

Taking the 'Leap of Faith'? The Narrative Construction of Trust and Distrust in Further Education

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In dedication to the incredible students I have had the pleasure to know and work with
#LoveOurColleges #ReimagineFE



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Abstract

Christina Donovan, PhD Educational Research

Taking the 'Leap of Faith'? The Narrative Construction of Trust and Distrust in Further Education

Without healthy levels of trust, there is a greater risk of relationship breakdown within institutions. High stakes accountability practices, fuelled by a neoliberal policy environment, have had a lasting impact upon organisational culture; and as such practice has become fuelled by risk aversion and self-interest. This thesis considers the impact that this climate has had upon how dispositions towards trust and distrust are constructed within institutions. In doing so, it posits that institutional values and culture play a significant part in shaping interpersonal affiliations, and therefore participation and dialogue are of central importance for building institutional trust. These concepts have been explored through a case study of staff and students on a Level 2 programme within a Further Education College in the North of England. Data were collected over a period of six months, and involved semi-structured narrative interviews with 15 participants, including 10 students and 5 members of staff.

Using the Dialogical Narrative Analysis (DNA) approach, a total of 10 narrative typologies have been identified relating to broader narrative tropes of 'Trust' and 'Distrust'. Engagement with these tropes informed the way participants constructed their narratives; influencing levels of engagement with the institution through the positionality of self in affiliation with, or against various others. The findings of this study suggest that disposition towards trust or distrust in relation to the institution can significantly impact upon the way interpersonal relationships are constructed from both a staff and student perspective. This appears to be further linked to the individual's perceived ideological alignment or misalignment with the institution; which has important implications for a culture which valorises competitive individualism. This suggests that greater attention must be paid to the cultivation of trust cultures through values-led leadership which respects and promotes greater collaboration and participation within the institution.

Key Words: Further Education; Trust; Distrust; Neoliberalism; Risk; Narrative Research

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Introduction

“I will not tell you what you want to hear but what I know to be true because I have lived it. This truth will trouble you, but in the end, you will not be free without it, because you know it already” (Frank, 2010: 63)

I feel that it is important to acknowledge from the outset of this thesis that what follows reflects my own experience as much as it does my participants. Prior to embarking upon a PhD, I spent five years (2010-2015) working in the Further Education (FE) sector; a sector which occupies a very special place in my heart for a variety of reasons. However, during my short career I became increasingly disillusioned with how those that should be at the heart of our work, students, were becoming increasingly distanced, homogenised and forgotten by those with the most influence to transform their lives. I became acutely aware of the way in which FE institutions, despite the best efforts of many of the professionals working within it, continued to undermine the inclusive values they espoused. I saw the ongoing reproduction of inequality.

If I am completely honest, I had no desire to undertake a doctorate so early on in my career, but I found myself in a position in which I was no longer able to conduct my work with integrity and authenticity. The reason for this is because, as I saw it, I was part of a system which did not sufficiently meet the needs of the students I was working with. My desire to understand why this is the case led me, somewhat intuitively, to the position I found myself in four years ago. It was becoming increasingly clear to me that there were political and institutional practices which did not account for, or recognise the experiences of students, and thus did not adequately support teachers (and other education professionals) to do the best work they can in such a complex system. My questioning was only enhanced after I conducted my Masters research in 2013 (see Donovan, 2018 for related publication).

My experiences are echoed by the ‘dancing princesses’ (see Daley et al., 2015), who together developed an edited collection of papers which championed the creativity and compassion of the FE sector I knew, albeit within a policy environment which did not serve to support this energy. Maxted (2015) said of her research with FE practitioners:

“Values are not recognised. They disappear from people’s thinking and discourse... finding themselves within an education system that was, as they saw it, at best uninterested in social justice and at worst, the main state apparatus by which

inequalities are maintained and reproduced, resulted in extreme cognitive dissonance and profound moral unease” (Maxted, 2015: 40)

The sense of moral unease described here spoke to a familiar sense of discomfort which I felt in my own practice as a student voice coordinator. The conflict between what I wanted to achieve for the students I worked with, and the appropriation of the work we were doing by management, led me to experience what I now understand as a crisis of professional identity. My struggle to maintain integrity in my work was consistently challenged by the management structures I fell within, creating almost daily conflict in my working life. It was a memorable day in December 2014 when I walked out of the institution, shaking with tears as I headed towards an emergency appointment with my GP; the last conversation with my line manager still ringing in my ears (“can you just send me that report for the governors before you go?”).

Here I sit in 2019, understanding with so much more clarity what led to the events of that day in 2014. This thesis is written with the deepest respect for the participants who made this study possible, and for those whose voices have yet to be heard. When trust is absent from your life all those things that connect you to others also cease to exist. The profound loneliness and anxiety associated with a story permeated by distrust is part of my own story, but also echoes throughout the pages of this thesis; contained within the stories of the staff and students who agreed to share theirs with me. I therefore present these ideas in complete solidarity with the storytellers this thesis represents, as well as those who their stories speak to. There is also hope in the folds of these pages, which have allowed me to reconnect with my authentic self and have renewed my commitment to the transformational nature of this wonderful sector, and the wonderful people who keep *The Values of FE* aglow.

General Overview

Trust is both deeply personal and deeply structural. As such, trust is a concern as much associated with the individual as it is with cooperation for social good. Indeed, trust is at the root of many things that are normally considered desirable (Rothstein, 2013). However, *how* one chooses to trust others is critical. A society that is based on strategic or particularised trust is one which views the world as a hostile place, and is prone to authoritarianism; whereas a society which is based on generalised trust is one where responsibility is shared, and its fate is dependent on collective effort. Generalised trust is at the heart of building

social capital (Putnam, 2000): to help individuals see others as a part of their 'moral community' as opposed to threatening, and is also linked to optimism, and a sense of control over one's life (Uslaner, 2002; Rothstein and Uslaner, 2005). It therefore follows that how a government behaves has the potential to transform how individuals in societies choose to interact with one another. Indeed, whether a government chooses to act in the best interests of its citizens or not led Rothstein (2013: 1009) to assert that "the fish rots from the head down" when it comes to trust in government and trust in society.

Education is often held as the ground upon which social capital is won or lost (Putnam, 2000). As such, education providers which do not foster the conditions necessary to build generalised social trust (Uslaner, 2002) risk holding back many of the most vulnerable in society. The degree of trust that exists within educational institutions is a key factor effecting inclusion (Coffield et al., 2007), and also restricts the agency of teachers who work to support students (Gleeson et al., 2015). It is therefore necessary to understand how public policy in education can influence trust between government, the educational establishment and the individual.

The relentless pace of education policy throughout the 1990s and 2000s have induced unprecedented instability in the sector (Keep, 2006). The prevalence of free-market practices that the further education and skills sector has been subjected to over the last thirty years has seen services, which were traditionally the preserve of locally-accountable authorities, being gradually co-opted by centralised education policy to serve a different purpose. This new purpose, influenced by what Harvey (2005) refers to as the 'neoliberal project' is one which is more concerned with the freedom of the market than it is freedom of individuals. This changing set of policies call into question what the purpose of education is, whose needs it is supposed to serve and in what way these needs are supposed to be met (Apple, 2006). The 'neoliberalisation' of education policy has not necessarily much changed the government's perspective on the core purpose of statutory further education, but has caused a dramatic shift in how it is ideologically underpinned, fundamentally effecting the values and operational practices within the sector, and therefore how trust relationships are forged within further education colleges.

The sea-change in organisational culture brought about by neoliberal practices has increased surveillance, increased managerialism and reduced autonomy. Gleeson et al. (2015: 87) posit

that “marketization, managerialism and funding centred-ness have reduced caring in FE”. Therefore, to improve conditions in which inclusion and creativity can be cultivated, the question of trust has been identified frequently by the research literature in this area (for example, see Hill, 2000; Avis, 2003; Thomson and Wolstencroft, 2018). However, what the research in FE consistently fails to acknowledge is the complexity of the concept of trust itself. What exactly these writers mean by trust is quite opaque, as well as the grounds upon which they suggest that trust can be built. We know from the work of trust scholars that trust is something incredibly difficult to build and far too easy to break down (Lewicki et al., 2016). However, Uslaner (2002) describes the concept of trust as ‘sticky’, as its state doesn’t change much over time, particularly in relation to societies. This suggests that while perceptions of trust can remain constant, a ‘crisis’ of trust (Möllering, 2013) can cause trust to become ‘unstuck’, creating a lasting impact upon trust relations within the institution. Therefore, if it is the case that successful education establishments are those that are characterised by close relationships with community, and underpinned by principles for social good (Fielding, 2015; Field, 2005; Putnam, 2000), it is in the best interest of the sector to understand how trust works. To do this, however, it is necessary to understand the context in which these relationships are constructed to fully understand the impact that it has had upon staff and students today.

The evolution of education policy in British society since the post-war period has been described as a move from collectivism to individualism (Gerwitz, 2001; Fielding, 2015): typically driven by beliefs in ‘consumer choice’ and ‘meritocracy’, and twinned with values of ‘self-responsibility’, ‘competition’ and ‘standards’ (Ball, 2013). Indeed, individualism is key to understanding how neo-liberalism has reconstructed the narrative of education, which neglects the value of community and social life. However, the consequences of individualism go deeper than determining how we view the purpose of education, to how we perceive, behave and interact with others in society: in other words, *why* and *how* we choose to trust others.

This central aim of this thesis was to examine the impact of the competitive environment described here upon the construction of relationships amongst staff and students in Further Education. Therefore, the research centred around a single case study of one Level 2 course

¹in a college in the North of England. Given the limited research examining trust in the sector, and further still the limited research examining this phenomenon from the student perspective, it was appropriate to take a 'narrow and deep' approach to this project. In unpicking the dynamics of trust and distrust within a single case, we can consider how the narratives contained within this thesis speak to other contexts.

By conceptualising participation in the institution from a trust perspective, I was able to unpick the powerful influence that trust holds over the lives of individuals, and the impact this has upon how they position themselves within the institution. The distinctiveness of using trust as a paradigm to examine these relationships lies in the backgrounding of the critiques of neoliberalism and managerialism which are dominant in the research literature, and foregrounding how the presence of these practices take hold within the lives of the individual; importantly from the perspective of both staff and students.

As such, the following research questions have guided this research project:

1. How do staff and students understand trust and trustworthiness?
2. What are the antecedents to building trust?
3. How do perceptions of trust and trustworthiness influence interpersonal relationships amongst staff and students?

Structure of the Thesis

The first chapter of this thesis explores the relationship between policy and practice in the construction of trust or distrust in more detail. In doing so, it conceptualises the evolution of distrust in the sector and demonstrates how low trust functions to breed low trust within a highly performative, competitive environment. This chapter contextualises the study within the broader research relating to the impact of neoliberalism in FE, and offers the rationale for using trust as a conceptual framework for analysing relationship construction in further education, highlighting the importance of identifying ways to increase trust in the institution.

¹ A pre-GCSE level course, normally vocational and predominantly delivered within Further Education Colleges

Chapter 2 provides an outline of the theoretical framework used to analyse trust and distrust within the research project. It provides a detailed introduction to the concept of trust from a theoretical perspective, drawing upon the key ideas that have influenced the approach taken to the data. It further contextualises the process of building trust by introducing Beck's (1992) concept of the 'risk society', demonstrating how it can support our understanding of the processes detailed in Chapter 1 from a theoretical perspective.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed account of the methodological approach used in the design of this doctoral project, as well as a procedural overview of the methods used in the conduct of the research. It further justifies the application of a social constructionist paradigm, and the use of narrative approaches in research; further describing the use of Dialogical Narrative Analysis (Frank, 2012a), detailing how this has been applied to the analytical framework that was developed.

Chapters 4 and 5 provide an in-depth account of the key narrative tropes which arise from the research that serve to construct trust and distrust in the lives of the participants in this study. The analysis identified ten key 'narrative typologies' associated with the 'narrative tropes' of trust or distrust, each of which are explored in detail through the narratives of the participants who engage with them. These chapters also go on to discuss the dialogic relationship between these narratives, and how they function to influence the storyteller's positionality towards trust and distrust. For clarity, a definition of the key terms used within these chapters are described below.

Narrative Trope: Within this thesis, the term 'narrative trope' is used as an umbrella term to describe the essence of 'Trust' and 'Distrust' within the analysis. The narrative tropes encompass all the typologies discussed within each of the analysis chapters. Featured in Chapters 4 (The Narrative Construction of Distrust) and 5 (The Narrative Construction of Trust), the two narrative tropes are outlined at the beginning of each chapter. They function as what Frank (2012a) refers to as 'narrative templates', upon which storytellers narrate their understanding of trust and distrust within the context of their own lived experiences.

Narrative Typology: Within the context of the analysis, a 'narrative typology' refers to the various 'types' of story which are fall under the narrative tropes of trust and distrust. They represent the emergent themes which arose from across the sample which describe the lived experience of trust and distrust.

Chapter 6 goes on to illustrate how engagement with narrative tropes collectively constructs 'narrative identities' through four participant case studies. This chapter complicates the binary nature of 'trust' and 'distrust' by illustrating how individuals live with a combination of both, all of which position them within the institution; causing them to affiliate with some characters and distance them from others. The chapter also discusses what I have called 'metamorphosing narratives'. These are narratives which support the participants to deal with complexity, and hold their own in the face of the vulnerability that distrust exposes them to. Within the analysis, the term 'metamorphosing narrative' is used to refer to those narratives which change the story, or add further complication to a story which disrupts the essentialist influence of the narrative tropes of trust and distrust. These narratives alter the perspective that the storyteller takes when telling their story, allowing it to move in different directions or protect them in the face of vulnerability.

Chapter 7 goes on to synthesise the analysis provided in chapters 4-6, contextualising the findings within the broader context of the literature review and the theoretical framework. It identifies the key assessments that are made by participants in the decision to trust, and how this influences their positionality within the institution. In doing so, this chapter constructs some key claims in relation to trust and distrust in the institutional context, and the effect that policy and institutional culture has upon this process.

The concluding section of this thesis provides an overview of the key findings of this study, highlighting the central claims made by this research. It discusses the original contribution this thesis has made to the existing body of knowledge. The implications these findings have for policy and practice within the FE sector are further discussed, as well as limitations and directions for future research.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

The Problem of Trust in Further Education²

1.1 Introduction

Public policy of the late 20th and early 21st century has increasingly portrayed education as intrinsically linked to economic progress across the developed world (Heyes, 2013; Walker, 2012; Antunes, 2016; Bartlett and Pagliarello, 2016; Banjac, 2018). Particularly during times of economic instability, education is brought sharply into focus, where it seems to be unproblematically positioned by governments as both the cause of, and solution to, economic instability and productivity (Slater, 2015). This is particularly the case in the Further and Adult Education sector. Indeed, there have been attempts by the European Union to play an increasing role in the development of adult education and vocational training policy (Bowl, 2017) to protect the economies of Member States. For example, Heyes (2013) notes that in the period post the 2008 global financial crisis, the European Commission called for member states to protect their economies by investing more in 'Training-to-Work' provision. This trend across Europe, and indeed amongst capitalist societies across the globe, to view vocational and adult education as a tool for economic advancement encourages the notion that education serves only as a source of production for 'work-ready' human capital (Atkins, 2017).

It appears to be a common understanding, therefore, that increasing economic competitiveness lies at the heart of the concept of self-improvement. In this sense, the 'lifelong learning' required to be competitive builds social cohesion through 'a strategy to develop consumer-citizen participation in the social, cultural and political spheres of their societies' (Barros, 2012: 125). However, Bartlett and Cino Pagliarello (2016) assert that this narrow-minded view of education has been to the exclusion of social justice concerns as

² Parts of this chapter have been accepted for publication in a special issue of *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*.

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large investors and governments play a key role in placing employability and the labour market at the centre of education policy. As Barros (2012) is keen to point out, 'Lifelong Learning' should be viewed as distinct to 'Lifelong Education'. This view is supported by Banjac (2018), who argues that European youth policy is constructed on the premise that modern life represents a constant series of 'threats'; while it is the young person's individual responsibility to mitigate against these threats by seizing as many 'opportunities' as possible. In doing so, individualism and competitiveness serve to regulate the behaviour of citizens towards objectives which complement that of the labour market economy. Yet despite this, youth unemployment rates in the UK and the EU show little sign of significant improvement in recent decades (ONS, 2018; OECD, 2018).

In England, the purpose of FE is hotly contested, and is more often defined by what it is not, than what it is. Influenced heavily by both education policy and industrial policy, it is a debate that sits within an ideological landscape which encompasses a broad range of stakeholders internally (students, lecturers, leadership teams) and externally (employers, funding bodies, trade unions, membership organisations, local and national government). Each party is broadly motivated by different intrinsic and extrinsic factors, which are often at odds with the wants and needs of the other players in the environment. This has created fertile ground for fractious, low-trust relationships to emerge between those that create policy, those that implement policy, and those that are the subject to such policy.

Successive governments have become increasingly instrumentalist in their approach to FE policy in the last thirty years as provision which had largely been provided locally by Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and voluntary groups have become increasingly rationalised and audited. The 1992 *Further and Higher Education Act* served as a catalyst for rampant competition within the sector. Incorporation divorced it from LEA (Local Education Authority) influence and forced Further Education Colleges (FECs) to compete with other colleges for funding in a 'quasi-market', which was centrally administered through the newly-established Further Education Funding Council (FEFC³). The Council's strict conditions for funding (Bailey and Unwin, 2014) served to extend accountability into central government (Lucas and Crowther, 2016). However, the increased autonomy afforded to institutions allowed the government to disassociate from the practices of individual organisations. Although it has been argued that the need for change in the FE sector was justified (Simmons, 2010), it was the "dominant political belief by government in a competitive market that formed the basis

³ The latest iteration of which is the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)

of incorporation” Lucas and Crowther (2016: 587). It is therefore the long-term impact of this ideological position, rather than the need for change itself, which has rippled through the sector since.

The drive towards competition was guided by the principle that the freedom afforded by deregulation would permit opportunities to innovate or fail on the assumption that high quality service would be guided by a free market. Given the perceived lack of importance bestowed upon the further education and skills sector, it has been argued that FE was ripe for this kind of experimentation (Keep, 2006). Providers were forced to compete with neighbouring institutions, which brought with it an aggressive form of individualism (Finlay and Finnie, 2002). The upshot of the forced competition imposed by the Act led to budgetary deficits within FECs, diverting attention away from pedagogical matters to excessive administration (Keep 2006). Job losses, the casualization of employment, and reductions in conditions of service and pay led to substantial industrial unrest (Williams, 2003), which has seen a recent resurgence as the impact of austerity bites harder than ever in colleges across England (O’Leary and Rami, 2017).

In such circumstances, it would seem practically impossible for institutional leaders to think in the long-term, and find a way to profit from investment in institutional stability, which as I will explain in Chapter 2, is imperative for the maintenance, and reproduction of, trust (Sztompka, 1999; Möllering, 2013). Instead, competition for resources fuels self-interested practices. This is something Rothstein (2005) refers to as the ‘problem of the commons’: how individuals can be best convinced to work together when the distribution of resources is finite. This has important implications for leadership practice.

“What is often forgotten when people engage in disparaging commentary about principals is the indomitable power of the external environment...yes, principals make swingeing cuts to their staffing, and yes, they may impose contractual changes...and yes they may create teaching environments in which teachers are continually surveilled and evaluated. But let us remember that these are not voluntary acts of managerialist despotism... the principal’s sole responsibility is the survival of their college and the education of their students, if that is threatened it is incumbent upon them to take whatever action necessary” (Page, 2017a: 35-36)

The sentiments highlighted by Page (2017a) above, are echoed in a report written by Dame Ruth Silver for the Further Education Trust for Leadership (FETL), who discusses the worrying tendency for FE leaders to be heavily criticized, and in some cases abused, for their perceived failure. She argues that the ‘shame’ associated with this can lead to leadership practices

which lack transparency, avoid consultation and display an unwillingness to be vulnerable (FETL, 2019); all attributes which can amplify distrust.

The competitive environment, coupled with political and financial uncertainty, has steered the practice of college governance towards managing the huge risks, most of which are financial, associated with failing to 'get it right'. Although this threat is very real, in part due to the ever-increasing scrutiny and 'intervention' by the FE Commissioner (Hill et al., 2016; Burke, 2018), the changing shape of governance in recent years has nevertheless been to the perceived detriment of those who are working at the 'chalk-face' (Hill, 2000; Gleeson et al., 2015). Competition for the market-share of students has caused many scholars researching within the English FE system to criticise how such drastic changes in FE policy have proved corrosive to building trust relationships amongst staff within FECs (Coffield et al., 2007; Avis, 2003; O'Leary, 2015; Boocock 2015, 2017). Page's (2017a) response to these criticisms on p.11, which derives from his chapter, *In Defence of the Principal* (see Daley et al., 2017), is provocative. The piece endeavours to justify, from the perspective of Principal, the distrusting behaviour often exhibited by those in FE leadership. Whilst the chapter appears to present in many ways as a blunt instrument with which to point out the strategic, political and managerial failures of FE institutions, it at the same time creates a legitimate line of intellectual inquiry which I will explore in this chapter.

In this literature review, I will analyse the development of policy in the sector, exploring the ideological drivers which have led to the precarious environment in which the FE sector now operates. The neoliberal ideology which underlies policy change arguably represents more of an existential threat to individuals working within this environment than the practical uncertainties it creates. I will therefore posit that these existential threats fuel the increased and ongoing instability in the sector; created by a policy environment which favours competition rather than cooperation. The abundance of external threats and the desire to manage them has been described by Thompson and Wolstencroft (2018) as a move from trust to 'mistrust'. They argue that FE leaders have little say in the direction of their organisations due to the heavy-handed political influence over vocational education strategy. The implications for interpersonal relations in this context cannot be ignored. The preoccupation with risk and uncertainty has segmented interpersonal relations, which have become divided along ideological lines, and has reduced trust in the perceived 'other'; fundamentally transforming the nature of relationship construction amongst all those who participate in FE institutions.

1.2 From Collectivism to Individualism: A Potted History of Adult Education

The roots of the sector that we know as 'further education' today are complex. The history of working class and adult education in the UK cannot be sufficiently told through a single narrative, but instead can only be understood as a set of distinct practices reflecting specific points in history: reflecting all the social, cultural, political and economic conditions of its time (Bowl, 2017). The term 'further education' is an umbrella for various forms of education or training for those studying after compulsory school-age, variously referred to as 'General Further Education and Training', the 'Post-Compulsory Education Sector', 'Post-16 Education', 'Vocational Education and Training (VET)' or 'Learning and Skills Sector'. This can include Sixth Form Colleges, Further Education Colleges offering largely full-time academic or vocational provision or apprenticeships, specialist colleges, community education centres and various pockets of private and voluntary provision offering adult education and training on a full or part time basis. The diversity of provision is significant, although there have been frequent attempts in education policy throughout history to homogenise, standardise and rationalise how FE is offered, often as a result of efficiency-based policies and reduced public spending. It has served a core, yet understated, purpose in British life both in terms of the emancipation and constraint of working people. As Woodin (2007: 483) states, the education of working people has 'been a continuing thorny issue that has resonated widely with implications for the organisation and values of society in general'.

This history has been accompanied by an ongoing debate as to what the purpose of adult education is and its relationship with students, practitioners and industry; as well as the communities in which it sits. As such, at various points in time it has been a site of collective political action, self-fulfilment, training and employability skills; which has invariably given rise to tensions as social, political and economic climates have shifted. It is the negotiation of these prerogatives that have determined how, why and to what extent the government has been involved with the sector. It is through the investigation of this rich and dynamic history that we can understand how trust, or lack thereof, has influenced the direction of statutory education policy. This may help to explain why the system as it is today remains both a site of success and 'second chances' for some, and social exclusion for others; something which will be explored in more depth within this thesis.

Throughout history, governments have had a vested interest in education as the key to providing the skills necessary to meet the needs of the economy. Industrial and technical

training has, therefore, always been concerned with the practicalities of skilled labouring. During the pre-war period, this was largely informal and provided in-house. LEAs had powers to provide further education and training, but this was not a statutory requirement. 'Adult education', however, was a distinct and separate sort of provision for working people. Woodin (2007) traces the pre-cursors of adult education to the late 19th Century and early 20th Century. Typically seen as a form of social emancipation, knowledge was considered a necessary, almost spiritual, form of nourishment: essential for the development of moral character and active citizenship (Woodin 2006; 2015; Goldman 2000). Goldman (2000) traces a mutually beneficent partnership between grass-roots workers' education organisations such as the WEA (Workers Educational Association) and the 'intellectual classes' (often graduates, professors, teachers and journalists) in attempts to understand the world around them through extended university programmes. Although commentators such as Fieldhouse (1995) saw this relationship as a way of containing the working classes and preventing them from becoming too radical in their politics, for Goldman (2000: 291), this relationship reflected that 'men and women were intrinsically part of social and political communities from which they could not be divorced... [as such] the commonwealth of shared ideas was a more powerful agent of solidarity than the pursuit of gain in market transactions'.

In a sense, adult education has always been a fringe movement. It has existed despite, rather than because of, policy implemented by government, which has always prioritised technical training in line with a core economic purpose. It could be argued, therefore, that adult education is not necessarily as ideologically opposed to government policy, as it is an entirely distinct form of education which lives on through communities united by a set of values, whether within a statutory organisation or otherwise. As a site of political solidarity, the adult education movement could be described as typically built on a form of generalised social trust, in which men and women from across class boundaries gathered to share and learn from each other. There was a sense of the 'shared fate' (Uslaner, 2002) in these communities, and Goldman (2000: 298) captures the spirit of this cooperation as he posits that 'working class education was a broad road to be trod together by many, rather than a ladder to be climbed by the few'. Trust was forged here through a shared perception of the world, and place within it, something which I will return to in more detail in Chapter 2. Although this ideology may not have been shared by the government or certain elite social classes, it was a tradition which existed to enrich the lives of those involved, with little involvement from policy-makers. It could therefore be perceived that it was the presence of government

involvement that threatened the existence and core values of adult education, rather than the absence of it.

1.2.1 Movements Towards Regulation

It is through the White Paper, *Educational Reconstruction* (1943), that we begin to see early interest from government in adult education practice. The paper resonates with a war-time sense of collectivism and an aspiration to make education accessible to the masses, and particularly stressed the importance of continuing education post-compulsory school age. As well as nationalising vocational training, the paper considered that 'provision of opportunity to develop... capacities and interests are alike essential if the best is to be made of the nation's youth' (DoE, 1943: 16). Education here had a sense of moral purpose over-and-above a competency-based rationale; holding parity of esteem with skills for employment. This paper formed the basis of the *1944 Education Act*, which placed a statutory duty upon LEAs to make adequate provisions for further education including vocational training but also 'cultural training and recreational activities' (DoE 1944: 33) and prepare people for their 'responsibilities of citizenship' (DoE 1944: 35). Although some believe that when adult education was co-opted by local governments, it did so at the expense of worker education's more radical ideals (Bailey and Unwin, 2014), it did for the first time put in place a statutory requirement for equity and accessibility for all. Given a lack of resources in the post-war period, the Act also actively promoted collaboration and cooperation with local providers for common good. It stipulated that when preparing any scheme of further education, providers must 'have regard for further education provided for their area by universities, educational associations and other bodies and shall consult any such bodies as aforesaid' (DoE 1944:34).

In his paper recounting Further Education outside the jurisdiction of local authorities, Simmons (2014) describes the pragmatic and productive nature of the partnerships between the LEA, industry and voluntary organisations; so-called the 'responsible providers' that were directly funded to deliver such training by the LEA. However, delivery of provision varied between LEAs according to level of need, and often depended upon the 'local ecology of individual, political and administrative arrangements' (Simmons, 2014: 58). There appears at this point to be a 'best interests' approach to further education provision rather than any real attempt to dictate it; with no intention to decide what provision should be provided, or who should deliver it. As such, there was freedom to shape education on a local level, demonstrating a faith in the competence of local authorities to be best placed to meet local

need. Nevertheless, Field (1995) is keen to point out that this was the point at which voluntarism started to be replaced by regulation, which was further reflected in the reforms of technical instruction which were to follow.

The 1944 Act was particularly critical of the inadequate industrial training being delivered, and in an attempt to regulate vocational training further the White Paper, *Technical Education* (1956) proposed a radical change in the way technical education would be delivered. The narrative of industrial decline and a struggle to keep pace with emerging competitors across the world hailed a call to action to avoid economic downturn. The paper would contain the seedlings of what would become the first Polytechnics, in a proposal for twenty-five regional colleges of advanced technology that would allow for the training and professional development of skilled labourers.

Combined with the 1956 White Paper, the 1966 Paper, *A Plan for Polytechnics and Other Colleges*, clearly tightens the government's grip on the sector further, focusing on need to 'concentrate' further education courses "in the interests of the most effective use of resources" (DoE, 1966: 3). Rationalisation of curriculum and restriction of which institutions were eligible to provide such provision were in line with the government targets for education and skills. Further Education Colleges were no longer permitted to commission any new courses of higher education, which in some cases led to the consideration of mergers to meet these targets. Government policy thus played an active role in shaping how the sector operated.

From the mid-1960s onwards, we observe the gradual transition from a 'welfarist' politics of education to a 'post-welfarist' strategy which would continue throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Gerwitz (2001) described this as a transition from an equitable distribution of social goods to competitive individualisation. Significantly, a difficult economic period placed education firmly as the site for reform that would put the country back onto the competitive stage. This 'new vocationalism' focussed education policy on preparing young people for the labour market (Field, 2006). The arrival of the 'technological age' also placed adult education and lifelong learning back on the agenda, insofar as there was a perceived crisis of competence as the 'knowledge economy' began to come to the fore. The need for economic advancement was thus the key driver behind educational policy reforms. Field (2006) suggests that lifelong learning became 'a convenient political shorthand for the modernising of the education and training systems'. At this point, a centralised training agenda seems to send a significant message that 'government knows best' when meeting the needs of the

skilled economy. This relationship had shifted from one of generalised trust to the beginnings of a particularised form of trust, where what is best for education and skills is determined centrally, though how the teaching is delivered is still led by professionals at this point.

Woodin (2007: 483) argued this could be the point at which UK education policy had been 'strained through a neoliberal sieve from which human capital versions of 'lifelong learning' have been retained while liberal education has been discarded'. In contrast, the UNESCO (1972) report, *Learning to Be*, argued that an emancipatory form of education was necessary to combat the risk of social and cultural isolation. The Report advocated for radical educational reform, contending that the education system in many countries was too hierarchical and that the 'dominator-to-dominated' nature of the teacher-student relationship was in urgent need of reappraisal.

The *Learning to Be* report was also highly critical of what it calls 'blocked societies', in which powerful elites continued to have too much influence and social mobility was stalled. This reduced opportunities for students to feel 'enabled' to choose their own path for the future. The authors of this report were advocating here a very different kind of relationship between state and citizen than that of UK policy currently. It extends beyond skills acquisition and human capital concerns, emphasising a need for strong, active citizenship where people are encouraged to learn throughout the lifetime for their own personal development, as well as for employment. This reflects a similar sense of purpose as the working-class education movement, where the reciprocal nature of knowledge exchange and the development of social and political agency was highly valued.

In the UK, however, an economic slump in the 1970s led the government to prioritise vocational training to prepare young people for the labour market (Bowl, 2017). Despite a rhetorical commitment to lifelong learning, very little was done in real terms in response to improving access on a national level, suggesting that "there [was] perhaps an ever-closer connection and blurring of distinctions between education and the needs of the labour market" (Field, 2006: 7). This has been defined by Bowl (2017) as an ideological shift from viewing education as a public good to a market commodity.

'The deconstruction of welfare has been predicated on a reconstruction of the notion of citizenship, which in much adult education work is now defined in terms of individuals' responsibility to accept and assume their place in the economic world order' (Bowl, 2017: 32)

In 1976, the famous 'secret garden' speech at Ruskin College by James Callaghan (Callaghan, 1976) again called into question the means and purpose of education. For the first time, he overtly challenged the right of professionals to curricular autonomy in the sector and called for more radical reform than had previously been seen. The source of blame for industrial decline was placed at the feet of the educators and while some of the failings cited may have been legitimate, it is a very clear indication of where education was to go in the future including the suggestion of a standardised curriculum and uniform inspectorate commissioned to investigate standards. This was the beginning of a very clear call to action for government to actively intervene with the work of schools and teachers: an approach which was later enshrined in law by subsequent governments via the *1988 Education Reform Act*.

1.2.2 The Quasi-Market

The arrival of the 1988 Act cemented a relationship between the government and educational institutions which was characterised by a verification-based trust. The state's skills-based priorities seem to have all but subsumed the liberal values that lay in the roots of adult education. FE funding would be restricted throughout the 1990s increasingly to concentrate on curricula that had direct relevance to employability (Bailey and Unwin, 2014). Collectivism and cooperation had been replaced by notions of individualism and competitiveness. In effect, government control over the further education system had been cemented (Field, 1995). The 1988 Act and the subsequent 1992 amendment, the *Further and Higher Education Act*, removed the sector from LEA control, and imposed a centralised funding system. This kick-started a process of competition and restricted curriculum offer which would be centrally audited and controlled. The value that was once placed in education for communal and 'recreational' purposes discontinued in many establishments as the FEFC restricted funding to courses that were not directly linked to 'employability' (Bailey and Unwin, 2014). Although some colleges continued to offer this provision on a fee-paying basis, provision none-the-less dwindled considerably, further reinforcing the notion that education was useful only insofar as it served the labour market or economic needs. For Martin (1996: 30) 'central government's drive towards the marketization, commodification and privatisation of public goods and services' undermined the traditions and purpose of adult education.

Within the further education sector, incorporation led to substantial industrial unrest in the 1990s. Research conducted by Williams (2003) investigated the reasons for the scale of

industrial unrest, which was attributed to budgetary deficits, forced competition for students and increased institutional autonomy which led to attention being diverted from pedagogical matters to the excessive administration required by the changing funding regime, and to the devaluation of teachers. The main reasons cited by participants for the strike action were job losses, the casualization of employment, conditions of service and pay. Williams (2003) thus attributes the causes of industrial action not to Incorporation itself, but how the policy changes were implemented. The value-orientation of those who made the changes and the response of the employees weakened professional relations which underpinned an increased sense of anxiety and insecurity (ibid) that was set to continue under the New Labour administration. Insecure work environments not only led to reduced professional autonomy, but also reduced trust in the employer-employee relationship through reduced cooperation.

To slow down this move towards competitiveness, in 1997, the FEFC published the report, *Learning Works*, which was written for the Widening Participation Committee, and in response to a need to increase participation in post-16 education and training. The report made recommendations for widening participation in post-compulsory education, and highlighted the limitations that free market principles could impose upon this work, arguing that 'this thinking blighted not just the British economy but the whole of British life. It demands urgent reappraisal' (Kennedy, 1997:10). The drive of colleges to not only be 'business-like' but also *act as if they were* businesses had become prevalent, bending to the will of the free market over the needs of its students. Kennedy (1997: 3-6) criticised the 'tendency of many colleges to go in pursuit of the students who are most likely to succeed' and further claimed that 'justice and equity must also have their claim upon arguments for educational growth'. Yet this report did little to influence the policies that would later be adopted by the New Labour government post-election in 1997. Williams (2003) is particularly critical of the failure of New Labour to address the wounds that had been inflicted upon the sector post-incorporation. As such, it can be assumed that weak relations heightened authoritative hierarchical management practices, which thus fuelled an increasingly particularised, conditional form of trust within institutions.

1.2.3 The Standards Agenda

The New Labour government (1997-2010) continued to push forward a highly bureaucratic form of governance, albeit with increased spending. *Learning to Succeed* (1999) not only

continued to forge an ever-closer relationship between learning and the economy but did so with an even stronger sense of competitive individualism, encapsulating a spirit of 'self-help'. There is a level of dissonance evident as the language of 'cooperation', 'collaboration' and 'partnership' sits alongside policies which reinforce accountability and inspection; bringing in OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education) to ensure the maintenance of 'rigour' and 'standards'. The further standardisation brought about by OFSTED's Common Inspection Framework and the further incorporated Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to replace the FEFC undermined the so called 'freedom' and 'autonomy' awarded to further education colleges.

OFSTED's role to quality assure teaching on programmes within FECs led to punitive penalties for those providers who did not meet these appropriate levels of 'rigour', which reinforced the power of the LSC to push its 'skills' agenda. However, not only did this involve further financial control of institutions due to more detailed conditions of funding, but also the ability to dictate to a greater degree the pedagogical activity of institutions (O'Leary, 2015). Illsley and Waller (2017) contend that the standards agenda has curbed much of the discussion regarding curriculum development and practice, which in effect led to an increasing focus on 'college' needs rather than 'student' needs. In doing so, it secured the government's centralised agenda to steer adult and vocational education towards the needs of a skills-based economy, whilst also setting the template for establishing control on an institutional level. In essence, the New Labour government enacted policy for greater inclusion, but on very specific terms.

Writing on trust in the New Labour administration, Johns et al. (2012) suggest that the ideological position of New Labour neglected social solidarity; instead advocating freedom and choice as a route to a socially just society. Using Sztompka's (1999) conceptualisations of trust (explored in further detail in Chapter 2), Johns et al. (2012) suggest that in the betrayal of 'old Labour' values, there was a resultant loss of faith in government from the perception of the general public. They further argue that because equality of *opportunity* overrode that of *economic equality*, the administration served to undermine trust by foregrounding negative conceptualisations of the unwaged population; portraying them as 'feckless'. By reifying individual responsibility in this way, Johns et al. (2012) argue that 'entrenched ideological views' led to a 'misidentification' of the problem (ibid).

The New Labour government veiled the inherent contradiction that the market favours those who are already privileged and continued to replicate long-standing structures of inequality and social class (Ball, 2013; Ball, 2005; Whitty, 2002). Finlay and Finnie (2002: 154)

demonstrate that at its worst, competition between further education providers had seen more wide-spread use of coercive tactics to either attract or retain students: “comments about ‘luring’ or ‘poaching’ pupils or of schools ‘hanging on’ to them suggest perceptions of learners as, at worst, commodities that can be traded or captured”. This infers a disregard for student needs and further demonstrates a fundamental shift in values caused by policies which force education providers to be more ‘business-like’.

By the time of the publication of *21st Century Skills* (2003), the language of further education policy became all but dominated by ‘skills for employment’, and the link between education and work had become a dominant lens through which the purpose of education is viewed (Apple 2006; Avis 2003). In a clear prioritisation of industry needs, the White Paper emphasises the employers’ ‘rights’ to expect education to meet their needs. Funding for FE was further reformed to incentivise industry-led training within colleges, which meant a reduction in choice to students in the long term. Williams (2005) studied the significance of the language of ‘skills’ used in the paper, which is used almost exclusively in place of ‘education’. The findings suggested that the ‘skills agenda’ demonstrated a strong ideological commitment to the notion that skills are essential not only for national prosperity, but for greater social inclusion. Williams (2005) argued that these assumptions were somewhat misguided. Instead, an increasing focus on the needs of employers neglects the needs and aspirations of individual students. Finlay et al. (2007) also posited that the narrowing of the purpose of FE to ‘skills’ further justifies a far narrower purpose for the sector and permits the prioritisation of business needs over individual needs. The education-work relationship was replicated throughout subsequent policy documents during the New Labour administration (for example see *21st Century Skills 2003*; *Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances, 2006*; *The Leitch Review of Skills 2006*), to the point where Coffield (2007: 9) argued that this slowly became “the sole mission, with colleges up and down the country closing courses not linked to it”.

Upon the election of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government in 2010, *Further Education: A New Horizon* was published. The government advocated ‘a truly lifelong approach to learning’ which harnessed the historical legacy of the adult education movement, whilst also placing an ever-greater emphasis on ‘self-responsibility’. This was accompanied by a 25% reduction in the budget for Further Education, and the introduction of a ‘student loan’ system for those wishing to undertake a qualification who were over 24 years of age. Learning support funds were rationalised and the means-tested grant for full

time students, Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), was abolished. This, again, further enshrined the values of individual responsibility into government policy.

Notions of individualism, meritocracy and ‘self-responsibility’ stand in opposition to collective responsibility for meeting societal challenges. Schools and colleges have become single-handedly responsible for success or failure. Boocock (2015: 728) points out that “funding and targets are two of the most powerful levers” used in government policy to meet retention and achievement targets on an institutional level, whilst keeping day to day governance at a distance. The top-down policy reforms that were implemented between 1997 and 2010 assumed certain levels of ‘self-interest’ and served as a central strategy for meeting the Coalition government’s human capital targets; allowing it to assert control under conditions of apparent ‘freedom’ (Steer et al., 2007), where ‘meta governance’ has become the new form of state power (Slater, 2015). Boocock (2015) found that retention became a top priority for most staff, and high levels of resentment were reported for the “disproportionate amount of time and energy” (ibid: 728) that was used to meet targets for poor attenders.

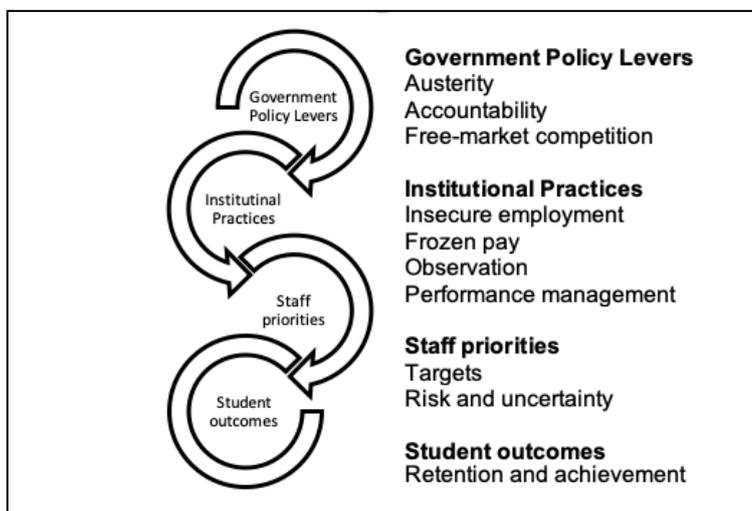


FIGURE 1. THE EVOLUTION OF LOW TRUST IN FURTHER EDUCATION

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between the policy levers which Boocock (2015) refers to and organisational culture. This relationship represents a low, ‘particularised’, form of trust between education professionals on a political, institutional and interpersonal level. It illustrates the extent to which trust between government and institution has become ‘strategic’ (or conditional), as I will explore in more detail in Chapter 2. This has been accompanied by increased authoritarianism and increased ‘gaming’ strategies within

organisations to maintain the financial health of their institutions, as well as 'outcomes' for students. In other words, the government will trust institutions only insofar as they meet their strategic objectives, and institutions will only trust governments if they remain financially afloat. The acceleration of policy initiatives since 1992 also demonstrates a lack of trust in institutions to achieve success in the long term, as each policy has asserted further authority, increased regulation and threatened budget cuts.

1.3 The 'Neoliberalisation' of Learning

A neoliberal ideology advocates freedom from the state via systematic decentralisation of services. In the case of education, while the increased autonomy afforded to institutions did allow the government to distance itself from the practices of individual organisations, these so-called 'freedoms' were accompanied by tighter central control in the form of increased surveillance and accountability. This reveals a contradiction in terms as the language of freedom is set against a strict state authoritarianism. Apple (2006) illustrates how running alongside neoliberalism is the somewhat contradictory ideology of neo-conservatism; which maintains an interest in the maintenance (and teaching) of 'standards', 'discipline' and 'values': exposing tensions between the discourses of freedom and control. However, for Apple (2006), both positions form what he refers to as a 'hegemonic alliance' in which self-interest, competition and 'standards' are promoted above all else in education in Western societies.

This drives the state to intervene according to what should or should not be valued, or in what order those things should be prioritised within the education system; which according to Hill et al. (2015: 59-60) consist of 'control of curricula, control of pedagogy, control of students [and] control of teachers'. Although there is an explicit tension between liberation and control in the functions of neoliberalism and neo-conservatism, they nevertheless combine to give particular values more precedence.

'Behind much of the neoliberal and neo-conservative 'reforms' is a clear sense of loss of control... the binary opposition of the we-they becomes important here. For dominant groups, 'we' are law-abiding, hardworking and virtuous. 'They' – usually poor people and immigrants – are very different.' (Apple, 2006: 22)

The uneven distribution of value and power has significant consequences for what happens on the ground in colleges, making these divisions visible. To retain the 'control' that Apple (2006) refers to above, the values espoused by those in power become reflected in an agenda of 'standards'. In practice, this manifests itself through relentless assessment practices,

increased surveillance of teaching, monitoring of performance and uniformity of curriculum (Slater, 2015; Woodin, 2014). This is further accompanied by strict hierarchical management structures (Avis, 2003), which has led to teaching practices which are performance and target driven, rather than student-centred; a phenomenon which Ball (2005) has termed 'performativity'. This not only dictates what is considered 'valuable' learning but also the kind of student that is *valued*. As Ball (2005: 144) asserts, within this value-system it is therefore the issue of "who controls the field of judgement [that] is crucial".

In the thirty years since Incorporation, the sector has faced some of the most dramatic and rapid policy change globally (Keep, 2015), which has served to keep FECs along with their many and various stakeholders in a constant state of flux. This chaotic environment has led to a fragmentation system, void of a common understanding of its role and purpose in society (Lucas and Crowther, 2016; Duckworth and Smith, 2018). For example, Smith and O'Leary (2013) found that the 'local knowledge' of educators was de-valued by managers due to a centralised preoccupation with meeting targets; exposing the conflicting interests between policymakers, FE leaders and practitioners. This fundamental difference in value-orientation continues to increase the distance between those who lead and govern FE institutions, and those who learn and work within them (Boocock, 2011). These insecure work environments have heightened anxieties and insecurities amongst staff members and reduced professional autonomy and trust in the employer-employee relationship (Williams, 2003; Thompson and Wolstencroft, 2018). The *All Change* report produced by the Institute for Government (2017) attributed policy churn to a conflict in perceived purpose of FE and the high level of discretion ministers have in making changes to the system.

The subject of this research is timely, given the insolvency regime which came into force at the start of 2019 (AoC, 2019a); increasing the burden of risk imposed upon college corporation bodies. Although to date the number of interventions by the FE Commissioner for financial concerns have been limited, the Department for Education have expressed their belief that this is set to increase three-fold under this new regime (DfE, 2018), coupled with a bleak financial forecast (AoC, 2019b). The explicit link between OFSTED grading and institutional financial health reflected in this change further reinforces the responsabilisation of leadership in conforming to central objectives, and limits opportunity to delegate authority to staff within colleges.

Ongoing instability and forced competition in the sector has therefore proved corrosive to building trust relationships amongst staff within FE Colleges. This has been illustrated

through Coffield et al.'s (2007) research which focuses on the lack of participation of key stakeholders in policy design and O'Leary's (2015) research on graded teaching observation. O'Leary (2015: 79) argues that "OFSTED's role has moved beyond that of inspecting standards, to one of defining them". Such a performative institutional environment has led to the construction of trust relationships which are based upon strategic objectives; serving to reduce autonomy and creativity (Avis, 2003).

The rigidity of the environment has also led to governance models which promote agent self-interest (Boocock, 2015; 2017). The P-A (Principal-Agent) model of governance which has become prevalent in the sector assumes that 'agents' require incentives to meet institutional governmental targets and thus conform to meet the demands of the 'principal'. This model encourages gaming behaviours, and privileges conformity at the expense of individual agency and local decision-making. Boocock (2017) argues that to improve creativity and build trust, a move away from this self-interested model of governance would be required, especially as the recent re-organisation of the sector incentivises regional skills development: a tension which has been explored by Spours et al.'s (2019) research into the Area Based Review process.

'An effective policy of localism will require a significant shift away from the current low-trust principal-agent solutions manifest in funding and monitoring systems, driven by marketization, managerialism, 'targets and terror' (Boocock, 2017: 308)

The instrumentalization of self-assessment and the rigidity of OFSTED grading criteria indicates the level of conformity required to achieve existential security, which Boocock (2013) argues is to the expense of meaningful critical reflection in the relentless pursuit of favourable OFSTED grades. The lack of security experienced by both institutions and individuals, therefore, results in an anxiety-producing culture (De Lissovoy, 2018) embedded within the context of the performative organisation.

1.3.1 Austerity, Employment Anxiety and Trust

The previous Lib-Con Coalition (2010 – 2015) and current government's (Conservative 2015 – Present) austerity strategies have had a particularly aggressive impact upon the FE sector (IFS, 2018), and there have been no signs of the Government slowing down its approach to this already impoverished sector since. As such, cuts to courses, departments and redundancy have become an everyday feature of working within the Further Education environment (O'Leary and Rami, 2017). The continued strain upon these professional

relationships is ever-tightening as disputes over pay get louder (Burke 2018), and ever-more lecturers consider leaving the profession (Jones, 2015).

A workforce survey by the Association of Colleges (AoC) reported an overall 17.8% sector staff turnover rate for the year 2016/17. Whilst 42% of management staff and 48% of teaching staff did not report a reason for resignation, staff at 80% of colleges reported stress and mental ill health as a main reason for sickness absence. Further, 61% of colleges reported compulsory redundancies (AoC, 2018). The report makes explicit the fragile environments in which staff in FE are working, contributing to the strain created by high stakes policy. In Bowl's (2017) study of community education lecturers in the UK and New Zealand, nearly a third had experienced redundancy or reduced working hours, while many more had experienced significant job insecurity.

Uncertainty, instability and insecurity all carry significant implications for trust. A study of note by Wang et al. (2018) into job insecurity in the UK (in particular the period following the 2008 financial crisis) found that collective trust in management was a key mediating factor in softening feelings of job insecurity and anxiety during times of uncertainty. The study posited that the notion of 'hidden job insecurity' (characterised by the loss of 'valued job features' such as pay or responsibility) played an important role in feelings of commitment towards an organisation. Within the FE context, professionalism and autonomy are abstract 'valued job features' which have been lost, which mitigates against institutional commitment and loyalty in the retention of educators in FE, leaving the 'job survivors' to do more with fewer resources (ibid).

Since 2015, the Conservative Government's continuation of the austerity project has accelerated the skills agenda, coupled with crippling budget cuts. A report published by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) captured a 40% reduction in government funding over the last decade (IFS, 2018). Colleges have struggled to stay afloat, often being forced to merge with other providers in line with the Area Review process. The Area Reviews proposed a further 'rationalisation' of curriculum offer to focus on local and national industry needs whilst also maintaining 'tight fiscal discipline' in doing so (DBIS, 2015). The increased presence of the FE Commissioner and the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) have forced Governing Boards in FE to become preoccupied by the precarity of their financial position to avoid the risk of college closure. The present overhaul of FE provision has left the sector with an ever-present sense of uncertainty, as the government turns its attention to reforming apprenticeship provision and prepares to roll out its flagship 'T-Levels'

programme.⁴

It therefore seems to be that in the case of education, the problems facing the sector are three-fold: its position in the wider political landscape as both the cause and the solution to economic problems, forced competition with other providers and its accountability to centrally imposed ‘standards’. The high-risk policy environment, combined with a continuing austerity project (Ryan, 2018), diminishes the capacity for FE organisations to enhance cooperation.

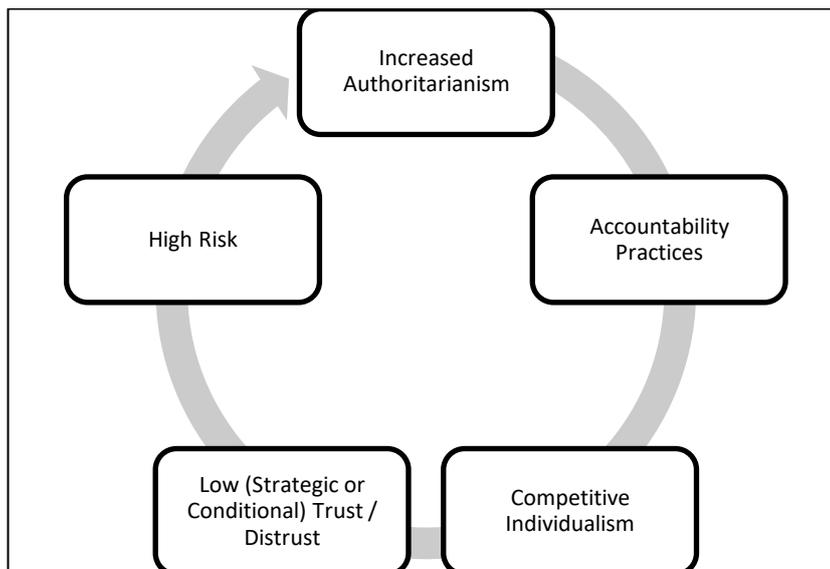


FIGURE 2: THE ‘SOCIAL TRAP’ IN FURTHER EDUCATION (ADAPTED FROM ROTHSTEIN, 2005)

The ongoing conflict between unions and policy-makers exposes the breakdown of trust between employees, institutions and government. *Figure 2* illustrates how the existential security and instability created by policy churn can be understood to create a ‘trap’ of weak trust which is perpetually reinforced. This is what Rothstein (2005) refers to as a ‘social trap’ (a concept I will return to in Chapter 2), whereby distrust prevails based upon a perceived norm that no one else will be trustworthy; often because of a historical institutional culture of low trust or distrust. Rothstein (2005) argues that low trust increases individualism and reduces cooperation on the general perception that others will also be uncooperative. This is a cycle of behaviour which is difficult to reverse. The ‘social trap’ in the FE context, therefore, allows us to understand how the perpetual reinforcement of high risk creates low trust across the sector, which filters into inter-professional relations. The social trap concept also supports Keep’s (2006) assertion that policy churn and intervention in FE has led to

⁴ ‘T-Levels’ are the current government initiative to reform vocational education, and to promote parity of esteem between technical education and ‘A-Levels’.

policy stagnation, in which the power of the state is reproduced and reinforced by political short-termism.

'A [continuous] cycle of state intervention [forces central government] to intervene in order to shore up earlier interventions, targets and policy goals; and this process in turn is driving a continuous reproduction and strengthening of state power within the Education and Training system' (Keep, 2006: 52)

Keep (2006) further argues that the state secures its control over the market by using various agencies as enforcers, of which OFSTED, the FE Commissioner and the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) are currently key players. Therefore, the centrally derived need to control institutions makes it common sense for college leaders to shape the behaviour of employees towards governmental objectives. In this way, the social trap keeps conditions ripe for uncertainty, while performative practice within institutions becomes embedded; introducing risk in every stage of the process. This makes behaviour easier to manipulate and control, reducing the scope for autonomy afforded to teachers, as illustrated in *Figure 1* above.

1.4 New Public Management, Self-interest and Survival

The discussion so far has demonstrated that the move towards free-market practice in the public sector has been accompanied by the rhetoric of individualism; incentivising self-interest through the creation of a high risk, high stakes environment. To manage this level of uncertainty, a different style of management has become necessary. Commonly referred to in the literature as New Public Management (NPM), this style of management can be considered the backbone of a modern neoliberal state, where risk and competition foreground everyday practice. According to Clarke and Newman (1997), 'new managerialism' makes efficiency an imperative in public sector management: this would allow for the creation of a more efficient government at a reduced cost within a high stakes environment (Keep 2015; Vallentin and Thygesen 2017). By relaxing regulation and reducing the power of the unions, NPM practices also support managers to establish the 'right to manage'. This so-called 'right to manage' is made legitimate by tools of audit and performance management.

In practice, the NPM approach has changed the nature of leadership in education and other public sector organisations. Leadership roles which were traditionally the occupation of experienced educationalists and pedagogues, have now become occupied by experienced business managers: preferring the title of 'Chief Executive' rather than 'Principal'. As such, the guiding principle of 'fairness' which might have traditionally been attributed to the spirit

of public service, have instead been gradually replaced by principles of 'efficiency' (Vallentin and Thygesin, 2017). A recent study by Connelly et al. (2018) found that this move towards 'organised professionalism' in the secondary school sector had fundamentally changed the job of a head teacher, and as such, the kind of person who wants to move into this role. Smith and O'Leary (2013) have described how leadership under NPM represents a quest to seek 'quantitative wholeness', whereby the only data which is considered meaningful is numerical. They assert that "managerialist positivism... normalises the representation of complex sociological and qualitative phenomena in reductive and numerical forms" (Smith and O'Leary 2013: 246). Not only does this approach reinforce hierarchical norms within institutions, but also valorises numerical data to the exclusion of complex ecologies of practice which form the basis of meaningful educational relationships (ibid).

The distance that has been created between 'those at the top' and 'those on the ground' is stark, and O'Leary (2016: 10) contends that the work of principals has become so far removed from "the realities of what it means to be a practitioner that it is debatable whether they have the skills or knowledge base to support improvements in teaching and learning". This was demonstrated by Hill (2000) when his research into lecturer perceptions of leadership revealed that less than 50% of teachers surveyed felt that they were trusted by their governors or their college management team. Further, over 50% of the respondents also reported that the then FEFC and the Department for Education at the time were 'poor' at representing their professional interests. It is evident today in the continual conflict between unions and policy-makers that there has been a complete breakdown of trust between education providers and government, which is reinforced by this 'trap' of weak trust.

Professional autonomy is central to building and maintaining trust relationships. Avis (2003) believes that trust is central to creativity, yet it is absent from the organizational hierarchies that are typical of many further education institutions. He argues that risk-taking must take place in high-trust environments as 'working conditions marked by hierarchical and segmented relations will fail to...lend themselves to creative endeavour' (ibid: 320). Environments such as these can only foster weak or 'synthetic' forms of trust which are conditional, and based on particular outcomes (Czerniawski, 2012).

Therefore, the establishment of a centralised, hierarchical system of management has been to the detriment of a more democratic system which would have been more conducive to building trust (Boocock, 2015). For example, a research study by Vallentin and Thygesin

(2017: 151) attributes NPM to the dissolution of trust in Danish public services, stating that 'NPM reforms have been blind to the value of cooperation amongst public agencies... undermining trust'. The assumption that those at the centre know best, with limited opportunity to participate in decision-making or provide feedback is one of the central pillars of the system that has been created (Keep, 2015). The sentiment that 'followers' need only follow has been similarly stated by Coffield (2017) in his work on the evolution of OFSTED.

Lazzarato (2009) contends that what lies at the heart of neoliberalism is not capital, but competition. Thus, for neoliberalism to survive, the conditions for competition need to be created, leaving individuals and institutions vulnerable to 'losing'. In creating levers which manipulate behaviour, the assumption is that individuals will act to protect themselves against uncertainty (Boocock, 2015). In this sense neoliberalism not only shapes what educationalists do, it *becomes* what educationalists do as individuals struggle to survive within a high-stakes culture. Ball and Olmedo (2013: 85) posit that 'neoliberalism speaks and acts through our language, our purposes, decisions and social relations'. As such, staff are at risk of becoming *subject*, rather than subjective.

The reduction of professional autonomy is attributed to a climate of distrust by Thompson and Wolstencroft (2018), who found that middle managers felt deceived by leadership, who fell through on their promises to afford them autonomy, instead enforcing the pursuit of corporate objectives. The neoliberal machinery used to regulate the behaviour of staff in FE (observation, inspection, audit and performance management), therefore is symptomatic of the need to control the conditions in which people can work, illustrating how it is the cultivation of a low trust environment that the manager's 'right to manage' becomes legitimised.

Control is required when risk is high, reflecting Page's (2017b: 2-3) assertion that 'the proliferation of teacher surveillance... is driven by a preoccupation with risk... [the need to] know the future as if it has already passed'. O'Leary and Wood (2017) have further observed that although individual graded lesson observations are no longer carried out by OFSTED, college leadership teams in many cases continue to grade individuals due to the 'deeply engrained practice' of observation (ibid); illustrating how difficult rebuilding trust can be once it has been lost.

1.4.1 A Preoccupation with Risk and Uncertainty

Neoliberalism and NPM therefore represent the antithesis of trust. In such an unstable policy

environment, it has been argued that in FE, the associated risks are passed down the social structure to those who work at the base of organisational hierarchies (Avis, 2003). In a context where institutional trust is low, and the risks are high, it makes more sense to control, than to trust. Control 'reduces complexity by regulating the number of possible outcomes' (Vallentin and Thygesin, 2017: 154). This is compatible with a neoliberal mind-set, as Lazzarato (2009: 120) argues that while the entrepreneur is free 'the freedom of the worker and consumer... are made subordinate'. In this sense, it is the teacher and the student who are the most vulnerable actors within a neoliberal further education context.

This means that the somewhat perverse effects of accountability practices, which are supposed to ensure increased success rates for learners, instead reduce trust to the extent that it significantly effects levels of inclusion in FE (Coffield et al., 2007). This can be attributed to the nature of 'strategic trust' relationships, as this often leads to 'gaming' behaviours (Rothstein, 2013). Trust is calculated based on a prediction of what another agent might do (Rothstein, 2013; Uslaner, 2002) and in this particular context, the prevalence of 'cream-skimming' in order to improve league table positions often results in this type of behaviour being applied to students themselves (Boocock, 2015; Finlay and Finnie, 2002) as a result of the 'high stakes' environment in which teaching takes place (O'Leary, 2015).

This problem was exposed by *The Wolf Review* (2011), a report which turned its attention to addressing the "diet of low-level vocational qualifications, most of which have little to no labour market value" (Wolf, 2011: 7) that has become prominent in colleges. The report accused colleges of cynically chasing funding from an ever-shrinking pot to provide 16-19 year-olds with 'inferior' qualifications of little value; a practice which Allan (2017) argues has increased since the raising of the participation age in post-compulsory education. This is demonstrative of what Smith (2007) refers to as the 'ducking and diving' nature of colleges, who to ensure institutional survival became preoccupied with practices of self-interest.

The individualism which underpinned the New Labour notion of social justice overlooked issues of structural inequality which affect the participation of individuals from marginalised social groups (Ball, 2013). Indeed, Thomlinson (2006: 18) criticised the 'morally dubious' nature of meritocracy, in which only the 'deserving' are given chances to progress, feeds into a "right wing belief in education as a mechanism for the development of a hierarchical society". In other words, the "language of choice covered a reality of increasing selection" (Finlay et al., 2007: 51) by education providers. Therefore, although studies by Jacquette (2009) and Boocock (2015) suggest that widening participation initiatives did benefit

disadvantaged students, it did so to the detriment of those students who were in most need. This has been illustrated by Boocock (2015: 178), who argued that there was further incentive “not to enrol ‘risky’ students if there was some doubt about their ability to contribute to success rates, at the expense of needs-based equity”.

Gleeson et al. (2015) are keen to point out that the data drawn upon by policy-makers (grade profiles and success rates) do not fully reflect what a provider does in producing inclusive, transformational learning environments. Policy strategies taken on by institutions mean that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are less valued under this new economic framework of education (Boocock, 2015), demonstrating decreased trust in students as well as staff. As Smith (2007: 43) has reflected in his work on the impact of the ‘quasi-market’ environment, ‘the “preferred student” carries no baggage, needs no extra support... is *predictable* in being able to achieve accreditation’ (emphasis added).

The idea of the ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ student also emerged as a key theme in my previous research exploring staff perceptions of ‘risk’ within the college context (Donovan, 2018). Interviews with teachers, support staff and leadership revealed a bias against vulnerability, a term which was frequently used to describe students within the organisation who were at risk of attrition. As the notion of ‘risk’ operated at once as a behaviour attributed to an individual, and to signal potential financial losses, participants experienced a self-conscious tension between their responsibilities both as educators and as auditors.

“The tensions that existed between the uses of ‘risk’ in this context were made explicit in the dissonance experienced by the managers and lecturers who at once had a duty to support students displaying either internal or external ‘risk behaviours’, and also protect the interests of their course through the monitoring of profit and loss” (Donovan, 2018: 76)

This illustrates that in a context where institutional trust is low, the most vulnerable students can become collateral damage, as internal relations become fractured by high risk. It is important to consider the impact that such conditional trust in colleges has upon the teacher-student relationship. Atkins and Flint (2015: 25) observe “hegemonic and normative discourses in which young people are variously positioned in discursive practices over which they have no control”. The fate of a student’s success largely depends on the relationship they have with their educators. Within a high-risk environment, new hierarchies are formed based on the perceptions of student ability. Uslander (2008: 27) states that “our actions not only reflect our own desires and beliefs, but also how we feel that others will act”. The ‘imperfect’ information about students informs perceptions, and thus can influence the

behaviour of individuals towards them. This process has been normalised, and has become an accepted, even if contested, part of teaching practice (Boocock, 2015; Gleeson et al., 2015; Donovan, 2018).

This environment exposes the 'uncomfortable obligation' (Skinner et al., 2014) that many practitioners working within the sector feel: the conflict between what they feel they should do, and what they are asked to do. This conundrum illustrates the problem that Page (2017a) poses at the start of this chapter; that the external environment forces the hand of leadership when making decisions. While the effect of distrust is to curb creativity, autonomy and agency (Boocock, 2011; O'Leary and Wood, 2017), trust represents much higher perceived risks which threaten intervention by various arms of government. Conversely, distrust does not tolerate deviance. Thompson and Wolstencroft (2018) found that various 'control' mechanisms were utilised such as micro-management, interference, constant judgement, unreasonable demands and excessive monitoring by senior leaders to establish conformity. As such, in the act of withdrawing trust, or threatening to withdraw trust, the "threat of removal is used as a sanction and a control mechanism" (Skinner et al., 2014: 216).

The instruments used by leadership teams such as audit, observation and performance management work to undermine the values of individual actors in the system by encouraging them to work towards extrinsic rather than intrinsic goals (Boocock, 2017), as the pressure to 'conform to central policy diktats' has been at the expense of agency and local decision making (ibid). Boocock (2011) believes that this has effectively shut down the availability of critical spaces for effective reflection on quality and open governance. The insecurity inherent in the competitive environment therefore induces anxiety into both institutions and individuals as they "are made responsible for the conditions they confront and for their ultimate destinies in this context" (De Lissovoy, 2018: 23). Anxiety names the tension inherent in the system and the potential crisis of institutions within a free-market environment (ibid).

1.4.2 Operating in The Cracks

The palpable lack of trust that is undoubtedly felt in many further education colleges across the country has led some educationalists to seek solace in those who share the same values as they do. The perceived 'logic' of incorporation as a means of control has neglected the values which many teaching staff hold dear (Lucas and Crowther, 2016). Smith (2007) argues that commonly shared goals and values associated with practice such as social justice and

community empowerment (often centred around localised knowledge) is inconsistent with the values of NPM. Therefore, the desire to form cross-institutional networks such as 'Tutor Voices' (a network of further education college lecturers where best practice could be debated and shared) functions as a symbolic refusal to trust the system which professionals find themselves in. In doing so they can, to some extent, exercise their agency to believe and act differently to the status quo. This reflects what Ball (2016: 1139) might refer to as the 'politics of refusal', in which "speaking plainly when there is a difference between the speaker and the listener [and] speaking frankly even when it flies in the face of the prevailing discourse" becomes paramount in the assertion of an identity (individual or collective) which reflects an outright opposition to the accepted practices of NPM.

Counter-narratives of resistance and resilience in the face of significant financial and political challenges are abundant in the literature (see Daley et al., 2015 for examples of subversion in FE). Indeed, Coffield et al. (2007: 728) remind us that "policy makers are not writing upon a blank slate, but on a page already made up of 'ecologies of practice'"...and as such the hereditary values of the adult education movement remain evident in pockets of the sector (Field, 2006). Mycroft (2016: 419) invites us to consider that "as neoliberalism tightens its hold, possibly its death grip... as educators we can seize this [opportunity to resist through practice] or let it happen to us". However, Bowl's (2017) research into adult educator identities in the UK and New Zealand found that those who had a long career in the sector were more likely to be able to 'operate within the cracks' and continue to exercise professional agency in the classroom, which she attributed to stronger trust relations with managers. Even so, for many experienced practitioners this is not always the case, and the somewhat binary nature of Mycroft's proposal is demonstrative of a withdrawn faith from leadership. This practice of refusal makes explicit the 'unwelcome trust' given to them by those in power. According to Skinner et al. (2014: 214), 'unwelcome trust' is 'the reluctance to be trusted' for a variety of reasons including when "the pressures of obligation may be intolerable... counter to their interests... or personal ethics". In this way, active distrust towards those in power serves as a form of ideological resistance.

This resistance, or reciprocal distrust, represents the fractured nature of institutional relations. It functions as "a rejection of comparison and improvement, and indeed of excellence" (Ball, 2016: 1141). This state of affairs diminishes opportunities for trust repair; as each party continues to use strategies based upon distrust to protect their interests. As Page (2015: 157) has reflected in previous work: "in the very act of subversiveness we

concede the loss of what lies at the heart of being professional: autonomy, authority and trust". Thus, the impact of reciprocal distrust between the key actors at play has resulted, to a greater or lesser extent, in an ideological stalemate. Lucas and Crowther (2016) have argued that neoliberal marketeering in FE has served to distract everyone in the field, resulting in what they refer to as 'unorganised social spaces' where discussion of core values in the FE sector relating to professionalism and curriculum have been neglected.

1.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter sought to conceptualise the evolution of distrust in the Further Education sector, through the analysis of policy and its implementation within institutions. In doing so, I have illustrated how policy churn can be perpetuated by fractured, low trust relations between government and institution. Policy dogma is further reinforced through high risk and uncertainty, which manipulates institutions into conforming to central priorities based on a skills agenda; fuelled by national and global competition. By exploring the question of distrust conceptually, I have been able to directly address the violation of trust associated with the increased surveillance of teachers; which has reduced the scope for individual autonomy and creativity. The acceleration of policy initiatives since 1992 demonstrates a lack of trust in institutions to achieve success in the long term. Increased regulation has, contrary to the rhetoric, reduced financial and curricula autonomy. This is driven by the struggle to establish a sense of control on the part of the institution, or maintain a sense of autonomy on the part of the individual.

The normalisation of competition and individualism raises important questions for inclusion in the sector. The perceived need to manage risk constructs 'vulnerability' undesirable; making the possibility of trusting virtually impossible in this context. Placing conditions of success or failure onto the teacher-student relationship undermines the notion of education as, in itself, transformative. This has significant implications for the construction of relationships within the institution. In the next chapter, I will explore the concepts of trust and distrust in more detail, and how positionality is determined by the institutions in which individuals participate. I will further unpick the notion of risk, and how the decision to trust (in whom, in what context and why) gathers much greater significance in societies where individuals carry more risks.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

Negotiating Trust and Distrust in The Risk Society

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter demonstrated how the values of neoliberalism which have seeped into the Western psyche during the late twentieth century have brought with them an unprecedented level of risk into the experience of living everyday life. That is not to say that risk is new in itself, but that the kind of risk under discussion here is of a different character, and its influence much more indiscriminate; meaning that risk is carried, to a greater or lesser extent, by every individual that participates within such a society. According to Beck (1992), the proliferation of risk heralds what he views as the end of modernity; the collapse of industrial class-based society in which “community is dissolved in the acid bath of competition” (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001: 33) and our lives become governed by exposure to unknowable risks. As such, everyday reality becomes a matter of protecting ourselves against the accumulation of risk: in short, individuals become as preoccupied with how risk is distributed, as they are with wealth. Beck (1992) argues that this happened almost without us noticing, which indicates how living with risk has become normalised, as is our response to such risks in the course of living individualised lives (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001).

“Industrial society exits the stage of world history on the tip-toes of normality, via the back stairs of side effects, not in the manner predicted in the picture books of social theory: with a political explosion” (Beck, 1992: 11)

Beck’s (1992) argument here is that whilst the risk society has opened up new freedoms to individuals, it has at the same time weakened the fabric of industrial class society. The ‘side-effects’ of freedom exist in the form of new uncertainties concerning our place in society socially, geographically and psychologically. Traditional long held assumptions regarding institutions such as family, gender roles and work, with their associated social ties, become challenged. With these new freedoms comes (self)-responsibility, and individual choice to navigate a cacophony of ‘social hazards’; the consequences of which also become individualised.

The consequence of modernity is thus to exhaust resources to the creation of boundless risks. These risks are so multifarious that they have become normalised. As a result, “the ability to anticipate and endure dangers, to deal with them biographically and politically acquires importance” (Beck, 1992: 76). In such a society, therefore, individuals unite through shared fears rather than shared values and who we trust becomes of central importance. A fundamental point to make here is that risk exists in symbiotic relationship with trust, in that the act of trusting another involves risk; and without risk, trust would be redundant (Möllering, 2006). The vulnerability associated with placing faith in another, therefore, cannot be underestimated (*ibid*).

Moreover, the decision to trust is not merely motivated by fear, but *in whom* we trust speaks to the core of our self-understanding. In this sense, the act speaks more of the *trustor* than the trustee and as such betrayal of that trust can result in crisis (Möllering, 2006). In a risk society, individuals congregate around shared anxieties, worries and political sympathies. Our association to others is linked to the maintenance of what Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2001) refer to as ‘tightrope biographies’: to plan one’s own biography and social relations, whilst also consciously participating in a continual competition for resources. Trust underpins this tightrope metaphor as Möllering (2006: 3) considers that, by definition, trust implies “one’s own lack of certainty and the other’s room for autonomy”. Placing trust in any context leaves the trustor open to the malevolent acts of the other. Therefore, the risk society makes the issue of perceived trust (or lack thereof) in individuals and social institutions an increasingly important agenda, requiring careful analytical consideration.

The complexity of the current field of research in this area can in many ways be attributed to the diversity of interest in the concept from across academic disciplines including psychological sciences, business and management studies, political science, social science and the humanities. As such, trust has been theorised from the macro to the micro level in comparative studies of trust in society, trust in institutions, as well as personal and interpersonal trust. This gives rise to the great deal of epistemological and ontological variation which is applied in trust research (Isaeva et al., 2015). However, across disciplines there appears to be a broad consensus that the capacity to trust hangs upon a few key concepts including: *competence, benevolence, integrity and reciprocity* (Skinner et al., 2014; Lyon et al., 2016). Möllering (2006) perceives a general agreement, therefore, that trust is the perception of someone as **able, willing and consistent** in their endeavours towards the trustor. For the individual, then, in order to accept the vulnerability associated with placing

faith in another, the trustor must make an assessment of whether the other potential 'trustee' has the ability to be trusted (competence), whether they have the 'trustor's best interests at heart (benevolence or willingness) and whether they are honest about their intentions (integrity or consistency) (Lewicki and Brinsfield, 2016).

These are qualities which are powerfully shaped by perception, and whether the act of trusting another will be reciprocated (Sztompka, 1999). The act of trusting therefore constitutes a 'leap of faith' on the part of the *trustor* that the *trustee* will not betray them (Möllering, 2006). As such, conflicts in vision and purpose could lead individuals to question the best interests of other parties (as described in Chapter 1). The problem with perception, however, is that it is often based upon imperfect information (Rothstein, 2005) and as such these perceptions are as influenced by experience, as they are concerned with motivation or rational choice when making the decision to place faith in institutions (ibid).

According to Uslaner (2002) and Rothstein (2005), trust is the bedrock for the accumulation of social capital; which potentially mitigates against the damaging impact of high risk in society. Piotr Sztompka (1999) demonstrates through his work that high levels of risk inhibit the accumulation of capital within low trust societies; disproportionately affecting the most disadvantaged. However, if we can understand trust and distrust as related to inequality of social capital and risk then the question of how vulnerability can be overcome to build these sorts of social ties becomes important. Möllering (2006) argues that a 'leap of faith' is required to trust another individual, which explains how it is possible to overcome the unknown to act '*as if*' the future was certain. This is underpinned by ethical and moral considerations (Uslaner, 2002; Sztompka, 1999; 2017; Latusek, 2018), and their influence upon the decision-making process. This so-called 'moral space' (Sztompka, 2017) which builds bridges between individuals is connected to the various institutions and organisations which the individual inhabits, as well as their expectations regarding moral conduct within those spaces. These elements constitute conditions for trust-building between individuals in the organisational context; supporting us to understand how history can have a powerful influence on the present state of trust relations through what Rothstein (2005) refers to as 'collective memory', influencing the formation and reproduction of what Sztompka (1999) understands as 'trust (or distrust) culture'.

Understanding dispositions towards trust as a product of individual and collective memories provides a fruitful basis for the analysis of the FE policy environment, and how this has come

to influence relations between individuals and institutions in the sector; particularly during ongoing turbulence. Through a detailed discussion of the concepts introduced above, in this chapter I will present a theoretical framework which attempts to conceptualise the nature of trust and distrust from multiple perspectives, demonstrating how our macro-level understanding of trust in society can also support us to understand trust in the micro-level interaction; acknowledging the broader influences upon the individual and their relationship to others and their environment (Fulmer and Dirks, 2018). In doing so, it will discuss the intimate nature of relations between levels of trust, social capital and risk. Using the 'risk society' (Beck, 1992) and 'individualisation' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001) as a conceptual basis for how society is organised, it will illustrate that the decision to trust within this space is associated with perceived risk, which has a subsequent effect upon social capital. Thus, the likelihood of agents taking the 'bet' to trust another can be linked to how much they have to lose in placing it (Sztompka, 1999). Placing this bet is also contingent upon the existence of what Sztompka (2017) refers to as 'moral space', which would reduce the risks associated in placing such bets in the first place.

2.2 Trust in The Risk Society

One of Beck's (1992) central theses in his seminal work *The Risk Society* is that the emergence of risk is a direct consequence of industrial modernity. The rampant consumption of resources, and the emergence of global capitalism has inevitably produced a world full of intangible, irreversible and unknowable risks. He argues that whilst historically, risks were taken willingly by 'brave' individuals, the risk society has spawned a rise in global risks which threaten all life on earth. This makes the associated risks (for example, environmental destruction) incalculable, and they feed into public consciousness, fuelling survival instincts from indeterminable threats. As such, individuals become organised through fear of, in opposition to and in denial of, a multitude of perceived risks which threaten humanity (ibid). This inevitably has consequences for social connectedness, as the 'leap of faith' (which will be explored later in this chapter) required to trust becomes associated with much higher risks in the absence of knowledge. In this sense, knowledge has more currency than wealth in the risk society.

"Now there exists a kind of risk fate into which everyone is born, which one cannot escape without any level of achievement, with the 'small difference' that we are all confronted similarly by that fate" (Beck, 1992: 41)

A key consequence, or side effect, of the risk society is that no one is immune to the risks that have been created. However, that is not to say that individuals are affected in the same way. Just as industrial society has been characterised by uneven wealth distribution, the risk society is concerned with inequality of risk distribution. There are those who produce risks, and those who absorb them, and risks tend to accumulate at the bottom; disproportionately afflicting the poor (Beck, 1992). In this sense, Beck does not argue that the risk society represents the complete demise of class society. Instead, class society becomes backgrounded by a preoccupation with risk.

“The concave mirror of class consciousness shatters without disintegrating, and each fragment produces its own perspective... the mirror’s surface with its myriad of tiny cracks and fissures is unable to produce a unified image” (Beck, 1992: 134-135)

In other words, what might have traditionally bound communities together is in decline. The risk society forces us to act as individuals in mitigation of perceived risk. This leads to a loss of the notion of the ‘shared fate’ (importantly different to the ‘risk fate’ described above) required to trust (Uslaner, 2002). Indeed, risk makes inequalities sharper and more distinct, but our response to inequalities becomes individualised (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001). Areas for common action diminish, and risk constrains the ability of individuals to shape their biographies. Therefore, the more risks an individual is exposed to, and the less knowledge they have as to how to overcome them, the less agency they have in society. This means that the uneven distribution of both wealth and risk has important correlations with trust. The less choice individuals have, and the less control they have over their own fate, the more risks involved with trusting others.

As class consciousness becomes shattered, it becomes replaced by what Beck (1992) refers to as ‘risk positions’, in which there is a heightened consciousness of our responsibility for our own fate, and the competition to secure a preferred future.

“One has to win, know how to assert oneself in the competition for limited resources – and not only once, but day after day” (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001: 3)

According to Beck (1992), the world has become full of ‘threatening possibilities’, and it is the responsibility of the individual to make the right choice in a ‘tyranny’ of possible choices (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001). Individuals are afraid and feel threatened in an anxiety-producing culture. Importantly, knowledge functions as a powerful lever within this space as

those without knowledge become dependent on those who produce risk: the guardians of knowledge who may distort the production of, and distribution of that risk. In other words, those in power can determine acceptable levels of risk within their sphere of influence, with real consequences for those who absorb those risks. This makes the ground ripe for division between people, where the 'other' comes to represent potential 'hazards'.

"The very intangibility of the threat and people's helplessness as it grows promote radical and fanatical reactions and political tendencies that make social stereotypes and the groups afflicting them 'lightning rods' for the invisible threat" (Beck, 1992: 75)

In what Beck (1992) refers to as 'The Scapegoat Society', those that represent these invisible threats become symbols for resistance. Individual differences such as race, gender, sexuality and nationality become marked opportunities to create divisions amongst groups. In the absence of collective consciousness, people congregate around fear, and in the absence of this identity, we do not automatically see our problems as shared. Our concerns are not immediately material, but are instead struggles to construct our self-identities as "pragmatic alliances in the individual struggle for existence and occur on the various battlefields of society" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001: 40). Therefore, handling fear and insecurity becomes an essential cultural qualification if one is to avoid economic disaster. Individuals must make themselves the centre of their life plans, conduct and social relations (Beck, 1992).

2.2.1 Individualisation

The proliferation of risk has led to the process of 'individualisation' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001). This process is eloquently observed by Zygmunt Bauman's forward to their book on the subject '*Individually, Together*'. He argues that individualisation leads to:

"Communities of shared worries, shared anxieties or shared hatreds... a momentary gathering around a nail on which many solitary individuals hang their solitary fears" (Zygmunt Bauman, in Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001: xviii)

In this sense, collective action is little more than reassurance that we are all facing these risks together, as *individuals*. In a 'collectively individualised' world, social groupings are temporary, engaged with on individual terms, and as such tensions still arise from within those collectives. Individualised lives represent the absence of permanence, a 'vagrant

morality' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001) in which individuals are expected to be always on the move, driven towards what they hope will be a more satisfactory outcome.

"Modern society does not integrate [individuals] as whole persons into its functional systems. Rather, it relies on the fact that individuals are not integrated but only partly and temporarily involved as they wander between different functional worlds" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001: 23)

In individualised society, people demand control over their own money, time, living space and bodies. They demand "the right to develop their own perspective on life and be able to act upon it" (Beck, 1992: 92). It is a product of a life living with incomprehensible risks, and the need for autonomy in managing them. An individualised society in turn creates a heightened dependence upon education, the labour market and the welfare state. In the drive to quell the effects of existential insecurity in the risk society, these institutions become of great significance to individuals. They demand that individuals run their own lives, and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2001) argue that as such, neoliberal ideology reinforces this atomization, creating individualised spheres of action.

The individual's dependency on the labour market thus ties social institutions into their biographies. Within the context of this research, education becomes a particularly important battlefield to negotiate within individualised society, as educational reform becomes accompanied by a dependence upon education to survive (Beck, 1992). In this sense, individualisation becomes institutionalisation (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001). Herein lies one of the stark contradictions of the risk society: as reliance grows on institutions in the construction of individualised biographies, so does the individual's susceptibility to crisis within those institutions (Beck, 1992). Our lives are individual, but highly organised and subject to state interventions. The state becomes complicit in the individualisation of people's biographies. As such, public institutions do not respond to collective decision-making but encourage a form of 'conflictual coexistence' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001).

To go back to trust, the individualised biography carries important implications for social relations with others. In the face of risks and overwhelming choices, the consequences of which are for the individual to carry alone, making the correct choice increases in significance. In this case, the correct choice would be in which institution or individual to place one's faith. The consequence of increased risk, which as discussed earlier is disproportionately associated with those who have the most to lose, is the emergence of

danger which lurks in the peripheries of people's consciousness. This danger represents the risk of being marginalised from society altogether. This is what Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2001) distinguish between a 'risk biography' and a 'danger biography'.

"It is a difficult business to identify the various degrees of socially produced existential insecurity. The grey areas are large and obscure, for the boundaries are ultimately nothing other than the boundary perceptions of individuals... the boundary between still calculable risk biography and the no-longer calculable danger biography is wide open to subjective opinion, supposition, expectation, hope and prophecy" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001: 48)

Risk culture increases the marginalisation of individuals, making those with the most to lose from not trusting, the least likely to trust others. The consequence of making the wrong decision can lead to expulsion from society altogether. In this sense, one could argue that in place of a class society in which one must 'know your place', the risk society enforces self-responsibility, or 'no place' at all. Social relations, therefore, are hugely important for survival and at the same time carry the greatest level of risk.

2.3 Trust and Social Capital

In a society full of risks, it would seem eminently sensible to expand one's social network. Indeed, a relationship to a variety of trusted individuals proves protective within such an environment, as risks become easier to manage. Sztompka (1999) suggests that there is a causal link between risk-taking, social capital and trust. He explains that the self-confidence associated with high social capital is enhanced by greater access to resources, making it much easier to place faith in others and thus, take risks. For example, in Sztompka's (1999) own research, he found a significant correlation between a 'trustworthy' self-concept (to view oneself as trustworthy) and a range of variables including level of education, prestigious employment and economic capital. On the other hand, "people devoid of resources tend to be distrustful (suspicious, susceptible to conspiracy theories, hesitant to extend trust). This is because for them a possible breach of trust could mean a relative disaster" (Sztompka, 1999: 127).

Social capital is often used to explain how individual agents navigate their environment. Although definitions of what constitutes social capital can vary, it is commonly understood that 'social capital' is attributed to the connections amongst individuals, the reach of these connections and to what extent these relationships are reciprocal in nature. Field (2005: 21)

asserts that “social capital is taken to be a universal human property: we all have ties and use them, so what matters is their range and nature”. Robert Putnam (2000) characterised social capital as having three core components: bonding social capital (demonstrative in the form of ‘thick’ relations such as that with family members), bridging social capital (connections with those who we perceive to be like ourselves or part of our community) and linking social capital (loose ties with those we encounter such as individuals working for public institutions). Although each characteristic is important, Putnam believed that a well-functioning society involved high levels of bridging capital within which relationships with others are based on an assumed mutuality and reciprocity (ibid). An individual’s social capital can be gauged by the amount of formal and informal connections they have which can be harnessed to navigate their way through society (Field, 2005).

Putnam (2000: 134) believed reciprocity to be the ‘touchstone’ of social capital, describing it as “self-interest – rightly understood” in recognition that short-term altruism would lead to long-term gains for the individual and the community. Put differently, to act collectively is pragmatic in the navigation of the risks described above. Putnam also believed that trust was an essential ingredient in lubricating reciprocity and mutuality. His work on social capital focuses intensively on community relations and civic engagement, as well as its importance for participation in democratic societies. He believes that social capital could be increased through participation in communities. Thus, membership of clubs, societies or local community groups would enhance social-connectedness as informal social relations constitute ‘tiny investments in social capital’ (ibid). The freedom of association afforded by the risk society indeed would lend itself to these pragmatic alliances based upon shared concerns.

However, in discussion with Putnam’s ideas, Uslaner (2002) contends that to be collaborative, one must *first* trust. Therefore, trust cannot be built through participatory activity unless the groundwork for building trust has already been done. This is an important point which I will return to later. In addition to this, Uslaner (2002) also argues that a society with low trust may lead to higher levels of in-group trust, meaning that the bonding social capital established through group membership may actually be detrimental for the development of generalised trust. Rothstein (2005), whilst acknowledging the key insights Putnam’s work has for the significance of trust in society, also takes issue with his definition of social capital, claiming that his understanding of social capital as at once a behaviour (participation), a belief (that other people can be trusted) and a social norm (reciprocity)

constituted a definition that was too broad. Therefore, to understand how social capital is produced, a more precise definition would be required. He claims while social capital involves both participation in social networks and a trusting disposition, these two core constitutive parts should be treated as analytically separate. As such, it is through the study of trust that the production of social capital (and risk) can be more fully understood.

Rothstein (2013: 1011) asserts that “many things that are normatively desirable seem connected to social trust and social capital”. Low levels of social capital are often linked with low levels of social (or generalised) trust, and high levels of particularised (or in-group) trust (Putnam, 2000; Uslaner, 2002; Rothstein and Uslaner, 2005, Rothstein, 2013; Czerniawski, 2012), and so the two are inextricably linked. For example, the seminal work of Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) draws attention to the prevalence of distrust in unequal societies, and that if we are to fully understand the lives of individuals, we need to turn our attentions to inequality. Consistently, their studies have found that societies with higher levels of inequality are more likely to perform worse on a broad spectrum of outcomes in relation to health and wellbeing. Low levels of health and wellbeing are also linked to diminished social-connectedness and cooperation amongst individuals in communities; one could argue as a direct consequence to the accumulation of risk. Uslaner (2002) believes that trusting relationships cannot take place within hierarchical cultures (in this case hierarchies of wealth, and of risk), and it is within structures of inequality that low trust is created within societies. He believes that trust is dependent on a sense of ‘shared fate’, in which society accepts that responsibility lies in the collective. Therefore, without the conditions in which trust and reciprocity can develop, individual agents see no reason why they should be cooperative with others: I will return to the moral specificity of trust Uslaner (2002) referred to here shortly.

An individual’s capacity to trust is particularly important in shaping perception of the world, as well as expectations of other people’s behaviour. Uslaner (2002:10) claims that “people who trust others have an inclusive view of their society”. They also arguably make ‘better citizens’ and societies that are trusting are better at solving problems through ‘collective action’. Rothstein and Uslaner (2005) also suggest that those who trust also feel more optimistic and that they have more control over their own destiny. Uslaner (2002) further offers multiple dispositions towards trust, identifying three key categories: strategic trust, particularised trust and moralistic (or generalised) trust, illustrated in *Table 1* below.

Type of Trust	Characteristics
Strategic (<i>A trusts B to do X</i>)	Often transactional and based on a person's ability to predict the behaviour of another.
Particularised (<i>A trusts B, where B is a member of a specific group</i>)	In-group trust based on a presumption of shared experience which could be based on religion, ethnicity, social class or group membership
Moralistic or Generalised (<i>A trusts</i>)	Individuals who hold a general belief that 'most people are trustworthy'

TABLE 1: TYPES OF TRUST (ADAPTED FROM USLANER, 2002)

Strategic trust is the kind of trust that is most closely related to the 'weak' or 'synthetic' trust described above. This kind of trust is based on predication of what the other party is likely to do and is generally the result of a 'deal' between two parties. Particularised trust is described as similar to Putnam's 'bonding' social capital, which manifests itself in the form of 'thick' social ties with those that we identify as 'like ourselves', whereas generalised trust is most closely associated with 'bridging' social capital which allows people to form social ties with those outside of our immediate environments.

The difference between particularised and generalised trust is stark. While particularised 'trustors' tend to "view the outside world as a threatening place, over which they have little control...fear that the deck is stacked against them and have authoritarian tendencies" (Uslaner, 2002: 31), generalised 'trustors' believe that they are commanded "to treat people as if they were trustworthy... you see them as members of your moral community whose interests must be taken seriously" (Uslaner 2002:18). Putnam (2000: 137) believes that "honesty, civic engagement and social trust are mutually reinforcing", which suggests that to expand a 'moral community', greater transparency and cooperation are needed within and between institutions.

It is important at this point to return to the concept of risk. If processes of individualisation (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001) have indeed reduced the scope for individuals to connect with each other out of something more than pragmatic self-interest, then it is important to consider this as a basis for increasing social capital in society. For example, Putnam's (2000) understanding that reciprocity constitutes 'self-interest, rightly understood' fits neatly into this paradigm. However, acting purely based on self-interest is unlikely to produce trust relations of any kind beyond 'particularised trust' (Uslaner, 2002), leaving the question of generalised trust somewhat unexplained. It is therefore worth exploring the conditions in which generalised trust can germinate. Here, it is helpful to spend some time considering the moral implications of trust, and the influence of this upon perceived trustworthiness.

Sztompka (2018) suggests that for social capital to move beyond particularised notions of trust, social networks must also develop what he refers to as ‘moral capital’.

“Social capital involves all relations. Now, in some cases, if you are lucky, a part of your relations constitutes moral capital. If you are unlucky, you may miss it forever. You may live in some social vacuum where you have many relations, but all of them are based on competition, on struggle, on conflict, on enmity, on fight. You are alone, and you are trying to save your little niche as much as possible by hostile relations with others” (Sztompka in conversation with Latusek, 2018: 14)

What Sztompka is speaking of here is the *quality* that we perceive in our relationships with others, rather than the reach of those relationships. In his more recent work (see Sztompka, 2017; Latusek, 2018), Sztompka becomes less concerned with the decision to trust, and increasingly concerned with quality of the relations that are being established between individuals. Therefore, accumulation of ‘moral capital’ relates to the ‘moral space’ in which one lives. He argues that it is not enough to simply have social capital, if the quality of these relations is susceptible to fracture and hostility, as these conflicts have the capacity to be counterproductive, leading to reduced trust. Rothstein (2005: 66) supports this view, suggesting, “it cannot be an asset to know a lot of people whom you cannot trust, or to be known by many people as a person who cannot be trusted”. Instead, similarly to Uslaner (2002) who argues that those who have a disposition towards ‘generalised’ trust do so from moral position, Sztompka (1999) contends that trust can only thrive in cultures in which it is embedded into the moral fabric of society.

However, this is easier to say than it is to achieve, particularly in the high risk, individualised world that advanced Western society has created. In this context, it would be easy to assume that it is not in the individual’s self-interest to adopt a generalised trusting disposition towards others. It is one thing to create the expectation for trust, but the act of trusting itself in this conceptualisation remains elusive. In this case, it may be more fruitful to discuss what it might be about the environmental conditions that allows individuals to suspend their doubts, and act *as if* the future was certain (Möllering, 2006).

2.4 Movements Towards Certainty

Trust necessarily functions as a tool to reduce the complexity of everyday life. Indeed, we choose to trust people countless times per day and give it minimal thought. In a world permeated by risks, the act of trusting makes life liveable. Without it, we would simply exist in a state of social paralysis (Sztompka, 2017). Therefore, the embodiment of shared norms

or rules goes some way to explain how trust functions in society, as it is through common understanding that complexity can be reduced to the extent that trust between individuals is possible (Möllering, 2006). However, the factors that influence the decision to trust, albeit unconsciously, vary according to the individual and the social spaces they occupy. It is therefore important to understand how these factors vary to develop an understanding of how trust can be cultivated. Guido Möllering's (2006) work in *Trust: Reason, Routine, Reflexivity*, provides a detailed and comprehensive review of the common approaches to understanding the function of trust in societal and interpersonal relations.

One of the simpler conceptualisations of trust would be from a utility-maximisation perspective. This model assumes that the trustor is motivated purely by self-interest, and as such acting upon trust involves potential gain as a prerequisite (Möllering, 2006). If trust is viewed as a transactional process in which the decision is based on a calculation of risk versus benefit to the individual, then trust is understood as an opportunistic action. However, this efficiency model assumes weak relations between actors and mirrors Uslaner's (2002) 'transactional' model described above. This model favours efficiency to the exclusion of reciprocity, which would necessarily perpetuate a low form of trust based upon contractual expectations or 'artificial trust' (Putnam, 2000). This model also assumes trust to be a broadly one-way process in which the trustor simply gives trust in the expectation that they will not be exploited, without necessarily considering whether it is in the *trustee's* self-interest to be trustworthy (Möllering, 2006). Rothstein (2005) further argues that trust as a rational act cannot be divorced from context.

"Economic theories based on self-interest have very limited value, because what is 'self-interest' in situations like these are determined by the social, historical and cultural circumstances that influence our expectations of how 'the others' are going to act" (Rothstein, 2005: 17)

Transactional models of trust reflect the Principal-Agent (PA) mode of governance, as discussed in Chapter 1. As this model assumes that agents will act in their own self-interest, it excludes the possibility that the agent's conditions for trust, or context, might be different. This is a pertinent point for the Further Education sector, where the 'transactions' often involve students' lives.

The assumption that the decision to trust is based upon a rational act also excludes the emotional element of trust, and how this can influence perceptions of trustworthiness. Similarly, to Rothstein (2005), Möllering (2006) highlights the importance of perception in

considering motivations to trust, arguing that perceived trustworthiness excludes “the harms they might cause through failure of goodwill... [this is] not in view because the possibility that their will is other than ‘good’ is not in view” (Möllering, 2006: 45). Therefore, once the trustor has decided to trust, this decision cannot necessarily be explained cognitively.

This argument gives rise to the central importance of institutions in the cultivation of trust. Just as the risk society necessitates a reliance upon institutions (Beck, 1992), the conditions for trust-building also becomes institutionalised (Möllering, 2006). This would suggest that there are no universal basic rules for social interaction outside of the institutions in which these interactions are taking place.

“It is in unstable, unfamiliar, discontinuous situations that we realise how much we normally take for granted by following routines, especially when we trust. In a way, what we [can] take for granted marks our identity and we would not be able to maintain it and exercise agency if we ever had to question everything at once” (Möllering, 2006: 53).

This would suggest that stability is fundamentally important in producing trust, linking back to one of the central components of trustworthiness, consistency, as described above. The ability to trust involves some level of positive anticipation, and “hinges on the actor’s natural ability to have a world in common with others and rely on it” (Möllering, 2006: 55). Participation in the world is thus linked to the role we occupy (our self-identity) and the roles of others within the spaces we act. Möllering (2006) argues that these roles become internalised, allowing us to place faith easily in those who share the space we occupy through the assumption of a common understanding of the rules or codes of that space.

Within the context of the organisation, therefore, we might assume that clear rules would function to foster trust relations. However, Möllering (2006) argues that rules to the exclusion of flexibility can constrain the agency of individuals within those institutions; inferring a negative impact upon trust. Therefore, within an organisation we must consider the cultivation of ‘solidarity’ in which there is a reciprocal moral obligation, but this should be balanced by a respect for individual autonomy. However, it is important to note at this stage that if the suspension of doubt has not been reached, then system trust (as does personal trust) fails. For mutuality of shared values to be agreed, and acted upon, the individual must feel safe in the assumption that moral space exists. This can only be acquired through the ‘leap of faith’ (ibid).

2.4.1 *The Leap of Faith*

For Möllering (2006: 110), the leap of faith “connotes agency without suggesting perfect control or certainty”. Therefore, the leap of faith can be considered to have a quasi-religious quality in the sense that the individual suspends their doubt as if there were certainty, without claiming to know the future. It is an inherently hopeful act, and by its very nature exposes human vulnerability. This is precisely why trust is so fragile and so connected to our sense of self. As such, for trust to be durable, it must be stronger than any rational proof or evidence which might suggest otherwise (Möllering, 2006).

“Trust is an ongoing process of building on reason, routine and reflexivity, suspending irreducible social vulnerability and uncertainty as if they were favourably resolved, and maintaining thereby a state of favourable expectation towards the actions and intentions of more or less specific others” (Möllering, 2006: 111)

The leap of faith is thus both powerful and fragile; representing both the best and worst of human nature. As such, the withdrawal of faith can lead to disastrous, sometimes irreversible, consequences (Rothstein, 2005), a matter which I will return to shortly. It may be possible to suspend doubt in the absence of evidence, but it becomes difficult to restore where evidence of betrayal exists. Therefore, making the ‘leap’ is a process which is made possible through ‘relations of familiarity’ (Möllering, 2006) in both interpersonal and institutional contexts. It also relies on a fiction of the future, which is incorporated into our personal narrative. This can explain how our biographies become institutionalised (Beck, 1992), and how our faith in others is inextricably linked to our self-identity. In other words, how we understand our position in the world speaks to those individuals and institutions in which we place our faith. This position (with its associated risks) can therefore make it easier or not to take the leap of faith required to trust others.

2.5 Trust and Collective Memory

At this point, it is appropriate to consider that while the concepts discussed so far have predominantly concentrated on the processes of building trust, perhaps it is also the case that these same processes contribute to the cultivation of *distrust*. For example, where the ‘leap of faith’ can lead to harmonised relationships within institutions, *withdrawn faith* can have chaotic consequences for relations. This is where the importance of perception in the calculation of trustworthiness comes to the fore. By this I mean that one can equally choose to trust as *distrust* based upon imperfect information (Rothstein, 2005). For Rothstein (2005), the role of collective memory (both individual and institutional) has a crucially important role

to play in the development of trust cultures within different spaces.

'This trust or non-trust in others... [is] often historically and or politically determined by the collective memory... our possibility to get out of such situations is limited by the fact that we cannot rationally decide to forget... memory is something we simply cannot make rational decisions about' (Rothstein, 2005: 13)

The influence of collective memory in the ongoing construction of institutional trust relations carries an important message for organisations as it implies that institutions will be judged as trustworthy or not based on historical as well as current evidence. Therefore, historic betrayal of trust cannot be easily dismissed (ibid). For Möllering (2013), the vulnerability associated with trust also means that betrayals of trust carry consequences for the trustor as much as the trustee; damaging for both view of self as well as others. As Rothstein (2005: 160) argues, "it is not the group that remembers something; the carriers of collective memory are individuals".

These memories not only shape perception, but also action. For Rothstein (2005) the core problem that is posed by collective memory is that if human action is determined by the perception of what others are going to do, then these perceptions will shape both individual consciousness around who is or is not trustworthy, but also political action as a result. Thus, if an individual decides that they are distrustful of their institution based upon this information, it is likely that this perception will endure. This leads to Rothstein's (2005; 2013) notion of the 'Social Trap'.

2.5.1 The Social Trap

As I have already illustrated in Chapter 1, a social trap is a process whereby distrust is perpetuated on the basis that all other actors also believe that others will choose to distrust. According to Rothstein (2013: 1021) "people have no choice but to make judgements based on the imperfect information that is available to them". This 'imperfect' information informs perceptions, and thus can influence the behaviour of individuals towards each other. Therefore, perception becomes a force which perpetuates a 'trap' of weak trust.

Rothstein and Uslaner (2005) illustrate the function of the social trap through the example of the social welfare state. They explain that in low-trust societies where state benefits are means-tested, perception of corruption or 'playing the system' has a powerful influence upon perception of those receiving benefits by those paying taxes. In effect, 'policies

designed to reduce poverty instead create a trap of high inequality, less optimism for the future, less trust in others, greater in-group identification and persistent inequities in the distribution of wealth' (Rothstein and Uslaner, 2005: 44). This is fuelled further in societies where there are high levels of economic inequality (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010).

Rothstein (2013) believes there to be evidence that the social trap is linked to perceived level of corruption; in particular, that of government and other authoritative administrations. He also argues that high trust leads to less individualised behaviour, and that the output (of an authority) is more important than the input (of a democratically engaged citizen) in the development of social trust. In other words, for people to feel able to trust each other, they must also believe that trust is reciprocated and supported by the institution.

"To breach an enduring social trap would be to require people who (for good or bad reasons) have developed deep mutual mistrust over a long time to suddenly begin to trust one another and thus erase their memories about the untrustworthy or deceitful behaviour of the other group" (Rothstein, 2005: 18)

The implication of the social trap is powerful, and the role of collective memory serves to reinforce the social trap by reproducing the point of betrayal in the hearts and minds of those who participate in societies that are caught up in them; phenomena which Möllering (2013) refers to as 'trust histories. Therefore, to restore an individual's willingness to rebuild trust once it has been lost is a key problem for institutional practice. Within the FE context, the role of collective memory has pertinence for the topic under exploration, given the extent of the turbulence over the last three decades.

2.6 The Will to Trust

Möllering (2006) considers trust to be an act of agency, and as such it cannot be demanded or forced: it is always a choice, and therefore the result of a 'will to trust'. While individuals can be coerced or controlled, no individual can be forced to take the leap of faith. This has implications not only for the cultivation of trust, but also trust repair.

2.6.1 Trust and Agency

It is important to understand trust as a product of will. Although high trust is linked to increased agency, in the act of trusting or distrusting, agency is also present even where low trust environments would stifle it.

“Suspension [of doubt] has a strong element of agency, implying that although many leaps of faith may not be made consciously, they are not made unwillingly either. On the contrary, without denying social embeddedness, it is hard to see how the ‘leap’ or the ‘faith’ necessary for trust as a state of expectation could be forced. We would speak of compliance, not trust, if suspension were not voluntary” (Möllering, 2006: 119)

Indeed, it is through consideration of trust as an agentic behaviour that the interrelationship between trust and risk is exposed. Sztompka (1999) suggests that although there are (more or less abundant) risks in people’s lives, one must still necessarily take a risk to overcome it. As such, risks are also associated with agency. Therefore, in an institutional context, the risk can be associated with the decision to trust, or to distrust: the consequences of each decision carrying its own risks. This explains why some actors within an institution will conform, whereas others will choose to act against what is asked of them (Latusek, 2018).

The resistance associated with distrust, then, can also be linked to notions of agency; introducing shades of light and dark into the construction of trust relationships. Indeed, Peng Li (2015) views the notion of choice in the decision to trust with ‘opportunity-taking’ as opposed to ‘risk-taking’, which reinforces the hopefulness associated with the leap of faith. To reframe risk as opportunity links the decision to trust with positive expectation rather than the aversion of danger (ibid).

On the other hand, Skinner et al. (2014) believe that within the organisational context, hierarchies can lead to ‘dark’ forms of trust where inequalities of risk and power can lead to coercive forms of trust which are unwelcome to those being trusted. They argue that trust can become a ‘poisoned chalice’ where to be trusted by another can lead to ‘uncomfortable obligation’, as discussed in Chapter 1 (ibid).

“In manager-subordinate relationships... ‘we’ve got to trust them’ means in fact ‘we don’t trust them but feel constrained to submit to their discretion” (Skinner et al. 2014: 213)

The ‘poisoned chalice’ metaphor posed by Skinner et al. (2014) here suggests that for the decision to trust (or be trusted) to be a hopeful act, there must be capacity within the institution to openly refuse or reject being trusted; highlighting the utmost importance of human agency in the capacity to place faith in an institution. Therefore, although the decision to both trust and distrust can be considered agentic, it is in the decision to *trust* that agency can thrive; as it is through a sense of control over one’s future that creativity can flourish (Sztompka, 1999).

2.6.2 *Trust as Process*

As important as the consideration of agency for institutions is for the cultivation of trust, it is equally important to remember that trust is a verb as well as a noun (Möllering, 2013). Therefore, it is not enough to create the conditions for trust. If an organisation is to avoid slipping into a social trap (Rothstein, 2005), it must accept that “trusting is a continuous effort in assessing if and when moral standards will be upheld” (Möllering, 2013: 298). The accumulation of experience and knowledge, therefore, will afford the trustor the opportunity to continually update their perception of the institutions in which they participate. This is significant for potential crises within institutions (Beck, 1992), and how response to such crises may influence trust relations. As such, Rothstein (2005) argues that those who are affected by the rules of institutions must have the right to participate in the decision-making process within those institutions.

“Social trust comes from above and is destroyed from above... [highlighting] the importance of institutions that allow for deliberation and communication” (Rothstein, 2005: 199)

This suggests that for organisations to cope with crises, the ‘will to trust’ must be built through participatory mechanisms which would allow for the process of trust to be continually maintained through turbulent times. Indeed, I explained earlier how Wang et al. (2018) found that collective trust in management was a crucial mediating factor in the softening of feelings of anxiety and insecurity during institutional crisis. It is therefore important to consider the factors which are likely to increase trust in management to sustain healthy levels of trust within organisations.

According to Lewicki et al. (1998), trust constitutes the confident *positive* expectations of another person’s conduct, while distrust is defined as confident *negative* expectations of another’s conduct. Therefore, disposition towards both trust and distrust (as distinct concepts) can influence the way an individual engages within an organisation. To conceptualise trust and distrust as coexistent adds further complexity to our understanding of the workings of organisational trust. Lewicki et al. (1998) draw important distinctions between ‘low or weak trust’ and ‘distrust’. While the former is based on weak ties or lack of collaboration, it can still be considered a form of trust. Distrust, however, constitutes an assumption of *malfeasance* on the part of the potential trustee; leading to the assumption of negative outcomes and harmful motives on the part of the trustee towards the trustor.

It is important to consider the role that collective memory (Rothstein, 2005) might play here in the perception of malfeasance associated with distrust within institutions; particularly at points of crisis, as previously discussed in Chapter 1, where risk management may foreground the maintenance of relationships, in place of trust. Therefore, to understand the influence of trust and distrust in institutional practice, it is perhaps most fruitfully explored through the consideration of what happens during moments of crisis in trust relations.

2.6.3 Trust and Crises

Crises in institutions can speak volumes about the strength of trust in institutional relations, though Möllering (2013) is keen to observe that institutional crisis may not be directly linked to trust. However, without mechanisms in place to maintain individuals' sense of existential security, a crisis can result in suspension of trust regardless. It is this suspension of trust which induces anxiety (Rothstein, 2013), making it difficult for the trustor to continue to take the leap of faith in the institution. As a result, crisis makes people more cautious and depending on how the institution responds, the aftermath can be characterised by more, or less trust in the institution (Möllering, 2013). It is therefore important to remember that in the case of crisis, everyone involved may have difficulties in trusting which can result in withdrawn trust if not handled carefully (ibid).

Crucial mediating factors that have been identified in research on organisational trust are access to information and levels of participation. For example, Gallie et al. (2017) found that feelings of job insecurity were softened where there was evidence of strong employee participation. They linked this to a sense of fairness with regards to the process of navigating crisis, demonstrating that the *perception* of how employees are treated by their superiors has an important influence upon the way they handle crisis. Again, this has a direct link to agency, as the ability to participate in decisions with regards to personal roles can allow individuals to navigate crises without completely withdrawing trust. Moreover, Möllering (2013: 299) identifies three core conditions which can lead to crises in trust:

- (1) They feel they lack information (uncertainty)
- (2) They are no longer sure of their identity (trust as becoming)
- (3) The system they use to support their trusting falls apart

Perhaps the most significant point that Möllering (2013) makes here is the link between crises in trust and sense of self-identity. He argues that trust is a process of becoming; that

“identity and trust are not just connected but entangled in process” (ibid: 294). Therefore, if it is the case that institutions become more fundamental to the construction of our biographies in the risk society (Beck, 1992), then those who we choose to trust within those institutions are also tied into our sense of self. As such, not only can crisis within the institution lead to a crisis of identity, a crisis of identity could also lead to a crisis of faith within the institution.

There is a correlation here to what Lewicki et al. (2016) have termed ‘identification-based’ trust and distrust, where parties congregate or diverge depending on value-orientation. At points of crisis, it is not beyond comprehension to imagine that identification-based trust is strengthened where the institution becomes weakened; leading to an ‘us against them’ ideology (ibid). Lewicki et al. (2016) further argue that identification-based trust or distrust is more challenging where organisational cultures are less cooperative. It is thus important to have healthy mechanisms which maintain trust and mitigate against the growth of distrust (ibid).

To turn now to the third point made by Möllering (2013) above, where the ‘system’ which supports an individual’s ability to trust falls apart, individuals are driven to replace trust with something else to maintain a sense of existential security; something that Sztompka (1999) refers to as ‘substitutes for trust’.

“When trust is missing, the resulting vacuum will be filled with some alternative arrangements providing similar functions and meeting universal cravings for certainty, predictability, order and the like. These are functional substitutes for trust” (Sztompka, 1999: 115)

These ‘substitutes’ include *providentialism, corruption, vigilance, ghettoization, litigation* and *paternalization* (Sztompka, 1999). Though these terms are used to describe the relation to political institutions, of importance in the organisational context are processes of *vigilance*, in which a lost faith in leadership can lead to protectionism and onto *ghettoization*, where individuals may seek comfort by cutting off ties to those who do not share a similar world-view. Within this context, *litigation* can also be understood as a reliance on contractual arrangements; similar to the concept of transactional trust described above (Uslaner, 2002). These substitutes for trust could easily contribute to ‘trust histories’ (Möllering, 2013) in

which there is a danger of a social trap being created (Rothstein, 2005), fuelling distrust between institutional factions.

To mitigate against the growth of distrust in institutions, then, it is important to return to the processes which support the renewal of trust; acknowledging that understanding trust as a process enables learning which could enhance the quality of trust relations (Möllering, 2013).

'We may be interested in determining whether an organism is dead or alive, but it is a different question to ask how the organism manages to keep on living' (Möllering, 2013: 287)

To develop our understanding of how something as elusive as trust can be maintained, it is useful at this point to return to the moral specificity of trust, since the fragility of trust must necessarily be maintained by strong moral bonds which speak to the core of human, and therefore, self-understanding.

2.7 Trust Culture

There is a good reason to return to morality as a basis for trust at the end of this chapter. Norms of reciprocity, shared values, cooperation and respect for autonomy thread throughout the concepts previously discussed as fundamental to the cultivation of trust. As such, moral positions are foundational to the decision to place faith, or not, in other people and institutions. Sztompka (1999) argues that societies which are characterised by high trust are those which have a 'trust culture'. These are the cultural rules and norms which facilitate what he refers to as the 'trusting impulse', allowing individuals to safely assume that those around them are trustworthy. However, trust culture should not be considered static, as the process of trusting should acknowledge that the 'product' of trust is always unfinished, and therefore must be constantly maintained to be reproduced (Möllering, 2013).

For Rothstein (2005), such a 'trust culture' could only be produced from the top-down. As such, political institutions must be prepared to support and promote norms of fairness, and equally to act upon them. He argues that it is not enough to accept opinions or arguments that are different from your own: trust can only be cultivated through norms of reciprocity which allow both sides to be ready to cooperate with those whose world-view is different.

The moral basis for trust culture is therefore outlined by Sztompka (2017) as core moral bonds which he collectively refers to as ‘moral space’. It is through this concept of moral space that Sztompka draws links between trust culture and social capital, as values are centrally important for any meaningful quality in social relations (Latusek, 2018). The ‘moral bonds’ that Sztompka (2017) refers to are: *trust, loyalty, reciprocity, solidarity, respect and justice*. Importantly, trust is the crucial underpinning bond which supports all others and allows individuals to build their social capital and cultivate ‘moral space’.

2.7.1 Moral Space

The concept of moral space helps us to better understand the leap of faith described by Möllering (2006) above. Taking the leap depends on perception of whether the trustee, to any extent, shares the same moral outlook as the trustor (Rothstein, 2005), as well as any rational or pragmatic decision to cooperate on the part of the trustor. As such, while the decision to trust is pragmatic, it can also not be fully understood without moral space.

“Such a framework [moral space] gives you some hint about what should be rebuilt, what should be paid attention to, what should be cared for in order for the people to live successful, satisfying, happy lives” (Sztompka, in conversation with Latusek, 2018: 14)

The assumption of moral space helps to explain how the quasi-religious nature of the leap of faith can be made based upon imperfect information in the decision to trust; and in the absence of trust, moral space can support institutions to understand the nature of what is missing. Sztompka (1999) argues that trust culture is also related to collective memory and is to some extent inherited from previous generations. Moral space, therefore, exists where there have been long periods of ‘normative coherence’ which is characterised by stability, transparency, familiarity and accountability (ibid).

For Sztompka, friendship epitomises the full embodiment of moral space (Latusek, 2018). Therefore, moral space goes beyond social capital. It speaks to the core of who we are, who we associate with and why we associate with them. Therefore trust, just as in friendship, must be constantly negotiated, renewed and maintained. The closer attention that is paid to the *process* (Möllering, 2013) of building trust, therefore, the stronger and more resilient trust within institutions will be; and if collective memory is considered, these ‘trust histories’ which are constructed will pay dividends to future institutional relations.

2.8 Chapter Summary

To conclude this chapter, it is important to consider why dissecting what we mean by trust and how it functions in society is important. Sztompka elegantly reminds us that:

“[To] make life liveable and make life something different than a ‘war against it all’... trust is central” (Sztompka, in conversation with Latusek, 2018: 14)

Trust is the one thing that can harmonise an individualised society which is characterised by the accumulation of risks (Beck, 1992). Sztompka (1999) warns us of the sensitivity of the relationship between the individual and the institution, stating that political instability is the enemy of trust culture. Thus, the ongoing policy turbulence in the FE sector outlined in the previous chapter carries significant implications for those who participate within FE institutions. Policy uncertainty and funding shortages have rippled their way through individual institutions, distributing increasing levels of risk throughout the sector; accompanied by legislation which ensures institutional liability. As such, FE institutions’ response to uncertainty is to further distribute this risk to the bottom of the organisational hierarchy (Avis, 2003). This carries significant implications for trust relations within institutions, where transactional trust has become dominant to the exclusion of shared moral space (Sztompka, 2017). The implication this has for the student-teacher relationship is unclear, although I have argued in previous work (see Donovan, 2018) that there is a relationship between high institutional risk and heightened sensitivity towards students who are considered vulnerable to attrition, suggesting that some students may be perceived as *untrustworthy* based upon certain behaviours which threaten institutional stability. It is therefore worth exploring how institutional culture impacts upon how students negotiate their relationship both to the institution and the individuals within it, as well as how they are perceived by the institution.

This chapter has also demonstrated that inequality of risk distribution can also be linked to power and knowledge; meaning that those who have power to influence the distribution of risk tend to do so with more knowledge. Access to knowledge therefore is both important in the mitigation of risk and disposition towards trust within the institution. Where hierarchies are dominant, and institutions are resistant to participatory practice (such as the managerialist practices described in Chapter 1), suspicion towards the other can become embedded as trust becomes replaced by ‘substitutes’ for trust (Sztompka, 1999). Given that

a lack of trust has direct consequences for agency, the theory outlined here speaks to the voices of FE practitioners and researchers which have been portrayed in Chapter 1. The dominant discourse provided by neoliberal agendas has reinforced organisational hierarchies and the manager's 'right to manage' to the exclusion of the voices of those who are dealing with the most risks (Smith and O'Leary, 2013). Therefore, if the voices of teachers and students are stifled by a preoccupation with risk management at the top of those hierarchies, then FE institutions' response to crisis serves to shut down spaces for trust through the violation of the moral space required to cultivate it (Sztompka, 2017). An exploration of how trust relations are constructed within institutions which are undergoing crisis is therefore analytically and theoretically important. The next chapter will outline how this doctoral project has explored the problems outlined in the previous two chapters.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapters have outlined how the Further Education (FE) sector in England has been subject to consistent neoliberal reform since its incorporation as a result of the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act, and the subsequent impact that this has had upon organisational culture. This has been characterised by increased competition for students amongst providers, leading to the normalisation of performative management structures which hold staff accountable to increasingly arbitrary measures of success (e.g., performance management, OFSTED grading criteria etc). The problems associated with what is most commonly termed ‘performativity’ (Ball, 2013), are well documented across all parts of the Education and Skills sector and have been discussed in detail in Chapter 1. However, as O’Leary (2016) argues, FE has been particularly hard hit as a consequence of unrelenting policy change and the swathes of cuts made to the sector as a result of the Liberal Democrat-Conservative Coalition government (2010 – 2015) and the current Conservative government’s (2015-) austerity policies. It has been argued by O’Leary, (2016) and Daley et al. (2015) amongst others, that this is nothing short of an ideological attack upon the FE sector by a class of politicians that neither know, nor are inclined to know and understand the purpose of FE and its outcomes for students, despite the fact that it caters for up to three million students (both under the age of 19 and adults) each year (O’Leary, 2016).

Accountability practices within a resource-poor environment has led to instability and fear for those who work within it, and this undermines the important work that FE institutions do for the communities in which they are situated. Lewicki et al. (1998: 439) suggest that it is precisely this uncertainty which puts trust relations within organisations at risk as “challenges of speed, quality and global reach, which require trust, also have precipitated distrust, through corporate restructuring, downsizing, and fundamental violations of the psychological contracts connecting individuals with organisations”. I outlined in Chapter 2 that the decision to trust involves “movement towards certainty” (Möllering, 2006). Thus, in an increasingly uncertain climate, fractures in interpersonal relations are to be expected.

The aim of this research was to shed a light upon how the pressure associated with current working environments in further education has affected relationships amongst staff and students. The findings of this research are of interest not only to the academic community

researching in this area, but also (and perhaps more importantly) those still practicing in the sector. This chapter outlines the methodological framework which was applied to capture these pressures in situ and understand the dynamics of trust building from a 'socio-narratology' perspective (Frank, 2012a).

In doing so, I intended to explore how individuals within the FE context assess trustworthiness, and who they place their faith in or withdraw their faith from, as a result. The basis for this decision is central to the study's aims as it will support me to establish what 'moral space' (Sztompka, 2017) looks like within this setting, and how individuals keep going in the face of adversity. This chapter further outlines the rationale for the narrative methods that were used for this study by making the case that trust is 'storied', in the sense that it is constructed with others and perpetuated using dominant public narratives (Somers, 1994). While other researchers have used risk and individualisation as a mechanism to explore the relationship between lives as lived and autonomy (see Thomson et al. 2002; Ball et al. 2000), this research project intended to explore in depth the role that trust plays in this process. In other words, how trust influences the amount of control people feel they have over their own lives.

3.2 Research Aims

The aim of this research was to understand how trust works within further education, and how perceptions of trust manifest themselves on a personal and interpersonal level, in an organisational context. Of interest is an area which is not covered in the literature; the effect that a strained professional environment has upon trust relationships between staff and students. Through the analysis of a single case study in a further education setting, the goal of the research was to draw a map of the dialogical relations that exist on a Level 2 programme of study⁵ (encapsulating support staff, teaching staff and students), and to what extent these relationships were characterised by trust or distrust. In essence, the research was designed to establish how central trust was to the everyday working practices of staff and students, and what effect high or low-level trust relations had upon the experience of participants in this setting. The rationale behind such a 'map' was to extrapolate what the conditions were for building trust, in what circumstances trust is broken down and repaired,

⁵ A Level 2 programme is a pre-GCSE level qualification, predominantly vocational and offered in Further Education Colleges full-time or part-time alongside apprenticeships

and what effect an actor's positioning within this system had upon their engagement with and construction of relationships within said system.

Lyon et al. (2016) have attempted to identify the key areas of focus for trust research. In the context of this study, the following elements of trust were of interest: the context that shapes trust-building, the antecedents (or preconditions) for building trust and the processes of building (interpersonal) trust. This research project focussed on students who had entered further education without having achieved the grades needed to progress beyond GCSE-level, as it is these students (though not in all cases) who have not necessarily had positive experiences of statutory education for the aforementioned reasons, potentially building 'trust histories' (Möllering, 2013) which position them on the margins of the system. As such, the following research questions guided the project's inquiry:

1. How do staff and students within FE understand trust and trustworthiness?
2. What are the antecedents to building trust?
3. How do perceptions of trust and trustworthiness influence interpersonal relationships amongst staff and students?

3.3 Narrative Constructionist Methodology

In the words of Lyon et al. (2016: 1), "trust is one of the most fascinating and fundamental social phenomena, yet at the same time one of the most elusive and challenging concepts to study". As such, it is notoriously difficult to measure and to understand. The field of trust research crosses a wide span of academic disciplines such as political science, social science, business management and psychology. Because of this, trust has been approached in several different ways using qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research.

Uslaner's (2002) work on trust has proved useful for identifying broader societal concerns around how trust shapes societal relations according to a general belief in the trustworthiness of others. Similarly, Rothstein's (2005; 2013) work has helped to identify how and why low trust is perpetuated, particularly between government and populations. However, they both base their theories upon quantitative analyses of national social attitudes surveys, identifying trends amongst and between nations. The question most often utilised to gauge trust is as follows: "Do you feel most people can be trusted, or can you not be too careful when dealing with people?". Uslaner (2016) persuasively defends the use of this standard question; pointing out the deficiencies of other questions used in similar

surveys, but also accepts that the binary nature of the response required does also have its limitations. His assertion that the way we trust is largely consistent throughout our lives and resistant to experience, both good and bad is steeped in cultural complexities which play out on the meso and micro level.

While the above question may point to interesting overarching patterns upon which to hang ideas, it is at the same time riddled with nuance. This nuance can only be unpicked by a more careful examination of what is subjectively meant by 'trust' on an individual level, and how this influences relationships with others. Thus, while quantitative study has proved demonstrably useful in understanding societal trends in trust (Uslaner, 2002; 2016), there remains a need for qualitative research to establish what this means for an individual's lived experience. As Silverman (2013: 97) asserts, "there are areas of social reality which statistics cannot measure". As this research is predominantly concerned with how perceptions of trust influence relationships, a qualitative methodology is the most appropriate to enable this process to be explored in depth. Given that positivist approaches are dominant in trust research (Iseava et al., 2015), it is also important to build ontological variation in this discipline.

Qualitative research has the potential to "bring about a better understanding of the phenomenon or to change problematic social circumstances" (Marshall and Rossman, 2016: 66), meaning that it has the capacity not just to capture individual experience, but in so doing discover solutions to identified problems. As such, there is an element of the political in qualitative methods which are not found as often in quantitative forms of inquiry (Silverman, 2013; Clough, 2002; Bell, 2005). Clough (2002: 83) argues strongly in favour of more narrative in educational research as "while measures, statistics and sterility of research exist, research which tells stories of the moral and political in educational settings will remain peripheral". Weinberg (2008: 15) further asserts that "the quest to discover universal truths can also be downright harmful, because it encourages us to think fatalistically about the status quo and to naturalise aspects of our existence that are not inevitable". A qualitative research inquiry is thus a move away from the sometimes essentialising nature of quantitative research, and to restore complexity to the social world that is under investigation. The complex processes that are involved in trust-building are a particularly important part of qualitative research in this area (Lyon et al., 2016). As this research is predominantly concerned with how

perceptions of trust influence relationships, a qualitative methodology appears to be most appropriate to enable this process to be recorded.

3.3.1 Social Constructionism

Social construction as an epistemological approach to research can be understood through the work of Berger and Luckmann (1991), who wrote about the centrality of common language and other symbolic gestures that keep people rooted into what they refer to as ‘the reality of everyday life’. Shared understandings of the world are generated through ongoing relationships with others, which maintains a sense of time and place, supporting the construction of a common-sense reality; the consistence and structure of which is maintained relationally.

*“I cannot exist in everyday life without continually interacting and communicating with others... most importantly, I know that there is an ongoing correspondence between my meanings in this world, and **their** meanings in this world, that we share a common sense about its reality” [original emphasis] (Berger and Luckmann, 1991: 37)*

Berger and Luckmann (1991) further argue that language allows for the creation of a ‘social stock of knowledge’. In other words, common language acts as a vast repository for experiences which not only helps us to articulate the present, but also functions as a vehicle for transmission beyond time and place. Thus, our common sense understanding of the world can successfully be passed on to future generations. Language, therefore, allows us to conceptualise our history as well as our future, and incorporate it into our understanding of our present as part of a collective consciousness. However, language also has the ability to ‘force [us] into its patterns’. What Berger and Luckmann (1991) refer to as ‘typifications’ support us to create abstract conceptualisations of those things and people that are not yet in the ‘here and now’ of everyday life. These ‘typifications’ are understood as shared social meanings which are then integrated into our personal understandings of how the world works. These understandings are often formulated on the basis of an ‘essentialised’ form of knowledge (for example, British people drink tea) and can serve to organise the world around us. This form of social bias contributes to structures that are created through a shared common sense understanding of the world ‘as it is’. The consequence of this is that “participation in the social stock of knowledge thus permits the ‘location’ of individuals in

society and the 'handling' of them in an appropriate manner" (Berger and Luckmann, 1991: 56). Therefore, Berger and Luckmann (1991) stress that the *distribution* of the socially available stock of knowledge is as important as the knowledge itself.

The organisation of socially shared knowledge as a result constructs the concept of 'truth'. Gergen (1999: 36) asserts that "words themselves do not describe the world; but because of their successful functioning within the relational ritual, they become truth telling". The consequences of the social construction of 'truth' is far-reaching, and becomes the foundation upon which we understand society, what is considered acceptable and unacceptable behaviour within given societies, and our identity (both individual and collective). Gergen (2001) argues that social constructionism creates space in which we can question the 'obviously real', which when unquestioned only fosters 'social paralysis'. In his words, absolute 'realism' "promotes distrust of all those who do not share the conventions of understanding" (Gergen, 2001: 18). In other words, our participation in the 'reality of everyday life' gives us a sense of who we are in relation to others, but also who is and is not included within the boundaries of our 'common sense' understanding of the space we occupy. To assume that things are indisputably as they are can lead to us to become entrenched in the place in which we position ourselves and others; to question such a structure allows new possible structures to be created. Thus, from a social constructionist perspective, the use of language is implicated in the structure of our shared reality. In this sense, Gergen (1999) argues that reasoning through language is a form of *public* action.

A social constructionist position assumes that "our interpretations, descriptions, analyses and theories are socially constructed to do particular kinds of work" (Weinberg, 2008: 33). These interpretations are a product of *living in* the world and making sense of it in relation to other agents and structures which exist around them. Schneider and Ingram (2008: 191) believe that "at some point, a particular construction may become so entrenched that it is thought of as *real*". Therefore, the way certain groups of people are constructed by those in positions of power can determine how that population is perceived, and thus treated, by others. This leads to stereotypes and popular beliefs which confer particular identities onto people (Schneider and Ingram, 2008).

In the development of public policy, administrators might develop policies according to how a target group is socially constructed and the amount of power or influence said group has.

This sends messages about worthiness of the target group, which can then be internalised. Negative social constructions aid the state in implementing punishments for certain social groups, allowing them to appear 'tough' rather than 'soft'. Examples of such negative social constructions include 'the homeless', 'the unemployed' or the 'pregnant teenager'. The abstract conceptualisations of these 'target groups' gives them a homogeneity which confers onto them a sense of worth, which is shaped by societal perceptions of which kinds of people are or are not worthy of support. Shneider and Ingram (2008) make the case that such social constructions become embedded in policy design, leading to long term consequences for the citizenship and democratic rights of these marginalised groups. The divisive and enduring nature of social constructions means that people consistently fail to question the status quo. Weinberg (2008) argues that we can only change the world as a result of living 'in it', and as such in meaningful contemplation and dialogue concerning points of both difference and commonality with others. If it can be understood that social constructions preclude that agents are conditioned by their past, then we can also be liberated from them through the development of such agency.

Certain attitudes towards groups of people and institutions can become especially susceptible to long periods without change because of the stereotyping and broad acceptance of the world as it is perceived on a micro level within the education system. This is particularly pertinent to the FE sector where the norms, expectations and language of education shape behaviour within it, which can lead to processes which are accepted uncritically by agents in the absence of the aforementioned dialogue. Wortham and Jackson (2008: 115) claim that accepting these conditions without question leads to fixed assumptions about student identity, as "local meaning systems and enduring social practices that together both produce the identity of [students] ... functions to preserve the status quo". Thus, they argue that adopting the approach of social constructionism in education can make the work of practitioners bound to these structures more liberating through the practice of critical dialogue.

The ideological position of policy makers is produced by the stereotypical representations which can be seen reflected in historical policy design. Shneider and Ingram (2008) thus argue that 'path dependent' policies, which continue to constitute users of such policies in a particular way, leads to a lack of policy development over time, despite evidence of ineffectiveness. This can be seen clearly in the work of O'Leary (2016) and supports Petrie's

(2016) notion that Further Education has an 'image problem' as policy makers continue to draw upon symbols of poverty and deprivation in their rhetoric (e.g., the 'Cinderella' sector). Perpetuating such assumptions increases the social divide between those who are education 'rich' and education 'poor', and further legitimises the stigmatisation of those who access the FE system. The social construction of users of the FE system are effective in perpetuating inequality as the enduring stigma reduces participation from under-represented groups in education. This stigma also serves to construct these students as high risk, and of less value; as discussed in Chapter 1.

3.3.2 Dialogism: identity and the social construction of 'self'

If it can be assumed that the world around us is socially constructed, so it can also be assumed that our identity is a product of social construction, or dialogue. Gergen (1999) argued that the construction of our self-identity (how we come to understand our values and our character) is susceptible to the judgements of others: that our sense of self is created through our interaction with other people. This is what Gergen refers to as the 'relational self', which is understood as "a product of historically and culturally situated interchanges among people" (Gubrium and Koro-Ljungberg, 2005: 693). As 'relational beings' we are constantly reconstructing our identity through interaction with others. Berger and Luckmann (1991) also suggested that as our understanding of the world is relational, and primarily constructed in correspondence through language. As such, our actions are only meaningful if they are acknowledged and responded to by others. It is through this reciprocity that we come to understand ourselves.

Dialogue is rooted in the complex relationship between self and other (Sullivan, 2012). In this sense, the 'self' is in constant negotiation with the environment, which shapes how it is presented to the world. In other words, interacting with others using language involves a negotiation of 'who I am', 'who I am to you' and 'who you are to me'. As such "any individual's voice is a dialogue between voices" (Frank, 2012a: 34). In a similar vein, Hermans (2001) describes what he calls 'self-as-knower' and 'self-as-known' in the construction of the 'dialogical self'. In this sense, 'self-as-knower' is characterised by a sense of personal identity which has a 'sameness' through time, whereas 'self-as-known' is the empirical self; what is known to others. Further, Hermans (2001) believes that identity is a negotiation of multiple

'I-positions' which can move from one place to another dependent on context. As such, the construction of identity takes place in the point of contact between people and locations.

These multiple 'I-positions' have different stories to tell, and each is in constant dialogue with the other. These positions act as different characters which "exchange information about their respective self resulting in a complex, narratively constructed self" (Hermans, 2001: 248). This narratively constructed self, Hermans (2001: 264) argues is rooted in historic dialogues which have an "embeddedness in situation and culture". In this sense, identity is set in a specific place and time, in negotiation with others. Drawing on the work of Bakhtin (1981), Sullivan (2012) describes the nature of the relationship between 'self' and 'other' as anticipatory. Dialogue is therefore constructed in the expectation each person has of the other.

"Dialogue is born out of inequality between self and other (where one has the power to complete the other) and equality, if present at all, translates as an onus on both self and other, to use this inequality to enrich each other. This introduces a prescriptive and ethical dimension to dialogue" (Sullivan, 2012: 4).

The interactions that we have with each other form the basis of our sense of self. In other words, we live according to abstract principles and beliefs (which are socially constructed) and these are also in anticipation of the beliefs of others. As such, single utterances can speak multiple truths, which is what Bakhtin (1981) referred to as 'double-voicing'. In the act of 'double-voicing', narrators are effectively able to position themselves in relation to others by engaging in dialogue with others (and their represented voices). This is an evaluative act, in which the narrator can construct their own self-identity through exclusion from and affiliation to other voices (Wilson, 2015). Therefore, our sense of self is navigated not only in dialogue with others in the 'here and now' but is also the result of historical feedback from others over time about who we are and where we are positioned within society. Dialogism thus constitutes an ongoing interpretation and re-interpretation of self in negotiation with others. Further, dialogue can also be used to cast the self, and others into 'recognisable social types', which allow the narrator to position themselves in their social world.

It has further been argued by Arvaja (2016: 393) that a sense of continuity in identity is maintained through narratives by "integrating their old and new experiences" and interpreting these through a coherent chain of events. As such, we need narratives to construct a coherent sense of self, or self-identity. The next part of this chapter will explore

the role of narrative in the construction of identity in further detail before describing how the notion of self-identity as being socially constructed fits within this research.

3.3.3 The use of narrative approaches in Social Constructionist Research

The use of narrative in relation to social constructionist principles assumes that structures, agents and the language of such structures are shaped, enabled, or constrained by the narrative resources that are available to people (Sparkes and Smith, 2008). Narrative constructionism gives a greater level of attention to how the experiences of individuals are 'related', through which stories are perceived as a vehicle to understanding self and others, in a given environment. It is believed that "stories are shaped by culture and... people may tell different ones in certain contexts over time" (Sparkes and Smith, 2008: 301). Therefore, in undertaking research from a narrative constructionist perspective, the stories that participants tell the researcher carry meaning in a specific time and place. As language is a tool which constructs a shared 'common sense' reality, it does so through the creation, appropriation and reproduction of stories which give sense, meaning and a moral underpinning to the reality which is created. As such, stories are tools which replicate and reproduce cultures in their telling and re-telling. Ricoeur (1991: 28) states that "we understand what action and passion are through our competence to use in a meaningful way the entire network of expressions and concepts that are offered to us by the natural languages". When we organise our experiences into stories, there are multiple narratives which we can draw upon and recount through a shared language (Ricoeur, 1991). For this research project, the narratives which participants draw upon to tell their story can reveal both where they position themselves in the given context, but also in relation to the researcher. In doing so, this exposes the dynamics of trust and distrust from the storyteller's perspective.

In the same way that language underpins the social construction of reality, our place within our own reality is socially constructed through the stories that we have access to, and those that we choose to tell. The significance of a story we are told is determined by how the story intersects with the world we occupy. For Ricoeur (1991: 31) "fiction is only completed in life and life can be understood only through the stories we tell about it". As such, narratives are fundamental to self-understanding, but also how we communicate this understanding to others. However, these narratives are not always of our own choosing, as although we can become 'narrator' we do not necessarily become 'author' of our own lives (Ricoeur, 1991).

Our place within society can be limited or constrained through story, as far as they constitute linguistic representations of society, and our place within it.

The stories we are told, therefore, are particularly pertinent to understanding how people come to trust and make sense of who is or is not worthy of trust as it plays a significant part in the construction of identity. For example, Somers (1994) argues that as identity has become politicised, people come to assume that those who are 'like them' must also share common interests and therefore act "based on the assumption that persons in similar social categories and similar life experiences will act on the grounds of common attributes... 'I act because of who I am', not because of a rational interest or set of shared values" (Somers, 1994: 608). Segregation such as this can lead to low trust in the 'other', whereas high trust can be seen to transcend this type of categorisation (Rothstein, 2013). Therefore, perhaps it is stories, or 'narrative identities' which contribute to our ability to trust the hypothetical, unidentified 'other'.

The assumptions made here by what Somers (1994) refers to 'narrative identity' and Frank (2012) refers to as a 'narrative habitus' are that people are driven to act not because of an internalised set of values, rather as a result of a set of stories to which they access, and in turn, reproduce. To act in contrast to these stories, Somers (1994: 624) argues, would be to "fundamentally violate their sense of *being* in a particular time and place" [original emphasis]. This is particularly important in a risk society (see Chapter 2), as affiliations are created through shared identities to secure a sense of existential safety. The temporality of narrative suggests that these identities are continually reconstituted as a result of relational encounters, and thus, narrative identity or habitus can be disrupted and altered. However, this reconstitution can only be done within a limited repertoire of available stories (i.e., the cultural resources of the individual).

Narrative, from a constructionist perspective, is concerned with 'what' happens in a story, rather than how that story is told. The stories that people tell are a product of how they have made sense of wider cultural resources in their own lives. Somers (1994) draws a distinction between 'meta-narratives', 'public narratives' and 'ontological stories' (see Figure 1 below): her premise is that our identities are formed by a much wider set of shared cultural narrative resources that are linked to global and societal understandings of how the world works, and our place within it based upon attributes such as class, gender, religion and ethnicity. This is

important in individualised society, as identity is a fundamental sense-making mechanism (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001).

As such, the narratives that dominate the social world “will depend in large part on the distribution of power” (Somers, 1994: 629). In other words, public policy and organisational culture could have a powerful impact upon who people choose to align themselves with and why. Frank (2012a) also draws a distinction between ‘narratives’ and ‘stories’, describing narrative as the ‘templates’ upon which stories are constructed, which aid our personal understanding of ourselves in relation to others in society. He asserts that “stories and humans work together, in symbiotic dependency, creating the social that comprises all human relationships, collectives, mutual dependences, and exclusions” (Frank, 2012a: 15). He further rejects the notion that stories follow events, claiming that “life and story imitate each other, ceaselessly and seamlessly, but neither enjoys temporal or causal precedence” (Frank, 2012a: 21).

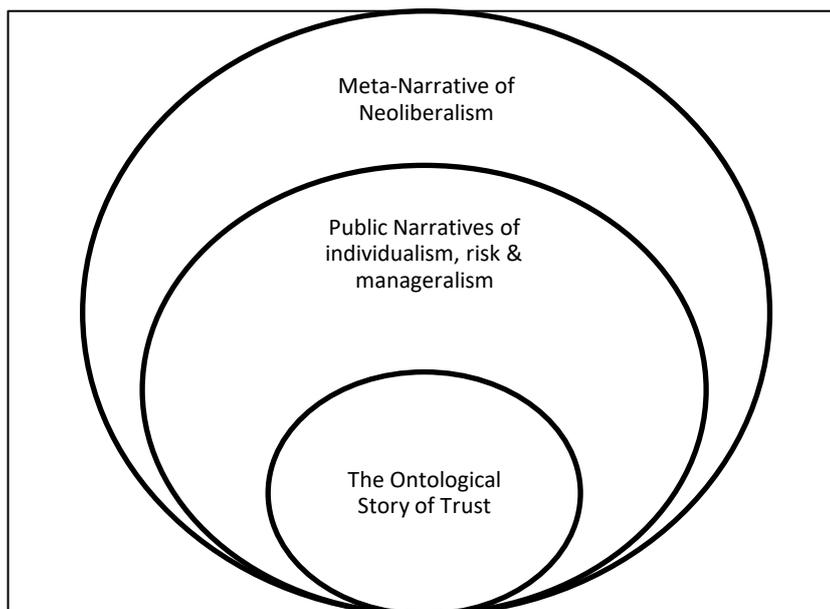


FIGURE 3: META, PUBLIC AND ONTOLOGICAL NARRATIVES (ADAPTED FROM SOMERS, 1994)

Narrative theory supports the researcher to “connect the articulated and contextualised with the invisible, structural and social institutions which shape our lives” (Marshall and Rossman, 2016: 55). It is this perspective which links the personal and political (Merrill and West, 2009; Duckworth, 2016), creating space for individual voices to be heard whilst also being situated in contexts which have far-reaching implications. The beauty of narrative as a research method is its accessibility, and therefore the reach and appeal to a wider audience (Bell,

2005). The appeal of stories is rooted in the shared cultural resources that are used to tell them; we can thus identify with the story being told and engage in the creation of a shared meaning. In the sense that stories are “artfully arranged, but never original” (Frank, 2012a: 34), stories allow us to articulate our self-identity, and understand the identity of others. Further, while other methods of research are context free, narrative acknowledges temporality. This is particularly pertinent to the research question as there is a broad acceptance that interpersonal trust is not static, but how it changes over time is not yet well understood. Organisational and interpersonal trust operate differently, but not independently of each other (Le Gall and Langley, 2016). Thus, this narrative study has the potential elements which could capture how trust changes form and shape as it develops and builds.

The way an individual chooses to tell a story speaks a great deal of not just who they perceive themselves to be in a given moment, but also who they want to become. Interpretation of experience, in turn, influences future actions (or possible futures) and the construction of new identities. Andrews et al. (2013: 51) assert that “narratives can never be repeated exactly, as words never mean the same thing twice”. This supports Frank’s (2012b: 7) position that while people are ‘cast’ into stories, they consist of “multiple scripts which are unfinished”. Therefore, a research participant’s narrative should never be ‘finalised’, as stories are constantly in negotiation with possible futures, and the reconstitution of the concept of self (Sparkes and Smith, 2008).

As revealing as stories can be in terms of influencing life trajectories, it is also important to acknowledge time and place in the elicitation of narrative. Frank (2012b: 113) reminds us that “what counts is which stories occur in what settings, and how different types of stories work in the setting where they do work”. He argues further that although there are multiple ‘templates’ (narrative resources) from which stories can be told, these templates are what create the fundamental sense-making structures which “set the terms of thinking, acting and imagining in this field” (Frank, 2012b: 123). If it can be accepted that a story is never told the same way twice, then it could also be accepted that the way the story is reassembled in a particular time and place reveals something about the moment in which the story is being told (Frank, 2012b); though this story should never be accepted as final. As such, sequencing in the analysis of narrative is a central part of the process of interpretation of stories.

The act of telling a story can give the participant the opportunity to breathe. In the act they may also articulate their role in the collective story. Andrews et al. (2013: 50) assert that narratives are “an essential feature of human sense-making” because they open up space to be heard by others, but also create opportunities for personal examination of how experience is articulated, and where we position ourselves in our own narratives. The truth is in the telling of the story, rather than the accuracy of the event being told; what Frank (2012a) refers to as ‘authentic fabrications’. In other words, the story is constructed in such a way that it reveals a truth which the ‘facts’ do not adequately convey.

Using a narrative approach is also a good way of understanding organisational culture. How individuals with different stories interact with learning cultures could lead to a greater understanding of why some manage to engage, and others don not, of which trust may be an important component. Understanding how and why people choose to engage with education can be particularly effective using stories, which Thomson (2002: 336) argues “illustrates the density of cause and effect in individual lives”. To use Somers’ (1994) terminology, the individual’s ‘ontological stories’ of their experience are encapsulated in their understanding of public narratives, and which of those they are the subject. They can only know their life through the way other people see it, in the sense that “all of us come to be who we are (however ephemeral, multiple and changing) by being located or locating ourselves (usually unconsciously) in social narratives that are rarely of our own making” (Somers, 1994: 606). It is at the intersection between individual stories and organisational culture that was of most interest to my research. The use of narrative allowed me to focus my analysis on how a participant’s story informed their positionality within the environment, and therefore, their interaction with others (and the stories they told) in the same environment. These stories revealed who is and is not worthy of trust, on what basis, and how this influenced the network of relationships which was being analysed within the setting.

The temporal nature of narrative means that it reflects the way the participants would like their story to be told at that moment in time. Merrill and West (2009: 59) assert that “narratives should never be simply accepted at face value”. This is an important consideration for research with young people who are caught up in major transitions in their lives from youth to adulthood. As such, narrative has been a common way of understanding the lives of young people (see Ball et al. 2000; Holland and Thomson, 2002; Thomson, 2002).

The reflexive nature of the 'narrative identity', as it is reconstituted through time has important implications for relational dynamics. Therefore, the evolving nature of the participant's disposition towards trust could be understood in relation to their positionality within the institution.

3.3.4 Socio-narratology

The discipline of socio-narratology is described by Frank (2012b: 17) as the study of "how stories give people the resources to figure out who they really are, and how stories both connect and disconnect people". Lived experience and stories are 'symbiotically' connected, and thus compel us to act in particular ways. As Frank (2012b: 69) asserts, "the power of stories is the problem with stories: they are far too good at doing what they do, which is being the source of all values". If it is the case that all stories are essentially tales of morality, perhaps experience of learning who to trust, how to trust, when to trust, who is worthy of trust and why could allow us to understand better the notion of 'trustworthiness' as a moral value, and what life experiences underpin trust more broadly. More simply, trust reflects the moral values and norms of society in a given time and place; what Sztompka (1999) describes as 'trust' or 'distrust' culture (see Chapter 2).

Some of the key principles of socio-narratology that I have drawn upon in this study are described by Frank (2012b: 40) as follows:

- *Stories are open to multiple interpretations.* For example, how does the way someone tells a story suggest their personal truths in relation to trust?
- *Stories have inherent morality.* This derives from an understanding that stories have an inherent sense of good or bad, or how one should or should not act.
- *Stories are always performing.* They act to make the listener respond in a particular way... "stories do not cease to perform when they are not being told after any specific performance ends. They remain resonant, even when they are not consciously remembered".

Structural conditions can influence how stories are told and can also dictate what stories are told, by whom, and in what environment. Stories do not simply imitate the real world, they also *act* upon it, and upon individuals, as Frank (2012b:3) argues; "human life depends on the stories we tell: the sense of self that those stories impart, the relationships constructed

around shared stories, and the sense of purpose that stories both propose and foreclose". From this understanding, the effect of the story is as important as the content. Drawing on Bourdieu's notion of 'habitus', Frank goes on to demonstrate that stories shape conduct, meaning that those who have access to fewer cultural resources have less stories to choose from when making decisions about their lives. He suggests that "people choose stories but have less choice about the principles of the choosing" (Frank 2012b: 25). This access to narrative resources is what Frank (2012a) referred to as 'narrative habitus': the disposition a person has towards particular stories because of the stories they are told about who they 'are'. As such, an individual's 'narrative habitus' can connect, as well as disconnect people from each other, depending on whether stories are shared, or in opposition to, our understanding of the world. From the perspective of risk, this 'narrative habitus' can be further understood by the degree of risk the individual has accumulated. The more risk, the more likely stories will contain distrust.

3.4 Methods

In adopting a narrative approach for this research, participants were given the opportunity to narrate their own stories, which in turn gave them the opportunity to examine them (Ricoeur, 1991). The telling of, and interpretation of stories can mediate the effects of them in people's lives. The opportunity to articulate a story, or to make a story 'narratable' (Frank, 2012b), can open up opportunities for new ways of understanding both for the researcher and participant, and enable the participant to identify alternative stories. Frank (2012b: 75) asserts that "a life that is not fully narratable is vulnerable to devaluation". In other words, stories told by more 'powerful' people (i.e., those with more resources) can overshadow the stories told by those without enough capital to be heard. Therefore, new narrators can create, change or add new dimensions to a story that have been previously unrecognised. As storytelling helps to articulate meaning, the approach not only allows the researcher to clarify how trust is understood by the participants, but also how this is constructed in their relationships by asking them to provide examples which illustrate their meaning.

3.4.1 The Case Study Approach

By situating the research in a single case study, there was opportunity to conduct a more in-depth exploration of trust to develop a sense of the whole. Bell (2004: 10) describes case study research as a way to "identify, or attempt to identify various processes at work, to

show how they affect the implementation of systems and influence the way an organisation functions”. As such, a study of several individuals and their perception of trust within one institution helped to establish how trust permeates the functioning of a college and establish ‘reliability’ to other settings. Carried out with the appropriate level of depth and detail, it was possible to make a lot out of what could be perceived as little (Silverman, 2013).

Accordingly, an ‘instrumental’ case study was used for this research. The purpose of an instrumental case study is to fully understand phenomena to provide insight into an issue, or to test a theory. The approach comprises an in-depth study with a broad focus, the findings of which can have implications for the wider field (Silverman, 2013). In contrast to other research methods, such as quantitative methods, which rely on large samples to demonstrate ‘significance’, qualitative case study research aims to “generalise to theoretical positions, not populations” (Silverman, 2013: 145). Therefore, the size of the sample is not as important as its fit to the research questions and the theoretical lens which is being used to examine the case. This research did not intend to investigate whether trust exists, rather it was interested in *how* it exists in the studied setting; building theory rather than measuring it.

There has been little research carried out on trust within the field of further education, and so this case study fitted with an instrumental design. A ‘typical’ case (one college) was selected where the process being studied (in this case, trust) was more likely to occur. Although relationships based on trust will be present in all colleges, it was perceived that a single case was sufficient as a starting point to establish what was happening with trust, how this related to theory and whether it could be extrapolated to other cases in similar contexts. An exploration of this case could also have been deviant to theory, which could have taken the research down a separate line of inquiry. Silverman (2013) states that case study design should always be provisional to make room for unexpected eventualities, and to aid coherent dialogue between theory and research.

The data were collected using one-to-one interviews with both students and staff, within a single case study of one Level 2 group in North City College⁶. The rationale for choosing Level 2 students was that they represent a common type of student in FE, who is on a pathway to a Level 3, often vocational, programme of study; many of whom may also be resitting their

⁶ This is a pseudonym, to protect the anonymity of the college.

Maths and English GCSEs. The research took place in a college in the North of England. The college was visited on three occasions within a six-month period (February 2017 – November 2017). The case study captured the views of ten students and five members of staff associated with the course through open-ended interviews designed to capture their disposition towards college life.

The narrative interviews were open-ended in nature, as the process of story-telling is a dialogic process, meaning that stories are constructed collaboratively between the storyteller and the listener (Frank, 2012b). As such, the interview schedule included details of topics to be covered, but the direction of the interview was chosen by the participant. Merrill and West (2009) advise that when conducting interviews, the purpose should be stated clearly and well structured. Therefore, even though the interview content was open, an activity was used to ensure that there was a logic to the flow and structure of the interview.

3.4.2 The 'card sort' method

To encourage participants to tell stories influenced by issues to do with trust, the participants were asked to initially take part in a 'card sort' activity⁷ (see Figures 4 and 5 below for more information). For this research project, the staff and students were presented with a series of individual cards with sentiments written on them. They were asked whether they felt these things in relation to their experiences at college. They were also given the opportunity to add feelings that were not on the cards available and were provided with a blank card to add new feelings where desired. The card sort not only helped the participants to identify feelings towards their institution, but also helped provide a form of structure to guide the participants in telling their stories. The results of the card sort informed the direction of the interviewing, whilst also keeping the schedule of the interview suitably open without being overly directive. The aim was to generate rich, descriptive data in an interview that lasted for approximately one hour. The logic behind asking the participants to describe their

⁷ This card sort is conducted in three rounds. In the first round, the cards that the participant does not identify with are discarded. In the second round, the cards that the participant identifies the least strongly are discarded. In the third and final round, the cards that the participants identify with most strongly form the basis of the interview (see Figure 4 for more information).

experiences is rooted in the value of interpretations in understanding the world. Structuring the interview in this way allowed me to elicit what Andrews et al. (2013: 49) refer to as ‘personal narratives’, which involves “interviewing several people about the same phenomena”.

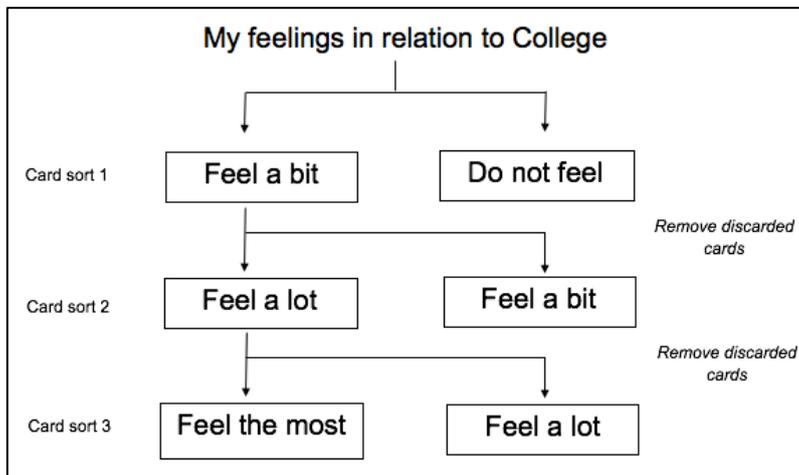


FIGURE 4: THE CARD SORT ACTIVITY



FIGURE 5: EXAMPLE CARD SORT

In his research on organisational trust, Saunders (2016) combined the use of ‘card sorts’ with in-depth interviews to establish how important trust was to the participant, and to understand its meaning on an individual level. The approach also allowed me to establish informed consent without sensitising the participants to the research topic. Because our feelings towards trust are often experienced at an unconscious level, if the nature of the research is explicit, it can significantly impact upon the quality of data given by the

participant (Lyon et al., 2016). Card sorts allowed the researcher to identify feelings, and their comparative importance to trust without the participants becoming consciously aware that trust was the central focus of the research. Thomson (2002: 338) also reminds us that “stories happen to people who know how to tell them”. This may be particularly difficult for some young people, especially those who have limited dexterity of language. To mitigate this risk, the use of a card sort also supported students to articulate their experience, without being too prescriptive as it offers a foundation upon which to tell a story.

Kress (2011) argues that multi-modality, the use of multiple senses, in research can enrich the data returned. This is because multiple modes (i.e., writing, font, image, layout and colour) can be used to yield responses which one mode alone cannot produce. The use of the card sort and the interview created two sets of data which cannot be understood independently as distinct sets, but only together as a richer way of understanding the phenomena. These methods are not designed to know the truth about trust, rather to understand sense-making around trust from each participant’s perspective, and in doing so capture a deeper understanding of how experience shapes perceptions of trust. Using more than one approach to capture this allowed the same issue to be focussed on from different perspectives.

In asking participants to talk about feelings in relation to their educational experiences, the researcher ‘interpellates’ the participant into a specific role. Frank (2012b) draws upon Althusser’s notion of ‘Interpellation’, described as calling on a person to act on a particular identity (Protevi, 2005) when signalled to do so by other actors (Guilfoyle, 2009). This is an important consideration for the relationship between the participant and researcher, as in this context, the participants were asked to assume their role as a student or staff member and respond to questions according to that role. This meant that what they revealed about their perceptions of trust or distrust were situated within that space, influencing the stories they told about it. In doing so, the participant could also choose to conform to, or resist the role in which they were being cast by myself, revealing further detail in relation to their positionality. As Frank (2012b: 51) asserts, “by accepting being in a story, a person at least provisionally accepts being what the story casts him or her to be”. In other words, the story compels people to assume roles they have been assigned or have assigned to themselves.

The concept of interpellation also complement’s what Frank (2012b) refers to as ‘unchosen

choices': how we are positioned dictates which stories are accessed, and how they are told. This is not to say that lives are pre-determined by stories, but that they are guided by them (Frank, 2012b). In a similar vein, storytellers may choose to exclude *themselves* from stories that do not seem to fit with their 'inner library'. Thus, it was possible to see within interview data how particular stories were favoured to the exclusion, or active rejection, of other possible stories. This reinforces the idea that stories are not heard in the same way by all people. Stories are selected to do particular kinds of work; the narrator changes its meaning in the act of their telling.

3.4.3 Digital Storytelling

After the data had been collected, all participants were given the opportunity to 'take back' their data through participation in a digital storytelling workshop. The practice of digital storytelling involves using images or documents as tools to construct visual narratives, documenting stories of everyday life (Bán and Nagy, 2019). The method has been used across the world to uncover stories normally 'hidden' from view by democratising the process through workshops. This enables communities whose voices are often marginalised to make their stories visible, and as such the method can be used as a way to promote inter-cultural education and understanding (for examples, see www.idigstories.eu or www.thestorycenter.org).

In this sense, digital storytelling makes life 'narratable' for those whose stories are less often heard (Frank, 2012a). As such, the rationale for running the workshop was to allow participants to take ownership of their stories, as well as to give their stories life beyond the pages of this thesis⁸. This meant that the ethical commitment to the participants went beyond member-checking the transcripts. It allowed participants an insight into how the analysis was conducted and created an opportunity for them to use their data to produce something for themselves which represented their voice in the research. In doing so, this element of the research allowed me to uphold ethical commitments of Dialogical Narrative Analysis (DNA) principles of 'no finalisation' and 'no interpretive privilege', which I will cover in more detail below.

⁸ In order to deliver the storytelling workshop, I attended a one-day 'train-the-trainer' course through the EU Commission's 'IDigStories' digital storytelling project with their project partner at the Liverpool World Centre.

3.4.4 Data collection

(a) Context for Research: North City College

North City College is a general further education college in the North of England. It is a large college which has multiple campuses in the city. It has a population of approximately 7,700 students, with a small majority of 16-19 learners. However, there are a high proportion of adult learners at the college (OFSTED, 2015). The city has a higher than average unemployment rate compared to other regions (NOMIS, 2017) and a youth unemployment rate which is almost twice the regional average at 22.1% (EY Foundation, 2016). At the time of data collection, the college's OFSTED report stated that the institution 'requires improvement' and is currently being monitored for improvement. Amongst the areas highlighted for improvement are outcomes for 16-19 learners and attendance rates (OFSTED, 2015).

(b) Participants

The study focussed on a sample of students studying on a Level 2 Media Production and Photography course, as well as staff associated with the programme. The research was conducted over a ten-month period, which is detailed below.

Phase 1 (February 2017)

The first phase took place with ten students from a Level 2 Photography and Level 2 Media cohort. Of the ten, seven were male (which was representative of the student cohort as a whole) and three were mature students (over the age of 21); three females and seven males. The students were asked to conduct an initial card sort, the results of which were used to form the basis of the interviews which lasted for up to one hour each.

Phase 2 (June 2017)

The same process described in Phase 1 was undertaken with the five staff participants; four males and one female. One was the Curriculum Leader for the Level 2 Photography and Media programmes, three were Lecturers on the programmes, and one was a media technician supporting both programmes. A full list of the participants, including brief pen portraits can be found in Appendix A.

Phase 3 (November 2017)

All participants were given the opportunity to produce a 'digital story' about their experience of being a part of the project. The digital storytelling workshop took place over the course of one day during the college half term. Five of the participants (4 staff members and 1 student; all male) took up the offer. Throughout the day, participants were told about the ethics of storytelling and each had the opportunity to see the ongoing analysis that was being done with their data. Participants signed a new consent form to acknowledge that their anonymity might be partially compromised, and to give consent for their videos to be shared with the general public. Links to their stories can be found in Appendix A.

(c) Ethical Considerations

An exploration of trust inevitably involves storytelling of a personal sort, which is why Merrill and West (2009: 122) recommend taking "the emotional temperature of the interview at all times". It can be expected that to conduct an interview that yields quality data, a level of trust must be built between the researcher and the researched (Bell, 2005; Marshall and Rossman, 2016; Silverman, 2013; Merrill and West, 2009; Webster and Mertova, 2007). This is particularly pertinent to trust research, and Lyon et al. (2016) suggest that to research trust, the researcher must be consciously aware of the dynamics of trust in the field. It was therefore clear on all project information sheets that I had a professional background in FE, to facilitate rapport-building with the institution and indicate that the research is intended to support a sector that I understand well.

Considerations around trust also required me to consider the position of young people and vulnerable adults in the study. Laenen (2008) illustrates the importance of trust in her research conducted with young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. For vulnerable young people, power relations can feel difficult as they may feel subject to assessment and so can find the process "confusing and sometimes frightening, because they feel powerless to influence the process" (Laenen, 2008: 325). Therefore, there was a risk that I would be viewed like any other adult by students who had negative experiences of adult relationships, from an implicit position of distrust. In this context, the decision to trust is based on a perception of good or mal-intent; even if this is a projection based on feeling rather than rational decision. As such, this could have been a significant barrier, and may have influenced the decision of students to take part. This was addressed by giving students as much ownership of their data as possible, creating a reciprocal relationship between

researcher and researched: to be open as a researcher is an imperative part of this process as there is “no intimacy without reciprocity” (Oakley, 1992, cited in Merrill and West, 2009: 116).

As far as possible, it was important that the students in the study felt like they had the agency to be open about their experiences and influence the course of the research. To protect students and staff in the study, the names of participants were anonymised and given pseudonyms for the purpose of sharing the stories within my thesis and any subsequent publications. The real names of the participants remained within the confines of those participating in the study, the researcher and supervisory team. Confidentiality was also ensured for all participants: staff members were assured that their interview data would not be shared with any other members of staff in the organisation or their students. Students were also reassured that no staff, or anyone else, would be informed of the content of their interview, except in the event of safeguarding concerns. In line with the BERA (2018) ethical guidelines, I also made sure that I was fully briefed on the appropriate safeguarding procedures of the institution.

I also considered at the design stage the tensions between research integrity and ethical obligation to the researched, as there is a duty upon the researcher to provide enough information to ensure informed consent has been given, yet too much information could have yielded unreliable data (Silverman, 2013; Lyon et al., 2016). To mediate this tension and to retain authenticity in the research process, participants were told they would be asked about their relationships in the college, and while the words ‘trusting’, ‘trusted’ and ‘distrusting’ were words featured in the ‘card sort’ activity as described above, the participants were able to discard these words if they felt they were irrelevant to their experiences. This meant that although the interview was influenced by the researcher, it was led by the participant.

In addition, as this study involved interviewing young people, special consideration had to be taken of their vulnerability in terms of their age, agency and the power differential between the researcher and the participant. A concerted effort was made to establish whether the participant had given their full consent to participating in the research, as they may have felt obliged to participate due to the expectation of an adult with influence such as their teacher or myself as the researcher (BERA, 2018).

To minimise any potential harm and to foreground informed consent, I made sure I was in constant dialogue with participants where possible. They were reminded throughout the process of their right to withdraw from their initial expression of interest through to the member checking stage. Student participants were given multiple opportunities to ask questions and were provided with a participant information sheet prior to interview, as well as immediately before the interview took place, allowing them to check their understanding of the process before signing the consent form.

All participants had the opportunity to see and comment on their interview transcripts, ensuring that ethical concerns were revisited throughout the project. It is worth noting that the ethics of interpretation in narrative depend on the participant's involvement in the process of construction, interpretation and validation of their storytelling (Andrews et al., 2013). Frank (2012b: 99) articulates the ethics of narrative analysis, a core feature of which is 'no finalisation'. Therefore, the narrator must be in constant negotiation with both the researcher and their own story, in which the future must remain open to possibility that "investigators watch with respectful curiosity". As such, the ethical tenets of narrative analysis were observed through the digital storytelling workshop discussed above.

A greater sensitivity was also paid to my own presence in the research. Clough (2002) argues that stories can bring together theory and practice, which are often positioned as opposites in the educational field. As important as the story being told, is how the story is understood by the listener (Andrews et al. 2013). As such, the lens through which I, as the researcher and a former FE practitioner, viewed these stories was also shaped by my own personal experience. I was aware that I was bringing my own values, beliefs and assumptions to the research setting. To disregard my perspective would have been to deny my intimate relationship with the topic in hand, and potentially isolate those who may find my research valuable. Therefore, I was open about my own professional experiences in the sector throughout the data collection process, allowing participants to ask questions of my experience; contributing to the co-construction of narrative in the interview.

3.5 Analytical Framework

Analysing stories is not a straightforward process as it is possible that “narrators continuously open up different narrative spaces or sub-stories, which are also interrupted and left open by introducing new spaces or stories and by resuming stories left behind” (Romano and Josep Cuenca, 2013: 352). This means that stories can often be fractured and confusing to trace. This is because “storytelling represents a transitional area of experience in which the self is constantly negotiating its position in relation to others” (Merrill and West, 2009: 122). Webster and Mertova (2007: 32) believe that narrative analysis involves looking for “recurring themes, looking for consequences, looking for lessons, looking for what worked, looking for vulnerability, looking for future experiences”. For my research study, it was therefore important to look at how these elements could have influenced the participant’s disposition towards trust.

Experience is ‘discursive’ rather than a ‘coherent guarantee of truth’ (Andrews et al., 2013), and as such, this research did not attempt to capture truth, rather it hopes to capture an abstract interpretation that may be encapsulated within concrete truths. The ‘truthfulness’ of the accounts is less important than what those stories articulate about perceptions of trust. It is how a story acts upon people that reveals something about the storyteller (Frank, 2012b). As my research was concerned with how trust relationships are constructed, it was how the individual shaped their story that was of primary interest, as the effect of this story has profound consequences for how their behaviour towards others unfolds.

In conducting narrative analysis, a conscious awareness of the researcher’s influence upon the process was also acknowledged (Merrill and West, 2009; Clough, 2002). Clough (2002) believes that researchers who fail to acknowledge their own biography and positionality in their research, as well as those of their participants, run the risk of regurgitating old norms and perpetuating stereotypical assumptions of what it means to be a lecturer, a student, or any other actor within educational settings. I therefore ensured I was mindful that my intimate relationship with the FE sector was acknowledged both in the interview with participants, and when conducting the analysis as without the presence of the ‘reflexive self’ (Webster and Mertova, 2007), the researcher risks distorting the narrative, or prioritising

one story over the other. By approaching the research with openness and transparency, I was able to acknowledge how my own self-identity influenced the way I engaged with the interview process, and subsequent data analysis.

Narrative researchers must view participants as experts in their own lives, whilst it is the researcher's role to use their 'conceptual tools' to create a critical understanding of what is going on: "what makes thought critical is a refusal to accept immediate, common-sense understanding, while at the same time having the most profound respect for and curiosity about common-sense understanding" (Frank, 2012b: 73). Therefore, my analysis could only be understood as 'dialogical' if it was working towards a shared understanding of the problem. In other words, analysis paid attention to the movement of thought between the researcher and participant, meaning both parties were involved in co-constructing 'what counts' as data (Frank 2012b: 98).

3.5.1 Dialogical Narrative Analysis

Dialogical Narrative Analysis (DNA), in its analytical approach, seeks to explore the connections between stories and social action. Frank (2012a: 34) contends that stories are "artfully arranged but never original". Stories are composed from multiple stories that have been told; these fragments of other stories are therefore composed from the voices of multiple people. This forms the basis of the 'dialogic' element in narrative analysis. In the act of telling a story, the narrator engages with "the generalised others of the speech community" (Frank, 2012a: 35). These stories can have a powerful influence upon the identity of the individual, including where they position themselves amongst the cacophony of stories available to them, though as explained earlier, some individuals have access to more stories than others (Frank 2012a; 2012b). The circulation of stories over time shapes the world around the individual, and "they are positioned by the stories they know, feel comfortable telling and can take seriously" (Frank 2012a: 47). The effect of this is that some stories are excluded, and others can go untold. Therefore, in the analysis of the data, careful attention was paid to what was excluded from the story, and how these untold stories impacted upon the story told.

Frank (2012a) identifies the following types of questions which are central to understanding how the participants position themselves in relation to others in a dialogical narrative

analysis. These questions focus on how their beliefs and values shape their interaction with the characters in question: *resource questions*, *affiliation questions*, *identity questions* (Frank, 2012a). Resource questions identify what resources shape the stories being told, what stories they draw upon to make sense of their own story, what stories go untold, and why. Affiliation questions look for structural aspects of the stories such as the characters involved, who the narrator aligns themselves to and against. It was also be important to note here which characters were excluded from the narrative entirely. Identity questions look to establish how the story teaches the narrator about who they are, and who they might become.

In analysing the data, the researcher asks, “what stories different actors are caught up in, what actions those stories authorise and even require, and how some stories silence other stories” (Frank, 2012b: 80). These perceptions, which reveal propensity to trust, may also reveal how structural restraints (i.e., our responses to public narratives), could also translate into attitudes towards, and reflections upon, critical events. For example, stories that emerge could be significant because they could either conform to wider cultural narratives or resist these narratives. The stories may also reveal acts of resistance, in which the participants position themselves as the protagonist ‘holding their own’ in the face of adversity (Frank, 2012b).

As noted previously, the effect of stories is as important as their content. In conducting DNA, therefore, the researcher is looking for how stories have influenced action and informed perception of the world as it is, and their place within it (Frank, 2012b). In other words, the researcher is effectively looking for ‘what is told’ and the *effects* of what is told (Frank, 2012b), through interaction with participants’ stories. Depending on the type of phenomena being studied, the ‘what’ of the story or the ‘effect’ of the story is foregrounded, though they cannot be analysed independently of each other.

3.5.2 Ethical Commitments in Dialogical Narrative Analysis

Frank (2012a; 2012b) foregrounds the ethic of ‘no finalisation’ in his work on DNA, stressing the importance of a story told at a particular point in space and time. Therefore, the researcher should make every effort in the analysis and writing of stories, to acknowledge that an individual’s story is never ‘finished. Instead, stories told should demonstrate the effect of that specific story at in a specific time and place, and how this moment influences

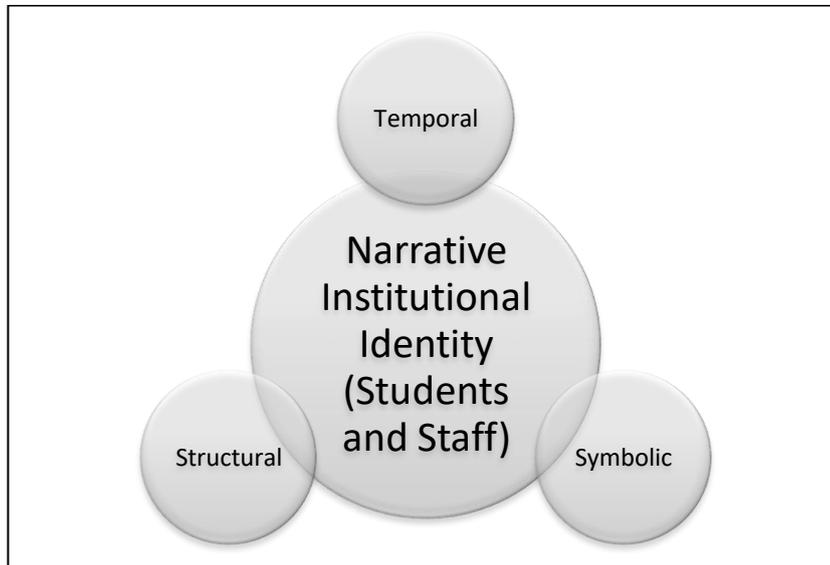
the participant's perception of past, present and future. Other ethical principles of dialogue in narrative analysis that are described by Frank (2012b) include:

- *Second-person address*: As the researcher and narrator are in dialogue, it is important to acknowledge that the story is about another person, who the researcher is in direct conversation with.
- *No interpretive privilege*: As discussed elsewhere, the interpretation is a product of negotiation between the researcher and researched.
- *Asking questions of the story to open up all possible meanings*: omissions may also be as important as what is said.

3.5.3 Developing a Framework for Dialogical Narrative Analysis

Structural Features	Identity Features	Temporal Features
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What voices are present? • How does the narrator interact with these voices? • What is the effect of the story? • What is at stake? How does the narrator hold their own in the face of vulnerability? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the role of the storyteller? • What resources does the narrator draw upon to tell the story? • Who does the narrator affiliate themselves to/against? • How does the narrator evaluate other voices? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do past stories influence the story being told? • How does the story indicate who they might become (possible futures)?

Drawing upon the work of Frank (2012a; 2012b) on DNA, and Wilson's (2015) heuristic for identifying participant positioning in qualitative interview data, the following analytical framework has been applied to the interview data collected (see Table 2 below). Wilson (2015) points out that there is a lack of specific analytical strategies for narrative. Drawing upon Ricoeur's understanding of narrative as "how meaning is mediated through the construction of a narrative in relation to an experience of time" (Wilson, 2015: 892), Wilson developed a model for analysing data which could reveal how the participant positioned themselves and others within a transcript by analysing the transcript for features relating to identity, structure and positioning. This research has adopted a similar approach to the data using the lens of DNA. The questions listed in the table below are not exhaustive, but indicate the approach taken to the data. The analysis then focussed upon how structural, identity and temporal features interacted with each other, to identify the narrative identity of the participant (see Figure 6 below).

TABLE 2: ANALYTICAL MODEL**FIGURE 6: ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK**

N.B. The above analytical framework has been applied to the analysis of the participant case studies in Chapter 6 (see p. 148, 153, 163 and 167). They relate specifically to the institutional identities of the participants within context of North City College.

3.6 Pilot Study

An initial pilot study was conducted to test the appropriateness of the research tools described above. Two members of staff and two students from a Level 2 Sport programme at North City College were interviewed as part of this study, which began with the aforementioned 'card sort', following the procedure described above in the section 3.4.4.

The card sorts proved useful in facilitating discussion around the participants' feelings in relation to college. Each time, trust became a central point for discussion, which involved negotiating definitions of what constituted trust or trustworthiness, and to whom this trust was afforded within the college. Interviews with both staff and students suggested a very strong trust relationship existed between tutors and students within the group, though this

trust did not always extend beyond the group to others in the college, or outside of college: this was particularly strong in responses from staff members.

It was perceived from both staff and student perspectives that trust involved having a close and open relationship with the other person, and trust could not be afforded otherwise. This meant that trust was not extended to those who were not 'part of the group'. For staff, this suggested an active exclusion of management in discussions around trust:

"You don't know what they're doing. They're making decisions on your behalf, and they're definitely making decisions on the students' behalf, and they don't know them. How can you make decisions about something that you don't know?... and that's where the trust ends" (Kevin – Lecturer, Level 2 Sport)

The quote above suggests that Kevin's close relationship to the students was related to an active exclusion of managers, who he deemed as untrustworthy because they neither knew him, nor his students. This is suggestive of what Uslaner (2002) describes above as 'particularised trust'. Throughout the interview, Kevin seemed to position himself as fundamentally different in his values and motivations to that of managers, and other members of staff, in a way which was irreconcilable. He was therefore simply unable to trust them. This was also evidence that the tools used for interview were fit for purpose in terms of gathering appropriate data for the research study in question.

However, the pilot also revealed gaps in the research design which provide useful in the main study. For example, there was little context discussion in the interview, which meant some of the responses could not be appreciated in full holistic detail. As a result of the pilot study, the following adaptations were made to the research design:

- Further contextualising questions were built into the interview schedule, including where the participant is from, why they are at college or came to work there.
- Each card is numbered, and the card sort is recorded on a sheet so that the researcher can keep track of cards excluded, as well as cards included.

3.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided the theoretical basis of narrative social constructionism as the chosen methodological approach used in the research conducted for this study. In addition,

it has justified the use of narrative as a way of conceptualizing how individuals choose to trust by making the case that an individual's disposition towards trust is storied. Furthermore, I have outlined how Frank's (2012a; 2012b) notion that stories have their own agency to act upon people has been used to underpin the approach to analysis; foregrounding the dialogic nature of storytelling. The following analytical chapters will use the DNA method and analytical framework discussed here to observe how the stories told by participants influence both sense of self and positionality, through the construction of a 'narrative identity' which positions them within the institution according to their perception of trust and distrust. Chapters 4 and 5 are organised into ten narrative typologies which represent the trope of 'Distrust' (Chapter 4) and 'Trust' (Chapter 5). Chapter 6 goes on to explain the function of 'metamorphosing' narratives in the construction of stories and illustrates how these narrative typologies function dialogically to construct a 'narrative identity' through the case studies of four participants.

3.7.1 Organisation of the Analysis

It is also important at this stage to detail the approach that has been taken to the data analysis chapters (Chapters 4-6). In line with the ethical commitments to the DNA approach detailed above, which emphasise partnership in the construction of story, the next three chapters will contain minimal citations in the body of the analysis. The rationale behind this decision is to ensure, as much as possible, that the stories of the participants are foregrounded and given due respect by minimising interruption. The foregrounding of the stories over the next three chapters also allows the reader to understand the power of stories that Frank (2012a; 2012b) refers to, illustrating how the narrative tropes and associated typologies that have been identified play upon the way the participants construct their stories, and thus position them within the institution. The result is a powerful demonstration of how perceptions of trust and distrust become 'storied', working in symbiotic relationship with the storytellers to construct the world around them. To achieve this, these chapters have been comprised according to the following logic.

Chapters 4 and 5 are structured around the ten identified narrative typologies which collectively construct the tropes of 'Distrust' and 'Trust', illustrating how storytellers draw upon these typologies to make sense of who is, or is not, worthy of their trust within the institution. Chapter 6 goes on to explore the dialogic relationship between these typologies in more detail by examining the stories of four participant case studies, illustrating how the

narrative typologies discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 support them in constructing a 'narrative identity', as outlined in the analytical framework above (Section 3.5.3). Each section will finish with a short summary detailing how the analysis calls back to the ideas introduced in Chapters 2 and 3 and will be further followed up for a detailed discussion in Chapter 7 which contextualises the analysis within the context of the literature review.

Chapter 4: Analysis 1

The Narrative Construction of Distrust

A Trope. *In a world where distrust abounds, the protagonist is forced to secure a sense of existential safety through strategies of self-preservation, which in turn helps them to mitigate against their own feelings of powerlessness. Their narrative tends to involve stories that begin with some sort of 'trouble'. In some cases, this trouble goes untold, but it nevertheless casts a shadow over the story as it develops. This trouble appears to have a defining impact upon their disposition towards self and others. As such, they enter relationships with some degree of trepidation. Their story often features characters of mal-intent, who would do them harm. The degree of caution, and sometimes suspicion, with which they approach their environment leads to the construction of survival narratives, in which threats are ever-present and the struggle is ongoing. They are prepared for confrontation at any given moment, and relationships with others are often characterised by conflict, tension or unease. Conflicts with other characters tend to involve resistance of some kind. This is a resistance to a perceived corruption on the part of the other characters. These conflicts are sometimes injurious, leading to a reinforced negative conceptualisation of self or a sense of hopelessness about the future. Their negative self-concept results in a sense of powerlessness, and so they become victims of their own narrative. Their feelings of difference to those around them serve to isolate them, leaving them with few options for future stories. They are limited to submitting to the will of a world that is not kind to them, or to burn themselves out in the act of resisting. Thus, the storyteller is driven towards stories of self-preservation, which help them to cope with an uncertain future.*

4.1 Introduction

Frank (2012a) argues that people do not tell stories; rather, the other way around. Stories act upon people, influencing their sense of identity at specific points of time and place. In a similar sense, the above trope does not describe an absolute truth. It expresses elements of truth; of 'authentic fabrications' (Frank, 2012a) which evoke the sentiments of a storyteller who knows nothing other than distrust, in a world that is full of risks and uncertainty. This trope was constructed from themes that were collected under the parent code 'distrust'⁹ within the narratives of the fifteen participants in this research study (both staff and students). This trope is salient because it describes the world through the lens of the post-welfarist society (Clarke and Newman, 1997), and the effect that neoliberalism has had not just upon material and cultural circumstances, but upon the psyche of the 'neoliberal' individual. To borrow from Somers (1994), the trope above functions as a 'meta-narrative',

⁹ All 10 narrative themes relating to Trust and Distrust are deconstructed in further detail on the 'analysis maps' provided in the appendices, which break down the themes arising from staff (Appendix C) and Students (Appendix D)

which seeps into the consciousness of the distrusting individual and informs how they come to understand their position in such a world. It is important to note that this narrative does not describe any one individual in the case study, but various individuals in the study engage with stories relating to the distrust narrative at different points throughout their story. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the kinds of work these stories are doing to position the participants in relation to others, the influence of time and place on this process and how this contributes to the individual's sense of identity. These stories can elicit the storytellers to authorise, or require certain actions or create certain affiliations, whilst isolating others (Frank, 2012a). In this process, they may cast other characters into roles that support them to make explicit who is or is not worthy of their trust, their relationship to power and lastly, to call myself, as the listener, to respond to their story in specific ways.

The stories which relate to the distrust narrative have been categorised into six different typologies, each of which reflects a structural, symbolic or temporal feature of the narrative, which then synthesises to create a broader understanding of the trope of 'distrust'; demonstrated on the diagram depicted in Figure 1 below. These are *Struggle and Oppression* (Structural), *Self-Preservation* and *Powerlessness* (Symbolic), *Trouble* and *Uncertainty* (Temporal). Throughout this chapter, I will describe the typology of each story, and the function it has in supporting the storyteller's narrative. I will provide examples of how various storytellers engage with the story and for what purpose. I will then demonstrate what makes narrative 'dialogic' (Hermans, 2001) by describing how these stories interact with each other to create a sense of individual identity, drawing on examples from the stories of Roy, Marcus, Jeremy, Richard and Sara (lecturers); as well as James, Adam, Dawson, Larry, Eddie and Ali (students).

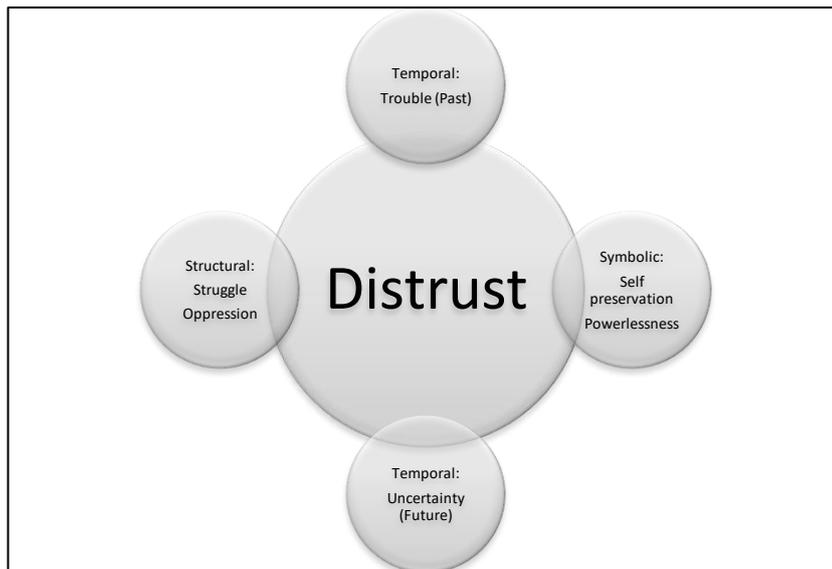


FIGURE 7: THE NARRATIVE CONSTRUCTION OF DISTRUST

4.2 Typologies of Distrust

4.2.1 Typology 1: Trouble (Temporal)

Trouble introduces a critical event from the past which influences the story that is to come. The trouble is sometimes known to the listener, and at other times goes untold; though in both cases the presence of the trouble is woven into the narrative as it is constructed by the storyteller. Sometimes these take the form of significant events that have played a role in creating the storyteller's position in the present. At other times, the elusive nature of the trouble is not clearly defined and it casts a shadow not only over the storyteller's present, but also their future.

Almost all the stories in this study begin with some element of trouble. For the students in this study, this was often not getting the grades to move on to Level 3 or A Level at the school or college they wanted to go to. None of the students in this study had intended to go to North City College. David, Yolanda and Jenny for example, had planned to go onto their school Sixth Form with their peers, and as a result had been separated from their friendship group. The unexpected turn of events gave these stories an unsettling start. However, for some students the nature of this trouble was more complex than it was for others.

Dawson: *I came to college basically because my previous school, which was the same as my secondary school, sixth form I mean, wasn't working out. It was a school that had good reviews and it was a good school for productive, creative options but English and Maths wise it was not a good school. The teachers were friendly but not very educational, they didn't teach me much, so they failed me academically*

Adam: *I was under a lot of really horrible stress, and I went through a lot of stuff like that each year of my life. I have done very very recently, and it really affected how I felt and my grades and just how I performed... I didn't end up getting high grades or whatever so...*

James: *erm [he sighs] ... well I never really planned to be back here when I was younger, I've got RAF parents, so I moved around a lot. They kind of split so I ended up with my mum and moving about. We went back to Scotland where I was born. I kind of went down a very [...] wrong path at the age I was and I kinda had to get away, so I came here to live with family and er, basically I kinda had to go on the dole and that and obviously I've kinda come to college to try and do something I guess*

While Dawson uses *Trouble* to apportion blame to a specific event, both James and Adam begin their stories by alluding to stories which are partially narrated, or not narrated at all. These stories are referenced on multiple occasions, doing work to position them towards others in the present, which I will describe in further detail in Typology 2. However, these untold stories play out in different ways as the story goes on. For Adam, emerging from 'horrible' and 'stressful' events in his life has made him stronger, and more defiant about who he is in relation to his experiences in education.

Adam: *I'm not bothered about the exam results I got, I could care less because at the end of the day I won't let a letter on a piece of paper dictate my future because that's not fair to anyone. That's not the way to live you know, so yeah, I'm not here really to make amends to that. No, I'm just here to get it out the way I guess until I figure out [...] a way to do what I want to do in the future*

Although Adam makes it clear that he will not let his previous experiences of education define him, this passage does seem to define his position towards education. By saying he is just 'here to get it out of the way', the listener can understand Adam as someone who is no longer engaging with this system by choice, but necessity. This attitude towards education goes on to shape his position in relation to other characters within the system as he perceives it. On the other hand, James' untold stories play a more ominous role in the construction of his narrative. He described experiences of being bullied at school, and how these issues were neglected by staff.

James: *yeah they just didn't do anything about it... my mum pulled me out, that was the school that I was actually going to stick to when I started that high school and after two years my mum pulled me out, like she chose to pull me out of school cos it was getting too far and I don't know, I've never found it easy to relate to people my age*

The experiences James describes here of disrupted education, bullying by peers and neglect by the staff define his lack of faith in the education system. Unlike Adam, instead of responding to this perceived failure defiantly, James submits to this narrative and allows

himself to be subject to the decisions of other people. Just like his mother in the passage above, who appears to pull him out school against his will, other characters in his story strip him of his agency by obstructing his ability to achieve. This leads him to a more finalising narrative, in which he cannot foresee being successful in education (described in more detail in Typology 6). This leads James to a position of assumed distrust in other staff, which serves as a protective mechanism to prevent him from being let down again.

James: *I wish I wasn't like that [distrusting] but at the same time I'm kind of thankful that I am because the stuff that I went through, if I was to go through it again I don't know*

For the mature students in the study, getting onto their course at North City College has been a complex journey in which multiple stories led to this point in their lives. For Eddie, Ali and Larry, this was not their first course at North City College, having studied at least one course at the college previously. Nor was it the only institution that they had studied at; all three of them had been on other courses at different colleges in the locality.

Ali: *I'm familiar with the college. I've been coming to this college since I was seventeen... nearly thirteen years. I've done GCSE courses, I've done fitness I've done nails, I've done make-up, I've done hairdressing and now I'm doing photography which is what I should have done in the first place*

Eddie: *I first left school and stuff like that, just been working on and off all different jobs for like six, seven years or whatever so I just like got to a point where I was like, I don't wanna like, I was mainly waiting on like in restaurants and stuff like that and it just got to the point where I was like no I don't think I wanna do this for the rest of my life.... but I wasn't too sure what I wanted to do. I actually got sacked that's what kicked it all off to be fair*

The listener gets a sense in both Ali and Eddie's stories that they felt lost before starting their course at North City College. For Ali, it was a series of courses then went nowhere for her. Her time spent studying various courses at the College linked with a long list of physical and mental health problems that she goes on to discuss in detail, have caused her to feel unable to participate in the labour market. Her familiarity with the College, and therefore her sense of existential safety, seemed to be bound up in her connection to the institution. Meanwhile, Eddie felt that his school education had not prepared him adequately and had cast him into a role before he could decide for himself.

Eddie: *When I was at school me and my mates were mischievous boys like whatever you wanna call them and you sorta get pigeon-holed into 'you should all get a trade, that's what you are all best off doing'... it's [school] like 'you are like this, you are a certain way so you can only get a certain type of job' ... like I say some of my mates have got a trade but some of my mates never had that intention at all but cos we were pigeon-holed into that I'd had that mind-set drilled into me since I was like*

fourteen so by the time I left school I thought this is what I keep getting told, and this is what I thought I should do you know what I mean.

Although both Ali and Eddie had very different experiences, the story of ‘trouble’ seems to define their sense of agency in both cases. For Ali, her life became bound up in her connection to the College and her ongoing struggles with her mental health, and the effect of this upon forming relationships with those around her (see Typology 2). For Eddie, his experience of being ‘pigeon-holed’ at school had caused him to set parameters upon his own potential. In both cases, they felt that since they had enrolled onto their current course, they had finally made a decision for themselves, and this newfound sense of agency allows them to feel optimistic for the future. Larry also felt a similar sense of optimism on his new course, describing it in very different terms to his previous experiences at North City College and other local providers. The trouble in Larry’s story started as a child growing up with Dyslexia, and his last experience in education, six years previously.

Larry: doubts go through my mind and I thought well I’m not gonna catch up with these and I’m just gonna be sitting with these for nothing now, I may as well leave now. I’ll stay off now I’m not getting nowhere so I’d usually just stay at home and I don’t come back. And they’ll be phoning going ‘oh why don’t you come back?’ and this, and then I would and then I would and there’s still no support. But if there’s no support what’s the point in me coming? I’m just gonna be behind and I’m wasting your time, and this is just wasting my time as well

In all the above cases described here, the story of trouble functions to position these students on the margins of education before their story begins. For the staff, trouble was linked directly to their role in the college. Sometimes the trouble was related to their circumstances when they came to work at North City College, such as Roy and Richard, who were made redundant; or Jeremy, who was an aspiring artist on an hourly paid contract at another local college. The experience of almost falling ‘accidentally’ into FE seems to also bear a relationship with the trouble in some of the stories; in particular Jeremy and Sara, whose previous experiences give their role in FE a strong sense of purpose. For example, below Sara describes how her experience of growing up in the care system influences her values as an educator.

Sara: I think it’s because of who I am. I’m lucky to be where I am because of institutions. And that’s probably what I believe in. I don’t believe I’m here because of individuals, I believe I’m here because institutions helped me

In a similar way, Jeremy describes his experience of having Dyslexia at school and how this had shaped his educational experiences.

Jeremy: *Schools fail a lot of kids, and obviously university is the aim and without FE that's kind of impossible. So, like morally and ethically, politically, FE has to stand in that strong ground... There is that niche kind of thing, and there is that need for a lot of people. And I guess I wouldn't have got the job I have now, and I wouldn't have gone to uni if I hadn't had FE, so I am definitely definitely part of that because I'm dyslexic, I failed school massively*

These stories seem to create a close affiliation with the stories of their students, who had never planned to go into Further Education either. These individuals become bound together by the trouble they have experienced, which has given them a sense of purpose within the shared space they are in. In other stories, however, *Trouble* manifests itself in an unstable environment. Marcus has worked in the college for thirty years and is the longest-serving staff member in the study. For him, the trouble began when his position at the college became threatened due to set of overlapping circumstances.

Marcus: *I'm pretty sure if you've interviewed a few more people in this building, and they've had a long service like me they'll have said it's on a downward slope at the moment for a variety of reasons. Partly government, partly management, partly approach but there's a general feeling and I feel it as well, it's not the job it was 4 or 5 years ago. It's partly because of those three reasons*

Marcus uses trouble in this instance to articulate a sense of grief, or bereavement, for what has been lost in the years since he joined North City College. The sense of loss for 'what was' in his story chimes with the sense of purpose the space of FE creates, described in Jeremy and Sara's narratives above. *Trouble*, here, reflects the evolving nature of FE and the sense of uncertainty which accompanies it. The 'downward slope' to which Marcus refers is also reflected in Sara's narrative and supports her to apportion blame to the college management for the decline of the values that are cultivated in the FE space.

Sara: *I've been to many principal's briefings and I've seen how they set the agenda. When the last principal came in she said that the staff are to blame and we don't really trust you lot blah blah bah and she brought a student up to attack the staff and I was thinking what a weird policy to get a student come in sort of go 'well you went on strike so you didn't care about us'*

The typology of *Trouble* serves to give a sense of risk to the storyteller's narrative. For some storytellers, the risk is ever-present, and seems to be reinforced when parts of the trouble go untold. For others, the trouble sets the context for a new beginning and for others, the beginning of the end. However, in all cases the trouble allows the protagonist to demonstrate to the listener that their story has at some stage been defined by a lack of trust in education. Their position on the margins have led them to engage with Further Education; and therefore, without trouble North City College would not be a part of their story.

Trouble has a particularly powerful influence upon the way the stories of the participants unfold. The risks which each individual storyteller is dealing with tends to encourage them to engage with more typologies associated with the trope of Distrust. Trouble, as a temporal narrative therefore, has a relationship with *Uncertainty* (Typology 6), in which a favourable future becomes more difficult to narrate; a discussion I will return to at the end of this chapter.

4.2.2 Typology 2: Struggle (Structural)

The story of struggle allows storytellers to position themselves clearly in affiliation with, and opposition to, other characters. While the storyteller is usually cast as virtuous, those who they affiliate away from are cast into roles (usually having 'power-over' the storyteller, though not always) where harm is being 'done to' them. Not only does the storyteller tend to be more virtuous than other characters in this story, but they also perceive the 'other' as less competent (or trustworthy). The struggle plays out in several scenarios which include acts of betrayal, conflict or resistance. Other voices in this story tend to be critical of the storyteller, leading them to believe that others are unworthy of their trust. This assumption may lead to stories of corruption, where the protagonist approaches relationships with other characters with a degree of suspicion. As such, this story requires relationships with others to be predictable. In other words, other characters must be able to 'prove themselves' worthy of trust where the default position is assumed distrust.

The typology of struggle can be organised further into two key themes: conflict and resistance. The theme of conflict relates to the inherent tensions that exist between the storyteller and their relationship with other characters, whereas resistance describes the protagonist's explicit position of distrust towards specific characters through their perception that said characters are either corrupt or incompetent (i.e., unable to fulfil the responsibility for which they should be trusted).

In stories which describe conflict, there is a clear distinction between those who are in the 'right' (more virtuous) and those who are in the 'wrong' (less virtuous). The conflict enlists me, as the listener, to understand the storyteller as being 'wronged' by other characters, often due to their immoral character. This seems to be linked to the way I am also positioned, as a former FE practitioner, and therefore as someone who can understand the view 'from below'. For some students, stories of conflict are used on multiple occasions to position staff members as incompetent, and for which they suffer because of their actions. In the passage below, James describes how the wrongdoing of his teachers effects his ability to keep up to date with his work.

James: *there have been times when there has been miscommunication with staff which has come back on us basically, like I didn't feel like they took full responsibility for it, and when I've said something, I've been the only person that's said something. Like I've asked other people in my class and once they've told me the information, I've said something, and I've just been kind of told off for it.*

What appears to make the story worse for James, and giving it a further ethical dimension, is his belief that the staff members concerned did not take full responsibility for their actions. It is the inherent sense of inequality which James expresses in this statement which allows him to make the injustice of his experience explicit, and by extension, the lack of morality displayed by those who had wronged him. His assertion that he is the 'only person' that has said something also reinforces his sense of isolation in relation to other characters in his story. Adam demonstrates a similar frustration with staff members when referring to his perception of his workload on his course.

Adam: *I like order, I like a structure, I like to know exactly what I'm supposed to do because if I don't then I can't do it. I need to know. With that, and with the amount of work that was on top of that. That was just stressful, and it sort of made me feel that the teachers had a lack of empathy*

Christina: *So, I guess the workload is quite stressful and you don't always feel that they have they empathy to understand what you're going through and how it affects you.*

Adam: *They do have that ability... they have it in them, but they don't do it, they don't show it properly*

This passage clearly reflects the issues that Adam was having with the workload on his course. However, by describing his experience through conflict, instead of casting himself into the role of the 'victim', he positions himself as having more virtue than his teachers. By asserting that his teachers do not 'do empathy properly', he further positions his teachers as less moral than his is, being unable (even unwilling) to recognise his needs. This provides further evidence for Adam's earlier assertion that the education system (in that instance schools) does not treat people fairly, stating that 'it's just that people have such responsibility and they can't do it right. *They just can't do it right.*' He is emboldened by his sense of individuality, which he believes was not catered for by a statutory system which tries to treat everybody the same.

Adam: *You know, and how the whole school system is just like one shoe fits all you know it doesn't appreciate other peoples' abilities, and it's all about them reading our intelligence and that... Just how it treats people, it doesn't make them people, it just makes them students, which aren't people.*

This sense of injustice gives him a very powerful voice in telling his story, though it is also clear that the effect of his previous educational experiences still weighs heavily upon him in the present. This sense of injustice is also echoed in James' story, where he demonstrates his understanding of the divisive nature of the education system.

James: *I dunno it's like something to do with education and how it's split people... I dunno how to describe it, like the education system will so easily discard people that don't fit their criteria... but then will be surprised when people who don't fit that criteria will retaliate for being thrown away.*

Christina: *do you feel like the retaliating person or just someone who doesn't fit into the education system?*

James: *I feel like I'm someone who's trying to retaliate from the inside, but that's just making it worse... it's like where I live there's so many thirteen-year-olds that walk around with blades in their pocket and fair enough they should stop doing it, but at the same time they don't know any better. Because the schools and the colleges don't give them opportunities because at the end of the day if there's someone with a rich dad and their dad's like a scientist like they'll go to universities, follow their dad's footsteps whereas if you've got someone whose got nothing and lives in a shack you'll think they're not gonna get anywhere.*

In a similar way to Adam and James, conflict is an implicit feature of Ali's story, yet she uses conflict to describe her relationship to most other characters around her. She positions herself as misunderstood, and as a result other characters intentionally try to do her harm.

Ali: *...as time's gone on and I've got to know my class a bit more there's been some issues. Yeah, there's one guy in my class who's always slagging me off and calling me a freak to my face and saying I'm ugly. And he keeps trying to cause trouble for me, which has now caused trouble between me and my actual friend in class and we've had a massive argument and we're not friends anymore... twice he's come to me and said, 'oh you know can we just let it be in the past, can we start over.' Me being me just wanting to move on and get on with things I've said yeah, and he's gone and done it again and caused more trouble for me. And it's as if he's jealous of me and he's trying to get me kicked off the course.*

Here, Ali describes a very fractious relationship with her peers. The language she uses to describe these relationships is violent, which gives a sense to the listener that life constitutes a constant battle. She also casts herself into the more virtuous role and enlists me to view her as such, saying '**me being me** just wanting to move on...'. This statement assumes that I have a certain level of knowledge about Ali's character, which calls me to respond to her story in a supportive way. However, during her story, she extends this sense of unease towards myself, by addressing me directly.

***Ali:** I either get on with sixteen-year-olds or forty-year-olds but people my own age I can't stand. I don't know why just especially if they're female. I mean you seem very laid back and down to earth... [for someone who is roughly her age]*

For Ali, the world is an unsafe place in which she must assume that others are untrustworthy. Differently to James and Adam, who use conflict to position those in power as incompetent due a failure to meet a higher ethical standard, Ali uses the story of conflict to isolate herself from almost all the other characters in her story; at times initiating moments of conflict, demonstrated in the passage below where she described an argument with her lecturer.

***Ali:** I had a screaming match with Marcus on Wednesday but that was only because I was feeling attacked by the students, so I took it out on Marcus.*

While the examples above demonstrate how students have used conflict to describe their relationship with their peers and teachers, staff members have used conflict in slightly different ways and for different purposes. Marcus, for example, has used the story of conflict to depict a collective opposition to an untrustworthy management structure in the college.

***Marcus:** I think the college has developed in some ways a culture of blame, and a culture of fear and a culture of cut-backs, and almost, almost, don't quote me on this but you can quote me on this, almost a nature of threat to staff and staff feel that. Staff feel pressurised, staff feel underfunded, under-regarded, over-blamed and they are being submitted to a whole barrage of impositions from the higher management that the higher management thinks should happen like that [clicks fingers]*

The above passage almost reads like a 'call to arms', in which Marcus is leading a campaign against the threatening nature of college management. In a similar way to Ali, he uses language which evokes violence such as 'barrage', 'fear' and 'threat' to emphasise his staunch opposition to the 'College' which throughout the interview remains largely synonymous with 'higher management', none of whom are mentioned by name. In doing so, he casts a variety of un-named others as 'higher management' figures whose purpose are to pose a threat to all other staff, who are collectively more virtuous.

Marcus uses the *Trouble* narrative (Typology 1) to justify his opposition to management. It is the trouble he describes in his 'run in' with management, when he nearly loses his job, that positions him in active conflict with leadership.

***Marcus:** I was put in a position where I would have to fight for my college life would you believe, and it was the head of this building who couldn't understand why I was so vehemently opposed to being pulled in front of HR for some things which had been done to me which was something that was opposed to their own system and I'd spent ridiculous amounts of time, my first month in college was not getting ready for the students it was getting ready to defend myself against a system that wasn't working*

The above statement from Marcus works on several levels. Not only does it reinforce his position as virtuous, but also calls upon the listener to assume this to be so by saying '**would you believe**'. In a similar way to Ali, Marcus assumes that I know something of his moral character and enlists me to understand the conflict he had with management from his point of view. Finally, he provides further evidence for his own virtue by criticising the 'higher management' for taking time away from his teaching preparation. This signals to the listener that his values (which are student-centred) are in direct conflict with those of leadership (whose values are not student-centred). In this way, Marcus makes his struggle a collective struggle against power. He provides further evidence for this by comparing the approach taken by the leadership to the approach of an educator.

***Marcus:** Teachers would say 'how are we gonna educate students?' and we just go in and shout at them... not gonna happen. If managers come and shout at you, it's not gonna happen*

This passage makes an important statement both about his positionality in relation to management (and the direct conflict of values therein) and his explicit perception that the college is being run by incompetent leaders, who do not understand how to run an educational institution effectively. In a similar way to Marcus, Roy also positions the leadership as to blame for a lot of issues that the college was experiencing.

***Roy:** mismanagement of money, mismanagement of funds, redundancies, buildings in absolute disarray, staff leaving left right and centre, I blame the college management whole-heartedly for that, whole-heartedly*

For Roy, the leadership are not just to blame for the poor experiences of staff but also the physical environment. He links the state of the physical environment to the student experience, which allows him to place the leadership in opposition to educational values in a similar way to Marcus. By creating these links in the passage below, he positions the leadership as 'uncaring', and not as committed to student-centred teaching as he is.

***Roy:** We haven't got enough money for printers, we haven't got enough money for paper, we haven't got enough money for ink in the toner for the printers. The building is a mess, it hasn't been decorated, the windows have never been washed since the building was built [...] but these are all things that students see, and parents see. You know if the building looks a mess you're gonna think that the people in it don't care*

He further extends this argument to the college performance management system, which he describes as 'worse than OFSTED'. On the understanding that I also come from a Further Education background, Roy calls me to recognise the fear associated with inspection.

Roy: *It's stricter than OFSTED. So, OFSTED when they come to a college have to give 3 days' notice. We can be inspected at any lesson at any time from September through to July and we've been told to expect a minimum of six inspections each*

Christina: *that sounds a little bit like [...] I felt a little bit on edge then just listening to you speak*

Roy: *Oh, it's supportive process [...] is it fuck, but that stops you from doing that as well don't it [being creative]*

Both Roy and Marcus use conflict in their story to position themselves against an oppressive environment which places staff in direct conflict with management. However, Sara uses conflict to describe how she is positioned as a member of staff by management.

Sara: *I always think that senior management think that we're all lazy and not doing very much and I think that's a bit of an ethos that comes down, distrust in people*

In constructing her story in this way, she positions the leadership as initiating the conflict, and as such, she has no choice but to be involved. She describes the process as 'boring', saying that the impositions made by the distrusting leadership get in the way of her work as an educator; in some cases, causing conflict between staff and students. In the passage below, she refers to recently imposed 'college rules' which students had been resisting to in class (including no drinks other than water, no hats and no coats in the classroom).

Sara: *Like I'm not really here to be like, 'you can't wear a hat', it's kinda pointless. You can't have a drink that's not water, great that's right. Let's just have that from day one, so it's not an issue. Not fighting students [...] you become the police. And I think that distrust gets in the way of education*

To Sara, her open opposition to directives from management can make her more trustworthy, but it makes her job feel more difficult.

Sara: *I think other people are more pragmatic and don't say anything and are more sensible. I don't know why we're like that [...] gosh yeah... it's like my team who would ask the question or say something, but then there are other people that wouldn't, but perhaps that's a more sensible approach really... but then I think that leads to being trusted.*

There is a sense of weariness in Sara's story here, where the conflict becomes exhausting and 'pointless', yet she feels the need to engage in the conflict regardless. In a similar way to Marcus and Roy, this seems to be due to a commitment to providing a quality education to students, which to her mind is harder because of management decisions.

Jeremy, on the other hand, positions the conflict differently to the other staff members in this study. In his story, he uses conflict to take a positive position on so-called 'management' decisions.

Jeremy: *Teachers are probably doing more now than what they ever were because workloads increase, systems increase, change in workloads, government, British val... things come in every year. And instead of just adapting to it and doing things that need to be done, people just kick off and I'm sitting there in meetings thinking like 'why are you kicking off?'. It needs to be done, it's a great thing. Like we've recently just started to track what's called 'predicted final grades' in the college, so you have to try and predict using all kinds of data what final grades and that's meant to be for every student across every course on the 16th of every month. Takes two minutes to do... People are kicking off about it and it's like, students need to know if they're on target, you need to know if students are falling behind and then yeah [...] it's just doing the role [position of Curriculum Team Leader] that I've done I've started to lose trust in other people in the department. Not in the department but the wider college*

In this passage, whilst acknowledging the pressure that teachers are under, he also positions those who refuse to 'just adapt' as letting students down. Again, he uses language which evokes conflict such as 'kicking off' to describe the tension in departmental relationships. However, differently to the stories of Roy, Marcus and Sara, Jeremy's story adopts the position of management. As such, the so-called 'impositions' which Marcus describes above are framed as positive for student outcomes. In this way, he incorporates his understanding of college policy into his desire to uphold his commitment to helping students to achieve the best he can. College policy then comes to represent a form of virtue, in a way that it does not for the other storytellers. He goes on to describe what he views as the pointlessness of opposition to policies which are in place, to his mind, to help students.

Jeremy: *There's a lot of staff that have resistance for the sake of having resistance [...] it's a weird thing that I've never experienced before. It's like they resist, especially when they're together. When people get together they seem to resist. It's almost like bravado.*

As a recently appointed manager, Jeremy experiences internal, as well as external conflict. He goes on to reflect more upon the impact of teacher workload upon the wellbeing of the team he leads.

Jeremy: *Erm [...] workload's definitely one of them. That's a policy that's directly come through, contracts of teaching time, you have to teach so many hours in a week. They lower the amount of weeks that college has, it used to be 36 weeks, now it's 30 weeks for a Level 3. So that means there's more teaching in a week...that's what my doubt is then. I understand that those policies affect the day-to-day running and teaching and quality of everything*

This passage works to reflect Jeremy's unease with his new position and at this point he seems to be working through his understanding of what it means to be a teacher having to work under these conditions, and his role as a manager in the implementation of these policies. Jeremy's story does a lot of work in negotiating his relationship to power, which will

be explored further in Chapter 6. However, at this point Jeremy uses struggle to help him to articulate his understanding of his relationship to others; both as a person who holds some degree of power, and who is subject to the power of others.

At times, instead of taking various forms of felt tension in the story, the struggle was made more explicit in the storytellers' open distrust of other characters in the story. These passages have been organised under the theme of 'resistance'. This open distrust is evidenced by corrupt motives, and an intentional drive to cause harm on the part of these characters. In the extracts below, Marcus and Roy express their suspiciousness towards the motives of managers.

Marcus: *there are some processes that go on, there are things that happen within higher management that we only hear about not directly, but we know things that go on and they all undermine the way you feel about education, and the way you do education, because you are undermined... management run things for themselves, not for the staff and the students. They have a culture of pretending that's what they're doing, but that's not proven by their acts*

Roy: *Key mistakes have been keeping the principal for as long as we've been keeping the principal for... while she's earning more than the prime minister earns in her annual wage... she's the highest paid college principal in the country. She's not employed by the college, she's actually freelance... again, these are all the things that we hear isn't it. But they took on a private education company, and the college bought a massive share in it whose chairman just happened to be on our board, what a coincidence! And basically, now that's shut down. And while she was managing that, and the CEO of that she gave herself a £60,000 pay rise*

Marcus and Roy here reference the rumours that emerge because of a widespread suspicion of 'higher management' motives at the college. This sense of suspicion seems to be reinforced by the fact that 'higher management' are not visible figures in the day-to-day working life of the College.

Roy: *I definitely don't trust any of the senior management. I probably wouldn't be able to pick most of them out in a line-up. We never see them*

The sense of suspicion in relation to management here seems to be linked to the position they adopt in their story as part of a virtuous collective against a leadership team that are invisible and therefore unaccountable, and corrupt. The lack of visibility also suggests lack of participation in decision-making, reinforcing the lack of agency experienced by these storytellers, a point that I will return to in Typology 3.

In the student stories, suspicion of those in power seems to stem more from their experience of *Trouble* in their educational trajectory. James makes explicit his struggle to trust his teachers because of previous traumatic experiences.

James: *...I'm at that point now where I'll never trust someone until they've proven it first*

Christina: *okay, and what do you think trust would look like. Once you've had that evidence what do you think?*

James: *that's the thing I have no idea what it would be like in terms of a college lecturer, I mean... I'd never know until I know, you know what I mean?*

James is very aware of the power his teachers hold over him, meaning that he takes the position of an assumed distrust towards them. He further cannot articulate what evidence he would need to prove their trustworthiness, which maintains his sense of isolation from them.

In summary, the typology of struggle plays a key role in helping storytellers articulate their position in relation to others. From the perspective of these storytellers, the distinction between trust and distrust is a simple one: a struggle between virtue and corruption. Positioning themselves in the site of struggle makes the world around them risky, forcing them to tread carefully in deciding who they affiliate themselves to and against. I will go on to explain how the next typology, oppression, can work in tandem with struggle to consolidate the power that others have over them according to this world-view. As a result, storytellers must adopt strategies to keep themselves safe within the environment they describe.

4.2.3 Typology 3: Oppression (Structural)

Oppression is used in stories to reinforce the storyteller's lack of agency. Oppression is used to typify sense of self, and how they are viewed by those with power over them. In some cases, characters abuse their power, and in the act, define the boundaries within which the protagonist can move.

Stories with *Oppression* draw boundaries to define the limits of the storyteller's relationship between self and others. Sometimes the boundary is of their choosing, and for others it is imposed. In most cases, the boundaries are there to limit the space within which the characters can safely move. This space is often restricted and as such limits the protagonist's sense of agency. For students, the boundaries seem to be a result of learned experiences

from education. For Eddie and James, their experiences have framed the educator as an oppressor.

James: *it appals me how much lecturers or teachers in the past that before I've said anything have said 'be yourself, speak up when you want to, don't let other people influence your thoughts' but then when you do say something that doesn't go with the college views or educational views, then suddenly you're in the wrong*

Eddie: *I'm not the only one whose in the position I'm in you know what I mean... there's gonna be hundreds, thousands, if not millions of kids or young adults who've probably been put in positions they didn't ever want to be in but they didn't know any other way cos when you're a kid and you've only got your parents and your teachers, and not everyone's lucky enough to have a good background to come from so you're going off what your teachers are saying, so if your teachers are saying the wrong thing you're getting stuck in this rut for 'x' amount of years*

The statements above reflect the power and influence that educators can have over students, and their own sense of freedom in decision-making. Both Eddie and James have felt let down by what they perceive to be educators' misuse of their influence over them and link their subsequent lack of direction since leaving school to this. On the other hand, Dawson, who attributes a lack of boundary-making to his failure to achieve his desired grades at school, expresses a need for boundaries as he progresses, saying of North City College.

Dawson: *Yeah there's a lot more of a professional approach, it's more literally like a boss, I don't wanna say boss but say supervisor, you're friendly with them but you know they have authority, and you know they're trying to do what's best for you sort of thing*

The distinct difference between the way that Dawson views boundary-making to that of Eddie and James is in his assumption that those who have authority have his best interests at heart. Instead of rejecting authority as simply oppressive, Dawson assumes that boundaries are required for students to be able to achieve. When compared to the staff narratives, it is possible to see how boundary-making might play out in an educational setting, which sheds light upon some of its complexities.

Roy: *I'll never ever give up on a student. Never, never ever ever give up on a student, but that trust does get [...] if they don't meet the first deadline, their attendance, you know that trust does kinda start to wane. But yeah, I think for most of them I do start with 100% trust, it's like a new born baby innit. A new born baby is all innocent in the world and everything, you've got to 100% trust in that yeah*

Jeremy: *I'm massively soft with the students. Getting better, because I'm seeing more from an organisational perspective things I've had to do so I've become a little bit harsher. Erm, and I think that's a good thing. I always used to think that's a bad thing but it's not, students do need an element of control.*

In these statements, it is possible to see that boundary-making starts when the teacher-student relationship becomes defined by institutional requirements such as retention and achievement. This can reinforce negative stereotypes, particularly for students for whom achievement has been elusive in the past. For James, his resistance to education represents a resistance to being cast into the role of 'struggling student' again. Conditions for trust-building become defined by success rates; a narrow definition of success that is not necessarily defined on the student's terms. For example, Eddie and Larry both describe previous experiences of being labelled by educators: Eddie for being a 'trouble-maker' and Larry for having Dyslexia, who says he was 'put in a corner' from a very young age. As such, they describe the need to redefine their relationship with education on their own terms.

Eddie: *So, when I had my first sit down one on one with Jeremy [he said] 'if you go to uni you wanna do an editing course' and I was bit like woah I don't know... all a bit going back into getting shoehorned into a specific role again and I don't think I want that... I'm gonna go to uni, I wanna do the media course, and do editing and make sure I know what I'm good at and what I'm bad at and what I enjoy for when I start looking for a job. I just don't wanna spend any more wasted years for me*

Larry: *This time around I had to tell him [Jeremy about the Dyslexia] because last time around I felt stupid because the kids were like younger than me, so I didn't wanna come out and be embarrassed*

Differently to James, by rejecting previous stories and choosing to re-write their relationship with education, Eddie and Larry mitigate against the damaging effects of oppression upon their narratives; restoring their sense of agency. It is possible to understand the use of oppression narratives in this context as defining the terms in which another character can be trusted. These terms are not necessarily chosen by either the protagonist, or the other characters involved in the story. These conditions are imposed upon them by those who have more power, which is reflected in the narratives of staff members. For example, Marcus, Roy and Sara use oppression to demonstrate how College policy dictates their relationship with students.

Marcus: *there's a set of criteria that you have to do here, and if this box is not ticked in some way then you are not doing your job. And the box often has nothing to do with what you achieve and manage with the students around you.*

Roy: *We were above national benchmarks for our success rates, at least that's what they've been telling us. Fantastic. Now they've not succeeded well enough. So, we've hit that, we've done it. Now OFSTED are now saying, yeah but they haven't achieved high enough grades. Well, you didn't mention high enough grades when it was back here [...] so you achieve one goal, and they just chuck another one in. So now we'll be having what's called 'value-added', which is what students come in with, compared to what they go out with and we're being hammered on that now.*

Sara: *I think it's changed because of the money, we've been a bit pushed. Teach more and more and focus less on what you're doing. I think that the pastoral side of it has always been a strength and if that gets eroded that would be really poor.*

Here, it is possible to see where the stories of struggle and oppression intersect. The 'box-ticking' culture of audit and evaluation which has become prevalent in FE successfully defines the conditions of the student-teacher relationship. Audit, in this context, constitutes the oppressor in these narratives. The storytellers (both staff and students) who use oppression in their narratives are resisting the roles they are being cast into by their oppressor, but the accompanying struggle suggests that they are not always winning the battle. Again, Marcus draws upon his 'downward slope' analogy to articulate how audit reframes his position in his classroom.

Marcus: *I used to be happy for someone to come and observe me, a formal observation, that was a long time ago and they'd just come in, and the students would ask me 'who was that guy?' and I'd say 'oh they've just come in to have a look at what's going on in here' and I'd be happy for it to be like that. Now I'm saying to students 'we're being observed, they're coming to observe me and observe you' because I don't see it as a positive experience now. I used to see it as a developmental experience, now I see it as a controlling experience.*

Roy also demonstrates how audit defines the boundaries of his teaching practice. He describes how the constant threat of evaluation denies him of his creativity.

Roy: *yeah cos if you constantly feel under pressure. If you constantly feel that someone could walk into your classroom at any time and make a judgement on your teaching at any time, then you're gonna make sure that what you're doing ticks the boxes, and sometimes if you wanna do something a bit creative it might not necessarily tick all the boxes. It might just be fun, it might just be a bit of team-building, it might just build morale-boosting [...] but if they walked in, and they looked at your paperwork compared to what you're doing in the lesson they'd fail you on your observation*

Meanwhile, Sara alludes to the more sinister nature of audit and accountability practices in teaching.

Sara: *there is a climate of like, 'we've caught you, do it better, and if you don't do it better you're in culpability.' And if we did that to students we'd be sacked, 'right you've failed, six more failures... and oh you might fail the next one.'*

In this statement, Sara sums up the nature of the oppression that is present in many of the narratives described in this chapter. The storyteller describes an environment that they have not created, where they are cast into roles that they have not chosen. If *Trouble* sets the scene for the narrative, and *Struggle* positions the storyteller within the narrative, then it is *Oppression* that prevents the storyteller from moving freely. By defining the nature of the

staff-student relationship, all storytellers are culpable in their own success or failure. Distrust, then, is the refusal to accept this definition. In this sense, the stories of struggle and oppression work as forms of ethical positioning.

The work that the typologies of *Struggle* and *Oppression* do to connect and disconnect storytellers from other characters is something I will return to as part of the discussion in Chapter 7. The affiliations created by *Struggle* help the storytellers to identify who is virtuous or not, and therefore set the parameters for who they trust, and perhaps more importantly, who they do not trust within the institution. As such, those who are 'virtuous' can be trusted, whilst those who cannot are 'corrupt', allowing storytellers to easily cast people into these roles based upon their assessment of this; usually influenced by their positionality in relation to power, as illustrated by *Oppression*.

4.2.4 Typology 4: Powerlessness (Symbolic)

The use of powerlessness narratives in a story signal to the listener that the storyteller has run out of options. There is a sense of exhaustion in these narratives; that they have given into the struggle. Sometimes this leads to self-doubt as they try to seek explanations for their circumstances.

The use of powerlessness narratives consolidates the impact of struggle and oppression upon the lives of the storytellers. Powerlessness symbolises the mental and physical exhaustion of navigating an untrustworthy world, and the reality of what is at stake for them. For example, Richard, a member of technical support staff, describes how the near-constant threat of redundancy poses very real threats to the storytellers in this context.

Richard: *it creates instability amongst the staff, of course it does, and generates low morale amongst the staff and you know young people [...] it becomes a very palpable thing for people and they can sense it when people are upset with the organisation. Yeah it does create an atmosphere or a culture even if people don't feel that they're changing their behaviour towards the students or aren't putting the same amount of energy and effort into the students, if you're under threat of your job it has to in some way affect you.*

Powerlessness in the face of redundancy describes the emotional toll of negotiating risk, shaping the struggle and oppression that comes to characterise a lot of the institutional relationships described by staff members. Below, Jeremy describes how the culture of *Struggle* can influence their ability to support students, but also how the fatigue of resistance can drive some staff to give in to their sense of powerlessness.

Jeremy: *It's quite fractured at the moment because we've gone through quite a lot quite quickly, and there are cracks within the department teaching team which I*

think, maybe wrongly, if they resolve themselves then they'll run for the students much more consistently and smoother. There's some staff that I know don't want to be here. Every year hope for VR [Voluntary Redundancy] and are waiting to be paid to go, and that's affected the department because they want to go into that redundancy pool

When the struggle becomes too much, the consequences become very real for Marcus, who felt unable to commit to it full time.

Marcus: *I'm a 0.8 lecturer, don't do it full time and I must say I would struggle if I did it five days a week. Not being in is a massive buffer for me not getting as stressed as I know I would get. I found it very stressful. I did take a year out after 4 or 5 years of full-time education, erm I did find it quite pressurised, so I got an agreed sabbatical, unpaid of course, did quite a bit of work, developed more skills. For some reason it didn't happen that those skills took me anywhere else, so I came back into education then here I am now.*

In the above passage, Marcus uses *Powerlessness* to make it clear to the listener that he is not in his current position by choice. His lack of agency reinforces his sense of oppression described in Typology 3, which makes reducing his hours his only option for survival. For Roy, the fatigue that the powerlessness narrative injects into his story makes him self-consciously aware that the story he wanted to tell, is not the story that he is telling me.

Roy: *I know it's not a nice word is it [tired]. It's not an optimistic happy word, that upsets me that I chose that [...] yeah, that's quite sad...*

Roy goes on to use the *Powerlessness* narrative to describe how the typologies of *Struggle* and *Oppression* undermine his identity as an educator. As such, the sadness that he feels is not just related to tiredness, but a sense of loss.

Roy: *I think it [tiredness] impacts upon my planning as well. You wanna be... doing something new and creative with them all the time. But it takes so much away, and sometimes when you're tired you just go, well I did this, and I know it works, and I know it ticks the boxes, and I know it's not exciting but it's easy for the students, it's easy for me, let's just go with that, as opposed to going, let's try something that's a bit F'ing risky, and a bit out there, and a bit off-the-wall, and a bit kinda, 'oh I just saw something on TV the night before' and be like let's do this. When you're tired you can't do that*

There is a tangible weight in the above extract that the story of powerlessness, or fatigue seems to exert over Roy's story. The story, in this sense, is actively shaping Roy's practice as an educator. The loss of identity associated with powerlessness creates a sense of doubt for both Roy and Sara.

Roy: *I'm doubtful in me, so you know I've been a course tutor for the last 8 years. I've asked if I don't do it anymore because I doubt I'm doing it well enough. Because all I seem to do is get pulled up about 'that student's left', 'that student's failed', 'what*

have you done about this?', 'why has that student gone?', 'this is your fault', 'why have student numbers dropped?', 'why is the value-added so low?' ... I doubt whether I've got it in me anymore... if the college are so worried that the course needs improvement because so many students are deemed to have left and failed and so on then I can't be doing a good job, so then I doubt my confidence

Sara: *I've seen there's not much time to do things, am I actually doing what I need to do, am I prioritising things I should be doing because I'm stretched so far that sometimes I'm doubtful of actually am I doing any of it any good. So, I teach a lot of the theoretical subjects. I do a lot of planning.... You're sort of doubtful of 'am I doing this well?' so I think you're often doubtful about what's going on around you. So however confident you are I think there always has to be a bit of a doubt... there's not much time to breathe, there's not much time to learn, there's not much time to think.*

Instead of tiredness, Sara articulates her sense of loss through a lack of time. The passage above is chaotic, and the lack of structure in her story here reflects the lack of structure in her working life. The cost of giving into the struggle is time to reflect on practice, which creates self-doubt.

For the students in the study who use the powerlessness narrative, there is a sense of fatalism which characterises their articulation of powerlessness. For Adam and James, their disillusionment with the education system culminates in a sense of futility about the process they're engaging with.

Adam: *I do enjoy, you know I put effort into my work. I do focus and do it then I do get the occasional thought of you what's the point like, what's it really worth?*

James: *yeah, education was just a no for me... I've never... grasped it*

For both students, the lack of clarity of purpose in engaging with education leads to a lack of clarity about the future (discussed further in Typology 6). This feeling seems to be compounded by their lack of trust in education as a supportive system, particularly for students 'like them'.

James: *yeah this is what I mean because I don't trust the education system because it's, I feel like it's set out in a way that you can fall behind and you can ask for help and they'll just say 'well it was your job not to fall behind'... which in all fairness yeah, but we're humans, it happens to everyone, especially that fact that we're teenagers you know*

In this statement, James uses notions of powerlessness to relate his experiences of alienation from education by framing it as 'anti-human', and more specifically, 'anti-teenager'. He extends his thinking further to describe what he believes to be society's attitude to teenagers in more generalised terms.

James: people wonder why teenagers these days are so messed up as they say, but when a kid was born 100 years ago nothing was sugar-coated, they were put into work from a young age, do as you're told blah blah blah, whereas these days it's all sugar-coating the world for your kid and by the time we get to 17/18 and we're shoved out by ourselves, we suddenly get introduced to this completely different world that wasn't there when we grew up. Like I said it sounds, it might come across arrogant but these days as a kid it's very 'I want this', 'I want that' they get it and you know you get told you can be anything you wanna be when you grow up, but when you get to college, you can't be whatever you want to be without doing all the stuff they want you to go through instead of just being able to do it yourself

By extending the issues as he perceives them from his own life to society in general, James successfully uses the powerlessness narrative to extend his experience to all teenagers. All teenagers have been lied to and oppressed by a society which valorises competition and the individual. James fully understands himself as one of the losers of a neoliberal society and uses the powerlessness narrative to position himself as such. From this point of view, there is little point trusting the education system because it is not accountable to him, or people like him. *Powerlessness* allows the listener to understand James as someone who lives on the edges of society, with the '13-year-olds with knives' he describes in Typology 2, and who understands exactly why he is there.

In summary, powerlessness symbolises a reluctant acceptance of the status quo. James and Adam's narratives chime with a similar sense of exhaustion as the staff participants in their use of this narrative in their stories. It reflects an embodied injustice and entrapment. They understand, through stories of *Struggle* and *Oppression*, that their position is not a voluntary one and that their agency has been restricted by those (often unnamed) others in power.

4.2.5 Typology 5: Self-Preservation (Symbolic)

Narratives of self-preservation tend to focus on the self-interested nature of people's characters. This is sometimes introspective and sometimes a critique of the character of others. This form of narrative is used to appeal to survival instincts. Matters of agency are disregarded in favour of 'getting by' safely, in a way that minimises harm to the self.

For this study, the stories of *Self-Preservation* can take one of two forms that have been thematically identified as *pragmatism* and *risk-aversion*. Whilst stories of pragmatism are used by storytellers to justify actions which protect them, risk-aversion stories instead engage the storyteller in narratives of over-work. In these stories, the protagonist must overcompensate to be sure that they have mitigated all risks. Where stories which use pragmatism relinquish control, stories of risk-aversion assume control as the only way to achieve safety.

The storytellers in this study use *Self-Preservation* to perform different kinds of positioning work in their narratives. They work to establish strategies which support the storyteller to protect themselves from the harmful impact of other structural and temporal narratives. For example, Dawson uses the pragmatist narrative to justify his relative isolation from other characters.

Dawson: I decided that I'd rather focus on my education rather than have a good bond with my teachers let's say

Dawson has learned from his experience of *Trouble* that being too friendly with teachers can lead to failure. Therefore, a close relationship excludes the possibility of achieving his objectives. As such, he employs the same rationale towards his classmates.

Dawson: when I'm negative, like the very negative moods that I've included [in the card sort] they mostly come from the fact that I'm a strong independent person, I don't like working in groups. It's often worrying... I'll be stressed because the group's failing me in some situation and there'll be a higher workload because the group's expected to work together and I'll get stressed and worried and be like 'oh no I'm doing all the work by myself' and I wouldn't feel in control and things like that

By excluding the possibility of forming close relationships with teachers and peers, Dawson is left to assume that the only way of achieving his objectives is to isolate himself from others. His reluctance to place faith in others symbolises a disposition towards distrust due to a fear of consequences and a lack of faith in the competence of others. This self-inflicted isolation is also echoed in Ali's story.

Ali: I always seem to get paired with the lazy people who will gladly sit back and let me do all the work...I don't say anything at the time cos I don't really wanna cause rifts, but it isn't really fair that people think 'oh it's Ali... she'll do it all'

Ali and Dawson assume that others do not share their best interests, and therefore isolating themselves socially becomes logical. In Ali's case, the story of *Struggle* also influences her disposition, which means all other characters are either there to cause her harm or to take advantage of her. What both storytellers lose in this process is a sense of existential safety, which adds a more heightened sense of risk in relation to their education.

Larry and James also use their experience of *Trouble* to isolate themselves from others. However, their social exclusion is more closely associated with self-esteem. Larry's stories to date have taught him that teachers and students do not help him, but instead make him feel inadequate. Therefore, the safest solution is to self-isolate or even avoid educational situations altogether.

Larry: *My confidence used to be terrible when I used to be round people, my confidence has been like low, cos like trust issues and things like that, thinking 'are you gonna be like them people?'*

James' negative experiences of education reinforce his sense of powerlessness. Therefore, he cannot place his faith in others as he does not know at what point he'll be moved on or let down by them.

James: *...I want to be friends with people but there's just that sense of I'm just used to having to go and not see them every again so...*

James's story has a very clear sense of being caught up in survival, which means he also draws on narratives of powerlessness and struggle to articulate this. The narrative of self-preservation works to call the listener to understand the precarious nature of his life.

Christina: *okay so do you have an end goal at the moment or is that not really something you've got in mind?*

James: *at the moment it's to survive and not go homeless*

Precariousness also appears as a feature in Ali's narrative, who uses the *Self-Preservation* narrative to articulate the impact of *Struggle* upon her life. Her lack of trust in others, combined with the *Trouble* she describes in previous stories means that there was a lot at stake for her achieving highly on her course.

Ali: *And I think that's why I work so hard. Like, a couple of months ago I worked so hard that my doctor said if you don't slow down and stop stressing you are gonna have a heart attack, my blood pressure was through the roof... but I can't, I'm so focussed on the fact that I'm 30. By the time I finish a two-year level three course, I'll be 33 and it just terrifies me that I won't get anywhere within the industry... it kind of becomes almost humiliating when applying for work*

For Roy, as a member of staff, the *Self-Preservation* narrative supports him to quell the sense of self-doubt that the powerlessness narrative implants into his story.

Roy: *I'm just not having that it's my fault anymore. I don't get paid enough, but as I said I'm a course tutor, but that doesn't actually exist, but I have to plan and structure and manage a team on a daily basis, so why put myself through the stress and hassle of it. Let someone else have a try and you never know they might love it and do a better job of it than I do and good luck to them.*

Instead of causing feelings of guilt or inadequacy, the *Self-Preservation* narrative works to justify his decision to let go of certain responsibilities as an act of self-care. It functions as a small resistance to the dominance of the powerless narrative in his story. Jeremy instead uses risk-aversion strategies to protect himself; meaning that he takes on rather than letting go.

Jeremy: *I do a lot of admin for the department and recently our Head of School has been off as well, and I think leadership and management put a lot of trust in me to do a lot of things whilst he was off, so I do feel like there is a lot of trust put onto me. I've only been in the job for 9 months and there's a lot of stuff that I do that I definitely shouldn't do, it's not part of my contract but I do that because I like control.*

For Jeremy, control positions him favourably to those in power. Therefore, in being risk-averse he can also demonstrate his competence; ensuring that he earns the trust of his management team. However, as a recently appointed manager, negotiating risk and trust sometimes presents difficulties with those he manages.

Jeremy: *I put loads of effort and control in making sure those things are in place, but I often feel hugely let down when within things I expect to be done and that I ask to be done [are not done]*

This passage demonstrates how Jeremy's over-work can lead him to question the commitment of others. For him, the risk is not from those in power, but those he has power over. In this sense, the self-preservation narrative works to reinforce his struggle as he continues to negotiate his positionality within the organisation. Richard demonstrates how those with power over others can often call the *Self-Preservation* narrative into the stories of other characters. In the example below, Richard describes how risk appeals to survival instincts, igniting the self-interest of other characters in his story.

Richard: *it's not often I have to say with the people I work with, but people get stressed out with the idea of OFSTED coming again and suddenly everyone wants the whistles and bells for that day because they want to pull out a high-end lesson for that week, and people get stressed by it. And sometimes when people get stressed niceties go out the window when they're under that kind of pressure. Which is understandable you know in that respect, when you get someone who's mind is a bit blagged instead of 'how you doing? how was your weekend?' it's just 'I NEED FOUR CAMERAS, ROOM 25 NOW'. BANG. and off they go, you know, fair enough they've got a lot on their mind*

The appeal to self-interest is also demonstrated in Roy's use of the *Self-Preservation* narrative. Again, Roy uses the narrative of *Powerlessness* in tandem with *Self-Preservation* to symbolise his resignation towards his sense of self in the organisation. Differently to Jeremy, who is in a more powerful position, *Self-Preservation* dampens the fire rather than lighting it.

Roy: *So it does become tick-boxing. BTEC now... they write briefs for you now [...] so as a tutor you can choose to write your own brief, or you can just go on the website and download BTEC's. And the temptation, because you are that [points to TIRED] and that [points to WORRIED] is that you just go straight to that, and you just go well that's nice and easy, paperwork's done, I don't have to think of anything. I don't have to think of the scenario, I don't have to think about how I can make it creative, how I*

can make it interesting, I can just go there you go [...] and that's all just to get 'em through, get 'em through

The palpable sense of loss that comes through for Roy in the powerlessness narrative is reflected in the passage above. In using the self-preservation narrative, he necessarily excludes any joy associated with his job. Self-preservation denies him the opportunity to create and enjoy building transformational relationships with his students.

Jeremy's need to manage risk leads him to a position of distrust in staff who not meet his expectations as outlined above. However, his understanding of the pressures associated with the teaching environment (which he reflects on in Typology 2), allows him to understand this member of staff as engaging in narratives of distrust because of his fear.

***Jeremy:** There's a member of staff with a course that's all these things that we just discussed, lack of communication, lack of trust, student engagement, everything like that. And I always thought that it's just an easy life, like rocks in at 9:30 – 10:00 and then first one to clock out. Students leave classes early all the time, right we're done for the day you can just go... but at the end of the year they're coming to me to complain about the course. But actually, there was a meeting where that fear and self-control kind of becoming really apparent. I thought it was just laziness and a lazy life, but it came out that it was complete fear of being able to control that and it was recently, and it completely changed my perception, and it's like what you said there's a deeper-rooted reason as to why that situation, why things are not transparent, why things are not clear on the course.*

Self-Preservation narratives seem to have a specific function. They work to protect the storyteller from the influence of other narratives which are harmful. They help the listener to understand how the storyteller has interpreted their experiences, and how this translates into action. If their temporal and structural stories position them towards distrust, then *Self-Preservation* is the narrative that they use to protect themselves against untrustworthy others. The effect of this narrative, however, is to shut down the storyteller's sense of agency to a greater or lesser extent. The final typology in this chapter will return to the temporal features of the distrust narrative; describing how Typologies 1-5 shape the storyteller's sense of future in a world characterised by distrust.

4.2.6 Typology 6: Uncertainty (Temporal)

The presence of uncertainty in narrative makes articulating the future difficult. This difficulty in narrating future can make future talk vague, unsettling and risky. The uncertainty narrative restricts agency through an inability to make plans. The level of risk associated with the future makes the world an unsafe place, which can consolidate a disposition towards distrust.

For many of the storytellers who engage with narratives associated with distrust, their use of uncertainty narratives helps the listener to understand their sensitivity towards the unknown. The insecurity they experience stems from stories which they have constructed using a selection of stories from Typologies 1-5. For example, Adam, Eddie and James use uncertainty to remind me, as the listener, that they have not forgotten how they have been treated previously by the education system.

***Eddie:** in the end of it I don't wanna do what happened to me in the first place and go through spend a year or two in college and at the end of it have a piece of paper what's worthless basically at the end of the day so that's why I mainly chose this course*

Similarly to Eddie, the lack of faith in the education system which Adam articulates in previous stories reflects a sense of uncertainty about the future.

***Christina:** When do you feel worried?*

***Adam:** It's the occasional thought you know, cos, what I've said before. What course to do, where to go, I do get the occasional thought of like... if you don't mind me saying... holy shit what am I gonna do now like, there's so much... where do I go like, how do I begin? And that thought naturally worries me a bit and I do get a little scared you know. But that's normal. Where to go, you know, what's gonna happen?*

The above passage reflects Adam's understanding of the system that he is in, even if he does not agree with it. His lack of trust in the education system creates an uncertain future, as he struggles to decipher which direction he should take. This contributes to a sense of anxiety about future possibilities. This is reflected in James' story, who uses *Uncertainty* to shut down any possibility that his qualification will support his future.

***James:** it's like I can understand yeah, I may's well just stick it out but to have come this far and put this much effort in and to know I'm not gonna get what I wanted out of it, it's like, it's one of those things isn't it, it's like what's the point now?*

Differently to Eddie, Adam and James, Ali draws on her earlier stories of *Trouble* and *Struggle*, as well as her relative dependence on the institution, to articulate her sense of uncertainty towards the future.

***Ali:** yeah but the apprehension comes from my age, and the fact that I haven't worked in... how many years is it now... (...) I haven't had a job since 2008/2009 because of my anxiety*

Ali's use of the *Self-Preservation* narrative intimately links her to the institution, where she has been a student for most of the previous ten years. This makes a future in the labour market a scary prospect, and one which she doubts she can succeed in. A similar sense of

dread about the future is echoed in staff narratives. Roy, for example, feels that his lack of qualifications constitutes an insecure future, should the college collapse.

Roy: *what's the future? I've been in it for quite a while now. I'm not trained in anything, I've been out of TV and film for too long now to go back to it full time. I can still do little bits part time, but definitely not full time. What happens if it goes? Where do I go? What do I do?*

The insecurity that Roy describes for his future reinforces his sense of powerlessness by tying him to an institution that he does not trust. The insecurity and doubt associated with the future is also echoed in Jeremy and Richard's stories.

Jeremy: *every couple of months, you're aware that there's funding implications impacting the college in quite big ways... it gets harder and harder to work in FE obviously, money does massively impact all sorts of decision making from all sorts of senior leadership teams in colleges*

Richard: *well this is probably less about relationships and more about the constant battle to survive in your post as everything is constantly restructured... so it's either be optimistic or bury your head in your hands and cry [laughs] so I just try to be optimistic about it and I try to think that you know, in terms of relationships as well, I think it's constant challenge for both tutors, support staff and everyone.*

The sense of 'constant challenge' which Richard articulates here reflects the ongoing *Struggle* and the *Oppression* within the institution. For the staff in this study, uncertainty is perpetual; creating fertile ground for distrust to grow. This is demonstrated in the passage below, where Marcus uses the 'downward slope' analogy to allow him to predict an impoverished future at the institution with confidence.

Marcus: *Okay so if we're talking about classes next year now, I'm not optimistic about how those are gonna run, so I'm not optimistic. They'll run and we'll do good things with the students, but I'm not optimistic that they'll be as good as they could be, or they have been. I'm not optimistic about the level of the work I'll be asked to do, I think my level of work will go up, for no increase in pay, as it were.*

In summary, the *Uncertainty* narrative is a culmination of the stories of *Trouble*, *Struggle*, *Oppression*, *Powerlessness* and *Self-Preservation* which characterise the experience of the storytellers. *Uncertainty* consolidates all other stories to position the storyteller in a perpetual state of distrust, supporting them to construct a world around them which is full of risks, where hope is in short supply.

4.3 Chapter Summary

Distrust is a trope which storytellers use to construct a sense of who they are in relation to others. For students who have had a difficult experience of education, Distrust narratives

support them to articulate their sense of being wronged by others, leading to their position in the present. However, Distrust narratives also restrict their capacity to move forward. Their agency is constrained by their lack of faith in those responsible for their education, making it hard for them to navigate their way to success. Meanwhile, staff members use Distrust to construct their own limited agency within their environment. Their lack of faith towards those in power diminishes their ability to be the kinds of educators that they want to be. Within the construction of Distrust, all storytellers are constrained, and none of them are in a position of their choosing.

Trouble plays an important role in bringing the storyteller's 'trust history' (Möllering, 2013) to the foreground of the narrative. This history speaks to Rothstein's (2005) notion of collective memory. This also indicates how institutional crises (Möllering, 2013) can influence disposition towards trust as the individual passes through the institution (in the case of students), or copes with institutional change (in the case of staff). This *Trouble* contributes to feelings of *Uncertainty* for the future. The *Trouble* typology, therefore, works to make life dangerous for storytellers by introducing high levels of risk. This calls back to Beck (1992) and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2001) work on risk and individualisation in society, as risk works to construct the biography of the storyteller. The aversion of risk seems to fuel *Uncertainty* narratives, leading to a social trap (Rothstein, 2005), in which the presumption of distrust serves as a protective mechanism for dealing with *Uncertainty*.

It further seems that *Trouble* fuels engagement with *Struggle*, as a lack of faith in the institution seems to be linked to a misalignment with perceived institutional values or objectives. For example, James' experience of *Trouble* leads him to feel marginalised from the education 'system' as he perceives it. As such, his lack of 'fit' within the organisation is linked to an inconsistency between his own feelings about education, and the rules or codes of the institution, which leads to the conflict he describes with his lecturers. Instead, he draws on public narratives (Somers, 1994) relating to negative constructions of 'youth' to articulate his 'ontological story' (ibid) of *Oppression*. For staff, this misalignment is similarly present in the construction of leadership figures, fuelled by an ideological conflict between lecturers and 'management'. This echoes work by O'Leary and Wood (2017, see Chapter 1) with regards to inspection, as well as Page's (2017a) provocation relating to 'corrupt' and uncaring leadership figures. These typologies combined contribute to the boundaries that are constructed between those who are, and are not, trustworthy, echoing Uslaner's (2002) notion of 'in-group' trust: the 'in-group' being virtuous, while the 'out-group' is corrupt,

demonstrating the powerful role that story has in connecting and disconnecting people (Frank, 2012a).

Struggle also leads to *Powerlessness* and *Self-Preservation*, serving to isolate storytellers from other characters, which has a considerable impact upon their self-identity. Their position on the margins of the institution causes them to construct other characters as oppressive. These identity constructions seem to be further linked to the ongoing pressure to perform (Ball, 2005; Lobb, 2017).

It is from a combination of these typologies that a 'narrative identity' emerges that positions the storyteller towards Distrust. This has important links with Möllering's (2013) notion that who we trust, or distrust is linked into our sense of self. The relational construct of the self is linked to those with whom we connect or disconnect; locating trust at the intersection between 'self-as-knower' and 'self-as-known' (Hermans, 2001). Interestingly, the dialogic nature of narrative construction became most evident in moments where I was called upon to respond to the stories being told; positioned as part of the 'in-group' through a shared understanding of FE culture.

It therefore seems that *Trouble*, in creating *Uncertainty*, has an important influence upon perceived corruption, and resultant isolation from the institution; themes I will return to in Chapter 7. The following chapter will demonstrate how Trust is constructed, and how narratives of Trust can mitigate against the damaging effects of Distrust for these storytellers; allowing them to form alliances with others and achieve transformation even when the odds are against them.

Chapter 5: Analysis 2

The Narrative Construction of Trust

A trope. *In a world characterised by trust, the storyteller lives in the moment. They dwell very little on past experiences, and in a sense, this appears to be because they are creating a new story or building on their current one. When one is transforming, the past seems irrelevant. Their narrative is future-facing, giving an energy and enthusiasm to their descriptions of the world around them. To this protagonist, the world is an inherently helpful place. This allows them to form positive relationships with other characters. Strangers are assumed to be benevolent; more likely to help them than to harm them. Their relationships are characterised by cooperation and reciprocity. There is an assumed sense of mutually shared values, which gives them a sense of self-confidence, making their story ripe for creative endeavour and risk-taking. This is due to a sense of psychological safety that is afforded to them by their environment. Their ability to express themselves freely affords them a sense of authenticity and integrity. They have taken ownership of their lives and their agency allows them to visualise and thus narrate their futures clearly, supported by strong networks which afford them the advice and guidance to safeguard them as they move forward with their plans. They see themselves as interdependent on their community, giving them a sense of purpose whilst also appreciating the value of the contribution of others.*

5.1 Introduction

In the same way as Chapter 3, the trope above is constructed from themes arising from the fifteen student and staff participants from this study. It represents the antithesis to the trope of Distrust; fundamentally transformed by a perception of the world which is helpful rather than harmful. Underpinning the energy that propels the protagonist forward are the foundations which are laid by strong relationships with others; both known and unknown to the protagonist. This is a world where the storyteller assumes that most people are trustworthy (Uslaner, 2002), and where storytellers occupy a shared ‘moral space’ with others (Sztompka, 2017). This trope is the product of four narrative typologies identified in the stories of the participants, which have been categorised under the theme of ‘Trust’. As illustrated in *Figure 9*, these typologies describe the nature of an individual whose narrative identity is characterised by high trust towards others. These are *Unity, Thriving* (Structural), *Transformation* (Symbolic) and *Optimism* (Temporal). Of note is the absence of narratives which feature the past. It appears that in a high-trust world, the future is more vivid and more relevant than the past. This seems to be associated with risk-taking. Where in the trope of Distrust, the typology of *Trouble* is associated with a tendency towards risk-aversion, the trope of *Trust* allows storytellers the freedom to take risks due to the sense of autonomy and

agency which are associated with placing faith in others. This will be exemplified most convincingly by the story of Daniel, who does not engage with the typology of *Trouble* at any point in his story, and where the typologies of *Transformation* and *Optimism* are abundant.

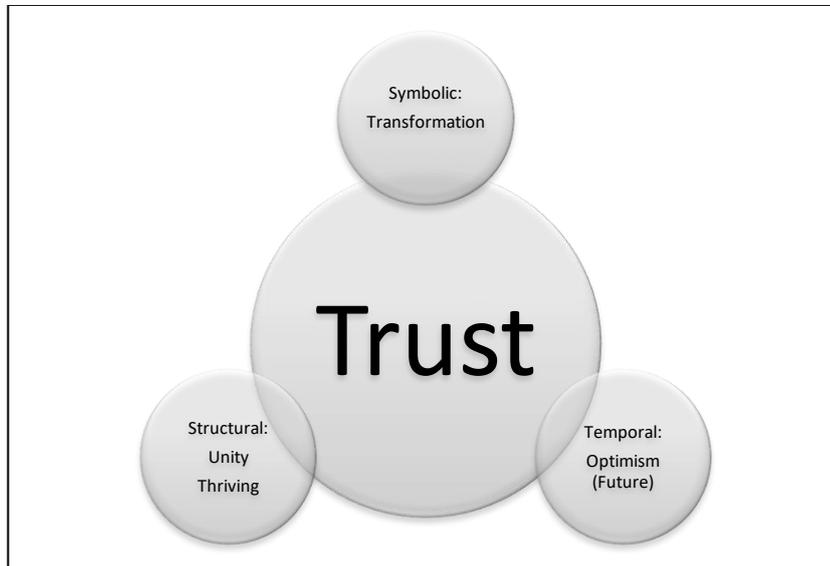


FIGURE 8: THE NARRATIVE CONSTRUCTION OF TRUST

This chapter will provide more detailed descriptions of the narrative typologies associated with trust ¹⁰ (typologies 7-10) through examples from the stories of other staff and students who engaged with this trope as part of their story, namely: Jeremy, Marcus, Roy, Richard and Sara (staff) and Ali, Eddie, David, Larry, Yolanda and Jenny (students). While many of the storytellers in this chapter also engaged with one or more typologies from the trope of *Distrust*, their engagement with typologies of *Trust* provide them with ways to cope with the influence of distrust in their narratives. The shift to Trust is often associated with an openness to new experiences or new characters that offer them an alternative vision of the world than the *Trouble* they have previously experienced. In this sense, the typologies of *Trust* can represent a 'second chance' for storytellers; a concept often associated with the values and purpose of Further Education (Duckworth and Smith, 2018).

5.2 Typologies of Trust

¹⁰ All 10 themes related to Trust and Distrust are deconstructed in further detail on the 'analysis maps' provided in the appendices, which break down the themes arising from staff (Appendix C) and Students (Appendix D)

5.2.1 Typology 7: Thriving (Structural)

Thriving is associated with the sense of existential safety that is afforded to individuals who perceive the world as helpful. Storytellers who engage with this typology speak with a self-confidence which not only allows them to feel competent but also to understand *themselves* as reliable and trustworthy. In other words, they understand their value to others in a wider community, which contributes to their sense of belonging in the educational environment.

Daniel: *No one in the college seems to give off the vibe that they're not like a nice person, and everyone around the college seems to be happy and friendly and if you need help they're always happy to give you help*

When storytellers engage with the typology of *Thriving* in their story, their voice becomes confident. This confidence is the result of an increased faith in their environment (both physical and psychological). This allows them to feel safe, which is central to risk-taking and creativity. The sense of safety experienced by student participants was provided by the presence of at least one stable and supportive relationship; whether that be fellow classmates, teachers or family members. The importance of lecturers in this context is indicated by Eddie and Ali below.

Eddie: *They [teachers] are dead good and friendly and helped me, and built my confidence, that's why I've been so positive about it. If they'd been negative to me from the outset I'd probably not be here now I'd be like I've been here before I'm not doing it again, I'll just go and get another job somewhere else again you know what I mean*

Ali: *Even if it wasn't my college day I know that if I needed to get away from a situation at home, I know I could just come in, find my tutor and be like look I'm a little bit like, shaky today, something's happened, I don't want it to affect the rest of my week in college. And you can do that here, someone's always on hand... it's nice to know that tutors care about their students and they're not just doing it for their pay cheque at the end of the month*

For Ali, however, her close affiliation to teachers is not afforded to her peers. Nevertheless, this affiliation does give her the confidence to feel as though she is thriving in her work; even when her relationship with her peers threatens her sense of trust, as discussed in Chapter 4. This is illustrated further below where she uses her experience of academic success to mitigate against the insecurity she feels towards others in the group.

Ali: *That's how it feels cos he [another student] sees how much work I do and how much praise I get and I dunno he just starts picking and calling me names and being horrible. So that's why I'm very distrusting and suspicious about people.*

Daniel, however, thrives on the supportive relationships he has with others in his group. Below he articulates the importance of feeling part of a group. Representing the opposite of Ali's experience, Daniel's story can provide us with a way of understanding why Ali's struggle to form positive relationships has such a powerful impact on her sense of security; and thus, her ability to place her faith completely in the college environment.

Daniel: *I think that once you feel safe with a group of people that's when you're most comfortable because you feel like you're protected and like, especially around the college you feel safe and that nothing bad will happen and if it does that it will be resolved, and it won't ever happen again*

Jenny and Larry also reiterate the importance of relationships in the educational environment; and perhaps more significantly, how isolating the lack of positive relationships can be for their experience.

Jenny: *At the start of the year I was really shy and I really didn't want to come here and my mum was dropping me off and I was like, I just felt really like intimidated... not intimidated but I was really shy cos I didn't know anyone at all and I guess like cos everyone seemed like they knew each other but no one did, everyone was just trying to talk to each other but I was like didn't talk to anyone... I feel as though like I've kind of like got somewhere with like introducing myself to new people and making new friends*

Larry: *Roy said 'you wouldn't talk when you first come in [but] now but you're interacting with other people has been very good compared to when you first come' so I think it's mostly the help with the group that I'm in and we're friendly with each other so it's got me more like you know what 'I'll go with things', you know?*

Whilst Jenny and Larry's narratives indicated an openness to new people, albeit with a certain level of trepidation, Ali's narrative demonstrates her readiness to isolate herself from others. In the excerpt below, she describes with confidence the types of people she does and does not get on with; effectively excluding herself before she is excluded.

Ali: *I get on better with the tutors rather than the students... I get on with older students, or younger students which doesn't really make much sense. I either get on with sixteen-year-olds or forty-year-olds*

The existence of supportive external relationships was also significant for storytellers who tended to use high trust narratives to narrate their experience. David and Dawson, for example, took advice from friends and family in choosing their course. Dawson came to North City College upon a recommendation from his uncle. The existence of these significant relationships meant that he had a level of faith in the college before starting; respecting the opinions of friends and family who had endorsed the organisation.

David: *[I chose this course] probably because of family and friends to be honest. Like friends and family both said you know you're really good at photography why don't you pick that up and er, so I just followed along that*

Dawson: *North City College was my first option because I'd heard positive reviews about it from my family...my uncle had come to do Graphics with the same teacher [whose class] I was just in...*

For Jenny, on the other hand, the existence of strong relationships outside of the college led her to feel less dependent on her peers whilst she was in college. Whilst it was important to her to feel comfortable around her peers, as she describes above, she did not necessarily see trust as an important consideration whilst she was at college.

Christina: *do you think it's not that important then to have a trusting relationship with your peers and your tutors at college?*

Jenny: *For other people it might be, but for me because I have such strong relationships with my family and I have really good friends outside of college I don't really feel like it's necessary for me, but for other people it might be*

Jenny's secure base outside of the college meant that she did not feel the need for closeness with her peers. This secure base, however, did seem to allow her to cope with the transition to college, supporting her to get to know other people on her course and foster a growing sense of independence. Jenny's story therefore stands in contrast with Ali's story, who alludes to unstable relationships outside of the college on several occasions and chooses who to trust very carefully; leading her to rely heavily on Jeremy to provide consistency and stability, to the exclusion of many of her classmates.

Further evidence for the importance of psychological safety for a group to thrive is provided by Dawson and David; particularly the role the organisation itself plays to promote a supportive and safe atmosphere.

Dawson: *oh yeah there's like a big safety in the college, like with all the walls and stuff you can't help but feel safe and I've seen people get into arguments and things and they're immediately solved like 'get it out the class and sort it out ourselves, you're in lesson time right now'... it's extremely safe*

While Dawson references an institutional approach to safety, David articulates the importance of the role of the teacher in creating an environment where everyone feels safe and included.

David: *you've got to get to know each other, got to work together in groups and pairs which is what Jeremy, Roy and Marie [do]...you know set us all to do quite early in the course, so we get to know each other cos on the first day... we went to the university garden... and took pictures in groups of two or three*

The role of the tutor in establishing a supportive and safe environment is also echoed in the narratives of staff members. Roy discusses the central importance of building trust with students to ensure they complete their course and achieve. This reflects the need for psychological safety that the students describe above, but also the role that perception of competence plays in establishing a relationship based on trust. For the students, the competence of the teacher rests on their ability to support them academically, as well as to effectively manage relationships.

Roy: *yeah, you've got to build that, you've got to build it quickly... cos if you lose them at the start, and they don't trust you very early on, you're not gonna have them for the rest of the course, you're gonna run the risk of them leaving*

The staff narratives also establish how important safety is to them personally to thrive in their work; particularly in the classroom context. Jeremy describes how he feels safest when he is with his students.

Jeremy: *I feel positive with the students, I feel safe with the students, I never ever feel out of my depth when I'm teaching. When I'm being observed and things like that then obviously that goes out the window.*

Marcus expresses a similar sentiment to Jeremy. It is evident in their narratives that any sense of security they feel is associated with the classroom, in their roles as educators. The classroom, therefore, becomes one of the few places where trust can thrive; as the threat of audit and redundancy make other areas of their professional life inherently risky.

Marcus: *I'm a positive hopeful person. It's a safe environment in the college apart from when you feel threatened for your job, that's not good... like I said there are at most a handful of times in my years of teaching where I've felt really unhappy with students. So that distrusting is not in the classroom, I have a very positive environment in the classroom*

Safety is foundational to the self-confidence associated with *Thriving*, making positive relationships a central part of the development of confidence both personally and academically.

Daniel: *I feel like that erm, that around the college I feel confident and that I can speak to people but if I didn't like have any of the other three [safety, positivity and trusting], erm, just in the classroom I'd feel like I couldn't speak out or anything or that I couldn't give my opinion because I wouldn't feel like, I wouldn't feel comfortable around everyone else*

Yolanda: *On the first day when I came into the class in like that first week I just hated everything about the college. I hated the fact that I didn't know the people properly and so I just thought like I wouldn't get on with anyone... but now I feel more*

comfortable in the class and like, like I'm not as shy. I feel like I'm very talkative in lessons and I've got to know more people, so I feel more confident and stuff

In Daniel and Yolanda's narratives above, the importance of confidence is foregrounded by their ability to speak freely. This suggests that a lack of trust is linked to the silencing of marginalised voices, whereas the ability to place faith in surroundings is linked to participation. For Daniel, this voice has also allowed him to feel more academically competent.

Daniel: *Say like you've created a piece of work and you look back on it you're like 'I did that', like 'I done that, on my own and yeah I asked for help from everyone else, but I've done it in a style that I feel best with and I feel proud of'*

David expresses a similar opinion that his confidence is related to his ability to perform well at college. The spirit of cooperation, and its importance to success is a theme shared by both Daniel and David, which will be illustrated further in Typology 8. Their ability to place their faith in others seems to directly contribute to their self-confidence.

David: *I'm always confident with whatever I have to do deal with, whatever's put in front of me. Erm, you know whether it's tasks that's given by the college for me or whether it's just general day-to-day things I'll always feel confident and independent*

Ali, however, while sharing a self-confidence that is associated with positive relationships with her teachers, does not associate this with cooperation. Instead, her confidence seems to derive more from the typology of *Self-Preservation* described in Chapter 3. That being said, without the trust that she has in her lecturers, she may not be experiencing the success that she is.

Ali: *I don't mean to be a big head, but I've been told it's [her work] pretty outstanding, because I've done... about thirty-thousand words, I've done sketches, experimentation, photo-shoots. I've got a set out plan, so if I fail I'd be very surprised.*

The relative safety of the classroom and its association with confidence is echoed by both students and staff. Roy, who spends a lot of his story engaging with typologies of Distrust, constructs his classroom as one of the few places where he feels competent. This construction of confidence as a subject expert and educator serves to protect him in the face of the various vulnerabilities he describes in using typologies of distrust.

Roy: *I think I'm a confident teacher, I think I'm confident in my subject. I think my subject knowledge is good, I'm confident in the way I can communicate it and deliver it to students, I'm confident from past students, and past courses that students get where I'm coming from and like the way that I deal with them, the way that I handle them and the way that I teach them erm [...] I think I'm confident in my course, knowing my course and my team. For the last [...] last 7 years, 8 years, I've been a*

course tutor, responsible for the daily running of a Level 3 Media course, and I'm confident that I do well, and I can work with my team well

Sara echoes a similar sentiment to Roy below, while at the same time making the link between how she feels in the classroom and how she feels outside of the classroom. It seems that the staff members who engage with the *Thriving* typology use it as a mechanism to affiliate more closely with their teaching practice, and by association, their students and fellow lecturers.

Sara: I've taught a long time, I'm confident in standing up in front of people, I'm confident in knowing that I am here to do a good job... but I've put doubtful straight after it [in the card sort] so how confident can I be? [laughs]

The typology of *Thriving* is inextricably linked to positionality. In order to thrive, the storyteller must feel safe with those around them. Their sense of confidence is in most cases directly linked to the quality of their relationships with others. It is this typology, along with the typology of *Unity* detailed in Typology 8, that are foundational to the decision to trust. Within the educational setting, the decision to trust seems to be linked to the perceived competence of the 'trustee' to provide both emotional and academic support. For students in this study, this is further reinforced by the expectations that are laid out within the physical college environment. For staff, however, the boundaries within which they can trust seem to be limited to the classroom and their immediate staff team; suggesting that positionality in this case is as physical as it is conceptual.

5.2.2 Typology 8: Unity (Structural)

Storytellers who engage with this typology understand their position as part of an inter-dependent community. They position themselves in close affiliation with other characters, and recognise the important contribution that other people make to their lives. *Unity* works to evoke the spirit of cooperation, respect and honesty. It is associated with an assumed trustworthiness based on the mutuality of values; as such other characters are benevolent.

The typology of *Unity* is used by storytellers to articulate their relationship to others in their environment; which is mostly characterised positively, though not always. It is important to note that engagement with *Unity* as a typology does not necessarily mean that the storyteller likes their peers. Rather, there is assumed beneficence: they do not perceive that any other characters in their story wish them any harm. *Unity*, therefore, is important for the good of all parties. It represents working together for shared benefit. It is *Unity* that allows trust to thrive, and it is based on a set of mutually shared assumptions about expected behaviours

and boundaries. In this case cooperation, respect, congruence and benevolence (see Appendices C and D for more information).

Cooperation is a common theme throughout the narratives of the participants in this study. Particularly for the students who engage with *Unity*, cooperation with other students is one of the most rewarding aspects of their college experience. The narratives of Daniel, David, Dawson, Eddie and Larry below highlight the sense of being ‘in it together’. They all feel that peer support is an important part of their ability to succeed.

Daniel: *If you can talk to others in the group like your peers, it helps you quite a bit because again it builds that sense of trust, and creates a sense of positivity as well for saying like... you're not the only person stuck, like there are other people in the group that can help, and that they can help you in the same way you will or in different ways*

David: *These other people that you've got to be with for the next year. I've gotta have trust in them, they've gotta have trust in you. It's like erm, it's like being on a boat. You've got five people on each side and each of them have got a paddle. If one of them doesn't paddle the boat's gonna swerve to the right or it's gonna swerve to the left, and even then you don't want it to swerve either way you want it to go straight so you know everybody's gotta have trust in each other*

Dawson highlights the role of the teacher in creating a sense of group identity, echoing the point made by David in the typology of *Thriving* above. Teamwork and cooperation are embedded into the pedagogic style of the programme, from group-work to assessment, mirroring the industry they aspire to work in.

Dawson: *If you need help the first person you turn to is your classmate, especially the ones who are sat next to you, so to be able to trust them saying I'm not quite understanding this I've got an issue blah blah blah, it's great it's just something everyone needs and, in this college,... [they make] everyone know each other and everyone like each other. Yeah, they [lecturers] reinforced that a lot everyone started trusting each other, with just little things at first and it started growing into a bit more and yeah that sort of stuff*

Eddie: *I feel part of the group... I don't know what anyone else feels like, but I don't feel like an outsider. I feel like I can go up to anyone and have a talk and when we're doing things in a group I get to put my input and they always listen.*

Larry: *I know that if I struggle someone will come over and say, 'oh you're doing that wrong' or 'come here this is how you do this', and the teacher ain't gonna leave me to just sit there thinking 'oh what the hell am I doing?'*

For the staff participants, cooperation is also embedded into practice. This appears to be part of their ability to thrive in their environment; through recognising what each member of the team does to support the other. As a manager, Jeremy works hard to cultivate this sense of cooperation; even though it runs contrary to the expectations of his managers.

Jeremy: *I do take workloads off the staff and I do dump workloads onto them but knowing it's the right stuff for the students. That's a difficult balance... I email everyone weekly with an update with what's coming up, and sometimes there are 15 things that go onto that email, but I won't put 15 things onto it, I'll put 5 things onto it knowing that the other 10 can be filtered into the week slightly and knowing that other 5 can probably go into the following week. And actually yeah, leadership management have questioned that as well*

they say 'if it needs to be done it needs to be done'

but I say 'yeah but if everything is poured at once onto staff then that trust is gonna go completely and they'll just resist against me'

and I'm that in-between filterer of stuff so yeah, I'd say that's why I feel trusted.

Here Jeremy is recognising the importance of respecting the workload of his staff. In trying to balance the amount he delegates, he is working to prioritise the objectives which are shared by the whole team; those with a direct benefit for students. Jeremy makes explicit the importance of reciprocity in the building of trust relationships; by 'filtering' directives from management, he creates a stronger ethos of cooperation through the act of his subversion. In the excerpt below, Marcus echoes the spirit of cooperation which is created by a supportive environment.

Marcus: *I think we're very supportive. If anything, negative would arise we solve those issues together. If there are positive things that go on, we support each other in those positive things as well... I think if I wasn't happy with other members of staff I wouldn't have been here as long... because you've got to feel that your colleagues have got your back*

Jeremy: *The courses that are working really well, either its completely isolated and that control is there or ones where trust is. So, for the Level 2, I think me, Marcus and Roy work really well together and there's trust there cos I control it... it works really well because yeah, I would be very truthful saying that needs marking why isn't this done and they'd say to me like they've been asking me about that and stuff like that.*

The assumption that each member of staff in the team 'has the other's back' is echoed in the student experience. Many of the students in the study felt that their teachers had their best interests at heart, and this sense of benevolence allowed students to feel able to cooperate effectively with others.

David: *I feel included in group work and stuff. There's been like incidents where some students haven't felt up or 100% one day and people have gone to help and see what's wrong with them and you know, and kinda give them a pick me up*

Jenny: *I feel included with my classmates and I feel safe because the tutors are always there like, asking if you're okay or if there's anything going on like even when you're just by yourself, and they're always like 'are you okay?'*

Daniel: *If we're working in groups and we've been given a certain task to do in the group then I do trust them to get it, to get it done and to get it done to the best that they can*

The concept of benevolence was particularly important to Larry, who described the negativity of his experiences of education under the typology of *Trouble* in Chapter 4. He felt that he had been judged by previous educators because of his Dyslexia, inhibiting his chances of success in education. As both Jeremy and Roy also had Dyslexia and were open about their struggles, it allowed Larry to feel that he was in a supportive environment; for the first time offering him the opportunity to experience success.

Larry: *I'd say both of them [Jeremy and Roy] have been the most positive with me and it's been like just good, working with them two, cos both of them have got Dyslexia so it's good that I'm working with people that have got the same type of thing as me and there's some people in the class that are the same as me as well so I'm more... it's cool now*

Sara indicated the importance of listening to students in developing trust. What she refers to as 'bad social work' indicates her benevolent intent towards students to 'push students to do what they can'.

Sara: *I listen to students, and I think that's important... even though I can be quite hard in some respects I think also you know, you do listen, you do care, and I think that's really important... I try to listen. I think me, and Roy always call it 'bad social work'... I don't think the students know much about me, but they know I would sit down and listen to them. I think that's true of all of the team, I don't think that's just me. As personal tutors and all that and running a course, you know, and pushing students to do what they can. I think that's important*

Her commitment to personal tutoring as well as academic support also indicates the importance of respect in the process of trust building. The ability to listen, to talk and to appreciate the wider context of students' lives is a common theme amongst all staff members of the study. For the students, this respect is felt as being treated 'like an adult' or 'as a person'; which they felt contrasted with their experience at school. Staff express the rapport they have with students because of this more 'adult' relationship.

Jeremy: *Obviously when I have to go in and do that authority role when [staff] have been undermined then it makes me realise through trust... I'm never an angry or 'shouty'... I don't think of myself as being authoritative but actually I do have a lot of control and that's probably through trust*

The trust that is built between staff and students seems to be facilitated by the kind of honesty that is demonstrated by Jeremy's ability to talk to students without being 'angry' or

'shouty'. There is a sense of congruence about how staff relate to students in this way which is in turn respected by the students.

David: *it has to be the people in general like erm, the tutors, like my tutors like Roy and Jeremy specifically just to point them out... Marcus is also nice but er, they make ya feel like a person.*

Eddie: *I feel like I'm in safe hands with them, I feel like... cos they tell us about the industry, but they don't always tell us the good part of it, they will tell us about the bad parts as well, and that honesty makes me feel like I know they're not bullshitting me.*

In relation to trust, the important point Eddie is making above is not necessarily the perception of honesty; more so the point that honesty overrides 'likeability' in creating the conditions for trust. As Eddie goes on to explain below, he gets a greater sense of security from his understanding of Jeremy as 'genuine' than him being 'a nice guy'.

Eddie: *Even if say I didn't like Jeremy on a personal level, but he was honest, and I trusted him I'd probably still be just as happy. I'm on the course as I am now, it's just a positive, it's a bonus that he's a nice guy as well you know what I mean, for me it's like being genuine it's being honest, being genuine*

This is also the case for James, for whom distrust shadows much of his story. The only character he remotely affiliates with is Roy. When asked what it was about Roy that makes him appear more trustworthy, James attributes this to his tendency to 'tell it like it is'.

James: *Even just talking about like safety when using the cameras outside of college he [Roy] was literally was like*

'I could give you the whole speech about it but there's no point just don't be fucking idiot'

and I prefer that and that's all he had to say, and we could just go do it, instead of giving us a five-minute lecture about health and safety protocols when it's just common sense, like he uses that a lot, common sense

Interestingly, Roy also makes a similar point about his own approach to trust-building with students. For Roy, 'telling it like it is' is about treating students as adults by speaking plainly with them about what is expected from them, and what they can expect from him.

Roy: *I talk to them like they're human beings. And I explain that from day one... if I ever got caught doing that by OFSTED I'd get absolutely killed for it [...] observations and stuff. I'll tell a student to shut the fuck up, if I think the student can handle that. I'll tell the student that their work isn't good enough, but then I'll tell them how they need to go about it to make it better. I tell them from day one*

'I will shout at you, I will swear at you but you're adults. This isn't school. I'm getting you used to going to work. If you think you're going to work on a TV programme, in a newspaper, in a newsroom, on a film and you're not gonna get shouted at...'

I talk to them like adults, and we have an adult relationship. They know that I'm in charge and I'll only accept a certain amount back... but they trust me because I talk to them, I don't treat them like kids.

The bluntness of Roy's narrative here creates a sense of transparency which allows him to appear trustworthy. This is congruent with his identity as an educator and industry expert. However, as illustrated in the typology of *Oppression* in Chapter 3, this congruence cannot be extended to his relationship with his superiors. This is made explicit with his reference to Ofsted; where it becomes clear that he does not feel his style of pedagogy is understood or accepted by the regulatory environment. It therefore seems to be an inability to be honest that associated with *Oppression* and inhibits trust-building with management, as he illustrates further in the passage below.

Roy: *They [management] like to think we get asked [what staff think] by inviting us to come along to meet the principal and have tea and scones [...] pardon my French, I can't think of anything more fucking worse. Being invited to come along for tea and scones in the boardroom and then tell them you don't think they're doing a good job. You just wouldn't do that would you?*

5.2.3 Typology 9: Transformation (Symbolic)

Transformation is associated with destiny and fulfilment. Storytellers who use the narrative of transformation are where they want to be in life, doing what they love most. Not only is this associated with excitement and creativity, it coexists with a sense of agency and control over the future. This typology helps storytellers feel safe knowing that the future is in their hands. This contributes to the creation of an 'Authentic Self'; knowing they are becoming who they were always meant to be.

Where the symbolic narrative typologies of *Oppression* and *Self-Preservation* restrict storyteller agency (see Chapter 3), the typology of *Transformation* propels the storyteller forward as it allows them to construct a future which is full of possibilities. For some storytellers, this leads to a sense of 'becoming' which allows them to feel in touch with what I have identified as the 'Authentic Self' (see Appendices C and D), a sub-category that has been identified under this typology. Storytellers who are buoyed by their engagement with *Thriving* notice the positive effect of their transition to college upon their sense of self; and their new experiences are allowing them to develop increased confidence.

Yolanda: *A lot of people have told me that I've changed and like my mates have always been saying like 'oh my god you've matured, we still feel like children' and stuff like that*

In a similar way to Yolanda, Larry uses the typology of *Transformation* to articulate an almost out-of-body experience as other characters around him notice the changes in his character.

Larry: *I never noticed it in me. My mum and my nan have gone 'woah you look more happy and confident in yourself' and I've gone 'well do I?'. I just think I'm just the same or something, but people have told me that I've more changed, a positive change*

Larry goes on to relate his growing sense of confidence to his engagement with myself as a researcher, demonstrating that the influence of *Unity* in his story has allowed him to place greater faith in those around him. Therefore, by engaging with the research he is illustrating a newfound ability to take risks.

Larry: *Like this right now what we're doing [the interview] I wouldn't have done this back then, but I feel more confident to do it now*

Yolanda and Daniel use this sense of 'becoming' as an opportunity to 'right' past 'wrongs'. The influence of *Transformation* serves to focus their thinking, evoking the spirit of 'second chances' which the Further Education sector advocates.

Yolanda: *I feel like the fact that I've got my confidence and my independence, and the fact that I got to start over when I came to college, like a new person now... and I'm just trying to work on myself and become a new person if you get what I mean, so it's making me like think okay 'I wanna do this, I wanna do that' whereas [at school] I was like yeah, no point changing now.. I'll just be what I am if you get what I mean*

The *Transformation* narrative alters the storyteller's perspective on previous experiences of failure. Daniel, like most of the student participants in this study, had not achieved a grade C or above in Maths and English, and so these students were studying to re-sit these examinations alongside their Level 2 qualification. When asked how he felt about the re-sit process below, Daniel embraced the opportunity to achieve.

Daniel: *I just see it as a thing like it's not the end of the world, you have been given a second chance to be able to do it again and this time be able to fix any mistakes that you've done in the past and for me able to...get it done and progress onto what I wanna do*

Daniel engages with *Transformation* to reframe this setback as an opportunity. Supported by *Unity* and *Thriving*, he incorporates it as part of his broader plan for the future.

For some storytellers, their process of becoming allows them to engage with The Authentic Self. This sub-narrative is associated with the storyteller's sense of integrity and individuality, characterised by a love of their vocation. This is underpinned by freedom of expression; as illustrated in the stories of Larry, Ali and Daniel below.

Larry: *This is what I've always wanted to do, yeah. When I was a kid I didn't even know I'd just go and watch films and go 'Woah this is fun. I'd like to do something like that'*

Daniel: *It's a lot different to school because... like your own person... like you're treated as... you can do things to the style that you like and like you're not always following what everyone else does, and you can create things and do things that you feel best with and feel comfortable with and again it's your own style.*

Ali: *I've always loved photography but because of my anxiety I thought 'oh no I'm never gonna be able to work around people. I'm not gonna be able to cope' but you know what, screw anxiety, excuse the language but I can't let it take any more of my life away from me. I don't have friends, I don't go out, I don't go on holiday, because I'm trapped... but photography and writing are like my two passions that kind of get me out of my anxiety bubble*

For Ali, The Authentic Self supports her to maintain a sense of integrity despite the *Trouble* and *Struggle* she experiences (see Chapter 4). She describes college as the most positive thing in her life as it gets her out the house and away from the problems she faces outside. Therefore, by engaging with *Transformation*, she can cope in a world which poses multiple threats. Furthermore, the feeling that these storytellers are doing what they 'love' and what they were always 'meant to be' doing allows them to feel a genuine sense of fulfilment in their life. This is illustrated by Eddie below, who is happy to trade his financial security for a sense of purpose.

Eddie: *I'm not earning anywhere near as much money as I was at one point, but I think I'm the happiest I've been in the past ten years you know what I mean because I'm fully focussed for once*

For the staff members in the study, The Authentic Self is expressed through the love of their vocation. For Roy, his love of teaching keeps him going and the integrity of his teaching practice allows me him to hold his values and principles defiantly.

Roy: *I love teaching, I love being in the classroom, I love being with the students, I love engaging with them. I love it when they take your advice and they go and produce something that they're really proud of. I love it when they go on to university or into the workplace and you know, you think, 'I helped them'.*

As Roy has a thorough understanding of who he is and why he teaches, he can align himself powerfully in affiliation with his students and his fellow lecturers, and against those who do

not share his sense of integrity (i.e., management). This is made explicit in the excerpt below, where he is able to describe why he is trusted through his articulation of who he is (a highly principled educator) and who he is not (a manager).

Roy: *I think I'm seen as someone who will speak up about issues to management and I'm seen as someone who knows, that if I say something isn't right and we have to change it I'm not seen as someone who is just creating extra workloads for people because I come across that way and they trust that I'm confident in knowing my subject and the students and the course and what the exam boards are asking and those sorts of things*

In a similar way to Roy, Marcus also engages with The Authentic Self to maintain his integrity in the face of management decisions that have negatively affected the way he feels about his work.

Marcus: *I think managers trust me. I might have problems with managers, but I know they trust me, I know I get on with them*

Christina: *Even though you say you would very readily challenge the position of a manager, but they still trust you? Why do you think that is?*

Marcus: *I wasn't unfair in that challenge, and in that initial challenge. The manager knew I wasn't wrong you know so it's like, so it's a case of then, the person had to deal with the situation they were in, and in their role, they had to impose a system on staff, so they had to come around to how that system was going to be used. And that system has continued, not just with me, a lot of other people and you know I'm not stupid I understand that it doesn't matter what the personality of the person is, doesn't matter if you like the person, they have a role to perform and if that role is they have to do something that might be against their personality, they either do the role or they leave the job. Or something else happens like they become very stressed and ill and go off for a long time*

In a similar way to the typology of *Struggle* (see Chapter 4), Marcus articulates his own integrity through constructing those in positions of power as having a lack of integrity. In other words, Marcus is trusted because he is right, and managers know they are wrong. This allows him to hold on to his identity as an educator, and further justify his opposition to the 'downward slope' described in Chapter 4. While the typologies of *Unity* and *Thriving* support these storytellers to foster a sense of trust in the classroom, The Authentic Self protects them outside of the classroom by protecting their values as pedagogues in the face of policy which serves to undermine their practice.

5.2.4 Typology 10: Optimism (Temporal)

Optimism represents the forward-facing nature of trust. Placing faith in the benevolence of others allows storytellers to feel confident in planning their future, with the relative certainty that things will work out the way they have planned. Storytellers who engage with this typology often have several options on the table, which is symbolic of their agency to make decisions on their own terms.

The storytellers who engage with the typologies *Thriving*, *Unity* and *Transformation* tend to also engage with the typology of *Optimism*. Eddie, Daniel, David, Larry, Yolanda, Jenny and Dawson all articulate fairly concrete ideas of what they want to do after they have finished their course which invariably involves moving onto a Level 3 course within the same college. Eddie, Daniel and Dawson also already had plans to go to university and were already thinking about the different degree options that were open to them. They shared an excitement for the future which was not shared by storytellers who engaged with the typology of *Uncertainty* in Chapter 4. However, Ali's lack of engagement with the typology of *Unity* prevented her from being able to be optimistic about the future.

Ali: I'm gonna put it [the word 'apprehensive'] alongside optimistic, because even though I am very optimistic that I am gonna get onto a level three course, I am apprehensive that my age is gonna block job opportunities

Being able to only think ahead to another Level 3 course reflects her attachment to the college as an institution and highlights the instability of her life outside it. Even though the influence of *Thriving* and *Transformation* allow her to experience success, her continued reluctance to understand others as trustworthy prevents her from being able to articulate a future without risks; in effect reducing the future 'narrative possibilities' (Frank, 2012a) that she has access to. In Eddie's case, it is quite the opposite.

Eddie: I think if I never got pigeon-holed in the first place like of getting a trade I might have ended up doing the media course cos I did do a bit of it at school and I did enjoy doing it so you know, I might have sat back and thought actually of all the lessons I did that was what I enjoyed the most, I'll do that

While Eddie's story is heavily influenced by the typology of *Trouble* (see Chapter 4), the influence of *Thriving*, *Unity* and *Transformation* create a sense of future with possibilities that were not there before. Eddie's transition from *Trouble* to *Optimism* is facilitated by 'The Train is Still on Time', a metamorphosing narrative which will be covered in more detail in Chapter 6. This shift illustrates how the influence of high trust can open up possibilities and create future-focussed narratives which ignite the storyteller's agency.

It is interesting, even expected, that the staff participants did not engage with this narrative typology in their stories given the extent to which *Uncertainty* overshadows them. However, it seems that their commitment to building trust within the classroom environment allowed *Optimism* to filter into the stories of the students. This commitment is reflected in Roy's narrative below, where he describes the 'battle' to prevent the unstable college environment to influence classroom practice.

Roy: *It is a real battle. We try really hard not to let it affect the students on a daily basis, but when there's no ink in the printer for them to print their end of year shows off, when there's no money to build a set for their end of year play, it becomes more and more difficult. But we try really really hard to not let it affect the students and not let them see. We went through redundancy just after Christmas and we didn't tell any of our students that every single one of their media staff, five of us, we were all up for redundancy and any one of us could have lost our job or part of our job within the next three weeks and we didn't tell the students anything about that. We don't want them to lose any faith in what they're doing. Lose that [points to TRUST on the card sort]*

Although this excerpt illustrates the absence of optimism, it is pertinent in this section to demonstrate how distrust is created when integrity is undermined by a failing system, making engagement with typologies of trust such as *Unity* and *The Authentic Self* even more important in fostering *Transformation* within the learning environment. However, as the space in which typologies of trust can thrive shrinks, Roy makes explicit how increasingly scarce the opportunities to create trust have become and will continue to be in its absence.

6.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter has illustrated how trust brings other benevolent characters into the story. This allows storytellers to engage more easily with narratives of *Transformation* and to visualise a future which is full of possibilities. This chapter thus represents the antithesis of the typologies described in Chapter 4, which serve to restrain people and to shut down safe spaces for *Unity* to thrive. As Roy illustrates above, this becomes more difficult during crisis in institutions, linking to Möllering's (2013) assertion that trust can only be maintained by adherence to a 'system' which supports it. This further demonstrates how *Thriving* requires an environment which affords existential safety, without which individuals are unable to suspend doubt and take the leap of faith in the institution (Möllering, 2006).

The typology of *Thriving* also indicates the importance of perception in taking the leap of faith. Both students and staff illustrated that their belief in the benevolence, honesty and competence of leadership was important for them to thrive. This supports Möllering's (2006)

assertion that the 'trustee' must necessarily be able, willing and consistent in their endeavours towards the 'trustor'. Within the context of this study, the lecturers' adherence to these principles afforded students an environment in which to thrive, whilst this was not the case for lecturers towards the wider college leadership.

However, Jeremy's endeavours to lead with respect for his curriculum team and their students also inspired engagement with *Unity*, which embodies the spirit of cooperation. This calls back to Sztompka's (2017) concept of 'moral space', indicating that respect for moral norms and boundaries allowed trust to establish between students and staff in the classroom. This supports Möllering's (2013) assertion that trust must be considered an ongoing process, and thus to build and maintain trust, a sense of 'normative coherence' must be established (Sztompka, 1999 see Chapter 2), where the principles of trusting practice (Möllering, 2013) are observed routinely.

For staff members, however, the threat of inspection disrupted moral space, making it difficult to take the leap of faith outside of the classroom or their immediate staff team. This seemed to be further inhibited by their perceived inability to be honest with leadership about what was not working, indicating that integrity and honesty are central to the maintenance of trust culture.

If *Unity*, then, necessarily requires moral space, then such participation is dependent on 'relations of familiarity' (Möllering, 2006) which is built and consciously maintained by the individuals who occupy that space. Without this, the individual's ability to suspend doubt is diminished; most notably in the case of Ali, whose lack of safe spaces inside and outside of the college, led her to over-rely on Jeremy for support. This links with Sztompka's idea of 'moral capital' (Latusek, 2018); where an individual's connections with others are based upon the norms and values of trust. Therefore, a lack of moral capital inhibits the individual's ability to be who they wish to become; illustrating the importance of trust in risk-taking and creativity, as illustrated by Avis (2003) in his work on trust and leadership in FE.

The cooperation described in *Unity* challenges individualisation (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001), as students and staff who engaged with *Unity* rejected narratives of competition, and celebrated the contributions made by others towards their achievement. This sense of achievement allowed them to connect with their authentic selves and afforded them the opportunity to engage with the typology of *Optimism*. It was therefore through the establishment of moral space (or *Unity*) that individuals felt able to freely participate and

feel positive about the future; themes which I will return to in Chapter 7. The next chapter will discuss how, in the absence of these narrative typologies, storytellers can develop 'substitutes' for trust (Sztompka, 1999) using 'metamorphosing' narratives which serve to protect them against vulnerability.

Chapter 6: Analysis 3

Metamorphosis in Narrative Construction

'Stakes... are highest when storytellers are working hardest to sustain their dignity and sense of life's coherence against forces to which they are vulnerable'
Frank (2012a: 146)

6.1 Introduction

Stories have lives of their own; they are not benign. According to Frank (2012a), an important aspect of what makes narrative analysis dialogical is the acknowledgement that stories do not just make life 'narratable', but that they can also make life dangerous. Thus, as much as stories can protect us, they can equally do us harm. Therefore, 'living well' with stories involves living in companionship with a diverse collection of them (ibid). The darkest forms of narrative are sometimes the most engaging "precisely because they engage so thoroughly: many good stories make one point of view paramount; other subjectivities disregarded" (Frank, 2012a: 145). In Chapter 4, the power of dark narratives became apparent as the trope of Distrust and its associated typologies worked to position storytellers in isolation from other characters, who are constructed as corrupt or oppressive. The sense of powerlessness which was associated with engagement with Distrust narratives is evidence of the harm that these stories pose to storytellers who are caught up in them. However, Frank (2012a) also points out that stories, in themselves, are rarely bad. Stories become troublesome in the context in which they are told, in symbiotic relationship with the storyteller and the other stories they tell. Learning to live well with stories, therefore, is associated with understanding a narrative from multiple perspectives: "a gift that will require working with but can bring riches" (Frank, 2012a: 152). The quote at the start of this chapter illustrates how storytellers 'hold their own' in stories; these are narrative typologies which protect them from the malign influence of the dark stories illustrated in Chapter 4. This chapter will shed light upon how the storytellers in this study hold their own using what I have called 'metamorphosing narratives'. In doing so, I will go on to discuss how these narratives can be considered 'substitutes for trust' (Sztompka, 1999), which allow participants to maintain hope even where faith in the institution is at risk.

Metamorphosing narratives act by changing the story in some way, either by influencing the direction of the story (for example, turning a distrusting narrative into a trusting narrative)

or they support the protagonist to cope with the situation they find themselves in (for example, from a position of powerlessness to powerfulness). Metamorphosing narratives are distinct because they fit neither the trope of Trust or Distrust; they simply change the position from which they narrate their story. In this way, metamorphosing narratives restore complexity to a story, thus interrupting the binary nature of Trust and Distrust in their lives. Storytellers who engage with metamorphosing narratives use them in different ways to broaden the scope of their story, but their function identifiably tempers the impact of Distrust and its associated risks in relation to insecurity and uncertainty.

Holding one's own in a story involves "situations that begin with a person who has a degree of self-regard; someone who is valuable and worthy of respect about him or herself. This self-regard involves... what a person is entitled to aspire to be" (Frank, 2012a: 77). Therefore, metamorphosing narrative typologies support the storyteller to maintain a sense of dignity, even when the odds are against them. Engaging in multiple narrative types serves to make life more complicated, and as I will demonstrate in this chapter, make life 'less dangerous' for the storyteller.

Each section of this chapter will begin with a pen portrait of its storytellers: Jeremy, Sara, Eddie and James. I will then go on to describe how they use their respective typologies of '*The Need to Hope*', '*The Values of FE*', '*The Train Is Still on Time*', and '*The Omniscient Narrator*' to alter the perspective on the story they are telling. In some cases, a life plagued by distrust is given the opportunity to thrive by maintaining a sense of self in time and place, and for others creating a strong vision for the future.

6.2 Metamorphosing Typologies

6.2.1 *Jeremy and The Need to Hope*

(Curriculum Team Leader, North City College)

Jeremy has been a lecturer at North City College for four years, and has recently been promoted to Curriculum Team Leader. His journey into FE was not intentional. He has a degree in Fine Art, and had intended to follow his dreams of becoming an artist. He had taken up a casual teaching position at Shore College, before moving on to North City College when it became clear they were not going to offer him a permanent position. Jeremy grew to love teaching and his identity as a teacher is intimately related to his own experiences of school. Jeremy has Dyslexia and feels that he had been let down by his school education. He did not receive support for his learning difficulties until after he failed his A-Levels at his school Sixth Form and enrolled into an FE College to study for entry into Art school. Jeremy identifies with his students and is open about his own struggles with Dyslexia. This helps him connect with students and encourages them to believe they can achieve. He has a very student-centred approach to his work, and believes he can use his new management position to shape practice across the department for the benefit of all students under his care.

I demonstrated in Chapter 4 how Jeremy's position as a middle manager had created a sense of conflict in his identity. The uncertain policy environment, the resource-poor nature of the institution and the impact that this has had upon teaching causes him to engage with the typologies of *Struggle*, *Self-Preservation* and *Uncertainty* in the trope of Distrust. However, the narratives of Distrust towards other characters in his story filter below to the team he manages as much as above to those he is managed by. As he struggles to accommodate his new position, he engages with Distrust narratives to seek explanations for the feelings of existential insecurity that he is experiencing. On the one hand, Jeremy fully recognises the influence that increased workload and administration has had upon teaching identity and quality. On the other, he is aware of being caught up in the institutional position that this administration should improve outcomes for students. This sometimes creates contradictions in his narrative, as he tries to accommodate his transition into a position of management with his sense of identity as an educator. However, what is abundantly clear is the sense of hope which threads through his story. This hope is fuelled by his sense of pride for his students and colleagues, and their collective commitment to achieve. In this context, the typology of hope functions as a metamorphosing narrative for Jeremy, supporting him to deal with the complexity of his relationship to the institution. Figure 9 below illustrates the key typologies which Jeremy engages with throughout his story, which form the basis of

his narrative identity (Somers, 1994). Given the number of typologies related to the trope of Distrust, this diagram demonstrates that *The Need to Hope* is a key narrative (alongside *Unity* as discussed in Chapter 5) which mitigates against the damage that the other narratives can inflict. By foregrounding hope in his story, Jeremy can hold his own against the forces which make him vulnerable.

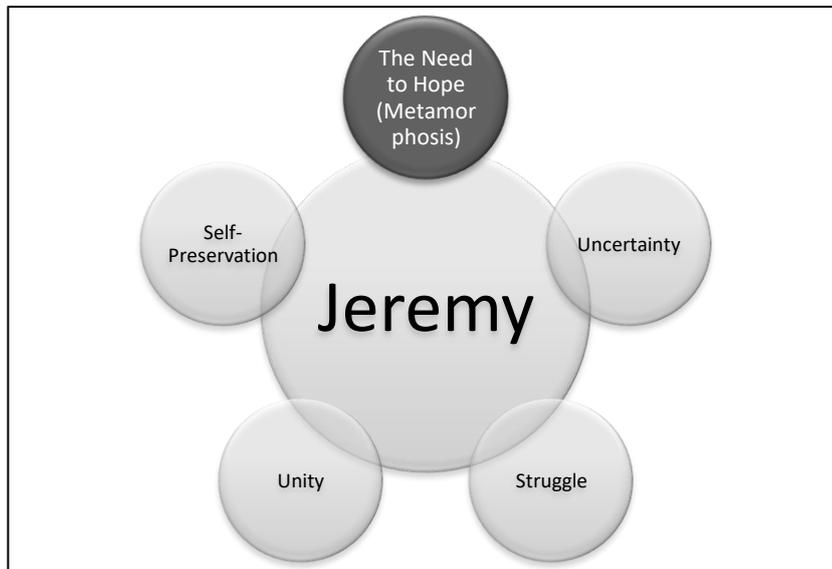


FIGURE 9: JEREMY'S NARRATIVE IDENTITY

The Need to Hope reflects the act of placing faith in forces over which the storyteller has no control. In the act of placing such faith in his surroundings, Jeremy can maintain a sense of positivity, and tell a story which appears to become characterised by high trust. Jeremy engages powerfully with this typology, as he lets the positivity associated with the hope narrative to influence, or stem the advancement, of the typologies of *Struggle*, *Uncertainty* and *Self-Preservation*. The influence of hope is documented powerfully in his initial card sort before the interview took place. Indeed, at a first glance, there appears to be little ambiguity with regards to his positive and trusting disposition towards his work (see Figure 10). However, as the interview proceeds it becomes clear that the sense of safety, confidence, positivity and control which are reflected in Jeremy's card sort are heavily influenced by *The Need to Hope*. This need to hope radiates from the core of his identity as a professional, and interestingly, also from the centre of his card sort. Upon the card at the centre of Jeremy's card sort in Figure 10 is the word that he chose for himself: pride. In the passage below, Jeremy articulates what he understands by pride, and how this contributes to his sense of hope in his work.

Jeremy: *You see holes in the organisation where you think like, that's taken a massive whack at my hopefulness and that actually [...] because if we're not all, and it kind of goes back to the college policy, one college one voice, because you're only as good as you're weakest part... but then it's positive and it makes me feel safe and it makes me feel confident when I go into those meetings and everyone in the team has worked dead hard to do it because I've emailed them and said 'come on we need to get this done', and I go into the meeting and everything's done, and this other department's kicking off... it makes me feel like the team has really come together and I can go back to the team and say 'they haven't done this and we're miles ahead of them', that makes me feel pride... I'm massively proud*

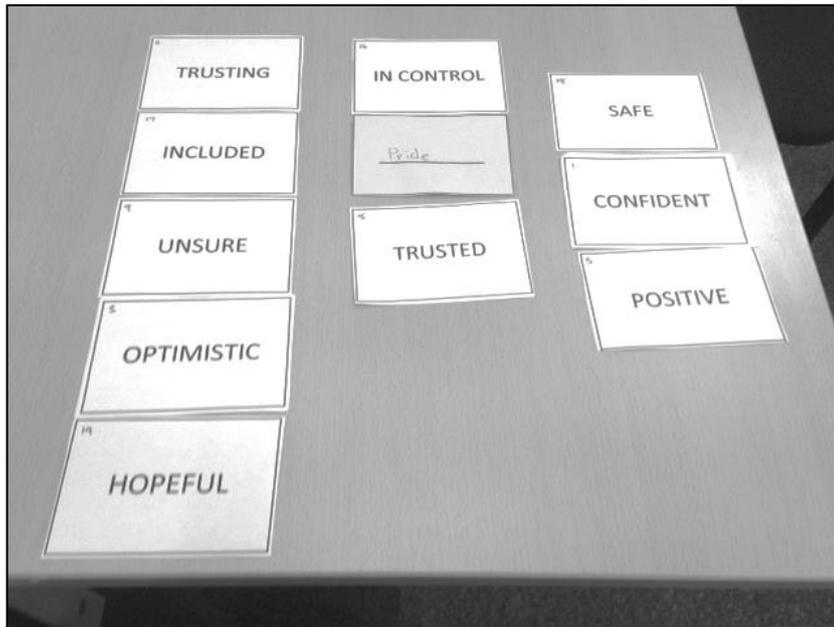


FIGURE 10: JEREMY'S CARD SORT

Jeremy clearly articulates how his sense of pride in his work, and in his colleagues, supports him to feel safe and in control in his job. Pride restores hope in the face of potential danger (i.e., the holes in the organisation); and it is hope that is fundamental to Jeremy's survival. The work that *The Need to Hope* is doing here tempers the effect of the *Self-Preservation* narrative which Jeremy uses in Chapter 4. The work that Jeremy has put in to get his colleagues to do the work required for these meetings, and the work that his colleagues have done to prepare Jeremy for them reflects the narratives of 'over-work' which typify the typology of *Self-Preservation*. The effect of this story is to position Jeremy's team as engaging in the struggle together to overcome the holes in the organisation that threaten to destroy his sense of hope. Conversely, it also aids the listener to understand how much he is affected when he feels his team lets him down, as he describes using the typology of *Struggle* in Chapter 3. This brings Jeremy's vulnerability to the foreground, demonstrating both how important Jeremy's need to hope is for his story, and how fragile the story is without it.

Jeremy: *I like being in control of everything... everything from knowing students are happy on every single course I manage, that attendance is good, that staff are happy, and they're supported and safe. But yeah, going back to the trusting, I put loads of effort and control into making sure things are in place, but I often feel hugely let down when things I expect to be done and that I ask to be done [are not done]*

The use of the word 'control' proliferates throughout Jeremy's story. The need to control, and more importantly, the *ability* to control his surroundings is an essential feature of Jeremy's narrative. It is his scope for control that gives him confidence, provides him with a sense of existential safety and thus allows him to feel positive and hopeful about the future. When that ability to control is threatened, however, his confidence begins to wane. For Jeremy, feeling in control is a condition for security, and it is maintaining this sense of security that allows him to hope.

Jeremy: *I love being in control. I love knowing what I'm doing. I love getting stuff done. Yeah, so that's as simple as it is. I feel massively proud of students, when they're good, yeah, the department as well. Definitely me, I do feel a sense of pride in that... yeah that I think I've got that control a little bit. Doing that job, I do, that I didn't think I ever could do. I feel personally safe in the department because I do that. I think I work harder than anyone else in the department, so I feel safe completely*

Given the significant role that Dyslexia plays in Jeremy's story and the way this supports him to identify closely with the students he teaches, the above quote is an important reminder to the listener that he is undertaking a role that he thought he could never be capable of. By linking his desire to control his surroundings to having a job he never thought he would have, Jeremy reminds the listener once again of one of the forces that makes him vulnerable. As such, he must work harder than anyone else to enjoy the safety of his position. Nevertheless, he struggles to balance the need to feel in control and maintain a healthy relationship with staff and students.

For example, in the passage below, Jeremy reinforces his position as the hardest worker in the department but works to portray himself as a supportive manager. However, there is an inherent conflict in the story here in which Jeremy must recognise the toll that workload takes upon the staff he manages and prioritise the aspects of his job which he must control to maintain his sense of safety and security.

Jeremy: *A lot of what I do is going through the list of what needs to be done and then considering how that's going to affect their job... so it can function in a healthy way. Like there's time when staff have come to me and said 'I'm dead stressed. I've got this on, I've got that on, I've got that on' So I try and take stuff off them or I say to them, which completely and utterly contradicts 'in control' I say 'don't do anything this weekend'*

*And they'll say 'oh but I've got that marking to do or I've got this'
and I'll say 'don't'
I know for a fact it's gonna knock the whole wider department, but in the grand
scheme of things it's a job... there's almost a contradiction that I want to be pulling
everyone in the same direction. I'll be working on the weekend but I'm telling
people not to...*

This desire to appease staff and students seems to be related to what he perceives as a need to create 'togetherness' in the department. It is the sense of connectedness that he wants to create between staff and students that supports him to feel confident in his role, and in taking his work to a higher level. In this sense, his relationships with students and staff function as a source of hope. This is illustrated in his student-centred approach to his work.

Jeremy: *I'm a prat. I would say I'm a prat. I'm always positive... they [other lecturers] said I was far too positive and far too encouraging to the students, but they said I'm far too willing. Things like if the student doesn't have a pen, I'm the first one of give them a pen... I'm massively soft with the students. Getting better, because I'm seeing more from an organisational perspective things I've had to do so I've become a little bit harsher...*

However, in some parts of his story, Jeremy appears to perceive conflicts between meeting the needs of staff and meeting the needs of students. From a managerial perspective, he feels it is necessary to improve the systems that are in place to ensure that students are adequately supported.

Jeremy: *As the wider curriculum lead, I've started to implement changes on other courses... I've started to try and control and influence their courses. So yeah, everything I do in this department is about trying to be in control. It's all for the greater good I think*

At times, there is also the sense that Jeremy feels that the experience of students is hindered by errors made by staff; an example of which is provided in the excerpt below. Therefore, what Jeremy perceives to be the 'greater good' involves changing the practices of staff. This seems to be how conflicts arise from Jeremy's perceived need for positive relationships and to be in control of their practice to maintain his sense of hope.

Jeremy: *If a student's not attending, 90% of the time there's gonna be something going on with the tutor, there's a reason for everything so I like that control approach to things*

What emerges from Jeremy's story is the *Struggle* that he engages with as he tries to stay positive about what FE can do for young people, and his responsibility as a manager to negotiate outcomes which may or may not sit within the realm of these interests. Therefore, *The Need to Hope* is evident in the way Jeremy uses his story to bridge meaning between

these two sets of priorities. Jeremy's sense of pride in his work with students, and the bounded nature of this to his identity and his own experiences in FE are illustrated below.

Jeremy: I identify my experience of FE of going through it all as that breaking point. So, the more I'm in FE now and the more I think about it... yeah, I identify really well with those students. That age group, I really connect with. I find it easy talking to 16-18-year olds. Yeah, I like inspiring that age group, so the more years I'm in it the more I feel settled in FE...

If Jeremy can perceive his work as congruent with his desire to see students achieve, he can continue to feel safe, secure and positive. Therefore, hope is central to bring his story together as a coherent whole. While the influence of the distrust typologies are present, they are outweighed by the tempering effect of *The Need to Hope*. This narrative typology supports Jeremy to maintain his sense of dignity and prevents him from losing faith in an institution which poses multiple threats; not just to himself, but to the people he is there to work for: staff and students.

Jeremy: there's been so many institutional changes that are dramatic, huge huge changes, I'm hopeful that the college is getting it right. It's painful, because there's so many changes and cuts and big kind of like, pulling through, predicting what the government are doing. I'm hopeful that the college is getting it right. I don't know if they are and if in two years' time that hopefulness drops down... I won't be here. I would go if I thought the college wasn't pulling in the right kind of direction [...] For the college to be a... not even a good college, but for it to do its job... that through road for other students who need that middle ground. I'm hoping the college is gonna get that right

The above passage reflects Jeremy's moment of vulnerability, and the importance of hope maintaining coherence in his story. The chaos that would present without hope is exposed to the listener, as is Jeremy's sincere passion to work for the best interests of those under his care. In order to achieve this, allowing himself to trust those forces over which he has no control is paramount and simply not achievable without *The Need to Hope*.

Jeremy does a lot of work in his story to negotiate what Hermans (2001) might describe as multiple 'i-positions' in the construction of a 'dialogical self', in the sense that throughout his story he moves between his position as a lecturer and manager. This movement between positions sometimes introduces confusion to his story, and so *The Need to Hope* provides a bridge between these two perspectives. This typology allows him to hold his own (Frank, 2012a) and to overcome his vulnerability to suspend doubt (Möllering, 2006). *The Need to Hope*, therefore, represents Jeremy's 'leap of faith' (ibid), or as Peng Li (2015) might say, 'leap of hope' by creating a positive expectation for the future.

6.2.2 Sara and *The Values of FE*

(Lecturer, North City College)

Sara is one of the longest-serving staff members in this study. She also describes how she ‘fell into’ teaching in FE after completing a Masters qualification in her discipline. She describes the importance of her job on a very pragmatic level as the single mother of 2 young children, and the security her income provides for her family. However, she is also a passionate advocate for FE, and the value of public institutions in providing opportunities for young people. This passion is linked to her experience of growing up in a children’s home. She felt she was saved by the education system, and she is saddened by what she perceives as a decline in the promotion of education for social justice. She sees the role of a socially just education system as much bigger than the individual, and that as such the FE system must reflect a societal belief in education as a social good. Her perception that the college is now being run for profit has led her to believe that people are no longer valued by the institution. She has a brutal honesty about her which makes her appear tough, but a self-awareness that brings with it a warm sense of humour. She is not afraid to ‘tell it like it is’, but there is no doubt that this is from a place of genuine care and compassion for her colleagues and students.

In Chapter 4, I illustrated how Marcus and Sara’s stories were influenced by stories from the past; discussed under the typology of *Trouble*. They used *Trouble* to articulate their perception that the FE sector was on a downward trajectory (the ‘downward slope’); from a sector that represented the values of social justice to one which has lost sight of its purpose in the ongoing struggle to secure funding and retain students. As both Marcus and Sara were the longest serving members of staff in the study, they could describe specific moments in the college’s recent past which they saw as signs of the continued demise of the college’s collective value base. This is poignantly articulated by Sara in Chapter 4 when she describes how she has seen how principals (plural) have ‘set the agenda’ over time, gradually shifting the blame onto staff within the institution. Whilst this narrative caused both storytellers to engage with the typology of *Struggle*, they also shared ‘*The Values of FE*’; a metamorphosing narrative which is a central thread running through Sara’s story, and is also used by other staff at various points.

The Values of FE serves a similar function to *The Need to Hope* in Jeremy’s story in the sense that it supports Sara to hold her own against the forces which make her vulnerable: in this case, the stories of *Powerlessness* and *Struggle* (see Figure 12 below). However, whilst in Jeremy’s story, *The Need to Hope* functions to foreground the positive (or higher trust) aspects of Jeremy’s work in his narrative, *The Values of FE* does not temper the impact of

Distrust in her narrative: if anything, the Distrust in her narrative becomes more pronounced by its presence. Instead, this narrative typology foregrounds Sara's strength of character through *The Authentic Self* (as discussed in Chapter 6) in the face of distrust. It signifies to the listener the key ways in which Sara is different, and importantly, how she does not represent the shift in the college's values, as she perceives them. While it does afford her a sense of optimism that her narrative may not otherwise have, it does so by allowing her to think about the way FE could be (or rather *should* be), rather than the way it is. It became clear as her story went on that Sara's values were rooted in her unwavering belief in the importance of universal access to social institutions; particularly education.

Sara: *I want to say education is of value to society and to people, and I think personally education saved me from where I was and that's probably one of the principles FE should have. And I also think FE has a collegiate and a community spirit that I don't think any other type of education has.*

Sara speaks very highly of *The Values of FE* throughout her story. To Sara, as to many other staff members in the study, these values include above all else the notion of second chances, of supporting the inclusion of those who need it, to promote equality of access and the transformative power of education.

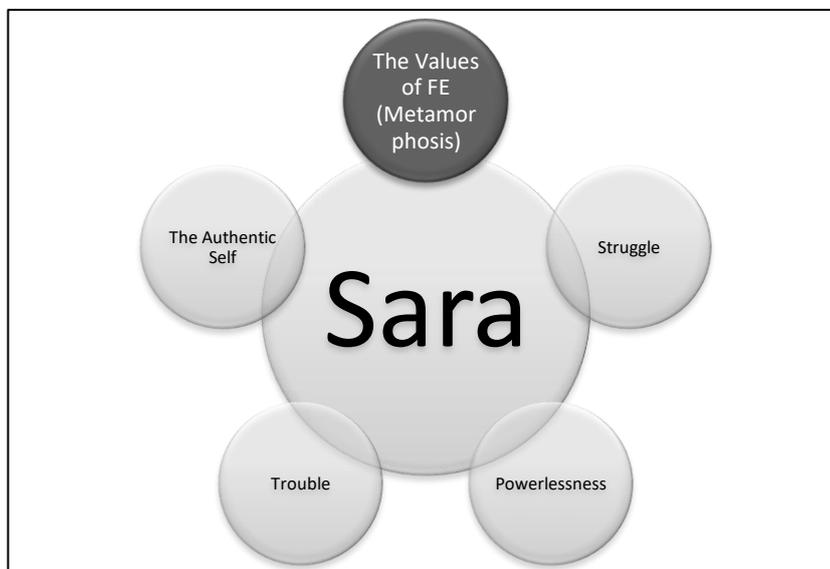


FIGURE 11: SARA'S NARRATIVE IDENTITY

Sara: *I'm hopeful about what education can do for people, I think that's important. Education is a really enhancing thing to people's lives, that's why I work in education.*

I think learning is amazing, and that's why I sometimes feel there's not enough time to do that, but that's why I love teaching

It is her commitment and passion for the ethos that underpins practice in the sector that has kept her building a career in FE, and initially supports her to create a sense of positivity in her narrative. However, as her story evolves, Sara begins to articulate some of the things which threaten her sense of hope in relation to the maintenance of these values.

Christina: *okay so if you look at it [the card sort] as a whole, is there anything that's surprised you, that you didn't expect to be there?*

Sara: *It's not as negative as I thought I'd be about my work and career, so that's quite good. I thought I'd probably be more negative because I've worked here a long time, and sometimes we are quite negative. Things seem a bit negative, so actually when I put the words down I looked at the negative words, or the negative feelings and I suppose I've taken them away*

In this excerpt, Sara indicates that she intentionally took away negative words from her card sort precisely because things feel negative. Therefore, the card sort (see Figure 12 below), represents what she values about FE, more so than the way she currently feels about working at the college.



FIGURE 12: SARA'S CARD SORT

Upon closer analysis of the card sort in relation to Sara's story as she tells it, it is possible to see the inter-relation between how she feels about *The Values of FE* and her disposition towards the college. The form of Sara's card sort is particularly interesting, as the continuum which starts on the left with 'independent' and 'confident' ends on the right with 'hopeful'

and ‘distrusting’: a shift from certainty to uncertainty. This seems to represent the extremities of her feelings towards her work. The words that Sara chose for herself, ‘unimportant’ and ‘time’, play specific roles in supporting her to articulate *The Values of FE* and how the changing nature of the sector impacts upon how she feels about her work. The importance of these words became increasingly clear as the story went on.

Christina: *so, are there any words I’ve not given you that you’d like to add?*

Sara: *[...] I suppose erm, a really negative word would be unimportant*

Christina: *okay*

Sara: *as in I think we all are quite unimportant in the grander sense of things [writes UNIMPORTANT on blank card] I guess that’s quite negative isn’t it*

Christina: *and where would you put that in your chain?*

Sara: *There [places in card sort]. When I look at these words I’m thinking of the ethics and the ethos, but actually if I wasn’t here, it would just roll on, so I don’t think that as staff we’re that important*

Christina: *you mentioned earlier about the ethics of FE, do you think if it wasn’t for you, that the ethics would continue to be there anyway?*

Sara: *no, it’s just that I think in the current climate, you know, it’s a business and people, are they valued? Probably not*

Christina: *so, does that clash in any way with the ethics that you think should be there, or do you think they coexist?*

Sara: *I suppose the other word is time isn’t it [takes another blank card and writes TIME on it]*

Christina: *as in no time?*

Sara: *time to reflect, time to plan, time to develop... so they’re probably linked as in, the fact that you are just, I suppose it’s the same in most jobs if you go something else will happen and I think that’s sometimes a worry isn’t it because you think oh, I’m trying all these things but actually, if I’m not here they’ll just carry on and it’ll just be... so I don’t think I’m that important in the grand scheme of things so it’s time and importance*

In the above conversation, Sara extends her thinking around her choice of words for the card sort. By thinking of the ethics and ethos of *The Values of FE*, Sara is thinking less about her day-to-day experience of work. Therefore, when I ask her if there are any words that she would like to add to her card sort, she describes her choice of ‘unimportant’ as being ‘really negative’. This self-conscious acknowledgement of the negativity of her thinking is a pattern that is repeated throughout her story. This seems to be connected to the story she would like to tell about *The Values of FE* and the story that she ends up telling. Each time she says, ‘I guess that’s really negative’, she is pre-empting what my reaction, as the listener, might be. This almost apologetic position exposes the tensions in her story between *The Values of FE* and the changing culture that she resists using the typology of *Struggle* in Chapter 4.

Further, her placement of 'time' in the card sort reflects the influence of a changing college culture (in this instance, an increasing lack of time) and its influence upon her feelings of doubt and sense of confidence in her work.

Sara: it's that we're stretched quite thin and we work across lots of different programmes and I think am I always running to catch up with myself so sometimes I'm actually thinking when I'm planning, I might think I'm doing a good job but actually am I? so a debate comes in because I'm thinking oh, if I'd actually planned these things better, the students would get these things back better, they'd feel better, actually am I doing as good as I think I am?

The self-doubt Sara describes above is tempered by her confidence in the shared values of her team. Below, *The Values of FE* works to bring her closer to her colleagues, to feel safer in the face of self-doubt which she experiences because of her workload. This narrative typology protects her by reassuring her that her team will always support her, even if this is not reflected in her relationship to the wider institution.

Sara: I think that's probably a lot about the team, that you're trusted. As a small team people have [...] that's the thing I've said about marking. They've said 'oh Sara you're a hard marker' but I think that's respected as well so that you know? Roy will say to me 'oh blah blah blah', and I'm like you know we'll get this person through. So, I think that as a team, we're a good team. I think a small team of people who... you know I've worked with lots of people, Marcus, Roy for lots of time so that's quite good. But I don't know, as a wider institution I'm not sure. Because I think these things work against you in a wider environment so then that makes you feel [...] But within our team I think we're trusted, people would give you the benefit of the doubt or would support you or would help you or you say to somebody 'I can't do that thing', I think that's really nice about a small team of people. Sometimes I think that we forget that if we properly support each other we'd probably be able to support the students better.

As all members of the team respect this moral space, even disagreements become easily resolved.

*Sara: I think we do trust each other. We've just had a planning meeting and I had a snarl at Marcus about something, there was a little [...] but I think in the end there's always a trust that we're trying to make it better, always trying to improve it, not just going what's the easiest way. And listening, you know. I think trust is important.
I don't trust the organisation*

Sara's positioning towards others in her story is often described by conflict, yet the assumed sense of shared values with colleagues allows her to believe in the best interests of those

immediately around her. Conversely, the lack of this assumed reciprocity fuels distrust, as demonstrated in Chapter 4, towards those outside of the team.

Sara: *I suppose I think it's because we're all working to the same aim isn't it? You know all of us do the work, I suppose we've worked with each other for a long time and we share some of the same values. Because we are a small team and we have helped each other, and we know each other and all that sort of stuff*

To Sara, *The Values of FE* should be an implicit aspect of organisational culture. She uses the notion of unimportance to reinforce the fact that *The Values of FE* are so important that they should be promoted by the entire organisation, irrespective of the individuals who work within it. Below, Sara comes to realise the tension between this belief, and her perception of the untrustworthiness of the college as an organisation.

Sara: *I think that's what's good about the college, not just this teacher that's cared for you, there should be other things. There should be a framework that's always there, you shouldn't erode those things because the people aren't important, the things are*

Christina: *Do you think that people who work in FE should hold the core values of FE in order to work in it?*

Sara: *yes*

Christina: *So, there could be another 'you', but they would need to have the same ethical motivations?*

Sara: *yes, gosh yes, that's terrible yes*

Christina: *So, there could be another 'you', but they would have to share the same values?*

Sara: *yes, a much calmer [...] that person who I should be. Yes definitely, although you've said that, and I feel really bad now, but I suppose I do think that yes*

Christina: *why is that a bad thing?*

Sara: *yeah, I think you're [people who work in FE] not important, but that's important. The building to have that ethos and all those things*

At this point, Sara begins to unpick her relationship with the institution in more detail by using *The Values of FE* to articulate how the change in institutional culture could reflect the erosion of these values.

Sara: *I was raised in a children's home. I was raised in the care system and I see the institutions, and I've seen them not work and I think if the whole institution changes, the people can just be slotted in, but if the thing doesn't work [...] so I think yeah, you're right it shouldn't just be you, it should be that role.*

It becomes clear that Sara uses the opportunity to tell her story to evaluate what it means to her to work in education; using *The Values of FE* as a vehicle to achieve this. Her belief in the social value of institutions, and her perception that the values of empathy, care and support

should be implicitly shared jars with her awareness that her work is inhibited by an organisation which does not necessarily support the ethos which is so important to her.

Sara: yeah you have to care about people on fundamental level at every level, and it's also that thing about once you've got to somewhere and not pulling up the ladder for everybody else. I think those ethics are really important to me

At this point in her story, Sara gets to the bottom of her core beliefs in relation to *The Values of FE*. For Sara, transformation is achieved through institutions which have an ethic of care deeply embedded as a cultural practice.

Sara: I very rarely think of my values, and actually that's what I need to draw on from your thing today because I don't want to be that person where everybody is like 'yeah yeah everyone's scared of you' [...] like you know that's really terrible, that makes the institution and all the things that I complain about... I'm part of that

At this point, we see how the narrative of *Struggle* disconnects Sara from her values. Her struggle to reconcile her values with her practice leads her to refer to herself as 'negative' (there are thirteen of these instances in total), which culminates in her stating that she does not 'want to be that [negative] person'. *The Values of FE* foreground the ethics that matter to her most. In doing so, she reconnects with her identity as an educator. Her engagement with *Struggle* and *Powerlessness* serve to distract her, and other staff members in this study, from fully living by *The Values of FE* in practice.

The tension between Sara's idealised view of the FE system, and the negativity she feels towards the system as it is, causes her to employ the voices of others' (including myself) to be critical towards her. This form of double-voicing (Ricoeur, 1991) helps Sara make sense of her position within the story. The result is a powerful reconnection with her values, facilitated by *The Values of FE*. These values underpin Sara's practice, and support her to feel positive in her teaching and as part of her team. Conditions for moral space (Sztompka, 2017) in this context, then, are found in *The Values of FE*. As safe spaces for *Unity* and *Thriving* shrink, *The Values of FE* become a basis for trust (Uslaner, 2002), excluding those who do not share those values (i.e., management or 'the college'). At the same time, *The Values of FE* indicate what might be needed to restore trust culture (Latusek, 2018).

6.2.3 *James and The Omniscient Narrator*

(Level 2 Student, North City College)

James is 17 years old. He moved to the North of England from Scotland after getting into some undefined 'trouble'. His parents worked in the Royal Air Force, and he has lived in a lot of different places throughout his childhood, including our current location where he has some family (although the nature of this relationship is not disclosed). His parents had split up when he was young and he had gone to live with his mother in Scotland, where he was born and had stayed until June 2016 when he moved back to the area unexpectedly. His education had been disrupted, and he had barely stayed at the same school for more than three years.

He had been back in the city for 5 months when we met. It was clear that his experience so far had taken its toll on him. He leaned into himself, with his head down as if it was being weighed down by the physical manifestation of his experience. Looking through a long fringe to avoid making direct eye contact with me, he cut the figure of someone who was just surviving. That said, he articulately expressed his anger with the schooling system. He was on the outside looking in with a self-awareness that allowed him to articulate his disenfranchisement with remarkable clarity.

James: yeah, education was just a no for me... I've never... grasped it...

At the beginning of his story, James alludes to painful events, but these stories are only partially narrated, or simply referenced with a clear understanding that these were not to be discussed further (see the typology of *Trouble* in Chapter 4). The suggestions of personal pain appear to be connected to his sense of displacement, and this unspoken story seems to be having a powerful hold over him. James' engagement with the typology of *Trouble* influences his sense of belonging in the educational environment, which causes him to later engage with both the typologies of *Struggle* and *Oppression*. The typology of *Oppression* seems to influence the sense of control that James has over his life. He frequently describes how other characters make decisions on his behalf, or he is negatively subject to the actions of other characters. His turbulent relationship with his education has led him to reduce trust in his educators, and the lack of control he experiences causes him to engage in narratives of *Struggle*, often positioning himself in direct opposition to his lecturers. The passage below further demonstrates how James calls the listener to understand that his attempts to engage with education are futile, as they always lead to conflict or failure.

James: *I kept saying that I feel like we don't have enough time and they were just like 'that's how it is' but I was even asking the other group who are in on a different day from us about how they felt about it and they were saying it's not fair at all it's ridiculous*

For James, all teachers are going to blame him for 'stuff' that is not his fault; and are therefore untrustworthy. He positions himself in opposition to them by disagreeing with the decisions that they make. There are several instances in his story such as the one above where he is subject to the unfair decision-making of others.

The narratives of *Struggle* and *Oppression* are particularly influential in the first part of James' story, and reflected clearly in the way that he organises his card sort in Figure 13 below. The two columns on the right reflect his experiences in college, 'hopeless' being at the top of his shortlist. He refused to work with the cards 'included', 'not bothered' and 'distrusting' on the left, saying wearily that he did not want to 'do' these ones, without providing an explanation. The weariness with which he says this reinforces the experience of powerlessness he is about to describe, and the fatigue that seems to accompany this type of narrative, as detailed in Chapter 4 (*Powerlessness*).

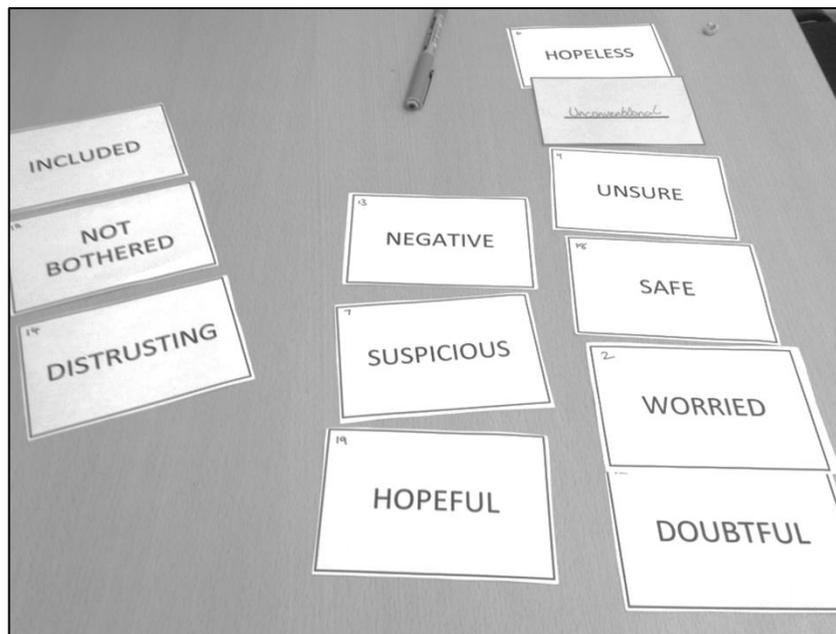


FIGURE 13: JAMES' CARD SORT

James provides an insight into the organisation of his card sort in the extract below.

Christina: *have a little look at what you've created, is there anything that surprises you about it or is it what you expected?*

James: *it's not what I expected*

Christina: *okay, so what surprises you about it?*

James: *how negative they are*

Christina: *did you not think that you felt that negative?*

James: *[...] I don't know... I kinda did but I just didn't want to believe it I don't think*

As James' story continues, it becomes clear that displacement is a recurring theme in his life. He says *"I'm kinda used to not getting close to people and having to leave"*, reinforcing the futility of trying to build trusting relationships. This feeling of displacement creates a palpable sense of powerlessness or lack of control over his life. The turbulent relationship he has had with educators in the past preclude the idea of being successful in education; mirroring the quote above where he describes education as something he couldn't 'grasp': something that is always just out of reach. The chain of events associated with past experiences allow James to look for evidence to distrust, rather than to trust. The untold stories associated with the typology of *Trouble* continue to play a powerful part in his narrative as it continues, leading him to assume a lack of benevolence on the part of other characters.

James: *normally I can get on with adults easier, but it's because they're my lecturer, stuff I say to them could affect their opinion and stuff*

Christina: *What evidence would you need, do you think?*

James: *I don't know...*

James' inability to visualise trustworthiness seems to add to his hopelessness towards his ability to rebuild his life; focussing instead on narratives of *Self-Preservation* such as 'not going homeless' (see Chapter 4). However, approximately half way through his story, James begins to engage with *The Omniscient Narrator*; a metamorphosing narrative which protects him as the typologies of *Trouble*, *Struggle* and *Oppression* continue to distance him from all other characters in his story. *The Omniscient Narrator* supports the storyteller to narrate the world as an all-knowing character, seeing and understanding more than other and thus justifying their description of the world as they see it. By adopting *The Omniscient Narrator*, James can see things that other people cannot about the way the world works, particularly in the relation to education and society. Although the typologies of Distrust continue to have a powerful effect on his story, becoming omniscient allows him to change his positionality in the story. In this way, he holds his own by being able to see and know everything, and therefore understand the situation he is in, even if he feels there is nothing he can do about it. *The Omniscient Narrator* changes the narrative by allowing James' voice to become powerful, where the typologies of Distrust would make him powerless (see Figure 15 below). For example, when talking about his education, he justifies his position by demonstrating how much he knows about the way the system works.

James: *I feel like I'm kind of different in terms of how I perceived stuff. I spend a lot of time thinking about stuff and reading stuff so like I say, I have knowledge on areas*

other people wouldn't have knowledge on. For me, it wouldn't make a difference because I already know that at the end of the day it's whether you can pass an exam or not so...

As he says this, his tone of voice appears to change. He speaks confidently about what he knows and about how people in society view him.

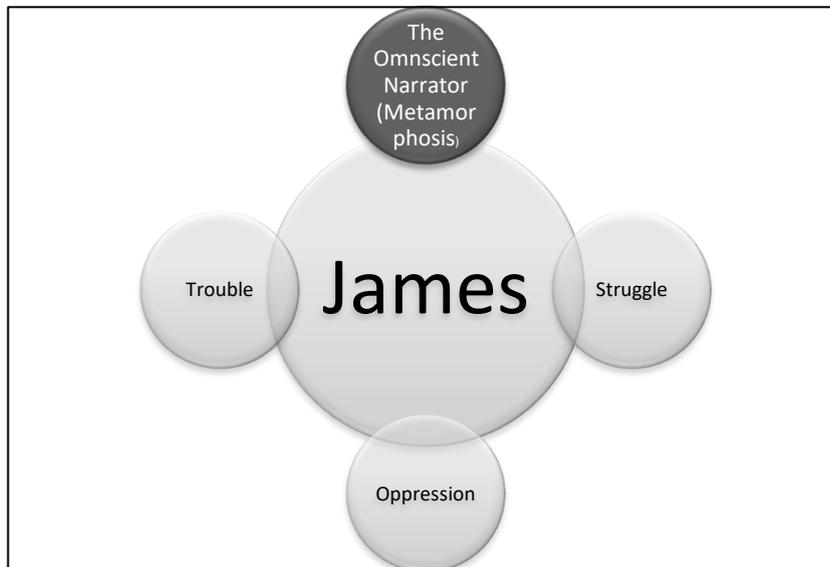


FIGURE 14: JAMES' NARRATIVE IDENTITY

The Omniscient Narrator allows James to take control of the story and not only position himself with greater authority but also re-position myself, the interviewer, as his equal. James is no longer subject to my questions as the interviewer but as a colleague with whom he is theorising about how society has impacted upon his life-course.

James: *We're told we can do whatever we want, be whatever we want to be and then we turn 18 and get shoved out by ourselves. We're thrown away*

The language of exclusion is peppered throughout his story as he describes young people like him as 'shoved out', 'thrown away' and 'not given opportunities'. James aligns himself with other perceived 'outsiders'. He draws on the popular narrative of what it means to be a 'chav' (Somers, 1994) to make sense of his own position in society. Chavs are both the object of his own fear and displacement, but also people with whom he increasingly sympathises as he engages with *The Omniscient Narrator*. At the beginning of his story, the 'chav' character walks around the streets with knives, making him feel unsafe where he lives. The physical risk of home combined with the psychological precariousness of his relationships at the college feed into his sense of displacement, fuelling the use of the typologies of *Struggle* and *Oppression*. *The Omniscient Narrator* tempers the level of risk and uncertainty that these

narratives pose. James can take control of the story and position himself with greater authority through his more highly developed understanding of the world.

James: If you don't fit into what they want you to be these days you're a delinquent which, I can understand now why chavs are the way they are because they could have been the nicest people ever, like I've seen people, like I know people here, when I used to live here before they were the sweetest people when we were kids and now you know they, stab people and stuff it's not pretty

James uses his position of omniscience to describe to me how he came to live the life he does, and the others who are also positioned on the margins of society. He goes on to position the education system as the cause of the many social problems that proliferate in society.

James: I feel like it needs to change because you've got kids as young as 9 years old killing themselves because of bullying now and... yeah, it's just not, I don't know, I feel like education has one of the biggest problems in this world at the moment. It's the cause of a lot of problems and people don't even realise it, cos even people like... trying to think of someone relevant today... even just today in class, like history and politics, schools will only teach what our government want them to know... I feel like in school they put too much stuff into our head that's not true, that's not real

By taking an omniscient approach to his story, his decision to distrust the education system becomes irrefutable. I can only listen. He then draws upon his own experience of being bullied, and not fitting into the system, as evidence for his theorising. Further, from the vantage point of *The Omniscient Narrator*, James is not a failure, but a unique individual that can neither be contained nor understood. This is reflected in the word that he chose for himself: 'unconventional'. He chose this word towards the end of his story as a way of describing how he saw someone who 'doesn't fit the ideal perception' of a good student.

James: the way that I would word it is the school system doesn't care how, it doesn't care... unless you fit into their ideal candidate student kind of position cos you even see if people who do more well than others, they will get more praise and fair enough if they did better, but it's not like the person who did worse deliberately tried to do worse, you know what I mean?

The combination of narratives that James uses in his story not only serve to construct his distrusting position towards education and educators, but the effect of *The Omniscient Narrator* is to make this assertion more powerful, whilst helping him to cope with his experiences of failure in a system that 'does not care' about him.

By taking on a more powerful position in his story, James' assertions become beyond debate. The *Powerlessness* that James experiences through his engagement with *Oppression* and

Struggle reduce his sense of autonomy. Therefore, Distrust to stalls his narrative as he struggles to visualise any other possible future, while *The Omniscient Narrator* supports him to cope with the precarious position he is now in. The precariousness of James' position links with Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2001) notion of a 'danger biography', in which risks threaten to consume him as he lives life on the margins of society. Therefore, by drawing upon popular narratives regarding the demonization of young people who lead such lives (Simmons et al., 2014), this narrative supports James to create some order out of the chaos a danger biography represents. In a sense, James' story typifies that of a young person navigating life in post-industrial society, where job insecurity is rife and support systems are scarce (ibid). James' last bastion of safety lies in his knowledge that he is not alone in this individualisation (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001).

6.2.4 Eddie and The Train is Still on Time

(Level 2 Student, North City College)

Eddie is a mature student, returning to the college at the age of 24, having spent the previous 5 years working in the service industry. He had been fired from his job as a waiter, and this had given him the impetus to rethink his career. He had previously attended North City College, studying a Plumbing course before being unable to get an apprenticeship because of he was too old. He had spent most of his education being 'pigeon-holed' as the 'naughty' student who should 'get a trade'. Being then unable to get a trade following this advice left him feeling there was little point in him continuing with education 'for a useless piece of paper'. Eddie has a lot of energy, however. He commands attention with his demeanour which is jovial and open. He takes on a mentoring role with younger students in his class, who he identifies with, as he also had 'no idea' what he was doing with his life at their age. He recounts his story with a level of forgiveness towards those who had given him poor advice when he was younger, and since taking it upon himself to re-engage with education he is feeling very optimistic about the future. He has done his research to make sure that his course leads him to an industry where he can find work that he enjoys.

Unlike the other cases in this chapter, Eddie's story was mostly characterised by typologies within the trope of Trust. However, what is unusual about Eddie's story is the extent to which he engages with the narrative of *Trouble*. For a significant part of his story, Eddie engaged with events from the past which have either disrupted or delayed his engagement with education. As detailed in Chapter 4, this started when he was at school and he was told to 'get a trade' by his teachers. He then had a teacher who 'had it in' for him and his friend when they went to study carpentry at another institution, before he studied plumbing at

North City College and was then unable to get an apprenticeship because of his age. These events led to a disengagement with education for several years whilst he worked in a restaurant. It was being fired from his job that ultimately provided the impetus for his re-engagement with education. For most participants in the study, stories which engage with high trust typologies tend not to dwell on past events; they are instead motivated towards the future. The typology of *Trouble* tends to cast a shadow over present and future events of other storytellers, in a way that is not the case for Eddie. Eddie instead uses his previous experience of trouble to articulate his excitement and drive towards the future. The vehicle which he uses to do this is *The Train is Still on Time*. As illustrated in Figure 15 below, *The Train is Still on Time* functions to keep Eddie's focus on the future with the support of the narrative typologies of *Transformation* and *Optimism*, which were discussed in Chapter 5.

The Train is Still on Time functions as a metamorphosing narrative, which alters Eddie's perspective on his story, and allows him to engage with the education system on his own terms. Whilst Eddie's story dwells on negative past experiences during which he was stereotyped, treated badly by teachers and enrolled on courses which did not lead to employment, this narrative ensures that the past does not come to define his story. Instead, he repeatedly states 'my train is still on time'; allowing him to focus on the present and feel excited for where his train might take him. This enables Eddie's story to be characterised by Trust as he foregrounds future-focused narrative typologies.

Eddie: *I'm not really religious or nothing but I'm a bit like' everything happens for a reason' sorta person so I'm quite lucky, I'm quite positive, I always try and take a positive spin on everything so like I said before it might not have worked out but my train's still on time somewhere, I don't even know where I'm stopping yet but I'm on time somewhere you know*

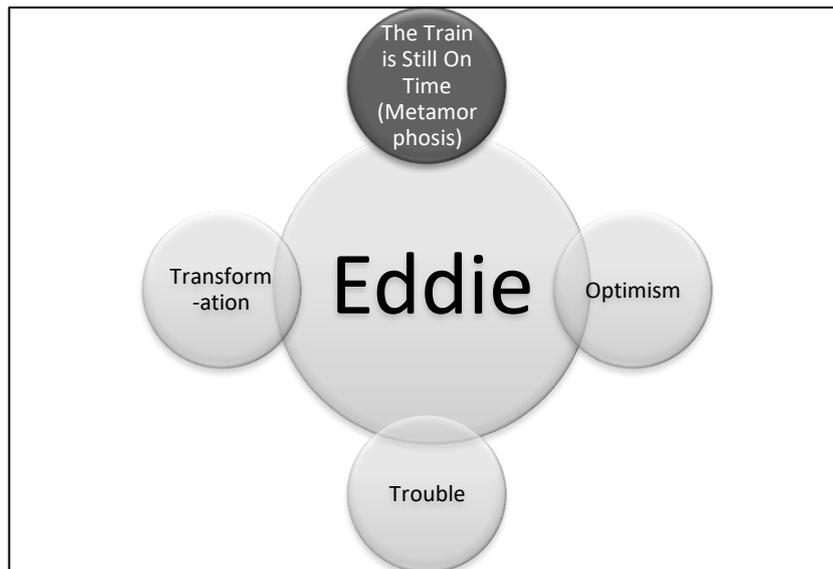


FIGURE 15: EDDIE'S NARRATIVE IDENTITY

Although the effect of *Trouble* is still evident in Eddie's card sort (see Figure 16 below) with the words 'scared' and 'worried' included on the right, the rest of the words Eddie shortlists are high trust in nature. The word he chooses for himself, 'excited', reflects his future-orientated thinking. This re-orientation is possible because of his engagement with *The Train is Still on Time*; illustrated in the excerpt below.

Christina: so, I guess the insecurities are more like echoes of past experiences that are getting in the way

Eddie: yeah but it's good as well cos that's like, helping keeping me motivated at the same time cos I'm trying to make sure I've always got everything like 100% because I dunno if this one thing I do will end up throwing a spanner in the whole works, so that's what's keeping me motivated so it's like go on, get that homework done, get that assignment in on time so even though being worried and scared is sorta negative, it's been a positive for me as well because I'm like I'm gonna show that tutor who kicked me out of that college, I'm gonna show me boss... so there's that sorta motivation as well yeah

Eddie's engagement with this narrative typology provides him with the motivation to push on with his education. As demonstrated above, at times his orientation towards success is as much to do with rejecting roles he had been cast into by characters from his past. The redefinition of his future will belong to him, and therefore his engagement with education will be on his terms. This enables him to keep his insecurities about the future at bay, as he refuses to allow others determine his path.



FIGURE 16: EDDIE'S CARD SORT

Eddie: You know I might not get a job from it, I might just go end up waiting on again but at least I know in my heart that I've tried then, and I've done everything I possibly could of to do something different you know what I mean, nothing always works out but in general I'm quite happy that I chose the course

Taking control of his future allows Eddie to also manage his feelings of insecurity as he knows he will have tried, and that his fate has been decided on his terms; unlike in the past. The agency that accompanies *The Train is Still on Time* influences engagement with *Transformation*, as a brighter future for Eddie becomes more tangible, and unlike James, within his grasp.

Eddie: I'm not just plodding along as they say. I feel like I'm living life a bit instead of just surviving if you get me. I've got like, as I said earlier, I've got a five-year plan for the first time in my life you know so that gives me confidence and belief and makes me excited.

Being able to make plans and visualise the future is an important theme associated with a trusting disposition. Although Eddie expresses earlier in his story that he believes 'everything happens for a reason', it is evident in the passage above and below that Eddie's engagement with education is far from incidental. Quite the opposite, he has invested a lot of time and energy researching courses which will allow him to secure a job in the labour market. In his story, he talks at length about this research and the options that are available to him.

***Eddie:** I'm not at that point yet and until I get to that point no one's gonna tell me otherwise basically. I'm always gonna keep my options at the moment cos it's gonna make me feel more confident and positive and excited for the future, knowing yeah that it's a bit more in my hands and you know in my control instead of someone telling me like basically yeah. I've been quite stubborn about it actually yeah, now I'm thinking about it*

Eddie's stubborn orientation towards taking his own path is the very vehicle which allows him to feel excited. Without the sense of agency afforded to him by *The Train is Still on Time*, the energy and enthusiasm he has for the future would simply not be there. As such, his faith in education and his educators are predicated upon the maintenance of his freedom of choice. This is what allows him to plan for a life which is different to the one which had led him to North City College in the first place.

***Eddie:** I'm fully focussed it's almost like tunnel vision for me now I don't know anything else what's not gonna be for me in the future, it's of no interest to me now but I think they're in that stage of I could do this, but I could do this, but I could do that so... I almost feel sorry for them it's like yeah, I was like that as well, things will work out don't worry. But me personally, I'm fully focussed, confident and positive about where I'm going yeah... making sure my train's on time*

Eddie's story has a lot to teach educators about the value of agency and choice in education for building relationships based on Trust. If Eddie had been given the opportunity to consider what he enjoyed whilst he was at school, it might not have taken his train such a long time to arrive. This is something which he laments about at the end of his story, where he criticises schools for poor quality advice and guidance. This is also reflected in the excerpt above, where he expresses sympathy for the other younger students on his course, who do not yet have a direction.

The Train is Still on Time is a prime example of a storyteller holding their own in their narrative (Frank, 2012a). This narrative not only protects him from forces which make him vulnerable. It also supports him to face those vulnerabilities head on and change the course of his story. Although Eddie is navigating his way through the same competitive society as James, his ability to place his faith in others allows him to feel in more control of his destiny (Uslaner, 2002). Sztompka (1999; Latusek, 2018) might argue that the ability to affiliate closely with others is afforded by the accumulation of social and moral capital; suggesting

that autonomy cannot be divorced from community. It is through Eddie's story that the intimate relationship between trust and agency can be observed.

6.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter has demonstrated how metamorphosing narratives function differently to the narrative typologies of Trust and Distrust. Instead of shaping the storytellers' orientation towards Trust or Distrust, metamorphosing narratives work to foreground aspects of the story from which they can draw strength. In this sense, all the metamorphosing narratives featured in this chapter help the storytellers to maintain an authentic sense of self, which (Frank, 2012a) might argue supports the storyteller to 'hold their own' in their vulnerability. Where distrust threatens their sense of safety, metamorphosing narratives can provide 'substitutes' for trust (Sztompka, 1999), as they satisfy the storytellers' need for predictability and certainty in the absence of their ability to completely suspend their doubts about the future.

Through the stories of Jeremy, Sara, James and Eddie, I have illustrated how metamorphosing narratives can create hope where it is in short supply, add value to a story that has lost direction, create order out of perceived chaos, and make a more positive future within reach. In doing so, metamorphosing narratives restore complexity to narrative where the binaries of Trust and Distrust would simplify it. The next chapter will synthesise the analysis in the previous three chapters, locating these findings within the broader context of the literature review and the theoretical framework. In doing so, I will return to key themes that influence the decision to take the leap of faith within the institution (Möllering, 2006).

Chapter 7: Discussion

7.1 Introduction

Stories are both creators and destroyers; responsible for both good and evil (Frank, 2012a), and are dangerously good at allowing people to find comfort in binaries. Therefore, as complex as the process of assessing trustworthiness is, the decision to trust similarly reflects a simplicity which allows the storyteller to cope with the complexities of everyday life, allowing them to act as if the future was certain (Möllering, 2006). As such, the analysis of the stories in this research project reveal several dichotomies relating to the individual's decision to place their faith in others; illustrating the conditions in which trust or distrust can thrive in the life of the individual, and their relationship to the institution. This chapter will discuss three such dichotomies which have emerged from the analysis of the tropes of Trust and Distrust as described in Chapters 4 and 5. These dichotomies relate to the structural, symbolic and temporal construction of narrative; together constituting a narrative identity that positions the storyteller in relation to the institution. These are *Uncertainty and Optimism* (Temporal), *Virtue and Corruption* (Symbolic), *Isolation and Participation* (Structural). The storyteller's assessment of these three elements of trust and distrust result in the decision to take a leap of faith in, or withdraw faith from, various others in their narrative. The storyteller's positionality in relation to these three binaries goes some way to answer the research questions posed at the start of this thesis:

1. How do staff and students understand trust and trustworthiness?
2. What are the antecedents to building trust?
3. How do perceptions of trust and trustworthiness influence interpersonal relationships amongst staff and students?

In relation to the third question, this chapter will further discuss the dialogic relationship between the stories of both the students and staff in this project; positing that trust in the staff-student relationship is in many ways the product of a shared 'trust history' (Möllering, 2013), creating a historical-institutional identity that allows them to construct a shared moral space (Sztompka, 2017) in which the wider context of students' lives are understood and respected. This moral space (characterised in this context through *The Values of FE*) is where the typologies of Trust (*Thriving, Transformation and Unity*) can thrive in a context where

spaces for the existential security required to cultivate it are shrinking at the institutional level. In this way, the analysis has also revealed that trust does not simply exist between individuals but is symbiotically linked to the institution in which the storyteller participates (Beck, 1992; Möllering, 2006; Frank, 2012a). Within the context of this research, I will further illustrate that the problems of free market competition covered in the literature review (Chapter 1) have led to the demise of a values-led FE institution, resulting in staff withdrawing their faith from leadership.

It is important to remember, however, that “no individual storyteller is reduced to any narrative type” (Frank, 2012a: 119). As such, the narrative typologies described in the previous three chapters support us to understand the dynamic nature of trust and distrust in the lives of storytellers, and how narrative tropes allow them to move between narratives (ibid). This illustrates the complexity which lies beneath the binary that the decision to trust or distrust represents. This is most notable in the metamorphosing narratives discussed in Chapter 6, which allow storytellers to maintain a sense of normative coherence (Sztompka, 1999) in the construction of their story, and protect them in the face of vulnerability. This can be further understood through Frank’s (2012a) concept of ‘narrative emplotment’, in which individuals participate in narratives which are not of their own making. Such emplotment can bring storytellers together through participation in the institution but can equally distance them from others. By unpicking the relationship between these narrative tropes, this chapter will examine the processes which can enable or prevent individuals from taking the leap of faith required to trust in the FE institutional context.

7.2 Uncertainty and Optimism

“People prefer to keep non-narratable what they want to believe did not or does not happen... stories can cry out: these things happen, I embody what happened” (Frank, 2012a: 76)

The temporal sequence of the narrative for all storytellers revealed a significant relationship between a disposition towards the future and a propensity towards trust or distrust. In most cases, those who had a propensity towards trust had a future-focused narrative, which involved limited discussion of past events. On the contrary, those who had a propensity towards distrust dwelled on past events, constructing a ‘trust history’ which provided evidence for their current position towards the institution, and others within it. This trust history seems to represent the role that collective memory plays in trust, as discussed by Rothstein (2005). In this case, the typology of *Trouble* (Typology 1), discussed in Chapter 4,

played a powerful role in the storyteller's ability to articulate the future. The various betrayals this narrative exposed led the storytellers to construct ominous futures which were overshadowed by *Uncertainty* (Typology 6).

For students in this study, previous experiences of education had heavily influenced their approach to the college and their teachers. These institutional histories had shaped their perception of education, and their place within it. This seems to reflect Ball et al.'s (2000) seminal work on youth transitions in which young people who had experienced turbulence often carried with them "learning identities often severely damaged by their experiences in post-compulsory education" (Ball et al., 2000: 8). This is fuelled by other factors which make them vulnerable such as poverty and other insecurities which limit their 'horizons for action' (ibid; Holland and Thomson, 2009). The accumulation of risk (Beck, 1992) culminates in the individual's 'trust history' and is co-opted into their relationship with the institution, creating an identity which shapes the individual's positioning. This effectively shuts down possibilities for building trust before their relationship with the college begins. This is most notable in the stories of Adam and James, who because of their previous experiences had already positioned themselves on the margins of the institution as individuals who were not 'valuable' within the neoliberal competitive educational landscape.

Particularly for James, who discusses an unstable personal life, a displaced education and fractious relations with both fellow students and teachers, faith had waned to the extent that he was unable to articulate any version of the future; effectively shutting down his narrative. This could be considered a form of 'self-finalisation', as he shut out narrative possibilities for the future (Frank, 2012a). Holland and Thomson's (2009) work on youth transitions draws a relationship between a young person's agency, their imagination and their ability to control their own destiny. Where a history of broken trust influences institutional positionality, we may consider that such a trauma can shut down a young person's possibility-thinking. For those who are studying at entry or pre-GCSE levels within FE institutions, the notion of failure is difficult to escape (Atkins, 2009). The wounds inflicted by a troubled education led James to what Frank (2010) might refer to as the 'chaos narrative'; a narrative trope in which a person's story "traces the edges of a wound that can only be told around" (Frank, 2010: 98). For James, a partially-narrated history casts an ominous shadow over 'scarcely thinkable' (Frank, 2010) future.

Holland and Thomson (2009: 457-458) assert that "whether a moment is consequential can depend on the resources to which the young people have access". Therefore, the way

experiences are internalised may be shaped by a perception of the world which is either helpful or hostile, speaking to dispositions towards trustworthiness, which are in turn informed by 'trust histories' relating to the institutions they participate in. This suggests that the less risk the individual is exposed to, the more opportunity there is to draw upon 'choice' narratives which promote agency, as opposed to 'fate' narratives, which restrict it (Thomson, 2002).

In contrast, the narrative of *Transformation* (Typology 9) has a significant role in supporting storytellers to create concrete visions of the future; most notably in the stories of Daniel and Eddie, but also in the story of Ali, whose engagement with the *Transformation* typology goes some way to temper her engagement with the *Trouble* narrative. However, the *Trouble* narrative still created an apprehensive disposition towards the future, in place of the concrete visualisations described by Daniel in Chapter 5 and Eddie in Chapter 6. Ball et al. (2000) identified the difference between 'copers' and 'planners' in their study tracking young people's post-16 transitions. While 'copers' were just about managing with their transitions, the 'planners' were much better able to adapt according to the series of risks presented to young people as they move from one institution to another; illustrating an increased ability to navigate life in individualised society (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001).

Similarly to Holland and Thomson's (2009) study, Eddie's story illustrates how becoming a 'planner' is linked to the individual's ability to take control over their circumstances. As discussed in Chapter 6, the influence of Eddie's metamorphosing narrative (*The Train That's Still on Time*) allowed a story which featured *Trouble* heavily throughout to gather momentum towards an optimistic future, in a way that did not seem possible for other participants in the study. Where *Trouble* had constrained Eddie's narrative through characters which gave him poor instructions and advice, similarly echoed by participants in Ball et al.'s (2000) study, the metamorphosing narrative re-introduced agency; allowing him to take back control of his story.

Frank (2012a) describes how a storyteller can sometimes feel a tension between "hitching a ride on the immanent volition of the story... versus the possibility that things could turn out differently" (ibid: 51). In choosing possibility, Eddie could take the leap of faith (Möllering, 2006) required to trust the institution in guiding him towards a positive future. Eddie's story, therefore, illustrates the importance of opening up spaces for possibility within educational institutions.

Trust has an important role to play in the construction of a concrete sense of future, suggesting that it is beneficial if trust is also embodied by the organisations in which the students participate. The current funding and policy environment in Further Education (detailed in Chapter 1) also led staff within the study to engage with narratives which reflected *Uncertainty*, inhibiting the normative coherence required to produce a trust culture (Sztompka, 1999). However, there was a solidarity that appeared to emerge between both staff and student participants who engaged with the typologies of *Trouble* and *Uncertainty* (Typology 6), that allowed *Unity* (Typology 8) to thrive.

For example, the stories of Jeremy and Roy, who had both struggled with Dyslexia as young people collided with the story of Larry, who through mutual recognition and support from Jeremy and Roy was able to transition from *Trouble* to *Transformation*. The story of 'falling into' a career in further education is common (Bowl, 2017), and at times, the catalyst between 'falling into' FE and staying in FE is related to a similar sense of marginalisation that features in the stories of students.

The act of falling into this sector, therefore, seems to be linked to a personal trust history which allows staff to promote social justice and work in solidarity with the students who enter it. This is further illustrated in Sara's story, whose experience of growing up in a children's home allowed her not only to identify with the struggles of her students, but also hold an absolute belief in her duty to represent a benevolent institution which supports second chances for those who engage with it. This commitment was underpinned by the metamorphosing narrative, *The Values of FE* (see Chapter 6). In this sense, *The Values of FE* represent how moral space can be cultivated amongst staff and students to open up possibilities in the classroom, where an institutional culture threatens to shut it down. This is similarly reflected in Duckworth and Smith's (2019) *Further Education Transforming Lives* project (see *Transforming Lives*, online), in which the stories of FE students and lecturers complement *The Values of FE*, representing how trust histories connect both groups together to produce *Transformation* (Typology 9).

As elements of temporal narrative, *Uncertainty* and *Optimism* represent the opposing tropes of romance and tragedy (Frank, 2012a). In choosing one or the other, the storyteller begins to construct their story along lines which invite disaster or transformational change. Trust history, therefore, has a powerful influence over perceptions of trustworthiness of the institution, which can lead the storyteller to at best, have limited faith or at worst, assumed

maleficence (Lewicki et al. 1998), which I will further explore in the discussion of Virtue and Corruption below.

7.3 Virtue and Corruption

The discussion of Uncertainty and Optimism above illustrated how trust is helped or hindered by a felt sense of existential security, or lack thereof. The shrinking of safe psychological spaces available in FE, therefore, can reduce the sense of existential security necessary to produce a trust culture (Sztompka, 1999). In this sense, security is symbiotically linked to the institution. The analysis in Chapter 5 illustrated that where trust existed, it was accompanied by freedom of expression (Typology 7 *Thriving*), whereas distrust brought *Oppression* (Typology 3). This illustrates how honesty and integrity lubricate trusting relationships. This is also evidenced above, where shared trust histories between staff and students allow them to affiliate more closely to one another. Virtue and Corruption, therefore, operate as symbolic features of narrative which hold sway in the assessment of trustworthiness on the part of the storyteller.

On an institutional level, however, the typologies of Distrust described in Chapter 4 demonstrate how the system used to support trust has collapsed (Möllering, 2013). This is evident most strongly in the narrative of Marcus, whose experience of *Trouble* within the institution led to a 'crisis of trust' (Möllering, 2013). This crisis of trust was represented by the 'downward slope' analogy which he returned to throughout his story. The oppression which is described by Marcus and Roy in Chapter 4, evidenced through unreasonable and authoritarian approaches to the surveillance of teaching and performance management, led storytellers to narratives of corruption. This led to the assumption that 'higher management' were 'running things for themselves', representing what Skinner et al. (2014) refer to as the 'dark side of trust'. They argue that the 'uncomfortable obligation' associated with compliance can run against the ethics of those to whom trust is requested or bestowed (ibid). In a study of trust in the UK education system, Bottery (2003) argued that accountability has replaced anything which had once resembled autonomy for teachers.

"The enormous raft of legislative and accountability checks... that will now make professional action so predictable and so controllable that they can be trusted to be 'autonomous', as they will hardly dare to venture (or even think) out of line" (Bottery, 2003: 248)

New Public Management and Principal-Agent modes of leadership and governance (see Chapter 1) do not recognise the importance of reciprocity in trust dynamics (Möllering,

2006). This represents what Skinner et al. (2014) refer to as the ‘self-deceiving’ character of what passes for trust in organisations, which they describe as “a managerial ruse for re-establishing order and masking the disorder, misery and despair felt by many at work” (Skinner et al., 2014: 209). The *Struggle* (Typology 2) which accompanies oppression can lead to stories of conflict and resistance. What is important to note is that where conflict represents low trust in the institution, resistance represents **distrust**. Lewicki et al.’s (1998) seminal work which explored the difference between ‘low trust’ and ‘distrust’ describe trust as ‘confident, positive expectations’ of another, whereas distrust was described as ‘confident, negative expectations’ of the other. Importantly, in cases of high distrust what might have initially been perceived as incompetence can turn to ‘assumed maleficence’ in which the trustor believes the trustee wishes them harm (ibid). This aligns with Beck and Beck-Gernsheim’s (2001) concept of ‘risk’ and ‘danger’ biographies, who argue that there is a blurred line at the boundary between a risk biography (low trust) that may turn to danger biography (distrust).

In this way, typologies of distrust tie both staff and student storytellers into individualised biographies (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001), where perception of corruption can serve to distance the storyteller from other characters around them, as well as the institutions to which they are a part. These narratives prove powerful, and as Frank (2012a: 147) asserts “people who are caught up in stories run up against other people living in companionship with different stories, and neither can hear the other”. This can therefore lead to a the withdrawal of trust from leadership, which can in turn lead to the kind of social trap described in both Chapters 1 and 2 (Rothstein, 2005).

Norms of compliance within education institutions undermine the agency required to trust and become difficult for individual actors to resist (Skinner et al. 2014). This can lead to self-doubt, something which features heavily in Roy’s story under the typology of *Powerlessness* (Typology 4). Möllering (2013) contends that who we trust is very much linked to our identity, and the institutions in which we are a part. The workplace being one of the most dominant institutions in our lives, a crisis of trust in the institution can also lead to a professional identity crisis (ibid). Therefore, by “casting other people as suitable objects of oppression” (Frank, 2012a: 71), Roy constructs himself as powerless, leading to stories associated with burnout. This narrative caused him to question his competence and confidence as an educator.

However, where storytellers choose to resist, this can lead to the expression of The Authentic Self as discussed in Typology 9 (*Transformation*) in Chapter 5. In the act of resisting the roles they are being cast into (Frank, 2012a), storytellers such as Sara can reconnect with their professional values, as illustrated in Chapter 6 under *The Values of FE*. This represents what Ball (2016) refers to as the 'politics of refusal', in which their values as educators can thrive. *The Authentic Self* serves as a powerful protective mechanism for all staff participants in this research project. For Jeremy, these values support him to restore hope to his practice, where at times he appears to experience dissonance in relation to his role as an educator and as a middle manager. However, Bowl (2017) suggests that in some cases, educators' 'value-systems' need to be re-articulated to cope with the changing ideological climate; serving to separate professionals from their authentic selves.

The Values of FE represent a positionality towards virtue, as the narrative identities of staff reflect the 'falling into' nature of a career in FE, as described above. These values represent the 'social mission' associated with a career in FE, where their professional identity is congruent with their beliefs (Bowl, 2017). As in Bowl's (2017) research, the changing policy environment and reduced government spending had significantly shaken the identities of the adult educators that were interviewed, discussing a 'profound' impact of ongoing instability and restructuring upon sense of purpose and self-esteem (ibid). Gleeson et al. (2015) further argue that the 'tsunami' of policy initiatives over the past twenty years has restricted the ability of colleges to develop in line with the communities and cultures in which they are embedded.

In this construction of narrative, the storyteller is always constructed as having virtue, whereas the 'other' is constructed as corrupt. The disposition that the storyteller takes towards trust or distrust therefore, leads to how they discuss the position of others in the construction of their story. As such, the next section will detail how corruption can lead the storyteller to isolate themselves from others, whereas virtue can lead to closer affiliation with others.

7.4 Isolation and Participation

Stories of isolation and participation are key to the structural positioning of storytellers towards trust and distrust. Where distrust increases the isolation of storytellers (or contain characters of mal-intent), trust brings other characters into the story who tend to be benevolent, and with whom they have a reciprocal relationship. As the leap of faith exposes

the individual to vulnerability (see Chapter 2), the ability to trust is determined by the availability of spaces to be vulnerable. Therefore, the influence of educational ‘trust histories’, as well as a performative institutional culture, as described above (and discussed in Chapter 1) have implications for all of the storytellers in this study. I illustrated in Chapter 4 how engagement with the typologies of *Trouble*, *Struggle* and *Oppression* can lead to stories of *Powerlessness* and *Self-Preservation*. Where an individual’s past experiences of relationships are negative, and current relationships are fractious, storytellers tend to isolate themselves from other characters: most notably in the stories of Ali and James, whose discussion of benevolent characters is limited. The marginalisation that tropes of distrust represent creates a significant sense of existential insecurity, in which storytellers must act to protect themselves against vulnerability. For Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2001), this might represent an individual who falls out of individualised society, succumbing to the dangers that abound within the risk society; a world in which the storyteller has ‘no stake’ (Frank, 2012a).

“Disposition suggests not what people are determined to feel, want, think, choose or act to bring into being, but rather how they feel conducted to do what they want to do; as they undertake their lives, the course that seems to flow most naturally” (Frank, 2012a: 52)

To a storyteller who has a trust history which places them in the margins of education, isolation could be the course that flows most naturally as Frank (2012a) describes above. Ball et al. (2000) suggest a lack of faith or trust in others may cause the vulnerable to self-exclude. Boundary-making plays a significant role in how we construct the world around us, for which Uslaner’s (2002) concepts of ‘in-group’ or ‘particularised’ trust, where individuals choose to trust others based only on shared characteristics, provide some clarity (see Chapter 2). As an individual’s trajectory through institutions causes them to accumulate risk, the boundaries in which they can trust can also shrink, leading to the ‘social paralysis’ associated with distrust, described by Sztompka (2017). Therefore, although young people may continue to engage in their own self-project (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001), their horizons for action may be limited (Ball et al., 2000), as those others who may threaten a risk biography represent danger. For the young people in Holland and Thomson’s (2009) study, those from more disadvantaged backgrounds (i.e., those with more risks) tended to identify critical moments in their biography that were associated most significantly with relationships; suggesting that for marginalised young people relationships are both fundamentally important and highly dangerous.

The work of Atkins (2009) on entry-level vocational education provides important further insights for the risks carried by students on these programmes. Atkins posits that lower level courses narrow choice, which in turn shapes dispositions towards education (ibid). James' and Adam's conscious awareness of their low value within a competitive educational landscape further chimes with Atkin's (2009) findings that despite their engagement with entry-level courses, these students were not blind to a qualification system which had little to offer them in terms of transaction value in the job market. In the case of James and Adam, their lack of faith in education led to the construction of identities which opposed the 'system' of education in which their place had little value.

For staff in this study, boundary-making became physical as well as conceptual, as the classroom came to represent the last bastion of psychological safety, which as I have already argued, are key conditions for *Thriving* (Typology 7). The abundance of risk associated with performative practice resulted in a particularised form of trust (Uslaner, 2002) which seemed to thrive only within the walls of the staffroom and the classroom. This appeared to be influenced by competing ideological motives, and a perceived incompatibility of the values of teachers, who shared *The Values of FE*, and leadership who were perceived to be 'in it for themselves'. Bottery (2003) argued that competing motives and ideologies fuel distrust in educational policy and practice, undermining the value of expertise and professional autonomy. Therefore, boundary-making functions to allow the storyteller to negotiate their relationship to power. This constructs opposition to management as a form of narrative 'institutional' emplotment (Frank, 2012a), where the collective memory (Rothstein, 2005) of decline in FE (i.e., the downward slope) and industrial conflict fuel engagement with the tropes of *Struggle* (Typology 2) and *Oppression* (Typology 3). As such, staff believe that it is malevolent leadership and management practices which have kept *The Values of FE* from flourishing, influencing their ability to construct meaningful relationships with students. This further links to themes arising from my previous research, where staff members felt they were 'forced' to view students through the lens of retention and achievement; indicating the lack of choice they had in conforming to policy diktats (Donovan, 2018). This is also supported by Illsley and Waller (2017) who argue that basing college funding upon retention and achievement removes the foundations of student-teacher relationships.

Frank (2012a: 130-131) suggests that "spokespersons [of groups] make groups visible not only to outsiders but to members". By speaking for the group, the spokesperson therefore assembles the group as having a voice and unity of purpose. For Marcus and Sara, this unity

of purpose was represented by *The Values of FE*, where a solidarity was constructed not only amongst staff but also between staff and students, creating a sense of ‘moral space’ within the physical space of the classroom. Therefore, where isolationist narratives promote risk-aversion, trusting narratives contain more benevolent characters, positioning storytellers in a community of others. Within this study, the typology of *Unity* (Typology 8) played a significant role in linking this ‘moral space’ (Sztompka, 2017) to normative coherence (Sztompka, 1999) allowing a trust culture to thrive, albeit within the confines of specific spaces within the college.

From a student perspective, *Unity* was represented most strongly in the stories of Daniel and David, whose recognition of the group in supporting their educational process was apparent. Möllering (2013) determines that ‘relations of familiarity’ are important in the process of building trust. For students in this study, the existence of at least one stable relationship was important for supporting trust, whether that was inside or outside of the institution. Those who were unable to articulate stable relationships, most evident in the stories of Ali and James, struggled with trust. This suggests the important role of creating a secure base for students who are vulnerable, and the role that institutions have in cultivating a ‘trust culture’ to allow those who are most marginalised to thrive.

7.5 Withdrawn Faith Vs. The Leap of Faith

The previous three sections have illustrated how dichotomies in relation to three key elements of narrative allow storytellers to comfortably place faith or withdraw faith in various others around them. The individual’s positionality in relation to Uncertainty and Optimism (Temporal), Virtue and Corruption (Symbolic) and Isolation and Participation (Structural) consolidated their decision-making with regard to their disposition towards the institution. These assessments ultimately led to the decision to take the leap of faith, or not. This section will explore how this decision is also contextualised with the FE context, particularly in relation to the high stakes, performative practices associated with neoliberalism and new public management.

“While macro-economic and political policy tends to view individuals as resources to be controlled and directed... it remains the case that much of the core of human existence is a deeply felt personal project... and when governmental and organisational policies fail to meet or depress the realisation of such existential needs, then individuals will be profoundly damaged” (Bottery, 2003: 247)

The claim that Bottery (2003) makes above speaks profoundly to the findings of this study. The failure of NPM and P-A modes of governance to recognise the human consequence of decisions has significant implications; not only for trust and distrust amongst staff and students, but all of the anxiety that withdrawn faith represents. The control mechanisms which are prevalent in this form of management reduce agency and divorce educators from their core values by reducing freedom of expression. Boocock (2015) argues that the assumption of agent self-interest disregards professional values as a basis for decision-making, and thus demonstrates the inability for this mode of governance to speak to the ‘social mission’ which underpins the practice of educators (Bowl, 2017). This led some lecturers in Boocock’s (2015) research to adopt a form of ‘strategic compliance’, who while resistant, were reluctant to display this outwardly; leading to what he described as ‘contrived collegiality’ through uncritical practice. This has important implications for freedom of expression, agency and autonomy within the institution; important for existential safety. Gleeson et al. (2015: 90-91) argue that the problem with managerial practices such as an inspection is the way they “misrecognise the conditions in which really useful knowledge is produced”. In doing so, they ignore the aspect of practice which is truly transformational, often challenging the system failure that is created by neoliberal managerialism (ibid).

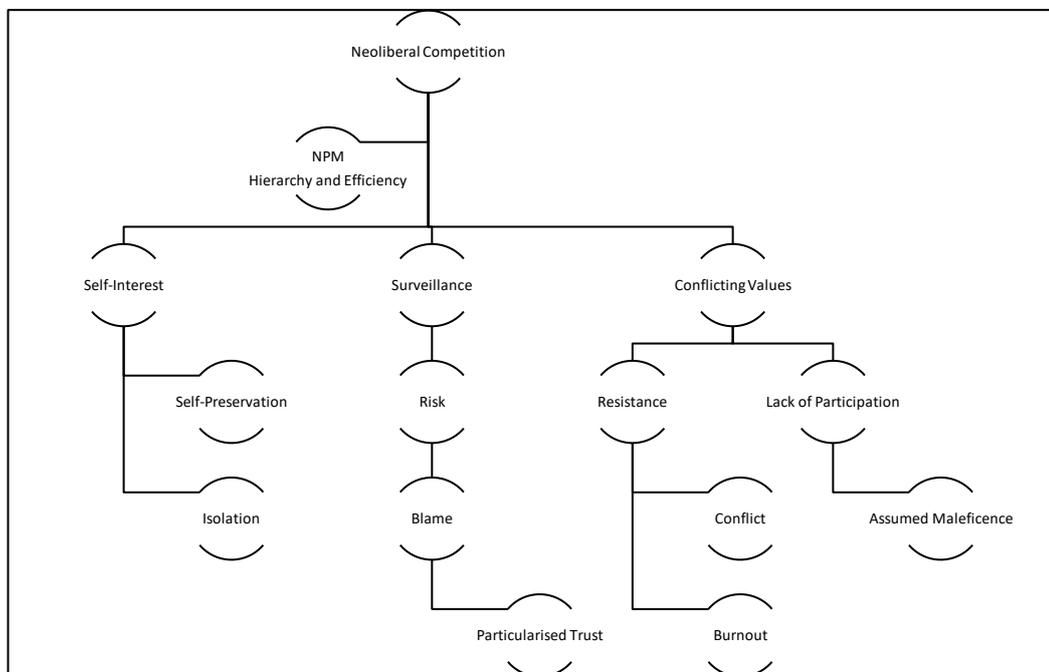


FIGURE 17: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NPM AND TRUST

Research on organisational trust and distrust by Lewicki et al. (2016) illustrated how trust culture is determined by the presence of, extent and growth of both trust and distrust. They contend that the 'tree of trust' and the 'tree of distrust' are determined by organisational values which influence industrial relations and employee participation in the institution. A tree of trust represents values towards the collective, whereas a tree of distrust is characterised by the prioritisation of self-interest, where individuals compete for power within the institution (ibid). Figure 17 above illustrates how the prevalence of NPM within the FE system, therefore, encourages the growth of the 'tree' of distrust to the expense of trust. Hierarchical systems which are motivated towards efficiency neglect collective interests and can lead to weak forms of trust (particularised trust) and distrust (assumed maleficence). This is due to practices which reduce participation in decision-making, increasing conflict and self-preservation strategies. This seems to stem from what O'Reilly and Reed (2010) have referred to as a rise in 'leaderism' in the UK public sector, in which the language of leadership has become valorised because of the need address the 'challenges' of a complex consumer-citizen marketplace. In such a system 'strong' leadership is more valuable than negotiated leadership, which is often construed as 'weak' (ibid).

This can result in withdrawn faith from the institution, or in the worst cases, 'moralistic' distrust. Whereas moralistic trust (Uslaner, 2002) represents the general belief that everyone is trustworthy, moralistic distrust represents the opposite; thus, adding to Uslaner's (2002) framework. Moralistic distrust is the result of assumed maleficence (Lewicki et al. 1998) as described above, and features heavily in the narratives of James, Ali, Marcus and Roy. The leap of faith is always a choice (Möllering, 2006), and as such the withdrawal of faith represents a small act of agency, where storytellers symbolically refuse the roles they have been cast into by more powerful others (Ball, 2016). This can therefore function as a form of ethical positioning against those who would oppress them. However, while this symbolic refusal may allow individuals to reconnect with their authentic selves, it is also dangerous; often leading to a crisis in professional identity or burnout, as illustrated in Roy's narrative. Therefore, where institutional divisions exist, existential insecurity is likely to grow. Duckworth et al. (2016) suggest that an antidote to managerialist assumptions is to create critical spaces in which co-caring communities of practice can thrive.

Sztompka (1999) argues that in the absence of trust, 'substitutes' are used to maintain a sense of existential security (see Chapter 2). In the case of James, for example, the metamorphosing narrative *The Omniscient Narrator*, protects him by allowing him to take a

more powerful position in his own story (see Chapter 6). In the *Risk Society*, knowledge is power (Beck, 1992) and in knowing more than others James can choose *Self-Preservation* (Typology 5), where the institution of 'education' is not interested in supporting him. This echoes Sztompka's (1999) concepts of vigilance and ghettoization, where individuals seek to protect themselves in the absence of trust culture in society. However, in the act of self-protection, James is excluded from the benefits of moral space (Sztompka, 2017).

Sztompka's (2017) notion of moral space constitutes trust, loyalty, reciprocity, solidarity, respect and justice: of which, trust is the foundation of these 'moral bonds'. As such, the absence of trust, in excluding the individual from the other components of moral space, effectively divorces them from social life. Within the context of this study, although moral space existed, it was absent from the everyday reality of many of the storytellers, or it was present in just small pockets of their daily life. Within the college, moral space was represented by *The Values of FE* and *Unity* (Typology 8); which featured in the narratives of storytellers who engaged with tropes of trust, as discussed in Chapter 5. In this chapter, I detailed how the typology of *Unity* was composed of cooperation, respect, congruence and benevolence. These concepts link closely with moral space, indicating the importance of these conditions in the cultivation of trust. Indeed, storytellers who spoke about the importance of benevolent others were more likely to also engage with the typology of *Thriving* (Typology 7), *Transformation* (Typology 9) and *Optimism* (Typology 10). Therefore, even in the presence of tropes relating to distrust, *The Values of FE* created a sense of normative coherence (Sztompka, 1999) amidst the perceived chaos that existed outside of these 'moral spaces' because of managerialist practices.

Frank (2012a: 83) contends that "memorable stories are moments of visible, palpable change...[and] these stories help people deal with their fears of what change brings, and they express hopes of what change might bring". In the case of Sara (see Chapter 6), *The Values of FE* represented hope, as this metamorphosing narrative allowed her to reconnect with her professional values in the face of the external threats she experienced through engagement with *Trouble*, *Struggle* and *Powerlessness*. The same was also true for Marcus, Roy and Jeremy, who use *Unity* to reconnect with the classroom and *The Authentic Self*.

Storytelling is repair work (Frank, 2010), and in the absence of an institutional system to support their trust, staff participants seemed to find solace in the above tropes. In this sense, trust is located in the recognition of shared trust histories which create the relations of familiarity required to trust (Möllering, 2013). Taking the leap of faith is a hopeful act, which

becomes fragile within low trust institutions (as illustrated in Figure 18). Therefore, in building trust it is important to acknowledge the role of professional autonomy (respect) in maintaining hope and mitigating against feelings of powerlessness. These findings seem to chime with those of Gallie et al. (2017) who posited that participation (reciprocity) was important in tempering feelings of job insecurity, and a large-scale mixed methods study by Canli and Demirtas (2018), who found that school leadership trust in teachers had a positive mediating effect upon school climate.

However, it also became apparent that there is a great deal of pressure upon middle managers to maintain this sense of hope within the current FE environment. Jeremy's metamorphosing narrative, *The Need To Hope* (Chapter 6) exposed the tension between Jeremy's role as an educator and his interpellation into the role of 'manager'. Frank (2012a), in discussing the role of institutions in story-making, asserts that "groups tell people what their stories ought to be" (ibid: 135). This became evident in Jeremy's appropriation of the college mantra, 'one college, one voice' to discuss the importance of working together to achieve institutional targets. This represents another form of institutional employment, where Jeremy is being called upon to tow the college position. However, his engagement with *Unity* called him to *The Values of FE*, which represented the opposition to 'managerial' values and led to 'filtering' practices to protect those he manages. This led him to rely on the metamorphosing narrative, *The Need to Hope* to maintain a coherence between his identity as an educator, and as a newly-appointed manager. *The Need to Hope*, therefore, represents Jeremy's leap of faith in the institution, allowing him to practice in a way which was congruent with *The Values of FE*, where at times these were challenged by managerial expectations.

The complexity of middle management positioning has been explored in Page's (2013) study of first-tier managers in Further Education. In this study, Page (2013) identified conceptions of 'faith' consistently motivated managers, supporting their resilience as they endeavoured to survive in the workplace. These typologies of faith took the form of 'Fundamentalists', 'Priests', 'Martyrs' and 'Converts'. Where 'Fundamentalists' positioned themselves in opposition to management diktats, and instead formulated their own basis for practice underpinned by a different set of values, 'Converts' self-identified as managers and as such co-opted the language associated with management. In all cases, the tension between being a manager and being *managed* was apparent, as they negotiated their relationship above and below. Within this study, Jeremy used the *The Need to Hope* as a bridge to reconcile his

understanding of himself as a manager, and as an educator with a responsibility to maintain trust within the department.

Within the context of this study, the shrinking of safe psychological spaces in which moral space can thrive has resulted in storytellers relying on narratives which can maintain their sense of normative coherence. The metamorphosing narratives described in Chapter 6 in some ways, therefore, function as substitutes for trust (Sztompka, 1999). These narratives supported storytellers to maintain their existential security, where the tropes of distrust produced anxiety. The tropes of trust described in Chapter 5 allowed those who engaged with them to take the leap of faith required to trust in the educational process and create the conditions for moral space to flourish. However, it is important to note that this was not the case for all storytellers, and for some the weight of distrust narratives bared heavily upon their institutional positioning, leading them to withdraw their faith and construct narratives of isolation and self-preservation. This reveals how stories can function as 'enactments of resistance' (Frank, 2012a), reinforcing the storyteller's ethical positioning where agency is constrained.

7.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has illustrated how binaries support the individual to position themselves within the institution, affiliating towards some people while distancing themselves from others. The stories of the staff participants in this study showed a clear alignment with students and a distancing from leadership, indicating a withdrawn faith in the institution; largely due to practices associated with low organisational trust. For students who engaged with the tropes of trust, their close affiliation to staff and other students supported their ongoing development and sense of transformation. The typology of *Unity*, therefore, maintained a system which supported their faith in the institution. However, those students who tended towards tropes of distrust relied heavily on *Trouble*, allowing their trust history to interfere with positive relationship construction in the present. The typology of *Trouble* fuelled a position of moralistic distrust towards the institution, encouraging them to engage with other narrative typologies which served to distance them from other characters.

However, Frank (2012a) reminds us that while binaries make sense of the world, they do not necessarily support the storyteller to understand where to take their story next. The metamorphosing narratives described in Chapter 6, therefore, play an important role in supporting the storyteller to 'hold their own' in the face of vulnerability (ibid) by satisfying a

need for certainty (Sztompka, 1999). These narratives helped storytellers to deal with complexity and conflict in their story, where the institution threatened incongruence. The function of metamorphosing narratives, in introducing complexity served to make their story 'less dangerous' through creating "an opening to [its] own unravelling" (Frank, 2012a: 160).

The performative environment serves to call staff and students into roles they have not chosen for themselves (Frank, 2012a), and as such positionality is heavily shaped by institutional policy. The competitive individualism created by the logic of neoliberalism and NPM construct the suffering associated with the low trust they create as personal. The rigidity of the education system as it stands, characterised by relentless assessment, audit and surveillance processes pathologize those who resist such a system, rather than supporting a common sense understanding of a life lived with chaos. The moral space that is created through *The Values of FE*, on the other hand, embraces the messiness of everyday life; supporting students and staff to create bonds located in shared trust histories that recognise the wider context of individual lives outside of the institution. This allows staff and students to maintain hope and therefore to take the leap of faith in others within these moral spaces.

On the contrary, uncertainty represents the loss of hope through the shrinking of spaces to be vulnerable. It is therefore important that institutions consider the extent to which their 'tree of distrust' grows (Lewicki et al. 2016). In adopting a position of distrust towards the institution, the storyteller has few options: they accept the 'uncomfortable obligation' (Skinner et al., 2014) with which they have been charged, or they can resist. Both options serve to isolate individuals from institutional practices, which can lead to crises of professional identity, as the mechanism which may have once supported their trust crumbles (Möllering, 2013; Bowl, 2017). Stoten (2014) argues that organisations, as social systems, are incompatible with mechanistic devices and as such leadership practices must take employee perception of loyalty into account in the management of institutions. O'Leary et al. (2019) posit that organisations must be aware of staff 'buy in' to institutional policy. In doing so, trust can be cultivated through stability, consistency and future-orientated strategy; making room for creativity and risk-taking.

In the concluding chapter, I will discuss the implications of these findings for practice, illustrating the original contribution this thesis makes to the broader discussion regarding the impact of neoliberal values upon the further education sector. In doing so, I will make the case that for trust to be cultivated, the institution must necessarily provide spaces to

'dance' (see Daley et al., 2015); making room for vulnerability, in which creativity and risk-taking can thrive within a community of benevolent others.

Conclusion

The deep understanding of the processes involved in building trust, which I have had the luxury to develop about over the course of the last few years, has allowed me to examine more closely the relationship between the individual and the institution. Whom we trust, and distrust speaks to the core of who we are, and the act of trusting represents humanity at its most vulnerable. In this chapter, I will consolidate the conceptualisations of trust and distrust that have been discussed throughout this thesis; contextualising the arguments I have made within the context of the research, discussing the implications of these findings for the FE sector more broadly.

Overview of Findings

I began this thesis by illustrating how low institutional trust within the FE sector could be traced back to the evolution of government policy, which has become increasingly rigid in its approach to audit and accountability; whilst at the same time creating conditions which have weakened the financial stability of institutions. This high risk, high stakes environment has embedded a 'trap' of weak trust between policy-makers, institutions and individuals which has served to increase verification-based trust practices whilst simultaneously reducing autonomy and increasing risk accumulation for those at the bottom of organisational hierarchies. This has produced institutional cultures that construct vulnerability as undesirable, making it almost impossible to produce organisational trust.

I then extended this thinking around low trust and risk by unpicking our understanding of these concepts in detail. I argued here that who an individual chooses to trust gains importance within an individualised society. This also highlights the sensitivity of the relationship between the individual and the institution, making who we trust and distrust core to the construction of our self-identity. Whereas individualised institutions create high risk leading to distrust, the cultivation of moral space (Sztompka, 2017) allows individuals within institutions to take the leap of faith (Möllering, 2006). These ideas were contextualised within the FE context, where I made the case that verification-based trust has become dominant within FE colleges to the exclusion of moral space. This led to the development of key points for reflection regarding the construction of trust between staff and students within the institution, including who individuals place their faith in and withdraw their faith from, and what moral space might look like within this context.

The theoretical work of Frank (2010; 2012a; 2012b) further inspired the understanding of trust articulated throughout this thesis. His principles of Dialogical Narrative Analysis underpinned the approach taken to the data. By making the case that an individual's position towards trust or distrust is 'storied', I argued that an individual's life is to a large extent determined by the stories they tell about it; which can speak volumes about how they engage with institutions such as education.

The analysis revealed ten key narrative tropes associated with the construction of trust and distrust in the life of the individual; all of which interact dialogically to inform institutional positioning within the FE context. I made the claim that from the position of distrust, stories of *Trouble*, *Struggle* and *Oppression* can lead to narratives which are characterised by *Powerlessness*, *Self-Preservation* and *Uncertainty*. In contrast, dispositions towards trust had a future-focused tendency, meaning that stories of *Thriving* and *Unity* were associated with narratives characterised by *Transformation* and *Optimism*. Although no single storyteller fit entirely into the 'trust' or 'distrust' narrative, engagement with one or more of the typologies from trust or distrust further influenced engagement with other narrative tropes. Engagement with stories of distrust, however, introduced anxiety into the storyteller's narrative, causing them to engage with 'metamorphosing narratives' that served to protect them in the face of such vulnerability. For some storytellers, these narratives supported them restore their faith in their work or the institution, in others they allowed them to cope with a life plagued by risk.

The analysis revealed how individuals find comfort in binaries, which allow them to assess the trustworthiness of others in the institution. This way, individuals reduce the complexity involved with taking the leap of faith or withdrawing faith from various others. Therefore, the individual's propensity towards Uncertainty and Optimism, Virtue and Corruption, Isolation and Participation can powerfully speak to their decision to take the leap of faith.

Reflections on the research process

Although this thesis has gathered rich experiences in relation to trust and distrust, it is important to acknowledge the missing voices in this study: that of the management and leadership to whom so many of the findings speak. Although I attempted to interview the Head of Department in the research, arrangements for this interview fell through; leaving a significant gap in our understanding of trust and distrust from a leadership perspective.

Additionally, the role that trust history played in institutional positionality indicates a possible area for future research. The biographical nature of trust, as well as the dialogic links between student narratives and staff narratives that this study has revealed could prove a fruitful area for further exploration. There is potential here to more fully understand the role that shared histories play in the creation of moral space.

Methodologically, the nature of case study research means that generalisability is limited. However, as I have already explained, the goal of a case study is to generalise to theoretical positions, rather than populations (Silverman, 2013). As such, this study has offered some significant theoretical insights which could be explored further through different approaches to research in other, similar contexts. The data gleaned from the research was rich, illustrating in detail how trust shapes positionality in time and place. However, with more time, a longitudinal study would allow for the analysis of trust dynamics over an extended period. This could offer a greater insight into trust repair and may be fruitfully explored through an ethnographic or participant-observer approach which can capture the temporal aspects of trust in greater depth.

Finally, the digital storytelling workshop that was delivered at the end of this study proved to be an important day both for the participants in reclaiming their story, but also for myself in understanding how stories relating to trust evolve and change over time. With hindsight, I may have built this element into the research more meaningfully to allow more of the participants the opportunity to produce a digital story. This is important both from an analytical and ethical perspective. Through the creation of a personal narrative, the workshop allowed participants both take back some interpretive privilege and ensure that their stories were not finalised by the research (Frank, 2012a). As such, it is important to note here that stories are on-going, and thus the findings of this study cannot speak to the positionality of the storytellers featured beyond the moment in which their stories were captured.

Central Claims

The decision to trust or distrust both represent movements towards certainty. It is in being certain about the future actions of another that creates either a sense of existential security that allows the individual to thrive, or existential insecurity that calls upon the individual to act to protect themselves. Therefore, this study fills a gap in the existing FE literature by illustrating that spaces in which existential security can thrive are shrinking. The demise of

values-led educational leadership has caused staff members in this study to withdraw their faith from the institution. The prevalence of narratives that relate to low institutional trust or distrust led the participants to perceive not only incompetence, but also corruption at the leadership level. For some participants, this led them to experience a crisis of trust in the institution, leading to a crisis in professional identity; causing them to question their own confidence and ability in their work. This has only been made worse by the precarious financial position of the sector in which the institution operates; further fuelling the uncertainty prevalent in the institutional culture.

Distrust has been attributed to a conflict in value-orientation, in which resistance to managerial practice has created divisions between leadership and staff. This has caused participants to deal with the risk and uncertainty created by developing substitutes for trust through self-preservation and isolation. However, I have already argued that substitutes for trust are dangerous for the storyteller. This is because isolationist narratives serve only to increase risk and vulnerability in the life of the individual. Within the context of FE, the collapse of systems which support trust has led to burnout, raising important questions for staff retention in the sector. Additionally, distrust in this context is closely linked to collective memories which have developed over time; evident in the downward slope narrative used by Marcus. This is further linked to the violation of 'moral space', in which the 'moral bonds' of trust, loyalty, reciprocity, solidarity, respect and justice have been repeatedly undermined; serving to create 'trust histories' which create divisions within the institution along ideological lines. This was also true for students whose trust histories were heavily influenced by negative prior experiences of education, causing them to lose faith in the 'system' they were a part of.

However, it was also evident that 'moral spaces' continue to exist, where the conditions required to build a trust culture can thrive. This was evident in the narratives of both staff and students who engaged with the typologies relating to trust. This process involved the existence of cooperation, respect, congruence and benevolence, which continued to thrive in the context of the classroom and the staffroom, in this case supported by *The Values of FE*. The analysis located a dialogic relationship between the narrative identities of staff and students through shared experiences of marginalisation; suggesting that *The Values of FE* play an important role in the creation of trust cultures. Trust culture can be particularly transformative for those who are able to use this 'moral capital' (Latusek, 2018) to mitigate

against the impact of negative 'trust histories', as in the cases of Eddie, Larry and to some extent, Ali.

The concept of moral space, therefore, also has important implications for institutional leadership and practice. The current educational landscape does not allow enough space for vulnerability; meaning that without significant cultural change, trust is unlikely to flourish. Although there are many institutions which commit to the ideals of inclusion which moral space creates, it is centrally important to understand that trust is not static and as such requires the ongoing production and re-reproduction of normative coherence (Sztompka, 1999). This process necessitates constant maintenance to ensure its reproduction; a burden that seemed to bear heavily upon Jeremy's narrative. It is in these 'moral spaces' that hope exists, and it is incumbent upon institutions to open up spaces for possibility if the lives of staff and students are to be truly transformational.

The original contribution that this study makes, as I have said elsewhere in this thesis, lies in the application of a trust paradigm to the further education context. Whilst critiques of neoliberalism and managerialism are abundant in the literature, as well as the impact of these ideologies upon practice within the sector, the application of trust theory has foregrounded the experience of lives lived with such chaos. This exposes the powerful influence of trust and distrust; importantly exposing where the light exists as well as the darkness within the modern FE institution. Additionally, this thesis has considered the impact of institutional culture not just upon the experiences of staff, but also students and how this influences their trajectories through these spaces; especially in a context where research with students studying at foundational levels is limited. In doing so, this thesis offers a framework with which to analyse FE institutional practice to examine how organisational culture influences the construction of relationships amongst staff and students. In this way, it offers a glimpse of what needs to change (Latusek, 2018) to improve institutional relations in the best interests of both the community the college serves, and the staff who work within them. In short, it is through the study of trust that hope can be located, and alternative possible futures explored.

Implications for Practice

Whilst I have acknowledged the role that the funding and policy environment plays in the cultivation of trust and distrust culture, it is not the aim here to be deterministic in posing simple solutions to complex problems. As such, this thesis does not posit that trust culture

can be created through policy change or funding injections alone. If anything, conforming to central diktats that are divorced from the communities in which FE colleges operate is part of the problem. While in the long term, policy adjustments can indeed play an important role in improving conditions for trust to build; most notably addressing the issue of surveillance and audit culture, these are arguments that have already been made elsewhere. The process of building trust is fundamentally about relationships. As such, institutions should not wait for policy change before evaluating, should they wish to, what the findings of this thesis means for trust culture in their own institutions.

Change starts with honest institutional conversations, in which practitioners at all levels can engage in deep contemplation with these ideas. This would require a shift from *consultation* to *participation*, where staff and students are involved with discussions relating to institutional values and have increased opportunities to participate in the decision-making process. This may involve organisational structures which are permeable, that allow ideas to filter up as well as down and emerge from safe spaces that facilitate meaningful dialogue. Building trust necessarily involves relinquishing control and placing faith in the professional autonomy of educators. Creating space for risk-taking may also involve a move towards collegiate systems which support peer-to-peer development. This would go some way towards cultivating collaborative spaces in which moral space can develop. Organisations which are committed to building trust must also think more systemically about wellbeing, addressing structural issues which are detrimental to the health of staff and students. A collective approach to strategy, and when required, challenge to external threats could play a vital role in the spread and maintenance of *The Values of FE*.

Whilst policy levers undoubtedly shape the behaviour of institutions and individuals, they do so by causing distraction. It is through this distraction that the centrally important conversations described above become devalued. In the words of Sara, “you have to care about people on a fundamental level, at every level”. Trust is not on the agenda in college boardrooms, nor is it likely to be on the agenda in departmental meetings. Where I can be sure trust *is* talked about, whether explicitly or not, is in staffrooms amongst teachers who share a common commitment to *The Values of FE*. Moral space is about maintaining the principles of trust, loyalty, reciprocity, respect, solidarity and justice, even where policy mechanisms might discourage it. These values are not new, or difficult; they are inherently human. The impact of this research lies in recognising the social life of institutions. As such,

institutions must practice in a way which is values-led; this is the only way to change the conversation.

It has been almost four years since I walked out of my institution. Up to that point, my story had been heavily influenced by *Trouble*, and the constant *Struggle* had led me to feel such *Powerlessness* that I no longer felt safe in my work. I was left both physically and psychologically exhausted by the influence of Distrust. Understanding the point at which 'low trust' turns to 'distrust' has illuminated my understanding of what happened that day, while *The Values of FE* have allowed me to relocate the joy in my vocation. *Unity* has restored the sense of pride I had in my work, in the students I worked with, and in the moral space we created together. I am hopeful that a different future, in which trust culture thrives within FE institutions is possible, if we can take the leap of faith together.

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Appendix B: Participant Information

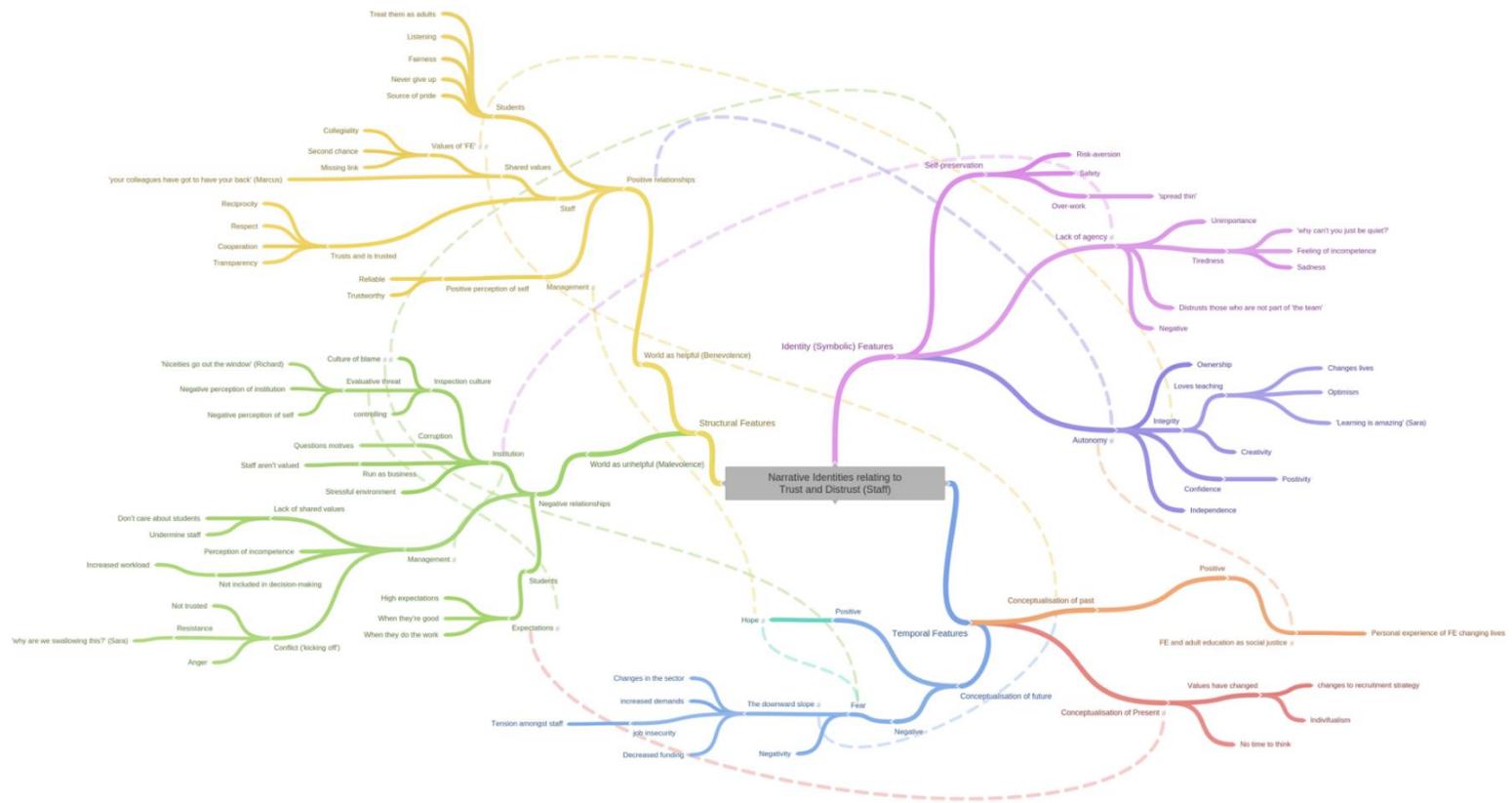
Student Name (Pseudonym)	Age	Gender	Notes
James	17	M	Recently moved to the area after some 'trouble' at home in Scotland. Son of RAF parents; divorced. At college so he can claim benefits and not become 'homeless'. No plans for future study
Larry	20s	M	Has severe Dyslexia, bullied at school and made to feel 'stupid' by teachers. Wants to be a film director and go and get a degree.
Eddie	24	M	Has worked as a waiter since leaving school and finishing his first qualification as a plumber. Never found work in the trade and had to look elsewhere. Was 'mischievous' at school and put into a 'box' from a very young age. Very focused on getting a job. Wants to do fast-track Level 3 course to go to university and get a job in the media industry.
Ali	30	F	Has been at the college on and off for 10 years, having completed qualifications in Beauty therapy, hairdressing. Wants to be a photographer or photo journalist. Hasn't had a job for ten years due to physical and mental health issues, afraid about being discriminated against in the future – e.g., too old to get a job, or because she hasn't worked for so long. Has been diagnosed with a variety of physical and mental health problems.
David	16	M	Didn't get into his school's sixth form to study with his friends, where he had originally planned to do A-Levels. Enjoys photography but has decided to progress onto L3 Fine Art & Design.
Dawson	16	M	Has a very disappointing experience of school and blames them for the fact that he didn't get the grades he needed in Maths and English. Wants to do L3 Journalism but is doing L2 photography as a 'stop-gap' so he can re-sit his GCSEs in English and Maths. Is the course rep. Has suffered intermittently with depression. Digital Story: https://vimeo.com/287686545

Yolanda	16	F	Didn't do as well as 'she should have done' in her GCSEs and couldn't carry on in the school sixth form with friends. Enjoys the independence she has gained from studying in the college, though she doesn't feel particularly close to anyone on her course. Doesn't know what she'd like to do after finishing.
Jenny	16	F	Came to college because 'mum told her to'. Doesn't particularly enjoy the course but doesn't know what she wants to do afterwards.
Adam	16	M	Adam had some issues at school which led to him doing less well than expected on his GCSEs. He is still figuring out what he wants to do after the course is over.
Daniel	16	M	Very focused on getting to university to study a media degree. Going on to L3 when he has retaken his GCSEs in English and Maths.

Staff Name (Pseudonym)	Gender	Role	Notes
Jeremy	M	Curriculum Leader and Course Manager for L2 Media and Photography	Studied Fine Art at university and taught at one college before coming to this one. Has worked his way up quickly, 'can-do' attitude. Been at the college for 8 years. Digital Story: https://vimeo.com/287684262
Marcus	M	Lecturer in Photography	Worked at the college for more than 20 years – seen a dramatic shift in policy and practice. Studied Sociology at university and set up his own film company previously. Background in community and adult education before working at the college. Digital Story: https://vimeo.com/284375654
Roy	M	Lecturer in Media	Previously worked for Granada as producer and cameraman. Very industry-focused. Has severe Dyslexia. Worked at the college for 12 years. Digital Story: https://vimeo.com/287897883
Richard	M	Media and Photography Technician	Trained as an actor, was part of a travelling theatre group before taking first job as Performing Arts technician. Has been at the college for 5 years.
Sara	F	Lecturer in Media	Worked at the college for over 20 years across all levels, including HE. Single mother of two children; raised in a children's home.

Appendix C: Narratives of Trust and Distrust (Staff)

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Appendix D: Narratives of Trust and Distrust (Students)

