg, 2007b). Public sector workplace bullying analysis that de-contextualises the phenomenon, however, focuses on individual agency and concentrates on micro-level explanations (e.g. Hallberg & Strandmark, 2006; Lewis, 2006; Strandmark & Hallberg, 2007a; Strandmark & Hallberg, 2007b). The corresponding analysis disregards structural influences, and leads to findings that concentrate on either personalised psychological harm consequences experienced by the bullied target (e.g. Hallberg & Strandmark, 2006), or interpersonal conflict resulting from differences in values exacerbating workplace bullying (e.g. Lewis, 2006; Strandmark & Hallberg, 2007b). These approaches emphasise the importance of the development of coping strategies and organisational support within the workplace bullying scenario. Therein, the associated explanations problematise workplace bullying at an agentic level, at the expense of considering structural influences.

A focus on structural forces would further illuminate the workplace bullying phenomenon, by enabling an analysis of the impact of the complex political and socio-economic social world that organisations and individuals are located within (Akella, 2016). Indeed, public sector workplace bullying researchers have undertaken analysis at a broader level, with some innovative research undertaken. Lewis and Gunn (2007), for example, undertook workplace bullying research aimed at understanding the racial dimension of workplace bullying and systemic racism in the public sector, demonstrating that bullying actors discriminate on racial grounds, despite broader legal racial equality duties. In addition, Hutchinson and Eveline (2010) argue against narrow representations of workplace bullying, and point out that wider gender inequality is entrenched within organisational cultures, structures, policies and daily practices, reflecting wider patriarchal power imbalances. In the majority of extant meso-level research, however, wider structural forces remain unexplained and concealed from analysis as a possible contributory factor. Shallcross et al. (2015) for example, point out that the toxic nature of the Australian public sector workplace culture leads to workplace bullying, without explicating the external factors that have impacted on the workplace, and hence potentially induced the workplace toxicity. This thesis, however, contends that examining structural influences is imperative because material and ideological forces have a tangible impact upon the distribution of resources in the workplace and power structures (Johnson, 2008). Furthermore, material and ideological forces become internalised within workers' socialisation processes and everyday organisational interactions (Kilkauer, 2015). Therefore, it is reasoned in this thesis that elucidating the role of wider structural forces in explanations of workplace bullying would provide further insights into the phenomenon.

The full range of implications for public servants remains contested terrain, but there has been a reported increase in workplace bullying in the public sector ('TUC: Workplace bullying,' 2016), and also in the context of NPM (Hutchinson, 2011; Ironside & Seifert, 2003; Mawdsley & Lewis, 2017). Ironside and Seifert (2003) using a Marxist framework, contend that the increase in workplace bullying in the UK public sector has been driven by the neoliberal imperative. Furthermore, they argue that workplace bullying has been precipitated by the acceleration of drastic changes to British industrial relations within the historical context of Thatcherism, culminating in the decline of trade union power, and deteriorating support for workers (Ironside & Siefert, 2003). Ironside and Siefert (2003) draw attention to NPM governmental initiatives imposing financial constraints on the public sector, leading to the enforcement of quasi-business restructuring, and complex performance management systems. Taylorism has been described as the first comprehensively articulated ideology of management control of workers within capitalism (Whitaker, 1979). Moreover, Taylorism has also been critiqued for being a profound ideological expression of the capitalist's monopolisation of the means of production, resulting in the exploitation of workers (Whitaker, 1979). Ironside and Seifert's (2003)

analysis centres around managerialist change, which they view as degrading established conditions of employment for workers in the UK public sector, leading to work intensification, and creating a cycle of conflict in which workplace bullying is a central feature.

The introduction of NPM in the late 1980s in the Australian public sector has resulted in an increasingly competitive, highly pressurised public sector environment, focused on profit-oriented outputs (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003). The bullying actors include managers, as well as employees, who have internalised externally imposed neoliberal ideology as legitimise, leading to negative behaviours within an increasingly highpressured environment (Brunetto, Shadlock, Teo, & Farr-Wharton, 2014). The internalisation of externally imposed ideology resonates with Alvesson and Willmott's (2012) contention that employees are enjoined to develop self-images and work orientations, which are deemed to be congruent with managerially defined objectives. Hutchinson (2011), and Omari and Paull (2015) argue that workplace bullying began to emerge as a significant problem in the Australian public sector due to the implementation of NPM-oriented policies, and Hutchinson points out that it continued to intensify due to austerity-induced job losses. Public sector austerity restructuring strategies include the achievement of budgetary efficiency through job losses, and the intensification of managerial prerogative over workers' continued employment (Salin, 2003). Hutchinson (2011) contends that budget reductions, and restructuring incorporating the downsizing of the workforce, leads to internal competition, individualised reward systems, and fear of job loss, creating a high-risk environment of managerial prerogative being exercised in ways that engender workplace bullying. Omari and Paull (2015) also maintain that the competitive elements of NPM have had adverse ramifications for worker interactions. The authors draw attention to power differentials between managers and workers in the context of imposed change management, which drives toxicity in the workplace. Omari and Paull (2015) argue that the transition from stable public sector cultures to privatesector-oriented competition has generated fertile ground for conflict, with an increased propensity for negative behaviours, including workplace bullying. Their solutions, however, centre on properly planned and implemented NPM, as opposed to an interrogation of the exploiting dynamics of NPM associated with neoliberal hegemony.

Analysis of workplace bullying in the UK public sector in the context of NPM-oriented radical alterations to public sector structures, culture and practices, and austerity, remains limited. This thesis seeks to fill this research gap. The study comprises 25 targets of workplace bullying of varying occupational statuses in the UK public sector from local government, the civil service, secondary, further and higher education institutions. In particular, this thesis extends research studies on workplace bullying in the UK public sector, which have been impacted by NPM and austerity. A Gramscian perspective is

pursued in this thesis due to its utility for the analysis of neoliberalism as both a material and ideological hegemonic force impacting on the UK public sector, and for exploring workplace bullying in this context.

3.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has reviewed changes in the UK public sector stemming from the ascendancy of neoliberalism since the 1980s associated with NPM, and it has explored the managerialism inherent in a marketised UK public sector. Gramscian concepts have also been used as the theoretical and conceptual framework to analyse public sector changes. This chapter has demonstrated that NPM has significantly impacted upon public sector structures, culture and practices. In addition, the austerity era has been examined, including its impact on public sector cutbacks. The chapter has outlined public sector workplace bullying research, culminating in emerging critical perspectives, which analyse workplace bullying in public sector organisations as sites of power relations and labour exploitation impacted by NPM – a focus which this thesis intends to extend. Furthermore, the chapter has highlighted the paucity of research that analyses the public sector workplace bullying phenomenon in the era of austerity. The next methodology chapter will explore the Gramscian philosophical and methodological perspective, which underpins the workplace bullying study. In addition, the next chapter outlines the research and data analysis methods used to analyse bullied targets' experiences in the UK public sector.

CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the research philosophy, design and methods that guide this thesis. In so doing, it explains the ontological and epistemological commitments of this research, aligned with the Gramscian theoretical framework. Discussion in this chapter about the philosophical underpinnings of the research leads to justification for the research design and research method choices that I have made. In addition, this chapter includes an overview of the data gathering that I have undertaken, and details about the research participants and the data analysis techniques used. The chapter concludes with a discussion about ethical considerations, and the criteria that I have adopted for establishing research trustworthiness, incorporating reflexivity. It addresses the third research objective:

> To develop an appropriate methodological framework, suitable research methods and data analytical approach in line with the Gramscian philosophical perspective adopted, in order to gather and critically assess the empirical data from bullied targets.

Prior to providing an exposition of the methodological approach, it is apposite to highlight again the overall research aims and objectives, which are informed by the underpinning philosophical presuppositions supporting this thesis.

4.2 RESEARCH QUESTION AND ASSOCIATED RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The overarching research aim and objectives of this thesis are:

OVERALL RESEARCH AIM:

- To critically explore workplace bullying and power relations from the perspective of bullied targets in a marketised UK public sector, using a Gramscian theoretical framework.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

- To locate and synthesise the research into a Gramscian theoretical perspective, and to demonstrate the applicability of Gramsci's concepts to the study of workplace bullying and power relations, through a review of existing literature from disparate philosophical orientations.
- To locate the workplace bullying research in its historical, political and socioeconomic context, through a Gramscian analysis of the impact of neoliberalism on the UK state and public sector.

- To develop an appropriate methodological framework, suitable research methods and data analytical approach in line with the Gramscian philosophical perspective adopted, in order to gather and critically assess the empirical data from bullied targets.

- To undertake effective interpretation, evaluation and representation of data in a way that enables an understanding of the lived experience of bullied targets, reliable contextualisation, and thorough analysis of the research findings.

- To provide original theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions to the study of workplace bullying and power relations in a marketised UK public sector.

  The research aims and objectives are focused by a central research question:

- What insights does a Gramscian framework offer to the study of workplace bullying and power relations in a marketised UK public sector, from the perspective of bullied targets?

The central research question is supplemented by five research sub-questions:

- In what ways do bullied targets conceptualise workplace bullying?
- In what ways, if any, have ideological forces influenced workplace bullying situations and experiences in the UK public sector?
- In what ways, if any, have power relations affected the workplace bullying situation?
- In what ways, if any, is workplace bullying legitimised by the organisation?
- In what ways, if any, is the workplace bullying justified as acting morally?

4.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is predicated upon philosophical choices, which in turn comprise metaphysical decisions concerning ontology and epistemology. Burrell and Morgan (2016) highlight that all research is based upon a philosophy of science, and a theory of society. Research methodology is underpinned by the researcher's adopted set of philosophical assumptions, which have significant consequences for the approach to the investigation of the phenomena of interest within the social world (Strydom, 2011). Research also comprises a research design, namely the principles inspiring and governing scientific investigation, as well as the technical issues regarding the practical implementation of a study – in other words, the research methods (Gelo, Braakmann, & Benekta, 2008). Ultimately, the philosophical and methodological positions adopted by researchers find expression in the application of the identified research methods. Research methods include pragmatic considerations, leading to the practical techniques or procedures that are used to gather and analyse data in relation to the research question under investigation

(Crotty, 2015). Although research methodology ultimately culminates in the research design and methods, it implies more than simply the methods the researcher intends to use to collect data (Crotty, 2015).

4.3.1 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

A research philosophical position consists of a set of fundamental ontological and epistemological assumptions and beliefs about how the world is perceived, which then serves as a framework guiding the decisions of the researcher (Jonker & Pennick, 2010). Traditionally, ontology and epistemology comprise discrete dimensions of the branch of philosophy referred to as metaphysics (Rawnsley, 1998). Metaphysics is concerned with describing the ultimate nature of things as they are, including abstract concepts such as being, knowing, time and space (Flick, Kardorff, & Steinke, 2004). The philosophical posture of realism 'postulates' the existence of real objects, or entities with properties, which are independent of our understanding or experience of them (Rawnsley, 1998). These entities or universals are conceived as being beyond our experience, and their essence or wholeness transcends sense, that is, experience about qualities of particulars (Rawnsley, 1998). The philosophical posture antithetical to realism, namely idealism, converges on the idea that reality is correlated with the mind (Burrell & Morgan, 2016). In other words, idealism purports that the nature of things cannot be known without reference to the mental operations that conceptualise them (Audi, 1999). Consequently, research is exemplified by a set of philosophical and meta-theoretical assumptions about ontology, which is concerned with the nature of reality and the social world (Gelo et al., 2008). Additionally, research is characterised by another set of assumptions related to epistemology, concerning the nature of knowledge, described by Crotty (2015, p. 8) as "how we know what we know".

4.3.2 ONTOLOGY

Assumptions of an ontological nature concern the very essence of the phenomena under investigation; thereby, ontology is the study of reality, and concerns the fundamental nature of existence (Crotty, 2015). Social scientists are faced with a basic ontological question of whether the reality to be investigated is external to the individual, imposing itself on individual consciousness from without, or produced through a blend of individual consciousness and language (Burrell & Morgan, 2016). In relation to social research, if ontologically one perceives the existence of reality as external, independent of social actors and their interpretations of it, this is termed realism, or objectivism (Neuman, 2011; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). In other words, a true reality is assumed to exist, driven by immutable natural laws and mechanisms, conventionally summarised in the form of time- and context-free generalisations, some of which take the form of cause-and-effect laws. Advocates of research from this perspective purport to converge on the true state of

affairs (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), and individuals are seen as being born into a world that has an objective external reality of its own (Burrell & Morgan, 2016). On the other hand, if ontologically reality is predicated on an assumption that individuals significantly shape and contribute to social phenomena, this is termed subjectivism, or nominalism (Wahyuni, 2012). The subjectivist position revolves around the assumption that the social world, which is integral to individual cognition, comprises names, concepts and labels, which are used to construct reality (Burrell & Morgan, 2016). The labels used are considered to be artificially constructed creations, whose utility is based on their convenience as tools for describing, making sense of, and negotiating the external world (Burrell & Morgan, 2016). In other words, subjectivism asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors (Bryman, 2012). Thus, from an objectivist realist position, an objective reality that is true, is assumed to exist, whereas from a subjectivist nominalist position, the social world is regarded as consisting of artificial creations, concepts and labels, used to structure reality (Johnson & Duberley, 2000). Aligned with a Gramscian perspective, this thesis adopts a subjectivist ontological position to the study of workplace bullying, described below.

4.3.3 GRAMSCI'S ONTOLOGY

Gramsci was concerned to counter what he considered to be the crudely materialist and objective ontological assumptions of classical Marxism (Ayers, 2008). Aiming for a purely scientific socialism, many classical Marxists during the 1920s removed any trace of subjective, nominalist, or voluntarist elements from consideration in their theory of history and reality – an ontological position that Gramsci was antithetical towards (Nemeth, 1978). Gramsci (1971) maintained that humans know the reality of the social world through interacting and submerging themselves within it. Hence, Gramsci aimed to restore conscious human subjective creativity to perspectives of the social world (Rachar, 2016). By way of illustration, ontologically classical Marxian theory in the 1920s was supported by the concept of historical materialism, which regards socially relational phenomena as essentially material in nature, rather than ideal or spiritual (Ayers, 2008). Therefore, history was regarded as ultimately characterised by material modes of production, the study of physical objects, and an emphasis on economics (Hamenstadt, 2012). A classical Marxist historical materialist approach thus rests on an objective realist social ontology, which emphasises the causal properties of reality with a focus on economic class relations (Ayers, 2008). Gramsci (1971) argued that historical materialism did not need to concern itself with material entities, which exist independently from human intentionality and social relations. In Gramsci's view, historical materialism must deal with historicised social objects that are dependent upon the intentionality of ruling powers, whereas the prevailing Marxism analysed social objects through a natural science approach (Green, 2011). Gramsci's historical materialism understands history as a complex and contradictory story

of social production, in specific social circumstances (Rupert, 2006). Thus, Gramsci's ontological assumptions drew a distinction between natural objects that exist independently of human intentionality, and social objects or entities that result from human agreement or acceptance (Rachar, 2016). In turn, Gramsci argued that social objects or entities are historicised objects when they become a productive entity in society, and enter a system of power relations (Rachar, 2016). Gramsci insisted that we exist in any given place and time through the complex of social relations in which historically situated persons live their lives, and develop self-understandings (Rupert, 2006).

Gramsci's analysis of reality also revolved around the dialectic notion of hegemonic power relations, as opposed to solely economic determinism. As discussed in Chapter Two, the latter position suggests that economic forces determine, shape and define all characteristics of a civilisation, including the political, social, cultural, intellectual and technological aspects (Jones, 2006). Gramsci's ontological focus, however, incorporated the relationship between the ideational and the material, that is, the relationship between ideological hegemony and the economic base, including its concrete socio-political effects (Donoghue, 2017). Gramsci's ontological position avoided ideological epiphenomenalism, which consists essentially of the claim that the superstructure is determined mechanically by the economic infrastructure, and that ideology, being simply illusory, plays no role whatsoever in the economic life of society (Ramos, 1982). Therefore, for Gramsci, reality cannot be construed as pure objective datum, external to humans, or as an entity that exists on its own and for itself – a position leaning him towards ontological relativity (Green, 2011). Gramsci, however, did not fall into an extreme form of idealism or solipsism, whereby humans construct the world from literal nothingness (Femia, 1981). Instead, Gramsci argued for a dialectic between humans and reality, and viewed reality as a historical relationship with the humans who modify it, constructed in relation to each other (Femia, 1981). Gramsci's ability to mediate the excesses of an overly materialistic, or overly idealistic interpretation of human praxis, constitutes the essence and dynamism of his perspective (Hill, 2008).

Gramsci ridiculed what he termed the common sense notion of an objective reality of the external world, which is also central to his ontological perspective (Ayers, 2008). Instead, Gramsci repeatedly emphasised the dialectical interaction, mutual determination, and continual process of development by human beings, within a subjective reality (Resnick & Wolff, 1987). In Gramsci's view, human subjects are understood as individuals living in material, social and cultural contexts, rather than being reduced to people with essential, constant natures and qualities (Filippini, 2017; Jubas, 2010). Simultaneously, Gramsci retained class relations clearly in sight, including an awareness of the dialectic of materiality and culture, and its implications for understanding the human subject (Jubas, 2010). Gramsci argued that hegemonic world visions propagated by the ruling elite, if

successfully transmitted throughout society, eventually become embodied as common sense, thus constituting and comprising a socially constructed reality (McNally, 2015). Specifically, he highlighted that hegemony normalises class divisions, leading to common sense assumptions, rendering class classifications natural and impenetrable within the structural organisation of society (Hill, 2008). Thus, Gramsci foregrounded the role of subjective human consciousness in relation to a historicised social reality, in a system of hegemonic dialectical power relations (Ayers, 2008). Gramsci's subjects of inquiry are human beings engaging in complex relations with the rest of the world, whom he regards as inter-determinate and changing, according to their social settings and experience (Jubas, 2010). Consequently, Gramsci viewed history and reality as the subjective activity of humans pursuing their ends, and the development of history as being impregnated with the living presence of human beings (Hill, 2008).

4.3.4 EPISTEMOLOGY

Closely associated with ontological assumptions are epistemological principles centred on positivism and interpretivism, which are intrinsic to all research investigatory positions. Epistemology encompasses philosophical problems concerned with the origin and structure of knowledge (Rawnsley, 1998). The epistemology of positivism deals with the formation of objective knowledge (Hruby, 2001). For the positivist, social phenomena, which are objective, external and observable to individuals, are amenable to empirical scientific analysis utilising reliable, verifiable, and precise research instruments (Comte, 1968). Accordingly, the scientific process of conjecture, testability, refutation and replication, grounded in logical positivism, illustrates a rigid adherence to *a posteriori* principles, in that the existence of reality or knowledge demonstrated through contrived or purely theorised experience is denied (Dancy & Sosa, 1992; Urmson & Ree, 2004). Hence, positivist epistemology sanctions and locates the authority of science in the ability to access a body of supposed privileged and uncontaminated knowledge through empiricism, which reveals the essentials of the world, guaranteeing explanation, prediction and control (Burrell & Morgan, 2016; Johnson & Duberley, 2000). Alternatively, interpretivism represents the efforts of the past few decades to respond to the most problematic criticisms of positivism (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The epistemology of interpretivism or constructionism is firmly opposed to the utility of a search for laws or underlying regularities in the world of social affairs (Burrell & Morgan, 2016). Interpretivism deals with knowledge formation outside of the mind between participants in a social relationship, and concerns the way knowledge is constructed by, for, and between members of a discursively mediated community (Hruby, 2001). The interpretivist emphasises that the social world can only be understood from the perspective of the individuals involved, with meaning being contingent upon the perspective that different people bring to a particular social phenomenon (Burrell & Morgan, 2016; Crotty, 2015).

Therefore, from this perspective, metaphysical reasoning revolves around abstract theorisation, and the role of human subjectivity in explaining human behaviour (Johnson & Duberley, 2000; Rawnsley, 1998). Interpretivists argue that positivist positions, which are predicated upon a plethora of philosophical assumptions regarding the possibility of knowing, are in themselves contestable and disputable (Johnson & Duberley, 2000). Thus, from the interpretivist perspective, social science is regarded as being essentially a subjective endeavour, as opposed to an objective enterprise (Bryman, 2012).

4.3.5 GRAMSCI'S EPISTEMOLOGY

Following intense philosophical study in the 1920s, Gramsci encountered considerable disagreements with classical Marxists over epistemological principles of knowledge (Green, 2011). The basic epistemological tenets of classical Marxism included a positivist epistemology, rationalism, economic determinism, and a quasi-Darwinian evolutionary history (Femia, 1981). Gramsci (1971) rigorously critiqued the epistemological position of classical Marxism as being identical to that of non-Marxists, thereby uncritically absorbing, endorsing and reproducing the existence of capitalism, and bourgeois individualism. Gramsci argued that the varying epistemological protocols of classical Marxists and nonMarxists were justified in the same manner, as *the* means to arrive at the truth – in other words, the 'scientific' approach (Wolff, 1989). Gramsci also castigated the prevalent determinist Marxist epistemological positions of positivism, rationalism and empiricism for reducing knowledge of complex social relations to simple cause-and-effect dichotomies (Green, 2011). This position was encapsulated in Gramsci's evaluation in 1929 in the *Prison Notebooks* (Gramsci, 1971), of Bukharin's (1925) theory of historical materialism, in which Gramsci attacked Bukharin's epistemology, as well as his 'unacceptable economism', underpinned by empiricism and rationalism. Gramsci used the term 'vulgar materialism' to describe the orthodox Marxist epistemological standpoint (Resnick & Wolff, 1987). In the latter schema, all knowledge begins with physical matter. Since all existence is considered to be material, human history becomes natural history, with the movement of social and economic life following a series of laws, which are of the same character as those of natural science (Femia, 1981). Specifically, Gramsci was opposed to the notion of knowledge of the physical world becoming the paradigm of all valid knowledge (Femia, 1981).

Gramsci pronounced that knowledge may appear singular and objective, but it is multiple and historically subjective - a reflection of the economically material conditions and social relations of the time (Jubas, 2010; Wolff, 1989). Epistemologically, Gramsci also emphasised the importance of elements *other* than economy and capital, whilst retaining an extensive critique of the material and ideational aspects of capitalism (Donoghue, 2017). Gramsci, however, did not underestimate the powerful role that economic

foundations play within the social order, or devalue the dominant economic relations that structure the edifice of social life (Gill, 1993). Instead, he critiqued economistic simplification of the structure of human relations to a single line of determination, a narrow determinist version of Marxism, which he considered to be theoretical reductionism (Femia, 1981). Donoghue (2017) highlights that Gramsci's epistemological position is unique because it focuses on the importance of the relationship between the ideational and the material, rather than the primacy of one over the other. Gramsci was also particularly concerned by the way in which prevailing Marxists eliminated any dialectical epistemological standpoint from their historical materialism specification (Resnick & Wolff, 1987). Thus, Gramsci (1971) argued that the essence of social change and historical development resides in the dialectical, that is, in the reciprocal relationship between human consciousness and material forces, between superstructure and base, between theory and practice.

Gramsci asserted that knowledge and truth are the product of unique systems of social, historical and political discourses and interpretation, and are therefore contextual and constructed (Resnick & Wolff, 1987). Gramsci's epistemology challenged the sanctity of the origin of prevailing knowledge of social conditions as leading to an uncritical common sense, which arises from both lived experience and the ruling institutions in society (Ayers, 2008). Therefore, Wolff (1989) argues that Gramsci's theorisations of philosophy and epistemology were an integral part of his work, through his critique of prevailing notions of science and truth. Indeed, Gramsci contended that knowledge itself is implicated in hegemonic power relations, and that knowledge reflects its particular *episteme*, or historically situated idea formations (Green, 2011). In this sense, Gramsci valued philosophical questions about knowledge as enabling a comprehension of subaltern domination, and regarded knowledge as socially constructed for specific ideologically hegemonic purposes (Olsaretti, 2014). He considered it necessary to subject to critique the existing common sense knowledge, understanding, and consciousness of subaltern classes (Zanoni, 2008). Hence, Gramsci argued for a counter-hegemonic philosophy of knowledge and truth for the emancipation of subaltern classes (Diskin, 1993). In this sense, he delegitimised knowledge, and exposed it as symptomatic of underlying hegemonic power relations.

Despite the insight into Gramsci's critique of the epistemological foundations of classical Marxism, some scholars (e.g. Anderson, 1983; Buttigieg, 1994) argue that he was not entirely successful in constructing a firm epistemological position, pointing to the lack of comprehensiveness and the fragmentariness of his conceptualisations. Nevertheless, several Gramscian scholars have sought to elucidate Gramsci's epistemological position (e.g. Ayers, 2008; Green, 2011; Jubas, 2010; Martin, 2002; Zanoni, 2008). For instance, Jubas (2010), using Gramsci's (1971) *Prison Notebooks*, outlines Gramsci's fundamental

epistemological tenets, especially emphasising their currency for qualitative researchers. In addition, Zanoni (2008) highlights Gramsci's perspective as pivoting around the social construction of knowledge, thus implying a critical posture towards it, which is an epistemological position underpinning this thesis. Thereby, Gramsci's epistemological position acknowledges the historical context of knowledge and practice (Ayers, 2008; Jubas 2010). For Gramsci, knowledge is developed in a social historicised context, and emerges from the combined endeavours of intellect, emotion, and engagement with people (Jubas, 2010; Martin, 2002). Therefore, this research takes social constructionism as its epistemological position, which includes viewing knowledge, insights and meanings as continuously reshaped by context, and assumes that they are constructed in everyday interactions (Andrews, 2012; Burr, 1995, 2003; Cunliffe, 2008; Lewis, 2002).

4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

My assumptions about ontology and epistemology have had direct consequences on the research design of this thesis. Research strategy and design includes the set of rules, principles and formal conditions that ground and guide the inquiry, and increase our knowledge about the research phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2012).

4.4.1 CASE STUDY

The workplace bullying study adopts a case study research design. A case study involves the study of an issue explored within a shared bounded system or unifying factor, for example, a setting or a context (Creswell, 2007). Flick (2009) and Yin (2009) suggest that the researcher selects representative cases for inclusion in the study. The case study approach is relevant for this research because it consists of representative cases within a common boundary (Creswell, 2007), in this case, bullied targets' experiences of workplace bullying in the UK public sector. In addition, the representative cases in this study involve a comparison and analysis of the experiences of the bullied targets, with comparison being a key aspect of case study design (Harding, 2013). The case study approach also enables an understanding of a complex issue through detailed contextual analysis of contemporary situations, which provides the basis for the application of theories and concepts (Gibson & Brown, 2009; Simons, 2009). Furthermore, Yin (2003) contends that the case study approach enables the proper consideration of contextual influences because it includes both historical and contemporary sources of evidence in an analysis of the bounded system.

4.4.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Subjective ontological positions lend themselves to qualitative research design approaches, which stem from a realisation that human behaviour is more complex and less rational than that of inanimate subjects of research in the natural sciences (Flick,

2009). If one subscribes to a view of social reality as subjective in nature, the principal concern is with the way individuals create, modify and interpret the world in which they find themselves (Burrell & Morgan, 2016). Ideographic subjective methodological approaches are utilised to undercover the internal logics that underpin human action by deploying voluntarist methods to access situations (Johnson & Duberley, 2000). The research methods include using interviews, narratives and ethnography to delve into the experience of human actors (Burrell & Morgan, 2016). Qualitative researchers are primarily interested in investigating how people experience the world and make sense of it (Gomm, 2008). They view reality as a multiple, socially constructed phenomenon, where the knower and the known are inextricably connected to each other (Gelo et al., 2008). Gramsci was derisory of social research that overlooked qualitative methods, and antagonistic towards approaches that attempted to derive the laws of evolution of human society experimentally in a way that led to causal predictions (Jubas, 2010; Kontinen, 2013). Gramsci also asserted that a connection between the researcher and marginalised groups through qualitative methods yields deeper knowledge of the phenomena being researched (Jubas, 2010). These factors influenced the adoption of a qualitative approach towards the workplace bullying study.

4.4.3 CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The research design was influenced by critical discourse analysis (CDA), which has traditionally been concerned with exposing power relations that are hidden within discourses, whether these are produced by ruling class, institutions, or authorities, or in individual face-to-face situations (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Fairclough and Wodak (1997) point out that CDA aims at demystifying texts, by focusing on the opaque relationship between discourse and societal structure. Therefore, CDA is a means of unpacking the role of discursive forces, power relations and ideology in the reproduction and legitimisation of power abuse, by focusing on an identifiable social problem (Fairclough, 2001; Van Dijk, 2005). Key components of CDA include research questions that emphasise injustice or control, an attention to power relations, and a sceptical stance towards mainstream narratives (Thomas, 1993). Indeed, critical scholars have sought to understand workplace bullying by examining patterns of power and domination, and also by relating it to broader conditions (e.g. Beale & Hoel, 2007, 2011; Hill & Lee, 2009; Hutchinson et al., 2006; Ironside & Seifert, 2003; Samnani, 2013; Walton, 2005). Due to the adoption of a research philosophy that is Gramscian in nature, a fundamental feature of the primary data gathered was ideographic and related to the critique of meanings, rather than an interpretivist focus on meaning itself (Anderson, 2009; Steinberg & Cannella, 2012). The research methods that I adopted within this thesis were semistructured interviews, and the question construction was influenced by critical inquiry. Hence, my questions were based on the notion that both the processes and the products

of social construction are infused with power relations, which privilege some groups and individuals over others (Cunliffe, 2008; Gramsci, 1971). The alignment of the research sub-questions, interview topic areas, main questions, and example probing questions are outlined in Table 4.1. In addition, the semi-structured interview schedule is attached as Appendix 1.

Table 4.1. Research sub-questions, interview topic areas, questions and example probes

Research subquestions	Semi-structured interview topic areas	Main questions	Example probes	
Sub-question 1 In what ways do bullied targets conceptualise workplace bullying?	**Exploring workplace bullying** Participant's perspective on workplace bullying.	I'm interested in hearing from you about bullying itself.	What does the word 'bullying' mean to you?	. .
Sub-question 2 In what ways, if any, have ideological forces influenced workplace bullying situations and experiences in the UK public sector?	**The context of the workplace bullying** Public sector context and organisational situation.	I'm interested in knowing whether there was an external or political related dimension to what was happening in the organisation.	What happened to you in the bullying situation? Why did the workplace bullying happen? Tell me about the organisational situation or context in which you were bullied? Could you describe whether or not the individual/s that bullied were influenced by developments or changes in the organisation? In what way?	. . **4.5**
Sub-question 3 In what ways, if any, have power relations affected the workplace bullying situation?	**Power and workplace bullying** Workplace bullying and power relations.	I'm interested in understanding the role of power in your bullying situation.	How would you describe the power of the individual/s that bullied in the situation, if any? Could you describe whether or not they felt empowered by what was happening in the organisation? Tell me about any links to governmental policy, if any.	
Sub-question 4 In what ways, if any, is workplace bullying legitimised by the organisation?	. **External changes and the organisation** External factors and organisational policies and practices.	I'm interested in knowing the extent to which governmental policy may have impacted upon relationships within the organisation.	Tell me more about the developments or changes in the organisation? In what way, if any, were the organisational changes related to external governmental policy? Could you describe whether or not the bullying was supported by the organisation? In what way?	
Sub-question 5 In what ways, if any, is the workplace bullying justified as acting morally?	. **Justifying the workplace bullying** The justification for the workplace bullying.	I'm interested in the type of bullying where individuals feel that they have a licence to behave in that way and are able to justify their behaviour.	Why did the individual/s who bullied behave in this way? Could you describe whether or not they justified their behaviour/actions? Could you describe whether or not they thought they were acting morally, or doing the right thing? In what way?	

RESEARCH METHODS

4.5.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

I considered and reviewed a variety of qualitative primary data collection techniques to ascertain their suitability for the research contained within this thesis, including visual methods, focus groups and individual interviews, ultimately deciding to utilise the latter

method for a number of reasons. Qualitative interviews have been employed in workplace bullying research since the early 1990s, however, it remains predominantly quantitative in nature with the majority of research involving large-scale surveys (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018; Redman & Wilkinson, 2008). Although individual qualitative interviews are ostensibly an obvious, or even hackneyed choice in relation to overall qualitative research, interviews are not the obvious or typical choice for workplace bullying research (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018; Samnani, 2013). A key feature that emanated from the initial discussions with the research participants was their insistence on confidentiality, including anonymising their personal identity, and that of the organisation where the workplace bullying arose. For these reasons, I reached a decision to meet participants on a one-toone basis, with nobody else present, and subsequently used pseudonyms, thus meeting the requirement for anonymity.

I undertook semi-structured interviews with the 25 bullied targets, as opposed to structured or unstructured interviews. Semi-structured interviews contain questions that are openended in nature, and possess the advantage of enabling the researcher to use planned and unplanned probes (Horn, 2009; Saunders et al., 2012). Such interviews can make better use of the knowledge-producing potential of dialogues, by providing more leeway for following up on any angles deemed important by the interviewee, providing the interviewer with a greater chance of becoming visible as a knowledge-producing participant in the process itself (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). Therefore, the use of open-ended questions in interviews has the advantage of providing the opportunity for the researcher to seek understanding and clarification of participants' stories (Bryant, 2009). Adopting semi-structured interviews enabled me to probe answers and provide respondents with the opportunity to expand on their responses, and to explore some areas that were not considered (Bryant, 2009). The semi-structured research approach enabled me to collect the qualitative data required and utilise a flexible structure, to permit subtle changes of research emphasis as the research progressed (Ackroyd, 1996; King & Horrocks, 2010).

4.5.2 PREPARING THE INTERVIEW GUIDE

A key feature of preparing for the semi-structured interviews with participants was developing a carefully thought-out interview guide. Besides acting as a prompt for the interviewer, a well-designed interview guide will enhance the consistency of data collection by serving as a broad agenda for all of the participants' interviews (Saunders et al., 2012). It also allows for a certain amount of flexibility, and as a mechanism for steering the interview, rather than a prescription for coverage (Arthur & Nazroo, 2003). Aligned with the CDA research design, I produced a list of semi-structured interview questions infused with critical inquiry. During the stage of devising the questions, I paid attention to phrasing questions in a way that would enable participants to consider their workplace bullying experience beyond the micro-level interaction. In other words, as well as focusing on the

participants' experiences of workplace bullying, I additionally generated questions that focused on the organisational context and wider societal developments, related to UK governmental policy and the UK public sector. My interview guide was designed around five main topic areas aligned with the five research sub-questions in the study as outlined in Table 4.1: the participant's conceptualisation of workplace bullying; the public sector organisational context within which the bullying occurred; power relations and workplace bullying; political factors, organisational dynamics and workplace bullying; and the justification for the workplace bullying. I reasoned that the interview guide, used in a flexible manner, should help participants to share their own workplace bullying experiences and, at the same time, reveal insights about the nature of power relations.

I considered participant anxiety around answering critical questions; this was partly dealt with through verbal dialogue prior to the actual interview, as well as the sharing of the interview schedule before the interviews took place. For instance, to ease participant anxiety, I felt that this was necessary to build rapport with the participants prior to the actual face-to-face interviews. Specifically, during telephone contact with participants in which the arrangements for conducting the interviews were being finalised, I emphasised that the interviews would be conducted in a safe, confidential environment. In addition, I highlighted that participants should avoid conceiving of the interview as a test of their knowledge. Furthermore, I stressed that the questions were designed to hear the participants' perspectives on UK public sector workplace bullying, and that they would receive the questions beforehand to enable them to familiarise themselves with the interview content. Invariably the topics were not raised in the exact same order with the participants, and supplementary follow-up questions were also asked, as is *de rigueur* for semi-structured interviews (Harding, 2013). During the course of the interviews I also used follow-up probing questions (outlined in Table 4.1) to support participants in providing a detailed account, and to explore the issues raised in more depth (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Futing Liao, 2004; Wengraf, 2001). Gramsci (1971), through his philosophy of praxis, emphasises that truth is not something that intellectuals concoct hermetically and impose on the masses, but something that emerges from subaltern groups, which stems from a critique of their common sense. Indeed, key components of critical research questions are an emphasis upon injustice or control, an attention to power relations, and a sceptical stance towards dominant mainstream narratives (Thomas, 1993).

4.5.3 INTERVIEW DETAILS, PARTICIPANTS, SAMPLING AND TRANSCRIPTION

The research participants were 25 bullied targets, and the interviews took place between August 2017 and August 2018. I did not have 25 participants from the outset: rather, the participant pool grew during the interviewing year. I accessed the research participants through personal contacts and professional networks using convenience sampling, whereby the participants are recruited via their accessibility to the researcher (Harding,

2013). The participant numbers increased through snowball sampling, as a result of some participants informing others of the research, which can occur when respondents are a group that are difficult to access (Gomm, 2008). In addition, the interviewees comprised a purposive sample, the defining feature being that participants are selected according to predetermined criteria relevant to the research objectives (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Specifically, UK public sector employees who identified as having experienced workplace bullying were recruited to participate in the research. The selection criteria for participants included direct experience of workplace bullying in the UK public sector, willingness to discuss their bullying experiences, and availability to participate in one-toone interviews (Geertz, 1973; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). I did not interview participants on their own organisational premises, in case that was where they had experienced the workplace bullying. Indeed, Elwood and Martin (2000) argue that far from being removed from social and political contexts, the interview site provides a material space for the enactment of power relations. In addition, the publication of the research is not dependent upon revealing the name of the organisation where the bullying took place, and thus interviewing on neutral premises negated the requirement for organisational consent, with its associated risks of refusal, withdrawal, or censorship.

Initially, I informed potential participants about the research via face-to-face conversations, telephone conversations, or personal email. During the initial conversations, I made the individuals aware that the research was exploring workplace bullying within the UK public sector. These conversations led to the individuals self-labelling their experience as workplace bullying, based on their notion of what bullying meant to them. Through the conversations, the participant pool began to form and develop, consisting of a heterogeneous group of bullied targets of differing professional statuses and occupational groupings, within the UK public sector. The organisations that the 25 participants came from included councils, the civil service, universities, further education colleges, sixth-form colleges, and a secondary school. Although the participant number is ostensibly small, a consideration was the difficulty of accessing participants on such a sensitive topic, as well as data saturation. Data saturation seeks to secure maximum benefit from the data gathered. It can be considered as reaching a stage of data adequacy after which no new information is obtained from additional qualitative data (Kerr, Nixon, & Wild, 2010). The literature on data saturation stresses its links with obtaining a sample of sufficient size to allow credible analysis to be carried out (Kerr et al., 2010). Mason (2010) refers to this as diminishing returns and argues that searching for new data may even be counterproductive. Research participants disclosed honest detail about their workplace bullying experiences, thus a consideration for this research was protecting the profile of participants who are well known to their public sector colleagues. These factors required sensitivity towards protecting participants' identities, and consequently I did not record information on age and ethnic origin, which could potentially reveal who they are in the

thesis. Table 4.2 provides details about the research participants by pseudonym, including the date of their interview, gender, role at the time of the workplace bullying, the type of public sector organisation that they worked for, the roles of the bullying actor/s, the duration of the bullying, and a summary of the workplace bullying situation.

Funding was available for external transcription services, and all audio-recorded semistructured interviews were transcribed verbatim by one third-party transcriber, who I accessed through the university's preferred supplier list of professional agencies. Therefore, the first stage in extracting primary data for analysis was derived from the transcripts of the audio-recordings of the interviews. Once the transcript was available, I listened to each audio-recording whilst reading the transcript and corrected any errors by the transcriber, such as misheard words, technical terms, or unfamiliar acronyms. The language of the participant, however, was preserved. Furthermore, the transcripts were returned to the participants to enable them to check them for accuracy and make amendments, where required. The interview transcripts for the 25 participants run to 609 pages and 240,008 words. In order to protect participants' confidentiality, entire transcribed interviews are not made public with the thesis. Selected quotations from the transcripts using pseudonyms are included in the findings chapters of the thesis. Additionally, interview extracts demonstrating how I carried out data analysis are included in Tables 4.4, 4.5, 4.6 and 4.9 in this chapter.

Table 4.2. Research participants' details by pseudonym

Bullied target pseudonym	Date of interview	Gender	Role at time of bullying	Public sector organisation	Bullying actor/s	Bullying duration	Situation summary
1. Roger (Pilot interview)	24/08/17	Male	IT Technician	University	Service Manager	2016–2017	Bullied to undertake work in the context of workforce reductions, without consideration of workload and skill set.
2. Lana (Pilot interview)	14/09/17	Female	Senior Leader	Council	Senior Leaders	2012–2015	Bullied by senior leader peers with a business focus, who undermined Lana's public sector background.
3. Sandy (Pilot interview)	2/10/17	Female	Civil Service Officer	Civil Service	Line Manager	2015-2017	Bullied through implementation of performance management rating scheme.
4. Sean	30/10/17	Male	Community Safety Officer	Council	Head of Service/Line Manager	2009–2011	Bullied to leave the organisation as part of a redundancy selection process.
5. Matthew	1/11/17	Male	Further Education Manager	Sixth-Form College	Senior FE Managers	2004–2006	Bullied as part of employee performance being related to achieving prescribed outcomes.
6. Nicholas	6/11/17	Male	Head of Service	Council	Executive Directors	2009–2012	Bullied to leave the organisation as part of workforce reductions.
7. Rachel	13/11/17	Female	Student Support Adviser	University	Line Manager	2016–2017	Bullied to achieve unrealistic workload in the context of workforce reductions.
8. Marilyn	15/11/17	Female	Policy Officer	Council	Head of Service/Line Manager	2011–2016	Bullied to achieve unrealistic workload in the context of workforce reductions.
9. Connor	22/11/17	Male	Organisational Psychologist	Council	Line Manager and Peers	2014-Ongoing	Bullied through formal disciplinary procedures in the context of cutbacks.
10. Sara	5/12/17	Female	Policy Officer	Council	Head of Service/Line Manager	2012–2017	Bullied to achieve unrealistic workload in the context of workforce reductions, despite her disability.
11. Tom	11/12/17	Male	Further Education Lecturer	Sixth-Form College	Line Manager	2015–2017	Bullied in the context of financial cutbacks and increasing workloads.
12. Jake	12/12/17	Male	Events Officer	Council	Line Manager	2010–2012	Bullied as part of redundancy selection process.

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Table 4.2. Research participants' details by pseudonym (continued)

13. Emily	18/12/17	Female	Learning and Development Manager	Council	Head of Service/Line Manager	2010–2013	Bullied to leave the organisation as part of a redundancy selection process.
14. Kate	9/01/18	Female	Learning and Development Officer	Council	Head of Service and Peers	2011–2013	Bullied to leave the organisation as part of a redundancy selection process.
15. Donovan	11/01/18	Male	Learning and Development Manager	University	Head of Service/Line Manager	2009–2013	Bullied within university environment of transformational change.
16. Anthony	19/01/18	Male	Assistant Pro Vice Chancellor	University	Chief Executive	2006–2012	Bullied within organisational environment of achieving business targets.
17. Ruby	22/01/18	Female	Teacher	Secondary School	Head of Faculty	2012–2018	Bullied to achieve unrealistic workload in the context of workforce reductions, despite her disability.
18. Karl	12/02/18	Male	Senior Lecturer	University	Senior Academics	2009–2014	Bullied to achieve unrealistic workload in the context of university businessoriented changes.
19. Ava	23/02/18	Female	Principal Lecturer	University	Dean	2009–2011	Bullied following time off work due to surgery and disability.
20. Clara	9/03/18	Female	Careers Manager	Connexions Service	Senior Managers	2009–2011	Bullied to achieve unrealistic business targets.
21. Scarlett	14/03/18	Female	Housing Manager	Council	Senior Managers	2012–2014	Bullied through undermining of competence, leading to removal of responsibilities.
22. Clive	22/03/18	Male	Senior Lecturer	University	Workload Manager	2003–2005	Bullied to undertake additional work, resulting in an unreasonable workload.
23. Martin	13/04/18	Male	Civil Servant	Civil Service	Line Manager	2013–2016	Bullied because of trade union representative role.
24. Seth	12/07/18	Male	Council Officer	Council	Line Manager	2015–2017	Bullied because of trade union representative role.
25. Henry	03/08/18	Male	Head of Service	Council	Assistant Chief Executive	2000–2003	Bullied within environment of achieving prescribed external outcomes.

4.5.4 PILOT INTERVIEWS AND PRELIMINARY DATA ANALYSIS

Pre-running the research through a pilot phase enables an assessment of the appropriateness of the interview questions (Saunders et al., 2012). Accordingly, I piloted the semi-structured interviews with the first three participants to assess the feasibility, practicability, flow, question content, question sequence, and timing of the interviews (Mitchell & Jolley, 2013). The pilot interviews refined the interview questions, honed my interview technique, anticipated problems that might have arisen later with the audiorecorder, and identified wasteful duplications in the interview process (Bloor, 2001; Hammersley & Gomm, 2000; King & Horrocks, 2010). Mitchell and Jolley (2013) identify fundamental interview errors including leading questions, double-barrelled questions, and poorly worded questions and phrases. The pilot interviews helped to resolve and improve such errors. Consequently, a revision of the wording of the questions took place, from some closed questions to open-ended questions, including the addition of supplementary probes to aid the exploration and elaboration of responses. Furthermore, the initial phrasing of some of the participant questions was underpinned by assumptions that I had made that needed to be altered, which led to a modification of the language used to phrase the questions. For example, I assumed that power inequality was a key feature of the workplace bullying experienced by the participants, rather than exploring whether indeed it was an issue. The logistical process led to the rewriting of questions to ensure they were clearer and less presumptuous, as well as to the abridgement of the schedule used in the subsequent semi-structured interviews. The intention was to ensure that the revised questions would generate useful and rich data to underpin the research.

Preliminary data analysis using the pilot data was embarked upon to ensure that the data collected enabled the investigative questions to be answered, and to allow a practice run of the proposed data analysis approach (Anderson, 2009). Preliminary CDA and thematic analysis (TA) were undertaken and applied to the pilot data in preparation for the larger study. The trial-run data analysis helped me to ascertain whether the proposed analytical techniques were appropriate, maximise their contribution to the study, and improve the research process (Salkind, 2010). Specifically, it enabled me to develop a manual process for analysing the data through CDA and TA. In addition, the trial run facilitated the development of data analysis techniques, including identifying CDA actions, which ultimately assisted in critically analysing the workplace bullying data. Furthermore, I was able to make sense of the TA process of developing codes, sub-codes and themes. The trial-run data analysis contributed to developing the data analysis processes ultimately adopted in the thesis and the CDA and TA approaches undertaken, which are described more thoroughly in the following sections of this chapter.

4.6 ANALYSING THE DATA: CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

CDA, which is embedded in critical theory and has a broad theoretical heritage drawing from thinkers including Gramsci (Wodak & Meyer, 2001), was used to analyse the data. In addition, I used TA to analyse the primary data, as described in Section 4.6.3. I began the data analysis with CDA, therefore, I will outline the background to CDA, followed by the specific CDA approach that I implemented to analyse the primary data in this study. Unlike some linguistic discourse methods, the 'critical' within CDA means that it underscores the linkage between discourse and power dynamics, including systems of domination and instances of resistance (Mumby, 2005). Hence, the scope of CDA is not only discourse based and, depending on the approach taken, CDA does not reduce everything to discourse (Fairclough, 2003; Tenorio, 2011). CDA approaches range from mega-discourse approaches, which have a macro-sociological dimension (e.g. Fairclough, 1992; Mumby, 2005) focusing on power relations, ideology and discourse, to micro-discourse approaches (e.g. Kristeva, 1986) focusing on the detailed study of language components, such as the examination of patterns in vocabulary, verb usage and linguistic text structure. In this study, I analysed the participants' data using a megadiscourse, macro-sociological CDA approach. Indeed, CDA scholars (e.g. Alvesson & Karreman, 2000; Fairclough, 1992; Van Dijk, 1997) point out that one cannot understand specific texts and discourses without considering the social and political context in question, that is, analysing 'text in context' (Leitch & Palmer, 2010). Fairclough (1992) defines texts as manifestations of discursive practice, and as encompassing both spoken and written language. Accordingly, the 'text' analysed in this study is contained in the transcripts from the audio-recorded semi-structured interviews with participants, and the 'context' is the changing social and political UK public sector environment. CDA primarily studies the way social power abuse and inequality are enacted, reproduced, legitimised and resisted, in the social and political context (Leitch & Palmer, 2010; Van Dijk, 2015). It does this by drawing out manifestations of unequal power relations that may appear inconsequential or obfuscated (Donoghue, 2017). Therefore, rather than merely describe, for example, discourse structures abstracted from their social and political contexts, CDA focuses on text in context, attempting to explain text in terms of properties of social interaction and macro-structure (Mogashoa, 2014), which is an important consideration for this thesis.

4.6.1 THE DATA ANALYSIS STAGES UNDERTAKEN

Systematic analytical procedures are required to examine text in context (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Leitch & Palmer, 2010). Accordingly, an iterative approach was taken to analysing participants' data, incorporating a comprehensive and systematic analysis to enable the trustworthiness of the data, and to enhance analytical rigour (Atkins & Wallace,

2012). As discussed, all audio-recorded semi-structured interviews were transcribed verbatim by an external transcriber. After receiving the transcription, I listened to the audiorecording and read the transcription simultaneously. I ensured that the transcription reflected the content of the interview, including inserting words that the transcriber had found inaudible. This process enabled me to re-familiarise myself with the interview and continue to understand the participants' workplace bullying experiences. Subsequently, I manually analysed the data, rather than using the NVivo Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) program, recognising Waring & Wainwright's (2008) argument that immersion in the data is an essential part of the analytical process, and use of technology can act as a substantial barrier. Initially, I organised the data into a manual table with five broad sections reflecting the semi-structured interview schedule, which enabled me to make sense of the data. I then developed a 'CDA Process of Reading and Analysis Template', where I transferred the participants' data into three dimensions to aid the analysis of text in context: the micro-level of the workplace bullying, the meso-level of the organisational context, and the macro-level of societal forces that have impacted upon UK public sector organisations. The purpose of the 'CDA Process of Reading and Analysis Template', attached as Appendix 2, was to assist in organising the data, to enable rereading of the interview content, and to systematically undertake CDA to analyse the data.

4.6.2 HOW THE DATA WAS ANALYSED: FAIRCLOUGH'S (1992) THREE-DIMENSIONAL MODEL AND GRAMSCIAN CDA

As discussed, the aim of this thesis is to explore workplace bullying and power relations in a marketised UK public sector, using a Gramscian theoretical framework to obtain insights into the phenomenon. I specifically analysed the primary data by drawing upon Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional CDA model, represented in Diagram 4.1. Fairclough's model aims at linking micro- and macro-levels of text analysis, not merely as language in use, but as a form of political and social practice. Fairclough argues that CDA involves the simultaneous consideration of the three dimensions – namely, the micro-level of text, the meso-level of discursive practice, and the macro-level of social practice – to enable an analysis of text in context. The benefits of Fairclough's CDA approach include the way it bridges the gap between micro-level phenomena, including agency and interaction, and macro-level phenomena at the structural, institutional and organisational level (Van Dijk, 2015) – a bridging that is a key aspect of this thesis.

Diagram 4.1. Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model of CDA
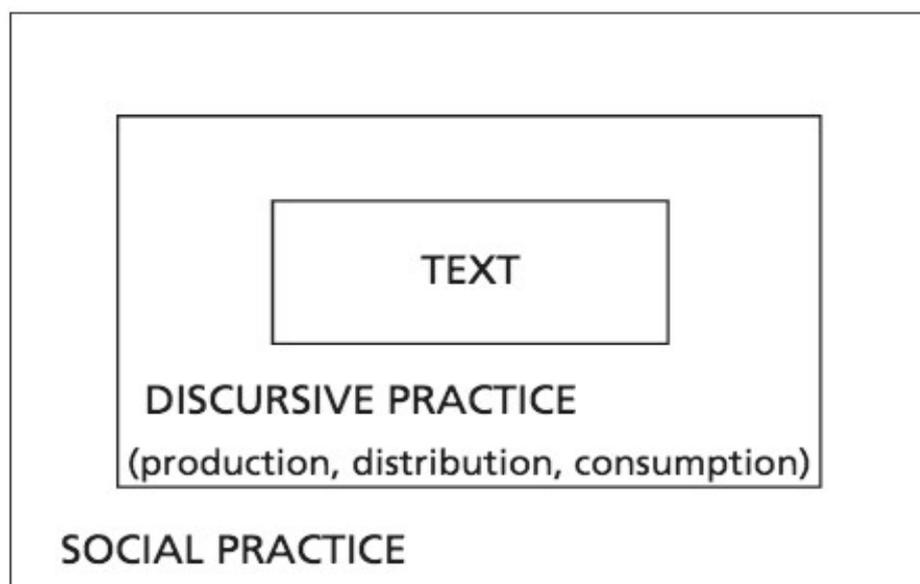
The first dimension, 'text', is concerned with understanding the construction of text, as well as what the text aims to achieve and how, at the micro-level (Fairclough, 1992). Hence, text is analysed to examine opaque, as well as transparent, relationships of power and control (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000). As part of the CDA process in this study, to gain an understanding of the workplace bullying situation at the micro-level, I identified subject positions that are central to the meaning of the text. This process included noting the bullied target's and bullying actor's roles, the relationship between the target and actor in the organisation, how the workplace bullying event is represented, and the bullied target's interests. In addition, using Fairclough's (1992) framework I analysed how the text is constructed by the participant, what the text trying to achieve, and how the text achieves its aim. The second dimension, 'discursive practice', examines the context of text production and regards discourse, power and ideology as being produced, circulated, and consumed at the meso-level (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000). For the meso-level analysis of this study, I identified the contexts within which participants experienced workplace bullying, including organisational changes, norms, and legitimisation and justification for the workplace bullying. Furthermore, using Fairclough's (1992) framework, I examined how the text is produced and consumed, and the intermediate level between the text and its social context. The third dimension, 'social practice', refers to the way in which discourse, power and ideology are represented and rewritten societally, shedding light on the emergence of new orders, attempts at control, and regimes of power at the macrolevel (Fairclough, 1992). For the macro-level analysis of this study, I explored the potential impact of NPM and/or austerity governmental policy, as well as whether power relations influenced the workplace bullying situation. Using Fairclough's framework, I also examined the relationship of the text to ideology and power, and the historical, political

and socioeconomic factors that constitute the wider terrain of the discursive practice. The process is outlined in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3. The Fairclough three-dimensional CDA process

Three dimensions	Focus	Actions related to the thesis	Fairclough's actions of data analysis	Associated CDA questions in this thesis
Micro Text	The content of the text.	Who is the target of bullying? Who is/are the actor/s of bullying? How is the workplace bullying event represented? What are the bullied target's interests?	How is the text constructed by the participant? What is the text trying to achieve? (Assertion, persuasion, justification, defence, and explanation) How does the text achieve its aim? (Words, phrases, and statements)	How is the workplace bullying situation constructed by the participant in the text? What is the bullied target trying to achieve through their account? How does the bullied target's account achieve its aim?
Meso Discursive practice	The production, distribution, and consumption of texts.	What is the organisational context? In what way, if any, is the workplace bullying approved or sanctioned by the organisation? In what way, if any, is the bullying justified?	How is the text produced and consumed? What is the intermediate level between the text and its social context?	Which discourses are drawn upon? Which discourses are dominant at the organisational level of the workplace bullying situation?
Macro Social practice	Power relations, ideologies, and hegemonic struggles that discourses reproduce or challenge.	What is the broader context of the UK public sector organisation? Are there connections to governmental policy? Have power relations influenced the workplace bullying situation?	What is the relationship of the text to ideology and power? What are the historical, political, and socio-economic factors that constitute the wider terrain of the discursive practice?	In what ways are ideology and power relevant? What are the historical, political, and socio-economic factors surrounding the organisation and workplace bullying situation?

Source: Adapted from Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional CDA approach.

Three readings were undertaken of the micro-, meso- and macro-dimensions of the participants' workplace bullying situations. The first readings of the dimensions included describing and summarising participants' accounts, to help me make sense of their

workplace bullying situations, with no attempt at analysing the data from a theoretical perspective. The second readings of each dimension entailed using Fairclough's (1992) actions of data analysis, summarised in Table 4.3. The third readings of each dimension involved applying a Gramscian conceptual framework to the data analysis, in line with the perspective undertaken in this thesis. CDA approaches that have been influenced by the work of Gramsci employ concepts of hegemony, and to a lesser extent common sense, in their analysis (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Therefore, Gramscian approaches to CDA contend that language reinforces hegemonic power relations, in a way that makes social conditions appear natural or common sense, when instead they are influenced by material forces, and are ideological (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Drawing on Gramscian theory, Fairclough (1995) argues that whilst many forms of social organisation and institutions clearly reflect ideological interests, one arena where we can use CDA is in analysing how ideological hegemony operates in society, reinforcing oppressive power relations. Although Gramscian CDA approaches have mainly incorporated Gramsci's concept of hegemony, and to a lesser extent common sense, Donoghue (2017) highlights that many scholars' explication of vital Gramscian concepts remains surprisingly intangible within CDA. Consequently, Donoghue (2017) calls for Gramscian CDA to contain a more thorough incorporation of Gramsci's concepts, arguing that it must not only include hegemony and common sense, but also incorporate an analysis of spontaneous grammars. Donoghue (2017) maintains that the inclusion of additional Gramscian concepts enables the further realisation of CDA as an emancipatory tool in political and social science. The inclusion of additional Gramsci concepts also leads to a more accurate claim that the CDA approach undertaken is indeed Gramscian. Accordingly, the Gramscian CDA approach adopted in this thesis, achieved through the third reading incorporated Gramscian concepts of hegemony, the ruling class, subalternity, the state, civil society, organic and traditional intellectuals, common sense, spontaneous grammar, and good sense. A redacted illustrative 'CDA process of reading and analysis' table for the participant known as Lana, demonstrating my approach to analysing participants' data, including the third Gramscian reading, can be found in Tables 4.4, 4.5, and 4.6.

Table 4.4. Micro-level process of reading and analysis

Interview question focus and actions of analysis as understood in the thesis	Summarised illustrative extract of participant response from interview transcript	First reading Positions in workplace bullying situation (summarised analysis)	Second reading CDA process (summarised analysis)	Third reading Identification and brief analysis of Gramscian concepts that apply to the workplace bullying situation (summarised analysis)
Micro-level question examples What is bullying? What happened in the bullying situation? **Actions of analysis** Identify actors in workplace bullying situation, i.e. target and bully. Target and actor positions involved in the workplace bullying situation. How is the bullying event being represented? How does the bullied target outline their interests?	**What happened in the workplace bullying situation?** 'Under the terms of us, err, agreeing to join this organisation it was determined that I would then join the senior leadership team of this … much bigger organisation. And as time moved on, it became clear to me that, erm, that I didn't necessarily share the values and, err, the other people, the majority of the others who were on the team … two senior leaders were bullying me and other members of the team, over, err, a substantial period of time. "'Well, you know, we have to take a business decision here."'	**Actors of bullying** Two senior leaders. **Target of bullying** Peer of workplace bullying actors. **How the workplace bullying event is being represented** Actors undermine bullied target's public sector experience; actors hold different values. **Bullied target's interests** Customers and staff. .	**How is the text constructed by participant?** Emphasis on values, justification of previous experience. **What is the text trying to achieve?** Impact of organisational changes on bullying actors' approach towards staff and service users. **How does the text achieve its aim?** Bullied target constantly undermined and underestimated. Power abuse.	**Gramscian conceptual framework** • Hegemony • State • Power relations • Intellectuals • Common sense • Spontaneous grammars • Good sense **Gramscian analysis of text production, achievement, and how the text achieves its aim** Power lorded over bullied target through senior leaders' businessoriented emphasis, which is used to undermine and differentiate the target. Bullying actor's language discursively maintaining and legitimising NPM organisational practices, at microlevel.

Table 4.5. Meso-level process of reading and analysis

Interview question focus and actions of analysis as understood in the thesis	Summarised illustrative extract of participant response from interview transcript	First reading Context, legitimisation, and justification of workplace bullying situation (summarised analysis)	Second reading CDA process (summarised analysis)	Third reading Identification and brief analysis of Gramscian concepts that apply to the workplace bullying situation (summarised analysis)
Meso-level question examples What is the organisational context? What are the organisational norms, expectations? Explore justification for the workplace bullying. **Level of analysis** Identify organisational context in which bullying occurred. Connections to governmental policy.	**Justification for workplace bullying?** 'I have a very clear view on this … the organisation ... would have started under local authority control … "Right, I've suddenly now got … more control to run this organisation as if it were a business organisation." You know, it's like "private sector is good because public sector was poor" and there was this kind of mantra. I think they would justify it in terms of "We have to make sure that we are the most successful example of this organisation in the sector." I got the impression they thought they had the licence to be the way they were because they were being … hard-nosed … and commercial.'	**Organisational context** NPM practices. **Legitimisation by organisation** Business-oriented focus; traditional public sector approaches considered poor way of running organisation by the bullying actors. **Justifying the workplace bullying** Bullying actors implementing private sector practices. **Connections to governmental policy** NPM; private sector practices.	**How is the text produced and consumed?** Text highlights businessoriented discourse used by bullying actors. **Understanding the intermediate level between the text and its social context** Governmental policy – separate management from council; impact on senior leaders managing the organisation.	**Gramscian conceptual framework** • Hegemony • State • Power relations • Intellectuals • Common sense • Spontaneous grammars • Good sense **Gramscian analysis of text production and consumption** Governmental policy impacting upon senior leaders' language and approaches; consent to governmental policy demonstrated by existing senior leaders. Private sector language in use by bullying actors, discursively reinforcing its prioritisation at meso-level. **Gramscian analysis of intermediate level between text and social context** Commercial approach; NPM-oriented policies and practices.

Table 4.6. Macro-level process of reading and analysis

Interview question focus and actions of analysis as understood in the thesis	Summarised illustrative extract of participant response from interview transcript	First reading Power relations impacting upon workplace bullying situation (summarised analysis)	Second reading CDA process (summarised analysis)	Third reading Identification and brief analysis of Gramscian concepts that apply to the workplace bullying situation (summarised analysis)

Macro-level question examples	Power relations	Power relations impacting upon the workplace bullying situation	Relationship of text to ideology and power	Gramscian conceptual framework
Impact of governmental policy on the workplace bullying situation, if any? Have power relations influenced the bullying situation? **Level of analysis** Identify governmental policy e.g. NPM, austerity. Explore role of power relations in the workplace bullying situation, if any.	'The roles gave them a lot of power over a lot of areas in the organisation. They frightened their staff into delivering … a lot of power came from the fact that they were senior in the organisation and had a job to do to make the model more business-like … there didn't appear to be any evidence of their behaviours being monitored in any way. Well, I don't think they ever sat down and said "the government wants this" but I do think they just considered the private sector mantra the way to go, they – what's the word … absorbed it … that's what was being asked of them and that's what they were determined to deliver. Any other way of working was inferior and [this attitude] affected their whole mindset right down to how they viewed customers.'	Although all individuals in the workplace bullying situation are senior leaders, bullying actors derive power from their roles; bullying actors' roles allow them access and power over many organisational areas. Power of bullying actors also demonstrated by lack of monitoring of their work.	Removing service provision from local authority control enabled the bullying actors to adopt private sector practices. **Factors constituting the wider terrain of the discursive practice** Organisation able to manage services alongside management companies; measured by performance indicators, benchmarking, and market competition.	• Hegemony • State • Power relations • Intellectuals • Common sense • Spontaneous grammars • Good sense **Gramscian analysis of the relationship of the text to ideology and power** Organisation structurally situated and impacted by external governmental policy; NPM; ideological hegemony; power relations at macro-level. **Gramscian analysis of the historical, political, and socioeconomic factors constituting the wider terrain of the discursive practice** External relations of force imposed on public sector organisation via NPM; Private sector partnerships formed as part of public sector reform in the UK.

4.6.3 ANALYSING THE DATA: THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Thematic Analysis was also used to analyse the primary data to increase the rigour, verification and trustworthiness of the data analysis, and to ensure the marshalling of meaningful results. In addition, Boyatzis (1998), and Braun and Clarke (2006) highlight that one key benefit of TA is that it is independent of theory and can be applied across a range of epistemological approaches. For instance, TA can be an essentialist or realist method that reports the reality of participants, or contrastingly a constructionist method, which seeks to theorise the socio-cultural contexts and structural conditions in which individual accounts are provided (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Constructionist TA resonates with the epistemological stance and Gramscian approach adopted within this thesis. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that TA provides a flexible analytical tool that can assist in providing a rich and detailed account of the data – considerations that led to my usage of TA to supplement the CDA undertaken in the workplace bullying study. Specifically, TA is concerned with the identification and analysis of patterns of meaning, denoted as themes, and is regarded as a cornerstone of qualitative research (Herzog, Handke, & Hitters, 2017). A theme is a pattern that identifies something significant in the data that relates to the research questions (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). TA as a research method involves organising, analysing, describing and reporting themes contained within a data set (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). Braun and Clarke (2006) distinguish between two code and theme levels: semantic and latent. Semantic codes and themes are descriptive and focus on what a participant has said (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Latent codes and themes look beyond what has been said, and identify the underlying ideas, assumptions, conceptualisations and ideologies, which are theorised as informing the semantic content of the data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Following the CDA, I returned to the primary data and proceeded to undertake TA, which involved establishing both semantic and latent codes and themes, to supplement and consolidate the CDA findings. Codes identify a feature of the data that appears interesting to the analyst, and refer to the most basic segment of the raw data that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon (Boyatzis, 1998). The codes were then scrutinised for each participant and collated to establish sub-themes, which were then categorised into broader themes.

4.6.4 THE THEMATIC ANALYSIS STAGES UNDERTAKEN

I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) TA approach, which encompasses a six-phase systematic method for data analysis. Phase one entailed re-familiarisation with the primary data. I repeated the exercise of re-reading the transcripts and listened to the audiorecordings again to enable data trustworthiness, enhance rigour, and to maintain close examination of the data. Indeed, Bird (2005) argues that each participant recording should be listened to at least twice, to enhance understanding of their voice. Phase two

involved generating the initial codes. The TA process involved coding following data interpretation, rather than using pre-existing codes for interpretation (Gibbs, 2002). I established codes in the primary data initially based on an inductive approach (Frith & Gleeson, 2004), whereby a descriptive code captured the essence of the workplace bullying experience using a short phrase. My approach, however, was not purely inductive. Indeed, Partington (2002), and Crabtree and Miller (1999), point out that it is misleading to imagine that experiences, preconceptions and prior understanding of theory are put aside when analysing data. In addition, an abductive approach (Boyatzis, 1998; Gibbs, 2009) was used, where codes were influenced by the literature review to examine broader power relations issues. I systematically examined the data by applying codes alongside the data set being examined, and returned to the initial codes, following a time lapse, reviewing and modifying them where necessary, recognising Coffey and Atkinson's (1996) contention that initial codes should not be 'set in stone'. Many of the codes were initially tentative and revised as new insights from the data emerged. Altogether, 1,545 codes were generated using a manual table with a simple tabular format in a word processing document. The codes were indexed manually as a means of recording interpretation, retrieving data for the presentation of findings, and acting as a flexible aide-mémoire during further iterations of TA. Phase three necessitated sifting, collating and extracting the codes for potential sub-themes, and highlighting the data relevant for each sub-theme. Phase four involved examining the sub-themes compared with the coded data extracts and the entire data corpus, to ensure that they reflected the participants' accounts. Phase five included identifying overarching themes based on the sub-themes, and categorising them according to the research sub-questions. Finally, phase six entailed producing the findings chapters by selecting extracts that illustrated the themes, and supporting the themes with the CDA analysis undertaken.

The TA approach that I followed is summarised in Table 4.7, and summarised examples of the 'code–sub-theme–theme' process are attached as Appendices 3 and 4.

Table 4.7. Thematic analysis phases

Thematic analysis phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarisation with the data	Listened to the audio-recordings and re-read the transcripts.
2. Generating initial codes	Organised the data into a manual TA table; systematically coded the primary data and highlighted data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for sub-themes	Collated codes of each interview into potential sub-themes.
4. Reviewing sub-themes	Ensured that the sub-themes worked in relation to the coded extract.
5. Producing and naming themes	Established themes from the sub-themes and aligned them with the relevant research subquestions.
6. Producing the findings chapters	Selected compelling live extracts from the data, related themes back to the literature and research sub-questions, examined CDA, and produced the findings chapters.

Source: Adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006).

Table 4.8 provides redacted illustrative quotes from the participants and the accompanying codes to demonstrate how I coded the data. Expanded versions of the quotes are contained in Chapters Five and Six of the thesis, which outline the findings of the workplace bullying research.

Table 4.8. Illustrative quotes and coding

Redacted illustrative quotes	Codes
'Well … drawing a distinction between individual bullying … and group or corporate bullying … not fitting in with corporate priorities … when the corporate collectively bully that person … a group in effect … turn on an individual.' 'Bullying … comes right from the top … they'll say it's being managed robustly or strong management, but it's … corporate bullying in a way.'	• Corporate collectively bullying • Group bullying • Corporate priorities • Corporate bullying disguised as robust management
'I didn't necessarily share the values of the other people bullying me … they saw themselves as being more hardnosed … I was often saying, "Have you thought about what the impact of this is going to be on staff … on customers?"' 'I spoke candidly about certain issues … things like losing the quality of services, being bogged down in admin to meet ridiculous targets, the pressure that was being put on council officers …'	• Bullied target's public sector background discredited • Bullied target critical of NPM-oriented practices • Bullied target critical of target-driven culture • Bullying actors oriented towards businessoriented objectives • Bullying actor supportive of public sector changes
'The workload was not manageable, but she didn't care as long as she could then report to the management team that the work had been done.' 'So, we were inundated with work … the workload was really bad.' 'There's been … central government cuts forever … and every year the workforce … reduced, every year … with more work being piled on.'	• Reduced workforce and increased workloads • Managers increasing workloads and unachievable targets • Managers not listening and inappropriate performance management • Crippling cutbacks and staff pressures
'She was always very careful to involve HR … she would work with HR … there was an element of collusion.' 'This bullying and this culture was strongly supported by management and the HR function … clearly HR was a management tool to create a particular culture.' 'HR don't seem to question … the bullying … just … accept it … automatically think … managers are right … employees always are in the wrong and they've got to change their ways or get out.'	• HR department endorse bullying actors' actions • HR and management bullying culture • HR support managers over staff • HR not neutral or impartial

'I think they would justify it in terms of "we have to make sure that we are the most successful example … in the sector … we haven't got time to … pussyfoot around … we just need to get on and deal with the business".' 'They're so wrapped up in the business plan … they … think they're doing right by the business and people's feelings become expendable.' 'Behaviour … at points reconciled with the good of the company, good of the enterprise.'	• Economic, competitive pressures justified behaviour • Justification through needs of the business • Justification through needs of the customer • Good of the company and the enterprise • Doing right by business

Table 4.9 contains a further audit trail supplying examples of codes, sub-themes and themes, aligned with the research sub-questions.

Table 4.9. From codes, to sub-themes, to themes

Research subquestion	Codes	Sub-themes	Theme
In what ways do bullied targets conceptualise workplace bullying?	• Corporate collectively bullying • Group bullying • Corporate priorities • Corporate bullying disguised as robust management	• Management-driven corporate bullying • Organisational workplace bullying • Institutionalised workplace bullying	Corporate workplace bullying.
In what ways, if any, have ideological forces influenced workplace bullying situations and experiences in the UK public sector?	• Bullied target's public sector background discredited • Bullied target critical of NPM-oriented practices • Bullied target critical of target-driven culture • Bullying actors oriented towards businessoriented objectives • Bullying actor supportive of public sector changes	• Bullied target undermined for previous public sector experience and knowledge • Bullying actors driving forward private sector approaches	Business model versus public sector values.
In what ways, if any, have power relations affected the workplace bullying situation?	• Reduced workforce and increased workloads • Managers increasing workloads and unachievable targets • Managers not listening • Crippling cutbacks and staff pressures	• Target-driven environments • Management instructions • Workload pressures	Power relations, pressurised environments, and increased workloads.
In what ways, if any, is workplace bullying legitimised by the organisation?	• HR department endorses bullying actors' actions • HR and management bullying culture • HR supports managers over staff • Corporate bullying through HR policies • HR not neutral or impartial	• Management supported by HR • Bullying actors supported by HR • Corporate bullying including HR	Managers, human resource management, and workplace bullying legitimisation.

In what ways, if any, is the workplace bullying justified as acting morally?	• Economic, competitive pressures justified behaviour • Justification through needs of the business • Justification through needs of the customer • Good of the company and the enterprise • Doing right by business	• Competitive pressures • Business needs priority	Meeting business requirements.

4.6.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND PROCEDURES

The ethical practice of undertaking research with human participants is a complex and demanding responsibility, and throughout any research process ethical issues emerge (King & Horrocks, 2010). In addition, in an increasingly complex political, socio-economic and moral context, the issue of ethics is a fundamental area to consider when undertaking organisational research (Brand, 2009; Crane, 1999; Saunders et al., 2012). Accordingly, I examined all aspects of the Northumbria University's Ethics in Research Policy prior to commencing the research. Furthermore, I followed the university's procedures to obtain ethical approval prior to commencing the research, as set out and required by the Faculty of Business and Law. As well as the 'Informed Consent Form for Research Participants', highlighting the nature, topic and features of the intended research, the ethical procedure entailed completing a 'Research Ethical Issues Form' attached as Appendices 5 and 6 respectively. Subsequently, my ethical issues forms were scrutinised by Northumbria University's ethics committee, and only when they were endorsed could the semistructured interviews commence. Ethical approval and clearance for the research was gained on 18th July 2017.

Non-maleficence is a core principle of many standard frameworks for ethical research, encompassing a duty to avoid, prevent, or limit harms to others in any research that is undertaken (Miller, Birch, Mauthner, & Jessop, 2012). The concept also includes avoiding harm or injury to feelings, respecting privacy, ensuring anonymity, and protecting the reputations of participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). The considerations in academic research assume a general responsibility to respect the rights, interests, sensitivities and privacy of all participants in the research being undertaken. For any researcher, this entails serious consideration of how to obtain valid data, whilst simultaneously protecting each participant in the research. In addition, participation in the research project must be voluntary, informed, anonymous and confidential. Indeed, a common theme that emerged during the initial conversations with the research participants was their concern for firm assurances of anonymity, which also influenced my decision-making around the data collection techniques contained within this thesis. An ensuing necessity is addressing the

issue of how to ensure an acceptable balance between the potentially conflicting interests of the researcher and of the research subjects (Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton, & Richardson, 1997). This renders certain practices unethical, including any form of coercion, violation, or invasion of privacy, or providing deliberately misleading information about the nature of the research being undertaken itself.

Simple, effective measures can be adopted to avoid unethical research situations, which are generally taken as part of the procedure for gaining informed consent from research participants (Torkington, 2011). Acquiring informed consent involved relaying verbal and written information about the research to the participants, including its aims and objectives, and addressing issues of confidentiality and data protection, before the semi-structured interviews took place. Therefore, all interviewees were given an informed consent form to sign about the one-to-one interview before it began. The informed consent form contained my contact details and the university department, stated that the interview would be recorded using a digital audio-recording device, and clarified that the interview extracts could be used in writing the research and potential future publications. The informed consent form also clearly stated the anonymised nature of the interview, and the fact that it was to be used for academic purposes only, as well as giving the assurance that participants could freely withdraw at any stage of the one-to-one interview. I reiterated these assurances verbally before the interview commenced, including outlining the usage of pseudonyms for the participants, and removing the names of any other people mentioned during the interview in the transcriptions.

Given the contentiousness of the workplace bullying topic, I was prepared for the possibility of participants becoming upset. Therefore, I emphasised participant anonymity at the outset of the interviews before beginning the audio-recording, to ensure participants felt comfortable. In particular, I explained that participants could withdraw from the interview at any point if they felt uncomfortable, and I was alert to the possibility of emotions arising during the interview. This included pragmatic considerations such as having a box of tissues in the interview room, and interpersonal considerations such as showing empathy and support to participants if they became upset or emotional. All participants completed the interview fully and nobody withdrew. In addition, following the interview scenarios, and when transcribing, analysing and writing up the data, I undertook a number of steps to secure the anonymity and protection of research participants. For example, I used pseudonyms throughout the research, removed any criterion within the transcripts that compromised their anonymity, and uploaded the audio-recordings onto a password-protected laptop that is only accessible to me. Furthermore, when writing up the research, although I used quotes from participants in the findings section to illustrate some of the viewpoints expressed, none of the quotes identified individuals, or the actual organisation that they worked for when the workplace bullying took place.

4.7 ESTABLISHING THE STUDY'S TRUSTWORTHINESS

Issues concerning the trustworthiness of qualitative research are subject to debate, and the quality and rigour of such a research endeavour are not as sharply defined or delineated as in quantitative research (Krefting, 1991). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) argue that 'trustworthiness' lacks definition against a subjective paradigm. Contrastingly, quantitative studies measure trustworthiness in terms of validity and reliability (Payton, 1979). In qualitative studies, the trustworthiness concept is more obscure because validity and reliability metrics are inappropriate for qualitative researchers (Agar, 1986). In addition, the plurality of qualitative philosophical paradigms, comprising ontological and epistemological differences, render trustworthiness more complex (Anney, 2014). That notwithstanding, Lincoln and Guba (1985) maintain that qualitative researchers are able to establish trustworthiness and academic rigour through demonstrating that the research study's findings include four main components, namely, credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability. Furthermore, various scholars (e.g. Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007; Mauthner & Doucet, 2003) contend that reflexivity is an essential element of demonstrating trustworthiness in qualitative research. Accordingly, credibility, transferability, confirmability incorporating reflexivity, and dependability were considerations in this research study to ensure trustworthiness.

4.7.1 CREDIBILITY

Credibility refers to the reader having confidence in the research process and the truth of the findings of a particular inquiry (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002). According to Ashworth (1999), researchers who make explicit their presuppositions, acknowledge their subjective judgement, and account for themselves by 'showing their hand' regarding the approach to their research, increase the credibility of their findings. I do this in Chapter One, which contains the rationale and personal motives for the research and also through reflexivity, outlined in Section 4.7.3. In addition, providing research participants with the 'right to withdraw', and ensuring that the data collection sessions involve only those who were genuinely and voluntarily willing to offer their data freely, are actions that support the credibility of the research (Shenton, 2004). The right to withdraw was detailed in the ethical issues form and I reiterated this during the introduction to the semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, actions that I undertook in the study research design, such as audiorecording interviews and transcribing participants' responses verbatim, support credibility claims by enhancing the persuasiveness of the research (Duberley, Johnson, & Cassell, 2006), and demonstrating scholarly integrity (Moss, 2004). Credibility can also be assessed through member checking, including enabling participants to check their responses during the data collection process, to ensure that the transcripts matched what they actually intended to express (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, the member-check

credibility provisions included returning interview transcripts to the participants, and asking them to check the transcript content for reflection, amendment and accuracy. Forbat and Henderson (2005) point out that, on viewing the transcripts some participants may wish to modify their opinions, dislike seeing their speech in text, or present their views in a more socially desirable way. Unless the return of the transcripts occurs relatively soon after data collection, participants may also have changed their opinions, perceptions and views, for a variety of sometimes intangible reasons. These arguments, however, are subject to heated and persistent debate (e.g. Barbour, 2001; Morse, 2015; Sandelowski, 1993). I pursued the approach of emailing all of the research participants their word-processed transcript as soon as it was ready. The majority of the participants checked their transcripts and did not make any amendments to the content. Three participants made minor changes to the wording, to aid clarity in the presentation of their accounts. All participants gave permission to use their data.

Additional member checks incorporating respondent validation, which enable participants to check the interpretations of the data by the researcher, are another aspect of ascertaining credibility (Hadi, 2016). Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) argue that member checks are a crucial aspect of improving the quality of qualitative data and lie at the heart of credibility claims. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that when data interpretations are recognised by participants as adequate representations of their research involvement, and this is honoured, it contributes to satisfying the reader of the credibility of the researcher's interpretations. Consequently, formal member checks were undertaken of my data interpretations, analysis and theorisations of participants' responses. The process entailed having conversations with several participants, emailing them excerpts of my data interpretation, analysis and theorisations, and offering them the opportunity to engage in discussion about the plausibility of my interpretations. This included allowing them to suggest changes to the content or point out if they had been misreported. The participants all agreed that the contents reflected their comments at interview, and did not raise issues with the analytical comments. Informal participant checks were also undertaken through some ongoing email correspondence and face-to-face conversations, which included discussing research insights.

Peer debriefing, or peer examination, also supports credibility claims (Krefting, 1991). According to Guba (1981), it provides researchers with the opportunity to discuss their growing insights, and expose themselves to searching questions. During the research process, researchers are required to seek support from peers providing scholarly guidance, such as members of academic staff, which helps the researcher improve the quality of their findings (Anney, 2014). Academic peers examine chapters, data collection methods and processes, data management, data analysis procedures, and research findings (Pitney & Parker, 2009). Questions and observations enable researchers to refine

their methods, develop a greater explanation of the proposed research design, improve the quality of the inquiry, and strengthen arguments (Anney, 2014; Shenton, 2004). I engaged in regular meetings with my supervisory team, which provided the space to receive feedback about various aspects of the workplace bullying study, discuss developing ideas, debate interpretations, and be subject to probes about my underpinning presuppositions. In addition, I maintained records of the supervision meetings, retained notes from the discussions, responded to the feedback, and reflected upon and took actions related to the challenges provided.

Peer debriefing also entails seeking fresh perspectives from impartial detached third parties or disinterested peers who have experience with qualitative methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Spillett, 2003), and who may challenge aspects otherwise implicit within the inquirer's mind (Chenail, 2011; Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins, 2008). The fresh perspectives allow the researcher to challenge their own assumptions, particularly when their closeness to the project may inhibit their ability to view it with detachment (Shenton, 2004). Accordingly, I had regular discussions with doctoral students and academically qualified colleagues about the approach and content of my research. These discussions were important for discussing alternative approaches, obtaining peers' perceptions, gathering feedback about the study, and as Anney (2014) highlights, contributing towards deeper reflexive analysis. Furthermore, I attended the International Association of Workplace Bullying and Harassment's annual workplace bullying summer school in June 2017, which provided the opportunity to discuss my research with other workplace bullying scholars and practitioners.

Negative case analysis is another aspect of establishing credibility and occurs when data emerging from the research study contradicts the researcher's expectations (Bitsch, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Reporting negative cases improves the credibility of the study by enabling the researcher to account for contradictions that emerged from the data (Anney, 2014). Identifying such cases allows the researcher to propose alternative explanations that would not undermine their overall conceptualisation, but which represent a dimensional extreme (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Mason (2002) argues that searching for such negative instances enables the scrutiny of participants whose experience or position is somehow 'peripheral'. Adopting negative case analysis increases the emancipatory nature of the research, by giving a voice to otherwise marginalised participants, revealing concealed possibilities, and being less entrenched in subjective positionality (Wolgemuth & Donohue, 2006). The presentation of contradictory evidence adds credibility and perspective (Creswell, 2014). Correspondingly, this research presents the responses and analytical comments of all participants in Chapters Six and Seven, including those that may be deemed outliers.

4.7.2 TRANSFERABILITY

Transferability refers to the ways in which qualitative researchers demonstrate that the research study's findings are applicable to other contexts, such as similar situations, populations and phenomena (Merriam, 1998). Given that this is a qualitative study with a small sample size, the aim is not to generalise but to enable the reader to judge whether the workplace bullying findings are applicable to other situations and populations. Qualitative researchers can use 'thick description' to show that the research study's findings are applicable to other contexts, circumstances and situations (Anney, 2014; Krefting, 1991). Li (2004) characterises thick description as including rich and extensive details concerning methodology. Accordingly, thick description about methodology outlining the overall research strategy, including ontological and epistemological considerations (Howell, 2013), is provided in this chapter. In addition, Krefting (1991) argues that it is critical for researchers to provide background information about the research participants and the research context and setting, to enable others to assess the transferability of the findings. Similarly, Shenton (2004) highlights that it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that sufficient contextual information about the fieldwork sites is provided, which enables the reader to make transferability assessments. Shenton (2004) outlines that the contextual information includes the number of organisations that were involved, the number of participants in the fieldwork, the data collection methods that were employed, the number and length of data collection sessions, and the time period over which the data was collected. Thick description about the research context is incorporated into this chapter and also Table 4.2.

4.7.3 CONFIRMABILITY

Confirmability in qualitative research partly refers to the degree to which the results of an inquiry can be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). Triangulation and providing an audit trail are ways of demonstrating this aspect of confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). Triangulation involves the use of multiple research methods, sources and theories to obtain corroborating evidence (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Denzin (1978) argues that triangulation through using multiple methods of data collection to study a particular phenomenon can be used to enhance credibility. The claim that multiple-method triangulation enhances the credibility of qualitative research, however, is the subject of considerable dispute in the literature (King & Horrocks, 2010). I did not use multiple methods of data collection owing to the challenges of accessing participants due to the sensitivity of the research topic, and meeting participants' requirements for confidentiality. That being said, methodological triangulation can also be achieved through the usage of different data analysis techniques (Anney, 2014). Accordingly, to ensure that the analytical process was as systematic and

rigorous as possible, as discussed, I supplemented the CDA with TA. This enabled me to search for and identify additional aspects of the data, which were thoroughly analysed using adaptations of Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional framework and Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-stage TA process. Furthermore, triangulation can be achieved by the participation of research respondents from several organisations to reduce the effect on the study of particular local factors, peculiar to one organisation or institution (Shenton, 2004). Where similar results emerge at different sites, findings may have greater credibility in the eyes of the reader (Shenton, 2004). Indeed, of the 25 participants interviewed in this study, 20 worked for different public sector organisations. Three participants worked for the same council and two for the same university, however, the latter five participants experienced workplace bullying during different timeframes, involving different actors.

Confirmability can also be established by leaving an audit trail, so that the decision pathway made in the data analysis can be checked by another researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The dense description of methods provides information about how repeatable the study might be, or how unique the situation (Krefting, 1991). The audit trail, which highlights every step of data analysis that was taken, provides a rationale for the decisions made, and assists in establishing whether the research study's findings accurately portray participants' responses (Moss, 2004). This chapter offers a detailed account of the data gathering and analysis process and the steps that I followed to analyse participants' data, in the form of an audit trail. Specifically, this chapter has outlined the rationale for my methodological choices, a transparent account of the research process, and additional steps that attest to the authenticity of the research participants' accounts, through the process of data gathering, verbatim transcription, coding, and the generation of themes. Notwithstanding qualitative researchers making decisions based on intuitive knowing, an important part of data analysis also involves using methodical techniques (Cunliffe, 2008). This chapter offers a detailed account of the data analysis process in the form of a description of the successive steps of the CDA and TA processes undertaken, which were conducted to ensure that the analytical process was as systematic and rigorous as possible. Further provisions that enable other researchers to trace decisions include Shenton's (2004) recommendation of illustrating the step-by-step research process and analytical procedures with tables and/or figures, which are provided in this chapter.

Reflexivity, which Mauthner and Doucet (2003) interpret as the personal, emotional, theoretical and epistemological influences on our research and data analysis processes, also heightens confirmability. In the past, many qualitative researchers have claimed neutrality and even invisibility in the fieldwork, much as the objective scientist has in quantitative research (Denzin, 1994). Johnson, Scholes, and Whittington (2006), however, argue for the transparency of the researcher's philosophical position, theoretical

assumptions, and methodological choices. Aamodt (1982) notes that the researcher is part of the research and not separate from it. In qualitative research, particularly in research undertaken from a critical social constructionist perspective, the researcher needs to be aware that her involvement in the research process as an active participant will shape the process itself, and the nature of the knowledge produced (King, 2004). This reflection requires the researcher to consider how their own social history, values and attitudes might influence their interpretation of the experiences of others (Bott, 2004) – in this case, public sector workers' experiences of bullying. A key contention in critical research is the proclivity towards researcher bias, incorporating implicit and explicit social and political motives (Swaminathan & Mulvihull, 2017). It is important to make the researcher's theoretical beliefs and paradigms visible, whilst simultaneously avoiding skewing them firmly onto the respondent's responses, without acknowledging their viewpoint (Saunders et al., 2012). Within the semi-structured interviews, I asked specific questions that closely aligned with the stated aims of the research. I decided to undertake the interviews in this way to avoid a general account and enable participants to relay their bullying experience beyond the individual, recognising organisational and societal factors. Indeed, Paley (2017) highlights that if researchers need a particular piece of information to solve a particular research problem, it is counter-productive to invite participants to wander around the topic as they see fit. In so doing, they are then likely to produce material that is vague, repetitive, and already familiar (Paley, 2017). Therefore, although the participants' accounts in this thesis are shaped by me in terms of the questions asked, potentially leading to criticisms of researcher bias, the data generated in terms of responses remained personal to the participants.

The reflexivity process also consists of exposing the researcher's predispositions, both through addressing the researcher's personal background and motivation, and through continuous reflexive practice (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It is vitally important for researchers to admit to their own predispositions by keeping journals, a method log, and a personal diary reflecting the thoughts, feelings and ideas generated by contact with the participants, as well as any biases (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Moreover, Moustakas (1994) regards reflexivity as a holistic aspect of research methodology, rather than something isolated as tactical actions. Indeed, I committed to being reflexive as possible from the outset and my motivations for pursuing the workplace bullying study are outlined in Chapter One. I also kept records documenting the research process through memos, as well as maintaining an ongoing diary disclosing my thoughts, feelings and biases, extracts of which are attached as Appendix 7. In addition, Shenton (2004) points out that beliefs underpinning decisions made and methods adopted should be acknowledged within the research report, along with the reasons for favouring one approach and weaknesses in the technique. Detailed methodological description is provided in this

chapter of this thesis, and the CDA and TA data analysis tables that I used highlighted my analytical reasoning. Tobin and Begley (2004) argue that reflexivity also constitutes ensuring that the research findings are supported, are not merely the figment of the researcher's imagination, and are derived from the data. In addition, Shenton (2004) emphasises that steps must be taken to help ensure as far as possible that the work's findings reflect the experiences and ideas of the participants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher. I achieved this through analysing the primary data thoroughly, using CDA and TA, as well as member checking, to ensure the findings reflected the lived experience and ideas of the interviewees (Shenton, 2004).

Furthermore, the limitations of the research process and reflexivity are recognised and acknowledged in Chapter Seven, Section 7.4 of the thesis.

4.7.4 DEPENDABILITY

There are close connections between credibility and dependability, and Lincoln and Guba (1985) maintain that a demonstration of the former goes some distance in ensuring the latter, encompassing some overlap between the two. Anney (2014) contends that dependability is established using an audit trail, a 'code-recode' strategy, and peer examination. With regard to auditability, the exact methods of data gathering, analysis and interpretation of qualitative research must be described (Krefting, 1991), as they are in this chapter, and specifically in the section above on confirmability. Guba (1981) argues that another researcher should be able to clearly follow the decision trail used by the researcher. In this chapter, I have disclosed all relevant procedures used in this study. Documents should be retained for this purpose, including raw data, interview notes, and data analysis records (Guba & Lincoln, 1982), extracts of which are included in Tables 4.4, 4.5, 4.6 and 4.8 of this chapter. Lincoln and Guba's (1985) categorisation of auditable records includes field notes, researcher diaries, memos, data interpretations and codes, and these were the principal materials delivering confirmability in this study.

Conducting a code-recode procedure on the data during the data analysis phase is another way of demonstrating and increasing dependability (Anney, 2014; Krefting, 1991). The code-recode procedure involves the researcher coding the data at least twice with a gestation period in between, and then returning to the results to check if they are the same or different (Chilisa & Preece, 2005; Coffee & Atkinson, 1996; Krefting, 1991). Accordingly, when conducting the TA analysis, I did not simply rely upon my first coding decisions but returned to the data several times to check my reasoning and results, following a break from the data analysis. Furthermore, I returned to my CDA analysis several times to again ensure the thoroughness of my data analysis, making modifications where necessary. Peer review, through colleagues and methodological experts, to check the research plan and implementation is another way of ensuring dependability (Krefting, 1991). As

discussed, I engaged in regular meetings with my PhD supervision panel and other qualified academics, who provided expertise and advice about my research approach and its practical implementation.

4.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has considered the ontological, epistemological and methodological choices underpinning the research, justifying them within the context of the research objectives, and explaining their consistency with the Gramscian philosophical commitments. In addition, this chapter has outlined the research process of selecting the participants and the methods used for gathering qualitative data. The CDA process, using Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional framework in combination with Gramscian concepts, and Braun and Clarke's (2006) TA procedures, have also been described and justified. The criteria for exploring the research trustworthiness have been outlined, as well as considerations to ensure the compliance of the study with ethical policies and procedures. The following two chapters present the major research findings from the interview data and analyse participants' responses within the context of the literature, research objectives and subquestions.

CHAPTER 5 FINDINGS, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of Chapter Five is to begin to present and analyse the findings from the primary data collected in this research on workplace bullying in the UK public sector, gathered through the semi-structured interviews. As highlighted, the research sample consisted of 25 participants who identified themselves as bullied targets. Although they experienced the workplace bullying in different areas of the UK public sector, the commonality was the impact of neoliberal policy on their organisations and institutions. The findings from the research will be presented in both Chapters Five and Six, which contribute to answering the central research question guiding this thesis:

> What insights does a Gramscian framework offer to the study of workplace bullying and power relations in a marketised UK public sector, from the perspective of bullied targets?

Chapters Five and Six do this by addressing the fourth research objective:

> To undertake effective interpretation, evaluation and representation of data in a way that enables an understanding of the lived experience of bullied targets, reliable contextualisation, and thorough analysis of the research findings.

Chapters Five and Six provide details about the research participants' workplace bullying experiences in the UK public sector by telling the 'story' of their lived experience, as recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994). Morgan (2013) emphasises the case for using quotations in the reporting of qualitative data because they provide evidence for the credibility of the analysis, enable participant voice, and provide an effective connection between the reader and participants. Golden-Biddle and Locke (2007) also recommend the 'showing' of illustrative live excerpts from the primary data, reinforced by 'telling' the theoretical elements that highlight the significance of the live excerpts. Therefore, the findings are presented in the format of participants' quotation excerpts from the semistructured interviews, accompanied by a description and theoretical analysis of their responses. The thematic analysis applied to the primary data enabled the identification of various themes, which have been used to categorise the findings. In addition, the CDA adopted in this thesis enabled the analysis of participants' experiences from a critical perspective, and the examination of primary data within the wider historical, political and socio-economic context in which the workplace bullying occurred. Furthermore, the deployment of the Gramscian perspective enabled an understanding of the dynamics of neoliberal hegemony that have resulted in a marketised UK public sector, and how this has impacted upon workplace bullying. Bell (2005) advocates organising and analysing the findings in line with research sub-questions; therefore, the findings for each research

sub-question are presented separately. Common themes and areas of convergence or divergence are also identified to help indicate how the different data may, or may not, be related to each other.

5.2 RESEARCH SUB-QUESTIONS SUPPORTING THE MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

As discussed, the overall research aim is to assess the potential of a Gramscian theoretical perspective in generating insights into workplace bullying in a marketised UK public sector, from the perspective of bullied targets, which is supported by the following five research sub-questions:

- In what ways do bullied targets conceptualise workplace bullying?
- In what ways, if any, have ideological forces influenced workplace bullying situations and experiences in the UK public sector?
- In what ways, if any, have power relations affected the workplace bullying situation?
- In what ways, if any, is workplace bullying legitimised by the organisation?
- In what ways, if any, is the workplace bullying justified as acting morally?

The findings in this chapter examine the first three research sub-questions, beginning with a focus on how participants conceive workplace bullying. Subsequently, this chapter explores the findings on whether ideological forces influenced participants' workplace bullying experiences and situations. The chapter then concentrates on participants' perspectives on whether power relations were a feature of the workplace bullying situations. This chapter leads to Chapter Six, which examines participants' viewpoints on whether the workplace bullying was legitimised by the organisation, and whether it was morally justified. The findings chapters lead to the concluding Chapter Seven, which considers the implications for workplace bullying of the illustrative data presented.

5.3 SETTING THE SCENE: WHAT IS WORKPLACE BULLYING?

To begin to examine the first research sub-question, I explored participants' subjective impressions of workplace bullying to set the scene, acclimatise them to the topic under exploration, and gather their thoughts on what bullying entails. Therefore, the first interview question I asked the participants was 'What does the word "bullying" mean to you?' Debates exist about workplace bullying accounts based on bullied targets' subjective perceptions of being bullied, versus objective, behavioural test definitions of workplace bullying (Beswick, Gore, & Palferman, 2006; Cowie, Naylor, Rivers, Smith, & Pereira, 2000; Healy-Cullen, 2017). Exploring participants' subjective impressions of workplace bullying, however, aligns with the epistemological stance taken in this thesis. In addition, the majority of European researchers have emphasised the importance of subjective assessments by the bullied target (Einarsen et al., 2011b), and as Parzefall and Salin

(2010, p. 765) state, bullying is a "subjective experience that resides in the eye of the beholder". Therefore, I did not impose a literature-based, technical workplace bullying definition upon the participants. Furthermore, Lewis (1999) argues that qualitative approaches to workplace bullying allow for the exploration of social realities and allow respondents to speak for themselves. The exploration enabled me to address the first research sub-question:

In what ways do bullied targets conceptualise workplace bullying?

Given the micro-level focus of the first interview question, participants' responses describing workplace bullying are largely abstracted from the external environment, and thus the following analysis is briefer and less critically oriented than the remaining data analysis. That being said, several themes emerged from the analysis of the participants' data about workplace bullying, outlined in Table 5.1 and presented in Sections 5.3.1 to 5.3.9, which support the conceptualisation of workplace bullying within the literature. Pseudonyms have been used throughout to protect participants' actual names and identities, and where job titles are used, they are included with the participant's permission.

Table 5.1. What is workplace bullying?

Chapter section	Themes
5.3.1	Intimidating working environment
5.3.2	Persistent pressure to complete work tasks
5.3.3	Worthlessness, powerlessness and isolation
5.3.4	Inappropriate and negative behaviour
5.3.5	Defamation of bullied targets
5.3.6	Subtle workplace bullying
5.3.7	Corporate workplace bullying
5.3.8	Bullying to achieve organisational or institutional agendas
5.3.9	Bullying and abuse of power

5.3.1 INTIMIDATING WORKING ENVIRONMENT

The notion of workplace bullying creating a difficult and intimidating workplace environment was specified by Sara, Roger, Lana and Clara. Sara, a council officer who experienced workplace bullying in the context of austerity cutbacks, described workplace bullying as verbal, threatening and intimidating behaviour. Sara pointed out that other

employees may not necessarily detect the behaviour, rendering the bullied target feeling uncomfortable and insecure in the workplace, compared to others:

> *Bullying … makes somebody feel uncomfortable in the workplace. It can be verbal, threatening, intimidating but sometimes … something that other people wouldn't notice the undercurrent of … somebody says something to you … that only you pick up … that makes you feel really quite uncomfortable and at risk.* (Sara)

Similarly, Roger, a technician at a university, described workplace bullying as being treated unfairly, leading to feeling uncomfortable and intimidated in the workplace. Roger also highlighted groups of managers supporting each other, exacerbating the feelings of intimidation:

> *Bullying … means … deliberately treating someone unfairly … which leads to distress. It makes you feel uncomfortable and intimidated because a group of managers … support each other against you, so there's that feeling of intimidation too. (Roger)*

Lana, a council manager who experienced workplace bullying from senior leader peers, described workplace bullying as aggressive and intimidatory. In particular, Lana focused on bullying actors creating a situation characterised by fear, resulting in bullied targets succumbing to actors' demands:

> *I think it's quite an aggressive intimidatory action … it's where people … make people around them feel … fearful in a situation and therefore get them to do what they want them to do because they create a climate in which the individual … is frightened and intimidated. (Lana)*

Clara, who experienced workplace bullying whilst working for a youth service, described workplace bullying as leading to bullied targets feeling uncomfortable, intimidated and victimised, undermining their sense of self-worth and status in the organisation. In addition, Clara emphasised that workplace bullying is not always managerial and can emanate from peers:

> *Being put in a position where you feel uncomfortable, intimidated, victimised … you have no worth in the organisation and it actually undermines your status within the organisation, self-esteem and confidence. It isn't just from a managerial to a non-managerial position, it actually can be peer-led bullying … it's not about subordinates necessarily. (Clara)*

Workplace bullying creating a difficult environment is a quintessential feature already established in workplace bullying literature (e.g. Einarsen et al., 2011b; Lutgen-Sandvik,

2006; Rayner & Hoel, 1997). Within workplace bullying research, harmful interpersonal behaviours from verbal to physical abuse have been described by bullied targets, including feeling undermined, insecure and threatened (Tehrani, 2013), which resonates with Sara, Roger, Lana and Clara's responses. Furthermore, workplace bullying has been defined as incorporating physical or verbal intimidation, and creating a hostile working environment (Einarsen et al., 2011a). Clara describes workplace bullying as not only emanating from those in managerial positions but also including peer-led bullying – something which Lana also experienced. Peer-led bullying resonates with Schat, Frone, and Kelloway's (2006) description of 'horizontal bullying' premised upon peer access to informal networks used to bully targets.

5.3.2 PERSISTENT PRESSURE TO COMPLETE WORK TASKS

Henry and Donovan discussed workplace bullying involving persistent pressure on bullied targets to perform work tasks that they are already undertaking. Donovan, an academic working at a university undergoing a transformation exercise, which involved working towards quality metrics, described actors of bullying placing continual demands on employees, with the negative effect of placing undue pressure on them:

> I think it's to do with … persistent behaviour directed towards an individual that's perhaps demanding and hectoring that individual to do things, which they are probably doing anyway and might be required by the job … but putting undue pressure on that individual … over a period of time, so persistence. (Donovan)

Similarly, Henry, a council head of service who experienced workplace bullying from the assistant chief executive, described it as entailing persistent requests from actors to provide updates on work that is already being carried out, resulting in a negative, dysfunctional working situation:

> I think it's … a persistent request or requirement to do things that probably are within your responsibilities and job description … which … you are working on … but the individual is bullying you persistently … requiring updates … bullying is dysfunctional, it distracts the individual … and introduces negative emotions into the situation … like anxiety, fatigue and depression. (Henry)

Both Henry and Donovan discussed persistent pressure placed upon them to undertake work. Workplace bullying accommodates a range of negative acts including persistent criticism, and excessive monitoring of work behaviours and tasks (Fox & Stallworth, 2010; Randle, Stevenson, & Grayling, 2007; Samnani et al., 2013). The notion of workplace bullying adversely affecting an individual's work tasks is another core component of its definition (Samnani et al., 2013). In addition, Henry described the negative emotions elicited by workplace bullying. D'Cruz and Noronha (2010), Lutgen-Sandvik (2008), and

Vega and Comer (2005) highlight the injurious emotions that workplace bullying generates, produced from the accumulation of harmful events that influence how bullied targets feel. Furthermore, Mikkelsen and Einarsen (2001) draw attention to bullied targets' lowered mental health, including distress, anxiety and depression, which resonates with Henry's description.

5.3.3 WORTHLESSNESS, POWERLESSNESS AND ISOLATION

Kate, Scarlett and Connor are all council officers who experienced workplace bullying whilst working for different councils. A theme that emerged within Kate and Scarlett's responses was the negative impact of the workplace bullying on bullied targets' standing in the organisation. Kate discussed workplace bullying generating feelings of worthlessness, and employees' workplace contributions being unrecognised and considered irrelevant:

> *For me bullying is making people feel bad about themselves … that they're not worthy … their contribution isn't valued, whatever they might say, feel, or think doesn't matter … that's bullying. That's the definition to me. To bully somebody, you make them feel pretty worthless. (Kate)*

Similarly, Scarlett described workplace bullying as creating feelings of powerlessness and worthlessness, and undermining confidence:

> *To me it's very emotional … making you … powerless in that situation and taking away your confidence and making you feel very small and insignificant and you become worthless in a work situation … and also leads to scapegoating. (Scarlett)*

Connor also referred to feeling powerless within the bullying situation, and additionally experiencing feelings of isolation:

> *You feel powerless. You are kind of on your own or you're isolated and there's that kind of feeling of isolation … and being on your own. (Connor)*

Kate, Scarlett and Connor's conceptualisations support Brotheridge and Lee (2010) who examined emotional reactions to workplace bullying behaviour and argue that belittlement, having one's work undermined, and feeling worthless in the organisation are consequences of workplace bullying. Lutgen-Sandvik's (2008) workplace bullying study also highlights the destabilisation of the bullied target's identity in the workplace, compounding feelings of worthlessness. Furthermore, Lutgen-Sandvik (2006), and Fox and Stallworth (2010) describe the harm experienced by bullied targets including being used as scapegoats when organisational issues arise, as highlighted by Scarlett. In

addition, Brenner (2018) regards social isolation as a tactic used by actors of bullying, validating their power over bullied targets.

5.3.4 INAPPROPRIATE AND NEGATIVE BEHAVIOUR

Workplace bullying was also described by Matthew and Jake as taking the form of 'inappropriate' behaviour. Matthew, who experienced and also witnessed workplace bullying in the further education sector, emphasised that workplace bullying is inappropriate, illegitimise behaviour, which should be unauthorised by the organisation, implying that workplace bullying may be sanctioned. Matthew discussed direct and indirect workplace bullying resulting in a negative change of the emotional state of the bullied target, leading to their acquiescence to the workplace bullying, and a range of negative consequences:

> *I think there are many gradients of bullying … direct and … sometimes indirect … can be just as hurtful from an emotional point of view … it can be more sophisticated … nuanced … bullying is a change in the emotional state of the victim from … a certain amount of acquiescence … where the victim feels intimidated, verbally assaulted or … embarrassed … it's inappropriate behaviour, it's illegitimise, and it should be unauthorised. (Matthew)*

Jake, a council officer and trade union representative, described workplace bullying as comprising inappropriate pressure and behaviour, which has the impact of demeaning the bullied target. Jake also discussed the espoused purpose of HR policies to eradicate workplace bullying as putative and not tackling workplace bullying in reality:

> *Inappropriate pressure and negative behaviour, which … demeans the person. I was a union rep … but then I got brought in … as a workplace contact for bullying … but I felt it was just a tick-box exercise by HR to say that they'd developed this policy but they didn't really want to delve into the issues … tended to skirt around them. (Jake)*

Both Matthew and Jake's accounts align with workplace bullying conceptualised as behaviour that is inappropriate, negative, and unreasonable, as opposed to trivial behaviours (Einarsen et al., 2011b; Hoel & Cooper, 2001; Saunders, Huynh, & GoodmanDelahunty, 2007). In addition, Jake maintained that despite developing the anti-bullying policy, the HR department did not delve into workplace bullying issues. Salin's (2008) analysis of formal anti-bullying policies highlighted that although HR departments are responsible for formulating policies, they are not necessarily involved in addressing the issue.

5.3.5 DEFAMATION OF BULLIED TARGETS

Workplace bullying creating a negative impression of bullied targets was a feature of the interviews with Sandy, Ruby and Emily. Sandy, a civil servant who experienced workplace bullying from her manager during civil service austerity cutbacks, described the actor creating a negative impression of her. Sandy also highlighted people in the workforce accepting the actor's viewpoint because of their seniority:

> *I think it's … influencing other people in a negative way. People who I think may be quite gullible or vulnerable … or in fear of that bully as well, so would accept whatever they said without question … maybe because of their position … their grade. (Sandy)*

Similarly, Ruby, a secondary school teacher who experienced workplace bullying from her head of department following a period of sickness due to acquiring a disability, described it as involving negative influence and defamation of character:

> *I think it's demeaning an impression of another person … basically it's not allowing them to progress and defamation of their character to other colleagues. And that makes them feel insecure in the workplace … also anxiety and not wanting to go into work because of the situation that's been created around you. (Ruby)*

Emily, a council manager who experienced workplace bullying from her head of service, described it as explicitly involving the act of undermining and creating a negative opinion of the bullied target:

> *Bullying … is very deliberate and specifically undermining you to others, causing other people to have a low opinion of you … and has an impact on either you as a person, and how you're perceived by others. (Emily)*

Sandy, Ruby and Emily's accounts align with Shallcross, Ramsay, and Barker (2010) who analysed workplace bullying cases in which bullied targets were publicly humiliated and terrorised through the tactics of gossip, rumours, and defamation of character. Indeed, Shallcross et al. (2010) argue that demeaning bullied targets through informal conversations should not be underestimated as a factor in the perpetuation of workplace bullying. Similarly, Strandmark and Hallberg (2007a) highlight that workplace bullying consists of devaluing an individual through personal insults. In addition, Bjorkqvist, Osterman, and Hjelt-Back (1994), Branch et al. (2007), and Hutchinson et al. (2006) contend that actors' access to networks of people is used to perpetrate bullying in the workplace, by creating a negative or false impression of bullied targets.

5.3.6 SUBTLE WORKPLACE BULLYING

Subtle workplace bullying aimed at pressurising bullied targets into undertaking additional work was also a feature of the interviews with Clive and Rachel. Clive, a university academic, described subtle workplace bullying emanating from more senior members of staff that resulted in him being coerced to undertake additional work, accompanied by the realisation that the coercion had happened after the subtle bullying incident:

> *The word 'bullying', originally it meant to me an aggressive behaviour, that's how I originally interpreted it. But … I've come to realise that this can be much more subtle, especially by senior members of staff and the bullying that … has affected me … is where I've been coerced, been badgered to do more work, but perhaps subtly to the point where I've not realised it at that time … but in retrospect. (Clive)*

Similarly, Rachel, a university support services employee, whose workload increased due to workplace redundancies, described the workplace bullying as subtle, leading to her undertaking excessive amounts of work. Rachel also highlighted inconsistent messages and lack of clarity as constituting the subtle workplace bullying:

> *I've realised it's … very subtle … things like inconsistent messages, so you're never really sure what you're supposed to be doing … lack of clarity of your role … makes you feel insecure because you're asked to do more and more work, you're not sure how you should be doing your work. (Rachel)*

Whilst workplace bullying researchers regularly conceptualise bullying as explicit and direct behaviours (Einarsen et al., 2011b), findings have revealed that bullying behaviours can be relatively subtle (e.g. Bulutlar & Ünler Öz, 2009; Fox & Stallworth, 2005; Lee & Brotheridge, 2006), as described by Clive and Rachel. Subtle workplace bullying behaviours include withholding information, excessive monitoring of bullied targets' work, high workloads, social ostracism, and taking credit for employees' work (Fox & Stallworth, 2005). Hence, subtle workplace bullying refers to workplace bullying acts that are not immediately obvious, and are ambiguous and open to interpretation, potentially leading to the target's acquiescence to the behaviour (Samnani, 2013). In addition, D'Cruz and Noronha (2010) highlight bullied targets being so immersed in their work and focused on achieving objectives, they only realise in retrospect that they have been bullied, which accords with Clive's experience.

5.3.7 CORPORATE WORKPLACE BULLYING

A theme that emerged in Martin, Nicholas and Karl's accounts was that of bullying of a corporate nature. Martin, a civil servant and trade union representative, described actors

exerting pressure on bullied targets to meet unrealistic targets, which were ultimately governmentally driven and being cascaded top-down to employees within the organisation. Martin's response to the first interview question was more contextualised through his comments on governmental targets. In addition, Martin highlighted the euphemistic language of 'robust management' actually concealing corporate workplace bullying:

> *Bullying is setting people to fail, basically … unrealistic time pressures, unrealistic targets … pressure to get more out of less … and it's a top-down, it comes right from the top, from the government, all the way down, target driven: 'This is what you've got to deliver.' The pressure is unbelievable … they'll say it isn't bullying, they'll say it's being managed robustly, but … it's corporate bullying in a way. (Martin)*

Similarly, Nicholas, a council head of department who lost his job due to austerity cutbacks, described workplace bullying as being corporate in nature. Nicholas felt that he was bullied because his role and experience did not fit with organisational priorities or the associated culture:

> *Well, I think you're going to find in my interview that drawing a distinction between bullying by individual A to individual B and group or corporate bullying … when somebody doesn't fit within a corporate culture or corporate priorities at any particular time … the corporate collectively bullying that person … when a group in effect, even not knowingly, but a group turn on an individual. (Nicholas)*

Karl, a university academic, also drew a distinction between one-to-one and corporate workplace bullying, comprising a situation of managers ganging up on employees:

> *It's very difficult … it can be the culture of the organisation … so it's not healthy … And it can be personal, one-to-one, but it can be managers – as I've experienced on the receiving end – managers ganging up on people … so … you can have a corporate culture of bullying. (Karl)*

Martin's response was more contextualised than those of other participants at the early stage of the interview, through his stating that the pressure on workers emanated from central government. Martin also drew attention to robust management concealing workplace bullying. Indeed, Simpson and Cohen (2004) argue that the boundaries between strong management and bullying have become blurred, with neoliberal managerial control being misused to conceal workplace bullying. In addition, Martin, Nicholas and Karl's accounts support research on depersonalised, as opposed to interpersonal workplace bullying. D'Cruz and Noronha (2009) describe depersonalised

workplace bullying as comprising the contextual and structural elements of organisational design that in effect can bully the target. Similarly, Liefooghe and Mackenzie Davey (2001) contend that institutionalised cultures, resulting from an entire amalgamation of policies, practices and work conditions, can themselves be inherently of a bullying nature. This resonates with the participants' descriptions and experiences.

5.3.8 BULLYING TO ACHIEVE ORGANISATIONAL OR INSTITUTIONAL AGENDAS

Ava, Anthony and Seth outlined being bullied to achieve wider workplace objectives. Ava, who had experienced workplace bullying in a previous academic role in a university that had become business-oriented, began by describing the workplace bullying as undermining the bullied target in a public way. Furthermore, Ava felt that the actor was bullying to achieve institutional agendas:

> *I think that it's about undermining that individual, belittling them, doing that in a public way … I think it was about … institutional agendas and I think it's something that, institutionally, was seen as a way of achieving those agendas. (Ava)*

Similarly, Anthony, a university academic, pointed out that workplace bullying stemmed from an expectation that he was required to achieve institutional priorities in a marketised university, accompanied by the removal of his responsibilities if he did not comply. The situation led to Anthony losing his senior role and resulted in him leaving the organisation:

> *The bullying was all around what he wanted me to do … and the threats of what he was going to do with me, move me around the university, change my role, 'if you don't want to do what I want to be done, then you're no good in that position'. So, he moved me from the roles I was in to more … junior roles. He took away my voice, so it was inevitable that it was going to come a major head. And the major head was that I eventually got up and left. (Anthony)*

Seth, a council officer and trade union representative, also discussed the exertion of pressure, exploitation and intimidation against workers in an environment of austerity, with bullies acting as agents of the employer. Seth described the actors as operating in the interests of the organisation, rather than merely acting individually:

> *Exerting intimidation and pressure and leverage against a worker. Acting under collar of office if it's someone in a senior position, a position of power. Exploitation. If it's someone in a managerial post … they're doing so in their official capacities representing the employer, that's under collar of the employer. They're the agent of the employer. (Seth)*

Ava, Anthony and Seth's responses also resonate with Liefooghe and Mackenzie Davey's (2001) research on institutionalised bullying, which focuses on the organisational context, environment and policies as the drivers for workplace bullying behaviour. As discussed, Liefooghe and Mackenzie Davey (2001) draw attention to business strategies and Taylorised working methods generated by scientific management approaches, nurturing an organisational cultural dynamic that justifies workplace bullying. In addition, Anthony described the bullying leading to his leaving the workplace, which Lutgen-Sandvik (2006) conceive of as an expression of multiple factors including resignation, defiance and resistance to bullying.

5.3.9 BULLYING AND ABUSE OF POWER

Sean, Tom and Marilyn incorporated abuse of power as a key characteristic of workplace bullying. Sean, a council officer who lost his job through austerity cutbacks, focused on where the workplace bullying is likely to stem from hierarchically. Sean emphasised workplace bullying being accompanied by the abuse of positional power by a manager in a senior position over the bullied target:

> *From the perspective of the workplace, it is about the abuse of power. It's generally orchestrated by someone who is in a position of power over the victim or the object of bullying … if it comes from an individual my experience is that it tends to come from someone in a position of power, for example, a manager or head of service. (Sean)*

Tom, a further education (FE) teacher, immediately described workplace bullying as incorporating imbalance of power. Additional complexity was incorporated into Tom's description, including bullying for the attainment of individual goals, bullying targeted against a particular individual, or bullying resulting in indirect harm to bullied targets:

> *Well, it's about power imbalance, isn't it? It's about a person with greater physical emotional, intellectual power, using that for … their own ends … And it may be done because the bully has a particular axe to grind against the victim … or because the victim is just collateral damage and the bully is so egotistical or so hell-bent on looking after their own interests. (Tom)*

Marilyn, who experienced workplace bullying in a council that was undergoing austerity cutbacks, described the actor as possessing the power to potentially destroy careers, including interference with the supply of an impartial reference for subsequent job opportunities. Marilyn also incorporated sexist and homophobic bullying as potentially being part of the actor's power, indicating patriarchal gendered and heteronormative aspects of power and control:

Treating you like you don't exist because they don't want you in the workplace.
So that person has the power … to destroy you career-wise, which could have
a massive impact on the rest of your life … where are you going to get a fair
reference from? So, it could be general … bullying, but … it could lead to sexist
behaviour, a specific sort of bullying or homophobic bullying. (Marilyn)

As discussed in the Chapter Two literature review, a number of researchers have analysed workplace bullying from a power perspective (e.g. Branch et al., 2007; Einarsen et al., 2003; Hutchinson et al., 2006; Lamertz & Aquino, 2004; Roscigno, Lopez, & Hodson, 2009; Salin, 2003). Indeed, bullying has been described as comprising a constellation of repeated acts, involving an imbalance of power (Jackson, Clare & Mannix, 2002; Yamada, 2000). The main emphasis has been on workplace bullying incorporating the misuse of power that is top-down and related to organisational structures (Branch, Ramsay, & Baker, 2013), which aligns with Sean's response. Tom's account emphasises power disparities, which are also featured in workplace bullying research that focuses on bullying involving conflict between colleagues who are not of perceived equal strength (Einarsen et al., 2003; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007; Salin, 2003). The positional power of the actor is drawn out of Marilyn's account who she describes as having the ability to damage her professional and personal life. Indeed, Roscigno et al. (2009) discuss workplace bullying arising from the role of overseeing workers and the misuse of relational power differentials to bully others in the workplace. Furthermore, Marilyn incorporated sexist or homophobic bullying into her definition aligning with Heatherton, Kleck, Hebl, and Hull's (2003) contention that a person whose social identity is called into question is stigmatised, devalued, spoiled, or flawed in the eyes of others through abuses of power; and Escartin, Salin, & RodriguezCarballeira's (2011) assertion that bullying is not a gender-neutral phenomenon. A core aspect of this thesis is examining power relations and workplace bullying, which I analyse further in Section 5.5 of this findings chapter, with the aim of enhancing existing research.

5.3.10 SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANTS' CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF WORKPLACE BULLYING

The participants' responses to the interview question 'What does the word "bullying" mean to you?' support the literature on the phenomenon of workplace bullying and its main components. The findings also highlight crucial subjective perspectives of UK public sector bullied targets about what workplace bullying entails. Rather than focusing only on the behaviour and actions that workplace bullying entails, this thesis contends that understanding the ideological context of the organisation enhances an understanding of 'why' the bullying took place. Hence, although the preceding section outlines vital perspectives from bullied targets on bullying itself, the subsequent interview responses

enabled a more contextualised analysis of their experiences in the UK public sector. I turn to this in the following sections.

5.4 THE INFLUENCE OF IDEOLOGICAL FORCES

In order to delve into participants' public sector workplace bullying experiences, I asked them directly about what happened in the bullying situation and explored their views on why the workplace bullying ensued. In addition, I explored whether there was an ideological dimension to what was happening in the organisation by asking about the organisational situation or context in which they were bullied, and whether or not the bullying actor/s were influenced by organisational or external developments. The exploration enabled a contextualised understanding of participants' workplace bullying experiences in the UK public sector in line with the second research sub-question:

> In what ways, if any, have ideological forces influenced workplace bullying situations and experiences in the UK public sector?

The key themes that emerged when I explored the second research sub-question are outlined in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2. Workplace bullying and ideological forces

Chapter section	Themes
5.4.1	Business model versus public service values
5.4.2	Market ideology, performativity and target-driven working environments
5.4.3	NPM performativity: Efficiency and cost-effectiveness
5.4.4	Austerity and public sector job losses
5.4.5	Managerial opposition to trade unionism
5.4.6	Workplace bullying and the social model of disability
5.4.7	Workplace bullying and personality

5.4.1 BUSINESS MODEL VERSUS PUBLIC SERVICE VALUES

Across the interviews, a public sector that has become commercialised and businessoriented through NPM was the ideological and political context, which impacted upon workplace bullying situations. Within the marketised context, two participants, Lana and Sean, explicitly discussed the uncritical adoption by bullying actors of business-oriented approaches to delivering public services as being contrary to their own public sector values, and as generating the workplace bullying. Lana, a council senior manager

who experienced workplace bullying from senior peers, outlined the organisational context being the merger of two public sector housing groups, having to provide services in competitive markets. Lana pointed out that the situation enabled the actors to achieve a degree of autonomy from the local authority, leading to them delivering public services according to a business-oriented model, and bullying Lana, who described her own values as focusing on supporting staff and customers. Lana felt that the actors' business-oriented emphasis, compared with her staff and service user perspective, was being used to undermine and differentiate her:

> *I didn't necessarily share the values of the people bullying me … they saw themselves as being more hard-nosed … 'We have to take a business decision here.' I was often the one round the table … saying, 'Have you thought about what the impact of this is going to be on staff … on customers?' And the replies were, 'She's wearing her pink, fluffy jumper again' and 'oh, for goodness' sake, stop, you'll be putting your socks and Jesus sandals on again.' (Lana)*

In the excerpt, Lana adopted the language of 'customer' rather than the pre-marketisation 'service user' when describing her challenge to the actors of bullying. Thereby Lana in her language usage, vernacularly reflected neoliberal changes to the public sector. Lana, however, demonstrated opposition to the changes by critiquing the actors, who she regarded as savouring the opportunity to be more business-like and efficient in their approach. The excerpt also highlights business-oriented discourse being accepted uncritically by the actors – the phenomenon that Gramsci denoted as common sense, leading to spontaneous grammar (Donoghue, 2017). The actors' usage of private sector language demonstrates political priorities shaping the objectives of the organisation, which Lana outlined in her response:

> *'Right, I've suddenly now got … more control to run this organisation as if it were a business organisation.' It's like private sector is good because public sector was poor and there was this kind of mantra, 'We'll prove to everybody that we can run it more commercially because we're not local authority and we're going to be more business-like.' (Lana)*

Sean, a council officer who experienced workplace bullying from his head of department based on differing notions of public service, described the council environment being negatively impacted by governmental austerity deficit-reduction plans. He highlighted that the council had already undergone changes, and that austerity had compounded the changes. Sean described governmental policies leading to public sector cutbacks, job losses, and the emergence of a 'dog eat dog' competitive environment, implying that people were willing to harm each other to keep their jobs:

The government had decided that council had been overspending, was to blame for UK debt, the council needed to cut its cloth accordingly, most departments were downsizing, making cuts … they blamed council workers, the council had to cut back money, and I fully accept that, but it changed the council even more, it became dog eat dog. (Sean)

Sean lost his job in an interview process as part of austerity cutbacks, and the actor possessed the decision-making power to instigate the redundancy. Hence, austerity deficit-reduction strategies directed at the public sector through job losses were implemented by the actor, but Sean felt that the decision had been made in an unfair way. Sean specifically drew attention to political differences between himself and the actor over their preferred models of public service delivery, which he felt had moved away from a quality focus, towards working in a pressurised target-driven culture. In addition, Sean critiqued council workers as being politically scapegoated for global debt:

I think one of the main reasons she felt I had to go was I spoke candidly about certain issues … which she wasn't happy with because the truth is often unpalatable. Things like losing the quality of services, being bogged down in admin to meet ridiculous targets, the pressure that was being put on council officers, everyone criticising us and blaming us for debt. Politics are murky, there's a lot of political spin and suddenly we had to lose jobs to save the country money. (Sean)

Both Lana and Sean's accounts demonstrate the impact on their respective organisations of political priorities driven by NPM ideology. Gramsci argued that the state's influence resonates within civil society, including organisational domains (Hill, 2008). Therefore, he suggested that social relationships within civil society and organisations are political in nature. Corporate hegemony ensues when material economic interests become the dominant societal interests, and organisations become the means by which to indemnify material economic interests (Dugger, 1989). Lana and Sean highlighted the impact of the adoption of business-oriented models on the workplace bullying behaviour exhibited by the actors. In addition, Lana and Sean felt that they were bullied because they did not share the same values as the actors, and moreover because they held traditional public sector values. Indeed, Skeggs (2014) points out that market ideology does not completely replace values of public good; invariably there are competing and contradictory values in the everyday life of public sector organisations. Lana and Sean's descriptions portray competing and contradictory values being the impetus for the workplace bullying that they experienced.

5.4.2 MARKET IDEOLOGY, PERFORMATIVITY AND TARGET-DRIVEN WORKING ENVIRONMENTS

The extension of market ideology into the public sector accompanied by market competition and target-driven working environments were highlighted by Clive, Anthony, Karl, Donovan, Matthew and Clara as engendering workplace bullying. Clive, a university academic, discussed being bullied and pressurised into undertaking excessive work to enable the institution to compete in university league tables. League tables that are focused on performance measures, achievement of targets, and financial demonstrations of accountability, are predicated on the notion of consumer feedback measuring academic quality (Dill & Soo, 2005). Furthermore, Clive described feeling pressurised into accepting the governmental emphasis on a profit-driven approach through league tables. Clive additionally outlined the punitive ramifications associated with the inability of academics to meet the teaching, research and consultancy aspects of their revised academic role, manifesting as an emphasis on performance, including the threat of losing their academic jobs:

> *I was badgered into doing work beyond the normal level of expectation … the institution wants to rise in the university league tables … the directive from top down is … teaching, research, consultancy … there's a directive from the vice chancellor … we have to be proactive in our sector and be profit-centred. The imperatives are on performance and league tables, the threat is if we don't perform well … the institution itself could collapse and a consequence … is more work or no position for you. (Clive)*

In the excerpt below, Clive asserted that the university should be a learning environment, but that increasing commercialisation had led to the university being conceived as a widget-manufacturing business, aimed at profit maximisation. Within the businessoriented university environment, Clive suggested the students were being conceived of as widgets, thus highlighting the 'commodification' of students (Gibbs, 2009). He intimated that students are now being taught within specified realms, implying that external forces had also impacted on the content of the teaching syllabus; thereby supporting Petrina, Mathison, and Ross (2015) who contend that neoliberalism has displaced previous learning content with market ideology. Gramsci argued that educational institutions reinforce and reproduce the intellectual knowledge of dominant groups, which secure their interests (Pusser & Marginson, 2013). Clive highlighted that the traditional notion of universities as places of learning had altered:

> *The university is a learning establishment … not a business, as in making widgets for a profit. The problem is that the university's becoming an organisation producing widgets for profit. The widgets being the students …*

*you're churning the student out against a certain cost that's coming in and …
for the student to be taught within the certain realms. So that the traditional way
of thinking of the institution as a learning establishment for me has changed.
(Clive)*

Similarly, Anthony, an academic, drew a comparison between the emphasis on quality of learning and teaching in previous university models, and the current business model. Lynch (2014) argues that commercial values are institutionalised in systems and processes, leading to educational institutions altering from being centres of learning to being service-delivery operations with productivity targets. Anthony emphasised that income generation was inappropriate for academics in the institution because academics were not commercially savvy:

*It was about bringing in more money … most of us in the previous system were
working on quality models … to deliver a quality learning experience … doing
all the right things that as an academic institution you were … expected to do
… to more a business model … academics trying to influence income
generation is not possible because it's not what they do … because they're not
commercial people. (Anthony)*

Karl, another academic, also discussed the increasingly competitive, market-oriented higher education (HE) environment, including the pressure placed on staff regarding league table improvements and income generation. Karl highlighted two senior leaders, who were the actors of bullying, being ambitious in the HE context and using the changes as a springboard to boost their careers:

*Clearly there was greater competition in the marketplace … the old polys
become new universities trying to put their marker down … establish
themselves … obsession about league tables … wanting to get up there.
Research agendas were putting pressure on people … and …
internationalisation … of the marketplace. We were chasing money and
numbers … there were two people in particular who were extremely ambitious
in that context. So, whatever they could do to make their mark … be a platform
for their future careers. (Karl)*

Donovan, a university manager, described the actor as having a prominent role in terms of transformational changes required at the university to move towards a performanceoriented, competitive and metric-driven model. Davies (2011) argues that the competitive forces of capital accumulation place pressure on hegemonic actors to enlist consenters, and to remove and discipline dissenters. Indeed, Donovan pointed out that

redundancies were being made in favour of new staff whose mentality aligned with the changing HE sector:

> It was … a high-visibility role … she did perceive her head was on the block … the organisation was in a stage of transformation and needed … to be changed by the key funding bodies, notably the … Scottish education funding organisation … the buck did stop with her … it was for changing significantly the way the organisation operated … funding body … was looking for … quality against key metrics, so they were getting rid of some people to replace them with … people who were more aligned with what was required for the new regime. (Donovan)

Similarly, Matthew, a head of faculty, discussed the impact of sixth-form colleges becoming independent from local authority control, and being driven by competitive economic priorities. Matthew drew attention to the phrase 'bangs for bucks', which highlights the spontaneous grammar that had emerged in the FE environment. Indeed, Gramsci regarded spontaneous grammar as a metaphor for politically constituted social relations (Ives, 2004b). Matthew pointed out that the FE changes resulted in the requirement for the college to self-generate funding and become financially efficient:

> The college went independent, therefore we had to fend for ourselves, we were competitive – we were in a very uncertain position … when the college merged … and work was very driven by economic priorities, efficiency – 'bangs for bucks' was a phrase often used. (Matthew)

Matthew also discussed the re-professionalisation of teaching associated with NPM. Ball (2003) argues that the profound disrupting of the teaching profession through marketisation, and the increased ideological role of the state, has prescribed what teachers are expected to deliver and achieve. Gramsci referred to this process as one of a hegemonic normative professional identity becoming institutionalised (Carvalho, 2012). Matthew specifically described the impact of the marketisation of educational services and performance-oriented audit requirements on teaching work, leading to the monitoring of taught lessons by metrics. Matthew highlighted the pressures inherent in FE institutions to manage and monitor teachers' performance as stemming from Whitehall directives. He also stressed the associated intense pressure on the delivery of taught lessons, and the negative implications of achieving a low classroom performance score, including teachers being subjected to workplace bullying in the form of disciplinary procedures, or even losing their jobs:

> So senior managers drive change within organisations because of marketisation … you were pressurised in your role, made to conform to the

targets and standards … first by Ofsted, and the government … you were reprofessionalised … Whitehall redefined what a teacher should be. The pressure on that lesson is astronomical … to get a one … is outstanding, if you got a three, then you might be under disciplinary, with a four, you might be leaving the institution. (Matthew)

Clara, a local government manager who experienced workplace bullying from her line manager, discussed the marketisation of the Careers Service for young people. The National Careers Service was privatised in 1994 and fragmented into over 70 companies competing for services for young people aged 14–19 (Colley, 2009). Clara worked for an organisation that had faced a significant reduction in central government funding, had reduced its workforce from 250 to 30 employees, and was competing with diverse private sector providers to offer youth services. She highlighted that governmental changes impacted on organisational funding, and resulted in the imperative for the service to work to a business-oriented model to generate income:

The political dimension was a change in government from Labour to Conservative … a central government priority … so previously, a lot of work was funded by the Department for Education. That was withdrawn, so they then had to look at … becoming a business, having to … cost out business services … to put like-for-like costs against … business proposals … come up with business models of work. So, basically they had to compete in the market with other providers of services. (Clara)

Clara was given responsibility for managing a business plan outlining support for young people incorporating six organisations. She pointed out that the business plan contained detailed business targets that were unattainable. Clara was working long hours to attempt to meet the various targets, and was bullied through competency proceedings for not being able to achieve them:

The targets that were set for that project were targets that I hadn't been involved in, very unrealistic and detailed targets … they were reported on every month to central government … and the situation was that we weren't meeting those targets, they blamed me … and I lasted about a year … then they decided to put me through competency. (Clara)

Gramsci argued that no organisation in the framework of legal society can entirely remove from its activity the effects of the reproductive character of bourgeois ideology (Maglaras, 2013). All six participants highlighted market ideology permeating their respective public sector organisations, and creating the situations within which the workplace bullying occurred. Gramsci's concept of hegemony, however, avoided the notion of social actors

being viewed as passive, unquestioning bearers of the dominant ideology, and includes the recognition of contradiction and disjuncture in social structures (Mumby, 1997). Accordingly, Gramsci's 'good sense' amongst the subaltern classes is the philosophy of criticism, which supersedes common sense (Daldal, 2014). Therefore, in Gramscian thought, social actors are regarded as active appropriators of interpretive possibilities, limiting the unproblematic reproduction of structures of dominance, and creating possibilities for struggle and resistance (Mumby, 1997). In addition, Fiske (1986), contends that all messages are open to alternative oppositional interpretations, which subvert the dominant ideology. Fiske (1986) highlights that members of subordinate subcultures can generate meanings that serve their interests, and not those of cultural domination. Indeed, all six participants, either directly or indirectly, articulated critiques of the dominant market ideology in their interviews, coupled with an emphasis on its negative impact within public sector environments, generating their workplace bullying situations.

5.4.3 NPM PERFORMATIVITY: EFFICIENCY AND COST-EFFECTIVENESS

The public sector emphasis on efficiency and cost-effectiveness was drawn out as an issue that impacted on the workplace bullying that Henry and Scarlett experienced in their respective councils. Henry described Compulsory Competitive Tendering, Best Value and Comprehensive Performance Assessment as increasing the levels of inspection and scrutiny of the council. In addition, Henry discussed the growing pressure to satisfy central government that the council was indeed cost-effective and efficient:

> *Compulsory Competitive Tendering, Best Value, Comprehensive Performance Assessment … the level of inspection and scrutiny from central government … directed largely at our central department … and some of the things that the previous Conservative government had set in train … seemed to follow through by Labour … at local level we were losing autonomy … to satisfy central government, everybody had to sort of toe the line financially … to be more efficient, it was the mantra in effect. (Henry)*

Compulsory Competitive Tendering was one of the key local government privatisation measures of the Conservative governments of 1979–1997 (Bivand & Szymanski, 2000). Best Value was introduced by the Labour government in 2000 with the aim of improving local services in terms of cost and quality (Boyne, Gould-Williams, Law & Walker, 2002). Consequently, Comprehensive Performance Assessment was introduced in 2002 as a local government performance measurement and improvement mechanism (Woods & Grubnic, 2008). Within this climate, the actor of bullying who was the assistant chief executive, applied pressure and excessive scrutiny on council officers to satisfy central government demands:

That seemed to ramp up this person's level of paranoia to … a whole new level … outside world would be scrutinising … leading to excessive scrutiny of what we were doing … audit commission would be coming in for four days at a time … this seemed to make this person even worse and everything had to be persistently checked and double-checked and … so that … created a lot of pressure on us. (Henry)

Henry also used a cinematic metaphor to illustrate his point about how the actor's behaviour constituted workplace bullying:

Do you remember the scene in Ben Hur with the galley slaves? It just feels like we're all kind of chained to the oars, and the assistant chief executive is just banging on the drum, shouting, ramming speed. (Henry)

Scarlett, a senior housing manager at a council, experienced workplace bullying from three actors, specifically a former head of service and two senior managers. Scarlett had responsibility for developing strategic housing and business planning, and the work had a high financial implication involving millions of pounds. The actors bullied Scarlett and presented her as incompetent because they wanted to lead the contract:

I was a senior manager … we were dealing with strategic housing … so housing development and business planning as well. I would do the business planning and manage all of this development programme … we're talking millions of pounds … and my former head of service … and two managers … just made life so terrible, my experience, my knowledge, was made to feel completely worthless. (Scarlett)

The ideological and political forces impacting on Scarlett's workplace situation included the sale of council housing, which Scarlett described as the most significant privatisation affecting local authorities. In addition, she felt that there was no evidence that the private sector was the best option for council housing. Scarlett also highlighted that the actors thought they were best placed to meet demands for efficiency, and ultimately removed her from the position through workplace bullying:

Well, council houses being the biggest privatisation … I don't see why the private sector is seen as the best, there's no evidence for it … In terms of the need for efficiency the perpetrators thought they were the best people to … make it more efficient … in terms of the asset side of things, and they sidelined me out. (Scarlett)

Henry and Scarlett's accounts describe the consent to and impact of NPM on the public sector, including local authorities. Gramsci highlighted that a key aspect of hegemony is

the assent to the socio-economic goals of a dominant constellation of class forces (Davies, 2011). The fundamental tenet of NPM is to make public sector organisations more business-oriented through a focus on performance, cost-effectiveness and efficiency, scrutinised through an external auditing system (Hood & Dixon, 2015). The recurring strategic objectives that underpin NPM discourses relate to achieving increased organisational efficiency through performance measurement and stakeholder satisfaction (Brignall & Modell, 2000); and cost-effectiveness, including competitive tendering and privatisation of services (Diefenbach, 2009). Henry described the pressures that NPM placed on the council over several years and the workplace bullying that it generated, which manifested in excessive scrutiny from the actor, and the persistent requirement to perform. Scarlett's situation was contextualised by the privatisation of council housing, and her responsibility for strategic housing and business planning. In addition, the three actors of bullying were competing to deliver the work and felt they were better placed than her to meet external efficiency requirements. Through workplace bullying, they undermined Scarlett's professional standing, knowledge and experience, leading to her removal from the role.

5.4.4 AUSTERITY AND PUBLIC SECTOR JOB LOSSES

Tom, Kate, Sandy, Nicholas, Emily, Connor and Rachel discussed the impact of austerityinfluenced public sector cutbacks, leading to workplace bullying. Tom, a FE lecturer and internal trade union representative, encountered many trade union members who had experienced workplace bullying from their managers. He felt that the bullying was aimed at ensuring that bullied targets lost their jobs and left the organisation:

> *I am a union branch secretary … and in defending union members I have come across really horrendous cases of bullying … the majority have been about undermining people … pressurising people … belittling … it's almost like the overall reason has been to get the victim out of the organisation … by making them feel their position is untenable. (Tom)*

Tom also discussed his own workplace bullying experience and referred to an increasingly pressurised environment generating bullying from middle managers, who were responsible for securing corporately driven results. Tom pointed out that middle managers were simultaneously trying to maintain their management positions in an organisation experiencing job cutbacks, which could likewise impact upon their job security. In Gramsci's conception of class, middle management and white-collar employees were included under his definition of the subaltern, as workers exploited by the capitalist (Germino, 1990). Indeed, Tom suggested that middle managers were more expendable than senior managers, suggesting that the latter would be more likely to retain their positions:

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I've suffered from … bullying from managers, it's always been a … top-down
approach … middle managers seem more expendable than senior managers,
so the pressure that gets pushed down is almost like a cider press … the middle
managers have to get results, so they're tending to do that for reasons of
maintaining their own place in an organisation. (Tom)

Furthermore, Tom discussed politically driven changes to the FE sector. The changes
resulted in FE institutions being removed from local authority control, and operating as
freestanding public bodies (Grand, 1991). Tom outlined how austerity had led to a drive
towards financial savings, engendered by constant institutional restructuring. The
accompanying job losses and a deteriorating physical work environment brought on by
reduced funds, had created a difficult environment for workers, including workplace
bullying. Tom also described workers attempting to meet demands for the attainment of
unrealistic performance management targets, within this challenging environment:

Ever since 1994 all colleges were made independent of local authority … our
college was competing against much bigger ones … financially it's never been
particularly robust … for the last 12 years we've had redundancies. And with
austerity everything … has been cut … if the central heating breaks down they
don't fix it … the number one motivation is saving money … involving constant
restructuring … makes people's jobs harder … their performance management
targets ever more unrealistic. (Tom)

Kate, a council officer, highlighted the impact of austerity, which had led to the organisation
facing significant financial cuts, in turn prompting job losses. The situation resulted in her
team facing job losses, with three positions being reduced to two. Therefore, Kate had to
compete with two colleagues to retain her position. Kate identified the head of service and
her peers as the actors of bullying, with the peers bullying her during the redundancy
exercise to keep their jobs:

It's public sector, local authority, and the organisation was required to make
significant spending cuts across the board, nobody was exempt … that meant
that the team I was in was shrinking, meaning that we had too many bodies …
there were three posts reduced to two jobs … the interviews were going to take
place, people in those posts were going to have to fight for their jobs but the
upshot was, one person out of those three was going to lose out and that's
where the trouble began. (Kate)

Sandy, a civil servant who experienced bullying from her line manager, described her
experience as stemming from the unfair implementation of a revised performance rating

system. Due to austerity, the civil service was experiencing financial cutbacks that resulted in job losses, and simultaneously the revised performance rating system was introduced. The revised system contained a progression of performance scores for employees:

> *I would have performance appraisals every six weeks … we had a performance curve … so you would either be at the top – 'Exceed' – 'Achieved' in the middle, or you'd be 'Needs Improvement'. And then there was a box at the bottom which was 'Poor Performance' … so we had a discussion around that: 'Where do you see yourself on the curve?' 'Well, I see myself sort of, like, in the middle, so I'm achieved', and he would pull us down, saying, 'Well, I think different'. (Sandy)*

Sandy initially accepted the performance rating system as a way of improving performance in the workplace. Over time, however, based on conversations that she had with colleagues and her own experiences, her opinion changed. Sandy felt employees' performance ratings were being decided subjectively to give her and other employees a poor rating, leading to employees deciding to leave, or being forced to do so in the austerity context:

> *I think that particular higher management level would have been told, 'You need to get rid of staff'. At first I didn't think that … it wasn't until time went on that I thought, 'That's exactly what they're doing', which was either to make people so sick they would leave … or mark people down, get them in that lower ten per cent … to get rid of people'. (Sandy)*

Nicholas, a council officer, discussed the timing of public sector cutbacks and the rationale for job losses emanating from the financial crisis. Additionally, he specified that government actions that had impacted upon the public sector pre-dated the financial crisis. Nicholas described the pressure associated with the changes, job losses, and the realisation that his job would be a redundancy:

> *It was public sector cutbacks … from about 2009 till 2012 … because of the crash and government actions before the crash … there was financial pressure and … someone was going to lose their jobs … then comes the realisation that yours is the role that they are making redundant. (Nicholas)*

Emily also contextualised workplace bullying arising as a result of austerity cutbacks, which led to organisational downsizing, creating the workplace bullying behaviour that she experienced, and ultimately led to her losing her job:

> *I think that initial identification with somebody as a bully … happened when some really major changes started to be implemented … local government*

finance issues… consequently the organisation moved into … downsizing and responding to … economic and government drivers. And that probably created the space for some unfortunate behaviour. (Emily)

Connor contextualised council changes as stemming from austerity cutbacks leading to increased pressures at work and workplace bullying. Connor felt that he was bullied for not being able to meet work demands. In particular, Connor focused on the reduction of council administration staff, resulting in a loss of support for organisational psychologists, and the need to work constantly to keep up with the pressures:

Well … it's a time of austerity … big cutbacks across the council. In the past we had facilities of being able to dictate reports … and then those being typed up by an admin team of up to ten or more staff. So, with cutbacks the admin team have been reduced, so there's … growing pressures of work, more cases, quicker turnaround … but also the other pressures with performance indicators … I'm never switched off from work to keep up. (Connor)

Rachel, a university support services employee who experienced workplace bullying from her line manager, described the detrimental impact on her workload of organisational restructuring and consequent job losses, specifically as a 'remaining' employee. She highlighted that job losses had occurred with no corresponding decrease in the remaining employees' workloads, despite employee redundancies. Rachel discussed the requirement to meet targets based on student numbers, exacerbating unmanageable workloads. Craig, Amernic, and Tourish (2014) critique developments in the HE sector, which have led to quantitative performance metrics being imposed on university staff, based on student targets. Rachel pointed out that the actor of bullying was unsupportive and judgemental, and blamed her for not being able to achieve work demands, rather than recognising that there was a structural issue creating the situation:

So, for me it was my manager … because of the restructure workloads had changed, targets were on numbers of students, there was a reduction of staff so very early on it became apparent that my workload was unmanageable, and I raised concerns … to say that we weren't coping. But she insisted that the targets were achievable and blamed me, rather than accepting that the workload was doing the job of three into one. (Rachel)

Gramsci argued that power, including setting the political agenda, is not always visible in terms of individuals' consciousness, but acts pervasively and insidiously as invisible power, shaping experiences (McGee, 2017). Indeed, Rachel was not fully aware of why the restructuring was being implemented:

I don't know the exact governmental policy but that might be my ignorance …
I think it was felt that there was a need to change the way we work because of
the competitive sector that we're in … but I really don't know what it was
specifically about … there were also the job cuts, so the team numbers were
reduced and that had something to do with government funding, I think, but I'm
not sure. (Rachel)

Tom, Kate, Sandy, Nicholas, Emily, Connor and Rachel's accounts demonstrate the lived experience of austerity and its impact on the bullying that they experienced. The turn to austerity has confirmed how deeply embedded neoliberalism and financialisation are in the contemporary global political economy (Callinicos, 2012). Indeed, austerity policies have been informed by NPM theories, which centre on privatisation and marketisation of public services, and provide the basis for the continued restructuring of public services and job losses (Evans & McBride, 2017). Through austerity, the UK government has significantly reduced expenditure on public sector organisations and services (Bramall, 2013). The resultant organisational changes have reinforced the NPM reforms that have been pursued in the public sector for decades (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011). Wells (2018) describes austerity as a form of class struggle from above; and as Blyth (2013, p. 10) contends, austerity "relies on the poor paying for the mistakes of the rich". In Gramscian terms, austerity rests on a durable narrative that is hegemonic through its portrayal of public sector expenditure reductions as the only viable 'common sense' solution, from the vantage point of the rulers rather than the ruled (Crehan, 2016). Within the austerity context, the public sector has been restructured, has become diminished, and is characterised by precarious insecure employment (Evans & McBride, 2017). The corresponding workplace environment is where the seven participants experienced bullying.

5.4.5 MANAGERIAL OPPOSITION TO TRADE UNIONISM

Martin and Seth's public sector workplace bullying experiences were connected to their roles as trade union representatives. Martin, a civil servant and the trade union representative in his department, experienced workplace bullying from his line manager, describing her as being opposed to trade unionism. As well as austerity-driven financial cutbacks, Martin highlighted that central government policy had resulted in a reduction in facility time for shop stewards to undertake their trade union duties. Martin pointed out that his line manager had bullied him to reduce trade union facility time, which he consequently had to undertake in his own time. He emphasised that other trade unionists in the movement also do this:

I'm a trade union rep … I had a team manager who … didn't believe in the aims
of the trade union movement. I would … say she was right wing in her approach

… it was when the Cabinet Office … under the instructions of the government, decided that in the public sector the amount of facilities time … was far too excessive … I was subject to … intense pressure to get my time down. But my manager had insisted that I did all that type of stuff in my own time. I still do it and … if you speak to anybody in the movement, they do it as well. (Martin)

Martin discussed the Conservative government claiming that the Labour Party had created national debt, but he felt that the bankers were responsible, and described the financial situation leading to cutbacks in the civil service. Similar to Sandy, the other civil servant in this study, Martin highlighted that employees were being bullied through the implementation of HR policies, including performance management and absence management policies, which he regarded as being misappropriated to eject employees from the workplace. Martin also described governmental targets increasing workloads, exacerbated by the reduction of staff:

So as part of the austerity drive the government have openly said, 'We have to balance the books … the Labour Party left us in a lot of debt' – well … it was the bankers – 'so we obviously need to introduce policies, redundancies … cut staff'. So, people … were being bullied out the door … with policies that were draconian, sickness absence … performance management … centrally driven government policies to reduce staff … as a consequence, there's more work and less people. And that's target driven from the ministers in Whitehall … so the pressure just adds and adds and adds. (Martin)

Seth, a council worker and trade union representative, described a situation of working in a council department, which was transferred through Transfer of Undertakings (TUPE) to a private outsourced organisation that remained under the auspices of the council. Seth highlighted that workplace bullying by the management team was already being experienced in the public sector setting, but this became intensified within the private sector environment. Seth also discussed being bullied due to his trade union role:

I was employed in a full-time permanent role … of the private outsourcing firm. So, I was TUPE-d … transferred … but the culture underwent a wholesale change. So, what was already a bad situation of public sector employer became far worse … there was already a culture of bullying amongst members of management, that was then tacitly encouraged and then given licence by the new private sector partner … so it flourished under their oversight. I was targeted specifically because I was a trade union rep, I perhaps posed the greatest threat to them and their immediate work life, or ambitions. (Seth)

When probed further, Seth highlighted that the trade union was attempting to persuade staff to participate in industrial action, which became the catalyst for the bullying from management. Seth pointed out that the management team were from an armed forces background, and they felt threatened by a galvanised trade union membership that was expressing opposition to the transition to a private sector environment:

> *The catalyst for the bullying was their failure to participate in industrial action … things then rapidly deteriorated … because the manager felt threatened by what appeared to be an emboldened trade union membership. So, there were two segments of this work group, these ex-forces managers, very obedient and loyal personal friends … and then a kind of emboldened kind of group of trade union members. (Seth)*

Martin and Seth's accounts expose significant differences in the ideological positioning of management and trade union representatives. Marx (1894) argued that the capital–labour relation is inherently antagonistic, due to managerial control of workers and their productive output. Gramsci incorporated struggle as forming part of a counter-hegemony towards existing power relations (Holub, 1992). Gramsci contended that subaltern consent must regularly be won, and that workers' material and social experiences remind them of their subordination, leading to antagonism and resistance (Hoare & Sperber, 2016). Indeed, Martin and Seth's descriptions demonstrate how the power and discourses of management are resisted in the public sector, through trade union-oriented challenges, focused on workers' rights. Martin and Seth's workplace bullying situations centre on resistance to worker exploitation, supported by collectivist notions. Towers (1989) regards resistance as an inevitable result of the exploitation of labour by capital. In addition, Wright (2000) highlights that galvanised working-class interests undermine and threaten the capacity of managers to unilaterally make decisions, which could exploit workers. Martin and Seth's trade union representative roles involve supporting workers, but their activism rendered them experiencing bullying from management. Furthermore, Martin's account reveals the suppression of trade union power – a continuous trend since the return of the Conservative Party to power in 1979, as trade unions increasingly came to be perceived as powerful labour market monopolies (Evans, 2013).

5.4.6 WORKPLACE BULLYING AND THE SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY

Issues regarding bullying related to disability as a means of undermining or ejecting employees from the organisation or institution were raised by Ava, Ruby and Sara. Ava, an academic at the time of the bullying, discussed being bullied by the dean of the institution. The actor bullied employees that she perceived as not conforming to her mindset concerning the workplace, which included a range of bullying behaviour, culminating in the initiation of formal competency actions against bullied targets. Ava had

returned to work after an extended period of sickness following spinal surgery, but when she resumed her role, the actor began to focus negative attention on her. Ava described being given an increased workload despite her physical disability:

> *The bully … the dean … had a strategy … she didn't like people who didn't conform to her way of thinking … effectively she picked them off … there would be a whole narrative about this person … she would institute incompetency proceedings … over absence through sickness … I'd raised issues with workload … took an extended period off sick because I had spinal surgery … when I came back … I'd be belittled and undermined, and I was given more work to do … it became increasingly stressful. (Ava)*

Ruby, a secondary school teacher, was bullied by the head of faculty. Ruby had experienced a six-month period away from work due to epilepsy. When Ruby returned to work, she questioned her high workload and timetable. Similar to Ava, Ruby was given a high workload despite her disability. Ruby challenged the bullying, which manifested itself in the unreasonable workload, but the head of faculty continued to bully her to remove her from the workplace:

> *We got a new head of faculty employed and basically I was off work ill for six months as well due to epilepsy and once I came back … he took a massive dislike to me … I questioned him about my timetable … he went really underhand with things … sent me off to the head teacher … saying how I was difficult and uncooperative and not wanting to work … he gave me really bad timetables with some of the hardest classes … he deliberately set out to try and get me … to leave the school by doing that. (Ruby)*

Sara, a council officer, was bullied by her senior manager. Sara described a situation of public sector cutbacks leading to constant restructures. Within this environment, despite Sara's disability, she was given inappropriate work, and the senior manager would undermine her. Sara felt that the senior manager was ultimately trying to pressurise her into leaving the council:

> *We've had so many cuts in the public sector … so many restructures time and time again … because I'm disabled and obviously required some reasonable adjustments … the senior manager … would try to undermine me … giving me pieces of work that really weren't appropriate for me to work on … when you've got someone who's doing that intentionally, who's then got the ear of the senior manager … and he's actually trying to cause problems … because he knows he can't get rid of you, he'd have to make you quit. (Sara)*

Social model disability theory seeks to explain the social marginalisation of disabled people in terms of broader ideological, political and social processes (e.g. Barnes, Mercer, & Shakespeare, 2010; Shakespeare, 1994). The hegemony that defines disability in capitalist society is constituted by the ideology of individualism, restricted notions of normality, and overriding representations of people as 'able-bodied' (Oliver, 1990). Therefore, Davis (1997) argues that the problem is not with the disabled person but with the way that normalcy is constructed to problematise the disabled person. In addition, Davis (1997) contends that the social process of disabling arrived with industrialisation, and that the ideological construction of normalcy is a component of the consolidation of power of the bourgeoisie to employ the 'ideal' worker. Similarly, Johnstone (2001) maintains that in the absence of a full-employment economy, disabled workers are socially denied in the workplace as equal to other workers, through the harmful exercise of power, discrimination and oppression. Furthermore, the socially constructed environment is designed in such a way that it does not account for individuals with variations in abilities or characteristics (Oliver, 2009). Ava, Ruby and Sara's accounts support Fevre, Robinson, Lewis, and Jones's (2013) assertion that employees with disabilities and long-term illnesses are more likely to suffer workplace ill-treatment. Moreover, their experiences resonate with Mawdsley and Lewis's (2017) contention that through intensive working practices, NPM facilitates the bullying of UK employees with disabilities and long-term health conditions. The participants' situations outline a systemic lack of consideration of their disability by the actors of bullying when assigning workloads. In addition, workplace bullying appeared to ensue because of their disability as a way of expediting their departure from their respective organisations, within environments of job cutbacks.

5.4.7 WORKPLACE BULLYING AND PERSONALITY

Roger, Jake and Marilyn attributed the workplace bullying to the actors' personalities and traits, and they felt that the actors would have behaved negatively regardless of the organisational context. In his account of workplace bullying, Roger outlined a situation where he was being bullied by his service manager to work in closed office environments, which he struggled to work in due to chemicals in the atmosphere. When I explored the reasons for the workplace bullying, Roger associated the behaviour with the actor's personality:

> *I think this guy was such a nasty guy that it wasn't just the policy from management, I don't think he was just following orders. All I can think of … there's kind of something mentally wrong with him, but I know it's a strong word but he's … got a strange personality. He's got that … bullying kind of trait. (Roger)*

Similarly, Jake, a council officer, concentrated on the actor's personality, highlighting her way of working including micro-management of employees, as the manifestations of workplace bullying:

> *I had a line manager who was very forthright – she micro-managed, so she wouldn't allow anyone else to … make decisions, everything had to go through her … it's just in her nature but also she saw it as getting the job done. (Jake)*
> When I probed whether the external context influenced the actor's behaviour, Jake focused on her nature and pointed out that her personality, and not the external context, predisposed her towards engaging in workplace bullying:

> *To be honest, I don't think her … attitude would have changed what was happening. There were no outside forces affecting behaviour, it was just in her nature. The budget cuts did bring out their bullying behaviour, but she was like that anyway. (Jake)*

Marilyn, a council officer, experienced workplace bullying from her head of department, who was also her line manager. Marilyn described the actor as having an aggressive persona, which he was renowned for, and which had led to many people within the organisation challenging his bullying behaviour:

> *So, he had this reputation of being very aggressive, not listening to staff … just headstrong. And I think towards the end he did lose the plot because people, even the elected members were telling him, 'This isn't working.' And he was so headstrong … I think he actually drove himself to almost insanity and drove himself out of the organisation. (Marilyn)*

Similarly, Marilyn attributed the workplace bullying to the actor's personality, combined with the organisational pressures, but then concluded by emphasising personality:

> *It was his personality, his character which – well, it was the two, the two things together, I think, the organisational stress and the worry of saving money, and the importance of that role and protecting the organisation's reputation but, again, I do think it was also his individual personality that came into play. (Marilyn)*

Overall, the findings on whether personality is related to bullying are contradictory (Branch et al., 2013). Zapf and Einarsen (2011) argue that workplace bullying research would be undeveloped without consideration of the personality attributes that targets and actors possess. Lind, Glaso, Pallesen, and Einarsen (2009), on the other hand, emphasise that workplace bullying explanations associated with personality are inappropriate, and Glaso et al. (2007) point out that a singular personality portrait of bullied targets does not exist.

The literature on targets' characteristics is more established than that on actors' characteristics (Branch et al., 2013). Baillien et al. (2009), Coyne et al. (2000), and Matthiesen and Einarsen (2007), for example, have highlighted personality issues such as introversion, submissiveness, and low self-esteem, as characteristics of bullied targets. The research that has developed on bullying actors describes either low or high selfesteem (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996), lack of social competencies (Zapf & Einarsen, 2011), and the inability to adopt flexible attitudes and behaviours (Baillien et al., 2009), as contributory factors to bullying. For Gramsci, there is no definite human nature; instead, human nature is the complex of human relations (Daldal, 2014). Gramsci argued that each individual is an aggregation of elements, both subjective and objective, including personal characteristics and relational characteristics (Filippini, 2017). In other words, he contended that the individual is a centre of interaction between their individuality and the external world, thus their behaviour represents a combination of the individual's relations with peers, as well as with society (Filippini, 2017).

5.4.8 SUMMARY OF THE INFLUENCE OF IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL FORCES

The participants provided empirical insights into the impact of ideological forces on their respective public sector organisations, and the Gramscian framework enabled an interpretation of their workplace bullying situations. Various interlocking themes were surfaced by the participants in relation to how ideological forces influenced the workplace bullying. Gramsci argued that ideological forces have direct consequences for social relations, which are characterised by complex, reciprocal interdependence, signifying their dialectical nature (Davies, 2010). Indeed, the findings demonstrate that neoliberal ideological forces have manifested in 'competing values' of organisational actors in the everyday negotiation of working life (Skegg, 2014). Moreover, some participants described the direct impact that having a contrasting perspective on public sector service delivery had on their experiencing workplace bullying. Other participants highlighted that neoliberal market ideology had resulted in performative environments, incorporating an emphasis on meeting commercially defined targets, accompanied by work intensification (Ball, 2003; Diefenbach, 2009). This led to managerial workplace bullying, supporting the NPM and workplace bullying research undertaken by Ironside and Siefert (2003), and Omari and Paull's (2015) research on NPM, work intensification and bullying. Additional participants discussed the public sector emphasis on efficiency and cost-effectiveness as demonstrating the impact of NPM on public service delivery. Using Gramscian theory, the development of a common sense and spontaneous grammar, reflecting material forces, and the naturalisation of ideology (Donoghue, 2017) was used to understand participants' experiences. Furthermore, the prioritisation of efficiency and cost-effectiveness, related to the overriding concern of service standard measurement based on private sector models (O'Flynn, 2007), were drawn out by some participants as contributing towards their

workplace bullying experiences. Participants' accounts align with Ball's (2003) work on public sector performativity and the emphasis on financial targets and performance indicators. Indeed, private sector models of public service delivery, resulting in a competitive drive towards meeting efficiency targets (Hood & Dixon, 2015), leading to workplace bullying, were described by participants.

Governmental deficit-reduction austerity plans have resulted in reduced public sector funding and also reinforced NPM ideology (Evans & McBride, 2017). Austerity policies have resulted in situations where several participants either lost their jobs due to cutbacks, or were bullied into undertaking additional work as remaining employees, supporting Hutchinson's (2011) research on bullying and austerity-induced job losses. Other participants described supporting employees through austerity-driven organisational restructuring but outlined how their trade union representative roles had placed them in direct opposition to managers with opposing ideologies, who consequently bullied them. This corresponds with issues drawn out by Ironside and Siefert (2003) about the decline of collectivism, and the prominence of unitarist ideologies in the workplace. Participants with disabilities discussed experiencing bullying from managers who did not consider their requirements, and moreover who bullied them because they had a disability, ultimately to eject them from their roles. The findings reinforce Mawdsley and Lewis's (2017) contention that bullying of UK employees with disabilities and long-term health conditions, has been enabled by NPM. The analysis was theorised by adopting the social model of disability and disability hegemony, to highlight the systemic nature of disability inequality. Finally, some participants regarded ideological forces as irrelevant, with their responses supporting research that regards bullying actors' personalities as being salient explanatory factors for workplace bullying (e.g. Baillien et al., 2009; Baumeister et al., 1996; Zapf & Einarsen, 2011). The implications of the findings will be synthesised further in the concluding chapter of the thesis.

5.5 PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON WORKPLACE BULLYING AND POWER RELATIONS

Power relations are the foundation of all aspects of society, and another key area of focus in the research was the relationship between workplace bullying and power relations. The majority of workplace bullying researchers (e.g. Aquino & Thau, 2009; Keashly & Jagatic, 2011), have tended to restrict their understanding of workplace bullying and power relations to the interpersonal level. In other words, the external context surrounding the organisation is either disregarded, or disappears into the background. In line with the Gramscian framework adopted in this thesis, I argue that UK public sector workplace bullying cannot be understood in isolation from organisational or external power relations. During the interviews with participants, I was interested in exploring how they conceived power in the workplace bullying situation, and whether governmental policy had

empowered the bullying actor/s. I initially asked participants to describe whether or not the bullying actor/s had power in the workplace bullying situation. Furthermore, I explored whether or not the participants felt that government policy had somehow impacted upon the bullying situation and the actor/s power. This exploration enabled me to address the third research sub-question:

In what ways, if any, have power relations affected the workplace bullying situation?

The key themes that emerged when I explored workplace bullying and power relations are outlined in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3. Workplace bullying and power relations

Chapter section	Themes
5.5.1	Positional power and external directives
5.5.2	Bullying actors' political power
5.5.3	Bullying actors' job cut decision-making power
5.5.4	Institutional or organisational power
5.5.5	Power relations, pressurised environment and increased workloads
5.5.6	Power relations and senior management self-preservation

5.5.1 POSITIONAL POWER AND EXTERNAL DIRECTIVES

Positional power abuses, power asymmetry and domination, as well as the actors' roles in driving forward organisational changes, were a ubiquitous feature of many of the participant interviews. Lana, Roger, Sandy and Ava discussed the hierarchical positional power of the actors as privileging them in the organisation to bully. Lana described the actors' power as emanating from their seniority and their roles in making the organisation more business-oriented. Lana felt that the actors' behaviour was permitted without being monitored or censored, which was a further signifier of their power:

> *The roles … gave them a lot of power over a lot of areas in the organisation. They frightened their staff into delivering. They had also worked with the chief executive for a number of years … a lot of power came from the fact that they were senior in the organisation and had a job to do to make the model more business-like … they were allowed to get on with things … there didn't appear to be any evidence of their behaviours being checked or monitored in any way. (Lana)*

When I explored whether the actors' power was influenced by governmental policy, Lana pointed out that they were not necessarily conscious of governmental requirements. She felt, however, that the actors had absorbed the business-oriented model, which they regarded as the optimum way forward. Thus, they had bought into neoliberal agendas. Gramsci referred to this phenomenon as unconscious intellectual and emotional acceptance of the socio-political order, as well as a key component of the consent aspect of hegemony (Femia, 1981). Correspondingly, Lana highlighted that the actors' private sector ambitions affected their mentality, organisational perspective, and approach towards service users:

> *Well, I don't think they ever sat down and said, 'The government wants this', but I do think they considered the private sector mantra the way to go, they … what's the word … absorbed it … that's what was being asked of them and they were determined to deliver. Any other way of working was inferior, and it affected their whole mindset right down to how they viewed the customers. (Lana)*

Roger felt that the actor's power stemmed from his management position and described it as involving dictating what Roger was required to do, including having the authority to make him undertake work against his will:

> *He was the manager and … he knew he had certain powers over you because he was your boss, he could … dictate what you actually did in certain circumstances. It's like a uniform, the way he walked around and told people what to do, including forcing you against your will. (Roger)*

With regard to governmental policy, Roger described the actor as accepting directives coming from above, and supporting financial cutbacks at the university:

> *I think to a certain extent … he accepts it because … it's his job to accept it. And there's a lot of managers who … don't question … the policy that's coming from above. They accept it because they are managers and I think … he thought the cuts had to be made. (Roger)*

Sandy felt that the actor's power emanated from his seniority in the civil service but concentrated on how his position enabled him to negatively influence others against her. Forst (2017) defines power as the ability of an individual to intentionally influence the thoughts of another, such that they act as a result of that person's influence. Sandy regarded the actor as having privileged access to senior managers in the civil service upper echelons, and described him as using those networks to alter the perception of her into a negative one. A key theme in Gramsci's writing was worker exploitation involving the dehumanisation and alienation of workers (Ekers, Hart, Kipfer, & Loftus, 2013). Sandy

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described senior management power having the negative effect of dehumanising employees, turning them from people into numbers, with actors of bullying deliberately inserting employees into a low performance bracket to meet job reduction requirements.

> *Well, obviously there's grade … there's also being able to manipulate situations to your own benefit, influencing people who are quite senior who you would not imagine would be influenced … I think they forget about people, it's more we're a number … 'How many people can we get into that performance bracket?' (Sandy)*

With regard to governmental policy, Sandy outlined the external imperative to reduce public services, and the connection between this and the revised performance management system. Gramsci described industrial and technological exploitation as a complex socio-economic arrangement arising out of historical external conditions that appear 'natural', portrayed as an objective necessity, when they are actually instruments of ideological reproduction (Ekers et al., 2013). Sandy felt that there was a connection between public sector reductions and the performance rating given to employees:

> *Obviously it's … a government initiative, isn't it, to reduce public services and I think that's probably why that performance management regime was brought in. (Sandy)*

Clegg and Hardy (1999) argue that organisations can be viewed as political and social systems, with associated internal mechanisms geared towards the integrative and survival needs of broader societal orders, of which they are the constituent elements. Sandy felt that the actor's power derived from his subjectivity in using a seemingly objective organisational performance rating system, to give employees a low performance score, and to justify job losses, leading to a reduction in the national public sector pay bill, as she stated:

> *To get rid of people. To cut the pay bill. To make savings. (Sandy)*

Ava felt that the actor had significant power due to her senior and prominent position in the university hierarchy:

> *It was significant power because the institution was structured into schools and she was dean of school … so she was in that context all-powerful, really. (Ava)*

Ava also described the actor's power as deriving from her drive to move the university forward, and meet the increasingly competitive demands of the HE sector. Ava highlighted the opacity of governmental imperatives to the majority of staff, and pointed out that meeting institutional requirements was not necessarily something that staff took account

of consciously. Ava added that we are all victims of government policy and it impacts upon all of us:

> *'We've got to be the best … move up the league tables' … it's this whole competition thing: 'We've got to show we're as good as the Russell Group', and that associated itself with league tables and outcomes and … it becomes like a vicious circle. As far as I'm concerned, we are all the victims of government policy because I think many people who work in the sector aren't even aware of … whichever white paper is coming out this week … but they all impact on us. (Ava)*

Ava's perspective supports Azmanova's (2018) contention that social actors are subsumed into a larger system of power relations, and are part of a structural and relational normative order. Indeed, Ava describes the systemic domination of all employees by the imperatives of the neoliberal system of power relations. The challenge of inducing subaltern people to think critically and coherently is the fundamental problem posed by Gramsci, permeating his writing and the history of Western political thought (Green, 2011). Ava highlighted the lack of awareness of and access to governmental white papers amongst academic staff, despite the concrete impact that they have on their working lives. Gramsci regarded the development of resistance as being able to concretise the originally amorphous, leading to a counter-hegemonic challenge to power relations (McNally, 2015). In addition, Thomas (2009) warns that if subaltern classes are unable to develop their own hegemonic apparatus, which is capable of challenging state neoliberalism, they will remain subaltern to its over-determinations.

5.5.2 BULLYING ACTORS' POLITICAL POWER

A theme that emerged from interviews conducted with Matthew, Sean, Martin, Donovan and Seth, who worked for a sixth-form college, a council, the civil service, a university, and a council respectively, was the political power of the actors of bullying. Matthew characterised the actors' power as political, combined with authority, and felt that their authority in turn reinforced the power-holders' legitimacy. Matthew conceptualised organisations as political entities and highlighted that the organisational culture that had ensued through changes in the FE sector was determining power relations, leading to inequalities and inappropriate workplace behaviours. Gramsci referred to the ideologically hegemonic function of organisations as being to maintain the social and political order, by being a projection of the very organisation of the state (Filippini, 2017). A key argument within Gramscian thought entails the capacity for individuals to collude with their own subjugation (Morton, 2007). Matthew outlined the balance of power and power asymmetries as leaning more towards leaders in the organisation but also replicated by employees:

Well, power is a political phenomenon. And all political systems are based on authority, legitimacy, and the exercise of power. Without authority you don't have legitimacy, in which to justify … the exercise of your power … I think we need to look at the nature of organisations as political entities. And therefore … the rules by which people play by and they're often set largely by the leaders but also by ordinary people within the organisation. And I think that exercise of culture determines power relations, inequalities, and inappropriate behaviours. (Matthew)

When Matthew was asked about any links to governmental policy on the workplace bullying situation, he felt that a particular type of bullying had emerged in the FE sector, accentuated by government policy, which had altered education over the past 30-year period. Matthew made a connection between the state and workplace bullying. Specifically, he described people who enjoy exerting power over others and are legitimised by the state, as having the power to place people's careers at significant risk:

I think what we're seeing with bullying is a particular type of inappropriate behaviour that is accentuated by government policy … for the last 30 years. And there's a certain type of person who revels in power and authority, and actually enjoys telling people what to do. And that's a dangerous position because if that type of person gets into a position of authority where it's legitimised by the state, then we have dangers. By having the power of jeopardising people's careers. (Matthew)

Similarly, Sean described power relations as political and felt that the actor derived power from being politically aligned with senior managers who were taking forward the austerity agenda. Sean felt that this offered the actor protection within the organisation against any scrutiny of the bullying behaviour that she perpetrated:

Primarily from her position as head of service but I think her power also derived from the fact that she was protected … she shared the same political views and philosophy as people who were more powerful higher up in the organisation … it's almost like a freemasonry, it cascades down … the perpetrator will know that they are protected because they have friends in high places. (Sean)

Sean discussed his aversion to new council ways of working, including target-driven cultures and income-generation activities – an attitude which went against the grain of change that was occurring in the organisation. Sean regarded the political differences between himself and the actor as being a contributory factor to being bullied, and class was also conspicuous in his description of the situation. Specifically, Sean felt that the

actor's behaviour signified an affront to working-class solidarity, inferring that workers should be united against the austerity cuts:

> *My politics were completely on the other side of the political spectrum to hers.*
> *She was New Labour, going on Tory … she wanted me out. So much for a*
> *united working class. (Sean)*

Sean's perspective on his workplace bullying experience draws attention to the plurality of opinions that can and do exist in a marketised public sector. Gramsci (1971) highlighted that although all workers are subjected to the overarching dynamics of material and ideological capitalism, the uneven distribution of power does not necessarily lead to a united workforce. Therefore, he argued, power relations and meaning emerge from a dialectical process, and he conceived organisations as sites of struggle. Worker resistance reflects antagonisms in capitalist relations of production. Furthermore, in the situation of power dynamics, organisational struggle, and divergent opinions, Marx (1894) highlighted that it is the power holder that decides whose opinion is heard. Sean felt strongly that the actor had politically aligned organisational support, rendering him powerless against the job cut decision.

Similarly, when I explored whether the actor was empowered by the organisational changes in the civil service, Martin pointed out that the actor's ideology and position on the political spectrum was aligned to governmental policy:

> *Well I think she was empowered because, ideologically, the way the*
> *government was operating fit where she was on the political spectrum … I think*
> *… this agenda was ideological. She thought, 'Well, I can relate to this and this*
> *is how we should carry on. This is how I'm going to carry out stuff in my*
> *workplace.' (Martin)*

Gramsci argued that 'traditional' intellectuals, including lawyers, politicians, scientists and journalists, provide leadership as organisers of social hegemony and state domination (Evans, 2005). Moreover, organisational agents are required to link ideology to structures, and Gramsci stressed the strategic position accorded to 'organic' intellectuals who are aligned to the empowered class (Martin, 2002); this aligns with Matthew, Sean and Martin's accounts. Furthermore, Gramsci (1971) highlighted that only a handful of organic intellectuals are required in organisations to maintain and legitimise the status quo, and he described their unreflective reproduction of political ideology as reinforcing external power relations. Gramsci emphasised the multiple, contested, and shifting dimensions of organisational power relations, as well as the dialectic between resistance and consensual domination (Mumby, 1997). Therefore, his argument that resistance is always a feature of organisational life comprised it being predicated on conflicting interests and values,

constituted through power struggles (Mir, Wilmott, & Greenwood, 2016), which reflects the participants' experiences. Hence, Gramsci was not suggesting that all subaltern workers are passive carriers of political and ideological structures in a mechanical sense. Gramsci highlighted that social order is premised on tensions and contradictions, but he was not proposing that oppression could be challenged in a facile manner (Mumby, 2005). Indeed, Wilmott (1993, p. 541) argues that although there might be an effort to articulate the possibilities for worker resistance, they have the potential to remain largely unrealised and latent at best, in the "face of the onward, irresistible march of managerialism and its attendant rationalisation processes".

Donovan pointed out that the actor reported directly to the chief executive, and also had responsibility for a considerable financial budget to implement the governmentally imposed commercialisation of the HE sector, all of which enhanced her power. Donovan described the actor as having social and cultural power in terms of her networks, and the ability to shape the direction of the institution. He felt that the actor was politically astute in terms of interacting with key power-holders in the organisation, reinforcing her power:

> *Well, she had quite a lot of power … she had a direct report to the chief executive and had been … brought in with a strong mandate to engineer this transformational change … she was on a very significant salary … managed quite a number of staff. So, she had a lot of … social and cultural power … she was working very closely with several key managers … so I think she was quite political … in an informal sense around the organisation, she knew who the … other power-holders were and how to, to play them to her advantage. (Donovan)*

The actor's privileged access to networks in the organisational upper echelons highlights the asymmetrical distribution of organisational resources between her and Donovan, and the unequal power relations within the bullying situation. Donovan highlighted that the actor's power was significantly influenced by the governmentally imposed changes to the institution. Performance metrics for academic staff imposed by external governmental funding departments were dictating the work of the unit, and Donovan felt that this was the catalyst for the workplace bullying behaviour:

> *'I think that [government policy] was significant … because it was the whole raison d'être for our existence really as a unit and for this particular individual's directorship-level position … the external change was very much a catalyst for her behaviour, because it was for our very existence. So, if it wasn't for that, we wouldn't have existed. (Donovan)*

Managerialism as an orthodoxy emphasises the defining and measuring of management performance based on the ability to achieve quantifiable outputs and results (Evans, 2005). Indeed, Donovan added that the funding body was focused on metrics and the actor had adopted a managerialist approach:

> *The funding body in Scotland was looking for … considerably enhanced … quality against key metrics … which involved doing things in quite a different way … where she put a managerialist discourse ahead of people, and policy ahead of principles. (Donovan)*

In a departure from the other participants, Seth, who experienced workplace bullying by his immediate managers, considered the actors' power to be momentary. Seth maintained that the actors are conservative by background, and therefore prefer order and structure, affecting their attitude towards employees. He described managers that bully as having a misunderstanding and acquiescence to authority. Seth also felt strongly that bullying should be tackled, highlighting that it is wrong in any circumstances:

> *Weak, fleeting, and very illusory. I maintain the best bullies in a managerial capacity are often from a very conservative family or background whether it was business or … the Armed Forces where everything is about structure, must be neatly packaged, things must be in their place and in a box and that includes people as much as it includes material goods and services. So … a total misunderstanding of authority … but we must make them understand that it isn't moral, that it isn't correct, it isn't right in circumstances. (Seth)*

When I explored whether the actors were influenced by governmental policy, Seth described the council's elected members, as well as the immediate actors of bullying, as being influenced by it. Seth was critical of the elected members' approach to delivering public services, and the transfer of the public service to a private sector contract. For Gramsci, the fragmentation of subaltern classes is a political detriment, impeding effective political organisation, to counter subaltern exploitation (Green & Ives, 2009). Indeed, Seth depicted the Labour elected members as ambitious 'survivalists' who had lost their connection to trade unionists:

> *Labour administration … the obvious question is: 'Which Labour?' It was not the sort of radical Social Democrat Labour that … we recognise now with … coverage of Corbyn, McDonnell … it's very much the entrenched North East monolith dinosaur Labour survivalists … who definitely lost their connection with … the community of trade unionists, Labour in name only in that it furthers their ambitions and secures their positions as politicians … these Labour apparatchiks? At local level, who are … Labour in name only. (Seth)*

Although Seth was not purporting that the Labour-run council were responsible for the workplace bullying, he contextualised the workplace as an environment in which the council had consented to the contracting out of public services to the private sector, where the bullying intensified. Ostensibly, the Labour Party and trade unions are of a similar political persuasion, however, Seth's account outlines their differences. Gramscian theory avoids polarities in political movements, by recognising that although being part of an opposition movement seemingly places the groups within it in unity against the status quo, their political diversity renders them an unpredictable and contradictory battlefield in the struggle for a new hegemony (Hirsch, 1988). Gramsci described complex and ostensibly competing agendas, identities, and modes of struggle, constituting a treacherous terrain, and disorganised oppositional politics (Carroll & Ratner, 1994). Seth felt that the council's Labour administration had lost their connection with the worker-oriented aspirations of the trade union movement. In addition, he highlighted managers bullying him for having opposing political leanings and for supporting worker activism, within an environment of transition to the private sector arrangements.

5.5.3 BULLYING ACTORS' JOB CUT DECISION-MAKING POWER

Nicholas, Tom, Jake and Kate drew attention to the decision-making power that bullying actors had in terms of austerity-influenced organisational restructuring, including deciding which positions would be deleted and ultimately making the job cuts. Nicholas, a council head of service, described the actor's power as absolute in terms of determining whether he had a future in the organisation. Nicholas also expressed feeling let down by his managers, who were either disinterested or unable to prioritise his role:

> *I felt like they had absolute power over my future in the organisation … based on judgements they made … and I had no other … place to go … I believed in being the good public servant. I wasn't the kind of person who would have tried to lobby politicians … so I put my faith in them as good managers, but it was proved to be utterly unfounded because … they were utterly disinterested and/or unable to prioritise my role. (Nicholas)*

When I explored whether there was a connection between the actor's power and governmental policy, Nicholas felt that the actor was indirectly empowered. He highlighted that if he had raised an issue about the negative treatment he was experiencing, senior management would have closed ranks and considered the bullying behaviour insignificant in the grand scheme of organisational priorities of making financial savings and workforce reductions:

> *I think the perpetrator was empowered indirectly in that the organisation would have closed ranks around their organisational priorities. They might have ticked*

the perpetrator off over what they would see as a fairly insignificant issue of behaviour. (Nicholas)

Nicholas's areas of expertise include working with marginalised communities and challenging societal inequalities, but he highlighted that the income-generation focus of the council did not align with the perceived purpose of his work. Nicholas also felt that his departure was precipitated by the fact that he did not fit the mould of what was required in the commercialised council. Indeed, he referred to ideal council workers as 'machine local government officers' who would simply follow elected members' instructions. Nicholas's excerpt below is filled with business-oriented language. This aligns with Gramsci's view of language as a human institution, subject to historical change, and open to humans collectively and consciously determining its role in society (Ives, 2006). Nicholas depicted the spontaneous grammar inherent in the marketised public sector environment:

Well … the impression was they wanted machine local government officers who wouldn't try to … bring about societal change but would just follow the instructions of their political masters … and I think that was where the organisation was going … increasing creativity financially, being enterprising … but my work didn't fit their search for income generation. (Nicholas)

Similarly, Tom the FE teacher described the actors' instrumental power in making decisions about who would remain employed and who would not. Echoing Sandy's experience, however, Tom focused on the actors' power to influence others through negative comments in the job loss environment as a way of vindicating their job cut decisions:

Well, it's obviously instrumental power because they do have an overall say in whether someone stays employed or not, but at a kind of micro-level it can be influential power, the behind-the-hands whispering campaign: 'I don't trust him', 'You don't want to be seen as friends with him because he's going to be out the door in a few months.' (Tom)

Tom felt that the actors were empowered by external developments, including possessing the power to expect employees to work in ways that breached employment law:

I think actually in a lot of ways they've been empowered by external developments. I'm not saying that … further education is part of the gig economy just yet … but the amount of people who are employed by agencies … on fractional contracts, casualised, is frightening. And it's very much the case of divide and rule. And there are people who are … expected to work in ways that breach employment law because they're not given breaks … but senior management would say they require flexibility. (Tom)

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In the above excerpt, Tom outlines the negative impact of the reduction in central government funding and the ways in which the FE sector has implemented spending reductions, justified discursively by management through using the language of flexibility. Gramsci argued that language itself is a metaphor for hegemony and is ideological, and that language dynamics can be used to demonstrate how power relations function (Ives, 2006). Furthermore, Donoghue (2017) points out that inherent to language use is a framework of rules that guide how we understand social worlds, and how we interact within those worlds. At first sight, and removed from context, 'flexibility' is seemingly a positive word, however, within Tom's account it demonstrates managerial power, and highlights the exploitation of workers within a marketised FE environment.

Jake drew attention to the actor's power base and described her as creating an 'empire' in the workplace, denoting Jake's perception of her considerable power. Jake also highlighted that the austerity cutbacks elicited the negative behaviours, aimed at reducing staff numbers, and felt that council managers had already drawn up a list of who they wanted to eject from the workplace:

> *Oh, I mean, she loved it, I mean she created her own empire. The budget cuts did bring out her bullying behaviour … so it was almost, 'Oh it's a licence … we can get rid of who we want'. So, I'm sure in some departments a list was drawn up … 'How do we catch these into the net?' (Jake)*

When asked whether governmental policy had empowered the actors of bullying, Jake felt that managers had to make the redundancies, used austerity as an opportunity to eject employees whom they considered to be troublemakers, and retained compliant workers, thereby reducing resistance in the workplace:

> *Well, somebody's got to do the job. So, they still needed people but … they wanted shot of the troublemakers and they wanted the ones to stay to be … the compliant ones. They … wanted an easy life. (Jake)*

Indeed, a key part of the Gramscian concept of consent is the issue of compliance and conformity, which is a component of domination that bolsters the interests of the ruling class (Filippini, 2018). Gramsci (1971) outlined the key mechanisms and processes whereby subaltern classes foster their own subjugation. Conformity occurs when the political and social ideological order is accepted by subaltern classes as common sense, in exchange for partial benefits. Femia (1981) extended Gramsci's writing and explicated conformity as incorporating an expectation of reward or future reciprocity.

Kate, who experienced being bullied out of her position at a council, regarded one of the actors of bullying, a head of service, as having positional power in terms of her job title

and salary. In addition, Kate pointed out that the actor had significant power through her professional connections with internal politicians and senior managers:

> *I think she had power … in terms of her position … her salary … her job title …*
> *the fact she was my head of service … she could have done so much more to*
> *be supportive but chose not to, which for me was a big part of her bullying …*
> *she also had power … connections to elected members, connections to senior*
> *managers, so she had a lot of power. (Kate)*

Kate regarded the workplace bullying as being directly connected to governmental austerity policies, which led to the job cuts. She pointed out that without austerity-driven policies the job losses would not have occurred. Kate highlighted that the job cuts placed workers in a situation of having to compete with each other to retain their positions, and that this generated the workplace bullying:

> *Without those wider … external policies … I would say it was a direct factor,*
> *because without the need to make those cuts, restructure the organisation and*
> *put … immediate colleagues in direct competition with each other, that situation*
> *would just never have arisen … wouldn't have happened. (Kate)*

Kate's account places the workplace bullying against the backdrop of governmental austerity policies. Within this context, there existed a power imbalance and asymmetry between Kate and the head of service. Kate felt that the head of service was unsupportive towards her in a situation that had direct implications for her livelihood. Kate also experienced bullying from workers who were of an equal hierarchical status. Gramsci argued that within organisations, a multitude of hierarchical relations, degrees of indispensability in occupations and skills exist, which lead to friction and competition between different categories of workers (Donaldson, 2008). In Kate's situation, the austerity-driven cutbacks created a situation where workers were competing with each other to retain their positions, and hence their economic livelihood, which Kate felt precipitated the workplace bullying. Nicholas, Tom, Jake and Kate all highlighted the authority and decision-making power of the actors to implement job cuts. Indeed, authority is the aspect of status in a system of social organisation, which legitimises decisionmaking that is binding, with employees bound to act in accordance with the implications of those decisions (Haugaard, 2002).

5.5.4 INSTITUTIONAL OR ORGANISATIONAL POWER

Clive, Karl, Ruby, Clara, Connor, Scarlett and Henry all described the actors' power being consolidated by wider institutional or organisational power. Clive outlined being bullied by the workload manager to undertake additional work. He highlighted that the actor's power

was augmented by the support of the institution, enabling him to have the authority to enforce the unreasonable workload:

> *They've got the support of the institution behind them. They believe they've got the weight on their side because the institution has decreed that … this is what is actually happening. So, they believe that they've got the authority to have almost a heavy hand … 'If you don't do this … you'll have to talk to somebody higher than me and they'll say the same thing.' (Clive)*

Clive described political developments impacting upon the institution and felt that there were several actors of bullying who were directly influenced by external changes. External power relations included the pressures placed upon the university to compete in the league tables and generate income:

> *Yes, they're influenced by the external changes because they can see the political arena changes, it comes into the institution who looks at this and says, 'Okay, this is income generation filtered out through into the different faculties and departments.' And then you've got heads of departments looking at them and saying, 'Well … where do we get the people to actually do this … to move these things forward?' (Clive)*

Clive argued that the workplace bullying had become entrenched organisationally through external directives impacting upon the institution, and he conceptualised this as institutionalised bullying:

> *I believe … that the bullying is … almost institutional bullying in the sense it's been agreed from top down as to what we should be engaged in as an institution … therefore as it filters down to a level where the engagement is between management and employee, 'Well, we need to do this to satisfy these expected outputs and achieve these targets … to get this income generated … so that we're going to be profitable.' (Clive)*

Clive's conceptualisation resonates with Liefooghe and Mackenzie Davey's (2001) notion of organisationally embedded institutionalised bullying, which in their view has been propelled by scientific management techniques in the workplace.

Karl also outlined a situation of institutionalised bullying by managers who were supported by the HR department. He described the actors' power as deriving from their position within the university, from managers working together to collude against employees, and an institutional culture that had developed whereby the HR department supported management actions, rather than defending employees who were impacted by increased workloads:

Power came from position … from undermining you … there's management colluding against colleagues … which I know three senior managers did against me, which is when I went off with stress for six months. As I say, the power comes … knowing … that there is an HR-come-management culture across the whole of the institution which supports their approach. So, it's a combination of things in terms of power. (Karl)

Karl described governmental policy altering the institution, from being a university that originally provided excellent pastoral support and teaching to students, towards being a university that was predominantly interested in achieving finance-oriented prescribed results. Karl specifically highlighted that the university had adopted a Taylorist approach towards higher education underpinned by efficiency and financial imperatives, leading to the workplace bullying. In addition, Karl referred to the Labour Party led by Tony Blair, driving changes in the higher education sector:

Very much about generating revenue and bums on seats which really turned this place from a … great place for excellent pastoral care and excellent teaching into something which turned into a … massive sausage machine in terms of how we processed students … so it changed it quite dramatically. And it was like a production … Taylorist approach to HE. And it wasn't from a student experience point of view, it was from a university, finance and efficiency point of view … which was driven by Blair. (Karl)

Ruby, the only secondary school teacher in the research sample, discussed the actor's power as stemming from having the institutional support of the head teacher and management. The actor had workload responsibilities, which Ruby described as 'control over teachers' timetables. Furthermore, the actor possessed the decision-making power to make redundancies, which was a fundamental part of his remit. In addition, the actor had connections with senior management and was liaising with the HR department about Ruby, using his power and influence to undermine her. Ruby depicted a pressurised situation of rising teacher workloads, simultaneous redundancies, and the school targeting teachers unfairly for redundancy because job losses had to be made:

I think he was very powerful … he had the backing of the head teacher and management and … he had control over your timetable, he could use that power to make your life exceptionally difficult. I think it was him and his allies … and these actions of the human resource manager and … they basically backed each other up … they were looking for scapegoats to try and get rid of. Workloads were rising but at the same time they were making redundancies … and he was brought in with that remit even though they didn't admit it, but it was happening. (Ruby)

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Ruby felt that the actor was empowered significantly by external developments. Ruby described the actor as having the full endorsement of senior leaders in the secondary school. Furthermore, the actor was receiving performance-related pay to make governmentally induced changes in the school, which Ruby highlighted as stimulating the workplace bullying. Ruby also demonstrated resistance to the workplace bullying:

> *I think he was empowered a lot, to be honest, because of the changes that were happening and … he had the full backing of the senior leaders … and he was trying to get his performance-related pay. So, I do believe that spurred on the bullying and he saw me as someone who wasn't cooperative, and he just expected me to lay down and take it. (Ruby)*

Clara described the actors' power as emanating from their personalities and self-belief. Additionally, Clara felt that it derived from the organisation and that, as a group of three managers, they derived power from each other:

> *The power came, I think, from themselves … they were very strong personalities … had a lot of their own self-belief … and I think they got power from the organisation and from the managers … and with their peers at that level … those three managers were very much at the same level, and I think they drew power from each other … they supported each other. (Clara)*

Clara felt that the actors were accommodating of the externally imposed governmental changes, which aligned with their way of working. She described the actors as supporting the business-oriented change of direction and felt that they derived power from the chief executive, lending support to the notion of institutionalised workplace bullying. Clara was subjected to workplace bullying for not meeting the business plan targets, and described the external changes as giving the actors the authority to focus on her performance:

> *The new structures … suited their way of working … that empowered them to pass that down the line. So, they were empowered … happy with the change of direction … and the business model and they had that relationship with the chief executive … they perceived that I was not meeting targets and … that gave them the authority to then do something about it. I think the authority came from above, it came from those changes. (Clara)*

Connor, the organisational psychologist, outlined the positional power that the actor of bullying had over him in her line management capacity. In addition, the actor was able to consult with HR about Connor to support her perspective, which Connor felt reinforced her power. Connor described the actor's power as bolstered by the organisational infrastructure, policies and systems that support management, which were not visible to him as someone lower in the organisational hierarchy:

Their power … stems from their position as a manager and actions that managers can take at an informal formal level, and their power being supported by the infrastructure that exists within the larger organisation, for example, the manager being able to discuss with HR certain actions they may want to take. So, their power is … augmented by the larger organisation. They've got policies and systems that support them. There's things that aren't visible to others below the chain, like me. (Connor)

Scarlett, a council housing manager, outlined a situation where she sought support from her immediate line manager about the workplace bullying to which she had been subjected. She described feeling disempowered because the actors had power over the HR department, leaving her line manager powerless to support her:

What made me feel worse … they had power over me … that made me feel pretty disempowered … but also power over my immediate line manager. So … in a way it's putting screws on him so that he couldn't do anything, and he was just ignored when he tried to stand up for me. Clearly they had power from each other and over HR. So … they could just do exactly what they wanted to do, just completely tread over … all your experience and qualifications. (Scarlett)

Henry, the council head of service, felt that the actor derived significant support organisationally from the chief executive. He also highlighted that the actor was a powerful tool exercised by the chief executive, which enabled her to have the authority to manage the council autonomously. Henry felt that the actor then maintained her power through supercilious attitudes towards staff:

She was … a powerful tool being wielded by the chief exec, and she had a fair degree of autonomy just to get on and run the rest of the council pretty much. So, her power definitely came from him. And I think she kind of maintained that power through her self-important attitude to the staff. (Henry)

With regard to the influence of governmental policy, Henry described the actor's conception of how the council should be managed as aligning with the chief executive's and council's vision. Henry outlined the actor as being able to translate governmental policy into how the council should operate, and the actor feeling personally responsible for ensuring compliance, depicting her behaviour as the 'iron fist in the iron glove':

I suppose her … vision for … how things could be run shared with the chief executive's vision and the council's vision … and she had that ability to say, 'Well, yeah, if this new piece of legislation is coming in, we've got to do this, and this is how we should do it.' So definitely, yeah, the external factors … all

of that she felt personally responsible for making sure it worked properly. We used to … describe her as the 'iron fist in the iron glove'. (Henry)

The oppressive repercussions of organisational power structures that reinforce imbalances of power, in the form of institutionalised workplace bullying, have been articulated by Liefooghe and Mackenzie Davey (2001), and this resonates with Clive's experience. In addition, Clive, Karl, Ruby, Clara, Connor, Scarlett and Henry described situations where not only did the actors of bullying have hierarchical authority over them, but the actors' power was supported by managerial power in the wider organisation. In Marxian terms, the structure and basis of the power of a social class includes organisational groupings, which have a common position in relation to the means of production (Gidden & Held, 1982). Gramsci's notion of organic intellectuals, who use their class-cultural affinities to maintain hegemony, broadens the Marxist dichotomy (Miliband, 2009). Neoliberalism has sponsored a cadre of organisational organic intellectuals who have promoted the associated ideology, enabling the ruling elite to exercise power, almost invisibly (Merino, Mayper, & Tolleson, 2010). Indeed, using Gramscian theory, Evans (2005) argues that social workplace agents, in this case senior public sector managers, operate as a transmission belt of neoliberal ideas. The participants' accounts highlight a situation whereby a managerial grouping unified in terms of policies, practices and narratives, supported the actions and decision-making of bullying actors. Furthermore, the actors were able to access wider organisational power to support their actions, whereas the bullied targets were unable to do so, placing them in a weakened, disempowered position.

5.5.5 POWER RELATIONS, PRESSURISED ENVIRONMENT AND INCREASED WORKLOADS

Rachel, Sara and Marilyn highlighted power as manifesting itself in pressurised working environments and increased workloads. Rachel, a university support services administrator, described the actor as abusing her power and influence to pressurise staff to undertake work beyond their capacity. In addition, Rachel outlined that the actor did not behave in this way with her peers at the same level, suggesting that the actor was abusing hierarchical power over the employees that she managed:

> *I think that they had a lot of power and influence … she was very dominant, I suppose, is a good word. I think she knew exactly what she was doing and definitely abused that power. I don't think she would behave the same way to people who were on the same level. (Rachel)*

Rachel felt that the actor already had power prior to the organisational restructure brought on by a reduction in central government funding, but that this restructure was a further

way for the actor to emphasise her power. She highlighted that the actor was not listening to staff about the intensifying workload pressures, and that her priority was to report to management that the work was achieved:

> *She had the same managerial responsibility, so it's not that she'd been given more power through the restructure, but I think it was just another way for her to emphasise her power. It was like a new group of people that she could inflict her behaviour … not listening … the workload was not manageable, but she didn't care as long as she could then report to the management team that the work had been done. (Rachel)*

Rachel's account reveals the expectation that has been placed on university support services staff to undertake work over and above their capacity and employment contracts, in the context of job losses. This resonates with Hutchinson's (2011) contention that workplace bullying is engendered in austerity contexts, and Omari and Paull's (2015) findings about work intensification leading to bullying.

Sara, a council worker who also experienced increased workloads within a working environment of job losses, described bullying actors as possessing individual power supported by other colleagues. In addition, Sara depicted them as having the power to apply workload pressures and their priorities as centring on driving forward organisational agendas:

> *There's been so many central government cuts for ever … every year the workforce was being reduced, with more work being piled on … and … these people just derive their power from inside themselves and … it's supported by people around them … that gives them the power to … force you to do things … you have to bend to their will. They are more into whatever task or agenda they're taking forward at the time … and because of that, they're able to grow their own power without worrying about the people that they're hurting on the way. (Sara)*

Sara felt that the actors were empowered by external developments in terms of their ability to dictate work requirements. She also went on to describe the actors being at risk of job loss and having to account for their professional existence, which suggests that they too were in a precarious employment situation. Sara intimated that the actors' power may have been a way of asserting their importance, and hence ensuring their longevity in the organisation:

> *Very much so, because they were allowed to do it … but also the two people were empowered because there was a culture of, '… we know what's best, we make the decisions round here, nobody else does. Just do as you're told.'*

Senior managers could also be cut. So that meant they had to account for their contribution and their existence. (Sara)

Marilyn, also a council worker, outlined a situation of previously separate teams merging into one due to austerity cutbacks. The team merger was accompanied by the alteration of job descriptions to align with the newly established team, a reduction in staff, and an increase in workloads.

So, we were inundated with work … the workload was really bad … we had to keep our own projects going but then learn a whole new profession … which would probably take ten years to become an expert in. (Marilyn)

Marilyn discussed the power imbalance as arising from the actor's senior position in the organisation. In addition, she described managers having the discretion to act in certain ways towards employees as another factor that empowered them. She also felt that the actor of bullying was sexist, indicating patriarchal gendered relations of power and control, which aligns with Hutchinson and Eveline's (2010) argument that wider gender inequality is entrenched within organisational cultures and daily practices, reflecting wider power imbalances:

Obviously because the perpetrator was at such a senior level in the organisation, then that naturally creates a power imbalance between me and him, for example, there's policies and procedures within an organisation … then there's always that caveat, 'at manager's discretion' … and I think he was also sexist … I think he had a disregard for women. (Marilyn)

Marilyn described the actor failing to meet the pressures that the council was facing as a result of decreased central governmental funding. The actor was viewed negatively by senior officials, which is a departure from the experiences of the other participants, who discussed actors deriving power from senior networks. Marilyn felt that the actor was bullying staff as a way of passing on the blame for not meeting workload targets contained within the team plan:

He was failing so badly at the job … he had to exert power in some way … by bullying staff … because he had no power in any other form … he wasn't getting praised by the chief exec, or elected members … he wasn't getting any respect from senior managers because the team plan was not being met, he couldn't translate what they wanted … so it was almost like he was completely losing it and the only way for him was to bully and blame staff. (Marilyn)

Rachel, Sara and Marilyn described workplace bullying occurring in pressurised environments of increased workloads. A significant aspect of management power is being

able to control and direct the activities of workers (Braverman, 1974). Marx's (1894) notion of surplus value highlights the exploitation of workers by capital to maintain levels of productivity and higher profit margins. Similarly, Gramsci argued that working people are forced to let themselves be expropriated for their labour, in exchange for subsistence (Donaldson, 2008). Indeed, within the capital–labour dynamic, McIntyre (2005), and Beale and Hoel (2011) contend that workplace bullying could be conceptualised as management control designed to ensure the extraction of surplus value from labour. As discussed, as well as consent to management powers, antagonistic work relations and struggle also featured in Gramsci's writing (Filipino, 2017). Indeed, Rachel, Sara and Marilyn, demonstrated resistance to the work intensification that they experienced. Rachel, Sara and Marilyn's workplace situations also included restructuring of teams, streamlining of job descriptions, and increased workloads. Correspondingly, research has shown that cost-cutting exercises and organisational restructuring are significantly related to workplace hostility (Baron & Newman, 1996; Hoel & Cooper, 2000; McCarthy, 1996; Sheehan, 1996). The participants' accounts also align with the findings of Salin (2003), who highlights that restructuring and downsizing lead to increased workloads, lower job security, and workplace bullying.

5.5.6 POWER RELATIONS AND SENIOR MANAGEMENT SELF-PRESERVATION

Anthony and Emily related the workplace bullying that they experienced to senior managers preserving their powerful roles. Indeed, Anthony described the actor, the vice chancellor, as having a high degree of power, emphatically depicting his power as:

> *A hundred per cent. Unbelievably a hundred per cent. (Anthony)*

Anthony pointed out that the introduction of student tuition fees was a stimulus for the workplace bullying at the university. In addition, he highlighted that the changes in higher education were a confusing time, which the actor took advantage of to produce material advantage for himself. Although Anthony described the governmental changes as the catalyst for the workplace bullying, he emphasised throughout the interview that the actor used the institutional changes to produce personal financial benefit:

> *The government changing from a non-tuition fee to a paid tuition fee was a big catalyst to all the bullying … and it maybe became the driver, but I think probably he also used that as the opportunity for what he wanted to do … I think it was him taking that opportunity of confusion of what could be done for him to drive through the things he wanted to get the benefit himself. (Anthony)*

In the excerpt below, Anthony portrays the actor as making financially motivated, selfinterested decisions in a competitive market, reflecting the market ideology that has pervaded the higher education sector.

I think … he was trying to make an impact and … he was busy addressing his own personal financial status, so he was obviously negotiating a bigger deal, a bigger pay package on performance … so the better the university did and the business models, then the more salary he would have … they were the drivers. (Anthony)

Anthony's account illustrates a senior management response to HE marketisation that is one of seeking individual gain. Indeed, Holmwood (2016) argues that some vice chancellors used the marketisation of HE as an opportunity to increase their autonomy to make self-beneficial financial decisions, in line with market ideology. External power relations were impacting upon Anthony's workplace bullying situation, and political policy meant that the institution changed its way of working, moving towards a business model. In addition, the actor had responsibility for ensuring institutional objectives were met. Indeed, the vice chancellor placed increasing pressure on academics to meet income targets, which also led to pressure on Anthony to bully staff to meet the targets – something he was unwilling to do:

Oh, definitely there was a political dimension. What he was wanting was … control of quite a large workforce to meet income targets … certain things to happen with this workforce … ending up bullying the workforce. But he was bullying me to bully the workforce to meet targets, so I was sandwiched in the middle … transitioning everything he wanted onto the workforce. So, then it was me in a hard place because I wasn't prepared to pass on that bullying. (Anthony)

Emily, a council manager, described several sources of the bullying actor's power, including hierarchical positional power in terms of managing and controlling employees. Emily also pointed out that the actor, who was a head of service, had connections to other sources of power including the chief executive, in terms of influencing others. She felt that the actor's personality was another factor, in terms of their conception of what was behaviourally acceptable in the treatment of others:

The power would have a number of different sources. So … was positional, to do with that person's role and how that person … might have in terms of managing, controlling, influencing others. Some of it was relational power because this person had a close relationship with the chief exec and people in very senior roles, and the ear of them. And the third one was about personality and behaviour, what they thought was acceptable … in terms of how they behaved and treated others in the workplace. (Emily)

Emily felt that the actor unquestioningly accepted the directives of the chief executive, and was empowered to enact the governmentally imposed changes:

> I'm sure in pointing upwards at this person … if the chief exec or leader said, 'Do this', they would do it, probably unquestionably, and probably people in that very senior role aren't terribly interested at ground level about how it's being done or working, as long as not too much negativity is spilling up. So, this person [the actor] suddenly has huge power in terms of how they enact this. (Emily)

Emily described the actor using the situation to achieve personal goals in relation to their own role.

> I think this person took opportunities … by the situation that was there to actually, to get things they wanted out of it … to do with their own personal role … within the structure. (Emily)

A new head of service position was being created due to the departure of the previous post-holder, which Emily and the actor of bullying were eligible to apply for. The previous head of service had described Emily as his succession plan, and she believed this was the reason that the actor began to focus negative attention on her:

> I was involved in a number of meetings with the director and this person. I was very conscious in these meetings [that she] had very little to offer … and the ideas always seemed to not be … generated from her. The director would … be interested in my ideas … and then eventually at one of those meetings the director looked up and said that this person and me, and I, were his succession plan. (Emily)

Although Emily was not interested in the promoted position, Emily felt that the actor mistakenly perceived her as professional rival and threat:

> [The actor] would have viewed me … as a direct competitor for a role that she aspired to. And even though … I wasn't applying … I told her I wasn't a direct competitor … it didn't change her perception and behaviour that was then unleashed … including … particular negative comments about myself and my professional contribution … she shared those quite widely. (Emily)

Anthony's account highlights a vice chancellor perpetrating workplace bullying to meet the demands of a business-oriented, competitive university sector. In his critique of neoliberal managerial power, Adler et al. (2007) argues that managers serve, perpetuate and reproduce the social injustices of the broader socio-economic system. In addition, Anthony felt that the vice chancellor bullied to achieve professional recognition and personal

financial rewards. This aligns with the findings of Hutchinson et al. (2010), who contend that workplace bullying is a political tactic, exercised for the achievement of personal or organisational advancement. Bamford, Wong, and Laschinger (2013) also view workplace bullying as a micro-political exercise enacted for influence or personal gain. Similarly, Krakel (1997) describes bullying stemming from actors' motivation to enlarge the proportion of existing profits allocated to themselves. Emily felt that the actor was bullying to achieve personal ambitions. In addition, she described workplace bullying being directed towards her by the actor based on a misconception that Emily was competing for a newly created high-profile position, as part of organisational restructuring. Emily highlighted that the bullying behaviour included undermining her professional contribution, and negative comments about her capabilities. Krakel (1997) argues that by sabotaging the work performance of a colleague, the actor of bullying aims to improve their own professional ranking, and perceives talented subordinates as rivals, hence trying to expel them. Ultimately, Anthony left the university because of the workplace bullying he experienced, and Emily was made redundant as part of council austerity cutbacks, with the actor of bullying leading the interview panel that made the redundancy decision.

5.5.7 SUMMARY OF WORKPLACE BULLYING AND POWER RELATIONS EXPLORATION

Drawing on Gramsci's (1971) conception of power relations, the preceding section has outlined empirical insights from participants about the complex impact of power relations on their workplace bullying situations, resulting in the emergence of several themes. For instance, some participants described the positional and hierarchical power possessed by bullying actors, supporting research undertaken by Keashly and Jagatic (2011). Moreover, in the context of neoliberalism, they highlighted the impact of governmental policy on reinforcing actors' positional power. This included the hegemonic phenomenon of consent to governmental policy, which incorporates the acceptance and unconscious absorption of state directives (Gramsci, 1971). Similarly, other participants highlighted actors of bullying possessing political power, which aligned ideologically with the senior vision in the public sector organisation, empowering actors to mistreat them. The findings on the political power of bullying actors sits against a backdrop of organisations as political phenomena (Bannerji, 1995; Clegg & Hardy, 1999; Clegg & Haugaard, 2009), and Gramsci's (1971) conceptualisation of civil society as a site of the reinforcement of ruling power ideology. In addition, Gramsci's (1971) concept of organic intellectuals who perform an ideological function for societal ruling class was deployed, highlighting their role in transmitting neoliberal ideology in the workplace. Furthermore, several participants portrayed the job cut decision-making power that actors possessed, within the austeritydriven environment of public sector cutbacks. A significant issue that was drawn out in this theme was the subjectivity of actors' decisions, which were largely based on

bullied targets not fitting into the mould of what was required from employees. Indeed, Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemonic power incorporates the expectation of compliance and conformity amongst subaltern classes – and participants described their non-conformity as leading to workplace bullying.

Additional participants outlined actors accessing wider organisational power to support their bullying behaviour. Hence, institutional or organisational power was an additional theme that emerged; participants described it as reinforcing the imbalance of power between the actor and themselves. Participants' accounts align with Liefooghe and Mackenzie Davey's (2001) research on institutionalised workplace bullying. In addition, Marx's notion of allied organisational groupings in relation to the means of production, and Gramsci's organic intellectual concept were applied to interpret power in the bullying situation. Several participants described power relations manifesting as management coercion to take on excessive workloads, as part of cost reduction and restructuring exercises, backing research undertaken by Baron and Newman (1996), and Hoel and Cooper (2000). Participants outlined their resistance to undue workplace demands, supporting research carried out by Sjøtveit (1992). In addition, Marxist and Gramscian notions of the exploitation of workers for surplus value and organisations as sites of struggle were drawn upon to understand bullied targets' situations of being forced to take on excessive workloads. Furthermore, other participants highlighted actors of bullying being driven by self-preservation and personal financial goals within neoliberal contexts, reinforcing the research of Hutchinson et al. (2010). Finally, the issue of bullied targets being perceived as threats and rivals was drawn out in this theme, supporting Krakel's (1997) theorisations about workplace bullying occurring in competitive environments. The implications of the power relations findings will be synthesised further in Chapter Seven of the thesis.

5.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter set out to present, interpret and analyse bullied targets' experiences of workplace bullying, and to address the third overarching objective of the study. The chapter began by explaining how the data is presented and interpreted. In line with the first three research sub-questions, the chapter then analysed the bullied targets' conceptualisations of workplace bullying, whether or not ideological forces influenced the workplace bullying situation, and the nature of power relations. Accordingly, bullied targets' responses were mapped out and analysed within the Gramscian framework. A number of themes emerged regarding participants' subjective conceptualisations of bullying that align with the workplace bullying literature. In addition, several themes surfaced regarding the impact on the workplace bullying situation of neoliberal governmental policy and power relations. The chapter summarises the findings of the workplace bullying study, which will

be synthesised further in the concluding chapter, and provides a foundation for the following chapter, which further sets out the research findings through an analysis of the fourth and fifth research sub-questions.

CHAPTER 6 FINDINGS, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter concentrates on the final two research sub-questions, namely whether workplace bullying was legitimised and somehow sanctioned or permitted by the organisation, outlined in Section 6.1 of this chapter, and an exploration of the justification for the workplace bullying, outlined in Section 6.2.

6.2 PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE ORGANISATION'S ROLE IN LEGITIMISING, ENABLING AND FACILITATING WORKPLACE BULLYING

Beginning with legitimacy, Giddens (1976), Suchman (1995), and Tyler (2006) describe it as a perception or assumption that the actions of an organisation are desirable, proper and appropriate, within some socially constructed system of norms and values. Furthermore, Bandura (2002), Bloch (2012), Hutchinson et al. (2010), and Jenkins et al. (2012) argue that workplace bullying can be regarded as legitimise by actors of bullying, by connecting it to the achievement of organisational goals or norms. A central premise of this thesis is that contemporary organisations are sites of domination of workers in neoliberal contexts. Therefore, I was interested in exploring whether the organisation itself legitimises workplace bullying, and whether the legitimisation was connected to the requirement to achieve external imperatives. Consequently, I asked participants questions that delved into their perspective on organisational developments and workplace bullying, and whether or not the bullying was enabled or supported by the organisation.

This exploration enabled me to address and explore the fourth research sub-question:

> In what ways, if any, is workplace bullying legitimised by the organisation?

The key themes about legitimisation that emerged from the interviews are outlined in Table 6.1 below:

Table 6.1. Workplace bullying legitimisation

Chapter section	Themes
6.2.1	Governmental directives and organisational legitimisation
6.2.2	Market ideology, increased competition and income generation
6.2.3	Managers, human resource management and workplace bullying legitimisation
6.2.4	Increased workloads, individualisation and blaming personal inadequacy
6.2.5	Corporate goals and senior management self-preservation

6.2.1 GOVERNMENTAL DIRECTIVES AND ORGANISATIONAL LEGITIMISATION

Lana, Sandy, Sean, Seth, Nicholas, Kate, Jake and Henry discussed governmental directives impacting upon the organisational climate, shaping its culture and practices, which in turn created a situation that, it could be argued, legitimised the workplace bullying. Lana described the impact of the commercialisation of public services and the effect on the actors' approaches to managing staff, with the bullying manifesting itself in management approaches that were punitive. Lana highlighted that the actors had a distorted view of how to manage staff, and argued that they felt obliged to behave in this way in a public sector that was adopting private sector approaches:

> *The organisation morphed out of local authority, part of the whole idea that government funding should be reduced … be more commercial in their approach. They had a distorted view … effective management in their heads was about threatening, telling people off, shaking a stick … they would be sacked, almost an encouraged state of mind and behaviour … they thought it was incumbent upon them to behave like this … because it was more like the private sector. (Lana)*

Lana also pointed out that the actors were emulating the chief executive and modelling her behaviour, suggesting that their approach was organisationally legitimised and sanctioned:

> *But I think they were both very keen to … earn her [the chief executive's] respect and affection and praise and get credit for it … like I said … they tried to sort of fashion herself in the same image as the chief exec. (Lana)*

As previously discussed, Sandy's workplace bullying experience centred on the newly introduced civil service performance management rating system, supposedly intended to improve employee performance. Sandy felt that the rating system was used by the actors to mark employees down, and ultimately as a deciding factor in generating public sector expenditure reductions. Moreover, Sandy reasoned that the external governmental directive had led to the introduction of more stringent performance management, which she described as a regime, in order to generate job losses. Sandy's account indicates that the performance management system, which is a formal legitimised system of managing staff, was a mechanism through which bullying was perpetrated:

> *I had people coming to me saying 'I think this is just to get rid of people', and as time wore on, I thought yeah that was the real reason. The performance curves weren't there to develop us, it was all part of their regime for the cuts (Sandy)*

Sean, who lost his job as part of a financial savings drive, was very critical of council cultures and argued that the behaviour of the actor was allowed to happen by the organisation, for political purposes. Sean referred to the contradiction of job losses occurring at the same time as the recruitment of corporate managers, whose role was unclear, but who fitted into the desired corporate culture. Sean described 'efficiency savings' being the priority for the organisation through job cuts, implying that the externally driven cutbacks legitimised the bullying behaviour:

> *I think there's something rotten, corrupt, and endemic in local authorities, there is behaviour … tolerated for the … political greater good, it's allowed to happen … they're now a law unto themselves, they employ people who shouldn't be employed, corporate types, no one knows what they actually do … it's like a job creation scheme, it's unbelievable, and a job cutting scheme for the ones that don't fit. In the past I was proud of being a public servant … What happened to a council job for life? Councils running good services? It's all about efficiency savings. (Sean)*

Similarly, Seth, the council worker and trade union representative whose public sector department was transferred under TUPE to a private sector organisation, felt that the actors were influenced by an austerity 'regime':

> *In the regime of austerity, I think bullying is part and parcel of it, so inextricably linked to cuts, to the orientation towards efficiency. Consciously, unconsciously, it manifests on a very frequent basis. It becomes often the justification for any number of decisions … including … the decision to bully, because there's a choice to bully … it's a choice to … sanction it, officially, unofficially, it's a choice … just like austerity is a choice. The choice has been made to attack vulnerable people. (Seth)*

In a similar vein to Sean, Seth highlighted that austerity and the pursuit of efficiency created the conditions for workplace bullying, and also influenced the justification for decisions made in the organisation. Seth described bullying as a choice, suggesting that it is underpinned by deliberate intent, which aligns with Lutgen-Sandvik (2006), Namie and Namie (2011), and Rayner, Hoel, and Cooper's (2002) view of bullying as an intentional act.

Nicholas lost his senior management position at a council due to austerity drives, and discussed the organisational transformation that ensued. He highlighted that business consultants advised council leaders about how to generate savings. The business consultants' recommendations included de-layering the senior organisational structure,

which led to the workplace bullying that Nicholas experienced, culminating in the deletion of his position:

Well … they worked to a particular transformational model … that was brought to them by highly paid whizz-bang consultants who went away and repeated it with council after council and made millions and it was based on a separation between operational line managers and specialists, in our case senior specialists. And it was kind of the first phase of the transition … that undermined my position … it was the first step to being cut adrift. (Nicholas)

Nicholas pointed out that the business consultants made millions of pounds, which appears ironic and contradictory when juxtaposed with the broader political narrative of the frugality required by austerity. The 'contradictory austerity politics' of expenditure during times of frugality (Callinicos, 2012) is illustrated by the fact that expensive business consultants were appointed at the same time as jobs were reduced, underpinned by a financial savings rationale.

Similarly, Kate, who lost her job during a redundancy selection exercise in a council experiencing financial cutbacks, argued that governmental drivers had a direct impact upon the workplace bullying that ensued. Kate felt that the governmental drivers impacted directly on the situation by contributing towards the lengths that her peers were willing to go to in order to preserve their own positions:

I would say … it was directly associated with that, because without that we wouldn't have been in that situation and given … the job cuts were not going to end with us … and they have continued … it would have had a direct bearing on … how hard they were prepared to fight and what lengths they were prepared to go to … they wanted a job at any cost and one of us had to go out of the three. (Kate)

Jake described the austerity-oriented council environment as resulting in employees trying to maintain their positions because the organisation would be making financial savings resulting in job losses:

I think everyone was jockeying for position and also there was a lot of distraction from our work … because we were coming to a point where we were going to have to tighten our belts. We were at the beginning of the pinch. (Jake)

Jake also felt that the actor was bullying to meet the austerity requirements, supported by two deputy senior managers who were emulating her approach:

She saw it as getting the job done. But, I mean … a couple of her deputies … who she used to manage … sort of morphed into her as well. And, again, a

couple of them are still with the council … and still terrorising staff to get things done their way. (Jake)

Henry felt that the actor's behaviour was directly connected to meeting externally driven requirements, and discussed her behaviour as being supported by the mentality of having to meet statutory requirements. Henry also described advice that the actor had given to him about achieving results from staff, which in the actor's view meant being unpleasant to staff:

I think almost totally related to council objectives, 'Well, we've got to perform these … statutory functions' … so that almost explained her entire approach, in essence it was the ends justified the means: 'If you're going to be a good manager, if you're going to get results, everybody needs to hate you and in order for them to hate you, you've got to be really unpleasant to them.' (Henry)

Lana, Sandy, Sean, Seth, Nicholas, Kate, Jake and Henry described workplace bullying situations that were directly impacted by governmental directives. Consequently, their respective organisational environments were permeated with what Hutchinson et al. (2006) outline as managerial imperatives, monitoring efficiency, measuring outcomes, and cost-cutting. Fundamental to the reproduction of inequality is the construction of organisational legitimacy monopolised by the privileged group (Sanford & Ali, 2005). Richardson (1987) highlights that in a neoliberal context, there is an increased legitimacy attached to the predominance of business values, with social values being linked to economic actions. Furthermore, Hutchinson et al. (2006) argue that wider societal imperatives contribute to an occupational milieu where workplace bullying becomes normalised, acceptable and legitimised. Organic intellectuals are the most important legitimising institution in maintaining organisational hegemony, through reifying neoliberal interests due to their advantageous positions in the workplace structure (Goldthorpe, Lockwood, Bechhofer, & Platt, 1969; Richardson, 1987). The organisational norms and values that ensue are taken for granted, and regarded as legitimise (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975). Therefore, Hutchinson et al. (2006) describe workplace bullying as a means of sustaining and legitimising the prevailing social, economic and political arrangements. In addition, Randle (2003) contends that workplace bullying can be seen as legitimising organisational rules in a broader socio-economic context. Indeed, the workplace bullying experienced by the participants appeared to be connected to neoliberal policy, which was being implemented organisationally.

6.2.2 MARKET IDEOLOGY, INCREASED COMPETITION AND INCOME GENERATION

Clive and Matthew drew attention to market ideology, competition and income-generation activities in their respective workplaces. Clive, whose workplace bullying experience

revolved around work intensification in a marketised university environment, highlighted that the institutional imperative to rise in the league tables generated the workload-related workplace bullying. He described workload discussions where he had highlighted to the actor that he was unable to take on additional work but was coerced into doing so. Clive depicted the actor emphasising institutional objectives, accompanied by management instructions that invoked market ideology and expectations:

> *'Well, you've got the space to do it.' 'You've got the work allowance to do it.' 'We all need to do this, there's a directive come in from the Vice Chancellor … we have got to be seen to be proactive in our sector,' so the management expectation is you need to be involved in this to move the institution forward, so this level of terminology almost implies that, 'Well, if you aren't involved in this, if we do fall by the wayside, well, where's that going to leave us in the market?' (Clive)*

Matthew described NPM as a system that prioritises profit over education. He extended this argument by describing the political legitimisation of marketised organisational cultures, which have generated workplace bullying. Matthew attributed the ultimate responsibility for workplace bullying to the political class, and he traced the political imperatives for NPM as deriving from Thatcher's Conservative government, reinforced by the Conservatives under Major, and continued by New Labour under Blair. Matthew also drew attention to the teaching profession being diminished due to the political changes:

> *I think it's the political class who brought in New Public Management, which prioritises money over quality of education. And it goes back to Conservative governments of the eighties … which was carried on during the Major government and then, in a different way echoed by the Blair government, because Blair was just as concerned about efficiency. Although he prefaced it on a social-democratic agenda, it still impacted negatively on teachers … they've been diminished as a profession. (Matthew)*

Matthew discussed the marketisation of the FE sector, incorporating an emphasis on league tables and pass rates, which could result in negative ramifications for the college where there was under-performance, leading to the loss of their sixth-form status, or resulting in college mergers. Matthew argued that senior managers drive change within organisations, legitimised by the marketisation of the FE sector. It was within this environment that Matthew described the workplace bullying as occurring:

> *When we went independent, we had to perform, we had to compete in the market. So, the marketisation of education is … the most important driver of change for education professionals. There are the league tables, pass rates,*

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and how you're judged as an institution, because if you're not judged sufficiently well, you go out of business or are merged with another institution. So, senior managers drive change within organisations because of marketisation. (Matthew)

Clive and Matthew's accounts suggest that workplace bullying within their respective workplaces is a feature of broader institutional requirements, brought on by the imposition of market ideology, legitimised through NPM and neoliberalism. Under capitalism, the state penetrates, organises and mobilises civil society – more so than under any preceding mode of production (Gramsci, 1971). This is due to states being dependent upon monetary revenues from capital accumulation, and competitive markets requiring an enforcing legal and regulatory framework, provided by governments (Davies, 2010). Fontana (2010) argues that the material and moral strength of the state depends precisely upon its ability to assimilate its cultural and ideological activity into organisations, and transform it into legitimising support. The rise of NPM and the injection of neoliberal market principles into public sector organisations has led to a managerial vision of competing in markets, and the implementation of performance criteria, to achieve income targets (Lapsley, 2009; Nash, 2018). In the excerpts above, Clive and Matthew draw attention to the marketisation of HE and FE institutions, and Matthew highlights it as anathema to the FE institution. Indeed, research has shown (e.g. Power, 1997; Rose & Miller, 1992; Strathern, 2000) that the inappropriate importation of market values into organisations and institutions undermines the values that they are supposed to uphold. Furthermore, McIntyre (2005) maintains that where employment relations are dominated by the market ideology of neoliberalism, managerial bullying is a more visible feature of the labour process.

6.2.3 MANAGERS, HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND THE LEGITIMISATION OF WORKPLACE BULLYING

Ava, Karl, Sara, Ruby, Connor and Roger all made a connection between workplace bullying and HR managers or departments. Ava highlighted that the actor involved the HR department to legitimise her actions against bullied targets, and to instigate competency proceedings against them. Ava felt that there was an element of collusion between the actor and the HR department, who she regarded as providing organisational support for the bullying behaviour:

She was always very careful to involve HR … and HR policies … if you were off sick for an extended period, however valid that was, or if you had a disability … that was used as grounds of competency proceedings … and she would work with HR … there was an element of collusion … you as an individual are not competent to do this job … because you haven't got Outstanding at Ofsted

… things that were structural issues … were reflected back as personal inadequacies. (Ava)

Karl discussed institutional changes that arose in HE due to the marketisation agenda, leading to an emphasis on competition:

Politically you go back to sort of Thatcher and beyond … which was creating a market culture and … that's changed higher education significantly … the competition became more intense, the market place became more open … and this obsession with the research agenda changed the whole market place as well. (Karl)

Karl felt that these factors had created the conditions for workplace bullying, fuelled by managers driving forward the changes by placing pressure on academic staff to go above and beyond their remits, to meet institutional objectives:

It was … this whole thing, 'If you're not with us, you're against us …we expect to get the pound of flesh and an awful lot more'. (Karl)

Karl also described an institutional culture of workplace bullying supported by management and the HR department. Karl described the HR department as an instrument of management used to create the desired culture related to marketisation. Hence, Karl intimated that the workplace bullying was legitimised by the institution:

This bullying … was strongly supported by management and the HR function … there was a HR-come-management culture across the whole of the institution … clearly HR was a management tool to create a particular culture. So, the institution was great at all the HR policies that you would expect to see in a decent organisation … but … it just paid absolute lip service to its own policies … there was no dignity at work for a lot of people. (Karl)

Sara, a council worker who experienced workplace bullying from her line manager, highlighted the impact of austerity on job losses and work intensification in the organisation, leading to a situation where there was a significant reduction of staff with no reduction of work tasks:

Well, 2010 is when the Tory/Lib Dem coalition came into power. It was probably 2011 when it really began to impact, and it's been every year since … the team I work in was previously four teams … with approximately 80 staff. We're now one team with 10 staff. There's no less work, if anything there's more. (Sara)

Sara pointed out that when staff sought advice from HR about the workplace bullying they had experienced from managers, HR would invariably support managers, or anyone in a

higher grade, against the bullied targets. The legitimisation of workplace bullying is described as management being able to enact bullying with the HR department supporting managers. Furthermore, Sara highlighted that the reduction in trade union power had heightened the power of the HR department:

> *HR absolutely always believed the manager in every situation. No matter what it is … and not just the manager, the person that's on the higher grade is always believed and you have to be able to show otherwise. As trade unions' power has weakened, HR are coming more to the forefront and … they are 100% there to support and back managers. (Sara)*

Ruby, a secondary school teacher, described a situation of experiencing workplace bullying from the school's head of faculty, who was employed with a remit to help the school compete nationally, including with private schools, to achieve governmentally driven results:

> *We got a new head of faculty … I think the head teacher employed him because … schools are more focused by governments on results … we used to be judged in line with those schools in a similar economic position … now we're judged on an equal basis with every school across the country, so there's much more pressure on head teachers to get similar results......including private schools. (Ruby)*

Ruby had a long career at the secondary school but had had time off work due to developing a long-term illness, epilepsy. When she returned to work after sick leave, she experienced workplace bullying from the head of faculty. Ruby outlined a situation of unmanageable workloads extending into weekends, and a disregard of her disability. Ruby also highlighted that demoralised teachers are leaving the teaching profession due to workloads and rising classroom sizes:

> *The head of faculty was micro-managing me, it was like carrying a heavy rucksack on my back … there was absolutely no support for the work … even though I'm covered because of my epilepsy … the workloads have become unmanageable. We're bombarded with paperwork, administration … most weekends are taken up with spill-over work but as well the working conditions are scruffy. There's a massive shortage of teachers now and loads of teachers are leaving the profession for similar reasons … because pupil numbers are rising, classes are getting larger. Teachers are demoralised. (Ruby)*

Ruby discussed a situation of a Conservative Party Education Secretary Michael Gove implementing changes in secondary schools that created additional pressure on teachers

due to fluctuating changes, performance-related pay, and schools competing in league tables:

> *He [Gove] was bringing in fast changes … his big thing was freedom for schools from councils, but he was getting involved in every detail, the goal posts were changing, and we never knew where we were … the marking schemes were different from one minute to the next. He … brought in performance-related pay and it was all about league tables. (Ruby)*

Ruby described a situation where workloads were rising but simultaneously redundancies were being made. Ruby felt that the head of faculty had allies and support from the HR manager to implement his remit of cutting staff. Despite job losses and external changes including the competitive league tables, there was a lack of acknowledgement that teachers were under considerable stress and pressure:

> *It was him and his allies and … the human resource manager and … they basically backed each other up … they were looking for scapegoats to try and get rid of … I was picked on because of disability … the culture was bad, there was too much being put on staff, you had teachers literally buckling at the photocopier and I think he saw that as a weakness in them … rather than accepting the stress and pressure. (Ruby)*

In the context of austerity cutbacks, Connor described the actors of bullying as undermining, controlling, silencing and monitoring employees. He felt that the ultimate objective was to justify employees being a potential job cut, legitimising bullying them in the process:

> *The issue is about trying to undermine you, trying to control you, it's about keeping you quiet, 'I'm watching you', and by making it formal if they ratchet things up to possibly get rid of you. (Connor)*

Connor depicted the access that managers have within the organisational hierarchy to committees, groups and information. He outlined how the actor used HR to support her perspective about him, coupled with criticisms of HR supporting management, and HR not recognising workers' points of view:

> *By becoming a manager, you go into another layer of … committees, groups, so you get more information, so your … networks, knowledge base, opportunities increase, and the manager used HR … because she would say, 'Oh well, I've taken advice from HR'. So, my response was 'But you don't need to ratchet this up to this level' … and HR were never going to see it from my*

point of view, I'm the worker, HR will support management … support what
they're doing, no matter what the reality is. (Connor)

Roger felt HR accepted the workplace bullying that he experienced, describing them as automatically assuming that managers were acting appropriately, and believing that employees had to comply, or leave the institution. He also outlined HR meeting managers before and after meeting the employee concerned, rendering the employee excluded from the discussion. Roger concluded by emphasising that HR should be neutral:

HR don't seem to question … the bullying … just … accept it, and automatically
think that managers are right, no matter what they do, employees always are
in the wrong and they've got to change their ways or get out … HR meet with
management beforehand, meet with management afterwards, they … discuss
the outcome afterwards when you're away from it, so you're not part of the
discussion. HR should be more neutral. (Roger)

Ava, Karl, Sara, Ruby, Connor and Roger's accounts highlight bullying that was legitimised through management authority, supported by either the HR department or individual HR practitioners. HRM is predicated upon a unitarist ideological framework whereby workplace divisions are assumed to be products of deviant behaviour of workplace dissidents, and are considered incongruous with the natural order of organisational affairs (Abbott, 2006; Fox, 1966; Horwitz, 1991). Such a unitarist ideology seeks to confer legitimacy upon and perpetuate managerial control (Horwitz, 1991). Additionally, the ascendancy of individualism has resulted in a decline in the trade union collective voice, which has been reintegrated into the sphere of management prerogative, through managerialism (Bacon & Storey, 1993). Some scholars (e.g. D'Cruz & Noronha, 2010; Harrington, Rayner, & Warren, 2012; Lipsett, 2005) have argued that HR provides organisational support for workplace bullying. Lipsett (2005) notes that university HR departments are perceived by bullied targets as protecting the institutions and helping actors of bullying, who are invariably managers. In addition, Harrington et al. (2012) found that HR practitioners prioritised their relationships with managers, automatically distrusting employees' bullying claims, accompanied by reluctance to risk their relationships with managers. Similarly, D'Cruz and Noronha (2010) concluded that bullied targets perceived HR professionals as providing either tacit or direct support to the alleged actor. Moreover, Harrington, Warren, and Rayner (2013) found that HR practitioners enacted 'symbolic violence' upon employees who raised claims of workplace bullying, by accrediting managerial bullying behaviours as legitimise performance management practices. Lewis and Rayner (2003) point out that HR does not simply operate as a functional or supportive area of the organisational structure for employees. Indeed, with the advancement of

neoliberalism, HRM has moved on from an employee advocacy role, towards protecting organisational interests (Harrington et al., 2012).

6.2.4 INCREASED WORKLOADS, INDIVIDUALISATION AND BLAMING PERSONAL INADEQUACY

Rachel, Scarlett, Marilyn, Clara and Martin raised issues about increased workloads and a focus on their supposed personal inadequacies in not achieving work targets. Rachel felt that the actor was enabled to bully by the university to ensure that work targets were met in a significantly reduced team. She pointed out that the team was required to meet work targets despite the reduction in staff numbers, and that the increased workload was impossible to achieve. When staff raised issues about their increased workloads, they were blamed, rather than the institution having fewer staff to undertake the work. Thus, the inability to meet work targets became individualised:

> *I do think it's the way that she is allowed to behave … to get us to do the work … [she's] been able to get away with it. We'd gone from 25 staff down to 11 … obviously the volume of work, the same workload completed by half the amount of people, it's not manageable. But then they seemed to be conveniently forgetting that, and … it wasn't attributed to the fact that they had less staff, we weren't allowed to use that as a reason … it was our fault or … we weren't working … in a lean way. (Rachel)*

In the excerpt above, Rachel refers to the requirement to work in a lean way. Lean processes are based on the capitalist rhetoric of achieving a high-performance workplace through a multi-skilled workforce, which assists the organisation to eliminate waste in the production process (Arfmann & Barbe, 2014). In other words, the lean production system is a recent variant of power in the contemporary economy, which reduces labour costs and consolidates capitalist profit through productivity gains, delivered by multi-skilled workers (Smith, 2000). Vallas (2003) emphasises the ideological consequences of lean work processes, entailing a potent system of normative control and managerial hegemony, whereby workers are encouraged to assume proto-managerial obligations and internalise managerial assumptions about their work situations. It could be argued that the legitimisation of the exploitation of university staff was inherent to working in a lean way, and the inability to meet work objectives was blamed on staff incompetence, rather than on the lean system.

Scarlett described bullying that she experienced from three senior managers who took responsibility for work that she was supposed to be leading and legitimised their behaviour by portraying her as personally incompetent. Her role then became redundant:

The insinuation was that I wasn't up to doing it in terms of my professional qualifications. When I was seen by the two directors they told me, 'Right, this is what's going to happen because these people are the experts and they will do the work.' And, I said, 'Well, what I don't understand is … this is in my job description to do all these things', so I not only lost the housing development, business plan, I also lost the internal capital bids, so basically my job was more or less got rid of. (Scarlett)

Marilyn, Clara, and Martin highlighted being subjected to bullying due to not meeting objectives and targets. Marilyn, a council officer who was a member of a merged team that had been streamlined due to austerity savings, outlined the workload pressures that her team was under. She described the actor engaging in bullying by blaming her for unachieved targets:

So, we were inundated with work … the workload was really bad … he was always blaming me for anything that went wrong: 'Oh, it's your fault. You haven't done this. You haven't met the deadlines.' He was almost justifying his behaviour to people … by blaming me for things that had gone wrong. (Marilyn)

Similarly, Clara discussed the workplace bullying stemming from the actors' focus on her not being able to meet unrealistic and complicated business targets. Clara's failure to meet the targets was reflected back to her by the actors as stemming from her personal inadequacies. Hence, the workplace bullying was legitimised through a focus on Clara's inability to perform the role according to organisational expectations, without acknowledging that the organisational targets themselves were unworkable, and that the performance standard framework was not visible to her:

They justified it in terms of, 'You're not doing the job that we set you up to do.' 'We gave you this job, this is the job description; you're not fulfilling that brief.' 'You're not following through the workload … you're not following the elements you need to do … your skills aren't up to scratch' … so it was very much about … me not meeting the performance standards. So, you're feeling a way in the dark … trying to do a job when they haven't given you any framework … and with … long, complicated, unrealistic targets. (Clara)

Martin described a situation of group bullying in team meetings, with team members being directly challenged by the actor for not meeting performance against prescribed targets. The behaviour was legitimised through the organisational mechanism of weekly team performance meetings and the requirement to meet targets. Individual workers were confronted directly in team meetings for failing to meet team targets, and the bullying was experienced as a form of managerial discipline:

We have a weekly team meeting where we would gather round, our performance is measured on boards and they'd pull the board over and they'd challenge individuals on, 'You're not hitting your targets. Right, you didn't hit your target there. Was there any reason why you didn't hit our team target?' (Martin)

Rachel, Scarlett, Marilyn, Clara and Martin described bullying received from management, which was legitimised by a focus on supposed personal inadequacy, rather than on structural issues. Tyler (2006) argues that managers are found to accept a variety of legitimising myths about markets. Moreover, Kluegel and Smith (1986) highlight that the blame for under-achievement becomes focused on individuals, not the market system. Therefore, as Baillien et al. (2009) point out, the stresses experienced by bullied targets are viewed by senior management as a result of either their inability to cope, or their lack of efficiency, rather than of the problematic terrain of market ideology. In addition, workplace bullying can be perceived as a legitimise form of behaviour, which is employed by managers to influence workplace behaviours and performance (Ferris, Zinko, Brouer, Buckley, & Harvey, 2007). As part of the bullying process, targets can be publicly labelled as being less competent, and such remarks are important devices by which the bullying actor secures organisational legitimacy for their behaviour (Baumeister, 1999). Indeed, locating the explanation for the inability of workers to meet organisational objectives within the problematic efforts and abilities of workers effectively legitimises existing status differences between workers and managers, and helps to justify the organisational and societal status quo (Alvesson, Bridgman, & Wilmott, 2013; Gramsci, 1971; Marx & Engels, 1941). Individualistic explanations of under-achievement that blame workers are favoured, which consequently legitimise a more troubling external reality (Braverman, 1974; Cloud, 1996). Therefore, attitudes that focus on workers' deficiencies are the product of hegemonic persuasion, which systematically obscures unequal structures (Gramsci, 1971).

6.2.5 CORPORATE GOALS AND SENIOR MANAGEMENT SELF-PRESERVATION

Tom, Donovan, Anthony and Emily discussed corporate goals legitimising the bullying behaviour, coupled with actors' determination to preserve their senior positions. Tom, who left his FE college job due to the workplace bullying that he experienced, felt that it was legitimised through references by senior managers to meeting business requirements and the needs of so-called customers:

'Needs of the business', 'interests of our customers', which we apparently now call the students … they would generally be couched in terms like that … 'I have to behave like this because it's in the interest of the wider organisation or our customer student base, that your behaviour is the problem.' (Tom)

In addition, Tom added that senior managers are determined to retain their own positions in the organisational hierarchy. He used metaphors from English literature to depict an organisational power hierarchy that exploits workers:

Because the senior managers, the very highest echelons of the organisation, are determined to keep their prestigious well-paid positions, and they believe that those below need to be treated almost like cattle … we don't describe it like Kafka, we describe it like Dickens … our middle manager is the Artful Dodger, and our senior manager is Fagin, we're all of the Victorian pickpockets and chimney sweeps and stuff, it's crazy. (Tom)

Donovan described the actor's personal ambition to enhance her university career in the context of governmental changes:

She was very career motivated … she was looking for an international position in terms of power and status … she wanted … quick changes that would … look good on her CV. So that was the context. I think there were probably some gender issues involved … the team that she managed were virtually all women. There was myself and another bloke who both felt that because we were blokes in a female-dominated context … that allowed her a little bit more leeway for bullying us as well, so there's that sort of gender aspect too. (Donovan)

Donovan also felt that there was a gendered dimension to the workplace bullying and that he and a male colleague experienced bullying in a largely female environment. That being said, Donovan's experience does not reflect the workplace bullying literature on gender, which has revealed that men are typically bullied by other men who are in a higher position than them. Without devaluing Donovan's account, research has shown that women face bullying from both women and men, more often than men do, and also from colleagues and subordinates (see Cortina et al., 2002; Escartin et al., 2011; Salin, 2003; Zapf et al., 2003).

Anthony highlighted that the university was impacted by governmental changes, which resulted in an increase in income-generation targets. The actor was cascading corporate objectives downwards towards Anthony and team members. Anthony described the institution as moving away from service quality, towards working to a business model predicated upon generating profit:

We were moving into students paying fees … the whole government structure of … fee structures … our student recruitment and how many the government would allow us to recruit – it was quite a traumatic period. So, it was quite a big redirection … which meant the pressures … on the workforce were huge. It was about bringing in more money. Most of us in the previous system were

working on quality models … [it moved] towards more of a business model … all about finances, income … cutting costs. (Anthony)

Anthony felt that the actor could behave in this way due to the positional power that he had, and also because he surrounded himself with other employees who were aligned to his way of thinking, working to deliver the ambitious results, thereby maintaining his financial security:

He was putting people in places that gave him the security of what he was doing. And … one of them in particular who worked for me … was a person who should have been sacked … he was a bully himself … so he just put those people in who were willing to do whatever was necessary to deliver what he wanted. So, he gave himself financial security by putting a lot of those people in place. (Anthony)

Emily, who experienced workplace bullying from her head of department, described the organisational context driven by governmental changes as being the catalyst for the workplace bullying. Furthermore, she felt that the emerging negative behaviours were connected to actors trying to protect their positions and being supported by the organisation:

People start to … protect their highly paid positions … so partly it might have been around their own preferred style of behaviour … in those particular times there was a drive to do certain things, so the other part of that triangle will be the economic conditions and what was happening in the sector that created the space for that kind of thinking, and those kind of behaviours to be supported. (Emily)

Emily also added that having power and influence was motivating the actor:

Vulnerability or fear of losing her position … would be one part of it. Another would be an all-consuming drive towards power in the changing environment … if you're somebody for whom power and influence is really important, you can gain that in really positive ways, or you can gain it by negative ways. (Emily)

Tom, Donovan, Anthony and Emily described workplace bullying situations where they were bullied at the hands of actors driven by preserving their own positions. Graeber (2015) contends that the way working lives are increasingly permeated by neoliberal leitmotifs obscures the fact that neoliberalism is designed to consolidate social stratification, which rewards the wealthy. Furthermore, Wright (1978) highlights the contradictory nature of class within organisations, leading him to develop a hierarchical model in which the employees' class location is dependent upon the extent of control they

have over the production process. Within Wright's model, the occupational positions closest to the proletariat are low-level managers and line supervisors (Johnston & Dolowitz, 1999). In contrast, senior management are located around the margins of the ruling class or bourgeoisie, with responsibility for proliferating corporate goals (Johnston & Dolowitz, 1999). Consequently, Guthrie and Parker (1990) maintain that senior managers legitimise social, economic and political arrangements, and ideological themes that contribute to their own interests. Similarly, Wright (1978) argues that although senior managers are denied full membership of the ruling class, they tend to form an alliance with it, as a result of rewards they receive and to maintain their positions. Goldthorpe et al. (1969) denote this phenomenon as the 'embourgeoisment' of the affluent worker in the class structure. Senior managers also have the legitimised identity to assess work and misuse their authority without facing any disciplinary procedures by the organisation (Akella, 2016). Hutchinson et al. (2006) refer to this as forming part of the legitimise organisational routines and processes, which can be used to perpetrate workplace bullying. The opportunistic senior manager can become adept at using relations of power and dominance for their own career advantage, exercised for personal gain (Bamford et al., 2013; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Hutchinson et al., 2010; Krakel, 1997). Senior managers might convince themselves that they are acting for the greater good, whilst simultaneously, managerialist ideology serves to legitimise their personal rewards (Deem & Brehony, 2005).

6.2.6 SUMMARY OF WORKPLACE BULLYING LEGITIMISATION ANALYSIS

The findings support the notion that workplace bullying is legitimised in organisations, and the participants provided various insights into how this legitimisation occurs. Governmental directives and the permeation of market ideology in public sector organisations emerged as factors which legitimised workplace bullying. Several participants described governmental directives directly impacting upon organisational culture and practices, creating pressurised environments that legitimised bullying cultures. Gramsci's argument that capitalism results in state ideology penetrating civil society and its various institutions, has manifested through NPM, resulting in the ubiquitous prioritisation of market forces and income generation in public sector environments (Lapsley, 2009; Nash, 2018). Participants highlighted the organisational implementation of NPM being accompanied by bullying, which was legitimised under the guise of actors requiring bullied targets to meet objectives connected to external directives. The findings resonate with Richardson's (1987) argument that business values and associated organisational actions are afforded organisational legitimacy, and Hutchinson et al.'s (2006) contention that external imperatives also result in an environment, which legitimises workplace bullying. Similarly, additional participants outlined the prioritisation of managerial imperatives, efficiency considerations, outcome measurement, and

costcutting in public sector environments, leading to workplace bullying. The findings align with McIntyre's (2005) argument that where employment relations are dominated by neoliberal ideology, bullying perpetrated by managers is a component of the labour process. Indeed, participants' accounts suggested that workplace bullying associated with increased workloads is a characteristic of the impetus to meet external requirements. This implies that workplace bullying could be perceived as a legitimise form of behaviour in seeking to achieve organisational objectives, underpinned by market forces, competition, and profitmaking.

Legitimisation of workplace bullying through the ascendancy of unitarist ideology and individualisation within workplaces, and actors' self-preservation for financial rewards, also emerged as themes. Indeed, a number of participants felt that their experience of their workplace entailed actors being supported by HR professionals who were partial in their assessments of bullying situations in favour of managers, thereby legitimising the bullying behaviour. HRM is characterised by a unitarist ideology and managerialist approaches which prioritise management over employees (Harrington et al., 2012; Horwitz, 1991). HR departments are considered legitimise functions within organisations, and participants' accounts highlighted the legitimacy of the bullying being compounded by HR's organisational positioning. The findings reinforce several pieces of research (e.g. D'Cruz & Noronha, 2010; Harrington et al., 2012; Lipsett, 2005), which have analysed the involvement and complicity of HR in workplace bullying. A further theme that emerged was that of actors apportioning blame to bullied targets for not being able to meet increased workloads, and this being used as a legitimising device by them in individualised, noncollective working arrangements. The findings support Baillien et al.'s (2009), and Ferris et al.'s (2007) assertion that actors conceive targets as unable to cope and inefficient. Therefore, rather than critiquing structural factors, incorporating market ideology that have created pressurised working environments, the focus is on the individual. The findings endorse Gramsci (1971), and Marx and Engels' (1941) argument that problematising workers legitimises unequal status between workers and managers, and helps to normalise societal inequalities. In addition, targets perceived actors as invoking corporate goals to influence workplace performance, but also as a conduit for their own selfpreservation in the organisational hierarchy. Akella (2016), and Hutchinson et al. (2006) point out that senior managers are legitimised to misuse their authority to control workers' performance, creating the conditions for workplace bullying. Furthermore, the findings suggest that the hierarchical location of senior managers in the uppermost echelons results in them legitimising market ideology. The legitimisation results in senior managers perpetrating or acquiescing to organisational workplace bullying aimed at shaping workers' performance, which contributes to senior managers' personal rewards (Deem & Brehony, 2005; Guthrie & Parker, 1990).

6.3 PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE WORKPLACE BULLYING

The final focus of the research study was to investigate the concept of the 'moralistic bully' (e.g. Zabrodska et al., 2014), and to explore whether there was a moral justification for the workplace bullying. As discussed, moralistic bullying centres on the notion that actors of workplace bullying exonerate themselves by linking their behaviour to the maintenance of organisational requirements or norms (Hutchinson et al., 2010; Jenkins et al., 2012; Zabrodska et al., 2014). This thesis augments the concept of moralistic workplace bullying with an analysis of public sector organisations in the context of neoliberalism. Workplace bullying and morality are seemingly contradictory concepts, and I understood this when I embarked on the interviews. I was interested, however, in exploring how the workplace bullying was justified and what connection there was, if any, to organisational goals, which potentially manifested itself as misplaced morality. In order to examine the concept, I asked the research participants questions about why the actor/s bullied, whether or not they justified their bullying behaviour, and whether or not the actor/s thought they were acting morally or doing the right thing.

The exploration enabled me to address and explore the fifth and final research subquestion:

> In what ways, if any, is the workplace bullying justified as acting morally?

Key themes that emerged from exploring workplace bullying justification are outlined in Table 6.2:

Table 6.2. Moralistic workplace bullying

Chapter section	Themes
6.3.1	Meeting business requirements
6.3.2	Institutional compliance and increased workloads
6.3.3	Political beliefs and morality
6.3.4	Meeting public sector duties
6.3.5	Unthinking buy-in to neoliberalism
6.3.6	Moral condemnation of bullied targets
6.3.7	Workplace bullying with no moral justification

6.3.1 MEETING BUSINESS REQUIREMENTS

Lana, Matthew, Tom, Donovan, Kate, Scarlett and Clara outlined the justification for the workplace bullying being associated with the achievement of business requirements. Lana highlighted that the actors considered the business-oriented model the 'right' way to take forward the organisation. She felt that the actors were motivated by making the organisation successful, but not necessarily on moral grounds. Instead, Lana regarded the actors as justifying their behaviour as the 'right thing' to do:

> *I think they would justify it in terms of, 'We have to make sure that we are the most successful example of this organisation in the sector. And that's why we're here … we haven't got time to … pussyfoot around and worry about supporting one another. We just need to get on and deal with the business' - would they see it as moral? I'm not sure whether they would consider whether it was moral or not, but I think they would consider it right. (Lana)*

Matthew, who experienced and witnessed bullying at a sixth-form college, immediately emphasised that workplace bullying is immoral. He felt, however, that the actors would imagine that there was a moral justification. Matthew highlighted the justification for the workplace bullying being associated with the requirement to meet key performance indicators. If they were not met by employees, the actors would blame them rather than the challenging performance indicators, and consider those employees unworthy to work for the institution:

> *There can't be one full stop. However, I think they would like to think there is one … often it's based on, 'I'm the manager. I've got to get these performance indicators. If you're not performing and you're not part of the team, then really you've got no future here.' And often the language used is, 'If you can't perform, you can't deliver … you're not good enough. It's probably best if you look elsewhere.' (Matthew)*

Matthew also pointed out that the primary reasons that the actors were in the institution were to achieve high results and pass rates. In addition, he felt that they provided justification for their behaviour through the necessity of employees delivering and achieving targets. Matthew described senior managers as feeling superior, or considering themselves more hard-working than their targets, and consequently being able to justify their actions to themselves:

> *There's only one reason they were there and that was to get high results and pass rates. I think there's also this 'holier than thou' approach from senior managers that … they are inherently … more gifted or able or harder-working*

than other people and … sometimes superior. That legitimises their actions emotionally to themselves. (Matthew)

Tom, the FE teacher, felt that the actors' senior positions enabled them to behave in any way that helped them to protect business interests, and ensure the FE institution was financially robust:

The very fact they are in a senior position in the organisation means they are almost entitled, beholden even, to behave in any way they see fit … to enable them to 'forge ahead with a dynamic vision for the future', or a similar pukeinducing empty cliché, senior managers can 'act decisively to protect the interests of the business and ensure a more robust institution going forward.' (Tom)

Tom described the actors justifying their actions morally based on the institutional mission, and connected their bullying behaviour with the need to meet business requirements:

There is a kind of disturbing, missionary zeal that infects some managers … they have this almost evangelical quality to their demeanour … almost preaching the validity of their conduct with wild-eyed passion that borders on monomania … they believe their vision or mission empowers them, in their opinion and that of other senior managers, to behave like medieval tyrants or Christopher Lee in The Wicker Man, all to protect the needs of the business. (Tom)

Donovan highlighted that the actor had been provided with considerable responsibility to deliver the business-oriented transformation at the university, within a relatively short timescale. Therefore, Donovan felt that the actor was in a position of being professionally exposed because of her accountability for achieving results for the institution:

There was this transformational agenda and … we were up against a very tight timescale … to achieve massive change … the Scottish funding body was … attempting to make us more accountable for the vast majority of income which was teaching income … and she was the sort of figurehead … who was going to be held accountable. (Donovan)

Donovan argued that the moral justification arose from the actor having to achieve results for the institution. The actor supported the business-oriented transformation of the university, and Donovan pointed out that she was also able to morally justify her behaviour, by conceiving the previous ways of working as not being beneficial for the client base of the university:

Because she was getting results … the moral argument would have been that we had been doing things wrong for a long time and … that this particular stakeholder group deserved to be getting better service from the taxpayers or their personal funding of their studies. (Donovan)

Kate, the council officer who experienced workplace bullying from her peers during a redundancy exercise, felt that the actors would justify their behaviour morally through their contribution to the council's strategic aims:

They were justifying that by, 'Look at what the organisation is going to be, look at what the strategic aims are … this is my little world and it's making a direct contribution to that, so then nobody can take that away from me.' That's my assumption … and it's the only way that I think they could justify that behaviour morally. (Kate)

When I explored the justification for workplace bullying with Scarlett, the council housing manager, she highlighted that the actors were working to a business plan and that their focus about rightness became associated with meeting business objectives. In addition, Scarlett felt that they were acting with impunity to maintain their positions:

I've spent so many nights awake trying to work out why. I think everybody who bullies does, they're so wrapped up in the business plan that they must think they're doing right by the business and people's feelings become expendable … because also they must think they're completely above the rule of law maybe? They were looking after themselves. (Scarlett)

Clara outlined the moral justification for the bullying arising from the actors believing that they were developing her skills to achieve corporate objectives. She described the extra support that she received as extra pressure and bullying. Bandura (2002) highlights the usage of sanitising euphemisms by actors who engage in bullying to exploit bullied targets. Indeed, Clara portrayed the actors' moral justifications as revolving around them supporting Clara to develop professionally to improve her performance, accompanied by additional pressure:

I think they thought they were morally right to go down that route … to maintain that work … because they thought they were developing me … helping me to develop by giving me … what they perceived as lots and lots and lots of extra support, which in fact was just lots and lots and lots of extra pressure and bullying … so I think they morally thought they were actually doing me a favour and they were trying to help me to perform better. (Clara)

Lana, Matthew, Tom, Donovan, Kate, Scarlett and Clara's organisations and institutions were impacted by neoliberal policies. Public sector functions operate under quasi-market arrangements, influenced by a capitalistic business-oriented rationality (Harris, 1998). Gramsci argued that the state's influence within civil society leads to socially constructed individuals who exemplify the workings of capital (Hill, 2008). Therefore, Gramsci described the state as being effectively etched into the everyday cultural and ideological realm of living (Hill, 2008). One of Gramsci's central propositions is that new economic relations require civil society to adapt the morality of the broadest possible masses to the necessities of the economic apparatus of production, evolving new types of humanity (Hunt, 1997). Indeed, Davies and Peterson (2005) highlight that systemic neoliberal transformations, incorporating heightened competitiveness and individualism, shape both individual subjectivities and the nature of work. In addition, Zabrodska et al. (2011) contend that the intensification of workplace bullying has been contextualised by a moral ascendancy of the neoliberal rhetoric of accountability, quality assurance and performance indicators. Thus, a materially normative organisational mindset cultivated by capitalism has been shaped by dominant intellectual and moral norms (Hill, 2008). Strategic bullying related to business objectives becomes normalised and is perceived by bullying actors as a reasonable method of influencing workers to meet organisational goals (Ferris et al., 2007). Furthermore, Azmanova (2018) highlights that it is the inequality of power relations from which arises the very need for justification, invariably on seemingly rational or moral grounds.

6.3.2 INSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE AND INCREASED WORKLOADS

Clive and Karl described bullying being morally justified on the grounds of their institutions complying with external drivers. Clive, who experienced workplace bullying through the imposition of an increased workload at a university, highlighted that the backdrop was the pressure on the institution to move the 'business' forward. Clive was informed that he had to undertake additional work for the benefit of the business becoming more competitive:

> *So, it was almost a two-pronged attack, 'You need to do this. It's for the benefit of the business. The business has to move forward and improve in the league tables.' (Clive)*

In addition, Clive described actors feeling morally justified due to their behaviour being supported by the institution, combined with believing the competitive agenda to be the appropriate way of working. Clive discussed actors feeling superior and becoming caught up in competitive forces, leading to the exertion of pressure upon academics to undertake additional work:

> *I think morally they believe they have the right because they've got the institution backing including the wider management structure that goes right up to the vice chancellor within the university. They've got themselves so caught up in the competitive agenda that they believe it to be the way things should be done. And all of that makes them feel superior. Then the problem is the language that they start to use becomes more forceful, leading to more work. (Clive)*

Karl, who also outlined experiencing workplace bullying through increased workloads, explained that the university he worked for had introduced a workload model where the work of academics was being measured in minute detail:

> *They actually changed the culture which was around the whole 550 hours model, the workload module … they turned it into the sort of Taylorist timetable model where they were going to measure everything that we did. (Karl)*

Karl described the actors' moral justifications stemming from the university's ambitions to improve strategically in the league tables. In addition, Karl felt that the actors would be able to justify their actions to themselves in terms of strategic improvements:

> *I think they would say that morally they did the right thing, the place had to change to survive and to prosper, so they would justify it through strategic improvement and if there was any even minor improvement in a league placing … whether it was The Times or, whether it was National Student Survey, they would pat themselves on the back. So, I think, yes, they would certainly justify it in their own mind, they would carry out whatever needed to be done. (Karl)*

Clive and Karl described workplace bullying situations that consisted of taking on excessive workloads under duress to meet institutional objectives. Hill and Lee (2009) contend that bullying behaviour within educational institutions is linked to meeting the demands of neoliberal ideology. In addition, in the context of austerity, material and classbased interests are driving the requirement to push workers to undertake additional work, supported by a supposed moral imperative. Governments monitor institutional compliance, and, in turn, universities monitor employee compliance, in order to deliver governmental requirements (Zabrodska et al., 2011). Therefore, universities have been described as unhealthy institutions, creating conditions that incite workplace bullying (McKay, Huberman, Fratzl, & Thomas, 2008). The features of universities that have generated the workplace bullying include intensifying workloads, funding pressures, excessive competitiveness, power imbalance between academics and managers, and weakened trade union power (Keashly & Newman, 2010). Twale and De Luca (2008) highlight that the introduction of corporate culture into academe has resulted in managerial

practices, such as assigning unmanageable workloads, being seen as necessary, commonplace, and acceptable. Furthermore, Hajjar (2015) argues that senior academics believe that they are responding to just demands associated with private-enterprise values of competition, productivity and profitability, modernisation and progress. Clive and Karl's stories reveal the impact of neoliberal culture on their workplace bullying experiences, with the bullying manifesting itself in pressures to shoulder increased workloads. In turn, the bullying was morally justified by the actors in the name of enhancing the competitive league table positions of their universities.

6.3.3 POLITICAL BELIEFS AND MORALITY

Sean, Martin and Seth discussed actors' behaviours being morally justified through their political beliefs. Sean highlighted that the actor was defined by her political beliefs and he commented that the actor regarded anyone else at the council with a different belief as inferior. The actor's senior position was also drawn out by Sean, which he felt enabled her to bully him. Additionally, Sean felt that the actor held the same political beliefs as those in the organisational hierarchy who were implementing the job cuts, and described a politicised workforce who had compromised their neutrality in delivering services:

> *The perpetrator believed she was acting morally because she was defined by her political beliefs. Intrinsic to those beliefs was the view that anyone with a different belief was inferior. Her senior position and her ego enabled her to do it. And … it's a very political organisation, the bullies themselves are imbued with the same politics as the hierarchy that run the place and it's … a ridiculously politicised workforce to the point where it impedes their professionalism and ability to deliver services. (Sean)*

Martin highlighted that the actors' management grades in the civil service resulted in them being inculcated with the notion that managers must drive workers intensively to achieve organisational objectives. He contextualised this inculcation as stemming from the government and senior civil servants. Matthew described institutional support for managers' actions from senior civil servants, and ultimately from government, which compelled the public sector to make cutbacks in the context of austerity. Similar to Sean, Martin pointed out that the actor was politically aligned with the organisational changes:

> *Well, because they're in a management grade and it's instilled in them from higher management, it's instilled in them from the government that senior civil servants all the way down the line, 'You've got to be hands-on, but you've got to be hard and … push people because we need to get more out of them.' And that agenda fitted with her politically. (Martin)*

Martin also discussed managers' positioning in the workplace hierarchy resulting in them being able to dictate tasks to workers with impunity. He conceptualised the hierarchy in terms of class, and described actors taking the higher moral ground due to their senior position and grade:

> *I do also think it was a case of the grading, 'I'm superior to you', a bit like a class thing … she would probably think, 'I'm a middle-class grade, so therefore I'm able to do this to you and get away with it'. Nowadays though, I see a lot of … cases where … they think they've got the moral excuse because of their grade. (Martin)*

Seth described differing nuances of morality associated with political inclinations. He pointed out that a Labour council's priority is to save jobs, and private sector organisations' morality is influenced by meeting obligations to provide the service in a different way to previous public service. Seth regarded private sector organisations as conceptualising the public sector as struggling to survive and morally justifying their actions accordingly:

> *Whether they're liberals or fascists, the understanding of morality is one which is evolving … marked by their values. Moral as it would have been understood by the Labour local authority would have been saving jobs. Moral to the private partner would have been, 'We're here ensuring provision of service because this is a local authority on its knees, it cannot function in the same capacities any longer.....and we have a duty … because that's what we're bound to do legally in this framework, we've signed this contract' … the ends justify the means. (Seth)*

Seth also felt that the workplace bullying justification was associated with organisational objectives, and reconciled by the actors through rationalisations depicting their actions as helping the organisation move forward. Hence, Seth described the bullying justification as being reconciled with the good of the business. In addition, he outlined actors using their power to advance professionally:

> *I have no doubt. The behaviours would have been officially centred, unofficially encouraged … at points reconciled with the good of the company, good of the enterprise … and played on with power … there would be perhaps scope for advancements or improvement in terms and conditions, personal circumstances as relates to their station in the company ranking. (Seth)*

Sean, Martin and Seth's responses focused on the moral justification for bullying being associated with the actors' political beliefs. Gramsci (1971) describes morality as an ideological expression of class interest, which serves to rationalise and justify existing relations of domination and control. Sean implied his preference for public sector

impartiality predicated on laws and rules (Evans, 2005), which provided substantial protection to employees (Kirkpatrick et al., 2005; Peters, 2003). By contrast, NPM provides more power to managers whose accountability is based on quantifiable financial indicators (Peters, 2003). Sean felt that the actor was not politically neutral, was politicised within the current public sector arrangements, leading to her believing that she had the higher moral ground. Martin's account was contextualised within austerity cutbacks resulting in civil service restructuring and job losses. Austerity morality and fiscal responsibility links the amelioration of debt to the disciplining morality of organisations and individuals, including public sector restructuring to meet difficult fiscal realities (Bloom, 2017; Graeber, 2011). Consequently, individuals and teams are forced to take on the task of providing the same quantity of service, with considerably fewer resources, articulated as a moral necessity (Graeber, 2011; Morris, 2016). In addition, Martin connected managers' moral higher grounds with their class and senior grade. Seth drew out differing morality associated with divergent political inclinations. For the neoliberalists, the preferable market system is predicated on values of individualism, private enterprise, entrepreneurship, competition and success (Bloom, 2017). For the socialists, the preferable system is based on state funding, personal well-being, social justice, and equal distribution of wealth (Miliband, 2009). Additionally, Seth highlighted that the 'ends justify the means', implying that the organisational mentality adopted impacts upon the moral justifications for the bullying behaviour. Indeed, Bloom (2017) argues that the market not only dominates social, economic and political relations, but shapes the way people reason and make moral judgements.

6.3.4 MEETING PUBLIC SECTOR DUTIES

Henry, Nicholas and Sara discussed connections between workplace bullying and meeting public sector duties. Henry described the actor's justification as stemming from her vision of how to implement the public sector duties imposed on the council. He quoted the actor as subscribing to the view of service users as customers buying a service, and outlined her focus on improving the service within that paradigm:

> *I think almost totally related to … her vision of how to go about implementing the public duties. 'We are public servants, we're a local authority, we're doing our best to make the lives of the 200,000 people in the borough better' … think about your … population as your customers … because they're paying their council tax, so what are they buying from us? What level of service are they getting?' (Henry)*

Henry pointed out that the workplace bullying justification was related to external drivers and meeting the associated organisational objectives. Furthermore, he described the actor

as sharing the same organisational vision as the council's uppermost senior leaders in terms of driving forward changes:

Definitely. The external factors … she felt personally responsible for making sure that it worked properly … coming back again to the ends justifying the means, there was a job to be done … and … she didn't want any … lightweights … holding her back so … just crack on. (Henry)

When probed about a potential moral justification, Henry felt that the actor felt justified in her behaviour through the requirement on the council to achieve inspection ratings:

If she needs to make sure that the council gets a five-star rating, then she will do anything that she has to do within the law to make sure that the officers in the council pull out all the stops and get it right, and if that means berating people for not doing a good job, or making them do things over and over again … she will, until she feels they've got it right. (Henry)

Nicholas highlighted that the justification for removing his position at the council, and the workplace bullying that ensued, emanated from the actors having a responsibility to reduce posts, and to meet governmentally driven financial savings targets. In addition, he felt that elected members and senior managers were able to justify their actions based on notions of public service, which in their view meant that they were meeting duties to make cutbacks. Nicholas pointed out that the actors would ease their moral consciences for bullying behaviour through falling back on an imposed requirement to perform their managerial duties, due to an external political imperative:

It seemed more that they were charged with reducing posts, so they got on and they did that, and they were being good public servants by meeting their duties, I guess the senior managers and the politicians would salvage their moral consciences on that by saying, 'Well, it's not our fault. That's London.' I mean, there must be that kind of thinking when you're under that kind of pressure to rationalise budgets at a senior level in a public organisation. (Nicholas)

Similarly, Sara argued that the justification for the workplace bullying was connected to the requirement to make job losses at the council. She also highlighted that actors would argue that they were doing the right thing as they had no choice but to make the changes due to public sector requirements. Furthermore, Sara referred to the actors feeling superior towards other workers based on their higher grade, enabling them to have an authoritative voice on how the organisation should be run:

I think senior managers would think that they were doing the right thing because that was what they had to do for the political masters. They would justify it

through 'We have to make these cuts', 'We have to make these changes', 'We
have no choice'. But then I also think … they also thought were doing the right
thing because their way was the only way. And they knew better than
everybody else how the organisation should be run. They thought of
themselves as better than you … on the grounds that they were paid higher.
(Sara)

Historically, public sector organisations were characterised by social justice values, ethical notions of care, and employees being dutiful public servants, linked to anonymity and ministerial responsibility (Diefenbach, 2009; Evans, 2005). Although public sector organisations, due to NPM, have become more market-oriented, the legacy of the previous model has not been entirely eradicated. Notions of public service, such as meeting duties as public servants, remain. In Henry's workplace bullying situation, NPM resulted in the actor viewing service users as customers, and her discourse signified the shift towards them buying council services. Hence, Henry regarded the actor's behaviour as being justified through the need to meet the changing public sector duties. In addition, Nicholas and Sara described situations where part of the actors' justificatory schema was connected with meeting public sector duties. Nicholas and Sara's situations highlight that the austerity that generated job losses and increased workloads in their public sector organisations stemmed from external forces, which the actors had no control over. That being said, Nicholas and Sara did not state that the workplace bullying itself was causally related to austerity. Austerity, however, created conditions that incited the workplace bullying. Indeed, Zabrodska et al. (2011) argue that shifting material and discursive forces surround the workplace bullying phenomenon, which cannot be easily separated from each other.

6.3.5 UNTHINKING BUY-IN TO NEOLIBERALISM

A commonality underpinning Ava and Sandy's accounts was unthinking buy-in to external directives by the actors of bullying. Specifically, Ava described the actor as subscribing unthinkingly to neoliberal managerialism. She also felt that the actor was averse to anyone with an opposing viewpoint, and described the rhetoric associated with neoliberalism as revolving around competition:

I think because she was totally bought in to all the neoliberal managerialism
and 'This is how we'll do it' … having decided that was to set the stall out that
way, she wasn't in a position to … deal with anybody who questioned that in
any way and that really goes back to … this whole rhetoric about … market
place … competition … the root of all neoliberal rhetoric in education. (Ava)

Ava questioned why the public sector supported the neoliberal rhetoric, and depicted it as all-pervasive through organisational and institutional systems and processes. She highlighted the unquestioning acceptance of neoliberalism by the actor, and pointed out that it was embodied in her professional identity:

> *I don't understand why it is … people in the public sector have bought into these ideas … I think they become sort of self-perpetuating, really … part of the … systems and processes of every organisation, every institution. I just don't think she questioned the rightness of it, actually. It was … 'This is … the world', and so there is … an unquestioning acceptance of it, it was embodied in her … professional identity. (Ava)*

Sandy, the civil servant, described the actors as acting on directives and assuming the directives must be correct. In addition, she believed that the actors knew there would be no challenge from employees because of the fear that the environment of job losses had created:

> *I don't even think they would acknowledge they were not doing the right thing. I think they just did what they were told, and they assumed it must be right … and they did it because they knew they wouldn't be challenged because everyone was frightened of losing their jobs. (Sandy)*

When I probed Sandy about the justification for the workplace bullying, she connected the actors' justification with a requirement to achieve the performance management quota and their belief in the poor rating that they provided:

> *The only thing I can think of is a link in with the performance management quota … the 10% down here, the 10% up there, the majority in the middle and they believed in it … that I was that 10%. (Sandy)*

Ava's story outlines the actor uncritically accepting neoliberal policies and practices in the institution, and Sandy felt that the actors assumed that the directives imposed upon the civil service were simply correct. Gramsci argued that the activities of civil society institutions exert a collective pressure on customs, ways of thinking and morality (Daldal, 2014). He further highlighted the spontaneous consent that leads to broader ideological currents being unthinkingly accepted, and taken for granted by members of the populace (Williams, 1977). In addition, Sanford and Ali (2005) point out that the ruling elite is supported through the voluntary acceptance of the dominant worldview, incorporating values, ideas and practices. Furthermore, Borg and Mayo (2002) contend that worldviews that are uncritically accepted within various political, social and cultural environments, develop a person's moral individuality. Managers consciously submit and contribute to the everyday reproduction of the neoliberal social order, even though they are to varying

degrees subordinated, marginalised, and negatively affected by it (Hall, Massey & Rustin, 2015). Concomitantly, the subjectivity that arises stems from extended interaction with culturally and institutionally prevalent neoliberal material and discursive formations (Levya, 2018). Gramsci (1971) highlighted that spontaneous consent is ultimately an outcome of the stature in society of the ruling class, and the inherent organisational power differential between managers and workers results in the reproduction of capitalism.

6.3.6 MORAL CONDEMNATION OF BULLIED TARGETS

Rachel, Connor and Marilyn described the workplace bullying being predicated on negative judgements about them as unworthy employees. Rachel felt that the actor's authority enabled her to bully, leading to a workplace situation where the actor was not challenged at the university. In addition, Rachel described the justification for the bullying stemming from the actor choosing to believe that she had capability and performance issues, rather than accepting the workload issues:

> *I think it was about authority and finger pointing. It was basically like, 'Don't try*
> *to question me. I can do what I want.' I just felt it was so apparent that … what*
> *she was doing was wrong. It's just that she has the authority to do it, so she*
> *did it. I think … everything was very deliberate down to that conversation …*
> *when she told me that she had severe concerns about my capabilities … she*
> *chose to say it was because of my abilities … a performance issue … and not*
> *the workload. (Rachel)*

Connor emphasised that it is difficult to assess another person's morality. He then attributed the justification for the actor's behaviour to the requirement to make council job cuts. Connor felt that actors deliberately scapegoated bullied targets by building up a negative impression of them, enabling them to justify making them redundant:

> *Oh! It's a difficult one … to get into someone else's morality … I think because*
> *they needed the team reduced … they justify it by making out you to be the*
> *problem, judging you, blaming you for things that aren't in your control, so they*
> *… build up a dossier on you, so when the time comes to make the job cut*
> *they've got all this stuff on you, but really it's because they don't want you in*
> *the team, you're the one they want out … and they start to believe it themselves*
> *… to get rid of you … I think it's a tactic that managers use. (Connor)*

Connor described being perceived as critical by the actor, who he portrayed as wanting to silence him to prevent him from expressing his perspective:

> *I think I was regarded as … somebody who is critical, and I think most people*
> *have a misconception of what critical means because they kind of see critical*
> *as negative. So, I'm critical – of course I am – I say what I mean … but the*

manager here … isn't going to rock any boats in the system of cutbacks, austerity … higher up the chain and wanted to silence me, control me for airing my opinions. (Connor)

Marilyn outlined a situation where the actor displayed posters on the office walls that highlighted the standards of behavioural conduct expected from team members. Team members felt that the actor inappropriately used the poster contents to reprimand staff for not meeting targets:

Oh, he had these posters put on all the office walls … it was things like … treat everybody equally, respect each other … have genuine conversations … but we were hauled over the coals by him if we didn't meet targets and somehow he twisted it through reference to those posters. (Marilyn)

Rachel described a situation where the actor devalued her competencies, rather than acknowledging the excessive work targets, to justify the bullying behaviour. Bandura et al. (1996) discuss moral justification where bullied targets are blamed and devalued, and hostility towards them is justified by associating it with varied worthy purposes. Indeed, Bandura (2002) argues that few actors engage in negative behaviour without justifying it to themselves as somehow moral. In addition, Connor's situation highlighted the actor engaging in a process of blaming and devaluing him to potentially justify making him redundant, underpinned by actively wanting to remove him from the team. Connor also discussed airing his opinions and having a critical perspective on work issues, resulting in the actor wanting to control and silence him. Bloch (2012) describes moral condemnation of bullied targets arising from targets having a differing mindset – one which does not align with organisational norms – and involving punishing the targets through hostility and exclusion. Marilyn described posters on office walls outlining organisational values that were being used to reprimand staff who were unable to meet work targets. This aligns with Davies (2011), who depicts guardians of the moral order enacting workplace bullying to gate-keep thinking and behaviour at work, and Laustsen (2014), who highlights terror tactics being used to discipline bullied targets who are portrayed as going against the normative order.

6.3.7 WORKPLACE BULLYING WITH NO MORAL JUSTIFICATION

Jake, Emily, Anthony, Ruby and Roger felt that there was no moral justification for the workplace bullying they experienced. Jake responded immediately by highlighting that the workplace bullying was immoral. Jake also described the actor as possessing a superior attitude due to her professional identity being synonymous with her job title and position:

Well, it was immoral. She didn't care that the cuts were hurting people as long as she was safe. She thought we were nothings … looking back, she did have

> *a superiority complex: how dare I question her kind of way of going on? She was plumped up in her job title, made her think she was better than us. (Jake)*

Emily was averse to the idea of there being a moral justification for the workplace bullying. She highlighted that morality is associated with acting with integrity, and given that the actor did not behave with integrity, she pointed out that she would be interested in knowing how the actor would define behaving morally:

> *Well, it would depend upon their interpretation of the word 'moral' or acting in a moral way. What I think acting morally means and what that means in terms of the integrity and the way you go about doing things might be different to the way that other people interpret it. So, I would be interested to know what this person's definition of behaving morally might be. (Emily)*

Anthony felt that a moral justification was not a component of the actor's considerations. He attributed the justification for the workplace bullying to a self-centred, ambitious personal agenda:

> *I don't think that was even part of their consideration. I don't think he was thinking about doing the right thing. I don't think that's ever been part of his agenda. I think his agenda was all about me, me, me. (Anthony)*

Similarly, Ruby ascribed the workplace bullying to the actor trying to maintain his position:

> *I don't think he thinks he was acting morally whatsoever, I think he was just trying to hold onto his job. And that's it. (Ruby)*

Finally, Roger simply answered by saying:

> *That's his … I think that's his personality. (Roger)*

6.3.8 SUMMARY OF MORALISTIC WORKPLACE BULLYING ANALYSIS

The workplace bullying study also sought to analyse the notion of moralistic workplace bullying associated with organisational objectives and norms, occurring in the neoliberal context (Zabrodska et al., 2014). When I asked whether the workplace bullying was justified on moral grounds, many participants answered in the affirmative, highlighting how they felt the workplace bullies considered themselves to be behaving morally. Other participants answered by describing the actors justifying their behaviour based on doing the right thing, rather than employing the word 'moral'. Consequently, various themes were surfaced by the participants about the potential moral justification for workplace bullying. Justifying bullying on the grounds of meeting business requirements arose as a theme, whereby bullied targets regarded actors of bullying as feeling morally permitted to bully, due to the overriding requirement to achieve intensifying corporate obligations. The

findings not only resonate with Diefenbach (2009), and Omari and Paull's (2015) research about work intensification in commercially defined public sector environments, but also suggest that the actors were able to morally justify their behaviour based on a business rationale. In addition, the findings reinforce Bandura (2002), and Davies' (2011) argument that actors are able to justify the acceptability of their actions for varied and seemingly rational organisational purposes. Similarly, additional participants felt that institutional compliance with neoliberal policy and associated increased workloads, enabled the actors to morally justify their behaviour. The findings reflect McKay et al.'s (2008), Twale and De Luca's (2008), and Zabrodska et al.'s (2011) arguments that neoliberal ideology has resulted in university compliance based on notions of competitiveness, stimulating workplace bullying.

Moral justifications based on bullying actors' political beliefs, notions of public duty, unthinking buy-in to neoliberalism, and moral condemnation of bullied targets, also emerged in the findings. Some participants described the moral justification for workplace bullying being connected to the actors' political beliefs. Gramsci (1971) regarded morality as ideological and connected to class interests. Similarly, Bloom (2012) and Miliband (2009) highlight that morality judgements vary according to the individual's positioning on the political spectrum, which shape the basis of their moral judgements. Indeed, participants portrayed actors as being politically aligned with market ideology and austerity, and regarded them as being able to morally justify the workplace bullying based on their political beliefs. A related theme that emerged was actors being able to justify and absolve their behaviour through the requirement to meet public sector duties. Participants outlined actors falling back on obligations to act according to central government instructions, which had been imposed on the public sector organisation. The findings align with Zabrodska et al.'s (2011) argument that workplace bullying is a complex phenomenon, influenced by both material and ideological forces.

Additional participants felt that the actors' unthinking buy-in to neoliberalism resulted in an assumption that market ideology was the correct way to take forward public services, resulting in workplace bullying. Gramsci's description of civil society shaping individual morality based on broader ideological forces, leading to common sense and spontaneous consent (Daldal, 2014; Williams, 1977), was deployed to analyse participant's accounts.

Indeed, various scholars (e.g. Borg & Mayo, 2002; Hall et al., 2015; Levya, 2018; Sanford & Ali, 2005) argue that neoliberal formations produce individual subjectivities that develop a person's morality in such a way as to reflect dominant ideologies. A further theme that emerged was moral condemnation of bullied targets on the grounds of their inability to achieve work demands, or bullied targets having a differing and critical mindset, which challenged organisational norms. The findings support Bloch's (2012) research on moral justification for workplace bullying, pivoting around the actors' moral condemnation of

bullied targets, based on a perception of them as violating organisational requirements or norms. Finally, other participants were averse to the notion of moral justifications for workplace bullying altogether and pointed out emphatically that there were none whatsoever for the bullying. These participants attributed the workplace bullying to the actors' ambitions to preserve their positions in the organisational hierarchy, or to their personalities. The implications of the findings will be synthesised further in the concluding chapter of the thesis.

6.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter set out to present, interpret and analyse bullied targets' experiences of workplace bullying, and to address the third and fourth research sub-questions. Hence, the chapter analysed whether workplace bullying was legitimised within a public sector impacted by neoliberal policy, and whether there was a moral justification for workplace bullying. Accordingly, bullied targets' responses were mapped out and analysed within the Gramscian and critical framework, incorporating a comparison with findings from workplace bullying research. A number of themes emerged regarding the impact of neoliberal governmental policy on the public sector, and the legitimisation of workplace bullying. The notion of moralistic bullying was also explored, highlighting various ways in which workplace bullying was justified morally or as doing the right thing, associated with organisational goals and norms. The two findings chapters have provided a foundation for the final chapter, which will conclude this thesis by referring back to the overarching objectives, and will address them by drawing on insights established in the analysis of the findings.

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to review the central argument of the thesis and conclude the workplace bullying study. The thesis offers theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions of knowledge to the study of workplace bullying and power relations. To demonstrate this, the chapter begins by recapitulating the underlying research objectives of the study, and evaluates how they have been addressed. Subsequently, the chapter highlights the main contributions to knowledge that have emerged from the thesis. In so doing, the chapter outlines the conclusions that have been generated in response to the main research question, reiterated below:

> What insights does a Gramscian framework offer to the study of workplace bullying and power relations in a marketised UK public sector, from the perspective of bullied targets?

This chapter addresses the final research objective:

> To provide original theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions to the study of workplace bullying and power relations in a marketised UK public sector.

The chapter then considers limitations of the thesis and concludes by outlining potential future directions for workplace bullying research.

7.2 REITERATION OF RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the study was to explore workplace bullying and power relations in a marketised UK public sector, using a Gramscian theoretical framework to gain insights into the phenomenon. In addition, the aim of the research was to retain an overall interpretation of workplace bullying based on bullied targets' lived experiences and accounts. The five research objectives supporting the workplace bullying study were:

- To locate and synthesise the research into a Gramscian theoretical perspective, and to demonstrate the applicability of Gramsci's concepts to the study of workplace bullying and power relations, through a review of existing literature from disparate philosophical orientations.
- To locate the workplace bullying research in its historical, political and socioeconomic context, through a Gramscian analysis of the impact of neoliberalism on the UK state and public sector.
- To develop an appropriate methodological framework, suitable research methods and data analytical approach in line with the Gramscian philosophical perspective adopted, in order to gather and critically assess the empirical data from bullied targets.
- To undertake effective interpretation, evaluation and representation of data in a way that enables an understanding of the lived experience of bullied targets, reliable contextualisation, and thorough analysis of the research findings.
- To provide original theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions to the study of workplace bullying and power relations in a marketised UK public sector.

The contribution to knowledge that this thesis has made will be evaluated by addressing the research objectives in turn.

7.2.1 THE GRAMSCIAN FRAMEWORK

Reviewing the literature on workplace bullying and power relations, Chapter Two of this thesis established the theoretical framework for the research study and addressed the first objective:

> To locate and synthesise the research into a Gramscian theoretical perspective, and to demonstrate the applicability of Gramsci's concepts to the study of workplace bullying and power relations, through a review of existing literature from disparate philosophical orientations.

The overall intention of the thesis was to adopt a Gramscian approach to analysing workplace bullying and power relations in the contemporary UK public sector, to enable an insight into the phenomenon in the context of neoliberalism. The literature review in Chapter Two directed attention to a growing theoretical engagement with workplace bullying analysis from a critical perspective, which I argued has the benefit of challenging dominant norms in society. The literature review also highlighted a gap in analysing workplace bullying from a Gramscian perspective, and the disproportionate emphasis on viewing it as a micro-level, interpersonal phenomenon (Samnani, 2013). Chapter Two outlined Gramsci's concept of hegemony, which describes the way in which the ruling class and dominant groups in society succeed in persuading subordinate groups to accept the formers' own morality, political values and institutions (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Key debates that hegemony provokes are how certain conceptions of reality hold sway over competing worldviews, and how subordinated groups actively support structures of power relations that work against their interests (Mumby, 1997). Language reinforces hegemonic attitudes in such a way as to make them appear natural and common sense, when in actuality they are ideological, and driven by the state and civil society (Machin & Mayr, 2012). The thesis conceptualises the state as the enforcer of the neoliberal order in civil society (Jessop, 2016). Indeed, a Gramscian perspective on workplace bullying in the contemporary UK public sector offers an analysis of how the state exerts ruling power ideology in the form of NPM in civil society, which is conceptualised as the realm in which ideology is reified. The thesis contends that workplace bullying in the UK public sector, which forms a part of civil society, is fundamentally facilitated by hegemonic power relations between capital and labour, within the context of state-regulated neoliberalism. Gramsci's formulation of hegemony, however, is dialectical, emphasising a complex interplay between power relations, competing ideologies, resistance, and organisations as sites of struggle (Mumby, 1997). Hence, the thesis examines the impact of neoliberal policy on the UK public sector and the stimulation of, and experience of, workplace bullying within this multi-layered context, from the perspective of bullied targets.

During the course of the research I came across Gramscian concepts and how they can be applied to workplace bullying, power relations and organisational studies. In particular, hegemony, the ruling class, subalternity, the state, civil society, organic and traditional intellectuals, common sense, spontaneous grammar, and good sense, were proposed in Chapter Two, as tools with which to understand the external conditions that surround the workplace bullying phenomenon, and also stimulate it in the workplace. From a power

relations perspective, certain groups in neoliberal societies and associated organisational settings are privileged over others (Forst, 2017). Although the reasons for this privileging may vary considerably, the oppression that characterises contemporary societies is most forcefully reproduced when subordinates accept their social status as natural, necessary, or inevitable (Kincheloe, et al., 2011; Sharp, 1973; Stoddart, 2007). Chapter Two proposed that the naturalisation of power relations in the workplace leads to the neoliberal material and ideological formation being abstracted from its political site, and translated into the organisational arena. In addition, obfuscation of power relations results in organisational arrangements being perceived no longer as coercion, but as the natural order and selfevident (Clegg, Courpasson, & Phillips, 2006). Therefore, a Gramscian hegemonic interpretation of workplace bullying and power relations supports the notion that existing material structures and ideology affect social actors' actions in the organisational arena. Thereby, the thesis makes a theoretical contribution by meeting various scholarly calls (e.g. Akella, 2016; Samnani, 2013; Walton, 2005) to conceptualise bullying in historical, political and socio-economic terms, rather than adopting a micro-level and functionalist position. A theoretical contribution is claimed in the thesis through the expansion of critical analysis on workplace bullying and power relations, and the use of Gramsci's theory to understand the state, neoliberalism, NPM, marketisation and managerialism, which constitute the contemporary UK public sector environment. The completed Gramscian conceptual mapping applied to the study is outlined in Diagram 7.1:

Diagram 7.1. Conceptual application of Gramsci's theory to workplace bullying study

HEGEMONY

Macro Level

Ruling Class. Historical, Political and Socio-Economic Structures.

The State.

Neoliberalism.

Hegemonic power relations

Production and distribution of discursive ideologies and legitimation of material forces by the ruling class

Traditional intellectuals – leaders of state domination

Meso Level

Civil Society. UK Public Sector Organisations.

NPM. Marketisation. Managerialism. Austerity.

Subaltern Classes.

Organisations as sites of coercion, consent and hegemonic struggle

Organisations representing hegemonic discursive ideologies and deploying material distribution of resources

Organic intellectuals – imposing hegemonic views

Micro Level

Individual Agents: Managers and Employees.

Subaltern Classes.

Individual agentic behaviour

Workplace bullying actors and targets

Common sense, spontaneous grammar, good sense and resistance

HEGEMONY

Source: Adapted from Torkington (2011).

The notion of the legitimised moralistic bully was also examined in Chapter Two, supported by the conception of actors of bullying justifying their negative actions in terms of inculcated organisational mores (Hutchinson et al., 2010; Jenkins et al., 2012; Zabrodska et al., 2014). Chapter Two also outlined the ascendancy of neoliberalism worldwide, resulting in legitimised managerialist organisational practices and norms in the UK public sector. The chapter argued that neoliberal states deploy maxims of market forces, not by despotic enforcement, but through entangling them ideologically with proclamations about the moral greater good. Hence, neoliberalism becomes associated with progress, modernisation, competition, and the fullest realisation of individual freedom (Appleby, 2011). This thesis suggests, however, that such discursive practices are laden with ruling class interests. Gramsci argued that within the operation of hegemony, organisations contribute to ideological belief systems through the dissemination of meanings and values

(Jones, 2006). Indeed, he contended that the multi-faceted nature of consciousness is not an individual but a collective phenomenon, a consequence of the relationship between the self and ideology, which comprises the cultural terrain of a society (Hall, 1986). Gramsci's theory of hegemony thus describes how capitalism and economic valuations inflect our cognitive and moral behaviour (Hill, 2008). Chapter Two highlighted that social conditions are intimately connected to power relations in society, and social interactions of bullying at the level of the actor and target are socially constructed through hegemony. Therefore, an additional theoretical contribution of the thesis is its contextualisation of the notion of the moralistic bully in a hegemonic neoliberal setting, and its augmentation organisationally through managerialism.

Through using Gramscian theory, Chapter Two provides a theoretical contribution by proposing a connection between neoliberal hegemonic forces, lived organisational practice, and how moralistic workplace bullying is potentially legitimised by managerialist practices within the organisation. In summary, the chapter proposes a Gramscian framework to enhance the understanding of neoliberal hegemonic power relations surrounding the UK public sector, and the implications for workplace bullying. Therefore, it offers a theoretical contribution to workplace bullying analysis by shifting from focusing on the role of human agency in constituting power relations, to focusing on material and ideological hegemonic mechanisms of domination and control, through which workplace bullying is engendered.

This research offers a contribution to critical studies on workplace bullying and power relations by adopting a Gramscian power relations perspective towards analysing the impact of neoliberal policy on the UK public sector, and analyses whether this legitimises moralistic workplace bullying.

7.2.2 CONTEXTUALISING THE WORKPLACE BULLYING STUDY

Reviewing the literature on public sector changes since the 1980s, contextualised by the ascendancy of neoliberalism worldwide, Chapter Three of this thesis was concerned with substantiating the theoretical framework for the research study, and addressed the second objective:

> To locate the workplace bullying research in its historical, political and socioeconomic context, through a Gramscian analysis of the impact of neoliberalism on the UK state and public sector.

Chapter Three focused the workplace bullying and power relations analysis further by shedding light on the historical, political and socio-economic factors that have influenced the UK public sector, and by highlighting studies that have demonstrated an increase in workplace bullying due to NPM (e.g. Hutchinson, 2011; Ironside & Seifert, 2003; Omari &

Paull, 2015). Indeed, Einarsen et al. (2011b) state that workplace bullying needs to be analysed against the background of societal elements, including cultural and socioeconomic factors. Taking the UK public sector as the focus, Chapter Three provided an exposition of the external factors surrounding its marketisation, using the Gramscian framework, and an account of NPM's contested origins and consolidation. It demonstrated that the ascendancy of neoliberalism since the 1980s has resulted in a significant shift in the ideological manifestation of the state, and radical changes to the UK public sector, in terms of both its governance and management (Hood & Dixon, 2015). The chapter outlined how neoliberalism through NPM has altered some parts of the traditionally collectivist culture of the UK public sector since 1945, towards a private sector praxis, which prioritises the market (Peters, 2014). Public sector changes associated with NPM have led to the marketisation of public services incorporating managerialist practices, the prioritisation of efficiency in public sector regulation, competitive league tables, widespread usage of key performance indicators, close monitoring of employee performance, decentralisation of budgets, and authority over employees through managers (Diefenbach, 2005). Since the 2007–2008 financial, economic and fiscal crisis, public sector austerity drives have also reinforced NPM practices (Newman, 2012). Therefore, this thesis makes a theoretical contribution by outlining the historical, political and socio-economic context that has impacted upon UK public sector practices, rather than the external context being marginal to the workplace bullying study. Additionally, the thesis offers a theoretical contribution by problematising functionalist notions of workplace bullying, and contextualising the phenomenon within broader frameworks of public sector changes. I critique NPM-oriented changes as creating intensified workplace environments and stimulating bullying situations, albeit not always consciously on the part of bullying actors.

Gramscian concepts were explored in Chapter Three to analyse public sector changes. Miller and Rose (2010) contend that the illusion that organisations and their processes are natural and functional responses to needs, protects them from examination as being produced under specific historical conditions, and out of specific power relations. The state has reshaped public sector environments to promote market competitiveness (Levy & Newell, 2002), and this has made public sector workers more accountable to financial bottom lines (Peters, 2014). Hence, public sector organisations are viewed in this thesis as being subjected to, and the promulgators of market ideologies through managerialism, within an overarching state neoliberal ideology. In terms of the marketised UK public sector, it is argued that managerialism has legitimised the control of workers in the interests of capital. Therefore, using Gramscian theory, the chapter outlined how neoliberal hegemony is reified by ideological influences in the workplace, including the managerial advocacy of specific values and visions, contracts and reward systems, and enforced by the coercion of rules and policies (Alvesson & Deetz, 1996). The thesis contends that

workplace bullying occurs in the UK public sector in this complex neoliberal hegemonic context, propelled by managerialism. Indeed, the concept of hegemony suggests the presence of dominant groups with ideological and material interests, and the presence of power and activity, even within dominated groups (Clegg & Haugaard, 2009). Such a theoretical contribution, based on a social constructionist epistemological stance, aligns with Gramscian ideas about subjugated groups participating in the production and reproduction of dominant organisational hegemonic ideology. Critical public sector research considering workplace bullying as emanating from NPM-oriented changes remains limited, and furthermore there remains a gap in terms of analysing public sector workplace bullying in the era of austerity. These factors offered an opportunity to make a theoretical contribution to the field by making visible the context that surrounds the UK public sector, which has been altered by the state through neoliberal ideology, undergirded by market forces.

In response to gaps in workplace bullying studies, the thesis drew upon Gramscian power relations and critical workplace bullying literature as an approach to researching bullied targets' experiences within a UK public sector, which has been impacted by neoliberal policy, NPM and austerity.

7.2.3 METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN TO CENTRE AN ANALYSIS OF BULLIED TARGETS' EXPERIENCES

Chapter Four of this thesis focused on outlining the research philosophy, design and methods that guide the thesis, including the ontological and epistemological commitments of this research, aligned with the Gramscian theoretical framework. Therefore, Chapter Four addressed the third objective:

> To develop an appropriate methodological framework, suitable research methods and data analytical approach in line with the Gramscian philosophical perspective adopted, in order to gather and critically assess the empirical data from bullied targets.

The philosophical orientation of the thesis was developed to encompass a Gramscian understanding of power relations in the social world and its relation to workplace bullying. Therefore, the research offers an inherently Gramscian epistemological and ontological stance towards examining workplace bullying and power relations, to surface and explore bullying as part of the broader neoliberal context within which it occurs. My research suggests that the ubiquitous philosophical position of positivism that underpins workplace bullying studies is problematic because it contends that it can be objectively measured – an approach that is critiqued for being deterministic (Fox et al., 2009; Samnani, 2013). This workplace bullying study, on the other hand, recognises power relations within

broader society, organisations and institutions, and analyses how they stimulate bullying behaviour. The Gramscian approach provided an opportunity to make a methodological contribution to the field by using a subjective ontological stance to offer an understanding of workplace bullying and power relations. In addition, there was an opportunity to apply a social constructionist epistemological stance that critiques the formation of knowledge of what appears as normal and natural, that is, the need "to deliver reforms more effectively in the public sector to make it more efficient" (Wilson, Davison, & Casebourne, 2016, p. 8). Furthermore, the dynamism of Gramsci's epistemological position, which mediates the excesses of an overly materialistic, or overly idealistic interpretation of human praxis, allowed the dialectical and dynamic nature of material forces and ideology to be examined (Hill, 2008). Whilst there will be inevitable shortcomings in any research approach taken, adopting a Gramscian philosophical approach resonated with calls (e.g. Samnani, 2013) for a shift away from the pervading functionalist and positivist paradigmatic approach to workplace bullying research, towards a critical analysis, and the latter is thus offered as a methodological contribution of this thesis.

Chapter Four offered the development of an analytical CDA tool, which combined Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional framework with the Gramscian conceptual framework, to analyse workplace bullying and power relations at micro-, meso- and macrolevels. As a methodological tool, CDA can help to build a credible inside perspective on how hegemonic discourses are experienced (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Consequently, an analytical framework comprising three readings was developed as part of the study, aimed at appreciating the influence that wider material forces and ideology have in shaping workplace bullying experiences. Donoghue (2017) critiques CDA scholars' engagement with Gramsci's work when using CDA as being insubstantial, especially given the impetus that Gramsci's theory gave to its initial formation. Therefore, I developed and applied a specific method of CDA to operationalise the research, that is, to move from data analysis to critical Gramscian theory. The approach provided a way of linking micro-, meso- and macro-levels of analysis, and considering whether individual bullied targets' accounts index broader material forces and ideologies. Adopting a Gramscian approach as part of the CDA analytical framework for analysing workplace bullying and power relations resonated with Donoghue's (2017) calls for integration between CDA and Gramscian concepts, to unearth asymmetrical power relations between classes and social groups. The research also enabled me to extend the application of CDA by investigating how power relations are reinforced through common sense and spontaneous grammar, and by critiquing the material forces within which the UK public sector is framed. I hope to have contributed to an understanding of how inequalities in social relations are reproduced through hegemonic power relations, which both constitute and are constituted by what are conceived as legitimise and justifiable forms of workplace interaction. In addition, the

combination of CDA with Braun and Clarke's (2006) TA enhanced the thoroughness of the analysis of the bullied targets' interviews. TA's versatility is manifest in it being less theoretically bound than other analytical methods (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and it had excellent philosophical synergy with the CDA adopted. Thus, TA permitted me to systematically uncover additional insights, identify areas of commonality and divergence, and led to the categorisation of the findings into meaningful themes.

Consonant with the philosophical orientation adopted, and the CDA and TA analytical process, a qualitative methodological approach consisting of semi-structured interviews was developed. The qualitative method enabled an in-depth exploration based on human experience, to yield deeper knowledge of the phenomena being researched (Jubas, 2008). The semi-structured interviews incorporated questions that focused on bullied targets' experiences, centring and amplifying their accounts. The questions also focused on the wider context, to enable participants to discuss their experiences in the context of the changing public sector. Indeed, the approach I adopted supported Leitch and Palmer's (2010) emphasis on the importance of strengthening CDA approaches to organisational studies by analysing 'texts in context'. The text-in-context approach recognises that there is always some kind of dialectical relationship between any discursive event, and the social and material world in which it is embedded (Van Dijk, 2015). In other words, language is socially constitutive, as well as being socially conditioned, through a variety of discursive practices, including the production, distribution and reception of texts (Machin & Mayr, 2012). In addition, material forces shape situations, social identities and relationships between people, as well as being reproduced and shaped by them (Fairclough, 2003). Hence, the approach that I adopted recognised social categories and norms as constructed divisions, open to critique (Burr, 2003). In this way, the use of CDA in this thesis led to semi-structured interview questions that focused on external and internal contextual factors, as well as bullying experiences, enabling an examination of hegemonic power relations. Therefore, the thesis has addressed calls to consider the interaction and relationship between individual bullying, organisational contexts, and broader sociohistorical factors (Akella, 2016; Einarsen, 2005; Hoel & Beale, 2006), and this is additionally offered as a methodological contribution.

The research offers a Gramscian ontological and epistemological orientation to surface and explore the impact of neoliberal power relations on workplace bullying in the UK public sector, from the perspective of bullied targets, through the usage of critical discourse analysis and thematic analysis.

7.2.4 BULLIED TARGETS' WORKPLACE BULLYING EXPERIENCES

Chapters Five and Six provided detailed findings and analysis of 25 bullied targets' accounts of workplace bullying in the case study of the UK public sector. The findings produced a thematically arranged, critical text, inviting readers to appreciate the resonances that unite bullied targets' experiences, yet also highlighted the different ways in which participants interpreted, made sense of, and represented their bullying experiences. Therefore, Chapters Five and Six addressed the following research objective:

> To undertake effective interpretation, evaluation and representation of data in a way that enables an understanding of the lived experience of bullied targets, reliable contextualisation, and thorough analysis of the research findings.

7.2.4.1 SUBJECTIVE CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF WORKPLACE BULLYING

The first part of Chapter Five addressed the first research sub-question:

> In what ways do bullied targets conceptualise workplace bullying?

I considered participants' conceptions of workplace bullying to be an important foundation to reporting the findings of the study, enabling me to compare their responses to the existing literature, and establishing the groundwork for the remainder of the study. My initial question asking participants what they understood by the word 'bullying' provided them with the space during the research interviews to make sense of it themselves, prior to discussing their actual experiences. Mattheisen and Einarsen (2010) observe that the target's subjective experience is critical, whilst Bartlett and Bartlett (2011) acknowledge that it is the subjective nature of the bullying phenomenon that provides it with its characteristic features. Indeed, according to Neidl (1995) the definitional core of workplace bullying revolves around the subjective impression the target forms of having experienced repeated, intentional, hostile, humiliating, intimidating acts, specifically directed at them. My research found that participants' subjective understanding and experience of workplace bullying aligns with the literature, which outlines the characteristics of the phenomenon (e.g. Einarsen et al., 2009; Fox & Stallworth, 2010; Keashly & Jagatic, 2003; Lewis & Sheehan, 2003; Leymann, 1996; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006; Vartia, 2001; Zapf et al., 2003).

Chapters Five and Six also addressed the following research sub-questions:

- In what ways, if any, have ideological forces influenced workplace bullying situations and experiences in the UK public sector?
- In what ways, if any, have power relations affected the workplace bullying situation?

- In what ways, if any, is workplace bullying legitimised by the organisation?
- In what ways, if any, is the workplace bullying justified as acting morally?

7.2.4.2 WORKPLACE BULLYING AND IDEOLOGICAL FORCES

On the whole, the findings from the majority of participants on ideological forces illustrate a complex blend between the societal backdrop of state-regulated neoliberalism, UK public sector managerialism, and bullied targets' experiences. The findings illustrate Denzin and Lincoln's (2017) argument that neoliberal ideologies are circulated, produced and reproduced in organisations, and perpetuate existing inequities that benefit ruling class ideology. Hence, the findings support the notion of organisations as hegemonic instruments of neoliberal market principles, producing and reproducing economic, social and political relations. This has led to a market-oriented common sense and spontaneous grammar in public sector organisations, but also good sense, resistance and competing values, with workplace bullying occurring within this dialectical context. For instance, the findings point to issues raised in Chapters Two and Three surrounding the transition away from quality models of service delivery in the public sector to business-oriented models, which have stimulated workplace bullying. Therefore, it is useful to consider workplace bullying as a strategic device used by actors to coerce the bullied target to conform attitudinally or take on an additional workload, in market- and performance-oriented environments. It appears that the bullying is also exercised strategically, to ensure compliance by wielding a threat, thereby implying that not complying could diminish bullied targets' employment security or longevity, or negatively impact on the survival of the organisation or institution. Thus, the findings suggest that bullying may be used strategically to facilitate the meeting of market-oriented demands placed upon public sector organisations.

Public sector organisations are performance-, profit-, and audit-oriented, driven by managerialist imperatives, alongside complex methods of scrutiny and governance (Diefenbach, 2009). The findings exposed performative target-driven environments, underpinned by competition and income generation (Ball, 2003). The findings suggest that performativity leads to pressures being placed on bullied targets through bullying by actors. For example, market ideology has impacted on public sector organisations in that institutions/organisations are pressurised to rise in competitive league tables. Consequently, actors appear to bully because the public sector is charged with introducing changes predicated on competitive forces, accompanied by systems of scrutiny that have created work pressures to achieve business-oriented targets. The findings also demonstrate that performativity, with its emphasis on effectiveness and efficiency, has created work-intensive environments in which external systems of scrutiny and accountability have resulted in actors bullying staff to meet the requirements of externally imposed monitoring systems. Furthermore, senior leaders occupying positions in the

upper organisational echelons benefit from social stratification through prestige and monetary rewards (Goldthorpe, et al., 1969; Johnston & Dolowitz, 1999; Wright, 1978). The findings highlight that senior leaders gain monetarily and secure their hierarchical position by enacting bullying behaviour, which supports neoliberal requirements. This could be through moulding bullied targets into complying with norms that are deemed acceptable, or indeed punishing them for not complying through additional workload pressures, demotion, or job loss.

Ideological forces also manifest in a dialectical struggle between managerial prerogatives and workers' perceptions of their employment rights. The findings show that the struggle results in resistance, good sense, lack of continuous consensus, and workplace bullying to control bullied targets. Workplace bullying of this nature has stemmed from factors such as bullied targets possessing different values to actors about what constitutes effective public sector delivery. Hence, the findings highlight bullied targets exhibiting resistance to the changes, reinforcing Skeggs' (2014) argument that competing values exemplify the everyday life of public sector organisations. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate conflict between organisational resistance movements that seek to disrupt managerialist practices and narratives, and managers seeking to implement such ways of working, illustrated by targets experiencing workplace bullying because of their trade union roles. Class was a feature of participants' responses, pointing to the UK public sector consisting of activist workers with class consciousness attempting to galvanise as a collective social force. Capital's power, however, is reinforced by the reduction in trade union power and the hierarchical ordering of subaltern classes, endowing some with a more enhanced status than others (Virdee, 2014). This is manifested in the findings relating to peer-related bullying involving employees at the same hierarchical level, which demonstrate how subjugated groups can actively participate in the production and reproduction of the dominant hegemonic ideology. Indeed, Hill (2008) argues that economic concepts of the world and our place within it, distort the internal relations that exist between human beings. The limits of cognitive capacity and the totalising social structures, infused with power relations under which humans labour, lead to them absorbing ideas that seem acceptable (Hill, 2008; Smith, 2005). The findings also drew out issues concerning bullying of disabled employees in an NPM environment, which actively oppresses and discriminates against them through abuses of power by bullying actors. This supports Mawdsley and Lewis's (2017) research on NPM and employees with long-term health conditions, and Davis's (1997) contention that the mistreatment of disabled employees is predicated on the perpetuation of stereotypical notions of the ideal worker. Finally, it is important to note that rather than ideological forces, several participants perceived the workplace bullying as stemming from individual conflicts and bullying actors' personal characteristics, supporting findings in this area (e.g. Coyne et al., 2000; Zapf & Einarsen, 2011). A Gramscian

perspective would highlight the dialectical relationship between the inner life of psychology, and systems of meaning associated with the outer life of culture, economics, ideology and politics (Holub, 1992).

7.2.4.3 WORKPLACE BULLYING AND POWER RELATIONS

Closely connected to ideological forces, I sought to illuminate whether power relations have influenced workplace bullying in the UK public sector through neoliberal policy, induced by NPM, marketisation and managerialism. The work of Gramsci (1971) provided the theoretical underpinnings for the notion of power contained within this thesis, where power relations are conceived of as structural and systemic, incorporating social relationships shaped by class-based relations of production, with the ruling class setting the ideological narrative. This thesis includes the notion of civil society incorporating organisations, which are dominated by the same class interests that dominate political society, so that civil society mainly reinforces rather than opposes the state (Bannerji, 1995; Clegg & Haugaard, 2009). Macro-level structures and power relations determine organisational designs and policy, through which employee interactions are mediated, which produce and reproduce external ideology (Clegg et al., 2006). Indeed, the UK public sector has material and political dependency on the state, and state power is exercised through decisions on public sector funding, which in turn effect organisational practices (Hood & Dixon, 2015).

The findings suggest that through the process of bullying, actors supported by their positional power, place demands on bullied targets to meet business-oriented requirements, thereby reifying ruling class ideological interests. The findings also highlighted something new – political power possessed by bullying actors based on their affinity with neoliberal policies and the marketised organisational narrative, rendering actors able to bully with senior support. Power relations are also evident in the findings through the power imbalance between actors and targets, and the various demands that are imposed on them in their everyday working lives. The findings indicate that workload allocations are in excess of acceptable levels, pointing to the exploitation of workers for surplus value. Hence, it is argued in this thesis that public sector organisations are themselves characterised by the unequal distribution of wealth and power, reflecting structural inequalities, which leads to the division of labour and antagonism in organisations, resistance to dominant market narratives (Bannerji, 1995; Clegg & Haugaard, 2009), and to workplace bullying.

Organisational and management structures are not immune from consideration in terms of perpetuating workplace bullying (Hutchinson et al., 2006; Liefooghe & Mackenzie Davey, 2001). The findings suggest that organisational power structures reinforce imbalances of power in the form of institutionalised workplace bullying, supporting the

work of D'Cruz and Noronha (2009), and Liefooghe and Mackenzie Davey (2001). Specifically, the findings illustrate actors' power being enhanced by power relations in the wider organisation, with the effect of sanctioning the bullying behaviour. In addition, austerity has indemnified NPM public sector changes (Clarke & Newman, 2012), and the findings highlight that managerial power and claims of superior knowledge (see Braverman, 1974) are used as a basis for justifying decision-making about job losses. Participants outlined bullying situations in the context of unfair redundancy decisions and job losses, in everincreasingly competitive environments of insecure employment and public sector cutbacks. The increasing emphasis on monitoring individual performance, accompanied by asymmetrical power relations, means that job suitability is judged by not only those who have power, but in the terms that they describe, leading to workplace bullying (Hutchinson et al., 2006). Finally, senior managers were found to engage in bullying as a political tactic through the enforcement of organisational goals, with the aim of securing their senior positions, supporting studies undertaken by Bamford et al. (2013), Hutchinson et al.
(2010), and Krakel (1997).

7.2.4.4 LEGITIMISATION OF WORKPLACE BULLYING

The findings illustrate that workplace bullying is legitimised in various ways, is not necessarily a conscious decision on behalf of organisations, can be indirect, and occurs through various ideological and discursive means. Discursively, markets and managerialism, which have pervaded the public sector for decades, have become institutionalised and taken for granted as natural facts and common sense about good governance (Drechsler, 2005; Larner, 2000). In addition, the organisational norms and values that result from this are regarded as legitimise (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975). The findings support Hutchinson et al.'s (2006) and Randle's (2003) arguments that workplace bullying legitimises organisational rules in a broader socio-economic context. In addition, conceiving bullying actors in Gramscian terms as organic intellectuals, supports Gramsci's (1971) and Richardson's (1987) contention that managers legitimise hegemony by reifying capitalist interests. The dominant economic and performance imperative, for example, has led to organisational legitimisation of intensified performance management practices, which appear unquestioned by bullying actors. Actors appear to bully in the quest to improve employees' performance or safeguard their own positions. Furthermore, the neoliberal narrative surrounding the UK public sector has led to workplace bullying being legitimised discursively through spontaneous grammar. The findings suggest that the language of NPM does have material consequences, in the sense that it affects the ways that people conduct interactions at work, and legitimises its underlying ideology. Thus, neoliberal policy seeks to legitimise a form of public sector practice that is portrayed as being based on mutually advantageous exchange, rather than highlighting power-based

divisions between social groups (Evans, 2015). Competition is seen as inherently good, and neoliberalism reinforces the ideology that through competition the best ideas and most efficient delivery of services can emerge (Dunn & Miller, 2007). The findings highlight that bullying is legitimised in this context to ensure that bullied targets meet demands for the public sector delivery of market-oriented services. Furthermore, the findings indicate that senior managers bully as a means of achieving corporate goals and preserving their status in the organisational hierarchy. Hence, the findings support the idea of actors legitimising political and socio-economic ideology, which contribute to their own financial interests (Akella, 2016; Guthrie & Parker, 1990).

Managerialism, unitarism and individualism have also had the effect of legitimising workplace bullying. For instance, the findings suggest that legitimisation of workplace bullying has occurred through a management-HR culture, predicated on a unitarist ideology, which perpetuates managerial control (Horwitz, 1991). The decline in the trade union collective voice has also led to the reinforcement of managerial prerogative, the neutering of trade union power, and the fragmentation of class collective power (Bacon & Storey, 1993). The findings highlight that unitarist ideology and HR departments' positioning within organisations as supportive of management rather than employees, appears to have legitimised workplace bullying. Consequently, it appears that actors' conduct is deemed reasonable within the framework of ensuring that bullied targets achieve work demands, and has resulted in targets perceiving HR as complicit with actors. Participants regarded HR as partial, rather than objective, in their assessments of bullying complaints put forward by bullied targets. Furthermore, Namie and Lutgen-Sandvik (2010) emphasise the complex role that HR professionals can play, by either overtly joining in, or passively supporting the bullying actor/s through inaction. The findings demonstrate that the apparent HR and management complicity, and lack of consideration of the targets' perspective, is perceived as bullying. Thus, as Lewis and Rayner (2003) contend, it appears that management-aligned HRM may itself be a form of bullying. Unitarism is closely associated with individualist conceptions of interpersonal relations, and neglects the social context in which workers are located (Archer, 1995). Correspondingly, the findings point to workplace bullying being legitimised through actors portraying targets as ineffective or incompetent, and casting negative judgements on them. This places the onus for bullying on bullied targets for not meeting demanding work objectives, rather than recognising the structural issues that have created the workplace pressures. The findings support Baumeister's (1999) contention that actors behave in this way to secure organisational legitimacy for their bullying behaviour. In addition, as Gramsci (1971) highlights, through a process of hegemonic persuasion, problematising workers' abilities effectively legitimises status differentials and behavioural norms, in the case of this study - legitimising workplace bullying.

7.2.4.5 MORALISTIC WORKPLACE BULLYING

On the whole, although there were outliers focusing on bullying actors' personalities, the findings complement various workplace bullying scholars (e.g. Bandura, 2002; Davies, 2011; Hutchinson et al., 2010; Jenkins et al., 2012) who argue that workplace bullying can be morally justified by connecting it to serving organisational purposes. Thereby, this thesis supports the notion of the moralistic bully (Zabrodska et al., 2014) in UK public sector organisations, and augments it as occurring within the context of neoliberalism. A number of critical theorists (e.g. Gramsci, 1971; Habermas, 1981; Weber, 1978) contend that individuals who serve the interests of capitalism possess an associated ethical moral framework based on individualism and competition. Indeed, the findings highlight that meeting business requirements and institutional compliance with neoliberal policy enabled actors to morally justify the behaviour of subjecting bullied targets to excessive workloads, to meet market-oriented demands. The findings demonstrate McKay et al.'s (2008), Twale and De Luca's (2008), and Zabrodska et al.'s (2011) arguments that neoliberal ideology has resulted in organisational compliance based on a notion of public sector market competitiveness, which stimulates workplace bullying. The findings also indicate that buyin to neoliberalism was unconscious on the part of some actors of bullying, based on an assumption that market-oriented public sector delivery must be correct due to it stemming from external directives. Gramsci's (1971) spontaneous consent and common sense concepts highlight a subsumed morality, which appears under the guise of being natural but is actually predicated on pervading ideology, and hence connected to ruling class interests. Therefore, this thesis argues that neoliberalism has influenced individual subjectivities and norms, which reflect neoliberal discursive formations of progress, individualism, competitiveness and materialism (Levya, 2018). In addition, the thesis highlights that neoliberal rhetoric characterised by competition, accountability and costeffectiveness, has achieved a level of moral permeation societally (Davies & Peterson, 2005; Hunt, 1997; Zabrodska et al., 2011). Thus, in the neoliberal context, workplace bullying appears to be morally justified as doing the right thing for the business.

The emergence of findings on moral justifications for workplace bullying based on actors' political beliefs and notions of public duty are offered as fresh empirical insights, and those on bullying stemming from moral condemnation of bullied targets support work undertaken by Bandura (1996), Bloch (2012), Davies (2011), and Tracy et al. (2006). With regard to actors' political beliefs, the findings highlighted that they tended to be aligned politically with the dominant system of belief pervading the organisation. This placed them in opposition to bullied targets in the study, and seemed to enable them to morally justify their behaviour. Bloom (2017) argues that political inclinations influence individuals' reasoning and moral judgements, and Hill (2008) points out that moral norms have created a materially normative organisational mindset. The bullied targets in such situations were

either concerned with the negative impact of market-oriented approaches on staff and service users, or had trade union roles focused on upholding workers' rights. These situations placed targets in opposition to actors, whose differing beliefs appeared to stimulate the workplace bullying. A connected theme of actors having no choice but to impose organisational changes, based on notions of public service duty, leading to spontaneous consent, emerged from the findings. In these workplace bullying situations, bullied targets outlined an organisational environment where actors felt morally justified in their behaviour because they had to implement changes due to wider directives. The resultant practices, for example, excessive monitoring of work or public sector cutbacks elicited by broader material and ideological forces (Zabrodska, et al., 2011), generated the workplace bullying that the targets experienced. Finally, negative moral judgements by actors against bullied targets based on perceived violations of implicit organisational mores emerged as justifications for the workplace bullying. Bandura (1996), Bloch (2002), Davies (2011), and Tracy et al. (2006) highlight that actors are able to exonerate and morally justify their own behaviour for varying purposes connected to organisational norms. Indeed, the findings demonstrate that bullied targets are conceived by actors as going against the organisational normative order, and the bullying appears to ensue to force compliance.

In conclusion, the findings highlight how a critical Gramscian approach can reveal the contentious effect that neoliberal policy has had on the UK public sector, and the implications of this for workplace bullying and power relations, encapsulated below.

The thesis offers empirical contributions to critically analysing workplace bullying in terms of hegemonic power relations, in a UK public sector impacted by neoliberal policy, and highlights how workplace bullying is potentially morally justified and legitimised.

7.3 THESIS CONCLUSION

The main research question guiding this thesis was:

> What insights does a Gramscian framework offer to the study of workplace bullying and power relations in a marketised UK public sector, from the perspective of bullied targets?

Due to the ascendancy of neoliberalism, the period since 1979 has seen successive 'reforms' of the UK public sector. Consequently, public sector organisations have become increasingly marketised resulting in a fundamental alteration to their governance and practices through managerialism. It is within this managerialist context that inappropriate behaviours in the public sector, such as workplace bullying, have grown (Hutchinson, 2009, 2011; Ironside & Seifert, 2003; Omari & Paul, 2015). The findings of this thesis support the conceptualisation of NPM and austerity as neoliberal hegemonic projects,

infused with ideology and power relations, which have significantly affected UK public sector environments. This thesis argues that NPM reifies the state's material and ideological predilection towards market forces, profitability, and surplus value in the UK public sector, and that these factors have stimulated workplace bullying. I am not suggesting, however, that individuals at an agentic level, in this case actors of bullying in the UK public sector, merely submit to an abstract category of the market, or experience a dull compulsion to support unequal class relations. Instead, this thesis contends that complex hegemonic power relations and dialectical forces impact on the UK public sector, contextualise the workplace bullying phenomenon, shape individual subjectivities, and stimulate bullying in the workplace. In addition, bullying pre-dates neoliberalism, however, as Zabrodska et al. (2014) argue, although neoliberalism did not invent workplace bullying, it is deeply implicated in practices that generate workplace bullying.

The commercial push in the UK public sector is characterised by business-oriented financial targets, performance measurement, metrics, commercially prescriptive evaluation, league tables, and quantitative systems of accountability (Diefenbach, 2005). In turn, subaltern conformity is incited by the state framing a market-oriented viewpoint of public services so extensively that it leads to actors of bullying inculcating organisational norms, generating the mindset that bullied targets have no choice but to comply. Hence, this thesis contends that hegemonic social normativities, and unexamined epistemological and moral norms, influence thoughts and actions. The associated power relations occur in an organisational environment impacted by dialectical forces of ideological hegemony, market forces and competition, as well as resistance and good sense. These dynamic factors have led to a punitive public sector environment, which is characterised by the coercion of a market emphasis on meeting business requirements, and a move away from the notion of public services as public goods (Rhodes, 1994). In this thesis, bullying is outlined as occurring in a heightened, ideologically driven, marketised UK public sector, supported by a managerialist organisational context (Ball, 2003). The resultant workplace environment is exemplified by the managers' right to manage, and corporate-style organisational and individual performance-oriented systems of accountability, which exert pressure on bullied targets to meet ever-increasing demands, stimulating bullying situations. Therefore, the study demonstrates how workplace bullying can become institutionalised through managerial complicity, individual pressure and blame. In this sense, UK public sector bullying may be said to have become part of the amoral fabric of unethical neoliberalism, incongruous marketisation, and managerialism. Indeed, this thesis argues that asymmetric societal power relations reify workplace bullying in the UK public sector, leading to its organisational legitimisation, and even moral justification, lamentably, as the *price of getting things done*.

7.4 LIMITATIONS AND REFLEXIVITY

The methodological and research design choices were outlined and justified in Chapter Four. Those choices, however, involved inevitable trade-offs and the process of discarding alternative approaches, therefore unavoidably resulting in several potential limitations. For instance, the qualitative nature of the UK public sector case study means there are limitations related to its small sample, including difficulties in generalising or transferring the findings to the entire sector. Therefore, the data generated in this study is not necessarily representative of the wider population group, namely, all targets of workplace bullying in the UK public sector. Although producing a framework that could be generalised or transferred to a specific or general population, was not my aim, not having done so could conceivably be perceived as a limitation of the research. An additional limitation relates to the composition of the sample. The research has gathered data from bullied targets only. Interviewing actors of bullying could have strengthened the findings, by enabling a comparison between targets' and actors' accounts of workplace bullying in the NPM-oriented UK public sector. In other words, triangulation of the data by comparing targets' and actors' perspectives would have been invaluable. Triangulation assists not only in investigating the similarities and convergence of data, but additionally as a means of revealing the different dimensions of a phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2012). Triangulation is therefore concerned with reflecting the complexity and multi-faceted nature of the social world (Moran-Ellis et al., 2006). Due to the sensitivity of the bullying topic, and challenges involved in finding participants who would be able and willing to disclose that they had bullied others in the UK public sector context, gathering data from actors' perspectives, although attempted, was not possible. Furthermore, triangulation through data gathering utilising further stages of interviews, rather than one semistructured interview only, would have provided richer data but was not pursued due to time limitations.

The use of semi-structured interviews with specific questions and my interviewing approach are also acknowledged as limitations of the research. In particular, the limitations of the questionnaire design included the development of specific questions, which I tended to stick to rigidly. Consequently, I did not consistently modify the questionnaire as the research progressed, despite recognising at an early stage of the interviews that some of the questions were producing superfluous data, which were ultimately disregarded during the analysis stage. A related limitation of my interview approach is that whilst it enabled the exploration of appropriate and relevant primary data, I omitted to explore other themes that may have been relevant to participants' workplace bullying experiences. Bell (2005) points out that research quality can be affected by the individual skills of the researcher. Correspondingly, a limitation of my interview approach revolved around not always taking advantage of opportunities to explore further themes that arose during the interviews with

the participants. Therefore, my approach did not allow for an analysis of whether other factors were relevant in relation to workplace bullying experiences. Specifically, a more sophisticated questionnaire design and interviewing approach might have resulted in additional responses being elicited, and further rich data being generated.

Potential researcher bias issues are acknowledged in terms of interpreting workplace bullying experiences through CDA, which is not without its critics. Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure, and Chadwick (2008), and Widdowson (2005) emphasise limitations of the CDA methodology because it involves the researcher already being influenced by political biases and lacking objectivity, in turn influencing their interpretation of the data. Reflexivity, however, also forms a component of critical research positions, exposing the political assumptions inherent within the investigation (Leitch & Palmer, 2010). Reflexivity is an explicit self-consciousness about the researcher's social, political and value positions, and how they might influence the design, implementation and interpretation of the theory, data and conclusions (Greenbank, 2003; Griffiths, 1988). Therefore, to offset the challenge of researcher bias, as well as outlining my motivations in Chapter One of this thesis, I committed to maintaining research memos and a reflexive diary, which contained active reflections on the interviews outlining my decision-making and the actions that I took during the research process, extracts of which are attached as Appendix 7. In addition, in order to ensure research appropriateness and credibility, member checks took place, enabling participants to check interpretations of the data, as recommended by Hadi (2016), and Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007). Furthermore, I discussed my data interpretations in meetings with my PhD supervision panel and other academic colleagues. That being said, engaging in a critical approach does not negate the truth value of participants' responses. Instead, it enables a light to be shone on issues of power relations, ideology and inequalities in society, and helps to expose fresh angles on a research phenomenon (Leitch & Palmer, 2010). In a sense, CDA is never complete because examining aspects of the data means other elements of data analysis will inevitably be missed. Alternatively, allowing the data to 'speak for itself' runs the risk of an unfocused and superficial analysis of too broad a range of parameters (Torkington, 2011). I attempted to compensate for the risk of missing aspects of data analysis by combining both CDA and TA to enhance the thoroughness of the data analysis, and I found that TA did enable me to capture additional participant insights.

A further limitation that is important to acknowledge is the recognition that there are many other possibilities for critically analysing the data from the relatively small sample of 25 participants in the UK public sector. Viewing power relations from a critical perspective has validated my commitment towards research that challenges the status quo. Feminist scholars (e.g. Butler, 1990; Frye, 1983; Hartmann, 1980), however, argue that patriarchal power relations form the crux of societal oppression and inequalities, and that Marxian

analyses of class domination must be supplemented with a radical feminist critique of patriarchy. I acknowledge that there was a neglect of gender dimensions in my analysis, despite the additional argument that gender has been disregarded in workplace bullying analyses, and that bullying is not a gender-neutral phenomenon (e.g. Escartin et al., 2011; Kelly, 2006). That being said, gender issues were not an identified criterion at the outset of the data-gathering stage of the research study, but some gender issues emerged. I recognise that gendered aspects of workplace bullying would have been an interesting line of investigation in terms of exposing issues concerning patriarchy, hegemony, power relations and workplace bullying, however, they were outside the scope of this study.

The final limitation is a reflexive one relating to my relationship with the research. Attempts have been made throughout the thesis to offer justifications for my theoretical and conceptual framework. Furthermore, I have endeavoured to make explicit any philosophical presuppositions and assumptions that I have made, and how they have informed the research. Where readers of this thesis disagree with those assumptions, and the approach that I adopted to the workplace bullying study, limitations will inevitably be perceived by them. I hope, however, that this thesis makes a contribution towards critically examining workplace bullying in the contemporary UK public sector, the structural foundations that engender it, and inspires further research into challenging the phenomenon.

7.5 FUTURE RESEARCH

If workplace bullying in the UK public sector is contextualised within broader societal changes associated with neoliberalism, then, without exonerating actors of bullying, it is not enough to focus on their actions; rather, it is necessary to examine the impact of neoliberal forces on public sector organisations as businesses. The central notion of neoliberalism is competition between nations, region, firms, and individuals, through relations based on mutual hostility (Bloom, 2017). Therefore, rather than mutual recognition and substantive social citizenship, neoliberalism creates a divided society (Hill, 2008). Obviously, producing a revolutionary strategy for usurping neoliberalism, and the political and economic inequalities of most of the planet, is outside of the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, critical research demands that all humans have a free and open society, and equal access to resources in the public sphere. Therefore, critical research on workplace bullying must continue in order to stimulate debate about the neoliberal agenda of society, and to emancipate the individual. Given the domination of neoliberal policy in today's societies, the public sphere is permeated with managerialist discourses and economically instrumental rationality. Nevertheless, adopting the fatalistic attitude that *nothing can be done* is not an option, given the testimonies of the participants in this study and many others who are experiencing workplace bullying, and the emancipatory nature

of critical research. These factors have led me to generate ideas for further research that could be pursued on intersectionality, and on trade unions and collectivism.

7.5.1 WORKPLACE BULLYING, CLASS AND INTERSECTIONALITY

Further scholarship on workplace bullying would benefit from examining the relationship between class and forms of bullying, for example, sexist, racist, disablist, or homophobic bullying or harassment, in the context of neoliberalism. Some research participants touched on discrimination-oriented issues in this workplace bullying study, however, as highlighted in Section 7.4 of this chapter outlining my limitations and reflexivity, the issues were outside the scope of the study, preventing extensive probing or a more detailed analysis. In addition, class was a feature of some bullied targets' perspectives, including the way that they conceptualised their own social identities and those of bullying actors, and organisational and societal inequalities. Workplace bullying studies concerning gender, disability, and racism have been undertaken, which have enhanced understanding of how these factors relate to bullying (e.g. Fevre et al., 2013; Fox & Stallworth, 2005; Lewis & Gunn, 2007; Mawdsley & Lewis, 2017). Class-oriented intersectional studies would also be beneficial in terms of extending extant research through a focus on how class intersects with areas including patriarchy, systemic racism, disability hegemony, and heteronormativity, enabling the examination of bullying as a multi-dimensional phenomenon. Intersectionality scholars (e.g. Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Goethals, De Schauwer, & Van Hove, 2015; Marfelt, 2016; McCall, 2005; Monro & Richardson, 2010; Nash, 2008) argue that class always intersects with identity categories of oppression, such as gender, disability, 'race', or sexual orientation. Indeed, with regard to 'race', Crenshaw (1989, p. 149) contends that intersectionality enriches understanding of dominance and disempowerment in society because the "intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism". Therefore, classbased intersectional studies enable a nuanced study of class combined with categories of oppression, and capture the intricacies of the inequities of contemporary life (Block & Corona, 2014). In order for an intersectional workplace bullying analysis to be effective, however, it must avoid the tendency to engage superficially with intersectionality by focusing on categories of difference only, and must examine identities – such as gender, disability, 'race', or sexual orientation – as they intersect with class in systems of neoliberal power relations (Dhamoon, 2011). A plethora of intersectionality literature has developed (e.g. Block & Corona, 2014; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991), which would support this type of workplace bullying study.

7.5.2 COUNTER-HEGEMONY, COLLECTIVISM, TRADE UNIONS AND RESISTANCE

Given the findings in this research about hegemonic neoliberal ideologies permeating the UK public sector, resulting in managerialist environments, a further recommendation for

future research centres on establishing an effective counter-hegemony against workplace bullying – through trade unions. This recommendation reinforces arguments put forward by Akella (2016), Hoel and Beale (2006), Mawdsley (2012), and Mawdsley, Lewis, and Sheehan (2010), which outline that trade unions have a pivotal role in supporting employees and addressing workplace bullying. Neoliberal ideology and managerialism have resulted in individualised conceptions of employee relations, and the attempted suppression of trade union and worker collectivism (Heery, 2004; Heery, Healy, & Taylor, 2004; Macdonald, 2014). Trade unions still exist, however, and form a crucial component of civil society, as well as worldwide and organisational democracy (Dromey, 2018; Kelly, 1998). In addition, Gramsci (1971) argued that capitalist power is always unstable, resulting in counter-hegemonic struggles in civil society through resistance and good sense, which advance alternatives to dominant ideas of what is considered legitimise. Indeed, Ishkanian and Glasius (2018) contend that discontent with and active protest against neoliberal state policy is growing in civil society. Kelly's (1998) mobilisation theory has been suggested as a way of stimulating collectivism against workplace bullying through a process of enabling bullied targets and trade unions to conceive bullying as injustice towards workers by managers (Einarsen et al. 2011a; Hoel & Beale, 2006). To date, however, workplace bullying and trade union research using mobilisation theory remains under-developed. Worker activism was a feature of this study and the findings demonstrated that unequal power relations have not prevented individual trade union representatives from operating as activists for workers' rights, including providing support for bullied targets. Given the fact that trade unions have historically been concerned with dealing with issues of social injustice, they have a fundamental role in challenging negative organisational practices, mobilising resistance, and converting common sense into good sense. Daniels and McIlroy (2009) highlight the challenges that trade unions have experienced in terms of their purpose, role, and identity in a shifting neoliberal context. Future research would benefit from exploring how trade union strategies against workplace bullying occurring in neoliberal environments could be capitalised upon through a collectivist stance and broader package of challenging hegemonic systems of managerialist power and meaning, specifically given the mounting discontent towards neoliberal ideology.

7.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter has concluded the workplace bullying study and outcome of the research process. It has drawn together the central argument of the thesis that insights into UK public sector workplace bullying and power relations can be gained through exploring historical, political, and socio-economic factors, and hegemony. The chapter has highlighted the theoretical, methodological, and empirical findings of this thesis using a Gramscian framework by reflecting upon the research objectives. The chapter has also

outlined how the study has enhanced the understanding of workplace bullying and power relations in the UK public sector. Reflexive consideration was given to some of the possible limitations of the thesis. Finally, the chapter concluded by identifying potential future research directions for taking forward some of the insights generated in this thesis.

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Appendix 1: Interview Schedule

1. **EXPLORING WORKPLACE BULLYING – I'm interested in hearing from you about bullying itself.**
   <u>Probes</u>
   What does the word 'bullying' mean to you?

2. **THE CONTEXT OF THE WORKPLACE BULLYING – I'm interested in knowing whether there was an external or political related dimension to what was happening in the organisation.**
   <u>Probes</u>
   What happened to you in the bullying situation? Why did the workplace bullying happen?
   Tell me about the organisational situation or context in which you were bullied?
   Could you describe whether or not the individual/s that bullied were influenced by developments or changes in the organisation? In what way?

3. **POWER AND WORKPLACE BULLYING – I'm interested in understanding the role of power in the bullying situation.**
   <u>Probes</u>
   How would you describe the power of the individual/s that bullied in the situation, if any?
   Could you describe whether or not they felt empowered by what was happening in the organisation?
   Tell me about any links to governmental policy, if any.

4. **EXTERNAL CHANGES AND THE ORGANISATION – I'm interested in knowing the extent to which external governmental policy may have impacted upon relationships within the organisation?**
   <u>Probes</u>
   Tell me more about the developments or changes in the organisation? In what way, if any, were the organisational changes related to external governmental policy?
   Could you describe whether or not the bullying was supported by the organisation? In what way?

5. **JUSTIFYING THE WORKPLACE BULLYING – I'm interested in the type of bullying where individuals feel that they have a licence to behave in that way and are able to justify their behaviour.**
   <u>Probes</u>
   Why did the individual/s who bullied behave in this way?
   Could you describe whether or not they justified their behaviour/actions? Could you describe whether or not they thought they were acting morally or doing the right thing? In what way?

Appendix 2: Critical Discourse Analysis – Process of Reading and Analysis Template

Interview question focus	Participant response from interview transcript – example	First reading	Second reading CDA process	Third reading Identification and brief analysis of Gramscian concepts
Question examples What does the word bullying mean to you? What happened in the workplace bullying situation? Tell me about the organisational context in which you were bullied? To what extent did the perpetrator think they were doing the right thing? Acting morally? In what way?	**Example Response:** Participant's response included here during analysis.	**Actors of bullying** **Target of bullying** **How the workplace bullying event is being represented** **Bullied target's interests** . **Organisational context** **Legitimisation by organisation** **Justifying the workplace bullying** **Connections to governmental policy**	**How is the text constructed by participant?** **What is the text trying to achieve?** **How does the text achieve its aim?** **How is the text produced and consumed?** **Understanding the intermediate level between the text and its social context** **Relationship of text to ideology and power** **Factors constituting the wider terrain of the discursive practice**	**Gramscian conceptual framework** • Hegemony • State • Power relations • Common sense • Spontaneous grammars • Good sense **Gramscian analysis of text production and consumption** **Gramscian analysis of intermediate level between text and social context** **Gramscian analysis of the relationship of the text to ideology and power** **Gramscian analysis of the historical, political, and socioeconomic factors constituting the wider terrain of the discursive practice**

Appendix 3: Thematic Data Analysis Example 1 – What does the word bullying mean to you?

Participants' Responses	Codes	Sub-Themes	Theme

'… for me bullying is … making people feel just bad about themselves and that they're not worthy, they can't make a contribution, their contribution isn't valued, whatever they might say, feel or think doesn't matter … you know? To bully somebody you make them feel pretty worthless.'

Defensive bullied target
Low self-esteem
Unworthy
Worthless in organisation
Valueless contribution

Worthlessness, feeling unworthy, contribution not valued

'To me it's very much emotional, erm, making you seem powerless in that situation … and then taking away your confidence and … you feel insignificant and … you become sort of worthless in a work situation.'

Emotional
Powerless
Lowered confidence
Rendered insignificant
Worthlessness at work

Lowered confidence, worthlessness

Powerless
On your own, no support
Isolation in organisation

Powerlessness, isolation

Worthlessness, powerlessness, and isolation

'… you feel powerless. You are kind of on your own or you're isolated and, err, it's very much about, you know … that kind of feeling of isolation and being on your own.'

Appendix 4: Thematic Data Analysis Example 2 – Tell me about the organisation context in which you were bullied

Participants' Responses	Codes	Sub-Themes	Theme

'There's a directive from the vice chancellor … we have to be proactive in our sector and be profit-centred. The imperatives are on performance and league tables, the threat is if we don't perform well … the institution itself could collapse.'

'Clearly … greater competition in the marketplace … the old polys become new universities trying to put their marker down … establish themselves … obsession about
league tables.'

'The college went independent, we had to fend for ourselves … we had to compete in the market … league tables, pass rates … judged as an institution driven by economic priorities, targets and efficiency – "bangs for bucks" phrase … used.'

Vice chancellor leadership
Top-down directives
Performance focus
League table targets
Income generation
Profit-generation shift
Threat to employment security from poor performance

Top-down directive, performance-led, targets, income, challenging environment

Competition
Marketplace focus
Success focus
Improved league table ranking

Competition, marketplace, league table results

Independence from local authority
Self-financing
Instability
Economic focus
Efficiency targets
Spontaneous grammar

Independence, marketisation, league tables, targets, economics and efficiency

Market ideology, performativity, and target-driven working environments

Appendix 5: Informed Consent Form for Research Participants

Newcastle Business School

Title of Study:	Workplace Bullying and Power Relations: A UK Public Sector Study.
Person(s) conducting the research:	Anita Garvey
Programme of study:	PhD Part Time
Address of the researcher for correspondence:	Anita Garvey Newcastle Business School Northumbria University City Campus East 1- Room 446 Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8ST United Kingdom
Telephone:	+44 (0)191 349 5349
E-mail:	anita.garvey@northumbria.ac.uk
Description of the broad nature of the research:	This research aims to explore workplace bullying and power relations within the UK public sector from the perspective of bullied targets.

Description of the involvement expected of participants including the broad nature of questions to be answered or events to be observed or activities to be undertaken, and the expected time commitment:	Please see below for the anticipated involvement expected of participants: • Interview (lasting approximately 1 hour) • Any additional one-to-one meetings that may be required- these will be agreed between the participant and researcher, as and when required or deemed necessary. • Review of interview transcripts from the interview. The interviews will be conducted in a semistructured format with a series of open questions or discussion points and further probing questions being asked throughout the interview.

	The interview will look to explore the research participants' understandings and experiences of workplace bullying and power.
	The interviews will all be conducted on a one-to-one individual basis, with only the participant and researcher present. Each interview will be recorded using an electronic Dictaphone, and the researcher will then transcribe the data from the interviews into a word-processed format. The word-processed version will be used to analyse the data from participants.
	All participant names, as well as organisational names and other individual names will be made anonymous during the transcribing stage to protect the participants' identities. The participants' names will be replaced with pseudonyms (e.g. Participant A, false name, or a colour).
	The individual word-processed interview transcript will then be emailed to the relevant research participant, whereby they will have the opportunity to add to any of the wording, or indeed to remove or amend data on the transcript. The participants will be asked to confirm whether they agree that the transcript is a fair representation of their interview with me - the researcher.
	Electronic copies of the data will be stored securely on my personal computer, which is password protected and only accessible to me, and will be backed up to a personal hard-drive, which will be stored at a separate and secure location. Electronic copies of the data will also be uploaded onto my personal USB stick, which is only accessible to me.
	All hard copies of the data will be locked away in a secure cupboard with the key only accessible to me. Hard copy summary extracts of the data may be shared and viewed with the researcher's supervision team and potentially to fellow postgraduate researchers to enable discussions around data analysis techniques. All documentation will be made anonymous

	prior to this, by replacing names with pseudonyms for instance, to maintain participant confidentiality. Through engaging in such discussions, the researcher hopes it will ensure that the data analysis techniques being applied are appropriate and being carried out effectively. The data collected will be used for the purposes of this research. In addition, it will always be redacted and anonymous.

Information obtained in this study, including this consent form, will be kept strictly confidential (i.e. will not be passed to others) and anonymous (i.e. individuals and organisations will not be identified *unless this is expressly excluded in the details given above*).

Data obtained through this research may be reproduced and published in a variety of forms and for a variety of audiences related to the broad nature of the research detailed above. It will not be used for purposes other than those outlined above without your permission.

Participation is entirely voluntary, and participants may withdraw at any time.

By signing this consent form, you are indicating that you fully understand the above information and agree to participate in this study on the basis of the above information.

Participant's signature: **Date:**

Student's signature: Date:

Please keep one copy of this form for your own records

Appendix 6: Research Ethical Issues Form   northumbria
UNIVERSITY
Newcastle Business School

Newcastle Business School

Student Name:	Anita Garvey
Portfolio Area:	PGR
Title of Research Project:	Workplace Bullying and Power Relations: A UK Public Sector Study.
Start Date of Research Project:	1st March 2016
	Comments
Brief description of the proposed research methods including, in particular, whether human subjects will be involved and how	Human subjects will be directly involved as participants in semi-structured interviews lasting approximately one hour. The interviews will take place on a one-to-one basis between myself and the participant only. No other human will be present at the interview.
Ethical issues that may arise (if none, state "None" and give reasons)	Due to the potentially sensitive nature of the data collected from participants during the interviews, the data will remain confidential and anonymous and will be protected from being circulated into the public domain. Methods such as locking hard copies of the data into a secure cupboard will be employed and password protecting any digital data on a secure personal laptop. This will be clearly stated on the individual consent forms for research participants. The human subjects involved in the research will not include individuals under the age of 16, or any vulnerable adults.

How will the ethical issues be addressed? (if none state n/a)	A proactive approach to managing ethical issues for this research will be adopted. Individual informed consent forms will be completed and provided to the participants ahead of the interview. All data collected during the primary research will be anonymised to ensure that the names of the participants are protected and replaced with pseudonyms (e.g. Participant A, or a colour). Any references made to organisational names or other individuals during the course of the one-to-one interviews will also be amended to retain anonymity. Electronic copies of the data collected will be stored securely on my password-protected personal computer, which is only used by me and will be backed up to a personal hard-drive, which will be stored at a separate and secure location. All hard copies of the data will be locked away in a secure cupboard at a separate and secure location. Electronic and hard copy data will be accessible to me only. Hard copy 'extracts' of the data, however, may be shared and viewed with the researcher's PhD supervision team, and potentially to fellow postgraduate researchers to enable discussions around data analysis techniques. All documentation will be made anonymous prior to this, by replacing names with pseudonyms for instance, to maintain participant confidentiality. Through engaging in such discussions the researcher hopes it will ensure that the data analysis techniques being applied are appropriate and being carried out effectively. In these discussions the emphasis will be placed upon anonymity of the participants and redacted extracts only will be utilised.

Has informed research consent participants of been considered? If appropriate, has an consent form completed?	Informed consent of research participants has been considered and will be applied to consistently to all research participants of this study. All participants will be asked to sign the informed consent form before any data collection commences. The individual informed consent forms will provide a brief overview of the main research aims and objectives, also outlining the anticipated data collection process, the requirements of the participants, and the ethical considerations that have been applied to this research. A copy of this form will be retained by the researcher and a second copy will be retained by the participant. Participants will also be provided with the option of withdrawing from the interview at any time. The individual informed consent form will be reviewed with the researcher's principal supervisor beforehand to ensure that it is suitable. This document will be provided to research participants when approached to take part in the research, and will be signed before any data is collected. The participants will be made aware in the individual informed consent forms that the data collected will be used for the purposes of this research primarily. It may, however, also be included in future academic publications and presentations in a variety of forms and for a variety of audiences. It will always remain anonymised, however, without disclosing any details of the research participants, and will only ever include redacted extracts.
Has organisational consent been considered? If appropriate, orga has an consent form completed?	Organisational consent has been considered, and as aforementioned any references to organisational names during the course of the interviews during the data collection stages will be made anonymous. An organisational informed consent form will not be utilised in this study, as individuals will be contacted directly as opposed to going through their organisation to gain access to them.

Please tick to confirm acceptance that it is your responsibility to store and destroy the data appropriately. ☐√

Student Signature (indicating that the research will be conducted in conformity with the above and agreeing that any significant change in the research project will be notified and a further "Ethical Issues Form" submitted).   **Date:** ………11/07/17….. **Student Signature:**…*A Garvey*………………

Supervisor:

I confirm that I have read this form and I believe the proposed research

will not breach University policies.

Please Note:

The appropriate completion of this form is a critical component of the University Policy on Ethical Issues in Research and Consultancy. If further advice is required, please contact the School Ethics Sub Committee through the Academic Support Office in the first instance.

Appendix 7 – Diary Extract Examples

Date of interview: 14/09/17
This was my second pilot interview. The participant had been bullied by peers at the same organisational level. Her story made me think about power relations where a senior individual is bullied by peers, and I reflected on homogenised and some negative assumptions about management as a grouping that I have held in the past. In terms of my interviewing technique, I tended to ask her questions verbatim on the script, and made a mental note to be more conversational, but then persisted with rigidly sticking to the questions. There was a slight apprehensiveness in my interview technique too, which I think I disguised. Towards the final segment of the interview, the Dictaphone stopped working, even though I had recently charged it. Therefore, for approximately ten minutes of the interview, I had to write notes to capture the participant's responses. The participant was understanding about this, and responsive to my apologies, but I must make sure the equipment is in full working order, and not repeat such a fundamental error in future interviews. The CDA data analysis template was guiding my interpretations focusing on the macro-level in particular, so I decided to include thematic analysis to facilitate a more holistic and inductive approach. This worked very well indeed, enabling me to undertake a more comprehensive analysis of her responses from micro-, meso- and macro-angles.
Date of interview: 13/11/17
This was a lengthy interview and the participant did not seem to answer the interview questions directly. When the issue of power arose, I assumed that power imbalance was a factor in the workplace bullying situation in my questioning and became immediately self-conscious of my assumption. During the interview, I then had to slightly alter the dialogue towards being open-ended in my questioning style. I found myself thinking that I would not be able to use the data generated from the interview, because the participant seemed to be digressing. I could not relate to her framing either. When I listened to the recording again, however, of course everything that was relayed to me was of vital importance to understanding workplace bullying. Similarly, when analysing the data, both CDA and TA were excellent in enabling me to make sense of the participant's responses because they enabled an analysis that helped me to capture her experience.
Date of interview: 15/11/17
The participant was very lucid and unrestrained in her discussion of her experiences. Re-telling her story seemed to elicit previous emotions. Ultimately she felt that the workplace bullying that she had experienced was due to the actor's personality and traits. I must admit, I felt irritated by this because of my philosophical and structural position. I reminded myself, however, that it is vitally important to understand, reflect and report participant's perspectives in the research, and not simply default to my preferences. I also discovered some literature about the importance of transparently reporting negative cases and outliers, a point that I must include in the methodology and findings chapters. I discussed this interview reflection with my supervision team who recommended additional literature sources concerning the importance of reflexivity.
Date of interview: 11/12/17
The participant taught English Literature in a previous role and his observations came replete with literary references, which I found fascinating. In particular, The Trial by Kafka was mentioned a few times, which resonated with me due to it being one of my favourite novels. The FE college where he worked was making redundancies through

bullying, and he considered the process to be grossly unfair. He was animated when discussing the various issues but after a while, he started to discuss how workplace bullying had impacted upon him in terms of his mental health. At that point, I almost felt selfish conducting the interview and gathering information for my PhD research, and I adopted the position of listening. I reminded myself afterwards, however, that this research is important, in terms of understanding people's experiences and reporting it, and that my approach towards the analysis is about generating new insights into why bullying happens. I did not follow through adequately on various prompts and so I was disappointed with that aspect of the interview. Later, I reminded myself that I am still going through a process of becoming a researcher and acquiring skills along the way. I acknowledged later that going with the train of thought of participants is essential, rather than prioritising the framing in my schedule. I will also bear this in mind for the next interview and endeavour to improve. After a month, I contacted the participant by e-mail to ask him about his experience of the interview, which he described as liberating, precisely because it focused on political factors.

Date of interview: 23/02/18

The interview took place with a Professor who spoke about her own personal experiences of workplace bullying and supplemented them with her academic knowledge of neoliberalism and managerialism, without any prompting from me. I'm not sure why the latter surprised me. Her conceptualisations were intellectually stimulating and it was difficult to comprehend why she was bullied for being inadequate in her role. My interview technique has improved and the conversation flowed well. I found myself enjoying the interview because of her knowledge of neoliberal policy and hence my critical bias was apparent in my thinking. I reminded myself, however, that all participants' accounts are valid, important and worthy, regardless of their perspective, and mine. I did wonder whether readers of the thesis would consider the interview almost contrived given my philosophical assumptions and her expertise and comments. I raised this at my supervision meeting and they pointed out that participants will vary in terms of their knowledge and framing of the topic under investigation, and they described the participant as a 'subject expert', which I will bear in mind for future research.

Date of interview: 12/07/18

The participant had a very sophisticated and nuanced perspective on organisational life and a sharp awareness of societal inequalities, based on his own experiences. Although, my thesis centres around issues such as class, the participant's view of his own political and social identity based on class-based notions surprised me. He described the solidarity of the trade union movement, which made me reflect on how trade unions are portrayed. I asked myself - has a common sense developed due to ideological forces that portrays unions negatively and as powerless? He also had a unique notion of power, particularly, the misunderstanding of power abuses by those in authority, which differed from other participants, with him describing their power as weak and fleeting. I wonder whether my surprise at the content of the interview and conversation has to do with the PhD making me believe somehow that I'm more well-informed than the participants. I must avoid making such assumptions. The interview did make me think about Gramsci too, and his insistence that every person is their own philosopher. When conducting the data analysis, I felt that it was vitally important to include the participant's quote of power being weak and illusory, rather than my bias for power stemming from a position of strength.