SPEAKING FREELY AND FRANKLY IN A SCHOOL CONTEXT: A FOUCAULDIAN APPROACH TO SCHOOLING

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Abstract

This thesis explores the experiences of participants in educational contexts as they interact with authority figures in their roles as students, workers and parents. It uniquely focusses upon these experiences through the theoretical lenses of Foucault's 'technologies' and Tolstoy's writing on education, with further references to Barad's 'entangled interconnectedness of self' and Berlant's concept of 'impasse'. Foucault's technologies of production identify how participants change or influence their situations. His technologies of power contribute to understanding power relations, his technologies of sign systems provide insight into understanding and responses, and his technologies of the self are useful in noting how participants exercise personal autonomy. A new technology is coined, that of 'truth-telling', to describe the strategies used by participants in their interactions with authority. Within Foucault's technologies, his account of the ancient Greek practice of parrhesia, or 'fearless speech', is embraced as a useful strategy to enable a more equitable model of interaction in power relationships. Whilst institutions often publicly proclaim their policies allowing free and frank expression, participants in this study find it problematic. Each of Foucault's technologies help illustrate how participants either exercise their power or avoid coercive control of authority. The thesis draws upon a wide range of sources from humanities and social science, using a narrative methodology to highlight the diverse and creative ways in which participants respond as they navigate the, often challenging, situations they encounter. Findings suggest that hierarchy and fear of consequences or being labelled 'a problem' act to inhibit free and frank dialogue with those in authority. The issues that emerge have implications for schooling and the development of learner freedom and autonomy.

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Contents

Glossary of terms

Barad's 'diffraction' – points to the overlapping and entangled nature of phenomena.

Berlant's 'impasse' – describes emotionally charged situations where a subject finds it difficult to move forward in their thinking and which also contains a sense of expectation and possibility.

Foucault's 'technologies of production' – these permit us to produce, transform or manipulate things. They are used to explain how and in what ways participants were able to change or influence their situation.

Foucault's 'technologies of sign systems' – these permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification. They are used to explain in what ways participants have understood/responded to their experiences.

Foucault's 'technologies of power' – these determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivising of the subject. They are used to explain the way in which participants have perceived or experienced power relations and their effects.

Foucault's 'technologies of the self' – these permit individuals to affect their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations, on their own bodies, souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. They are used to explain to what extent participants are/were able to use personal autonomy.

Foucault's 'parrhesia' – The ancient Greek practice of allowing and facilitating the speaking of truth to power without shame or fearing consequences.

Plato's Laches – one of the early Socratic dialogues of Plato, where Socrates relies on parrhesia to courageously speak truth to power.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Position statement and research context

Inspiration to begin this research came, first, from my experiences as a teacher, working in various posts within schools, pupil referral units and adult and higher education settings. My observations and interactions with parents, students and employees led me to reflect upon the lack of agency and voice each had when interacting with their respective institutions.

Fixed curriculums, bureaucratic structures, and wariness of speaking out freely and frankly to those in authority appeared to me as barriers that interfered with the liberating potential offered by study and education. My thinking was further influenced by encountering a newspaper article that succinctly framed the issues with which I was wrestling. In the London newspaper, the *Evening Standard*, Young (2019) raises questions around freedom and autonomy within the process of schooling. Young describes the experiences of a child starting school for the first time. As the child is groomed and prepared for school, Young describes the process as one in which 'freedom began to ebb away' (p. 15). Writing from a position of personal experience and observation, mixed with anecdotes from a retired primary school teacher, Young observes the school experience as one of 'boredom', 'forced interaction' with others and complete loss of autonomy.

Issues of power in the school–child relationship begin early, with children trained to 'please' the teacher and achieve the accolade of 'good girl' as a motivational reward. This early form of influence and control has implications for inhibiting students and adults to speak freely and frankly to those in authority.

The issue of being able to speak freely and frankly to authority, however, is not one simply confined to schooling, even though it may, as Young suggests, have its roots there. Socrates (Plato, 1999; Saxonhouse, 2008) constantly entered into free and frank exchanges with authority that were consistently misinterpreted, misrepresented, magnified, or distorted, leading, eventually, to his death.

More contemporary sources (Mullan, 2006; Satterthwaite *et al*., 2008; Biney and Olukoshi, 2010) also reflect upon the negative consequences of those who dare

to speak freely and frankly to authority. Alford (2001), in his studies of institutional whistleblowing, reflects that authority and disciplinary power often make ethical discourse difficult or impossible. To speak freely and frankly to authority often incurs intimate and subtle ways to isolate or transform the subject from a position of 'moral actor' to that of 'victim' in the politics of discipline (p. 17).

After taking up a position teaching in higher education, I was more easily able to pursue studies into areas of autonomy and freedom to speak freely and frankly to authority. These studies functioned as a catalyst to fuel my thinking and research.

Discovering Leo Tolstoy's writings on teaching and learning in his experimental schools of the 1860s awakened my interest in alternative approaches to schooling. Tolstoy's schools encouraged considerable autonomy for learners and reconceptualised the role of teacher as facilitator.

I was also intrigued by various publications and lectures by Maria Tamboukou, who refers to the work of Michel Foucault, which, particularly, sparked my interest in the concept of parrhesia, an ancient Greek idea relating to fearless speech. Foucault (2001, 2011 b) describes parrhesia as a process by which persons of lesser power can be given the right and confidence to speak their truth to authority without fear of negative consequences. Foucault, in his Berkeley lectures (1983), draws extensively from ancient Greek classical sources to outline how truth and power combine, through history, to shape understandings of free expression. What constitutes a truth, Foucault (1994) and Ricoeur (2006) point out, is subjective and evolves through history, subject to the control of the *status quo*.

Drawing upon Foucault's use of classical sources, in which he explains the phenomenon of parrhesia, this thesis, also, refers to classical, ancient Greek materials. In addition to these, I have incorporated, where appropriate, further references from Renaissance and early modern sources, combining them with more contemporary materials to illustrate concepts. In combining ancient, classical and modern sources, this thesis seeks to illustrate that important issues concerning free and frank expression remain as problematic to present day societies as they were to past generations.

Throughout history, what has been acceptable to say and do in each context has acted to shape and form perceptions of speaking to authority. Through political and social media, the consequences of speaking out freely and frankly can be publicly viewed, ranging from minor irritation or embarrassment to high profile political figures suffering ruined reputations and careers.

Foucault and Tolstoy provide the main influences throughout the thesis. Both authors drew upon ancient and modern historical sources to inform their thinking on power relations, ethics, and the workings of society. Foucault's writing, on how power influences all levels of society, worked together with Tolstoy's writing on teaching and learning, creates a unique aspect of the thesis. This combination of influences enabled me to make wide connections and draw upon my previous studies and interests in the humanities.

In addition, at different points in the thesis, I have drawn upon the works of Barad (2007) and Berlant (2011). Barad's metaphor of diffraction, leading to the view of theories and experiences as 'entangled phenomena', not only connected with Foucault and Tolstoy but influenced the approaches used in my methodology and analysis. Berlant's theory of impasse, relating to critical, deciding moments in people's lives, was also drawn upon, as it, too, had connections with Foucault, Tolstoy and Barad that were particularly useful when describing and illustrating how my participants were affected by, and responded to, authority.

My research has been a fascinating journey through historical sources, informed, predominantly, by Foucault and Tolstoy's writings, through to connecting with more contemporary sources. This, eventually, led to formulating my overall aims, research questions and participant interviews.

Broadly, my aim in this research was to explore the activity of speaking freely and frankly to authority in education contexts. Within this, I was interested to investigate who, and in what circumstances, a person can feel free to express themselves and question the inner workings of those in authority. These questions led to wider issues of relationships with authority, the consequences of speaking out freely and alternative approaches to schooling.

My initial plan was to interview adults for their reflections on experiences of speaking to those in authority when they were school students. However, during the interviews, it became clear that the participants wanted, also, to include their

more recent, adult experiences of speaking with authority figures, both as parents and as workers in education.

Seeking to make sense of the diverse experiences of participants through the lens of Foucault's (2011 b) concept of parrhesia led me to Foucault's (1980, p. 84) political understanding of 'subjugated knowledges', which seek to identify and explain the effects of power as it shapes thinking and action. In particular, I was interested in what Foucault refers to as 'knowledges and understandings' that are 'located low down on the hierarchy' (p. 82).

These popular 'knowledges' or 'truths' are not fixed, and are often contested and fluid, depending upon context or the power relations within which a subject functions. They constitute the reality of individual experiences gained from navigating society and interacting with educational institutions.

Subjugated knowledges led me to consider how participants functioned within their educational contexts. Participants entered 'systems of relationship' or 'apparatuses' akin to 'devices', which Foucault (1980) refers to as 'dispositif' (p. 190), being the various mechanisms that exercise power within a social body. Livholts and Tamboukou (2015, p. 68) describe these influences as 'narrative modalities', useful in understanding how public and private narratives contribute to thinking and action.

The participant narratives were constantly in flux as they responded, resisted, thought, and acted within their worlds. My research illuminates the ways in which participants responded to their situations within educational contexts and exercised levels of autonomy to influence their situations. Here, Berlant's (2011) work on 'cruel optimism' and the concept of 'impasse', where a subject found themselves in periods of inaction after a dramatic encounter with authority, link with Barad's (2007) work on the entangled, diffractive nature of life and meaning. Both understandings were useful in making sense of participant experiences.

This research also benefits from use of the 'artistic' method of narrative analysis (Kohler-Riessman, 2008; Tamboukou, 2020) in recording and recognising the voices of participants. Tamboukou (2020) describes listening to subjects as a political activity that 'enables us to live in the world with others' (p. 1) – a complex process, in which we neither speak nor listen from a void, with speaker

and listener situated and influenced by vicarious experiences, allowing new perspectives to arise from interaction with others.

Kohler-Riessman (2008) points to the importance of listening carefully to a subject's story. Such stories, or truths, function as a 'cultural envelope' into which is poured significant experiences requiring careful attention. The telling of a story, or truth, allows a person not just an opportunity to speak freely and frankly but also to revisit disruptive events in their biography, making connections and meanings and linking 'past, present, self and society' (p.33).

My naive assumption on beginning this research was that I might find clear answers to my original aims of highlighting the difficulties of speaking freely and frankly to authority in an educational context. However, as Soan (2004) points out, complex problems rarely involve simple solutions. The nature of how the system of schooling operates, and the relationships within, constitutes what Cudworth and Hobden (2018) characterise as a 'wicked problem' (p. 72). The problems faced by participants often contain little consensus, definition or clearly identified conceptualisation of their experiences in attempting to speak freely and frankly to authority.

1.2 Statement of originality

In examining issues surrounding the ability of students, workers, and parents in educational contexts to speak freely and frankly to authority figures, this thesis draws attention to the difficulties and challenges experienced by service users. In particular, participants gave their stories from reflections as school students, workers in education and as parents. These three perspectives, together with my drawing upon a theoretical foundation consisting mainly of Foucault and Tolstoy, as well as Barad and Berlant, provide a fresh, unique insight into this area of enquiry.

Links and connections between the ideas of each of these four figures combine with my own understandings of interrelated issues in what I have configured as 'technologies of truth-telling'. This is a new concept that I offer in this thesis in addressing the difficulty of speaking freely and frankly within the power regimes of educational institutions. Within the narrative methodology of my research, I have also blended approaches from Labov and Waletzky with Foucault's technologies, as well as narrative and discourse analytical insights from

Tamboukou and Ball's work, to order story material. These complimentary methods were applied in analysing and interpreting the stories told by participants and, to the best of my knowledge, this is a novel methodological approach in narrative analysis.

This thesis is intended to inform existing debates around issues such as voice, freedom, and autonomy within schooling. To this end, it is guided by my research questions, which function as a broad compass to investigate the experiences of speaking freely and frankly in educational contexts.

1.3 The research questions

The research questions have facilitated the gathering of stories and entangled experiences that now constitute an archive of unique encounters, useful in informing the process of schooling and education. They are:

- What effect does speaking freely and frankly have upon the individual?
- How does thinking about fearless speech in education contribute to issues in education and social justice?
- How can the experiences of speaking freely and frankly be interpreted through the lens of Foucault, Tolstoy, Berlant and Barad to inform the process of schooling?
- What are the experiences encountered by those who speak freely and frankly within an educational context?

1.4 Thesis overview

The literature review (Chapter 2) is organised to include a wide range of sources connected with the research questions. The objective is to provide insights into a variety of exclusionary, constraining, or liberating discourses that highlight how individuals and institutions interact.

Chapter 3, on theory, identifies links between Foucault, Tolstoy, Berlant and Barad that give rise to the key themes woven throughout the thesis. Specific focus upon Foucault's technologies is combined with Tolstoy's writing on education, Berlant's concept of impasse and Barad's notion of the entangled nature of experience. This theory chapter links closely with the methodology chapter that follows.

Chapter 4, on the methodology of this research, builds upon the theoretical influences outlined in the previous chapter, influencing the methodology within the thesis. A guiding theme throughout is that of a narrative analysis approach advocated by Kohler-Riessman (1993; 2008), taking as its object the story of each participant.

The initial organising of transcript material in the methodology began with Labov and Waletzky's six key elements of narrative (1967). Recognising the entangled nature of research material, each story was further examined through the lens of Foucault's technologies. Links with the works of Tolstoy, Berlant and Barad have also been made.

The selected participant stories chapter, Chapter 5, introduces a range of different stories and experiences related by participants in their encounters of speaking freely and frankly to authority figures in educational contexts. The chapter leads on to a more in-depth analysis of these stories in the following analysis of participant stories chapter, Chapter 6.

The analysis chapter, Chapter 6, outlines, first, how participants perceived, understood, and were affected by their situations as students, education workers and parents. It goes on to relate how each participant changed, influenced, or responded to authority figures in all three situations. Connected issues are further developed in Chapter 7: 'Entangled aspects of parrhesia'.

Chapter 7 delves deeper into Foucault's concept of parrhesia, making connections with a range of concepts and experiences raised by participants.

Chapter 8 further develops Foucault's idea of technologies and the 'truth games' adopted in participant interaction with authority. I have coined this chapter 'Technologies of truth-telling' to focus upon the strategies participants used to navigate relations with authority and make their truths known. Here, I continue to bring together the influences of Foucault, Tolstoy, Barad, Berlant and others to reflect upon how participants experienced the vagaries of the bureaucratic hierarchies that enmeshed them. I consider areas of silence, rites of passage, self and identity, relational dimensions, and space.

In conclusion, I note the entangled influences upon both individual and institution, highlighting the different strategies participants used to speak freely and frankly. The underlying issues of how power is perceived and understood

within a hierarchical institution remain problematic and complex. This gives rise to considering alternative thinking on schooling to focus upon facilitating a more liberal understanding of the importance of being able to speak freely and frankly. Increased freedom for all parties within the education system to exercise greater autonomy in what is allowed to be said, what is taught and mode of attendance, would contribute to a more participative approach to current understandings of schooling.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review attempts to provide varying insights, focussing upon exclusionary, constraining, or liberating discourses related to speaking freely and frankly in an educational context. The sources are an eclectic mix of contemporary and older material, selected to highlight how individuals and institutions interact. Older source material helps to contextualise discourse and education practice that continues to inform and underpin contemporary student engagement.

Parent and student interaction with authority figures has been well documented (Murray, 2000; Todd and Jones, 2003; Hodge and Runswick-Cole, 2008; Czerniawski and Kidd, 2011) but remains a key area for research, given the prominence accorded to the role of schooling in society. This thesis seeks to bring together participants' memories of schooling as well as their experiences of being workers and/or parents in education contexts. In doing so, it highlights issues of agency, pedagogy, and voice, interpreted primarily through the works of Tolstoy and Foucault, with reference also to Berlant and Barad.

My intention, in the literature review, is to highlight sources that question and stimulate thinking around speaking freely and frankly to authority in an educational context. In doing so, I bring together different fields of study with a focus upon the complexity of the subject. In order to open up possibilities of stimulating 'different thinking' (Braidotti, 1993, p. 3), the sources highlight impediments to expressing voice, discontentment with schooling and alternative approaches to schooling. Throughout the literature review, and in participant interviews, is the ever-present theme that fear of authority and possible consequences act negatively upon free expression of voice, autonomy, and learning.

2.2 Voice and speaking freely: a philosophical and educational account

My concern, throughout the thesis, is that being able to speak one's mind freely and frankly to those in positions of authority is not only beneficial to personal wellbeing (Mill, 2006; Roffey, 2013) but also an important ingredient within

democracy. Bornstein and Davis (2010) highlight the need for democracies to foster citizen skills such as empathy, identification with others, collaborating and problem solving. Citizens who feel free to express themselves stay more focussed on long term objectives, lead when necessary and become more able to demonstrate resilience in the face of change. To achieve this, Bornstein and Davis (2010) suggest that students and parents need to experience full voice, autonomy and assurance that their ideas and opinions are valuable.

More often, however, when students do have a voice (Duckworth, 2006; Wearmouth, 2013) their ideas and contributions are regarded as 'trivial, unacceptable or inconvenient' to the needs of the teacher or institution (Duckworth, 2006, p. 6). Equally, in the adult world, speaking out freely and frankly can also be unwelcome, as outlined by Alford (2011) in his study of whistle-blowers and May (2023), who detailed the experiences of those who express their unwelcome truths to authority and find it can be costly, requiring courage, persistence and fortitude.

Allowing free and frank verbal exchanges with authority in educational contexts has long been recognised as beneficial to the learning process. Godwin (1797), writing in the eighteenth century, raises concerns about the nature of schooling and the exercise of voice. Similarly, Tolstoy, in the nineteenth century, also reflected deeply upon a schooling process that impeded the ability of students to speak freely and frankly (1972), (Tolstoy's views are outlined in greater depth in Chapter 3). Schopenhauer (2000) outlines the importance of mastering and thinking for oneself. This, he suggests, occurs through language and reflection, which can be restrained and distorted if inhibited by fear of consequences – whether real or imagined.

More recent commentators such as Gardener (2004), Taylor-Gatto (2005), Carnie (2018) and Robinson and Aronica (2015) also raise concerns about schooling and the effects of institutional structures and relationships upon the natural enthusiasm and inquisitiveness of learners. Atim (2022) makes clear links between effective student learning and speaking freely and frankly. Atim maintains that the human 'propensity to inquiry' (p. 301) requires learners to be able to express themselves freely in seeking, or making known, truths. Atim identifies school as the ideal place to foster these skills.

The effect of the schooling process upon the learner, Miller (2002) and Foucault (1991a) regard to be that of encouraging learners to be dependable, manageable, unprovocative students. Freire (1996, p. 59), similarly, describes education as having the potential to be an 'exercise of dominations' within society, acting as an instrument of conformity and compliance. This view is also reflected by Krishnamurti (1991) who counsels that the mind can only effectively shed conditioning if free of fear and consequences. More hopefully, Freire (1996), Miller (2002) and Tolstoy (Maude, 1987) also regard the effect upon the learner as having potential to enable a 'practice of freedom' (Maude, 1987, p. 241). A first step in enabling free and frank speech to those in authority entails a wider acceptance of a school process akin to Foucault's (2011a, b) historical concept of parrhesia, outlined in more detail in the following chapters.

Research into the experiences of voice has taken different forms and approaches that have been well-documented in the last twenty years and can be seen reflected in the work of, for example, Hart (1992), Cook-Sather (2006), Bragg (2010), Czerniawski and Kidd (2011) and Bahou (2011). Within the context of an educational institution, Bahou (2011, p. 3) identifies voice as a 'complex web of school structures and cultures' moulded by policy makers, school leaders, teachers and students. Cook-Sather (2006) points out that discussing the student voice as if it is a single entity is problematic and complex, raising expectations that are thwarted by institutional concerns or manipulated by adults. Czerniawski and Kidd (2011) outline two competing narratives describing the importance of student voice. One is of encouraging the democratic participation of students, whilst the other impedes this through policies which impose control, performativity, audit and competitive positioning.

Within the school context, Rudduck (2022; 2006) and Rudduck and Flutter (2004; 2006) wrote extensively on student voice and its effect upon learners. Fielding (2007) describes her legacy as giving 'deep understanding and commitment' to the idea that 'genuine' understanding of student perceptions is a pre-requisite for forming a 'learning partnership' (p. 324). Hodge and Runswick-Cole (2008) concur with this view, applying it equally to both student and parent interactions with authority. These require an empathetic response from professionals to encourage a more equal partnership between themselves, parents and learners.

The effect upon the learner of rules and strictures, imposed consciously or unconsciously by an institution, can act to enhance or hinder learning partnerships. Robertson (2007; 2015) and Noyes (2005) each cite less formal learning partnerships as important in facilitating learning. Flutter (2007) urges teachers to focus more upon listening to students to identify how they learn best, whilst Fullan (1991) reminds us that there are wider implications at stake in not listening to the student voice.

The effects of this complexity upon the individual emotional motivation to use their voice in a free and frank manner is not easily categorised or analysed. Emotional responses are commonly expressed through discourse and narrative. Kozulin *et al*, (2011) with Hardy (1968) claim that we seek to gain understanding of the 'other' through the free and frank expression of telling, un-telling, believing and disbelieving stories about each other's pasts, futures and identities.

In order to make sense of the 'other' and impact upon the 'self', the learner becomes what Perkins, cited in Salamon (1997) refers to as a 'person plus' (p. 89), drawing upon their own personal resources, those around them and non-human sources (Braidotti, 2011; 2017; Braidotti and Bignall, 2019) to make sense of the world. According to Rand (1984), the fluid nature of 'self' is distributed, rather than fixed, constantly in the process of encountering truth and knowledge to inform thinking and perceptions. Stevens (2000) reflects upon this as continually 'spreading, changing, grouping and regrouping across a relational and social field' (p. 222).

The effect of this upon individual behaviour and voice is illustrated by Mandelstam (1989) in her autobiography, set within a repressive, Soviet, Stalinist era, which graphically records her responses to authority interference with freedom of expression. Mandelstam was continually changing, masking and adapting thoughts and verbal expressions in her multiple encounters with authority. Through silence, she guarded against expressions of thought or feelings, avoiding any misinterpretation by others. Mandelstam notes that in childhood, it was perfectly natural to long for harmony in relations with others, curbing feelings of injustice by declining to challenge or question. Mill (2006) however, questions such practices as 'fettering the development' of the

individual (p. 11), whilst Olson (2009, p. 40) describes ‘over compliance’ in schooling as the enemy of creativity.

A major determinant of voice is fear of authority and punishment. Bloom (1948; 1952) cited in Rudduck and Fielding (2006, p. 222) identifies ‘fear of being different’ or punishment determinants upon voice in school contexts. Bloom felt that such negative aspects of schooling should be replaced with ‘friendship’ and security when interacting with authority figures. Dent (1930), reflecting upon paucity of voice and democratic participation in schooling, noted that to attain a more democratic society it was necessary to experience and exercise autonomy of voice. According to the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015), lack of opportunity to speak freely and frankly to authority impedes the hoped-for participation of students and parents to develop the skills needed to function fully in a democratic society.

Burke and Grosvenor (2005) provide insight into issues affecting student autonomy and voice in their longitudinal study of student reflections on education for the twenty-first century. Students aged 8–17 wanted to be heard and meaningfully consulted by teachers and institutions. Burke and Grosvenor (2005, p. 80) cite students as not being listened to, feeling inferior and not being able, or allowed, to express themselves to those in authority. One student wrote,

> *The teachers can tell us what they think of us, but in a ‘dream school’ we could tell teachers what we think of them.*

Burke and Grosvenor recorded students complaining of being ‘told what to do’ or having their conversations controlled and manipulated for the teacher’s ends. Children felt the absence of voice as well as loss of individuality by being treated ‘like herds’ within their schools (p. 80). Amongst the frustrations voiced by students toward those in authority were lack of privacy and individuality and lack of opportunity to speak freely and frankly with their teachers.

Carnie (2018) recognises the effects upon learners of depriving them of a voice. She questions how schools involve students in the process of learning, connecting voice with society’s desire to produce, through schooling, ‘good citizens becoming active participants making valuable contributions’ (p. 37). To achieve this, however, students and parents need confidence to become more

involved in decision-making within school contexts and exercise voice and responsibility. Carnie points out that too many students feel they have little voice to influence curriculum or exercise autonomy, becoming bored or turned off education.

Ruddock and Flutter (2004) researched a range of diverse school settings and concluded that students who do feel involved, respected and listened to as individuals are more likely to be engaged with their school's purposes. By contrast, those who feel less engaged are also likely to feel less well respected and to disengage from learning. Part of students feeling respected by staff in schools is the knowledge that one's voice and ability to speak freely and frankly will be welcomed and listened to. Halsey *et al.* (2008) outline a wide range of beneficial effects that can arise from listening to the student voice. These range from improved decision-making through to greater democratic participation and enhanced self-esteem.

The effect upon the student can be on a spectrum ranging from 'passive' (Fielding, 2004) to an 'initiating force of enquiry' (p. 201), bringing student and teacher together as enabling partners. Feeling more able to speak freely and frankly to someone in authority allows a student to achieve an active, rather than passive, or solely dependent, role in the learning relationship.

How voice is defined can also be influenced by context and the realities of the relationship. Cook-Sather (2006) identifies the close relationship that exists between voice, 'agency' and 'action', which determines how comfortable a person feels to speak freely and frankly within a relationship. Bland and Sleightholme (2012), in a study of children's views, found they initially hoped that their teachers would be patient, kind, listen to them, allow free expression and accept criticism, yet the reality was often one that led to disappointment.

With regard to the effect upon learners of enabling a greater degree of autonomy and voice, Roffey (2013) suggests it can lead to more positive teacher–student relationships and enhanced student wellbeing and resilience. Brazelton and Greenspan (2000), Nadel and Muir (2005), Raskauskas *et al*. (2010), Weare (2000) and Howes and Ritchie (1999) all indicate learner autonomy and voice as important. Pianta *et al*. (2008), Hattie (2009), Cornelius-White (2007), Noddings (1984; 1992; 2003; 2007) and te Riel (2006; 2009)

equally, all attribute the importance of developing closer, more relaxed relationships between teacher and student.

Positive teacher–student relationships, in which students feel free to express their feelings to those in authority (Ginott, 1975; Faber and Mazlish, 2001; 2006; Rogers, 2012) are essential elements in promoting autonomy and learning. Where students are equipped with the freedom, skills and strategies to express their feelings and views without fear (Brazelton and Greenspan, 2000; Good and Brophy, 2000; Larrivee, 2005) it can contribute to increased autonomy, choice and participation in decision-making. Autonomy, choice and participation are important. Bragg (2010, p. 59) calls for students to be regarded as 'social actors' and not simply passive participants in relationships with adult authority figures. Feeling free to speak one's truth also has connections with 'whistleblowing' (Alford, 2002; Martinez, 2017) where a subject seeks to make known a truth or malpractice.

In the adult world of work and service, the effect of speaking out freely and frankly can be recognised in the phenomenon of 'whistleblowing'. Where an institution discourages free and frank speech, it can lead to one or more brave, outspoken persons breaking the silence. Cassematis and Wortley (2013) suggest that to speak out freely and frankly is often an arbitrary action on the part of the speaker rather than any personal characteristics of the speaker.

Reasons for adults speaking out freely and frankly are often complex. Burr (2003, p. 64) describes such instances as comprised of 'meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories and statements', which together, can produce a particular version of events. The 'truth' of what is expressed freely and frankly to an authority figure can only be judged by its 'verisimilitude rather than its verifiability' (Bruner, 1991, p.13).

The complexity of expressing voice to communicate a truth, Hardy (1968) maintains, is not so different from fiction where voice is a continuation of the 'uncertain, attenuated, interrupted and unpredictable, or meaningless flow of happenings' (p. 7).

Real life often has the disjointedness of a series of short stories as related by my participants in later chapters. Such stories can contain experiences of victimisation or perceived wrongdoing and lead to the phenomenon of whistleblowing. Although fear of consequences and threat of retribution is

common to all whistle-blowers (Collins, 1992; Alford, 2001; Wortley, 2013; Kenny, 2019; Bazzichelli, 2021; May, 2023) Cassemetis and Wortley (2013) note that fear of consequences is often ignored once a decision is made to speak out freely and frankly.

To speak out fearlessly often requires what Grant (2002, p. 398) describes as ‘conspicuous courage and self-sacrifice’. Grant refers to those who speak out as ‘saints of a secular culture’, especially if, consequently, they suffer marginalisation or other penalties. Paeth (2013), however, points out that speaking freely and frankly does not absolve a person of the responsibility, obligations and loyalty to their workplace. The consequences arising from speaking out and the loyalties of a speaker will remain in continual tension.

Collins and Callahan (1992) state that those brave or bold enough to speak out freely and frankly will be judged by their peers on the seriousness they, and others, regard the issue. They describe a ‘hierarchy of perceived appropriateness’ (p. 948) that determines what is regarded as acceptable or not acceptable, with legal issues more of a reason to speak freely and frankly than ethical ones. Despite this, however, their research indicates that most people think authority figures should listen to those who speak freely and frankly.

For adults, inequality of power relations is not always as clear within an institution (Alford, 2011) but quickly realised when an individual crosses unseen barriers within an organisation. Fear of crossing recognised, or hidden barriers acts to prevent voice being expressed in a free and frank manner. Alford laments that we do not fully estimate what the consequences of being subordinate means until we experience a negative reaction from speaking freely and frankly.

Alford (2011) further suggests that a key organizational strategy of those in authority is to transform an act of free and frank discourse, or whistleblowing, from an issue of policy or principle into an act of ‘personal disobedience and psychological disturbance’ (p. 32). Alford (2011, p. 97) quotes Bauman (1989) in saying that all social organisations consist of ‘neutralising the disruptive and deregulating impact of moral behaviour’. Both Alford (2011) and May (2023) record aggrieved subjects as simply wanting to be listened to. Flutter (2007) urges teachers to focus more upon listening to students to identify how they

learn best. Whilst Fullan (1991), reminds us that there are wider implications at stake in not listening to the student voice.

Consequences of speaking freely and frankly (May, 2023) can lead to feelings of frustration, being constantly thwarted or persecuted by the controlling, disciplinary constraints of those in authority.

Recognition that power relations can negatively impact individual voice led Oldfather (1995), cited in Cook-Sather (2006, p. 363) to observe that 'major shifts' in thinking on issues of 'self, power, language and knowledge' are needed if opportunities to speak freely and frankly are to be encouraged. The complexity of power relationships within an institutional context can inhibit or enhance voice. Satterthwaite *et al*. (2008, p. ix) reflect upon the 'rhetoric of vulnerability' effecting relationship between a holder of power and those of less power. Regarding children or adults as though they are 'vulnerable' or lacking agency can create feelings of powerlessness that inhibit autonomy.

Alvesson and Spicer (2016) point to 'pre-programmed' scripts of how one has learnt to think and function in relationships with authority figures. These scripts can negatively affect and influence behaviour. Images and experiences of authority formed in childhood from early experiences of parental authority may continue to persist and influence behaviour into adult life (Freud, 1979; Reich, 2016; Garhart-Mooney, 2013; Martinez, 2017).

Singh *et al.* (2016, p. 317) point to a personal 'unconscious conspiracy' in which an individual may lack self-reflection or understanding, restricting their ability to change, transform their thinking or relate well to others. Peters (1971, p. 314) describes such moral and ethical attitudes as being acquired through the 'process of apprenticeship' informed by parents, social influences and life experiences.

An example of how people have been helped to overcome their inhibitions to speak out is noted in Swain *et al.* (2003) who write in the context of supporting disabled clients to find a voice, charting the rise in advocacy and self-advocacy. Individuals and groups are enabled to gain and practice communication skills to speak freely and frankly to those in authority positions. Swain *et al.* consider that such an approach also helps to develop self-esteem, confidence and autonomy. Similarly, Brandon and Hawkes (1998) found that disabled people acutely felt a power imbalance between themselves and their assessors, which

negatively affected the relationship, inhibiting their ability to express thoughts in a free and frank manner.

Acknowledging the difficulties surrounding the ability to speak freely and frankly, Satterthwaite *et al.* (2008) recognise the inhibiting fear of consequences in making bold to speak out 'openly and honestly' (p. 113). Satterthwaite *et al*. point out that speaking freely and frankly is not an end in itself but can be the beginning of a hoped-for change in an individual or group situation (2008).

Fear of authority and its role in inhibiting the ability to speak freely and frankly cannot be underestimated. Fielding, cited in Higgins and Coffield (2016), observes that educational institutions often demonstrate complacent attitudes to the 'espousal of a democratic dynamic' (p. 114). Fielding describes 'student voice initiatives' as often being undermined when used for 'market led customer orientation'. For example, school promotion, or tokenistic, approaches to fulfil outside regulations rather than reflecting more democratic principles of equality and participation.

When considering aspects of power and authority, Arendt (2006) argues it is easy to be caught up in a 'maze of abstraction, metaphors and figures of speech' (p. 136). Arendt (2006, p. 92) recognises that authority is a 'natural necessity' defying exact definition but can be found in its basic form in the parent–child relationship. Such authority works to command compliance, but this should not include coercion or violence. The nature of authority, however, often acts within hierarchy to negate persuasion or argumentation from those positioned in lower levels, making voice difficult. Within an education context, Arendt (2006) and Kitchen (2014) note that a teacher's authority arises not just from qualification but also from knowing the world and being capable of instructing newcomers into it.

Arendt (2006) observes that the traditionally accepted model of parents having authority over children and teachers having authority over pupils stands as a pattern for political authority. In the later, analysis chapters of this thesis, participants, in their stories, express their assumptions about authority, at times, reflecting Sennet (1980) who referred to such assumptions as 'the modern fear of authority' (p. 19). Max Weber, writing on authority and cited in (Swidler, 1979; Morgan, 1986; Hughes *et al.,* 1997) highlights such fears as arising from

traditions, legality of rules, entitlement and what Morgan (1986) refers to as ‘charismatic authority’ (p. 277).

Such rules and traditions work toward ensuring obedience, recognition and respect to achieve ‘coherence and order’ (Sennet 1980, p. 21). They can, however, equally, inspire fear of authority, building ‘bonds of rejection’ while also fostering over-reliance, hoping for something better. Foucault (1990, p. 92) points to a ‘multiplicity of force relations’ within this process, which are explored in more detail in Chapter 3. Arendt (1998, p. 185) describes this complex ‘interplay of relations’ as a ‘perplexity’, whilst Tolstoy (1997, p. 1335) interprets it as an ‘endless chain of causation’ that contributes to individual actions.

Allen (2002) echoes Foucault in that authority acts in both repressive and productive ways, both enabling and restraining. Arendt (2006) describes the exercise of authority as being ‘whatever makes people obey’ (p. 103). This can lead to abuses of power by institutions (May, 2023) who prioritise their own interests over those of the people they seek to serve. Ball (2012) prefers the term ‘power’ rather than ‘authority’ being a more ‘active, penetrating and flexible’ term (p. 25). As with Hoyle in Westoby (1988), power is regarded as a micro-political process of negotiation, trade-offs, threats, pressures and compromises, which are reflected in the participant experiences recorded in Chapter 6.

Being able to speak freely and frankly can also be influenced by the space that subjects inhabit. These areas can be affected positively through authority strategies of congruent communication (Faber and Mazlish, 2006; 2011; Ginott, 1975) promoting forms of language more harmonious to feelings and facilitating empowerment through encouraging voice. Foucault (1998) reflects upon various kinds of spaces that can co-exist alongside, and within, the mainstream. Foucault describes these spaces as ‘heterotopias’ to identify localised but ‘utterly different’ spaces from those around them (p. 178). Tamboukou (2003) discusses spaces that influence thinking and action, which affect relations with authority and wellbeing. Such spaces may be ‘real or imagined, metaphorical, reflexive or ‘gendered’ and each with the potential to inhibit, or encourage, free and frank expression to authority (p. 58).

Tamboukou (2003) notes that space can also function as a ‘utopian’ (p. 128) influence, in which thoughts of being free or escaping the domination and

control of authority can be safely played out. The effect of speaking freely and frankly to authority has wide-ranging, interrelated aspects and influences, which can determine who speaks out, when they are able to do so and the consequences.

2.2.1 Emerging themes

The many factors that influence the ability to speak freely and frankly are, clearly, complex and multi-faceted. The effect on the individual of being able to speak freely and frankly, and the ability to express oneself without fear to authority, are problematic. Mill (2006) and Roffey (2013) highlight the benefits that can occur for both learner and teacher, with Bornstein and Davis (2013) emphasising the wider importance of exercising voice in a democratic society. Similarly, May (2023) cites the importance of allowing voice in the form of being open to difference and challenge.

The complexity involved within the notion of student voice can be clearly recognised in the participant stories related later in this work, where Chadderton, cited in Czerniawski and Kidd (2011) notes that voice must, of necessity, be tempered by the multiplicity of institutional, cultural and social expectations. The multiplicity of influences can act to dissuade, or stifle, free and frank expression of voice to the detriment of the speaker. Bahou (2011), together with Ruddock and Fielding (2006) highlight the complex web that surrounds voice and the inhibitory factors that dissuade free and frank dialogue.

Reflected in the experiences of participant stories, Foucault (1998), Robertson (2015) and Noyes (2005) identify space and context, also, as a factor in exercising voice. Such spaces, as Young (2019) and Foucault (1991a) point out, often influence the way adults and children are groomed and prepared before, and during, schooling to accept loss of autonomy and freedom. Alvesson and Spicer (2016) reflect later participant experiences by highlighting the use by interlocutors of adopted ‘pre-programmed scripts’ (p. 59) to navigate their relations with authority. Miller (2002), describe such a process as designed to produce ‘dependable, manageable and unprovocative’ (p. 151) students who (May, 2023) ‘avoid questioning the institution’ (p. 317).

Roffey (2013) attests to the benefits gained by all parties when learners and their teachers meet on more equal grounds. Burke and Grosvenor (2005) also

highlight the views of 8–17-year-olds pleading for their voices and experiences to be listened to and recognised as important by their institutions.

Whilst many literature sources have focussed on specific age or cultural groups, there are few studies that engage with the lived experiences of subjects across their different life roles. This thesis brings together the individual encounters with authority of participants as school students, their further experiences as a working adult in an educational context and as a parent of a school age child.

Kohler-Riessman (1994) discusses the importance of using an approach that incorporates listening carefully to the stories subjects tell. Stories, or truths, act as a cultural envelope containing significant experiences that require to be heard. Chapter 6 of this study contains such ‘cultural envelopes’. The nature of authority and power and how it is understood and exercised is also a crucial element influencing the extent a subject can feel able to express themselves freely and frankly.

The space within which authority and power are exercised (Foucault 1998; Tamboukou, 2003) clearly influences a subject’s ability to feel able to express themselves freely and frankly. In the Chapter 6, I centre, uniquely, upon participant experiences of authority as students, adult workers and parents as they encountered authority within the education sector. The lived experiences of my interviewees and their interactions with authority inform understanding of how power and authority play out in the lives of education users.

The next part of this literature review continues to raise issues related to a subject’s ability to speak freely and frankly within an education and schooling context. In particular, this part of the literature review chapter focusses upon schooling.

2.3 Voice and schooling: traditional schooling and its discontents

In this section of the literature review, I focus upon the extent to which schooling encourages or discourages free and frank expression. In particular, connections are highlighted that identify issues concerning wellbeing, models and purpose of schooling, as well as alternative education provisions. These issues are relevant to the participant stories related in Chapter 6. I examine these issues to highlight the institutional factors that affect voice and help to contextualise the

personal experiences and perspectives of participants who, in Chapter 6, reflect upon being students, workers and parents within the education arena.

An institution's acknowledgement and encouragement of student voice (Baroutsis *et al.* (2016) reflect broader commitments to social justice. Fraser (2009) notes that allowing greater voice and participation contributes to a more socially just society within the boundaries of institutional rules and procedures. However, Fullan (1991, p. 170) reflects upon the 'undemocratic nature of schooling institutions' and argues that democracy is a process that needs to be participatory and experienced, rather than just taught. Chadderton (2011) in Czerniawski and Kidd (2011, p. 73) reminds us that student voice is a 'complex notion' involving diverse cultural and social voices that, inevitably, lead to institutional limitations.

Being able to exercise voice and speak freely and frankly is an important aspect of wellbeing. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12, clearly states that children have the right to express their views frankly and should be listened to. Berman and MacArthur (2017) are among researchers who have identified that schooling does not always facilitate a student's ability to speak freely and frankly. Where it is encouraged, Higgins and Coffield (2016, p. 114) note that it can often be 'tokenistic' or skewed to institutional needs rather than for the benefit of the student. Atim (2022) however, argues that schooling is potentially an 'exemplar space' to foster free and frank discourse (p. 303).

Models of schooling prevalent in most industrialised nations remain similar in structure and organisation to those of the nineteenth century. The underlying institutional structures imposing discipline and conformity through authority of professional educators and politicians continue to influence how schools operate. Miller (2002) makes clear that schooling can never solely be concerned with academic issues alone and is always contingent on a 'culture's ruling values and ideologies' (p. 16). The institutional structures that operate within a school can act to inhibit or enhance student, adult and parent voice.

Methods of schooling can present challenges and difficulties when it comes to allowing all but modest forms of voice. Fielding (2004a, p. 308) outlines two key issues. First, that of 'performativity and surveillance', which make it difficult for education professionals to engage in free and meaningful dialogue for fear of

bringing them into conflict with students, parents or management. Second, what Fielding refers to as ‘dialogue and its spaces’ in which both metaphorical and physical spaces rarely allow students, parents and teachers to meet one another as equals to plan and develop shared understandings of schooling.

This leads Fielding (2004) to state that radical institutional changes are required to allow students free and frank voice to achieve ‘creative difference and transformative potential’ (p. 213). Fielding reflects Miller (2002) in maintaining that it cannot be expected of parents who, themselves, are a product of the schooling system to be the main catalysts for change. Parent response (DeAngelis and McClusky, 2020) usually follows one or more of three actions if they wish to make changes: to simply exit quietly for another provider, to complain vocally if they are assertive enough, or to remain ‘meekly loyal’ (p. 44).

Fundamental leaps in imagination to transform current schooling practices into something more democratic often founder if there is an unwillingness on the part of the institution to recognise or allow it. Schooling institutions have their own needs, which may not always coincide with the needs of learners or their parents. Wearmouth (2004) highlights a school’s need to tightly regulate social interactions, resources, activity, time and discourse to demonstrate their effectiveness. Closely related to the effective functioning of a school, as Wearmouth (2004) highlights, is that of purpose.

Handy and Aitken (1990, p. 38) describe three unique functions and purposes of a school system. First, a ‘custodial’ function, with the school being responsible for keeping safe and looking after students. Second, a ‘certificating’ function, to ‘sift and sort’ students in recognition of the required educational standards. Finally, a ‘socialising’ function, to enforce standards of morality and behaviour. Handy and Aitken (1990) point out that these functions often bring institutions into conflict with both students and parents as it is simultaneously ‘hard to be friend, judge and guard-dog’ (p. 39). Schools are under constant pressure to meet multiple purposes with regulatory bodies stipulating criteria for success.

The main regulatory body in the UK schools environment, is The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). They operate as a non-ministerial department of Government ensuring consistency of operation and output across

schools and colleges. In Chapter 6, one participant gives her account of the direct interaction she had with a representative of this statutory regulative body.

Handy and Aitken (1990) note that schools are accountable to OFSTED but also to their governing body, parents, professional bodies and their students. This can lead to ‘confused accountabilities’ (p. 31) where schools shape and develop controls over all those associated with their institution. The workers, clients and beneficiaries, who identify and support the institution, self-impose controls upon themselves and allow institutional controls to achieve compliance. Deacon (2006), quoting Gore (1998), describes the different techniques of power involved in schooling – powers of surveillance, normalisation, exclusion, classification, distribution, individualisation, totalisation and regulation. These aspects of power work to create barriers that hinder free and frank exchanges with authority.

Ball (2013) wonders whether we should be celebrating the creation of state-sponsored and controlled schooling at all, expressing concerns about imposed performativity, coercive methods and strict self-regulation, which interfere with a more learner-centred approach. In explaining how this comes about, Gould and Baldwin (2004) point to the rise of ‘managerialism’ (p. 48) in all public services, creating a hierarchical expertise culture that pursues targets and regards any form of criticism as a threat.

Concerns about the lack of freedom to develop schooling practices allowing for more student and parent participation has influenced the establishment of alternative schooling spaces. Holt (1972; 1977; 1984; 1989) raises searching questions concerning the traditional practice of schooling and student learning. He recognises the institutional fears and concerns generated by allowing students and parents the freedom to question professional and institutional authority. Carnie (2018) too, mentions the lack of student, parent and even teacher voice that acts to limit agency within school environments. Difficulty in exercising agency, for students, parents and school workers, is problematic, as demonstrated in the participant interviews discussed in Chapter 6.

Taylor-Gatto (2005) argues that the schooling system adopted by most industrialised countries is one that encourages dependency and hinders the natural curiosity of learners. Robinson (2010) and Robinson and Aronica (2015) have sympathy with this view, questioning the relevance of today’s system of

mass industrial schooling. Their solution proposes a more personalised and ‘organic’ approach to learning in which the learner has more control over content and curriculum. Uscinski (2013), Schragg (2008) and Chirkov (2009) also regard the ‘industrial’ model of schooling as an outmoded practice. Some alternative models of education and schooling, working in more independent, less controlled spheres, have been better able to facilitate support for students, teachers and parents.

Non-traditional schools, freed from political regulation and control, have often functioned as innovative catalysts in new forms of schooling (Gray, 2015). Raywid (2006; 2006a) recognised that boundaries between different models of schooling can often be blurred, with each learning from the other. Raywid has published and campaigned prolifically (1994; 1997; 1999; 2001; 2006; 2006a) in support of smaller schools where focus turns more easily upon student need rather than institution need. For Raywid, smaller schools and less outside political control are advantageous in allowing parents and students an enhanced opportunity to form closer, more relaxed teaching and learning relationships.

A more personalised approach to learning is advocated by Pykett (2009) and Milliband (2006), drawing upon the work of Leadbeater (2004; 2006). De Marzio (2007) also outlines benefits of a personalised learning journey where the teacher ‘brings to light’ those aspects that motivate and interest the learner (p. 115). An integral part of a personalised approach to learning lies in facilitating closer relationships between learner and teacher, which can lead to fewer formal exchanges.

Dissatisfaction with mainstream government schooling, and a growth in demand from parents for a more personalised approach to learning, are apparent even in more authoritarian countries such as China. Xu and Spruyt (2022) observe that with emerging affluence in China, parent reasons to seek out alternative forms of education align closely with Western dissatisfaction. Xu and Spruyt (2022) cite rigid, exam-orientated teaching methods, unhealthy competition, impersonal teacher–student relationships and the desire for a more utilitarian educational experience. Similarly, Doyle (2009) maintains that a person-centred approach fosters closer connections between professionals, students and

parents, having a strong ethical, moral, humanitarian and educational justification.

Noddings (1984; 1992; 2003; 2007), te Riel (2006; 2009) and Roffey (2011) also place great store upon building stronger informal relationships. Such relationships allow greater learner autonomy and voice as the professionals' role is to facilitate, motivate, encourage and enable. For Noddings, the relations of care and trust are ends in themselves and not simply a means to achieve imposed curriculum learning targets. Watts and Bentley (1984) in Murphy and Moon (1989) highlight the importance of teachers creating a supportive atmosphere, being warm, friendly and encouraging autonomy.

Chirkov (2009) emphasises that the desire for self-determination and autonomy is a basic human need in the learning environment. These aspects, Chirkov maintains, are not culturally relative virtues but are a natural propensity in any living organism. In addition, autonomous motivation is an attribute of a fully functioning individual in any culture or society. The most satisfying learning experiences are had by students exhibiting elevated levels of autonomy. Chirkov notes that in all societies, cultures that support students by encouraging autonomy, allowing choices and acknowledging feelings, thoughts and opinions are universally beneficial.

Students need, therefore, to be able to speak freely and frankly to those in authority and follow their own choices and directions, taking responsibility for achieving their own goals. Mortlock (1984; 1989; 2009; 2011) maintains that these are basic factors of any morally satisfying lifestyle. If society judges people by irrelevant results rather than their interests and effort, it decreases learner motivation. Methods of imposed pupil and teacher performance measured solely upon soft and hard coercive measures simply impede learning.

Thinking differently about schooling to encourage free and frank expression requires a more radical conceptual approach to what it means to be a successful learner. Krishnamurti (1990) advocates a system of education based on knowledge of the 'self' rather than simply knowledge of the curriculum. Krishnamurti (1990, p. 24) argues that focussing upon 'becoming something' – upon the future – simply encourages conformity and subservience on the part of the student. This, in turn, creates a culture that is overly dependent upon authority and professional leadership (Krishnamurti, 1990). Noddings (2003),

Olson (2009), Taylor-Gatto (2012), Gray (2013) and Robinson and Aronica (2015) similarly, suggest that schooling should facilitate becoming self-aware, pursuing natural enthusiasms for self-knowledge and gaining understanding of the wider world.

Such non-competitive approaches (Braidotti and Bignall, 2019, p. 88) promote a stoic concept of 'sympathy', of 'feeling together' and natural learning with and from others whilst preserving the individual uniqueness of each person. The creative, 'sympathetic' approach extends to all areas, both human and non-human, bringing them into a deeper state of 'knowing'. This is echoed by Claxton (2002; 2015) in his 'learning dispositions', which seek to expand students' capacity to learn through their own efforts rather than being dependent on teachers to simply impose subject knowledge.

Swidler (1979) holds that schooling creates a framework through which students can be more easily controlled and regulated. She notes that within the alternative school approaches she investigated, there existed a more 'equalised' relationship between students and teachers. This closer relationship meant that teachers resorted less to institutional sanctions or role authority than in a more traditional school. For education to be practised without the imposition of authority (Swidler, 1979), requires a completely different approach to curriculum and pedagogy.

2.3.1 Emerging themes

Institutional schooling involves issues related to individual, cultural and political expectations, which are difficult to reconcile, and freedom to seek out a form of schooling that is wholly conducive to any one individual is problematic. Many of the participants whose voices are heard in Chapter 6 did not have the luxury of being able to choose a form of schooling in which voice and autonomy were promoted over institutional requirements.

Schooling methods that impose conformity to curriculum, institutional rules and procedures directly affect the attitudes of learners from an early age, as outlined by Young (2019). An authority that seeks compliance through 'soft and 'hard' coercion (Taylor-Gatto 2005; Olson, 2009) works to undermine learner autonomy and promote dependency. This, in turn, generates feelings of fear, which Olson (2009) suggests, contribute to anxiety and stress in schooling

contexts. She relates negative reflections of parents and their children, where experiences led to diminished self-esteem and reduced pleasure in learning, and states that pressures to comply with school authority and fears of speaking freely and frankly, undermine the basic need for self-determination and autonomy, also outlined by Chirkov (2009). The imposition of inflexible curricula, compulsory attendance and institutional targets acts to reinforce conformity and subservience through assessment, ranking and certification.

Participant stories in Chapter 6 reflect many of these frustrations as they navigate their own pathways through institutional constraints to exercise voice.

2.4 Voice and autonomy: frustrations and impediments

Participants expressed their experiences of many trials and tribulations in their relationships and interactions with school authority figures. The following review draws upon sources that illustrate the difficulties that can hinder speaking freely and frankly to authority in education contexts. As with previous sections of this literature review, the following insights help to further contextualise the frustrations and impediments that impact upon interactions with education authority figures.

Choosing to express oneself in a free and frank manner to those in authority can range from a sympathetic hearing through to punitive consequences. The experiences encountered by those who have spoken freely and frankly to authority are of interest as they give insight into the workings of society. Good relationships that facilitate free and frank exchanges are recognised as key to promoting both learning and autonomy (Nodding, 2003; 2005; te Riel, 2006; 2009; Roffey, 2013).

Burke and Grosvenor (2005; 2015) recount the views of school students who consistently lament their lack of agency and voice within school institutions of all types. Students negatively describe their identities as shaped and regulated by institutional procedures, practices and discourses (Burke and Grosvenor, 2005). These themes reflect Ball (1990) and Thomas (2008) in their descriptions of Foucault's writing on schooling. Burke and Grosvenor (2005) relate students' desire for a more equal relationship between teachers and students. Ideally, students hoped that teachers and education professionals would take the role of 'friends' or 'facilitators' rather than disciplinary and authority figures. One young

person had wished to experience their school ‘more qualitatively and less quantitatively’ (p. 94).

Wearmouth (2017) is adamant that if we accept that students are active agents in their own learning, then adults need to make more effort to listen and actively respond to how students feel about their learning. Carnie (2003; 2017) notes that speaking out freely and frankly is a key component of student motivation and engagement within schooling, with Whitehead (2010) reflecting that being free to express oneself through speech and writing acts as both carrier and dynamic creator of cultural values – a theme expanded upon by Hern (2008), Gray (2015) and Robinson and Aronica (2016), all of whom advocate a more liberal approach to schooling.

Prescriptive curriculums and institutional hierarchical systems of management often work to inhibit student ability to speak freely and frankly. Gray (2015) echoes Tolstoy (Steiner, 1914) in seeing the central problem of schooling and voice as one of denial of liberty that undermines relationships. Wrigley (2006) expresses the view that schools often subvert pockets of democracy into institutional ways of upholding discipline. Even where students do have the opportunity to speak freely and frankly to authority, Wrigley (2006) points out that major power differences, in the form of inequalities of class, ethnicity and gender, further inhibit the ability to speak out freely and frankly.

Witherill and Noddings (1991, p. 186) state that allowing students to freely express their views and frustrations encourages the dynamic interplay of ‘thoughts, feelings and actions’, giving insight into how these both influence and are influenced by behaviour. Ball and Goodson (1985), Schubert and Ayers (1992), Goodson (1992), te Riel (2009), Roffey (2011) and Robinson and Aronica (2015) all note the frustrations of service users and lack of voice expressed by both students and teachers within the schooling process.

Teachers, as authority figures, often face the dilemma of strengthening their own authority and the dominant interests of the institution at the expense of individual student or parent need. O’Connor (2008, p. 258) outlines the dilemma and tensions felt by parents in not wanting to upset the ‘delicate balance’ between seeking justice for their child and being seen by teachers as ‘pushy’.

Kay-Johnson (2006) observed that not having the skills or ability to speak freely and frankly to authority in education contexts also makes it difficult to speak

freely in other contexts. For example, not wanting to look confused or silly when faced with difficult to understand situations, or when taking ethical or intellectual risks. Laing's (1970) poem, *Knots*, describes the nerve-wracking dilemma of not wanting to appear stupid or ignorant to those in authority. Laing (1981) describes the difficulty of raising questions, entering into disagreements and coping with inner resistance to enter into confrontation with resultant feelings of marginalisation.

Hart (1992), in addressing the marginalisation of students, describes varying global attitudes towards listening and engaging with them in meaningful participation and decision-making. Bahou (2011) cites evidence from Denmark, USA, New Zealand and Chile to illustrate the many differing roles that voice is allowed to play in promoting learning and understanding. Cook-Sather (2006) maintains that at its most radical, allowing free and frank expression can widen perspectives and influence actions, which may influence changes in power relations. Mill (2006) suggests that silencing expression deprives the hearer of 'exchanging error for truth' (p. 23). Even if what is expressed may prove incorrect, declining to listen clouds opportunity for the hearer to gain greater perception.

Voice can be received in ways both exploitative and frivolous. Hart (1992) outlines strongly divergent views concerning the extent to which society listens to children and young people. They range from regarding children and young people as virtual 'saviours' of society, through to being protected from undue responsibilities to enjoy a 'care-free' childhood. Hart states that for children and young people to grow and develop into competent, caring citizens, what is required is greater involvement with competent, caring adults in meaningful, real community projects.

Similarly, Marshak (2011), drawing upon the work of Mead (1970), advocates giving school students more opportunities for working side-by-side with adults outside of formal schooling. 'Real' projects, which encourage opportunities for frank dialogue and interchange of ideas between age groups, rather than simply participating in contrived, or pseudo, work-shadowing activities. Mead (1970, p. 91) suggests that the young should not be stifled, inhibited, or fettered by adult thinking located in the past. Instead, advocating a 'prefigurative' learning, in

which adults and society radically re-think what is taught and how learning experiences are organised within schooling.

Modern internet social media provides the opportunity to express views and feelings about those in authority but does not guarantee that anyone in authority will take notice or listen. Digital citizenship, (Barker and Jane 2017, p.466) potentially, allows full participation of expression in social media. Considerable inequalities exist, however, (Van Dijk and Hacker, 2003; Van Deursen and van Dijk, 2014) in the use of social media (Van Deursen and Van Dijk 2014, p. 521) and can act as ‘active reproducers of social inequality’.

Carpentier and Cammaerts (2007, p. 974) consider that public digital spaces, potentially useful, ideal ‘agonistic spaces’ intended to foster debate, often become akin to a ‘form of autism’ (p. 968) where people only speak, read and listen to others they agree with. Barker and Jane (2017) note that speaking freely and frankly through digital spaces is negatively influenced by advancing technologies that allow, for example, the security services and others to ‘stymie’ protest or use the process for unprecedented surveillance of individuals and groups.

Whilst use of digital spaces may contribute to a free and frank expression of views to authority, the difficulties of expressing those views in a physical context remain more problematic, as evidenced by the participants in Chapter 6. Arnstein (1969, p. 216) identifies these barriers to speaking freely and frankly to authority, recognising the often ‘empty rituals of participation’ in education contexts, and cautions that participation without consideration of a redistribution of power makes it a frustrating process for the powerless.

Within an educational context, one cannot ignore the realities of the schooling process. Berlin (1994) describes educational systems as ‘despotisms founded on falsehoods’ (p. 257). Ekoko and Ricci (2014) recognise this theme in their collection of interviews focussing upon examples of more democratic and autonomous approaches to learning. Considering different approaches to schooling and education are relevant to this thesis as schooling strongly influences behaviour and thinking. Democracy requires active vocal participation, essential to challenging authority, and functioning as a counterbalance to authority and power (Mouffe, 1995), a concept that needs to be fully embraced early in the schooling process.

Numerous writers have looked at less controlling schooling systems. Smith (1983), Gribble (1985; 1998); Taylor-Gatto (2001; 2010), Miller (2002), Wrigley (2006), Hern (2008), Olson (2009), Gray (2013), Ekoko and Ricci (2014) and DeAngelis *et al.* (2020) among others, criticise many schooling approaches as curbing individual liberty and self-determination. Robinson and Aronica (2015) also question whether all schooling is fit for purpose in the twenty-first century, claiming it stifles individuality, imagination and creativity. Greater learner autonomy, with accompanying free and frank expression of views, offer opportunity for self-determination and growth (Roffey 2013, p. 219) through relationship with 'self' and others.

Arendt (1998) acknowledges that closer relationships, through interaction and dialogue, lead not just to self-knowledge but wider human togetherness and understanding. Relationships between interlocutors can be complex (Roffey, 2013) and influenced by, for example, social dynamics within organisational hierarchies. If the prevailing culture inhibits expression toward authority, people become anxious about consequences. Both Olson (2009) and Graves (2011) raise the dichotomy between democratic values, which, ostensibly, promote liberty, but within a schooling system that denies liberty and seeks obedience to authority. In contrast, Carnie (2017) advocates a more libertarian, personalised approach built upon knowing, supporting and valuing student interest, encouraging voice and initiative to decide curriculum. A personalised approach to teaching and learning requires a more equal and less formal relationship between teacher and learner.

2.4.1 Emerging themes

The complex relationship between those who perceive themselves to be powerless and those who hold power is revealed in the research into student experiences and perceptions by Burke and Grosvenor (2003; 2015). Students are clearly frustrated by what Arnstein (1969, p. 216) refers to as 'empty rituals of participation'. The research of Burke and Grosvenor (2003; 2015) with school students reflects many of the stories and accounts from participants in this study, related in Chapter 6. What is concerning is that similar perceptions are not just held by school students but, as my participants reveal, are also held by adult workers in educational contexts and parents.

Consideration of different methods and approaches to organising schools, as advocated by Robinson and Aronica (2015), Marshak (2011) and Mead (1970), could, potentially, open up a wider debate about the process of schooling. Mouffe (1995) points out that democracy requires the active vocal participation of citizens. Opportunities offered by modern internet social media do not fully address the issue of free and frank expression of voice. What is required (Kay-Johnson, 2006) is that from early school experiences onwards, the importance of allowing autonomy of choice and voice is important within the learning process. To be effective, the skills required need to be clearly communicated and allowed to be practised.

The following section of the literature review introduces, and briefly outlines, the literature sources that act as lenses through which schooling and voice are further analysed.

2.5 Voice: anchoring research through the lens of Foucault, Tolstoy, Barad and Berlant

My chief aim and intention in this section of the literature review is to introduce the reader to Foucault, Tolstoy, Barad and Berlant before explaining them in depth in the theory (Chapter 3) and methodology (Chapter 4) chapters. The four writers are present throughout the study where they function as a lens, informing my understanding and analysis of the experiences encountered by participants.

At first glance, these four may appear to be an eccentric coming together of thinkers whose links may seem tenuous. However, this unlikely blend forms a unique aspect of the thesis, where I reflect, not only on their theoretical contributions, but especially, draw from them, ideas relevant to schooling in the twenty-first century. Each has, at different times in recent history, shown an understanding of the way in which the subject is affected by society, politics and social forces. Within this swirl of influences are connections to my research intentions, as autonomy, and the ability to speak freely and frankly, affect individual functioning. Foucault and Tolstoy, in particular, but also, Barad and Berlant, each writing in different contexts and times, comment on how society functions. The issues they raise, concerning the functioning of how individuals interact within society, intricately link with matters surrounding voice in education.

The thesis that unfolds is one that is informed by my own observations on the processes of schooling, teaching and learning. Tolstoy's writings on his practical experiences of schooling and wider philosophical reflections resonate with many of my own experiences. The importance of equity of voice in the process of teaching and schooling led me to the writings of Michel Foucault and his historical portrayal of the ancient Greek practice of parrhesia. This, in turn, opened up my understandings of the manner in which knowledge and power shape and influence the workings of society.

My readings of Foucault and Tolstoy found further links and connections with Barad's work on the entangled and diffractive nature of knowledge and experience, which is not constrained by fixed perceptual or spatial boundaries. This, in turn, led to my adoption of the more open narrative analysis approach toward interpreting participant stories. As participants related their stories and experiences of navigating the challenges of education contexts, I recognised connections with Berlant's thinking on impasse as they struggled to make sense of their experiences.

In drawing upon both Foucault and Tolstoy's writing, I have been reliant upon English translations of their work. Whilst I am aware that translations from French and Russian may not do full justice to their thinking, I have been mindful to quote published, peer-reviewed material. Some of the sources drawn upon from Tolstoy contain first hand observations made by the many English speaking visitors Tolstoy received at his home and schools in Yasnaya Polyana. These sources give accounts of their observations and interviews with Tolstoy, his teachers and students of all ages.

Tolstoy was a prolific writer and social commentator in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Much of his writing was published outside of Russia and he wrestled incessantly (Jones, 1949; Wilson, 1989; Bartlett, 2011) with Russian censors who regarded him with suspicion. Berlin (1994) states that Tolstoy battled all his life against controlling, bureaucratic structures that lacked transparency, preferring instead, a more liberal and open approach to knowledge and learning. In this respect, his ideas are related to the concept of a more autonomous approach to education that values greater free and frank expression of voice.

Murphy (1992) describes such freedom of action and voice as allowing students to develop their own imaginative potential. Tolstoy was heavily criticised by political authorities in his day for not imposing government teaching methods and content. This led to his schools (Troyat, 1967; Bartlett, 2011) suffering two days of occupation and arrests by state police. Tolstoy's thinking on education can be regarded as an inspiration (Wilson, 1989) by those who aspire to a more libertarian view of education. Equally, however, it had the capacity to disturb, unsettle and irritate authority.

Tolstoy's approach echoed Ball (2013, p. 118) who, drawing upon Foucault, encouraged the discipline of 'standing outside of our own history, outside of ourselves' to view schooling with fresh eyes. As related in Chapter 6, this approach, when adopted by participants, required courage to think differently. A problematic task, as Allen (1991) points out, in that modern day thinking on schooling is strongly influenced and shaped by those who have only their own schooling experiences to inform them.

My affinity with the writing of Tolstoy on education led to my wider interest in the limitations of voice and learner autonomy. This, in turn, led to Michel Foucault (1983; 2001; 1997; 1998b; 2011b) and his works on parrhesia and technologies of the self. Foucault drew upon historical, psychological and sociological sources (Mills, 2004) to inform his writing on issues connected with authority and power. These aspects played out in Foucault's (2001) concept of 'fearless speech' where he identified the concept of parrhesia as an important ethical and moral device for both individuals and society.

Beard (2002) questions Foucault's understanding of parrhesia in terms of public familiarity and use by citizens of ancient Athens. Saxonhouse (2008, p. 99) points to ancient Athenian citizens having lost the ability to fully discern between 'noble' parrhesia, where a citizen wanted to convey a truth and 'ignoble' parrhesia, which simply sought to undermine established views and practices in a democracy.

Despite these critiques, Jack (2004), writing in the modern context, describes parrhesia as an important, bold and fearless act enabling how political life should function within a democracy. Atim (2022, p. 303) refers to 'parrhesiastic activity' as an essential preparatory space for political activity. Similarly, Bech-Dryberg (2016, p. 266) describes parrhesia containing aspects of voice as 'vital'

in enabling communication with those perceived as more powerful. This thesis reflects the more positive and beneficial workings of parrhesia as a useful tool for all citizens to communicate with those in authority.

Foucault (2001) describes parrhesia in terms of speaking one's mind, communicating a truth and criticism, which involves an element of risk or danger.

Peters (2003, p. 212) describes this as being motivated by a 'moral duty' on the part of the speaker. Within a healthy, functioning democracy, Mouffe (2009) observes that dissent should always be a part of consensus. These issues lie at the heart of the participant accounts outlined in this thesis.

Mouffe (1995) upholds active vocal participation that challenges authority and power. Carpentier and Cammaerts (2007) recognise the importance of individuals exercising their voice to balance encounters between their public and private lives. Mouffe (1995, p. 219) highlights a radical republican approach to democracy in which individuals have a civic duty to function as a counterbalance to authority and power. This involves feeling uninhibited about speaking out freely and frankly to challenge those in authority.

Foucault's parrhesia lies within his broader work on technologies of the self (Foucault, 1988b; 1997), encompassing a wide range of skills, understandings and actions, all of which feature in Chapter 3. Foucault draws from Plato, Seneca and Epictetus (Foucault, 1997, p. 223) and other sources, to describe an individual's desire to 'take care of themselves'. These concepts all find connections with Tolstoy and can be detected in the works of Berlant (2011) and Barad (2007) to explain participant experiences of exercising voice.

Both Berlant and Tolstoy were keen observers of human behaviour. For example, Tolstoy's epic work, *War and Peace* (1976; 1997; 2006; 2009), written in 1869, contains close observations of individuals and their interactions with society, encompassing the full gamut of human emotion and experience. Tolstoy's portrayals of character, moods, indecisions and quandaries mirror Berlant's (2011) portrayal of experiential enigmas. Within Berlant's concepts of impasse and cruel optimism, we find resonance in the experiences and stories of participants in later chapters.

Berlant (2011, p. 199) portrays lives lived within ‘spaces of ordinariness’ and experiences managed in contemporary life. Berlant describes the concept of impasse as a situation in which one finds it difficult to move forward after an emotionally unsettling experience and yet also containing an expectation that produces a sense of possibility. Foucault (1997) reminds us that even in the most difficult of situations and contexts, a subject can influence events through action and resistance.

Emotional outpourings, Foucault observes, have potential (2004, p. xx) to be ‘something that brings about effect’. Rose (2017, p. 170) observes that having the ability to ‘short-circuit self-doubt by avowing an autonomous truth’ can be effective in some contexts but always risks the wrath of those in authority. Recording such times of emotional memory in participant interviews is vividly brought to life through narrative enquiry approaches (Kohler-Riessman 1993; Tamboukou, 2003) adopted in Chapter 4.

Barad (2007), like Foucault, Tolstoy and Berlant, is concerned with uncovering what is effective in the world and what differences are important. Barad (2007) explains her understanding of the concept of diffraction, where all phenomena are entangled and over-lapping, thus enabling a genealogical or evolutionary perspective to understanding, and aiding interpretation of events.

Jackson and Mazzei (2012, p. 13) describe Barad as providing ‘diffractive reading’ tools to analyse data through different theoretical lenses. Barad (2007) is interested not just in how participants think but how that thinking constitutes the working of the subject – a concept that is also demonstrated by Tolstoy, Foucault and Berlant. Bozalek (2021) recognises Barad’s diffraction as opening up possibilities for new thinking and drawing upon a wide range of previously unrelated sources. Barad’s concept of the entangled nature of diffraction brings together previously unconnected sources. For example, the approach taken in this thesis, whereby Foucault, Tolstoy, Barad and Berlant are brought together to form a unique lens through which participant experiences may be interpreted.

Barad (2007, p. 89) makes the point that to think diffractively requires experiences that provoke grappling with contingencies and being open to multiple possible connections. Similarly, Foucault (1988), discussing freedom, advocates never accepting anything as definitive, untouchable, obvious,

immobile or offered as true or real. Following this tenet has encouraged a process of analysis, within this thesis, of curiosity and reflection.

Barad's diffractive entangled explanations connect with Berlant, Foucault and Tolstoy as each wrestled with ideas of how power acts to shape thinking and action. Tolstoy (2009, p. 1204) wrote that 'every human action appears as a conjunction of freedom and necessity'. Subjects do not operate within a vacuum (Trepanier, 2011) and their reasoning is often limited in its awareness of wider influences upon thinking. Making sense of the present (Trepanier, 2011; Ricoeur, 2006; Carr, 1991) reflect that 'space, time and causality' (Trepanier, 2011, p. 36) combine to mask all that influences thinking and action. In Chapter 6, this is voiced by two participants who were aware that their reactions to authority were influenced by their upbringing.

2.5.1 Emerging themes

Tolstoy, Foucault, Berlant and Barad all reflect upon the way in which our relationships and interactions within society are full of complexity. They each provide a useful lens with which to help make sense of relations with those we perceive to be in authority positions. Tolstoy and Foucault, in particular, draw attention to problematic aspects associated with authority and schooling. In Chapter 6, the relational aspects of how each participant used their voice to navigate their power relationships with education authority figures are expanded upon.

Foucault (1991a), in particular, recognised the ways in which mechanisms of power are exerted through schooling institutions to 'coerce bodies, gestures and behaviours' (p. 191). Such forces, Foucault (1990, p. 140) refers to as 'bio-power', which acts to foster thinking and behaviour. Each interaction requires participants to constantly 'measure themselves' against whatever is seen as the norm (Campbell, 2011, p. 451).

Navigating these relations of power within education institutions – as participants testify – involves courage on the part of service users. Within the auspices of an approach based upon parrhesia, this would mean authority figures embracing dissent, encouraging autonomy and enabling free and frank dialogue. The task of bringing about 'the will to change' (Braidotti, 1993, p. 3) and the desire for something different is problematic.

Strebel (1998) and Hellawell (2019) describe the difficulties of overcoming psychological and social barriers on the part of both service users and authority in any change initiative. Berlant (2011) provides insight into how an individual copes with seemingly unachievable goals against a background of the entangled nature of society. These themes are recognisable in the analysis of participant stories in which they felt either enabled or inhibited. The reality of how these ideas have affected them in their lives as students, workers and parents becomes more transparent in the stories and experiences related by participants, which are a unique feature of this thesis.

The novelty in my thesis is in bringing together the writings of Foucault, Tolstoy, Berlant and Barad to inform, reflect and interpret the experiences and narratives of my research participants. Tolstoy, Foucault and Barad's understanding of how power relations function can be observed in the strategies participants adopt, mirroring aspects of Berlant's cruel optimism, where something desired becomes a barrier to a longed-for outcome. Such 'entanglements of self and others' (Barad, 2007, p. 394) also find connection with Foucault, Tolstoy and Berlant in the way in which participants were affected by, and influenced, their individual encounters with authority.

From the lived experiences of my interviewees, I seek to gain a deeper understanding of the processes involved in exercising free and frank speech in institutional contexts. Issues highlighted in Chapter 6 raise questions concerning methods of schooling, teaching and learning. Many sources reflect upon issues of authority and control (Hern, 2008; Olson, 2009; Taylor-Gatto, 2012; Gray, 2013; Ekoko and Ricci, 2014; Robinson and Aronica, 2015; Young, 2019), which become problematic when education, curriculum and school organisation are increasingly directed, politically, and administered by professionals in large institutions. As a consequence, the roles of student and parent become diminished in the decision-making process. This has direct influence on the confidence of users to question, challenge or speak freely to those in authority. The effect upon participants – as related in their stories – is profound. The seventh century Chinese poet, Wang Wei (1973) conveys 'human feelings turning over and over like the waves of the sea' (p. 79). This aptly describes the stories contributed by my participants as they grappled with the complexities of speaking out freely and frankly.

Schonle (2003) infers from the writings of Foucault and Tolstoy, that they advocated enabling individuals to discover or learn something about themselves. Similar sentiments are attributed to Barad and Berlant who have influenced the way in which knowledge and insights are formed. All four have stimulated new thinking through re-examining commonly held concepts using approaches that recognise the complexities and entanglements of ideas, thus avoiding simplistic explanations of causation.

May (2023) advises that in order to protect one's own interests, a subject should be prepared to 'challenge experts' (p. 119). This aids the human need to seek rationality and understanding of the world around us (Schopenhauer, 2000). In doing so, Bhave (2004) would argue that such action constitutes an essential component of self-government and thinking for oneself.

2.6 Concluding thoughts

In raising the issue of free and frank voice in this thesis, and drawing attention to the experiences of participants, the hope is that it will benefit both service user and authority. Fear of consequences associated with exercising voice has the potential to negate what Shakespeare refers to in one of his poems as 'fear no more the frown o' the great' (Untermeyer, 1971, p. 139), an apt sentiment, which may be achieved through wide acceptance of Foucault's parrhesia. This, in turn, would require consideration for a more democratic schooling system, enabling a greater understanding of interaction with authority. The theme of free and frank expression of voice, and the inhibitions that can result from fear of authority and consequences, is further reflected on in the following chapters.

Chapter 3: Theory

3.1 Introduction

Barker and Jane (2016) describe theory as sets of narratives or tools to make sense of social phenomena, to distinguish, describe, define and explain general features and occurrences. This chapter describes the ideas that have contributed to my thinking and interpretation of participant stories in the later analysis chapter (Chapter 6). This chapter outlines the work of Foucault and Tolstoy, with reference to Berlant and Barad. Each writer has functioned as a lens through which I interpret experiences in Chapter 6. Together, they constitute a unique feature of this study, as I will further discuss.

Initially, Tolstoy and Foucault may appear to have little in common, separated as they are, by history, culture, education and theoretical background. However, I seek to show that they have much in common, and the two combined offer relevant material for consideration in contemporary education practice.

What first caught my imagination with Tolstoy was the passion and vivid descriptions that he produced of teaching and learning within his schools. Tolstoy's experiences of teaching are described as perpetually experimental, seeking to engage learners and facilitate their innate inquisitiveness. The nineteenth-century translations of his work, and the perceptions of his students, reflect contemporary ideas and practice recognisable in twenty-first-century schooling.

Tolstoy's ideas on schooling spread throughout the world in the nineteenth century (Sergyeenko, 1899; Tolstoy, 1954; Maude, 1987; Tussing-Orwin, 2002; Moulin, 2014) across diverse countries and cultures, influencing such figures as Mahatma Gandhi (Bondurant, 1988) and Wittgenstein (Moulin, 2014). Murphy (1992), writing on the relevance to the modern world of Tolstoy's vision of education, describes Tolstoy's approach to learning as being 'extraordinarily valid and meaningful' to contemporary teaching (p. 250). Murphy (1992) describes close comparisons with the later works of Dewey, Sukhomlinsky and Buber in their suspicions of authoritarian institutional approaches to teaching that stifled individual freedom and autonomy. Murphy (1992) also makes connections between Tolstoy and Vaclav Havel's vision for a reformed society

in Czechoslovakia, through the encouragement of more open community structures rather than the imposition of institutional controls of education.

Tolstoy's ideas on human nature and agency (Tussing-Orwin, 2017) were also woven into his novels. He recognised the forces upon individuals that shaped thinking and action, comparing people to rivers, in that as one travels through life, the river becomes 'now narrow, now swift, now wide, now quiet, clear, murky, or warm' (p. 54).

Foucault, Berlant and Barad also reflect upon the life experiences that shape thinking and action. Foucault's concepts of parrhesia and technologies of the self are particularly useful tools with which to interpret and analyse the experiences related by participants outlined in Chapter 6.

Foucault (1988b; 1997) writes that parrhesia has the potential to positively influence relationships between those who perceive themselves as powerless and those they regard as having more power. Being able to express one's 'truth' without fear of negative consequences can act to affirm self-esteem, create autonomy and contribute constructively to wider wellbeing. In the modern age of social media there are myriad self-serving channels to express one's views freely and frankly, but physical contact can be more problematic.

When it comes to face-to-face interactions with authority, there remains a reluctance or inhibition to express one's 'truth' through fear of consequences. This is particularly evident in participant stories analysed later in this study. Foucault's parrhesia has the potential to beneficially influence relations between interlocutors through encouraging free and frank exchanges without fear of negative consequences.

Consequences of speaking out freely and frankly can also be recognised in Berlant's (2011) concept of 'impasse' (p. 24) and her descriptions of 'cruel optimism', which reflect aspects raised by participants in Chapter 6. Heightened expectations, the promise of unachievable outcomes, fear of being seen as deficient, or views irrelevant, lead to inertia or 'impasse'. These complicated interactions, noted by Berlant, Foucault and Tolstoy, are also observed by Barad (2007) who recognised that existence is not simply an 'individual affair' (p. 394). Barad observed that individuals emerge through an 'entangled intra-relating', which configures and reconfigures each person. In Chapter 6, the

stories related by participants reflect such themes as they encounter authority in their roles as students, education workers and parents.

This theory chapter seeks to develop further knowledge on writers, Tolstoy, Foucault, Berlant and Barad, as mentioned in the literature review. The intention is to connect the reader more fully with their ideas, which have been used to interpret the participants' experiences in Chapter 6. I will, first, outline the ideas of Foucault, giving an overview of his concepts of discourse, power, technologies of the self and parrhesia. I will then turn attention to Tolstoy's approach to schooling, before highlighting the contributions of Berlant and Barad.

3.2 Foucault's concept of discourse

Participants gave interviews (see Chapter 6) within which they sought to make sense of their experiences of authority in school contexts. The power of their language is compelling and insightful. Barad (2003), together with Horrocks and Jevtic (2004) reflect that the power of language cannot be underestimated and is but one element in understanding their reality.

Foucault's (1989) concept of discourse seeks to look beyond what is said, to include anonymous, historical sets of rules, determined in space and time, defined through social, economic, geographical and linguistic conditions. Hodgson (2000) similarly describes Foucault's discourse in terms of 'a socially and historically specific system of assumptions, values and beliefs, which materially affect social conduct and social structure' (p. 59).

The philosopher, John Rajchman (Chomsky and Foucault, 2006) described Foucault's analyses of discourse as an attempt to interrupt and 'problematise' those aspects of social interaction that are simply accepted or taken for granted in the thinking processes involved in daily life. In Chapter 6, I draw attention to these interactions in participant functioning within school contexts.

Foucault sought to illuminate taken-for-granted habits of thinking, opening them up for wider reflection and understanding. Barker and Jane (2016) observe that a Foucauldian approach to understanding social phenomena is one in which the surfaces of discourse are analysed together with the effects and historical conditions in which they occur. Foucault (1989) declared that his intention was to allow phenomena to 'emerge in their own complexity' (p. 52). In a

comparable manner, my intention, in Chapter 6, is to illuminate practices that inhibit the ability of subjects to speak freely and frankly to authority.

Mills (2004) explains the identification of phenomena as a 'regulated raft of statements' (p. 54) guided by a set of rules, of which the speaker may not be fully cognisant, that come together in a predictable way. Foucault (1980b) explains such discursive practices as embodied in technical processes, institutions, behaviour and methods of transmission and diffusion. Foucault reflects upon the role of the institution in controlling discourse in one of his lectures and is reported, by Young (1981), to describe a conversation between what he calls 'desire' and the 'institution' (p. 52). 'Desire' wishes to speak without inhibition to the 'institution', which encourages and allows candour and free speech. The 'institution' receives desire's free and frank speech by enfolding it in an 'institutional cocoon', which neutralises and disarms anything that, potentially, threatens or disrupts its workings. Only discourse that is considered institutionally worthy (Foucault, 2002) is deemed to be legitimate. Foucault succinctly describes the problematic and challenging aspects of the relationship between subject and institution, an aspect discernible in the participant stories in Chapter 6.

Speakers often find themselves bound by both overt responses from authority figures within the institution, who can simply declare 'I don't want to hear that' and the less transparent internal societal messages that constrain; for example, 'I shouldn't speak out'. Foucault maintains (Young, 1981) that in every society, the production of discourse is controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by various mechanisms embedded within society.

Social exchanges and communications (Young, 1981; Foucault, 1997; 2002) work through complex systems of restriction, inhibiting the speaker. Explicit and implicit hidden influences (Young, 1981) maintain, modify and appropriate rituals that strengthen their knowledge and powers. Foucault (1973) describes, from an evolutionary and historical perspective, how such discourses within institutions refine, perpetuate and reinvent themselves to influence thinking and action.

The participants in this study (see Chapter 6) all experienced education institutions at various stages of their lives. Ball (2012) notes that educational institutions operate through the aegis of a hierarchical management that derives

legitimacy from an ability to impose order and efficiency, thereby avoiding fear of chaos. Foucault (1994) describes school institutions as ‘production apparatus’ for knowledge transmission, functioning to ‘normalise’ individuals (p. 78). Through coercive methods of punishment, reward and classification, the institution enables individuals to imbibe concepts of knowledge and power that become ‘deeply rooted in consciousness’ (p. 87). These ‘internal procedures’, Foucault (1981) describes as ‘equally influencing actions and thinking’ (p. 56).

Both internal and external discourse is regarded by Foucault (Young, 1981) as simultaneously a distant constraining force and having potential for autonomous action. Luke (2005) and Clegg *et al.* (2006) argue that Foucault’s notion of power does not fully recognise autonomy and the existence of given truths. For Foucault (1997), however, truth was an historically changing and dependent concept. The power and autonomy of the subject was something exercised even through the smallest resistance.

3.3 Foucault’s concept of power

In Chapter 6, it emerges that participants often felt themselves powerless in the face of authority. Nevertheless, they each exercised strategies that manifested in resistance and action through thought and language. Vygotsky (1981) describes language as the primary function of social interaction, enabling possibilities for change and influence. Through desires, interests, needs and emotions, thoughts take shape in meanings and find expression through words. Vygotsky portrays this as akin to ‘a cloud shedding a shower of words’ (p. 150). Kozulin *et al.* (2011, p. 9) suggests that listening to others and encouraging open communication is an essential element in thinking and learning. Language and discourse (Fairclough, 1995) constitute an element of what Foucault refers to as bio-power, which operates within social institutions, influencing every day, mundane practices.

Participants in Chapter 6 reflect Livholts and Tamboukou (2015), who point to the importance of the use and control of language and the way in which power relations become constituted, forming social identities. Millei and Imre (2016) recognise the forming of identities in their study of Palestinian and Israeli childhoods. These children live geographically close but come to be framed very differently by those in authority. Jeronin draws upon Foucault’s concept of

‘governmentality’ (Foucault, 1994; Foucault 2011a; b) to describe how power works through institutions to influence, guide, encourage or manipulate thinking and attitudes through the process of schooling.

Such power, Foucault (1990) describes as being everywhere present, taking the form of a ‘multiplicity of force relations’ (p. 92) arising from struggle and confrontation. Participants in this study felt impelled to exercise autonomy in the presence of authority. They also strongly felt the need to take care of self and others, mirroring Foucault’s (1997) discussion of the ancient Greek principle of ‘care of the self’.

This active approach to searching for the best course of action and thinking is further outlined by Foucault (1988b) by reference to Plutarch’s treatise on the art of listening. Here, Foucault illustrates that one can exercise autonomy of thought, even when under the control of one’s master, by listening to the logos – the voice of reason, within. Participants in this study demonstrate various strategies to exercise their autonomy within the constraints of institutional authority and their own skill set.

Fromm (1969), in common with Foucault and the participants in this study, perceived his institution’s influence as having benign possibilities as well as coercive ones. Fromm points out that even in a relationship between slave and master, there may be material benefits or opportunities to exercise power through silence, voice, resistance or subversion.

Foucault recognised power as not simply a negative force (Chomsky and Foucault, 2006) but a productive phenomenon acting through resistance. Haugaard (2002) describes Foucault’s ‘care of the self’ (p. 182) leading to new ways of being from the hidden influences and contexts that make up a subject. This can be clearly seen in the participant experiences in Chapter 6. The participants combine autonomy with what Fromm (1969) describes as a process of ‘commander and command’ (p. 92). These become invisible in individual consciousness through subtle suggestions that pervade the whole of society.

Similarly, Arendt (1998) describes the way in which one becomes ‘entangled’ in a web or relationships that ‘lure’ and influence individual thinking and behaviour (p. 233). Berrezkin (2015) suggests agreement between Arendt and Foucault regarding constraints upon autonomy from ‘multiple and collective interactions’ (p. 5). Foucault describes the process of knowledge generation and truth

(Chomsky and Foucault, 2006) as being one ‘hidden to men’s eyes’ and ‘sitting in the shadows’ (p. 16) waiting to be unveiled. Therefore, discourse and language, through expressions of ‘thought and interaction’ (p. 4) can act in ways to reflect upon the historical norms or ‘truths’ within the context and time in which they occur.

3.4 Foucault’s technologies

At the heart of exploring the activity of speaking freely and frankly to those in authority lie Foucault’s technologies. Over a period of twenty-five years, Foucault (1988b) studied diverse ways in which people develop knowledge about themselves. He refers to ‘truth games’ (p. 18) that a subject engages in to understand themselves and make sense of their experiences. Foucault (1988b; 1997) ordered these forms of investigation under four major types. Each of the four technologies inform my methodology and analysis chapters and can be found in the appendices, where I show the guiding principles informing analysis and ordering of data.

First, are technologies of production (Foucault, 1988b) that enable the subject to ‘transform and manipulate’ things (p. 18). Second, technologies of sign systems, which allow one to make sense of meaning, symbols and signification. Technologies of power, the third element, directly influence conduct and behaviour. The fourth technology is that of the self. This technology allows subjects the autonomy to exercise influence upon themselves and others, thereby shaping their ‘way of being and thinking’ (p. 18).

Foucault (1988b; 1997) referred to a subject’s ability to influence, navigate or exert control on their circumstances as ‘technologies of the self’. His ideas on technologies are relevant to the way in which participant experiences have been interpreted in the Chapter 6 analysis. Foucault’s technologies comprise acts, feelings and desires that enable subjects to produce, manipulate and transform things using signs, meanings and signification. Foucault brings together the ancient Greek concept of the ‘art of life’ and ‘knowing oneself’ in his technologies of the self to describe transformative possibilities.

The ancient Greek approach to developing the self, exemplified by Socrates, (Foucault 1988c; de Marzio, 2007) suggests that there is an art form associated with human growth and development. Foucault (1991) recognised this art form

as evolving into an ethical process of governing the self and others. The idea being that the self is not given (Foucault, 1991) but created by each person; the art of living being founded upon the active involvement of the individual in response to their context and experiences (Tamboukou, 2003). Tolstoy (1899) also reflects the idea that thinking and acting is an organ of human life, an art, practised in its widest sense.

Foucault (2011a) affirms 'knowing oneself' and 'care of self' as both being essential for the subject (p. 44). Patocka (2002) describes this process in terms of being ready to question oneself and/or allowing oneself to be questioned by another. This process of thinking and questioning can be illustrated in Foucault's (2011a) account of Socratic methods of enquiry involving the Greek noble, Alcibiades. Plato (2006) notes the importance of seeking 'justice and temperance' (p. 9) and not simply trusting to the advice and guidance of those 'devoid of intelligence' (p. 55). Questioning and seeking wise council, both within and outside oneself, is essential to Foucault's account of technologies of the self. This can be observed in participant accounts of their interactions with authority and in seeking guidance from other sources.

Socrates advises his pupil, Alcibiades, (Plato, 2006) that in dealing with the state and institutions, one must always be vigilant as 'wave and storm' are ever-present (p. 59). In the last days of Socrates, Plato (1964) records him as not being cowed by the authority of the state but taking control of his destiny, even unto death. The importance of knowing oneself, and its connection with speaking out freely and frankly in the modern-day context, is as problematic today as it was for Socrates in ancient Greece.

Tamir (1993) describes the difficulties of envisaging a subject as being 'independent of their context or circumstances' (p. 16), given such close interaction with the culture(s) around them. Machiavelli (1979), writing in the fifteenth century, describes the reality of autonomy in terms of fortune being the arbiter of half the things a subject does, whilst the other half is the product of free will. The metaphor of fortune that Machiavelli provides is akin to a violent, raging river in flood that seeks its own pathway, yet still, the flood torrent can be mediated by human actions, through engineering, for example, embankments, channels, canals and dikes. Fortune, therefore, can be seen as reflecting Foucault's (2002; 2011a; 2011b) 'knowing oneself' and 'being true to oneself',

intricately bound up with the process he refers to as ‘parrhesia’ or ‘fearless speech’.

3.5 Foucault and parrhesia

A central idea in this thesis concerns Foucault’s (2011b) interest in parrhesia. Drawing from ancient Greek history, Foucault (2001; 2011b) considered issues around the idea of parrhesia as an activity of ‘truth-telling’ and ‘speaking from the heart’ toward authority. In his Berkeley lecture, Foucault (1985) describes parrhesia acting as a form of inner criticism toward the self or others, enhancing reflection. Foucault (2001) outlines parrhesia in terms of five main characteristics. The first is ‘frankness’ – being prepared to speak one’s mind. The second is ‘truth’, both knowing it and communicating it. The third is an element of ‘risk’ or ‘danger’ associated with the action of speaking up. The fourth is ‘criticism’, which must be implicit; and finally, there is ‘moral duty’ on the part of the speaker. Peters (2003) describes Foucault’s account of parrhesia as both an ethical concept and a key element within any democracy.

The practice of parrhesia has been identified by Saxonhouse (2008) as intricately connected with democracy in ancient Greece. Athenian citizens were afforded the opportunity to speak out fearlessly, to ‘voice frank criticism’ (p. 94), celebrating this ability by publicly funding the building of a boat named ‘Parrhesia’. Saxonhouse (2008) discusses Foucault’s parrhesia as a critique of hierarchy. Whilst there could be benefits to the speaker and the wider community, the Greek stage also portrayed instances of tragedy, disaster, exclusion or death for brave souls who dared to speak out freely and frankly.

Foucault (2001; 2011a, 2011b) cites Plato and his account of Socrates risking rebuttal in speaking ‘truth’ to the aristocratic Alcibiades. To be successful, Alcibiades needed ‘self-knowledge’ (Taylor, 1960, p. 523) and that required a skilled teacher like Socrates, who could speak ‘truth to power’. Socrates’ boldness in speaking freely and frankly to Alcibiades resulted in a good outcome for them both. Socrates was not always so fortunate, however (Plato, 1964). The Athenian authorities did not receive his outspoken criticisms so benevolently and sentenced him to death.

Equally unfortunate is the fate of Thersites, who spoke truth to power in Book 2 of Homer’s *Iliad* (1977). Homer describes this unfortunate soldier as being a

commoner who had the temerity to speak freely and frankly to King Agamemnon. Unfortunately for Thersites, parrhesia was not a kindness extended to him. Odysseus, being of noble status, berated Thersites, striking him violently for 'holding forth to kings' (Homer, 1997, p. 47). On re-joining his fellow soldiers, the injured Thersites received little sympathy as his comrades were grateful to Odysseus for 'stopping the mouth of the windy ranter'. By contrast, when Odysseus himself (Homer, 1977, p. 259) was critical of King Agamemnon, he spoke under the safety of parrhesia and was graciously accepted by the King as simply a 'harsh rebuke'. King Agamemnon continued to extend parrhesia to others, declaring that he wanted to hear what they thought, and for them not to be inhibited to speak freely and frankly, regardless of their position (Homer, 1997).

Foucault (2006) illustrates further examples outlining parrhesiastic roles played by characters in Euripides' play, *Ion* (Euripides, 1973), in which Ion speaks truth to power about the king's shortcomings, and his mother, Creusa, freely expresses injustices she has endured. Foucault (2011b) outlines different experiences of other characters expressing their truth in all its different forms through 'curiosity, battle, courage, resolution and endurance' (p. 125).

In Euripides' (1972) play, *The Phoenician women*, Foucault (2011b) refers to Polyneices, exiled from his city of birth. He recounts the worst thing of all about living the life of an exile is the loss of the right to free speech, which is tantamount to having the status of a slave. Polyneices adds, 'to endure the idiocy of those who rule' means joining 'fools in their foolishness' (p. 249). For Polyneices, and others in the fifth century BC, to speak freely and frankly without the safety of parrhesia could be fatal.

For those who choose to speak out freely and frankly in a modern-day context, the experience may not be fatal, but fear of consequences continues to influence speakers. Participants in Chapter 6 reflect the same underlying anxieties and fears expressed by characters portrayed by Homer and Euripides.

The practice of parrhesia within society can also be problematic for democracy and institutions. Foucault (2011b) cites the fifth century BC Greek orator, Isocrates, who informs that parrhesia can be a threat to a city or institution. Thus, parrhesia can function as a good, courageous and noble act that may benefit the self and others, but it may also cause disquiet and be received as a

threat to the smooth running of an institution, rather than a bond or point of connection between truth-telling and governing well.

Foucault (2011b) points out that parrhesia has the potential to upset the balance between obedience, respect and distance toward authority. Parrhesia can, however, potentially benefit interlocutors contributing to greater understanding, thereby promoting wellbeing and effectiveness. Conversely, authority could also view it as over-familiarity, presumption or arrogant self-confidence. The benefits and disadvantages of parrhesia come alive in the lived experiences of participants in this study in Chapter 6. The French Renaissance writer, Montaigne (1978), aptly put it that it is in real life stories that the true complexity of human actions can be fathomed.

Zembylas and Fendler (2007) build upon Foucault's parrhesia and care of the self, locating the social control of emotions in education, within a combination of psychological and feminist discourses. Noddings (1984; 1992) advises that it is the responsibility of those who hold authority, or power in a relationship, to listen, be respectful, compassionate and empathetic in their dealings. Within these exchanges, Foucault (2011b) draws attention to the effect of speaking freely and frankly as an act of individual agency by the speaker.

Parrhesiastic encounters, or confrontations with authority, occur within a gendered social context. De Lauretis (1987) notes that gender is both 'representation' and 'self-representation' (p. 9) and takes Foucault to task for under-emphasising the role of gender in social relations. Braidotti (2017, p. 98) argues that whilst 'sexualised, racialised and naturalised differences' still exist in the 'post-gendered' era, there is much more of a 'blurring of the categorical divide' between the sexes. The 'post-gendered' era is one in which complex questions of sex and identity need to be re-discovered. In discussions with participants for this study, only one considered this an issue in their encounters with authority.

Foucault (1969, p. 23) explains that his approach was not to look for 'secret, hidden meanings' embedded in society but an attempt to describe relations that 'lie upon the surface of discourse' to make more visible what might easily be missed or taken for granted. For Foucault (1990), the authority and power that flows from encounters can be a productive and socially useful concept, even if oppressive.

Within powerlessness, Foucault (1997) maintains, lie the dynamic seeds of resistance and power. How these relations are perceived and interpreted give insight and understanding into the mechanisms of power within any relationship. The practice of parrhesia is not just an attempt by Foucault to replicate a practice from antiquity (Jack, 2004) but an effort to introduce the concept of speaking freely and frankly as an ethical relation to the formation of the self, with the potential for change. Tolstoy was also much concerned with the practice of freedom and change, as I will further discuss.

3.6 Tolstoy and schooling

Tolstoy's theoretical observations were developed throughout his lifetime. Murphy (1992) traces Tolstoy's influences as emanating from his readings of Godwin, Rousseau, Proudhon, Kropotkin and others, all described as 'utopian anarchists' (p. 235). What influenced each, Smith (1983) maintains, was a deep suspicion of political control of education and a desire that at its heart, education should be politically liberating and enhance freedom.

The essence of Tolstoy's approach to education and schooling is to equalise the balance of power between learner and teacher. Shotton (1993) describes the authoritarian role of the teacher ideally becoming more one of learning 'guide or enabler' (p. 202). Such an approach, Tolstoy (1972) maintained, would succeed in 'freeing the individual for creative improvisation' (p. ix). Edwards (1992) notes that both Tolstoy and Dewey recognised students should be free to choose learning pathways for personal, rather than political or institutional, needs.

Maude (1987) notes Tolstoy claimed that the success of his schools at Yasnaya Polyana, in terms of the progress made by pupils, arose from the teachers' responsiveness and ability to constantly adapt to each student's needs. For Tolstoy (1967), writing in the mid-nineteenth century, an effective education system, which truly has the learner's interests and needs at heart, could never be coercive. Compulsion of attendance and curriculum left little opportunity for student autonomy or voice. Freedom was not just the absence of compulsion (Steiner, 1914) but a coming together of teacher and child to select the best method and materials to be studied. Limiting freedom of student voice and choice leads to training rather than educating.

In this respect, Tolstoy's approach resonates with Robinson and Aronica (2016), writing a hundred and fifty years later, in asserting that twenty-first-century education does not need to be reformed but rethought. Robinson and Aronica (2016), like Tolstoy, criticise an education system built upon standardisation and conformity, which discourages individuality, imagination and creativity and leads to a standardised, conforming society. At the heart of participant experiences, outlined in Chapter 6, are the problematic issues of conformity, institutional standardisation and compromised individuality.

Edward Steiner (1914) was a visitor to Tolstoy's schools at Yasnaya Polyana, noting that they were not simply places to train children or force knowledge upon them but to 'influence the child definitely; and influence is without force' (p. 165).

Murphy (1992, p. 105) describe Tolstoy's teaching approach as an 'art and talent' rather than a craft, where creative responses are important to meet different learning needs. Recognising and facilitating an approach of this kind requires a more creative response to teaching – facilitating the natural learning instincts of a pupil requires a particular approach. Tolstoy (1972) wrote, 'The best method is the absence of all method, but the knowledge and use of all methods and the invention of new ones according to the difficulties met with' (p. 44).

Tolstoy (1972, p. xiii) emphasised that concentration upon individual learning needs and interests should be the central focus of an education process. He acknowledged the bundle of 'anxieties, fears and needs' of each learner, facilitating their 'unbounded intellectual curiosity and imagination'. Tolstoy's teachers were trained to recognise the natural goodness in every pupil, with all learners being inspired to follow their innate motivation and natural curiosity and allowed to be 'mischievous in their desire to be free'. Tolstoy's teachers also avoided imposing either content or discipline and sought to balance individual freedom with relevant formal instruction.

This experimental approach is illustrated in Tolstoy's detailed observations and notes on teaching, where all pupils had freedom to explore and consolidate their 'imaginative potential' (Wiener, 1972, p. 227; Eikhenbaum, 1982, p. 65; Murphy, 1992, p. 261). Education, for Tolstoy and his teachers, was an innately 'human activity based upon a desire for equality', a unique experience where emphasis

should be upon the ‘intuitively grasped direction of things’ within each student (Maude, 1987, p. 241; Matlaw, 1967, p. 30). Attempts to mould learners were regarded as ‘sterile, illegitimate and impossible’ (Maude, 1987, p. 241).

Teachers in Tolstoy’s schools adapted their teaching to the individuality of each pupil (Berlin, 1994; 2011). His schools attracted many visitors from around the world. Goldenveizer (1923) records, in an interview with Tolstoy, the emphasis he placed on the individual learning needs of each child. Tolstoy’s schools were places where the relationship between learner and teacher took account of personalities, talents, characteristics and individual thinking (Cohen, 1981).

Further echoes of Tolstoy’s approach to teaching and learning can be found in the modern-day writings of Holt (1972; 1977), Noddings (1984; 1991; 1992; 2003; 2007), Raywid (1994; 1997; 1999; 2001; 2006), Miller (2002), Sidorkin (2002), Hern (2008), Olson (2009), Roffey (2013) and Gray (2013).

More equal relationships with those in authority offer the potential to encourage questioning, free-thinking, discussion and debate (Hern 2008). Hellawell (2019) points out that such thinking can be perceived as a threat to professional expertise, leading to frustration or conflict. This creates a paradox, where institutions declare respect for their employees, learners and parents, yet simultaneously, devalue a more equalised relationship. This paradox can be observed in the participant stories that appear in later chapters.

3.7 Foucault and Tolstoy: connecting ideas

One of the unique features of this thesis is the coming together of ideas from Foucault and Tolstoy, which are later used to gain insight into the experiences of participants. Both Tolstoy and Foucault declared themselves to be teachers. Indeed, Foucault (1988b, p. 9) describes himself to be neither a philosopher, nor ‘a great figure of intellectual life’, but a teacher. His main ambition was to facilitate his students and readers to develop into ‘someone else that you were not at the beginning’ (1988b, p. 9).

For Tolstoy, teaching was something he felt called to do. Troyat (1967) places education as one of Tolstoy’s most important occupations. Tolstoy, himself, described it as ‘something that comes as naturally to me as breathing’ and having ‘a passion’ for teaching (Troyat, 1967, p. 256). Pinch (1982) records Tolstoy reflecting that he wanted to help learners to ‘enjoy and understand’

(p. 49). Tolstoy's daughter (Tolstoy, 1954, p. 109) talks of her father's 'inspired passion' for teaching.

Both Foucault and Tolstoy had much to say about the process of schooling. Foucault (1980b) states that communication of knowledge is always positive; however, it also functions as a double repression in terms of those it excludes and the model and bars it imposes upon receivers of knowledge. Tolstoy, too, had reservations (Berlin, 1994), commenting that one of the lessons that history teaches us is that all previous education systems have always proved to be 'despotisms founded on falsehoods' (p. 257).

Foucault (2004, p. xv) is recorded as being 'uncomfortable' with the traditional view of teaching as one exercising power over an audience. He and Tolstoy felt that the audience for their teaching should be free to exercise autonomy to come and go as they please. Thomas (2008, p. 152) describes Foucauldian teaching in terms of preferring 'no fixed plan' but simply 'recipes for movement somewhere else'; not so much concerned with a declared 'outcome' but to enable the learner to make connections and understandings in their own way.

Foucault (Chomsky and Foucault, 2006) criticised teaching systems that simply stood to disseminate knowledge. Similarly, Tolstoy (Murphy, 1992, p. 259) advocated an 'aesthetic curriculum' driven by the interests of the learner. Foucault (2004) approached his teaching as a researcher exploring possibilities, identifying areas of problematisation in society. Tolstoy, too, was deeply interested in the problems of society (Tolstoy, 1946) cautioning the need to be mindful of the past but not enslaved by it (Tolstoy, 1899).

The imaginations of both Tolstoy (Simmons, 1949) and Foucault (Miller, 1993) were stirred by trolling ancient and modern archives for inspiration. Each was aware (Farge, 2013, p. 96) that the archive is rich in 'symbolic and intellectual constructions of the past' that can be 'rearranged' and used creatively.

Both Tolstoy and Foucault recognised, in common with Montaigne (1978, p. 55) the need to guard against being 'enslaved and captivated' by the authority of the teacher. What was important was to develop critical faculties through speaking freely, regardless of approval by those in authority (Montaigne, 1978) – a shift from schooling solely concerned with learning fixed content to developing a more philosophical understanding of the self and how one should 'live well'.

Foucault and Tolstoy both took a more philosophical understanding of society, one informed by history but not bound by it. Miller (1993) describes Foucault's recollections that the most lasting lessons Foucault learnt from his teacher, Hyppolite, was that philosophy must proceed through the study of history. This passion, Foucault shared with Tolstoy in their use of ancient Greek sources. Foucault (2004, p. 186) like Tolstoy, recognised the 'perpetual confrontation' between the 'history disciplinarised' by the state and the history bound up in the struggles of individuals within society.

Foucault (1990, p. 12) was interested in exploring the 'instances of discursive production' and how such knowledge and power has shaped thinking through history. This, too, was a concept that engaged Tolstoy in the epilogue to *War and Peace* (1976; 1997; 2006; 2009), together with his portrayal of characters in his fictional writings. Connection can also be found between Foucault's (1991, p. 46) experimental 'historico-critical' approach to enquiry and Tolstoy's (1972) experimental approach to teaching methods. While Foucault points out that history alone cannot provide solutions for present-day problems, tools such as parrhesia may act to bring about a different relationship with authority that has the potential to involve subjects in attaining a stronger and more creative voice.

In an interview (Martin *et al*., 1988), Foucault reflects upon the need to look beyond what is already known and not be bound by the accepted generalisations that influence thinking and understanding of the human condition. Tolstoy, similarly, sought to bring fresh thinking to society and stimulate other possibilities of interpretation and understanding (Maude, 1987). For Tolstoy, the thinking and practices of the individual reflect their lived experiences ('history appearing from the inside out') in each personal account (Jones, 1978, p. 136).

Tolstoy – as with Foucault – was part of an 'intelligentsia' that inspired cultural, economic and technical transformations. Miller (1993, p. 17) describes Foucault as making a 'sharp break' with the thinking of his predecessors. Gorky (1920, p. 62) describes Tolstoy as a 'noble belfry', communicating ideas across international borders, and Briggs (2010, p. 9) refers to him as an 'overwhelming genius'. Mills (2004, p. 1), equally, lauds Foucault as 'one of the most important figures in critical theory'. Foucault (1998b; 1997) elaborated on questions of how society functions in terms of technologies of the self.

Foucault (1988b) highlighted, and brought into question, familiar ‘truths’ that manifest themselves in past and present societies. Inspired by the hermeneutics of ancient sources, Foucault identified specific techniques or technologies that people use to understand and explain themselves. These technologies range from how things are produced, manipulated or transformed, through to meanings, symbols and signs that enable action. Both Foucault and Tolstoy wrestled with related questions concerning the relationship between truth, power and the self.

Similar philosophical influences can be traced between both thinkers. Foucault (Miller, 1993) and Tolstoy (Maude, 1987; Thompson, 2009) refer to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche influencing their thinking on the individual as formed by multiple, historically influenced rules, statutes and norms. Miller (1993) reflects that Foucault regarded the subject as defined by the ‘customs, practices and institutions’ they inhabit travelling from the ‘unchangeable past, to the uncontrollable present and then on into the unintended future’ (p. 69).

Tolstoy (1954), in common with Foucault, was familiar with Schopenhauer’s views of Eastern religious ideas suggesting a more humane foundation for living. Schopenhauer’s ethical ideas, such as control of ‘will’, peaceful co-existence and non-violence (Eikhenbaum, 1982) strengthened Tolstoy’s opposition to coercive forms of authority. Tolstoy, in particular, considered Schopenhauer a ‘great genius’ (Tolstoy, 1954, p. 191) and towards his later years, came to believe that human ‘will’ (Schopenhauer, 2000, p. xxxiii) fuelled a damaging, constantly elusive desire, which led to unhappiness and disillusionment. Tolstoy found Schopenhauer’s extraction of the supernatural elements contained in religion as confirmation of his own thinking, which was at odds with the Russian Orthodox Church.

3.8 Religious and philosophic connections in Foucault and Tolstoy

Tolstoy (1987) held a Christian belief that centred upon the teachings contained in the Sermon on the Mount. These Christian teachings, Tolstoy felt, provided a basic pattern for moral life (Berlin, 1994; Bartlett, 2011) and needed to be interpreted by each generation in context. For Foucault (1997), whilst acknowledging the deep connection between philosophy and religion, also put forward an ethical view, one based upon the individual’s ‘mode of being’, in

which each must perform upon the self. Foucault did venture into the area of ‘political spirituality’ (Carrette, 1999) in which he began to examine the way in which Government in the Iranian Revolution ‘directed the behaviour of men’ (p. 2).

Foucault (2007) distanced himself from religion to perform an interpretive analysis or genealogy of hermeneutics. Miller (1993) describes Foucault as reading widely from the early Christian writers to ponder on ‘the soul and its proper care’ (p. 301). Steiner (1914) comments that Tolstoy embraced the concept of the divine, albeit critically, and formulated his own interpretation and practice. Both Tolstoy and Foucault held similar views to Socrates’ ‘spiritual’ concept of daimon, outlined by Miller (1993) in which there resided an ‘indwelling and audible divinity’ (p. 71). For Tolstoy, this consisted of God-given guidance through Christian scriptures. For Foucault, (Miller 1993, p. 68) daimon was something ‘strange and unsettling’, akin to an inner voice.

Foucault responded to the task of ‘contesting the origin of things’ (Foucault 1973, p. 332) and examining the elements of ‘self-expression and confession’ within Christianity. The focus of Foucault’s research into ‘the self’ (Miller 1993, p. 322) took the form of examining the Roman philosopher, Seneca’s, pagan approach to autonomy and aesthetics with the Christian thinking of Cassian. Foucault charts the liberating ancient Greek precept ‘to know oneself’ and how it evolved into the restrictive, mainstream Christian thinking and practice of self-discipline, self-evaluation and self-examination.

Foucault (2007, p. 178) identifies this process as noticing personal imperfections and unworthiness, requiring confession of inner thoughts. The necessity for verbalisation of inner thoughts functions as a ‘complex technology of the self’ to influence and guide thinking and behaviour. In Chapter 6, the need of participants to verbalise their (often) emotive experiences reflects this element of ‘knowing oneself’.

Foucault’s analysis of how religion works to influence and shape thinking, finds connections with Tolstoy’s religious thought. Tolstoy, according to Moulin (2014), became extremely critical of the controlling nature of the Church. For Foucault (Prado, 1990, p. 20), reason and ‘truth’ are ‘self-created’. Whilst Tolstoy would agree, he attributed the inner voice of reason (Maude, 1987) to a more innate, divine inner guidance.

Tolstoy, in his interviews with Goldenveiser (1922, p. 146) in 1896, stated that although it was impossible to know anything about God, the concept of the infinite was necessary to order ‘a right, moral life’. Similarly, in his conversations with Gorky (1920, p. 19) Tolstoy spoke of his desire to know God more, which Gorky described as akin to ‘two bears in one cave’. Greenwood (1975), Wilson (1989) and Moulin (2014) point out that Tolstoy’s religious beliefs underpin his desire to bring about beneficial changes within society.

Lavrin (1925) declares Tolstoy to be more a moral than religious figure. He also compares Tolstoy and Nietzsche as opposites in their thinking but says that both were motivated, like Foucault, by their personal desires to make sense of the world. Lavrin describes Nietzsche’s non-belief as ‘suppressed Christianity’ and Tolstoy’s Christianity as ‘suppressed non-belief’ (Lavrin, 1925, p. 75). Lavrin quotes Tolstoy’s diary of 1896, indicating that he saw a full Christian life as ‘uninteresting and burdensome’ but simultaneously, giving a sense of ‘safety’ in death and moral direction in life. In this sense, Tolstoy and Foucault have common ground in seeing religion as a ‘disciplinary technology’ (Ball, 1987, p. 43) that influences and controls actions. Foucault (1994, p. 334) refers to ‘archaic religious beliefs’, with ‘salvation’ in the next world being replaced by the more ‘worldly’ aims of the ‘here and now’. Both Tolstoy (Maude, 1987; Bartlett, 2011) and Foucault (Taylor, 2011), in their studies of world religions, agree with Schopenhauer (2000) that despite religious differences, the aspirations and focus on the inner life have much in common.

Agreement between Foucault and Tolstoy can also be seen in the realms of spirituality. Foucault’s definition of spirituality (Taylor, 2011, p. 145) links with the ‘search, practice and experience’ through which a subject can transform themselves to access truth. Tolstoy’s definition (Philipson, 1967, p. 62) recognises the Socratic process of transformation as one that is important in helping to facilitate a heightened awareness of ‘moral development’ that would bring about a closer, divinely inspired and ‘intuitively’ grasped autonomous direction to their lives.

Influenced by Foucault, Fairclough (2010, p. 136) notes that ‘mundane practices of social institutions’ shape and influence. As with Foucault, Tolstoy, throughout his literary career, questioned ‘obscurantism and repression of the desire for knowledge’ (Berlin, 1994, p. 66) – Government and Church imposition of

ideology acting as a channel through which ‘social relations of power and domination’ hold sway. Stirner (2014, p. 36) describes such ideologies as implanted ‘wheels in the head’ that unconsciously influence behaviour.

Steiner (1914) observed Tolstoy’s approach to schooling as an activity based on the human need for students to attain equality in knowledge with their teachers. Tolstoy felt that teachers needed to go to school with the students, not the students simply coming to school to be with the teachers. A teacher’s role is as facilitator, encouraging the creative powers of learners by introducing new horizons, allowing the pursuit of personal interests and needs.

Klimova (2017) links Tolstoy with Arendt in that both seek ways for good in opposition to what they regard as social evils. Klimova describes this as ‘thinking in the sense of Socrates’ (p. 4), an approach similar to the works of Foucault – a form of Socratic thinking (Villa, 2001) designed to draw critical attention to a common viewpoint. Tolstoy clearly exercised Foucault’s ‘care of the self’ by speaking his views freely and frankly to the Russian government. Jack (2010, p. 130) describes this as Tolstoy feeling a ‘moral duty’ that was not without cost to himself, family and teachers in his schools (Simmons, 1949; Maude, 1987; Wilson, 1989).

Whilst writing *War and Peace*, Tolstoy was influenced by the anarchist philosopher, Proudhon (Edwards, 1970; Troyat, 1967; Bartlett, 2011) who interpreted society as being in constant struggle and conflict. As with Foucault (1990, p. 100), Tolstoy viewed these encounters as consisting of a ‘multiplicity of discursive elements’ (Tolstoy 1997, p. 1325) made up of a variety of strategies. Through his own encounters with authority and in his novels, Tolstoy would have recognised Foucault’s (1988b) technologies of the self – the truth games, in which one is both object and subject; the relationships with others, consisting of strategies and power relationships and the connections between truth, power and self.

Foucault (1997) notes that possibilities for change through resistance always exist even when power relations are unequal. In common with Foucault, Tolstoy (1997 p. 1338) also recognised that whilst operating within a hierarchy, a degree of personal autonomy is always possible.

3.9 Foucault, Tolstoy, Barad and Berlant

Having the freedom to speak out with frankness to authority can have multiple outcomes depending upon context and personality. In Chapter 6, each of the participants outline the inner turmoil in their stories that often followed their encounters with an authority figure. The result of such experiences can lead to varying feelings of empowerment, adjustment, mediation, confusion, dithering or loss on the part of interlocutors.

Berlant (2011, p. 199) describes such situations as 'impasse', where a person is brought to a place where norms have been challenged, incurring feelings of confusion and inertia. This has connections with both Tolstoy's constant inner spiritual anxieties to live a simple life (Philipson, 1967) and Foucault's (1983, p. 56) 'daimon', that is, a constant struggling within oneself to resolve life's challenging issues.

Impasse can be a period of reflection and introspection (Berlant, 2011), allowing opportunities for life to be 'adapted to, felt out and lived' (p. 199). Three main types of impasse are outlined. The first can occur after a significant, dramatic event that has deep or significant emotional arousal, where one is left not knowing what to do. The second, Berlant describes as an unsettling of normative life pattern. This may be intimate or situational, occurring without a dramatic event yet causing emotional standstill. The third form of impasse is where a problem or event arises, to question and doubt old sureties. These three forms of impasse can have dramatic effects, leading to extremes of emotion, acting either to discourage or motivate.

Berlant's impasse connects clearly with Foucault's 'care of the self' and parrhesia, or 'fearless speech', as well as relating closely to dilemmas depicted in Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (1976; 1997; 2006; 2009). Two of Tolstoy's characters, Bolkonsky and Bezukhov, exemplify impasse in their experiencing of life-changing events leading to questioning the meaning of their lives and future direction (pp. 375, 417, 587 and 894). Schopenhauer's (2000, p. 45) inference that one is both free whilst also being impacted by 'external necessity' and 'contingency,' meshes with Tolstoy's thinking on freedom.

Foucault's concept of discourse encompasses Tolstoy and Berlant's thinking, as well as Barad's conception of the 'entangled' nature of phenomenon. Barad

(2003) discusses the inseparability of entangled interacting phenomena, both human and nonhuman, that influence decision-making. Within the entanglement, Foucault (1980a) highlights power as something to be actively exercised rather than possessed.

Within an institutional context, Foucault (1994, p. 82) describes power as manifesting in diverse forms and stages and having four broad characteristics. The first three are economic, political and judicial functions. The fourth is institutional power, with the ability to extract knowledge 'from' and 'about' subjects. All these elements of power are 'deeply rooted' and combine within an institutional context to influence the behaviour and thinking of those within it.

Institutional power, Foucault (1997, p. 299) maintained, manifests itself in 'strategies and games' existing between subjects' liberties and 'states of domination'. These technologies of power influence individuals to constantly 'measure themselves' against whatever is deemed to be the 'norm'. They dictate curricula and methods of organisation, test and measure performance and regulate talk and action. According to Eikhenbaum (1982) and Crosby (1904), Tolstoy was also sensitive to the operation of these technologies of power within institutions.

Barad (2007), similarly, looks to social forces for explanations of change and causality, highlighting the entanglement of all phenomena as capable of influencing actions. Barad notes (2007, p. 394) that each subject is part of a 'web of causal relations' with the self and others. She uses the optical metaphor of 'diffraction' (p. 71) to describe the spreading and interconnectivity between all physical and social phenomena. She states that her philosophy, as with Foucault and Tolstoy, is to propose a 'rethinking of fundamental concepts' (p. 26), to look anew at the unseen forces that shape thought and action, and Berlant (2011) points to the limitations of agency upon subjects simply by the exhausting demands of everyday working life.

Foucault's (1990, p. 100) concept of discourse is clearly present in Barad's entanglements and diffraction, where he discusses how a 'multiplicity of discursive elements come into play' in power relationships. Trepanier (2011) points out that in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, in both fictional characters and philosophical epilogues, subjects do not operate in a vacuum, and the

multiplicities of influences, reasons and causes often make it difficult to fully comprehend actions.

Berlant (2011) notes that impasse arises from just such situations where a subject is attempting to make sense of confusing, puzzling or traumatic experiences outside of their reason or consciousness. Resolving impasse is achieved only through finding an acceptable personal solution whilst recognising the need to accommodate influences of 'external necessity' which cannot easily be changed (p. 40).

Foucault's technologies of the self – his concept of discourse and power – also indicates the capacity to act through self-knowledge (Berezkin, 2015) with the unseen hand of 'governmentality' (Allen, 1991, p. 21). Foucault (1997, p. 167) reminds us that power exerts itself in multiple, diverse ways, both impacting and giving agency, to create autobiography. Foucault's (2011b, p. 124) parrhesia involves bold speaking of truth to authority and an 'opening of heart and mind'. Rose (2017) maintains that parrhesia has the ability to 'short-circuit' self-doubt by avowing an autonomous truth' (p. 170).

A further connection between Foucault, Tolstoy, Berlant and Barad can be noted in their references to ancient Greek philosophy. Barad (2007) refers to Democritus to help explain 'entanglement' as encompassing all phenomenon, not just 'as the measure of all things' (p. 136). Berlant's (2011, p. 200) concept of 'impasse' appears to be very similar to Aristotle's (1976, p. 118) importance attached to deliberation through providing insight into reflective processes. Tolstoy and Foucault both cite Socrates and other ancient classics. All four explore the depths of the interactivity between nature, culture, society and agency.

In highlighting agency, Foucault (2011b) draws upon ancient Greek sources, referring to Diogenes Laertius in consulting the prophet Pythia in the Oracle at Delphi. Here, we find Diogenes advised to 'alter or change his currency' (p. 240), a process involving introspective practices akin to impasse, in which one develops an approach to life by first getting to know oneself more deeply, then evaluating and re-valuating present understanding. This process, advocated by the Oracle's Pythia, of 'knowing oneself' and 'revaluing/changing one's currency', connects closely with Berlant's periods of impasse. Similarly, with Barad's entanglement of all phenomena, as the subject must look outside

themselves to consider all possibilities of thought or action – akin to what Tolstoy (1997, p. 1330) refers to as ‘necessity and contingency’.

Understanding that people do not operate in a vacuum, Tolstoy (Trepanier, 2011, p. 36) dwelt upon questions of ‘freedom’ and ‘necessity.’ For Tolstoy, ‘freedom’ was partly an illusion because one could never be fully aware of all the forces and influences upon them. In this sense, the subject is both ‘free’ and ‘not free’. Limited personal autonomy is exercised amidst the laws of space, time and causality. In Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* (1976; 1997; 2006; 2009), this can be witnessed in the character of the unfortunate Karataev. Despite being a prisoner of the French army – caught up in the space, time and causality of the retreat from Moscow – and being captive and powerless, Karataev is still able to exercise an emotional and philosophical autonomy of thought.

3.10 Further links and concluding thoughts

Tolstoy, Foucault, Berlant and Barad exert an integral influence upon the account of participant experiences in Chapter 6. Tolstoy’s thinking in his experimental schools deeply resonates with my own teaching experiences. My interest in student voice and the experience of learners in their schooling also resonates with Foucault’s work on parrhesia and his explorations into the workings of society. This, in turn, leads, first, to Barad’s entangled nature of things, and then, to the work of Berlant, where the process of impasse is relevant to making sense of the entangled nature of life experiences.

Tolstoy, like Foucault, does not sit within any movement or clearly defined theoretical approach. Reflecting Nietzsche (1977), Foucault, Barad, Berlant and Tolstoy each sought to reveal aspects of the ‘nature of human life, its meaning, moral significance and values’ (Bantoc, 1984, p. 282). Each has been relentless in their questioning, guarding against what Nietzsche (1977) describes as seeking ‘simple and sober methods and results’ (p. 125).

Hodgson (2000, p. 80) quotes Foucault in declaring that the role of the intellectual was to ‘question over and over again’ what others accepted as normal, echoing Tolstoy’s approach of avoiding simplistic explanations (Berlin, 1994). Tolstoy, as with Barad, Berlant and Foucault, recognised that action results from a ‘multitude of factors’ (Briggs, 2010, p. 56).

Foucault's (1991) thinking, drawn from Nietzsche, that action is often the result of 'haphazard conflicts' (p. 88) links with Tolstoy's writing (Berlin, 1969) describing life as a 'stream moving in a given direction' or a 'tideless ocean stirred by occasional breezes' (p. 83). The strong central currents make resistance difficult, requiring one to 'tack', 'trim sails' and 'avoid collisions' – a theme in Tolstoy's letters in support of the persecuted Russian Dukhobors. Despite the great power imbalance that existed between themselves and the state (Bartlett, 2011; Donskov and Gladkova, 2019) they still exerted power through peaceful resistance.

Tolstoy's reading appetite, like Foucault's, was wide and voracious and included a great deal of philosophy and comparative religion. Tolstoy's daughter recalls her father once emerging from a long session of reading and study to declare, joyfully, that he had spent his time in the 'beautiful company' of 'Kant, Montaigne and Schopenhauer' (Tolstoy, 1933, p. 62). Tolstoy's avid reading, combined with acute observations, was carefully documented and circulated in his Yasnaya Polyana school journals. As with Foucault, they were experimental, developmental and, often, critical of authority in times of social and technological change (Moulin, 2014).

What Foucault, Tolstoy, Barad and Berlant did in their writing was to look anew at the forces that shape society. Ball (1990, p. 203) describes 'standing offside' of rules and knowledges, with Ball (1990, p. 1) taking a position 'standing outside' social institutions to look anew with fresh eyes. Both Tolstoy and Foucault were very 'heuristic' in their writing, enabling others to gain autonomy of insight and thought. They both sought to provide their readers with a lens through which to analyse society in diverse ways so that tools could be fashioned to bring about beneficial change.

Both sought to stimulate new thinking (Schonle, 2013, p. 44) through re-examination of commonly held concepts of 'modernity' and avoiding simplistic explanations of causation. In so doing, they each bring to any given area of enquiry, a unique approach to interpretation – one that considers both the history and the evolution of commonly held concepts. An illustration of this can be found in an interview with Foucault on the question of Russian gulags in the twentieth century, in which the lens that Foucault brings to examination of this political issue has a wider application than the context of gulags (Foucault,

1980a). Foucault offers insight into a mode of questioning not dissimilar to Tolstoy a century before. Both were adept at posing questions to authority that challenged taken-for-granted institutional practices. Foucault calls into question the usefulness, function and means in which the gulag system had been integrated, politically and socially, into the life of the country. He delves into what makes the process tolerable or intolerable, what sustains those affected and what gives them energy to uphold or resist. Tolstoy, too, poses these types of questions in his criticism of the Russian state. Both raise issues concerning power and resistance, roles, the effects of coercion and diminished autonomy. Their questions seek to reframe and re-appraise a given situation so that new thinking and analysis can be brought to bear upon a previously accepted concept or procedure.

This is particularly illustrative within the schooling context. Both Tolstoy and Foucault drew attention to the impersonal nature of schooling systems. Foucault describes schooling as a ‘machine for learning’ (Foucault, 1991a, p. 165) in which techniques are perfected (Foucault, 1991a, p. 157) to take charge of, ‘individual existences; for regulating the relations of time, bodies and forces’. Tolstoy is equally uncomplimentary of state-regulated schooling systems and those he observed in his travels through Europe (Troyat, 1967; Simmons, 1949; Bartlett, 2011). Both Foucault and Tolstoy posed questions as to the purpose of education in society, illuminating connections with political stakeholders.

After visiting Tolstoy’s schools, Crosby (1904) recorded that Tolstoy abhorred schools where pupils were controlled and regulated like a ‘disciplined company of soldiers’ (p. 12). Autonomy, freedom and even disorder were necessary components for revealing the individuality of each pupil. Concentration upon teacher control and coercion were consequently regarded by Tolstoy as an intrusion, a ‘chimera, an absurdity’ which undermined the ‘beautiful and good’ in human nature.

Another visitor, Baudouin (1923) records Tolstoy criticising the ‘moulding’ of students through imposed education and it being ‘barren, illegitimate and impossible’ (p. 103). Learning was only fruitful when it corresponded to the needs of the learner (Goldenveizer, 1923) and it was the teacher’s responsibility to facilitate an environment within which this could be achieved. Murphy (1992, p. 101) notes that the freedom and autonomy proposed by Tolstoy was not at

the expense of ‘purposeful, ordered learning’, or ‘stimulating and enriching curriculum content’.

Tolstoy ensured his teachers were competent, knowledgeable and enthusiastic practitioners who focussed upon facilitating the learning of each student. Crosby (1904, p. 17) used the metaphor of a ‘busy beehive’ to describe the ethos and spirit of Tolstoy’s schools. The ‘free’ nature of the relationship between learner and student allows the exercise of autonomy, seeking harmony with the innate goodness of human nature.

Through such an approach, the learner begins to take on more responsibility for their own learning, reflecting the Socratic notions of ‘know thyself’, ‘examine yourself’ and ‘take care of yourself’, the object being to become a ‘better self’ within the bounds imposed by environmental, cultural and societal influences (Joranger, 2018, p. 48). Both writers used this approach derived from the writings of Plato, Seneca and Epictetus.

Foucault (1997), outlines, through his technologies of the self, ways in which a person’s desire to take care, and to know themself, can be practised. This process involves being emotionally aware of self and others. It can be enhanced through learning to transform or manipulate things, use meanings or symbols, recognise the workings of power and bring about transformations through introspection.

Connected with ‘knowing oneself’ is the ability to use and practice ‘fearless speech’ (Foucault, 2011a; 2022b) or parrhesia. Both Foucault and Tolstoy recognised the importance of participation in the relational workings of power through open communication. Schonle (2013) notes that this practice can be both repressive and productive, shaping reality through a range of discursive practices. Schonle describes modernity as creating hierarchies that influence normative behaviour.

In Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* (1976; 1997; 2006; 2009), he uses various literary devices to demonstrate that whilst power produces and shapes practices, individuals, equally, exert power within a hierarchy to bring about change. Tolstoy’s thinking resonates with Foucault’s work on signs and signifiers (Foucault, 1973) where words, phrases, perceptions and thoughts take on other significances and meanings.

Tolstoy has been described as a ‘profoundly visual author’ (Seifrid, 1998, p. 436), often making recourse to metaphor to make sense of the human condition. Foucault similarly has been described by Deleuze (2016, p. 43) as a ‘great seer, a voyant’. Rajchman (1988, p. 91) describes Foucault’s approach as one that attempts to make ‘visible’ the ‘unseen evidences’ of human behaviour that have become embedded in institutional practice. Both authors drew upon what Maude (1987, p. 630), in his biography of Tolstoy, refers to as ‘artistic creativity’ to see things as others saw them and yet, see things differently, examining history and philosophy to make sense of the complex web of multiple connections that interconnect, inform and influence individuals.

Foucault and Tolstoy are also connected through their consideration and exploration of the processes of history. Foucault regarded his own writing as ‘simply tools for the deconstruction of the established apparatus’ (Poster, 1984, p. 151). Tolstoy, too, seeks to make sense of society (Tolstoy, 1948; Neilson, 1948) when he expresses, for example, his incomprehension and frustrations with the workings of established institutions. Cohen (1981, p. 251) describes Tolstoy’s educational writings as encouraging readers to ‘investigate’, ‘to think’ about and to ‘re-evaluate’ teaching, learning and schooling. A sentiment that Foucault would, himself, endorse.

Foucault (1991a) attempts to give an account of the way society, government and institutions act to transform, mould or influence people into forms of behaviour. This form of ‘disciplinary power’ (Foucault, 2015, p. 240) is exercised through ‘normalisation, habit and discipline’, communicated through diverse channels including that of schooling. The basic goal of ‘disciplinary power’ (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 2013) is to create subjects who can be treated as socially and economically productive ‘docile bodies’ (p. 13).

In the later chapters of this study, the ideas of Foucault, Tolstoy, Berlant and Barad are drawn upon to identify and understand the influences that promote or inhibit the ability to speak freely and frankly to authority in educational contexts. As Foucault and Tolstoy point out, the effect of schooling is to mould and influence ways of thought and action.

Teachers are expected to be ‘in’ authority and to be ‘an’ authority (Peters, 1971, p. 240) on subjects and learning. Tolstoy (1972, p. x) regarded himself as ‘in authority’ but did not advocate compulsion or coercion. Murphy (1992, p. 257)

also recognises this, commenting that Tolstoy lent great weight to the idea that a teacher's goal should be to equalise the relationship between teacher and student. This could be achieved by being flexible, knowledgeable about learning, an enthusiastic facilitator, and keen to interest and motivate students.

The desire to equalise the relationship between teacher and student is important within contemporary alternative approaches to teaching and learning. Neil (1973; 1992) explains that within the alternative free school he founded, there continues to be a robust declaration that all ‘persuasion and hidden coercion’ be removed from the schooling process. The adult’s ‘natural authority’ is still recognised (Neil, 1966; 1992; Croal, 1983; Bailey, 2014) by students with some boundaries and rules set by adults. This is implemented through school meetings that allow and encourage the free and frank expression of dissenting views without consequences.

Foucault reminds us that power and influence is not solely confined to those in authority. Foucault maintained that power was something ‘practised’, rather than ‘possessed’ (Miller, 1993, p. 234). This ‘bio-power’ (Foucault, 1990, p. 140) is exercised and perfected through schools and other institutions. Tolstoy, too, was aware of these influences, although he lacked the descriptive articulations of Foucault to express the process. Even where power imbalance exists, resistance constitutes an exertion of autonomy.

In Chapter 6, participants demonstrate the diverse ways in which institutional power influences their thinking and actions. Equally, their own experiences record instances of resistance through practising various strategies. One such strategy, taking the form of the ancient Greek, Diogenes Laertius (Foucault, 2011b, p. 240), is to alter or ‘change their currency’ and re-evaluate their situation – a process that can involve introspective practices akin to Berlant’s impasse.

One of the means by which participants were able to express their resistance was through their ability to speak out freely and frankly. However, their voices were often unwelcomed by those in authority, which caused further anxiety and stress for participants. The ability to access a form of parrhesia, as described by Foucault, could offer an empowering strategy that would allow individuals to express their truth to authority without fearing adverse consequences. Parrhesia

alone, however, also requires the nature and purpose of schooling to be re-imagined.

As Tolstoy, and much later, Krishnamurti (1987), suggest, the problems of schooling are complex in a system of education where dependence upon authority dissipates individual autonomy. A curriculum based on ideas of what a person ‘is’ rather than what they ‘should be’ (Krishnamurti, 1987, p. 22) requires a philosophic change in practice from that of ‘teacher (expert) requiring obedience’ to one of ‘facilitator’.

The Chapter 6 participant stories contain and illustrate these themes. For each participant, as Barad (2007) suggests, their experiences are diverse, over-lapping and entangled within a spectrum of relationships, with Berlant’s (2011) impasse acting as a process or strategy to contemplate action.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I seek to make known the methodological approach and influences that have guided me in conducting this research. I begin by explaining my use of narrative research and discourse analysis. I then outline my understanding of the entangled nature of research materials, before proceeding to relate how my research interviews were conducted and transcribed. I conclude by highlighting the important contribution of Foucault's technologies of the self to gathering and analysing participant experiences.

4.2 Overview

This thesis sets out to gain insight and understanding of everyday encounters and experiences of participants talking with, and to, authority figures in a school context. It is qualitative in nature, following a broad, experience-centred discourse narrative approach, informed by Foucault and his interpreters.

This approach draws upon a wide range of narrative and discourse analysis enquiry practices and procedures (Kvale, 1996; Punch, 2011; Davies and Hughes, 2014) using materials both written and spoken. This mixed approach requires attention to detail in recognising and interpreting a range of intersecting links and connections, exploring what is believed, and what is understood by the notions of power, influence and perceptions.

Mitchell and Egudo (2003) describe the value of story narratives, highlighting the ways in which meaning is expressed and understood through cultural values. Olney (1972) demonstrates that narratives capture implicit knowledge and experiences unavailable by other research methods but can be compromised by the difficulty of fully comprehending another's lived experiences. In this thesis, participants' personal accounts of speaking freely and frankly provide insight into the process of schooling and education and throw light on the nature of real-life encounters with authority figures. From these interviews, I reflect upon the connections and play of forces arising from multiple processes of influence. A narrative methodology, focussing on the interplay of relational codes, norms, context and personal experiences, fits comfortably with the approach taken in this thesis.

4.3 Narrative as method

Clandinin (2016, p. 21 declares that we ‘live by stories’; stories having the potential to reflect complex relationships, identities, contexts, a person’s becoming and past. The contexts within which stories emerge, range from the personal through to the institutional, and each participant carries with them experiences of multiple stories.

Cardinal, cited in Clandinin (2016) notes the process of narrative inquiry having the potential to create safe spaces in which interviewees relate their stories and researchers analyse content. Cardinal describes narrative inquiry as ‘interpreting the threads of life woven in the fabric of daily lives’ (p. 178). A process described by Setterfeld – also cited in Clandinin (2016) – as ‘knotted’ and ‘tangled’ (p. 186), nevertheless, as Kristeva (2001) writes, having an important role in interpreting and reporting a subject’s ‘action’ (p. 43).

It is through the writing of biography and putting into words a subject’s actions in narrative form that the human condition can begin to be explained and understood. Memorable aspects of a subject’s actions need the coming together of two ‘related events’ (Kristeva, 2001, p. 73) to create the story. First, an ‘in between’ is needed that helps the subject unlock the memory or testimony. Second, the ‘in between’ must provide the fertile ground upon which the memory or testimony can be articulated. ‘Events, deeds and words’ (Arendt, 2006, p. 206) are transitory without the ‘in between’ to interpret and record them.

Speech is never just a simple expression of ‘thinking, feeling or willing’ (Arendt, 1978, p. 180) but needs ‘another’ to be involved in helping to make sense of events and the stories we tell of ourselves and our experiences. This is especially so when important issues within society, such as experiences of talking freely and frankly to those in authority, are considered. Such occasions can simply be dismissed as trivial and become part of what Kristeva (2001, p. 73) describes as the ‘crisis of modern culture’ in forgetting, not questioning, or thinking deeply about events and happenings. The narrative testimonies of those who have experienced talking freely and frankly to those in authority become ‘steps along the royal path to the disclosure’ of the ‘who’, revealing glimpses of hidden selves.

Arendt (1998) maintains that each person shares both similarities and differences with their fellow kind. This combination of similarities and differences reflects an individual's uniqueness that cannot easily be categorised or labelled. It is through the act of speaking that aspects of personal identity may be revealed to others, often without the speaker's conscious recognition.

The understanding of *who* a person is, Arendt (1998) describes as a 'curious intangibility', as vocabulary more easily grasps for descriptions of *what* a person is through their character or deeds. To attempt to recognise *who* a person is, Arendt explains, is akin to reflecting the ancient oracles who 'neither reveal nor hide in words, but manifest signs' (p. 181).

A researcher can only ever glimpse a veiled reflection of who or what a person is (Arendt, 1998, p. 184) through the stories they reveal. In the process of analysing interview stories, an array of signs may only 'reveal an agent' or 'hero' and not easily identify the author or producer. In participating in an interview, each revelation can be described as a 'courageous act' involving leaving one's private hiding place and exposing oneself to the world (Arendt, 1998, p. 186; Kristeva, 2001, p. 74), thus giving rise to the 'infinite action of interpretation'. Foucault (1990, p. 92) reminds us that within these recollections of experiences, there exist a 'multiplicity of force relations' that contribute equally to the process of interpretation.

Foucault is usefully deployed here as a 'research tool' to make sense of the discourse contained in interviewee stories. Foucault raises questions about the 'normativity of behaviour' in relation to the technologies of power that work to shape and influence a subject (Foucault, 2011a, p. 42). These technologies of power act to objectify the individual. First, by what Foucault (1991, p. 10) refers to as 'dividing practices' that separate and classify individuals. Second, by the way in which individuals respond to the forces acting upon them, thereby, making themselves into subjects. The complex interplay between these 'objectifications' and 'subjectifications' provides the foundation of my narrative enquiry along with the influences of Tolstoy, Barad and Berlant.

This primarily Foucauldian approach broadly aligns with Tamboukou (2003; 2013), and Kim (2016, p. 66) who writes that narrative is firmly rooted in 'discourse, power and history' to locate understandings of self. Dentith (1996, p. 56), identifies the importance of the individual's belief system, which is both

facilitated and moulded by technologies of power. These powers act in two ways: first as an ‘authoritative discourse’ and second, as an ‘internally persuasive discourse’, allowing the subject a degree of flexibility of thinking and autonomy.

The collective tools I have used for analysis (Foucault, 1997; Tamboukou and Ball, 2003; Berlant, 2011; Tolstoy, 1972) allow me, as a researcher, to analyse interview stories and seek out and explore the ‘germs and roots’, the ‘active seeds’ (Kim, 2016, p. 236) within the stories presented. The tools provided by Foucault and others, however, are not to be regarded in a fixed, Procrustean bed of terms, in which interviewee experiences must bend and conform to fit my chosen theories.

The accounts interviewees chose to share with me were analysed from an open awareness to the responses given. The questions and prompts I used to help focus the interviewees in relating their experiences were as unobtrusive as possible, with the aim of allowing participants autonomy to share their experiences in as wide a manner as possible. The language used is not the primary object of study but an instrument (Gee and Handford, 2012) for obtaining insight into ‘complex social processes’ and practices that form the subject (Foucault, 1989, p. 49).

Jackson and Mazzei (2009, p.8) refer to this approach as conducting narrative enquiry using ‘soft ears’. ‘A process by which the interviewer listening carefully and being sensitive to the ‘overlapping and competing entangled discourses’ that may be contributing to ‘multiple positions’ and forms of knowledge. The interactions between interviewee and researcher constitute ‘complex discourses’ (Foucault, 1990, p. 100) that can ‘come into play’ when questioning, recording and interpreting stories.

It is at the point where these ‘discursive communities’ interplay and overlap that Mitchell identifies the possibility of ‘rich opportunities’ (p. 92) where different meanings can be found, stimulating new thinking and reflection. However, Mitchell also advises the researcher to be cautious when interpreting findings as the complex nature of both interviewee and researcher can make full understanding difficult or impossible. At best, the researcher is advised to proceed with ‘soft ears’ (p. 93). So, recognising the complicated nature of

narrative enquiry, and the need for careful analysis of stories and sensitive selection of what presents itself, are among the most significant issues.

These issues are not necessarily ‘truths’, as what constitutes ‘truth’ can be self-constructed and variable. Nor are the issues raised by participants in their interviews simply analysed for ‘meaning’ (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 2013) when an interviewee gives an account of themselves. What can be more interesting and revealing (Jackson and Mazzei, 2009, p. 165) is the ‘entanglement’ of truths, powers, desires and the way in which the subject speaks of the present. As Foucault describes in an interview (1990a, p. 39), the ‘truths’ about a subject are made up of many different power relations, which are simultaneously exerted upon, and by, a subject. Through this process, ‘truth’ is being constantly re-worked and constructed.

The flexibility of using the narrative approach is one that allowed me the opportunity of bringing a usefully reflexive direction to transcript analysis involving a questioning of self and others. Narrative research tools allow exploration of questions related to my area of enquiry, finding minor resonance in Socrates’ utterance at his trial that ‘life without enquiry is not worth living’ (Plato, 1964, p. 443).

The process of enquiry and examination for this study, which seeks to make meaning from story and narrative, inevitably involves a coming together of my own beliefs and experiences of education, learning and schooling with those of my interviewees. Narratives constitute stories (Kim, 2016), and stories require narratives that may contain elements of both uniqueness and universality. Ricoeur (1991) describes this as an inevitable, constitutive characteristic of narrative that brings both interviewer and interviewee together as co-constructers of meaning from written and discursive dialogue.

Narrative enquiry, however, is not without its critics, and Casey (1995, p. 212), cautions that whilst narrative can be ‘compelling’, the researcher should not be blinded by the ‘extraordinary self-conscious fascination’ of the story. Nor should the researcher (Munro, 1998; Goodson, 1992) allow themselves to romanticise the subject, even though personal biography is a rich source of information that helps to clarify dispositions and behaviours. Similarly, Barone (2007, p. 463) describes the dangers of ‘narrative overload’ and a general scepticism of storytelling as research.

These issues are ever-present in the process of narrative enquiry (Kim, 2016). I have been mindful to consider these aspects in my use of interviewee stories, where I seek to record the 'complex, layered and dynamic reality' (p. 21) presented by interviewees. Despite these issues, the use of narrative as a method of enquiry provides a unique insight into the lived experiences of subjects not otherwise recorded. The narrative analysis approach is one in which the researcher brings to the enquiry process their own understanding of phenomena and interacts with the subject to jointly create insight and understanding. It is, therefore, important that my understanding of narrative analysis is made transparent within the research process.

4.4 Narrative and discourse analysis

Any narrative that arises between interviewer and interviewee (Kohler-Riessman, 1993, p. v) 'always bears the mark of the person who created it'. The storytelling of my interviewees is seen very much through the lens of my own school experiences and informed by my understandings of Foucault, Tolstoy, Barad and Berlant. The narrative approach takes as its object of study the story, as related by the interviewee, and how they have made sense of, and responded to, the events, incidents and experiences they have encountered (Kohler-Riessman, 1993). Kohler-Riessman describes stories told by interviewees as 'revealed truths' (1993, p. 20) taking form through the researcher attending to careful and transparent interpretation of context and social factors. She adds that narratives cannot be viewed as 'exact records' (p. 64). They give 'prominence to human agency and imagination' (p. 5), providing insight into issues concerning social life and experiences. Foucault (1980, p. 82) notes that examining how these issues or 'truths' helps to interpret the 'historically determined' subject.

Kohler-Riessman (1993), in her narrative methodology, builds upon earlier approaches in examining how related stories spoken by interviewees are organised. Starting on the inside of the story, she analyses meanings and works 'outward' to include what is taken for granted by both interviewee and interviewer. However, what is chosen, and what is left out, depends upon the influence and guiding principles within the research question and insight from the interviewer.

The process of narrative methodology is, therefore, complex and does not rely upon constraints or procedures. Narrative material is rarely 'clearly bounded' (Kohler-Riessman, 1993, p. 18) and finding meaning and understandings can be in a story mixture of past, present and future. Interviewees often try to make sense of the stories they relate in the process of verbalising them to the interviewer.

Where Kohler-Riessman's approach is particularly useful is that she takes account of emotion as a factor in the narrative, which is not transparent in, for example, the Labov and Waletzky (1967) approach to analysing narrative. Le *et al.* (2009, p. 71) also emphasise the importance of emotion, personal experience, biography and motivation. Emotions mould the content of recalled events, having, within them, an agenda that 'shapes' the content of what is revealed in interviews (Kohler-Riessman, 1993, p. 65). This, in turn, informs interpretation and judgements concerning the trustworthiness and truth of what is related, as well as the persuasiveness of what the interviewee relates, its plausibility and how convincing it is. An element, therefore, of correspondence can be included in the interviewing process, where the interviewer returns to the interviewee to check the transcript. This requires flexibility on the part of the interviewer (Kohler-Riesman, 1993, p. 67) attending to 'nuances of speech', organisation of content and understanding context. Tensions are always present within analysis and interpretation of narrative between 'generalisations and the unpacking of speech'.

'Narrative' and 'discourse' often evade any general definition (Andrews *et al.*, 2000) and this is embodied in what Foucault (1997, p. 200) refers to as 'the technical processes' through which power relations exist. Discourses function as 'frameworks' (Andrews *et al.*, 2000, p. 131) of understanding that assist in comprehending the social world.

Using narrative analysis, I felt it important not to neglect the links it has with discourse analysis. Stubbs (1983, p. 3) describes the challenges inherent in analysing both written and spoken materials, regarding them as synonymous. He draws attention to the 'different universes of beliefs and background assumptions' that comprise understanding.

Hodgson (2000, p. 72), influenced by Foucault (1990), recognises the role played by the words spoken and the discourse of wider society forces in

‘constituting the subject’. This can occur in direct and indirect ways (Foucault, 1990) and in a multiplicity of different discursive elements, in an ever changing, sometimes contradictory, oscillation between the instrument of exerting power and the effect of power upon a subject. His object of analysis was the ‘surfaces of discourse’ (Barker and Jane, 2016) involving both language and practice and the way in which discourse ‘defines and produces the objects of knowledge’ (p. 23).

Within each individual, as Vygotsky (1981) notes, there is a process of perpetual oscillation of words to thought. Through this process, thought and word undergo change and development to solve problems, with meaning constantly in flux. Expressions of thought (Vygotsky, 1981, p. 150) ‘developed successively’ eventually express themselves as a ‘cloud shedding a shower of words’. Through this process of dialogue, the ‘shower of words’ needs interpreting, not just to identify the interviewee’s thoughts but to identify aspects such as motivation, understanding, emotion and spatial, social and cultural context. Building rapport with the interviewee is, therefore, important, and this research was influenced by Tolstoy’s methodological approach.

Troyat (1967) relates that Tolstoy made extraordinary efforts to put his participants at ease, sometimes even dressing as a peasant and travelling the open road on foot when interviewing pilgrims and travellers, noting the words, thoughts and experiences of those he met. Lucas (1979) relates how Tolstoy went on to spend much time making sense of these encounters and recording the discourses he heard so they were represented fluently in his own writings.

This process has been described by Squire *et al.* (2014, p. 10) as a ‘pragmatic direction’, involving ‘theories, methodologies, data and modes of analysis’ to construct meaning. Bruner (1991) makes clear that we organise our memory in the form of narrative, such as a collection of stories, excuses or myths, for example – narratives, themselves, being continually constructed and re-constructed in the light of experience and reflection.

A narrative approach that combines both story narrative and words spoken is an important tool in recognising the human experience as one in which we are constantly engaged in making sense of our human condition. Livholts and Tamboukou (2015) acknowledge the active role of language in the production of knowledge but challenge the notion that there may only be one version of that

knowledge. They argue that knowledge itself can be regarded as an artefact of culture, influenced by such matters as context, culture, relationship and time. Similarly, Burr (2003) recognises that meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories and statements all inform the creation of a 'version of events' (p. 64).

Barad (2003) notes that discourse is, therefore, not just what is said but a force that constrains and enables what *can* be said. My role as researcher is one that recognises my own part in constructing a 'version of events'. Rouse (1987) also raises questions about the role of representationalism when interpreting objects, social activities and language, advising that it is a presumption that representations are more accessible to a subject than the things they are supposed to represent. Rouse declares we cannot fully know or interpret a set of circumstances and one should not assume that meaning and content are easily accessible.

Barad (2003) refers to the physicist, Niels Bohr, who maintained that any attempt to measure or explain, in the enquiry process, is always influenced and limited by the apparatus (methods) used in that experiment or enquiry process. Being aware of this from the outset, places the observer within the context of the investigation or experiment itself, constructing and influencing the selection, interpretation and conclusions of the research material.

Morey, cited in Armstrong (1992, p. 119) and drawing upon Foucault, suggests that 'telling of the present' leads to a re-thinking of the 'normal' and in so doing, helps to 'untangle' the present from the 'normal' of the past and question previously held beliefs. Barad (2003, p. 814) recognises the 'normal' as the effect of complex practices involving power, agency, meaning and the 'conditions of possibility'. These are, in turn, influenced and entangled together with the interpretation of the observer. Being aware of these issues in my thesis led me to explore further the connections between Barad's entangled nature of research material and Foucault.

4.5 The entangled nature of research material

Bozalek and Zembylas (2017, p. 115) describe 'entanglement' of meaning and matter as an active phenomenon that is both a process and a product of scholarly engagement involving application of both 'the head and the heart' of

the researcher. Entanglement as a concept takes shape from Haraway's notion (Barad, 2007, p. 29) of 'diffraction' which concentrates upon 'patterns of difference' acknowledging that research phenomena often concern the interpretation of diverse, entangled ideas and experiences in a way that reflexive methodologies may not.

Foucault (2002, p. 84), too, points to the complicated formation and interplay of thought, action and discourse, identifying multiple influences that lie on the surface and unseen behind the 'visible façade of the system' under investigation. Foucault points to the 'rich disorder' that lies beneath the thin surface of discourse and thought arising through many 'multiple relations' of influence. These themes link with the work of Barad (2007).

Barad's metaphor of 'diffraction' draws inspiration from the work of Niels Bohr in quantum physics (Bozalek and Zembylas, 2017, p. 115) where it is used to describe the way that light waves combine, bend and spread. Barad (2007) developed the notion of diffraction to 'engage affirmatively with difference' (p. 28). This is elaborated on by Jackson and Mazzei (2012) who explain it as a process in which one discipline, subject matter or approach can be read through another. This approach has been adopted in participant interviews and analysis in not assuming anything about participants beforehand and using intuition to guide both interviews and the interrogation of the data.

In this way, it allows more flexibility on the part of the researcher to pursue previously unrecognised or unexpected connections or differences that emerge from the research material. Diffraction, therefore, becomes one of the 'tools to think with' (Barad, 2007, p. 72) involving both the transcript narrative and the intuition of the researcher to capture the complexities of social life, rather than relying solely upon mechanistic coding (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012, p. viii). Diffractive approaches raise questions about how texts, artefacts and humans inform one another (Braidotti and Hlavajova, 2018) in a dynamic cycle of engagement.

As an approach, it encapsulates a critical practice (Barad (2007) that seeks to understand 'which differences matter, how they matter and for whom they matter' (p. 88). Such a view, therefore, seeks more than simply noting where differences appear (Bozalek and Zembylas, 2017) but attempts to map where the effects of difference present themselves.

Jackson and Mazzei (2012, p. 6) liken this process to an architectural ‘threshold’, a place in the middle of things, a hallway space between different but connected rooms. From this connecting passageway, the rooms may also be conjoined with each other, naturally having different capacities and shapes. By bringing data and theory together in the ‘threshold’, new questions and presently unknown issues can emerge. Participants, before interview, will have already (Jackson and Mazze, 2012, p. 3) ‘filtered, processed and interpreted their stories and recollections’. For this study, it was useful in expanding the scope of the research from simply investigating participants’ recollections of being students to their recent experiences as adult workers and as parents.

4.6 Design of the research: a flexible approach

This research sought to gain insight and understanding of everyday encounters and experiences of respondents talking with, and to, authority figures in a school context. Being interpretive, it is based upon ‘an ontological assumption that there is no objective reality’ (Davis and Hughes, 2014, p. 26), that is, ‘reality’ is subjective, having many different perspectives and understandings.

A qualitative approach allows for a ‘continuous refocussing and redrawing’ (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 30) of the study’s conditions of operation. An example of this is in my initial intention to obtain written responses to questions before selecting subjects for interview. I abandoned this approach early in the study as interviewees were reluctant to engage with a written activity.

Similarly, adjustments were made in the wording of how I described my study. Initially, participants were only asked to recall their experiences as school students, but I discovered that respondents were much more likely to volunteer for interview if I explained the study as one concerned in more general terms, focussed upon a wider range of conversations with authority figures in a school context. Participants wanted to include more recent encounters with authority figures, especially where they felt an injustice had occurred, and found that talking about these had the additional advantage of aiding memory recall of more distant events when they were younger. For this reason, I felt it useful to my research that I include both types of recollection and not just confine it to recalling experiences as a school student. This wider scope became one of the key unique features of the study.

4.7 Participant interviews: sampling and ethics

Punch (2011, p. 150) outlines the importance of making clear, in qualitative research, the 'who', 'what' and 'why' of selecting individuals for interview as part of the study. My interviewees were obtained through 'purposive' or 'non-probability' (Miles *et al.*, 2014) sampling techniques. Gilbert (2004) recognised this as a suitable sampling method appropriate for an exploratory approach that involves theoretical development. Similarly, Blaxter *et al.* (2009) note that non-probability approaches to sampling are most appropriate where the interviews require in-depth discussion of experiences. Robson and McCarton (2011) highlight their appropriate use within small-scale studies, explaining that smaller studies commonly make use of non-probability or purposive sampling together with 'convenience' or 'accidental sampling' (p. 279).

Non-probability (convenience) sampling has been my adopted method of approach as it allows access to the most convenient and accessible pool of respondents available. I am aware, however, that this method has been criticised as the 'least satisfactory' (Robson and McCarton (2011, p. 281). Nevertheless, it is useful in getting a general 'feel' for the issues under investigation and is widely used. It has also allowed me to access the views of adults from different genders, nationalities, ethnicities and cultures. Participants were self-selecting; some from hearing of my research through symposiums and presentations, and others from word of mouth during my PhD registration period. All those who responded were mature adults and have been included in the research.

Twelve participants were female and four were male, from a range of ages, diverse cultures, ethnicities and experiences. In all, there were sixteen participants who provided nineteen semi-structured interviews lasting one or two hours. Three participants were keen to have more than one interview as they wished to discuss, in more depth, their experiences from different phases and roles in their lives (see Appendices). Participants narrated a wide range of individual experiences of interacting with authority figures in education contexts. The ages of participants ranged from mid-twenties to mid-fifties, representing a variety of diverse cultural, ethnic, national and religious backgrounds.

Interviewing participants about their experiences of being able to speak freely and frankly to authority is a 'moral enterprise' (Kvale, 1996, p. 109).

Consequently, I ensured that in all interviews, participants were aware that they were able to withdraw at any time or have deleted any communicated material they felt unhappy with. As Kim (2016, p. 193) advises, the stories related by interviewees have been taken at face value and my approach has always been one that looks to explore and seek understanding of the 'subjective world inhabited' by each participant. All views communicated in interview have been included and no material de-selected. Similarly, uppermost in all the research undertaken in this thesis is the principal aim (Kvale, 1996, p. 109) that social science research must be driven by a desire to 'ameliorate the human condition and enhance human dignity'.

4.8 Story transcripts

4.8.1 The challenges of converting interviews into transcriptions

From the audio recordings of interviews, I began to realise that the transcription process of transforming speech into written text (Kvale, 2007, p. 93) is one in which the stories of my subjects become 'decontextualised conversations'. Kvale elaborates the problems inherent in converting spoken word into written word, pointing out that it is a process in which body language, tone, gesture, intonation and breathing can be lost in the starkness of the printed transcript. Stubbs (1983) cautions that there is no one solution for all these transcription problems.

However, by transcribing interviews within twenty-four hours of recording, and inserting annotations from participants, it helped to clarify any unclear meanings, allowing me to attain as accurate an account as possible. Transcription is a time-consuming and complex process (Halcomb and Davidson (2005) and one that is always open to human error, such as misinterpretation due to differences in class, cultural and language. With this in mind, participants were shown the transcripts and invited to discuss further where issues of clarification or accuracy were needed. Halcomb and Davidson (2005) mention that the accuracy of transcription is always shaped by how the interviewer hears and perceives what is related.

The process of transcription (Kohler-Riessman, 1993) directly connects with its later analysis, with both undergoing repeated annotation and review as new

ideas or connections become apparent. Kim (2016) describes this process as like looking through a kaleidoscope; when the kaleidoscope is turned, new and different patterns emerge. Reading and re-reading the transcript material for this study continued to shed new light upon material included in the analysis chapter (Chapter 6).

Transforming talk into text can only ever be a representation, inevitably involving a process of selection and reduction (Kohler Riesman, 1993). Silverman (2006) raises the issue of accuracy, consistency and reliability in transcription, explaining that the process can be gravely weakened by, for example, failure to note pauses, repetitions and body language. Wherever transcript material was unclear in this study, the participants were invited to clarify or explain further.

The question starters used in participant interviews were semi-structured in design. Kim (2016) and Kvale (1996) advise that a researcher should consider the degree to which they wish to control both the process as well as the content of each interview. For this research, my approach was to use questions to help guide the focus of interviews rather than to control the content. The questions posed in this study were influenced by my own personal experience, working in education; Foucault's technologies of the self and other sources drawn from the literature review and theory chapters. Their focus reflected each of the main research questions, whilst remaining sensitive and open to any unexpected themes emerging from the participants' responses (see Appendices).

The participants' narrative stories were transcribed using *Express Scribe* transcription software (v.7.01) at a reduced speed of 83%, which helped to note all pauses, hesitations and remarkable incidences that arose in the interviews. The transcripts were methodically re-scrutinised during and after transcription to identify any over-looked insights or note further details on how an interviewee related their story.

4.8.2 Creating order from raw data

To manage the rich data from each participant required an initial ordering device. To this end, the Labov and Waletzky model (1967) allowed for the orientation and general overview of each narrative (see Appendix C). Thus, enabling a better understanding of context (Andrews *et al.*, 2013), which aided

analysis. As an initial ordering device, the six elements devised by Labov and Waletzky (1967) provided format headings, useful for an initial structural capturing of information, to aid analysis of oral narratives. This template (see Appendix C) was used to record summaries of, for example, subject matter, setting, time, place, what happened and result of action.

The Labov and Waletzky template aided my recall when engaged in writing Chapter 6. Labov (1972) regarded methodology not as a tidy, self-contained programme for converting ignorance into knowledge, but an amalgamation of different strategies for handling and processing rich data. The next stage in making sense of participant story transcripts was to combine the material from the Labov and Waletzky template and interrogate it through the lens of Foucault's technologies of the self. This entailed designing a cartography (see Appendix C) to map the captured meanings, metaphors, representations, images and statements from the stories related by the participants (Foucault, 1988b; 1997; Tamboukou and Ball, 2003). It should be noted, however, that because of the open-ended nature of the experience-narrative approach, these outlines in my research functioned as guides rather than prescription.

4.8.3 Foucault's technologies

Foucault (1988b) maintains that there are three main areas of enquiry. The first concerns the relationship the subject has to 'truth', in which the individual is both the subject and the object. The second is the relationship the individual has with others and how power is experienced and exercised. The third is how elements of truth, power and self are experienced. Technologies of the self represent one of four types of technologies (Foucault, 1997) that seek to capture the essence of how individuals function in society and raise questions about the influences that contribute to their thinking and action.

Foucault's four technologies (Foucault, 1988b) are intricately connected and overlapping in influencing thinking and action. These technologies influenced the interrogation of this study's transcripts and their analysis in Chapter 6.

Technologies of production: allow a person to manipulate, transform and produce both things and ideas.

Technologies of sign systems: permit the use of signs, meanings and symbols.

Technologies of power: account for the way individuals submit to, and exercise power.

Technologies of the self: describe how individuals know and take care of themselves.

These technologies, Foucault (1988b) maintains, describe how, from ancient Greek times, individuals have come to know and take care of themselves in society. In common with Foucault (1997), my research interest has been within these technologies of production, sign systems, power, and the self. Foucault (1988b, p. 18) refers to these technologies as 'the perpetual quest of humankind to make sense of themselves, their context and those around them'.

4.8.4 Further challenges faced and how they were addressed

Participant narratives do not simply draw upon past experiences but also, *generate* experiences and thinking in the process of interview (Kohler-Riessman, 2008). This happened with many of the participants, who were keen to discuss their past and present experiences. Ochs (2008) cautions that whilst selectivity is essential in working with transcripts, the selectivity process should not be random but made explicit. Hence, in Chapter 5 (Selected participant stories), I make clear my criteria for using these as a focus.

Transcripts cannot avoid being selective (Jaworski and Coupland, 2008) and, as pointed out by Squire *et al.* (2014), can only go so far in capturing, fully, the voice of the speaker. Kohler-Riessman (2008, p. 29), too, notes that there are inherent problems in attempting to accurately 'capture the fluid and dynamic words and gestures' contained in an oral conversation in print. Despite these limitations, Kohler-Riessman (2008) acknowledges that the use of transcript is a useful tool to interrogate how speech can become an element that acts to construct the individual and their history.

As noted by Andrews *et al.* (2007), stories are a useful means of communicating and making sense of experience, involving (Kvale, 1996; Kohler-Riessman, 2008) the co-authoring of transcribed interviews between interviewer and interviewee. The 'co-authoring' of the conversation occurs through questioning and directing the course of conversation from which the story emerges. These 'decontextualised conversations' (Kvale, 1996, p. 165) continue to evolve in meaning and understanding during interrogation of the

written text. Stubbs (1983, p. 20) describes this process as a useful tool for identifying ‘complex aspects of conversational coherence’, describing words or phrases ordinarily overlooked, but of significance, in general, everyday conversation.

When engaged in the interview process, Denny (2011) provides a useful list of four key questions that guided this research. He advises that before and after every interview, the researcher should ask themselves what they are doing and whether they are interviewing the right person, at the right time, in the right place, and finally, will the interview be of value?

These basic precepts proved useful in the case of one interview, which was interrupted by a fire alarm evacuation. On return, it took some time for the participant and me to re-orientate ourselves to the task in hand. Denny (2011) suggests that these reminders are anticipatory in mode and designed to help focus attention and reflect upon the task to be undertaken.

4.9 Concluding thoughts

Creating meaning and seeking to understand are innate human traits, and part of the motivating factors within Foucault’s (1988b) technologies of the self. Drawing upon both narrative and discourse analysis approaches has allowed me to analyse and illuminate lived stories that have arisen from the experiences of talking with authority figures and service users in a school context.

The issues and themes that have emerged contribute to the wider debate concerning the process of schooling. The issues raised contribute to thinking differently about how education is practised and the associated relations of power. Le *et al.* (2009) highlight the importance of increasing consciousness of how power relations are communicated through language. As Foucault (1980b) observes, discursive practices are not simply ways of producing discourse but also contain obscured undertones of meaning and influence.

In attempting to make this process more transparent, my research will be contributing to a greater knowledge and understanding of relationship and the complexities involved in speaking freely and frankly to authority. I hope that this knowledge and understanding of discursive relations will contribute and enable a more emancipatory approach to relationships in school contexts. From the material provided by interviewees, I seek to achieve a degree of insight into the

problematic area of speaking freely and frankly to authority. In doing so, I hope to encourage those within the education sector to think differently about the ways in which they interact with others and reflect upon the purpose and operation of schooling.

Chapter 5: Selected participant stories

5.1 Introduction

The following participant stories have been selected on the basis that they illustrate a range of different experiences, contexts and themes related to speaking freely and frankly to authority. Extracts from the interviews give the reader an insight into their different encounters with authority in education contexts. The selection and featuring of these extracts function as a forerunner to the later, more detailed analysis.

The participant stories in this chapter have been selected because they encompass examples of recalled encounters from all of the three perspectives of school student, worker in education and parent.

Each of the featured encounters illustrate examples of Foucault's technologies outlined in Chapters 3 and 4. Foucault's technologies of production (1988b) can be observed in the ways participants were able to bring about change or have influence on their situation. Equally, participants illustrate examples of Foucault's technologies of sign systems in the ways in which they understood and responded to their experiences. Technologies of power can be discerned in the participant's descriptions of power relations and technologies of the self manifest in how they used their personal autonomy. Arendt (2006, p. 61) notes that 'mortal action' is bound up with 'human plurality' and that 'remembrance' (p. 6) is essential to the stories that can be told. Each participant story generates a range of meanings, allowing for interpretation and connections.

Tamboukou (2020) describes the role of the researcher as having responsibility to write about life, making links between life histories and explanatory discourses. This, I have attempted to do, with Foucault's technologies in mind. Participant accounts in this chapter constitute a 'living archive' (Farge, 2013, p. 77) helping to illuminate their experiences. For participants, their experiences (Ahmed, 2019) became a life-changing element in their biographies. My intention, with these interviews, is to allow the voices of participants to articulate their opinions, hopes and fears. Their genders, ages and ethnicities are outlined in Appendix A, with an overview, in Appendix C, of how data from the interviews was initially organised.

5.2 Emily

Emily is a young woman in her late twenties. Reflecting upon her secondary schooling, Emily described incidents of resistance to authority. Unable to directly voice her feelings for fear of consequences, Emily felt unable to directly impact unpopular changes. Meeting with other, like-minded students, she began to write plays and stories that lampooned those in authority.

Although these plays and stories were never publicly performed, they did amuse the 'safe' teachers and sympathetic students unsupportive of the changes being implemented. Emily recalled one playlet,

> *… my friend and I wrote a screen play in which we, the heroes, had to save the school from an invasion of giant bees* [headteacher's mantra to aim for grade 'B' and above] *who had been released by mistake in her creation of a consortium of schools…..and it ended with a fight to the death of a whole band of teachers who were on our side and the* [new] *headteacher …* [Laughter].

The new changes radically affected the organisation and ethos of the school. For Emily and her co-conspirators, avoiding direct confrontation with authority was essential to preserve self, '… as we were still just in it for ourselves'.

Emily and her fellow students became less supportive of the institution's changes and engaged in active resistance, undermining some of the changes.

> [The head] *brought in things like houses……and people thought this school has been around for 200 years, and we have never had houses and we are fine….and then she named them after* [regional] *orchard fruits … and we all thought that was hilarious…… and to be in a house called 'Pippin' was so ridiculous, in our eyes, that we all just didn't take it seriously so…. like, her sports day didn't work because no one cared about their houses.*

Despite the lampooning of the changes, Emily felt sympathy for her headteacher.

> *Um…. I guess she was probably under loads of pressure as an innovator to make changes ….and I guess she never really explained why she was doing these things or* [took] *into account that she had such a conservative bunch of people on her hands.*

Emily and her co-conspirators were amused by the attempts of senior managers to innovate and began to lose respect for them, recalling the headteacher implying the students should all be 'busy bees'. The headteacher,

> *…created hilarious mantras like …. achieving 'B or above'…. and we just thought all of this was absolutely hilarious as she seemed to have no sense of irony or humour in anything she was saying……seemingly did not see, that the entire school was mocking her… so we just took it and ran with it.*

The headteacher's desire to impose her will and bring about changes she felt were necessary, was described by Emily as akin to the Star Wars saga, 'like Darth Vader was committed to destroying the rebel fleet'.

Emily's reaction and response to authority helped her to cope with feelings of powerlessness.

> *It made* [the headteacher] *like, non-terrifying because she was just a figure of fun… it's like the same kind of concept that the troops in WW1 made fun of their generals telling them to go over the top when they were actually standing behind the lines… they just paid them lip service and made fun of them behind their backs.*

Emily did not recall feeling angry or upset about her lack of voice to speak out freely and frankly. There was a grudging acceptance that her place and role within the school prevented her from directly expressing her feelings.

> *… we just felt it was just stuff that happens, you know…I don't think we ever thought that any of it was necessarily, like, anything to feel particularly strongly about….it all just struck us as hilarious because it was all taken so seriously.*

Emily felt no real expectation that having a voice to speak freely and frankly was ever an option for her, '… we had no authority to say anything… [thoughtful]…I don't think anyone was bothered by it, that was just the dynamic…'.

Emily expressed feelings about the nature of the school as a working institution dominated by expectations of education and a rigid hierarchy of organisation.

> *It is… hierarchical…. like….it is still 'good girls do the right thing' ……. don't complain …. get good grades…. like….at no point are kids ever*

asked to shape how their school works…. or when they are, it is in superficial ways that are clearly meaningless.

Emily explained that together with students in her circle, there was an unseen pressure to conform to the expected norms within the school. If a student stepped out from the expected mode of behaviour, it was frowned upon by those in authority.

Well, you would be labelled 'naughty' …… and good students towed the line and said, 'yes' and 'no' at the right places and got 'A-stars'.

Emily felt 'under orders' to adhere to the school rules and expectations placed upon her. Despite Emily's lack of voice, there remained a loyalty to what Emily felt was the school ethos before the arrival of the new headteacher.

… we felt more loyalty to each other and the school …the whole point was that we were ganging up against her [new head] *as a school because of the school and its history and err… we were tiny cogs in that…*

Emily remarked that the lampooning dialogue did, eventually, play a part in influencing her and other students to leave the school.

Post-secondary school, Emily attended university and gained a qualification in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), where her understandings of authority in an educational context continued to develop. Emily felt more empowered to speak freely and frankly as an educational professional but was, again, critical of those in authority above her.

…there was a senior teacher on every job, so …most of them were bossy, middle-aged women who had been actual teachers and who ran everything really well…. but there were a couple who were really terrible…but also it was like …. you see incompetence as a professional but because, you think… clearly this person can't do it, so basically, you do their job and then use that as a lever to get a promotion next time.

Emily felt it was too risky to speak freely and frankly, as a rule. Her strategy was to study the failings of those in authority and to speak in a carefully couched way so as not to jeopardise her career.

I noticed that this and this didn't actually work in the rota, but I have re-drafted one that looks like this…. would you be happy with that piece of the things I've changed? … the implication being you [the boss] *are an idiot. You clearly have not done this properly. It doesn't work, therefore, I have had to re-do it for you … I'm twenty years younger than you and the newest teacher here. Why can't you sort your life out? … I know you were out drinking last night.*

Emily stated this was a good strategy to adopt when dealing with authority and one that proved successful for her. Emily felt the strategy, though not as direct, was much more effective and avoided unpleasant, confrontational consequences.

Well, I think the objective is more important than, like speaking truth to power for the sake of it … like I don't think that gets you places…

Emily likened speaking freely and frankly to a Greek tragedy play in which,

… something bad happens to them and they become a martyr, whereas actually, the people who get promotion are diplomats who go…. hmm…err…. this is a thing that I just don't think we have quite got right….and I've actually been noticing that this works instead, would you just be happy with doing that?

Emily's strategy relied on the authority figure thinking,

O my God! I've put something in place that didn't work! Why hasn't this worked? […] And do it differently next time […] but equally if they are incompetent […] it's fine […] whatever.

Emily also noticed a difference between the staff–student modes of interaction that occurred in the TEFL context and those in a school; caused, primarily, by the fact that in the former context, they were paying for the service. This, at times, emboldened them to speak more freely and frankly to their adult teachers when they were unhappy with the service they were receiving. The students in the TEFL context saw themselves as consumers and customers. Unlike school students, they expected to be able to speak freely and frankly more easily to their teachers.

Emily also identified the short duration of the contractual period of teaching on the programme as encouraging students to speak their minds freely and frankly.

> *Nothing mattered in the relationship...like you were just a person you were taught by for a week, or three weeks, or whatever…then you would go away again. So, even if, as a person in power, you did bear a grudge, it would only be for a short period of time anyway because they would be gone.*

Students also knew that the TEFL teachers needed a good student review at the end of the contractual period of teaching and, therefore, expected their teachers to listen intently to criticisms they may have about the course, teaching or accommodation. Furthermore, students entered the teaching sessions having identified their own goals, rather than teacher- or school-imposed goals. Emily felt that this gave them more confidence to speak their minds freely. Students learning English were not inhibited by the nuances in an unfamiliar language, therefore, often came across as blunt in expressing their views to teachers.

Emily also noted that modes of dress could affect student willingness to speak freely and frankly. When Emily exchanged her TEFL role for one of a visiting teacher entering a formal school context in various European countries,

> [students] *they call teachers, like, 'Sir' and 'Madam' but, like, in many cases, you'd be, like, not dressed like their normal teachers, so they'd call you by your first name…*

In this context, Emily found that the student–teacher relationship was quite different from what she had experienced in her own schooling. Lack of formal dress and not holding a position of recognised authority allowed students to speak more freely and frankly than they would to their own schoolteachers.

5.3 Richard

Richard, a young man in his twenties, gave a vivid account of his school and post-schooling experiences of authority in school contexts.

One of Richard's schoolboy recollections concerned an incident of name-calling between two teenage boys that led to a minor fracas involving tie-pulling and verbal abuse. Richard describes this incident as minor but escalated through the exercise of teacher authority and school discipline procedures. Richard felt that the way in which the authority figure reacted and singled them out for blame was unfair.

> … [the teacher] *went into 'authoritative teacher' mode. They probably ….um…did the staring eyes… and furrowed brow…and shouty voice and sort of, looking down on people…*

Richard's response to this experience was formed by observations of other incidents he had observed in school, recalling, 'I probably became very meek…and I put my eyes down….err… yeah'.

Richard felt that such an approach in the face of authority was the best strategy to keep the incident low key, explaining,

> *I think I had internalised that is the sort of response you do when you get shouted at… so… probably… influenced by two factors… in that I have been told and taught, probably by parents….and teachers and things…*

Richard felt it was futile to speak out freely and frankly to the teacher as they would not listen. He explained his silent response,

> *… that is what you do when you get told off…. for something…. you should just…….um…. sort of take the punishment…. being shouted at and not answer back and stuff…….and yeah, that is your role…*

Regardless of who was at fault, Richard felt it pointless to discuss the incident with the authority figure, explaining that to speak freely and frankly may have led to further misunderstanding or increased chances of further punishment.

> *I do also remember from school witnessing people…. answering back….and arguing with the teacher in similar situations and it just never ending … well… it made their punishment… larger because of their actions.*

Uppermost in Richard's mind was to minimise punishment and exit from the uncomfortable incident quickly, without jeopardising his future relationship with the authority figure.

> *Yeah…. I just wanted to draw a line under it...I did not want it to be seen that I was that sort of student… I didn't see myself as that… kind of person.*

Richard accepted the consequences, which included minor punishment, even though he felt unfairly treated and the punishment unjustified. The authority figure made little effort to discuss or explore the incident further.

> [The punishment] *was… a 'serving your time' experience… I don't think of it as a negative experience… they didn't talk to me … I wouldn't have wanted to do that really… if I had been made to, I would have been quite monosyllabic.*

Richard relates the unpleasantness of the encounter and how it has influenced his adult thinking.

> *… It wasn't a pleasant experience… and I haven't had run-ins with authority figures since, so maybe that contributes to my future relationship with authority figures … and not to fight* [with others or authority] *and things.*

He recognises the separate roles authority figures played depending upon their audience and context. He notes that authority figures could become more approachable, considerate and empathetic on an individual basis. However, he felt there was a professional persona that they adopted, depending on the audience.

> *Um… it's sort of like parents evening really… I was always amazed at how smiley… the teachers were…. and how nice they were … and how human they were… and just like your mum and dad, sort of thing… um… very warm… and that's, to some extent, as how they would be if you caught them on your own.*

Richard reflected further on how teachers used their private and public personas.

> *… in front of children in a classroom setting… they are playing a role and don't want to be undermined… because they can lose control of the class… and things like that…*

Richard was aware of the contrasts,

> *… it really is quite dramatic, the transformation in some personalities…. like the private as opposed to the public… perhaps that's true in lots of ways in the world of work and stuff as well.*

He adopted these observations into his own adult experiences of exercising authority within an educational summer school. In this context, authority figures exercised authority with students who were paying customers rather than in a

state school. Richard adopted some of the skills and behaviours he had experienced as a school student himself to cope with the responsibilities of his position.

> *Yeah… too much free and frank* [discussion] *isn't… what is expected… it's not what they* [the parents] *pay you to take their children on for…*

Richard confided,

> *… I wouldn't be comfortable in a free and frank discussion… with kids as they would probably be like… why can't we just do swimming all the time… because that heated pool is really fun… I see no problem with that…* [laughs]*… but that is not what I've been hired to do….*

He was concerned that allowing free and frank conversations,

> *… it just, sort of, leads to all these weird conversations with children… that you don't want to have really…*

Richard was concerned not to weaken his authority position.

> *Yeah… more undermining… and puts you and them on more of a level, I guess, which isn't really, not, like, how it works… err.*

Richard outlined some of the potential problems he felt were associated with allowing opportunities for speaking freely and frankly.

> *I guess the problem is that whenever speech was free and frank … other people… might sort of … assume, read more into what you have said, or they might take it in a bad way.*

He was anxious about the unpredictable element of allowing free expression, which could be problematic.

> [Authority figures] *sort of pick at it… they look for things... that are wrong, so, some free and frank discussion, if it is in a tone of negativity, is not going to end well. But if it is a positive tone, well-intentioned… and then, it's good… but it doesn't really seem to be the case often.*

5.4 Taneesha

Taneesha is a woman in her twenties who boldly confronted authority figures on two occasions and experienced consequences. On both occasions, she found herself in situations where her managers were making decisions she did not

agree with. In both situations, Taneesha expressed a high level of commitment to her places of work and for social justice.

In her first interview, Taneesha related her experience of a group meeting called by management advising impending redundancies. She recalls her shock at how the emotionally charged meeting was handled by her manager and found it very intimidating.

> *...people were scared to say things... his attitude was very condescending, patronising and flippant... if we had something to say, he would fire back an answer... so I just... in the middle of him talking... I just interrupted him… and um... gave him my views...*

Taneesha spoke of the group being frightened to speak out and of her own disappointment that others, who were older and more qualified, remained silent. Frustration and moral indignation fuelled Taneesha's response.

> *So, I would say that the kind of character I am – I wouldn't say that I disregard authority... I do respect authority... however, I'm not scared of authority or the repercussions that I would face challenging somebody in authority.*

She felt an inner motivation to speak out.

> *I guess it's that part of me, the confidence and sort of extroverted side of me and also my impulsiveness... and the fact that we were going* [redundancy] *.... so, I'd say whatever I felt like saying, to be honest.*

Taneesha and her colleagues felt devalued and their previously celebrated work records diminished.

> [The manager] *didn't appreciate the value of how we helped the students and what we contributed to students, so I was pretty frustrated and annoyed...*

Recalling her surprise as to how her manager received this outburst of passion,

> *I think he was quite shocked. I don't think he expected somebody at my level to challenge everything that he was about. I basically said, 'your model is not going to work here' and he, obviously, don't understand the institution. Yeah, he was shocked, didn't have a direct answer back and he became quite flustered, to be honest.*

Taneesha felt powerless to change her situation but did feel satisfaction acting in the way she did, reflecting wistfully,

> *I feel speaking freely and frankly is important. In that instance, I don't think speaking freely and frankly got anywhere but I think it is important to speak freely and frankly, because if you don't, you might, later, wish you had said something. You might have thought you could have made change* [voice fades out and indecipherable].

She was not without hope of having some influence.

> *... I hoped he* [the manager] *would have gone and reflected on what was said and actually listened to what was said and hoped it would have made a difference... but it didn't.*

Taneesha described another occurrence of speaking freely and frankly in an education context. She disagreed with decisions, made by her manager, for a student she was working with. Meeting with her manager, Taneesha's knowledge and understanding of the pupil's difficulties was dismissed as her manager wanted the student excluded from school. Taneesha felt sympathetic to the student's situation, which was partly informed by her own experiences of schooling. Her manager exerted pressure by emphasising his qualifications, position, experience and authority. Despite this, Taneesha spoke out freely and frankly in the hope that the decision to expel might be reconsidered.

> *So, I said 'Quite frankly, you don't understand. You're just a teacher. You might be Head of Year... I don't think you know anything about why behaviour occurs; what are the factors that contribute towards the behaviour occurring... so essentially, you don't know what you are talking about.... when it comes to behaviour and how to deal with it....'. That was what I said then.*

Taneesha's comments were not well-received by the manager. The consequences of speaking freely and frankly soured the working relationship with her manager. Taneesha felt that whilst it had taken courage to speak out freely and frankly, she became more frustrated in her role and with her manager. From then on, Taneesha reported that she felt marginalised, and her views ignored.

[Thinking pause] *... so yeah, he had, sort of a bad attitude every time we met after that, kinda disregarding a lot of things I'd say, everything he said after that... just irritated me... I mean… every time he spoke... I just felt quite enraged to be honest*... [laughter]… *sometimes I think he had a vendetta against me*.... [fades off].

She wondered, on reflection, whether speaking freely and frankly was a more effective communication tool amongst equals.

Um... I guess, if I had spoken more diplomatically... maybe sat down with him and explained more... but I kinda felt he was quite ignorant... [voice trails off] *... but maybe if I'd spoken more diplomatically, I may have been heard more* [voice fades thoughtfully].

5.5 Sharon

Sharon, a woman in her twenties, worked as a classroom assistant in a state school and felt she had particularly good relationships with her colleagues and those in authority. When an issue of concern arose concerning a colleague, she was hesitant about speaking freely and frankly with her line manager.

I felt my boss was approachable, [but] *I didn't feel like I could completely freely speak about it, you know, because you don't want to step on other people's toes so, yeah, you can't always speak completely freely.*

She was inhibited by hierarchy and felt needful to be circumspect about what was said. Sharon's concerns about a colleague troubled her but she refrained from speaking about the issue freely and frankly through fear it would be transmitted up through the school hierarchy.

… because of their position, sometimes you don't feel like you can speak completely freely, so there might be things that are not said that need to be said.

Sharon expressed relief on receiving assurances from her manager that the issue would be dealt with confidentially.

[Line manager]*'s response was she would sort the problem out and, at the time, said there was no reason to go further, so if there was anything I felt, like, needed to be said, then I could say it …um …so that was really nice.*

Despite this assurance, Sharon still felt inhibited to speak out freely and frankly.

> *I was unsure of how much I should actually say because I wasn't sure if I was over-stepping the boundaries between opinion and what was actually happening, so I thought I'd give* [the line manager] *the facts of what was happening ……she can make that decision.*

Sharon reflected upon her experiences, in general, of being able to speak freely and frankly to those in authority within her educational context and the importance of an understanding and empathetic authority figure.

> *I think that depends upon the relationship with the person, because with some people, you can speak freely because you feel comfortable with them, but if you don't know the person, you are not going to feel as comfortable, so you would not want to speak as freely …*

She remained hesitant to speak freely and frankly to authority even with a comfortable relationship.

> *… because the* [line manager] *is part of the senior leadership team, you know that whatever you say to her is going to go further, to the headteacher and the deputy head and that sort of thing. I think it is probably why even though you can speak freely to her, you've got that in the back of your head. You can't speak completely freely because of the consequences, yeah.*

5.6 Sue

Sue, in her forties, reflected upon her experiences as both parent and worker in education. Sue's interactions with teachers and headteachers were marred by refusal to recognise that her child required extra support in the classroom. Initially, Sue felt she needed to follow the advice and direction given by the school to attend parenting classes, implying that the problem was with the parents rather than the child. Sue complied with this advice, even though she felt it was her child who needed support in the classroom. Sue's initial reaction was of deference to authority and not to speak out freely and frankly about her misgivings.

I look back now, and I think I didn't fight his [her child] *corner at all. I kinda took it on the chin that it was us. I was adamant he needed support from a very young age and the school were adamant that he did not…*

Sue put her trust in authority, feeling,

I always want to work with people, and I don't want to upset people. I kinda think... [laughs]… *you can't say no, can you?*

Her attempts at outspokenness led to stressful emotional consequences when she clashed with authority figures in her school.

[exasperated voice] *... and I walked out* [of the meeting] *and I said to myself... NO!* [very strongly] *... she* [the teacher] *is not making an effort.*

Sue's speaking freely and frankly had a consequence.

Literally....every single night [school authorities] *would pull me out of the playground and they would tell me what* [my child] *had done wrong that day and I would have to stand there and make* [my child] *apologise....*

She reflected, with regret, that she didn't speak up more forcefully in defence of her child. The effect upon Sue of what she regarded as an on-going battle to have her child's difficulties acknowledged, caused her to feel both anger with herself and those in authority who functioned as gatekeepers.

… you get so downtrodden about it because it was literally every single day. I think I should have taken it further [exasperated]; *I never even wrote.*

Sue eventually took the decision to study for a degree in special education to find her voice and to volunteer at her son's school.

…you have to be very careful [in what one says] *and I think, sometimes, my interactions with teachers was very different before I did the course* [university degree]*. I look back now, and I think I didn't fight his corner at all, I kinda took it on the chin.*

Studying for the degree gave Sue the confidence and knowledge to challenge the school's assessment of her child. Sue decided on a strategy to have her voice heard by becoming a trusted insider within the institution. Sue describes this as having an 'in', a route into being able to influence those in authority.

> *… you have to tick the boxes, don't you? And show you is willing to work with the school. I needed to get closer to the school, so I went in and volunteered one day a week* [laughs] *and made sure my face was around.*

She ensured she was visible to authority and, in the course of her work, mentioned her own child's situation. Sue explained, '... and that really helped, and it did mean that [my child] kept on their radar'. Through her voluntary work within the school, Sue gained the trust and respect of the professionals and this, gradually, changed the way in which the school interacted with her. Uppermost in Sue's thinking was avoiding any unpleasantness or clashes with authority.

> *I try never to clash, and work with them, and I think if they can see you with other children, and see what you are about, then I think it keeps you on the radar, and I think, if you are seen as a supportive parent, I think they are more likely to support your child, I think it is easier for them.*

Eventually, Sue was able to confidently challenge authority figures within the school about her own child's situation; standing her ground and speaking out freely and frankly, posing the questions that were uppermost on her mind.

> *I said is* [my child] *lazy or is* [my child] *struggling.....and* she [the authority figure] *got all flustered and I said 'Well, that, to me, is a child what is dyslexic' and she completely changed. I thought 'I'm not having you tell me that', so I asserted myself and my husband sort of went .... oooow*... [laughs].

Speaking out freely and frankly gave Sue a feeling of satisfaction in her quest to obtain justice for her child.

5.7 Sandra

Sandra, in her forties, related accounts of interacting with authority figures in different schools. In the first school, Sandra felt that she could speak freely and frankly to those in authority and her voice was valued.

> *… they listened to my point of view and took on board what I felt was the problem. I felt very relaxed to talk to them and it was quite a mutual understanding.*

In the second school, the authority figures were not so receptive and her input unwelcome.

> *It was very, very formal. It was in a meeting room. The headteacher was a bit intimidating, she was one side of the table, and I was the other side, so that was a distance.*

Sandra researched and sought help from a charity to help strengthen her case. Despite these attempts to speak freely and frankly in meetings, she felt constantly undermined.

> [The headteacher] *kept calling me 'mum', which, I thought, was quite condescending. I did ask her not to and she kept saying 'mum', which I, kinda, felt she was being superior over me.*

She found the approach of the first school more empathetic.

> *...whereas the language in the other* [school] *was more friendly terms, on first names, it felt much more equal status, kinda thing.*

Sandra felt the second school and local authority officials were not listening to her.

> *I've had no feedback. I felt* [the meetings] *was tokenism, just a tick-box situation.*

Sandra's frustration with authority inaction continued and her attempts to present pertinent information gleaned from her readings and outside advice was constantly dismissed and ignored.

> [School] *said that they took on board what I said but even when I pointed out about the legal, they didn't seem to think that was important. Well, I didn't quite know how to take it really because I thought, where do you go from there if they don't even recognise* [the law]*?*

She became more assertive and continued attempts to speak out freely and frankly, despite feeling uncomfortable.

> *I felt quite like I had to fight my corner. I felt intimidated but I felt I kinda needed to be brave and fight for what was right and not what* [school] *thought right. I think that might quite have upset* [school] *because no-one was doing anything.*

In the meetings that followed, Sandra felt particularly challenged by the superior attitude adopted by professionals who ‘knew best’. Sandra, eventually, overcame her nervousness and continued attempts at speaking freely and frankly in the face of authority.

> [School] *were just saying they knew how to do it and you just needed to do it that way and you know, at that time it was new. I was shaking, I was petrified, because there were all these people, and they were very aggressive,* [saying] *it’s your fault and you are not doing this or that.*

Sandra felt that she had to develop the skills and perseverance necessary to influence those in authority. Reflecting early in the process, Sandra noted she, ‘did not have the ‘tools’ [to speak freely and frankly to authority] so it was quite difficult’.

Sandra reflected upon the endurance and persistence needed to influence those in authority.

> *… one of the hardest things as a parent with kids that have* [Special Educational Needs] *(SEN), it is exhausting. No-one ever comes back to you. You always must chase everyone up to get things done. You always have to phone, no one ever phones you. Some people just don't have enough energy to jump through all the hoops, because it is hard, it is really hard. Unless you are a pain, you don't really get support.*

5.8 John

Reflecting upon his memories of school, John, in his mid-twenties, stated that speaking freely and frankly to authority figures was neither encouraged nor welcomed.

> *When you are in school as a student, I think you can never really speak freely and frankly to authority because everything you say will have repercussions. There is an element that you are supposed to respect the teachers and, therefore, you can't really voice your opinions freely.*

John felt that the hierarchical nature of the school created difficulties for students building relationships with those in authority positions, which prevented them feeling confident in speaking freely and frankly. John identified younger

teachers, and those who carried less authority, as being more likely to encourage students to speak out freely and frankly.

> *Yeah, you definitely feel nervous, depends on your relationship with the teacher as well. Younger teachers seemed to value your opinion more than, maybe, older teachers.*

As an adult, John worked as a teaching assistant in a school, and his perception of employees being able to speak freely and frankly to authority figures echoed his student experiences.

> *I don't think you can always speak freely and frankly to those in authority because you are employed by the school. So, you don't want to say anything extreme that might upset the headteacher, the person that employs you, pays you. Maybe if I had a really big idea, I don't think I would feel comfortable raising it with the headteacher if it were too extreme.*

John felt that one had to be circumspect and mindful not to upset those in authority for fear of being annoying or disagreeable. John suggested,

> *I think if you know the person you are talking to, the way you word it, so they like it, so you use words or phrases that you know they like, and it works.*

Having developed a relationship with authority, John felt, '… then you tell them something they may not like so that you are already in their good books'.

He was very aware that as a teaching assistant (TA), his voice carried little authority and needed to be filtered upwards through the teacher he worked alongside.

> *I'm simply employed as a TA. A lot of the time it's, oh well, you are not the teacher so you can't really voice your opinion about your class.*

John felt frustrated with school hierarchy,

> *… you have to tell the teacher, who then decides whether they should tell the headteacher, even though it is your idea.*

He felt that hierarchy often impeded efficient working relationships between staff, citing one example where he answered a phone call in his classroom.

… they wanted the teacher, who was not there, and then asked, 'is the senior TA there?' So, they spoke to the senior TA .... but the message related to me about covering another class. They wouldn't give me the message direct… it did annoy me, and it annoyed the senior TA as well, as they had to stop what they were doing to answer the phone that I had already answered.

John identified occasions when he might speak freely and frankly, especially if a child's welfare was at stake.

Mmmm, if it were about a child's welfare or safety, I think I would have to pluck up courage to voice my opinion.

His headteacher did try to be available to all staff, however, the busy nature of the workplace left John feeling opportunities to speak were not welcomed or encouraged.

Yeah, where I work now, the headteacher has an open-door policy. He will invite you in, [but] *you need to hurry up because he is always ready to move, but he tries to be inviting.*

Despite this attempt at openness and accessibility on the part of the headteacher, there remained the feeling that speaking out freely and frankly was not wise.

NO, [loudly] *I don't think anyone can speak freely and give their honest opinions, especially in the culture we live in. If you say one thing you could be accused of something being misunderstood or interpreted in different ways.*

When John reflected upon his experiences as a boy in school, he recounted two occasions that were instrumental in shaping his adult attitudes to authority.

Yes, there was once when I was in Year 11. There was an incident. Basically, another child said I was involved in something.

After much stress, being wrongfully accused, John plucked up the courage to speak out freely and frankly. John relates,

I would have had to take the blame for something I didn't do. That really sticks with me, 'coz, it might have been me and it wasn't.

Being older, John felt he could, on that occasion, speak up freely and frankly. ‘If I would have been [younger], not Year 11, I would’ve just went with it’.

John also recounted another incident that he felt strongly about where he was unable to speak his mind as freely and frankly in his defence as he felt he should have been able, if given the opportunity. John had turned eighteen and found himself arriving late to a lesson due to a traffic problem. John felt that if he had been a working adult, he would have been treated differently.

> [The teacher] *made the biggest deal out of it I've ever known in my life. It was an adult problem, and I was being treated like it was a child problem. So, I was three minutes late. It was the most pathetic thing I ever seen from a teacher and that annoyed me so much. I didn't speak to him for the rest of the lesson.*

John was very aware of the power imbalance between himself as student and the adult as teacher. He felt the power imbalance prevented him from responding as he would as an adult employee.

> *I think that as an adult, there is more understanding. Now that you are an 'actual adult' rather than a 'school adult', if I were late for work, I would have apologised, and they would have accepted it. It has had an impact, I just thought it was so petty.*

His experiences of hierarchy and restricted ability to speak freely and frankly in an educational context have influenced him as an adult practitioner working in a school.

> *I think the children in my class, I let speak freely and frankly. They might tell me something I don't like but it is their right to speak. I must listen to them, I don't have to, but I want to. I think that sometimes, when they do speak freely and frankly, you don’t actually have to say anything, more a case of just listening.*

5.9 Louise

Louise, a parent in her forties, experienced challenges in understanding and adjusting to the culture of schools, having previously worked in a business environment. Louise describes the steep learning curve she needed to adopt, to advocate for her child starting school.

It was quite a learning curve, actually, in terms of talking about provision for my child, a real trick with having to keep emotion out of it and I find you can't really be too critical.

Louise found she had to be,

… a bit of a shrewd negotiator in terms of how you go about asking so that it doesn't appear to be confrontational or critical of what they are doing.

She had been used to a business environment, where emotional aspects of life are not shared or transparent. In contrast, Louise found her negotiations with school authorities constantly influenced by emotive language.

I've found that emotion kinda played more of a part with education practitioners. In business, you are kinda meant to leave your emotions at the door really…. [laughs] *... if someone wants to criticise … you just need to get on with it.*

In her business environment, Louise was used to direct communication where one spoke freely and frankly about business transactions without considering whether what was said may upset someone. Louise found that this direct approach was received by education professionals as being overly critical.

[In the business environment] *…YES*, [loudly], *it is very blunt, and it is very kinda 'dog eat dog' and you know, that was the kinda world I was used to. So, it took me by surprise that I had to tiptoe around educational professionals.*

Louise had to adopt different strategies to bring about hoped-for changes.

At the start, I was just picking at things that were going wrong. I'm trying really hard now to thank people for doing things, you know? If something has gone well, I now want to speak to them and acknowledge it because I think that is important [in getting the point over].

She describes the reaction of the headteacher to her early attempts at speaking freely and frankly.

The response I got from the head was he got quite emotive and was kinda suggesting that nothing was good enough, I'm too picky [laughs] *and it just took me by surprise, really, that that was the reaction.*

Louise recalled, ‘I definitely had to adjust my communication style from that point on’, to encourage a more receptive hearing from authority.

> *So, if there was something that I kinda of thought might be a helpful thought or intervention, I kinda, you know, put it in front of them. What do you think of this?* [pleading voice]. *I had to really, kinda, change my approach rather than just going in and saying, right, I think this is good.*

This more subtle form of speaking freely and frankly proved productive for Louise.

> *I’ve found now that I have a much more workable relationship with them, but you know, I have to be very, have to* [still] *tread very carefully in terms of appearing* [not] *to be critical in any way.*

Louise described how she needed to be proactive, using her personal autonomy to enlist the advice and support of outside professionals to successfully advocate with educational professionals. Seeking out independent practitioners and knowledgeable support resources contributed to Louise feeling more confident speaking freely and frankly, albeit in a less direct form.

> *It has helped that I've had guidance from other professionals, external to the school. Having another professional, kinda backing me on things, you know, and getting advice from other people who know a bit more than I do, has been really helpful in terms of not being intimidated.*

She was quite adamant when asked whether parents felt able to speak freely and frankly to authority.

> *DEFINITELY NOT* [loud voice], *I see from so many parents that they are just intimidated out of asking questions. It is almost like a shut door “*[the school] *know what is best, trust the professionals”. I don't see many parents being able to speak freely.*

Louise described other parents she knew, finding speaking freely and frankly to school authority figures problematic.

> *It’s almost a case of if you do go too far and burn your bridges, then you become a ‘problem parent’. You just worry that you’re never gonna get anywhere with these people because they've already written you off as*

> *overly emotional, or asking for too much, or being too involved. So, I think it is really hard for parents* [to have their voice heard].

She spoke of her frustrations with those in authority at all levels who functioned as gatekeepers for financial and educational resources.

> *… it's a real surprise to parents because, actually, it's not fair and your child is not going to get everything unless you fight for it.*

Louise talked of requiring a courageous toughness.

> *There is this sort of fighting mentality that you have and then when you get to the school you have to tone it down a bit because you have to work with them on a day-to-day basis, so you've really gotta make that a workable relationship, otherwise, I don't think they engage with you properly.*

Louise described the experience as requiring much courage to be,

> *…the pushy parent, but not too pushy* [laughs]. *I think it is really hard for parents to know what should be done, what they should have, and feel that they have a voice.*

She attributed this to a system which, statutorily, promises much, but is often unable to deliver entitlement.

> *There is so much blame sharing and finger pointing, and you are never given one person who is accountable for delivering this stuff, which is hard, yes, there does seem to be a sensitivity to criticism, which took me by surprise ...*

After building a working relationship in which speaking freely and frankly became more possible, Louise recalled a conversation with her child's headteacher. It seemed to her that,

> *I think, in some cases,* [schools] *kinda shut off to a point because* [schools] *are just used to cuts, become de-sensitised to complaining parents because all parents complain, maybe that's part of it.*

Some of the reluctance on the part of school authority figures to be fully open with parents in their communications arises from a lack of control over parent expectations and their own ability to meet them. Louise considered that schools should be more open with parents as,

… they seem very wary about being transparent, so then, parents feel they are hiding something.

5.10 Matthew

Matthew, in his twenties, works as a school teaching assistant and recalls two memorable incidents from his experience as a student that also went on to influence his work practice. Matthew describes a minor incident as a student.

> *My headteacher was quite a scary teacher. I remember once, I didn't have my school shoes on, for some reason, and I came in early to work in the library. I got caught at the front of the school about forty minutes before school started, and he questioned why I was wearing trainers.*

He remembers showing a note from his mum but was sent to sit outside the head's office for the whole morning. Matthew recalls his headteacher was not someone who would listen or encourage a student to speak out freely and frankly. Matthew did try to speak up politely, but this was interpreted as an 'attitude problem'.

> [The head] *was very tall and had a very deep voice. He used it to control – being an authoritarian type of teacher. In the grown-up world, if you had that conversation with anyone, they would be understanding, but because you are just trying to explain yourself,* [authority figures] *don't like it because THEY* [loud voice] *are the teacher.*

On a second occasion, Matthew worked out a story in advance to explain an occasion of truanting. Matthew successfully rehearsed a pre-prepared fictional story to speak up fearlessly and frankly, explaining,

> [my previous experiences] *fuelled me to rise up more to him* [headteacher]. *It created animosity between us.*

As an adult TA, Matthew felt that his prior experiences of authority influence how he now works with students.

> *I'm very aware that I would never like to come across like that, and just because I'm older, I shouldn't be like that, there is no need for it. It just made me be more rebellious. I think it has affected the way I work with children.*

Matthew encourages student skills that build relationships with adults.

What I always found with teachers was that if they were nice to me, then I would be nice to them. If the teachers were rude, I'd play up to it and become argumentative back. I've got on with a lot of teachers really, but some I didn't like.

He felt that before speaking out freely and frankly, one needed to evaluate consequences. He noted differences depending upon age.

There are less consequences when you speak freely and frankly as an adult. Whereas, because you are a child, [school authority figures] *have this power over you and they can just say, 'go to my office'.*

5.11 Mamoonah

Mamoonah is a young woman in her mid-twenties who strongly feels that her adult relationships with authority figures have been detrimentally affected by her encounters with authority as a schoolchild. Mamoonah recalls an incident from her secondary school where she had chosen to comfort a friend and been mistakenly accused of involvement in an altercation. This had resulted in consequences beyond the incident she was wrongly accused of, affecting her relationship with her parents and the school authorities. Mamoonah, initially, attempted to speak freely and frankly but was disbelieved.

BUT [loudly] *no matter how much I was trying to say no, I was not involved, I literally just went there as a coincidence, it was like, no, you should have been to lessons.*

Mamoonah had problems protesting her innocence to school authorities and her parents who felt that the authority of the teacher must be respected and believed over their daughter.

My parents said, wow, what happen? You never in stuff like this. I was just like, trying to explain I didn't actually do anything. My parents are quite traditional, so they were like, yes, but your teachers said [small voice]*, really, I didn't,* [laughs].

She felt that the school authorities gave insufficient time and space to listen sympathetically.

Yeah, [loudly] *I've been someone that was never been in trouble, so it was intimidating. It left quite a big imprint on how I feel.*

The effect of this experience was described by Mamoonah as impacting her adult interaction with authority.

> *Yeah, I'm very cautious in how I talk to* [authority] *people now. I just wait for them to explain, it's just better for to wait rather than make a fuss. I know a lot of people have experienced worse, even though it is so small....it deeply influenced the way I feel today, if that makes sense?*

In recalling a second incident, Mamoonah, remembering her previous experience, chose the path of silence rather than speaking out freely and frankly to defend herself.

> *I didn't try to say anything. I just sat and didn't say anything because the first time...* [loudly] *Yeah, it's made quite a big influence because how my parents were, they were disappointed, upset, like.*

Mamoonah continues to find dealing with authority figures difficult and stressful, deeply lamenting encounters with school authority.

> *I used to be quite outgoing, you know? I could say what I want to say. Now I'm really cautious, it seems silly, but people think about what you say. Like you want to leave a good impression, don't want to get into trouble or say something out of turn. So, I'm just very cautious now.*

5.12 Narjis

Narjis, in her fifties, describes her interaction with school authority figures in her North African upbringing as quite different from her experiences in England.

> *Talking freely and frankly wasn't an option. The teacher was the teacher who knew everything. Talking back was rude so it wasn't an option. If you talk back, you would be punished, not just writing lines but corporal punishment. You could not complain about it, it was normal, it was discipline. I don't recall anyone speaking freely and frankly. Maybe a little more in college. You must follow the rules.*

When Narjis relocated to England, she discovered, through her children's experiences of school, a more liberal approach to allowing free expression.

> *I discovered, when my kids went to school, I started to see the difference. How they can express themselves, how they encouraged children to talk, to have opinions, to create your own voice.*

Narjis began to feel more confident in expressing herself freely and frankly to those in authority and felt a bond with her children in being able to communicate more openly.

> *Yes, I was confident. I learnt with them how to express yourself, how it was not talking back. it wasn't being rude it was because I want to express my opinion and because you are giving me this chance to listening to me.*

She was still very respectful towards her children's teachers and other authority figures, mindful not to upset them in communication exchanges.

> *I never did like being critical* [saying things like] *'you never did or 'why you not done'. I was aware when I approached the teacher, I would not offend her and* [then] *not reply to me more badly.*

Narjis developed a humble enquiring approach when seeking to express herself to authority figures, which she found effective in putting them at ease whilst, at the same time, assertively making a point.

> *Anything that concerned my children that I would go and talk about it. BUT* [loud voice*] in a friendly manner. I would not accuse her or tell her. I may misunderstand and be really friendly, I take my child's words, but he still a child, he might see things wrongly, I would see the teacher's side of the story and then decide.*

She developed certain turns of phrase which she called 'tweaks'. 'I would [speak] in the manner that I was worried about something'. These took on a neutral enquiry, a questioning approach rather than risk offending by direct free and frank dialogue.

5.13 Subira

Subira, in her forties, working in an education context, related her experience of talking with authority figures during a school inspection. Initially, Subira felt inhibited and overwhelmed.

> *I wasn't feeling too confident to them, that's maybe because of their role. Later, I sort of get myself together....*

Subira recalls saying to herself,

> *I really need to do this. So, we engage ourselves in conversation. I was able to converse with the lady inspector. But initially, it took me a while. Maybe it was to do with the authority. But after a while, I was able to flow the conversation.*

She felt the authority of the inspector's role clashed with her need to be loyal and supportive to the school and, therefore, she was inhibited to speak freely and frankly.

> *DEFINITELY* [loud voice] *about careful of the words* [laugh] *because what I am discussing. It prompted more questions, and I really must be sure of what I am saying, you know. It is more formal conversation.*

Subira was very aware that the inspector would make judgements about the school from what she said, so was careful not to speak freely and frankly for fear of being misinterpreted and of letting her headteacher or colleagues down.

> *I don't worry* [speaking with the headteacher] *because we are quite familiar but* [with the inspector] *I WOULD NOT, DEFINITELY, I WOULD NOT* [loud voice].

5.14 Alisha

Alisha, a woman in her thirties, and a parent, recalls speaking freely and frankly to her child's teacher. Alisha describes meeting with the teacher and summoning the courage to speak freely and frankly of her concerns for her daughter, and others of a shyer disposition. Alisha felt that the teacher projected a friendly, pleasant persona towards her, which gave her confidence to speak freely and frankly.

> [The teacher] *understood and was more patient* [with her child]. *I did explain to her* [the problem] *and she kind of eased up.*

Alisha recalls her own school experiences in a positive manner, finding her teachers and authority figures receptive and friendly towards students. Alisha's experience post-schooling was more challenging. At college, Alisha felt more distance between students and authority, making them less approachable or receptive. She spoke of her relief that her daughter's school listened sympathetically and responded positively to her concerns once they recognised that she was not criticising them but needed help.

5.15 Ankita

Ankita, in her forties, described experiences as a schoolchild, parent and educational worker, declaring that she always felt comfortable with authority figures. From early in her schooling, Ankita recognised the benefits of building relationships with authority.

> *The more authority you have, the more questions of mine you could answer. I never been fearful of speaking to 'them'. Your position to me meant you have more knowledge.*

Ankita reflected that actively building good relationships with authority in school was beneficial, lamenting that for some students, the only contact with authority was, ‘under the terms of naughty behaviour’. She expressed the need for authority figures to make themselves more openly available to students. This, she suggested, could be through unscripted, incidental and informal contacts that authority figures made with students.

> *When you meet them in an environment like a corridor and you’re just having an average chat with them, if you have built that relationship, then you feel bad because you disappointed them. So, I was not scared to own up to wrongdoing, face the consequences and move on from that.*

As a parent, Ankita’s strategy of interacting with authority figures was to be politely empathetic and assertive in getting her point across in conversation.

> *I don’t have any issues. I think I'm very diplomatic in myself in how I deal with things and try to see it from their* [authority] *point of view.*

She recognised that an element of conformity to authority is required. The signs given off by authority figures were important for Ankita to feel that they were taking notice.

> *If* [teachers] *can show me that they are working for the best, then that’s all I ask from them. When I've had a complaint, they have always said, right, this is what we are going to do about it. Just seeing my word causing something to happen, you do feel a bit more comfortable, that you are listening to me.*

In her adult working environment, Ankita expressed views on how authority in a school context could make communication more effective. Ankita's emphasis was upon the role of individuals in their everyday interactions.

> *Yeah, it's down to individual people and the effort and the lengths you go to build bridges. I do think it is vital. I use every tool at my disposal and my cultural capital. If you can just reach someone in their 'home language', they instantly feel comfortable. They will know that you have tried and will be willing to try. It is showing that effort, showing that little bit of 'give' so they will give a little bit too.*

5.16 Concluding thoughts

The accounts rendered by participants involve discourses and practices (Foucault, 2011b) revealing insight into the truths they hold. Each participant practised elements of both passive and assertive behaviour. Each were mindful of taking care of self as best they could in communicating with authority. The memories of participants featured in this chapter were remarkably vivid in their recall. At times, the stories related were very emotive, suggesting that participants had undergone formative changes in thought and action.

In taking care of self, Foucault advises (Foucault, 2011b, p. 238) one must be alerted to study what is 'useful in and for existence'. This can range from 'revaluing one's currency' (p. 241) to equipping oneself with new strategies to perform subtle acts of resistance. Three of the participants made a conscious choice to 'revalue their currency' by embarking on higher education studies. The added value of their studies, however, was not simply in attaining a degree, it also enabled them to feel more comfortable when dealing with professionals (Wainwright *et al.*, 2019). Such processes reflect Foucault (1988b) in his technologies of production, sign systems, power and the self, as explained in Section 4.8.3.

Foucault (2000, p. 244) comments that the role of thought is to 'supply the strength for breaking the rules with the act that brings them into play' (p. 244). Participants resorted to a range of strategies of resistance in response to the authority figures they encountered. Richard and John gave examples of responding to authority with silence, which Foucault (1980a) notes, is a tactical strategy. Emily outlined a very individual response, using humour,

anonymously, toward authority to communicate a serious message. Emily's voice, in common with other participants, was subdued but no less critical of authority.

Unlike Emily's more circumspect interactions with authority, Taneesha was fired up by the injustice of her situations and spoke boldly on behalf of herself and others who remained silent. For Emily, as for other participants, it was important to give the appearance of compliance.

Narjis was careful to express herself in ways that did not anger authority, whilst Louise and Sue were careful in their interactions with authority not to be labelled as 'problem parents'. Ankita actively built friendly relations with authority as a school student and as an adult, whilst other participants were always wary of consequences attached to speaking out freely and frankly. Mamoonah, for example, explained the negative effects that her interactions with authority as a school student had had upon her adult life. Fear of consequences associated with speaking freely and frankly to authority was present in each participant transcript.

Foucault points out (Foucault, 1980a) that power is ever-present and that no one is outside it. However, it does not, as my participants demonstrate, imply that they are completely subjected to the domination of others. There are always ways and means of exercising forms of resistance, which is, in itself, an exercise of power – a view reflected by Arendt (2016, p. 25) in that the 'power of locomotion', however small, is a condition of freedom.

Each participant reflects examples of what Foucault (1991) explains is the ability to exercise creativity in their manner of interacting with authority. In this respect, Foucault regarded the subject as akin to a creative work of art in the way in which they constituted self and interacted with others.

In the next chapter, participant stories are analysed in more detail using Foucault's technologies as tools to interpret their recollections of interactions with authority.

Chapter 6: Analysis of participant stories

The stories people tell have the potential (Clandinin, 2016; Kohler Riessman, 1993) to give insight into the complex relationships, contexts and identities of a subject. Stories play an invaluable part in human expression (Blaisdell, 2013) and are an aspect of creativity in education practice. Tolstoy (1967), in his education writing, uses the medium of story as an enabling method to encourage expression of thought, action and writing. Through story, participants in this study related past and present experiences of speaking freely and frankly in education contexts.

For some participants, telling their stories had a cathartic effect, allowing them, for the first time, to express their feelings and thoughts. Clandinin (2016, p. 182) refers to the substance of story narratives as containing 'threads of life' that help researchers extract meaning. Foucault (1997), too, makes use of such threads in his notion of technologies of production, sign systems, power and the self, as explained in Section 4.8.3.

Foucault (1997) advises, when observing the influences of power, to look beyond a particular authority, person or institution and recognise that force relations come not just from a lone source but are diverse and have a multiplicity of intersecting influences. In all societies, these technologies enable individuals to navigate, as best they can, the multitude of experiences that life presents (Foucault, 1997). Such experiences, Tamboukou and Ball (2003, p. 199) describe as constituting a 'profound complexity of discourses' that contain interwoven subjectivities. Foucault (2001) elaborates on these complex discourses and interwoven subjectivities by asking who can tell the truth, what are the entangled conditions, effects, consequences and relationships, and how do relations of power affect these?

In this chapter, there are three broad threads, informed by Foucault's technologies. First, participants' memories of speaking freely and frankly when they were school students; second, adult experiences of being able to speak freely and frankly in an educational workplace and third, parent experiences of interacting with school authority.

6.1 Participant experiences as a school student

6.1.1 Introduction

Ten participants contributed their memories of encountering authority figures as students in a school context. Emily, Richard, Mamoonah, John, Matthew, Narjis, Rose, Alisha, Ankita and Abdul all feature in this section of the analysis. Only two participants reported positive experiences of authority, whilst others recounted fewer positive memories. For each participant, these early experiences of encountering authority when a school student were formative in influencing their future attitudes.

6.1.2 How participants perceived, understood and were affected by their situations

Olson (2009, p. 44) describes school students as developing a 'carapace' to protect themselves from negative experiences of authority and institutional bureaucracy encountered in their schooling experiences. Rose, for example, protected herself by avoiding all direct contact with authority figures in school as much as possible,

> *Why should I want to talk to one of my teachers? They were there to teach us, not talk to.*

In her interview, Emily unflatteringly referred to her headteacher as being 'Darth Vader-like', likening her to the force of evil character in *Star Wars* films. Emily lamented not having any real authority or influence on events that affected her,

> *At no point are kids ever asked to shape how their school works, or when they are, it is in really superficial ways.*

Emily explained that there was unseen pressure to conform to norms within the school, describing it as being 'under orders'. If a student stepped out of line, it was frowned upon by those in authority.

> *Well, you would be labelled 'naughty' and good students towed the line and said, 'yes' and 'no' at the right places and got 'A-stars'.*

She does not recall feeling angry or upset about her lack of voice to speak out freely and frankly. A grudging acceptance that her place and role within the school was one that lacked influence.

> *We just felt it was, like, just stuff that happens, you know? I don't think we ever thought that any of it was, necessarily, like, anything to feel particularly strongly about. It all just struck us as hilarious because it was all taken so seriously.*

Richard recalled his experiences of authority in a similarly memorable account describing some of his encounters.

> [The teacher] *went into 'authoritative teacher' mode, they probably did the 'staring eyes' and the furrowed brow and shouty voice and, sort of, looking down on people.*

This was not an unusual reaction or unexpected by Richard who had witnessed such responses before with other student incidents. Matthew, too, recounts his experiences of interacting with teachers as being 'very scary', mentioning that when you are trying to explain to them '[authority] it is not welcome because THEY [emphasis] are the teacher'.

Mamoonah, too, described feeling intimidated in the presence of authority figures who were not prepared to listen. Both Mamoonah and John experienced incidences where they found themselves accused of things they had not done. John, too, related similar incidences of not being listened to or treated fairly. Richard and Mamoonah spoke of the futility of speaking up for oneself in the face of authority.

> *…when you get told off for something* [even when innocent] *you should just take the punishment, being shouted at, and not answer back and stuff, and that is your role as the* [presumed] *guilty people.*

Foucault (1997c) describes a reluctance to use voice towards those in authority as a form of submission to power. Both Rose, Abdul and Narjis felt that to expose themselves by challenging or questioning their teachers made them vulnerable. Abdul reflected that he did not want to come to the attention of authorities as, in his experience, teachers remembered those students or parents who were problems.

Alisha and Ankita, however, did have more positive experiences of adult–child interactions with authority. Ankita reported that encounters with teachers in school had been positive even when she found herself in trouble.

> *For me, personally, I never had any issues with asking for help in terms of work or anything. I always thought it was important. If you are an authority figure, the more authority you have, the more questions of mine you could answer. I never been fearful of speaking to 'them'.*

For Ankita, it was important to 'get on' with her teachers as they were holders of the knowledge desired, and she adopted a strategy to ensure she did.

> *When you meet them in an environment like a corridor, and you're just having an average chat with them, and if you have built that relationship, then you feel bad* [when you let them down] *because you have that relationship.*

Her teachers were, 'always gonna do the best for you' and she sought out opportunities to build good relations and not 'disappoint them' through bad behaviour. Alisha also reported memories of positive experiences of teachers in school, saying simply that adults were 'there for the children' and should always be approachable.

Roffey (2013, p. 95) maintains that where an adult communicates warmth, uses reason and allows autonomy, it increases the likelihood a student will develop skills that enhance empathy and understanding and encourage adoption of prosocial behaviours. Use of such prosocial skills and strategies by the child allows them to exert their autonomy and to sustain good relationships with adults (Foucault, 1994).

By contrast, for Narjis and Mamoonah, recollections were of remaining passive and obedient, with students fearful of consequences, should they speak out. Questioning of a teacher was only welcomed if non-critical, the teacher being regarded as the sole source of knowledge, and dissention with argument strongly discouraged. For both participants, home life was also one in which parents, equally, deferred to school authority.

Holt (1972) states that adults are often concerned that students are intent upon power struggles with them. Holt felt such thinking was exaggerated. Whilst adults appeared sensitive to any loss of authority, Holt states that students were very aware of their standing within an institution and the power adults hold to praise or punish.

Matthew described school authority figures as ‘scary’ and ‘inconsistent’. His attempts to speak freely and frankly led to accusations that he had ‘an attitude problem’. Consequently, Matthew felt resentful at the injustice and refusal of authority to listen. The sense of anger he felt at the injustice remained in easy recall even though he was now an adult.

Olson (2009, p. 43) describes such experiences of anger and embarrassment as ‘wounds of rebellion’, which can arise from negative encounters with adults in school. Matthew’s ‘wounds’ arose from his belief that he was entitled to speak truth freely and frankly and was upset when it was received negatively by his headteacher. The headteacher’s lack of regard for Matthew’s expression of voice and the dismissal of his attempt as impertinence and rebelliousness, fuelled Matthew’s distrust of authority figures.

Another, later incident, for Matthew, concerned arriving slightly late for school, where, again, Matthew encountered authority. Foucault (1997) relates that in any given circumstance, within a relationship, there are always possibilities to influence or change a situation. On this occasion, Matthew describes ‘being prepared’ for another problem encounter and feeling, ‘fuelled up’ in anticipation to ‘rise up more to him [the headteacher]’ and stand up for himself. Matthew did this in a circumspect manner by mischievously misleading the headteacher into believing a pre-prepared, fabricated explanation to avoid trouble.

Foucault (1997) points out that it is at this very point of resistance that a subject evolves from a state of obedience into a power relation dynamic that has possibilities of influence. Matthew recalled this as a negative experience that he felt uncomfortable performing, but was pleased that on this occasion, he spoke freely and frankly. Matthew recalls,

> *I don’t like it when people who should have more power or authority than me, like, speak down to me, or seek to use their authority to say things they shouldn’t.*

Holt (1977, p. 28) declares that there can never be a ‘reality of encounter, truthfulness and honesty’ where power relations are unequal. From Matthew’s first encounter, he was particularly upset by what he considered ‘unnecessary punishment’, which he felt was, ‘illogical’ and resulted in feelings of frustration and anger.

Many of the participants recalling similar incidents from their school days carried memories of being voiceless when in the presence of authority. Participants were especially affected by feelings of injustice when punishments were involved (Holt, 1972; Faber and Mazlish, 2001; 2006; 2013). Such experiences left them feeling frustrated, humiliated and angry. Others reported feelings of weakness, resentment and powerlessness.

John also reflects some of the concerns and frustrations raised by Matthew.

> *When you are in school as a student, I think you can never really speak freely and frankly to authority. Everything you say will have repercussions in school. There is an element that you are supposed to respect the teachers and, therefore, you can't really voice your opinions freely.*

Despite this impotence, participants often found ways of exercising their voice, if not direct to authority. Participants sometimes participated in confidential discussion with trusted friends, family or colleagues, or, as in the case of Emily, in the anonymous writing of playlets that lampooned a headteacher. Through these small acts of resistance (Foucault, 1997), of speaking freely and frankly, came feelings of satisfaction and empowerment.

Matthew and Richard mentioned seeking out younger teachers with whom they felt more at ease to speak freely and frankly. Emily shared her playlets and jokes with 'safe' teachers who were more loyal to the old regime rather than the new headteacher. John recounts that younger teachers 'seem to value your opinions more'. Richard, too, felt that younger teachers were often more sympathetic than older teachers when it came to allowing students to speak freely and frankly.

As a young teenager, John describes simply 'going along' with authority figures, even if it was clear the authority figure had misunderstood or made a completely unfair judgement that impacted upon him. As an older student, John expressed frustration at required deference that was expected towards authority figures whom he did not respect in school. John recounts incidences of having to account for himself, and his explanations and justifications being ignored or discounted.

Sidorkin (2002), commenting upon the process of mass schooling, raises issues regarding the exercise of authority and enforcement. Sidorkin charts the evolution from enforcement, through corporal punishment, to the more subtle forms of enforcement of discipline described by Foucault (1977). Control, through systems of peer or parent monitoring, targets, shaming, reward and soft punishments help to keep students compliant. Threat of punishment, enticement of incentives, and future benefits arising from qualifications post-schooling (Sidorkin, 2002, p. 62) are all part of the 'soft violence' within institutions.

Emily reflects this soft, coercive power in her references to being seen as a 'good student' and the need to get good grades. Richard, too, felt his observations of adult–student encounters around him told of the futility of speaking out freely and frankly. This view was also held by Abdul, who felt that safety lay in anonymity.

Tolstoy, writing in the mid-nineteenth century, was equally aware of these processes and argued vehemently against coercive measures within schooling. Binswanger (1988) points out that freedom of speech should include the freedom not to agree, not to listen and not to support those that are wrong, annoy or irritate. All participants recalled that the expectation of their respective schools was one of obedience rather than questioning or assertiveness. This often led to feelings of resentment and resistance.

Edwards (1970) argues that, ideally, the opposites within society, of authority and liberty, should balance each other to achieve an equilibrium that avoids conflict. Olson (2009) questions an overreliance of schools upon simple obedience to authority. Teachers rely upon the soft skills of emotional intelligence and emotional literacy to keep themselves and their students under control (Street, 2003). During their school day, participants experienced times when they needed to tolerate boredom and the enforced attitudes of institution, community and loyalty.

These attitudes, fostered in schooling, may be useful in some workplaces post-schooling, but Olson (2009) suggests that these attitudes and skills are outmoded in the twenty-first century, where employers require workers who are more flexible, confident and creative.

6.1.3 How participants changed, responded to or influenced their situations

Arendt (2016) notes that all authority rests upon the willingness of others to obey, and this is echoed in both Tolstoy and Foucault, indicating that whilst we may, as Stirner (2014) suggests, have our actions and thoughts guided by 'wheels in the head' (p. 36), there remain certain freedoms a subject can practice in pursuit of autonomy.

Foucault (1991, p. 334) points out that thought is present in 'every manner of speaking, doing or behaving' and constitutes essential elements in understanding behaviour. Each of the participants expressed feelings of powerlessness to influence and yet were still able to exercise a degree of power that affected their situations. Foucault refers to this phenomenon as technologies of the self (Foucault, 1997) in which subjects can influence, transform or manipulate their situations, even when powerless.

Emily felt herself to be a 'tiny cog' in a large school institution, where her role was to obey and not question. Nonetheless, Emily responded to authority in creative and subversive ways, choosing the anonymous form of expression of writing plays and sketches to broadcast her opinions. Emily wrote and co-wrote plays that made fun of the headteacher and leadership team and shared them with sympathetic 'safe' teachers and students.

Emily was cautious not to be identified and labelled as 'naughty', as the consequences would impact negatively upon her relationship with authority. She had worked out a comfortable, 'practical system' (Foucault, 1991, p. 48) for addressing her situation – a rational way of dealing with a difficult context, in which she modified and adapted her voice in a unique, humorous form.

Griffin and Tyrell (2003) identify humour, as portrayed by Emily, being a useful and active strategy to reframe stressful situations. Roffey (2013) describes injecting humour into distressing situations as having multiple benefits for developing relationships and avoiding stress-related physical ailments. Using humour as a means of expressing a truth (Foucault, 2011) is an initiative-taking way of taking care of oneself and others. Applebaum (2003) relates prisoner reminiscences from Soviet gulags in which men and women wrote, acted, lampooned and portrayed the Soviet state and their guards in comical ways. Foucault (1997) explains that such actions of humorous truth-telling are means

by which a subject can exercise a degree of power, and in so doing, transform their thinking.

Ankita used a different strategy of ensuring that she was able to maintain a good relationship with authority figures in her school. Despite ‘getting into a bit of trouble’ in her school career, she always (like all the respondents) tried hard to be ‘diplomatic’, recognising that it was, ‘very important how you reacted to the situation’. Ankita took advantage of her headteacher’s accessibility around school corridors to build a more informal, friendly and chatty relationship.

Her desire ‘to do well’ at school and be seen by authority figures in a ‘good light’, guided her behaviour. Whilst choosing not to speak out freely and frankly, Ankita wanted authority figures to be ‘proud of her’ and strove to act and talk in a manner that did not disappoint them**.** Whilst Ankita needed to be circumspect about the content and subjects she spoke about, the strategy of building a relationship did allow a limited free and frank exchange to develop.

Participants who found themselves in contexts or situations that raised their anxiety sometimes spoke out freely and frankly but, more usually, kept their own counsel. Matthew’s first negative encounter with an authority figure left him angry and resentful but his second encounter was more successful, due to pre-planning and rehearsing a pre-prepared untruth. John recalls being so angry he was lost for words. Mamoonah, however, chose to remain silent, and Richard saw little point in explanation.

Some of the participant encounters with authority were spontaneous and, on reflection, participants felt these were out of character. John, Mamoonah and Matthew each responded intuitively, in some of their recollections, to what they saw as injustices. Sutton (2021) suggests that authenticity can be understood in two ways – as consistency of personal traits, that is, behaving consistently across roles and contexts, or as coherence, that is, even though at times we do act inconsistently, overall, one has a clear sense that the way in which we respond is understandable.

Both the ‘coherence’ and the ‘consistent’ understandings of thinking and action inform a sense of our ‘true self’. All participants were able to feel that their responses to authority were, indeed, compatible with their understandings of themselves as a person.

Richard, Ankita, Narjis, Mamoonah and Emily were very wary of upsetting authority through their voice or actions, for fear of being seen as ‘naughty’. Each felt that adverse consequences might arise from letting down or upsetting authority. Narjis spoke of only talking freely and frankly to trusted classmates, whilst Emily assessed the reliability and sympathy of authority figures before sharing her thoughts and opinions about the new headteacher.

Alison and Alison (2020) consider sensitivity to be a useful social skill that demonstrates self-awareness and contributes to social adjustment. To be able to understand and recognise the authority styles of those within a given context allows one to judge and interpret how best to inform their own actions.

Matthew, having experienced a first ‘scary’ encounter and unjustified punishment from his headteacher in attempting to speak frankly and freely, responded very differently to his second encounter. Foucault describes ‘governmentalising techniques’ of the self (Taylor, 2011, p. 177), in which subjects impose restraint upon their own behaviour (Foucault, 1997; 1990) and are stabilised through an institution’s rules and regulations. Braidotti and Bignall (2019) describe the process as generated through an ‘entangled range of biological, technical, economic, social and political systems and processes’ (p. 436).

Matthew’s feelings of powerlessness in the face of authority helped him to consider future coping strategies. Like Odysseus, in the shadow of Polyphemus, the one-eyed Cyclops (Homer, 1991), Matthew’s second encounter with authority involved a certain amount of trickery and fabrication to escape the wrath of the headteacher. Matthew describes preparing a verbal script to deliver in the event of being challenged for lateness. Matthew’s fabricated story, which he boldly related, freely and frankly, proved successful. Matthew’s action of resistance (Foucault, 1997) allowed him to exercise a degree of power.

Barad (2007) illustrates, from nature, the connectivity of humans to the wider world, in the sea creature known as a brittlestar. At first glance, the brittlestar has little in common with the human world. Brittlestars appear to be non-thinking creatures, affected solely by their environment and other sea creatures. However, far from being inactive, the brittlestar uses multiple bodily functions to outwit, evade and survive death or dissolution in many cunning ways. The

brittlestar, as with Homer's creative character of Odysseus, and participants in this study, exercises its power through various acts of resistance.

6.1.4 Resistance

Mamoonah, in her second encounter with an authority figure, adopted a different tactic by responding with silence. Mamoonah recounted that, 'I didn't think they would listen. I just sat and didn't say anything because of the first time'. This approach required a determined stance, on the part of Mamoonah, not to respond and resulted, eventually, in an annoyed dismissal from a difficult interview situation.

The tactic gave Mamoonah some satisfaction as, by not speaking freely and frankly, she had avoided confrontation and escalation. Mamoonah's successful encounter still left her aggrieved that she had not been able to speak up to correct an injustice. Mamoonah felt strongly that her negative experiences continued to affect her thinking into adulthood, making her wary of encountering authority.

The use of silence can be regarded as a 'practice of freedom' (Foucault, 1997, p. 283) in that it is an active strategy where the 'powerless' can exert themselves in the face of the 'powerful'. Foucault (1980a), writing in the context of the Soviet gulags, attempts to explain what makes a difficult circumstance easier to bear for those under authority. The use of silence toward authority is an example of resistance.

Bolton (1979) sees silence not only as a time to allow for thinking but also a powerful force to resist. Bolton argues that silence can have more meaning than countless words, enabling the less powerful to develop fresh strength in resistance to authority. Bolton and Bolton (2018) further suggest that a silent response to a questioning authority often triggers anxiety and confusion.

Faber and Mazlish (2001) recognise how easily a subject can consciously or unconsciously assume a role or label. Passive or aggressive roles or labels may be consciously adopted as a tool of resistance in the face of authority. Richard felt silence to be the best option, as expressing a defence against injustice might result in escalation or punishment.

Richard's experiences of authority were not pleasant and, as with Mamoonah, continue to influence into adulthood. In remaining silent, Richard, John and

Mamoonah exerted the little power they possessed (Foucault, 1997) exercising resistance and non-cooperation by simply refusing to engage in rituals of contrition. All three participants responded in a passive, patient acceptance of their experiences, which suggests a level of contempt towards authority.

The physical and verbal changes that authority demonstrated were clearly understood by participants to intimidate and exert the teacher's authority. However, Arendt (2000) declares that such acts are orchestrated to impose passive obedience. Fear of upsetting authority by speaking out, echoes Euripides' play, *Orestes* (1972, p. 355), in which the chorus cautions against speaking truth to power by declaring that 'it is safer to keep quiet'. Richard revealed that he took this obedient approach because 'that is your role', not wishing to become a 'marked man'.

The 'disciplinary technologies' (Foucault, 1991a; Barker and Jane, 2016) of Richard's institution were effective in influencing the way in which he controlled his behaviour. Richard's self-regulation of voice effectively inhibited his ability to speak out freely and frankly. Arendt (2016) points out that authority requires obedience and whilst all authority rests on opinion, a universal refusal to obey can result in upheaval. Every challenge by an individual in speaking out freely and frankly to authority may be regarded as a threat to the *status quo* and efficient operation of an institution. As Arendt (2016) points out, individual possession of freedom only resides in the personal realm.

Foucault (1997) notes that where resistance appears totally absent, then it is simply a matter of obedience, and relations of power are less evident. However, resistance to power can open creative opportunities taking many forms. Emily, for example, put her writing skills to beneficial effect in voicing her opposition by writing anonymous playlets that lampooned those in authority, whilst participants, John, Matthew, Mamoonah, Narjis and Emily, all used silence and created alternative truths.

Richard commented that in general, he did not think that speaking freely and frankly to those in authority was well received and always risked repercussions. He based this upon observations of how fellow students were dealt with who summoned the courage to speak out freely and frankly. However, with those of equal power, that is, fellow students, it had some validity, but use needed to be circumspect so as not to upset or damage a relationship.

The theme of silence as a technology of ways and means to influence a situation, or understand, or respond and engage in power relations, is expanded further in a later chapter.

6.1.5 Wounded by school

Each participant felt affected in some way by their experiences of encountering authority figures in school. Olson (2009, p. 30) discusses some of the negative consequences of schooling in terms of ‘wounds’. These ‘wounds’ suffered by learners arise from institutional procedures involved in administering and operating a regulated organisation. Such regulations often take little account of individual differences or feelings.

Whilst there are positive, enjoyable aspects of schooling, described as ‘faces of pleasure’ by Olson (2009, p. 32), involving experiences of ‘autonomous pleasure,’ ‘social reward’ and ‘tension and release’, Olson also notes that schooling can inflict ‘wounds’ that arise from compliance, control and fear of punishment. Participants were all, to a greater or lesser extent, reluctant to speak out freely and frankly in their school contexts for fear of drawing unwanted attention to themselves, doing the wrong thing, or being regarded as ‘naughty’ or troublesome. The connection between obeying rules and the need for acceptance and approval was important.

A certain ‘dislocation’ was felt by participants, who, feeling they held the right to speak out freely and frankly, still knew this would bring them into conflict. Hamm (2014) discusses the influence of an institution’s rituals in forming student attitudes and expectations. Ritual performances within the institution invite members continually to ‘play along’ and accept the expressed meanings, rules, structures and regulations. Failure to do so can lead to ostracism, marginalisation and exclusion.

The most overwhelming reality of school life (Hern, 2008) is that of time control, behaviour and imposed learning activities. Inevitably, this also affects how students think about themselves, others and about learning in general. Tolstoy (2006) noted that every individual has two sides to life. A personal life, in which they can exercise some freedom, and an elemental life, strongly influenced by those around them.

Experiences of authority figures could be quite different when the context changed from daily classroom school routine to parents evenings. Two of the participants recalled experiences of how their teachers' attitudes and behaviour were quite different when meeting with their parents. Mamoonah explained that after twelve months of pleading her case to her teachers, it was only when the teacher met her and her mother together that Mamoonah's explanations of the upsetting incident were finally accepted. Mamoonah communicated her relief at the recollection of this meeting towards the end of the school year that finally convinced her parents she was not part of the, much earlier, bad behaviour incident.

> *I said to my mum*, [at the meeting], *'see, I told you so'* [laughs]. *From then on, my mum was more lenient* [at home].

The changed context from classroom to parents evening appeared to have influenced the teacher to assume a more relaxed and receptive attitude. Mamoonah felt that her teacher took on a more approachable and listening outlook than she had ever witnessed in ordinary school time. Richard also provided illuminating insight and perceptions of parent–teacher exchanges when he recalled his observations of how teachers interacted with parents at a parent–teacher consultation.

> *I was always amazed at how smiley the teachers were and how they were* [with parents] *and how human they were.*

The experience helped Richard to see his teachers in a different light and to recognise they played distinct roles depending on audience. Richard explained this in terms of teachers not wanting to be 'undermined' by students in the classroom and not wishing to antagonise parents on open evenings. The large size of school institutions, due to economies of scale, (Hern, 2008) militate against close teacher–student relationships, with busy teachers having little time to speak with students informally.

6.1.6 Summary of experiences as a student

Participants were able to recall incidents of their interactions with adult authority figures that were formative in how they interacted later, as adults.

All participants recognised that adults expected obedience and were not open to authority being questioned. Participants spoke of ‘going along’ with whatever their teachers told them they should do, even if they felt it unfair.

In this respect, their responses reflected the fable of Aesop (2007) in which the flexible reed was more successful than the more rigid olive tree in withstanding the power of the wind. For respondents, obedience was a platform from which power was exerted, whilst for others, it left them resentful or angry.

Participants developed skills and strategies to speak in a manner that did not disappoint or let down adults. Where students were unhappy, they learnt to ‘keep their counsel’ and not argue back. For some, this was through fear of consequences whilst for others, it was avoiding the notice of adults. Feelings of being a ‘tiny cog’ in a huge machine and keeping a low profile, were often cited. Olson (2009, p. 44) describes such actions as a ‘carapace’ to protect from negative experiences.

Participants felt pressure to comply with authority, exercised through a range of control mechanisms such as monitoring, target setting, shaming and rewards. Respondents recognised that part of the adult–student relationship within a school environment involved such control mechanisms. A consensus amongst participants was that adults are sensitive to signs that their authority is being threatened when students choose to speak out freely and frankly.

Modifying speech, thinking and dress to avoid confrontation or upset was an important skill. Choosing the right language to express themselves assertively, using words or phrases that would not directly challenge authority, was an on-going learning process that participants took into adulthood. Such processes ranged from Emily choosing to write humorous, anonymous plays, lampooning senior managers, to Matthew’s constructed untruths, or the opting for silence.

Younger and less senior adults in the school hierarchy were often seen as being more receptive to receiving free and frank criticism from students. Participants resented being ‘spoken down to’ by someone in authority, citing feelings of powerlessness. Strategies of response ranged from ‘acting dumb’ to speaking out freely and frankly, sometimes simply creating an untruth to satisfy the adult.

Each response was tempered by the knowledge that they had to accept whatever was dealt out to them. Participants all expressed the importance to their own self esteem of not saying or doing anything too radical for fear of losing the approval and acceptance of the adult. Both male and female participants chose the action of silence as a deliberate response to adult questioning rather than speaking freely and frankly.

The ancient Greek playwright, Euripides (1957, p. 192) describes the frustration that can be experienced by authority when a person of less authority responds, ‘more dumbly obstinate than the sea’. Whilst Euripides cautions ‘there is no remedy in silence’, participants felt the use of this response to be a safe act of defiance or resistance, given their impotence. Where participants felt an injustice had been meted out by an adult, described by Olson (2009, p. 43) as ‘wounds of rebellion’, such experiences were often clearly recalled. Incidents that resulted in fear, humiliation or embarrassment were not easily forgotten by participants.

Participants were never wholly impotent in the face of authority. Having had an initial unpleasant experience, some spoke of ‘planning’ a strategy in advance of an expected future exchange with an authority figure. One participant spoke of having a pre-prepared (untrue) story ready for the expected challenge by a school authority figure. Another spoke of ensuring that if they did have to explain themselves or their actions, they would try and do so, first, to a sympathetic authority figure of their choice, who might function as an advocate for them. One participant spoke of a careful use of humour to get their point across. Another of reminding the authority figure of when they had been personally loyal or cooperative in the past, in the hope of a more sympathetic hearing.

As with Barad’s brittlestar sea creatures (Barad, 2007), participants were able to sense when and how best to respond to a threat to their own wellbeing from an authority figure and learnt to respond appropriately. The overriding feeling of all participants, when reflecting upon their school experiences, was, however, one of powerlessness and resentment towards those in authority. This feeling was consistent across all the different participant genders, ages and ethnicities. Each participant recognised that being accepted and approved of by those in authority was as important as gaining qualifications.

None of the participants reflected upon issues of gender or ethnicity being significant. However, there were consistencies in responses. The male participants all recalled memorable instances where they had experienced problems with male authority figures and the female respondents all appeared to have similar issues with female authority figures. Moreover, two of the female respondents reported that they made successful conscious efforts to relate well to their male authority figures and build rapport.

6.2 Participant experiences as a working adult in a school or college context

6.2.1 Introduction

Ten participants had experience of employment within educational contexts as an adult and related their encounters of interacting with authority. John, Ankita, Matthew, Emily, Richard, Taneesha, Sharon, Sue, Subira and Rose, all described how they felt about being able to speak freely and frankly to those who held authority within their respective institutions.

Obedience to those in authority, and experiences of being part of an inhibiting institutional hierarchy, feature strongly in these accounts. Similar to their memories as school students, participants felt reluctant to speak out freely and frankly for fear of consequences, being misinterpreted or letting down colleagues or their manager. Some spoke of the responsibility they felt about their own exercise of authority, whilst others reflected upon the personal cost of stressful exchanges. Others confessed feelings of resentment toward those in authority above them, who prevented them from expressing their true feelings; and a desire to feel more comfortable or safe in their respective roles.

6.2.2 How participants perceived, understood and were affected by their situations

A theme common to both student and adult experiences of working in school contexts was the expectation that obedience to authority was always required. Foucault (1991; 1991a) makes clear that management techniques of supervision and hierarchies of surveillance contribute to bringing about conformity through myriad small signs and relational interactions.

Some participants held junior positions in schools or colleges, which made them acutely aware of hierarchy and their place within it. Taneesha, Sharon, Subira and John were able to exercise some influence upon the school hierarchies they found themselves part of. Foucault (1991a, p. 149) describes the 'rhythms, regulations and cycles of repetition' within the disciplinary regime of the school that inform the structured roles and procedures of its operation.

Sharon spoke of being governed and inhibited by what she saw as the school expectations of her role and place within it.

> *I felt my boss was approachable,* [but] *I didn't feel like I could completely freely speak… don't want to step on other people's toes, you can't always speak completely free.*

She felt uneasy in expressing her true feelings as her line manager might transmit what was said up the chain of command and she could be misinterpreted to her detriment. Sharon felt her hierarchy confined her to speaking only to, or through, her immediate line manager. Foucault (1991, p. 48) describes 'practical systems' influencing and informing thinking and action. Such systems account for the way in which subjects organise what they do, how they react, or modify rules, or respond to others. Within Foucault's 'practical systems', there are three broad areas of influence: relations of control over things, relations of action upon others and relations with oneself.

Obedience to institutional rules and procedures did not fully inhibit Sharon from speaking freely and frankly to those in authority. Sharon sought out 'friendly, trustworthy' members of the hierarchy who could be relied upon to confidentially express her opinions to. For Sharon, as for Subira, it was necessary for them to 'know the person' before speaking freely and frankly. John was also inhibited from expressing his unhappiness at work. John, like Sharon, was concerned about consequences arising from speaking out freely and frankly.

> *I don't think you can, because you are employed by the school,* [I don't want to] *upset the headteacher – the person that employs, pays you.*

John recognised a strategy to give himself voice,

> *If you know the person, you word it so they like it, and then you tell them something they may not like so that you are already in their 'good books'.*

Taneesha held no such fear in conveying how she felt towards her manager. Threat of redundancy, and anger towards the way she and her colleagues were treated, emboldened her to feel less inhibited in speaking out freely and frankly.

> *I do respect authority. However, I'm not scared of authority or the repercussion.*

In retrospect, Taneesha was concerned that her actions might have implications for future employment references. Emily, too, lost respect for some of her managers but approached the situation differently.

> *You see incompetence as a professional but because you are…* [internally thinking]*, 'clearly, this person can't do their job' and then use that as a lever to get a promotion next time.*

John spoke of the frustration working within a tight knit hierarchy of authority that constrained him to expressing his ideas only to the manager directly above him. All participants felt they owed obedience to whoever was in authority.

Taylor (1960), reflecting upon Plato's 'laws' (p. 472), notes that obedience is inculcated early in a child's development, lest children be left to their own devices. Through obedience, children are transformed from bodies that cannot keep still, jump around and shout, to people who, through the rubric of education, learn to practice restraint, achieve refinement and become cognisant of others.

Commenting on Plato's Book III, Taylor (1960, p. 471) illustrates the challenges for ancient Athens when the 'uneducated learned' could use their own judgement and voice on matters from politics to poetry. Plato notes and laments a decline in ancient Greek society, where 'no one learns how to obey', but equally, cautions that obedience should not degenerate into regimentation, nor lead to anarchy.

Villa (2001, p. 159) cites Nietzsche and Socrates as advocating that a subject cannot simply be a 'mere receptacle for a given code of conduct' and that (p. 160) the 'instinct of obedience' needs to be tempered with critical and creative activity. Such activity, Foucault (1988b) describes as technologies of the self, which allow the exercise of autonomy.

Fear of upsetting those in authority through speaking out freely and frankly was consistently raised by participants, and echoes Mandelstam (1989), who

declared that if subjects feel helplessness, shame or insecurity, a sense of fear will always be present. As the sole breadwinner for her family, Sharon was not prepared to jeopardise her employment through speaking out of turn. John, Matthew, Emily, Richard and Rose were equally inhibited.

Each participant recognised and used an appropriate register of deference and respect toward authority. John and Matthew communicated discontent toward authority, not through speech, but by displaying upset and shocked facial expressions and restrained verbal responses. John and Matthew did just enough to register their unhappiness without antagonising authority figures.

Richard and Mamoonah both reflected that deference to authority was learnt from their parents. Richard's account reflected Aristotle (1976, p. 337) who notes that a child, ideally, should be trained to obey 'from an early age'. Nietzsche (1989) declares that ever since human beings existed, many have obeyed, compared with a small number who command.

Nietzsche stated that obedience is ingrained into the human psyche to the extent that it is now innate as a form of consciousness. Whilst participants did, on occasion, challenge and disagree, in small ways, with authority figures, they usually went along with those who issued direction.

When Richard assumed a position of authority as a young adult, he described the fear he felt that those in his charge might challenge his authority. Richard felt that he, '…would not feel comfortable in a free and frank discussion', where his decisions were questioned. Foucault (1980, p. 187) comments that relations of power immerse subjects in experiencing, observing or exercising relationships of power that are manifestly complex and inherent in 'myriad issues, [having] myriad effects'. Whilst Richard found the responsibility of exercising authority burdensome, Emily viewed the weaknesses of authority as an opportunity to assume authority herself.

> *You see incompetence as a professional so, basically, you do their job, then use it as a lever to get promotion.*

A more typical response from participants concerned resentment that their impulses to speak out freely were not welcomed by authority figures. This mirrors Olson (2009, p. 43) and the 'wounds of rebellion', noted previously, in participant experiences of authority.

Aristotle (1976, p. 337) wrote that most people are far readier to submit to compulsion than risk punishment for their ‘fine ideals’. Aristotle’s writings also align with the experiences of participants in that whilst people may resent it when their impulses are opposed, they do not protest. For John, Narjis and Matthew, the decision to obey was automatic and yet they were resentful at having to do so.

Lilyquist (1998) suggests that conformity is important in a school context, and without it, practitioners can put at risk their sense of personal and professional identity. Ensuring that both students and colleagues are seen to adhere to the vision, structure, rules and procedures of the institution is, therefore, important.

Villa (2001) suggests that to function effectively within the wider public realm requires adherence to multiple perspectives of thought, speech and action. However, Arendt (1998) notes that if free and frank exchanges of views are discouraged, then the individual remains imprisoned in their own singular experiences, leading to feelings of inconsequence and isolation. John and Matthew illustrate this in their inability to fully express their voices. Both participants record feelings of anger and a need to restrain themselves from speaking out freely and frankly, for fear of breaching staff etiquette.

Arendt (1978) points out that whilst generating feelings of coercion and resistance, obedience can also give a sense of wellbeing, especially in a hierarchical context. Within an adult hierarchical context, Sharon and Subira expressed feelings of comfort and safety (Wetherell, 2002), being part of a decision hierarchy that also expected compliance and loyalty. Sharon expressed relief that the situation that troubled her could simply be passed ‘up the line’ of hierarchy to solve.

For Sharon to have acted and solved the problem herself would have upset what she perceived as the equal authority relationship she had with another member of staff at the same level. Sharon refrained from speaking freely and frankly to her colleague. Instead, she simply referred upwards to her supervisor, who held more authority.

The pressure to comply influenced participants’ exercise of freedom of action in how they responded to their situations. Not wishing to be misunderstood, or seen as mischievous, inhibited speaking out freely and frankly. For students and teachers, Boaz (1998) notes that schooling often seeks to reflect

employers' wishes for students to be both independent thinkers – proactive decision makers– and yet also, be willing to obey and conform to the institution's norms.

The combined influences of parenting, schooling and wider society interact to produce what Foucault (1977, p. 138) refers to as 'docile bodies' with employment-friendly individual skills, aptitudes and capacities. Such self-imposed, governing, disciplinary processes are reinforced by authority figures, through measures of coercion, to ensure compliance and dissuade more serious breaches of discipline.

The use of physical space to encourage compliance is illustrated, first, by participant, Taneesha, in her manager's choice of meeting staff in the unfamiliar surroundings of the institution's board room – the effect upon staff was one in which they felt much more inhibited to speak out – and second, in John's experience of the headteacher's door, which was, ostensibly, always open, yet no-one dared enter or felt free to speak their mind. Handy (1990), in his focus on the organisation of schooling, identifies a concentration upon a school's threefold areas of socialising, custodial and certificating, as one which lends itself to ensuring conformity and order.

Ricoeur (2006) also identifies issues concerning the control and direction of the learning and discipline processes. He states that criteria for success, organisation, punishments and rewards for ensuring compliance are always in the gift of those who oversee and manage an institution. The desire of participants was often to be able to speak out freely and frankly. However, as Ricoeur points out, how a subject reacts in the artificially constructed environment of an institution may differ from how they would act and feel in a more familiar and comfortable environment.

Mandelstam (1989), writing in the context of adversity, urges a subject not to give up their freedoms by merging quietly into their surroundings. Mandelstam describes feeling like a 'woodchip' (p. 164), swept along by the raging torrent of life's pressures and influences. Like Foucault (1997), Mandelstam centres upon the tiny woodchip's possibility to influence, resist and bring about change.

Subira, in her meeting with inspection officials from the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), felt pressure not to say anything detrimental that would bring her loyalty to her institution into question. Subira did not want to be seen

to let down her colleagues or headteacher by verbalising comments that might be interpreted as critical. Subira felt inhibited in speaking out freely and frankly. She was suspicious of attempts made by the authority figure to make the formal interview seem like a relaxed, informal discussion. Subira felt uncomfortable with the enforced nature of meeting with the inspector.

Alvesson and Spicer (2016) describe the contradictions inherent in many hierarchical institutions who employ intelligent, creative workers and yet rely upon mindless enthusiasm, conformity, discipline and loyalty in their performance. Subira, as with the other interview participants, felt a pressure to be loyal to her institution. Alvesson and Spicer (2016) claim that a strong ethos of loyalty encourages subjects not to think for themselves and fosters fear of deviation and a moral compunction to act in the interests of the institution.

Subira highlights the pressure also experienced by other participants in being seen to be loyal to colleagues and the institution in which they worked. Subira did speak positively about how comfortable she felt speaking with her headteacher, whom she regarded as a friend.

I feel more comfortable to say whatever I need to say and if it is not favourable, I feel I can say whatever I want.

The close relationship that Subira forged was made over time, allowing her the opportunity to speak her mind freely and frankly. The situation was quite different when Subira was interviewed by what she regarded as a higher authority, in the form of an OFSTED inspector. ‘When I spoke with OFSTED, I felt a bit panicky, I wasn’t feeling too confident to them’.

Subira felt that there was a responsibility on her shoulders to say things that would not let either the institution or her colleagues down. Of having to ‘pull herself together’ in the presence of the inspector to get ‘the conversation to flow’. This required much concentration and courage. Telling herself, ‘OK, I really need to do this but initially took me a while’. Words were chosen with care during the interview and speaking freely and frankly was not an option.

> *DEFINITELY* [emphasis] *about* [being] *careful with words* [laughs] *and I wasn’t too sure what my colleagues said, so limited saying the basic things.*

Faced with the dilemma (Berlant, 2011) of speaking freely and frankly to the inspector, or risking losing face or the approval of colleagues and headteacher, was stressful. A good relationship with the headteacher was something Subira prized highly and to lose that close relationship would cause her significant distress. At all costs, Subira wanted to avoid any 'problems' with the inspector and therefore, was inhibited in what she said to the inspector, who, ultimately, felt she was, 'not giving enough'. 'They [OFSTED inspectors] prompt you to say more because they need more from you'. Despite this, Subira kept up her guard in answering the inspector's questions, describing a difficult conversation in which the two interlocutors sparred together. Caught between two authority figures, loyal to one and wary of the other, required careful, thought-through responses so as not to let anyone down or become the 'weakest link'.

> *No matter how prepared you are, there is this fear in you that comes up because of the authority figure, or what they do, because you don't know what is going to come out of it.*

Alford (2002) discusses the pressures that arise within a subject when they feel unable to express themselves freely and frankly for fear of negative consequences relating to their employment. Taneesha, in exchanges with her line manager, did feel confident expressing her feelings freely and frankly, which, consequently, led to a breakdown in relations and her seeking another job. Alford (2002) recognises this phenomenon, commenting that a subject's choice to speak out can have wider ramifications such as loss of income and/or alienation.

According to Alvesson and Spicer (2016), the culture of an organisation acts in ways that give people directions on what constitutes acceptable thinking and action. Equally, an organisation culture can lead to lack of freedom and constrain thinking outside of what is seen as acceptable by the institution.

Taneesha felt a keen sense of community toward her school and those she worked with, which made it more difficult for her to stand out or disrupt the harmonious relationships she valued. Sharon, too, felt under pressure not to jeopardise the way in which her managers felt towards her. Behind their words lies the fear of possible negative consequences that may result from speaking out freely and frankly.

Ricoeur (2006) reflects that the structure of hierarchy revolves around the exercise of power. The acceptance and recognition of ideas based around hierarchy legitimise authority bringing order and strengthening institutions. Alford (2002) draws upon the work of Girrard (1997) in declaring that an institution is always alert to any person – inside or outside the organisation – who threatens its good order or existence. Consequently, the institution requires a ‘sacrifice’, or scapegoat, to function as an example, or warning to others. Participants always felt they needed to be very sure that if they did venture to speak freely and frankly, it concerned issues that would not be interpreted as critical or harmful to the institution.

Ankita felt duty-bound to those in authority to listen to, and accept graciously, the free and frank views of those further down the hierarchy. She referred to authority figures as ‘them’ throughout her transcript, indicating the distance between herself and authority. Speaking freely and frankly was not an issue for Ankita, who regarded her strategy as useful for the institution in which she worked and her main way of communicating her feelings to senior managers.

Whilst Ankita referred to those in authority as ‘they’, her strategy was always to be polite and diplomatic to ‘them’ as they would then feel obliged to, ‘take your opinion on board a little bit more’. Rose, on the other hand, would not ‘have dared to speak freely and frankly’ to those above her in the hierarchy. Rose felt confidence in her immediate line manager, whom she knew, but not those more senior. If she had any issues to communicate, they would be directed through her teaching union, due to her mistrust of those in authority (Foucault, 1980a,) to deliver an impartial judgement.

Rose could not fully articulate why she felt this way, other than sensing a distance between herself and senior managers who held quite different perspectives and concerns. Rose needed the reassurance of a strong ally in the form of a trade union to help ensure balance, which gave her confidence that her interests would be heard.

Many participants expressed elements of fear that they may upset the holders of power by speaking out freely and frankly. Dreyfus and Rabinow (2013) state that power is only exercised over free subjects who can choose possibilities. The exercise of power infringes upon freedom, thus leading to a perpetual ‘agonism’ (p. 221) in the play between power and freedom.

Participants, to a greater or lesser extent, were fearful of offending those above them in the hierarchy by saying or doing things that would let themselves or their colleagues down. Feelings of becoming an outcast, being different from colleagues, were of concern to participants. Such fears threatened feelings of wellbeing (Barker and Jane, 2016) and shaped emotional responses, resulting in what Olson (2009) describes as 'wounds of compliance' (p. 41).

Both Matthew and John declared that their experiences of feeling powerless in the face of authority as schoolchildren had led them, as adults, to listen more to the free and frank opinions of their own students. Matthew stated,

> *So, I think now, when reflecting on it, I think it has affected the way I work with children.*

John made a similar claim in that he was more open and receptive to student voice than his teachers had been towards him.

> *I let them speak freely and frankly. They might tell me something I don't like but it is their right to speak. I want to listen.*

Both Matthew and John had concerns, as adult employees in their respective institutional hierarchies, about the restrictive nature of disciplinary procedures that placed loyalty to school, colleagues, policies and procedures above ability to speak freely and frankly.

Tolstoy (1972) regarded listening to the views of students as especially important to the teacher and student learning relationship. Czerniawski and Kidd (2011) note that the practice of effective teaching requires both reflection and critical thinking; and Tolstoy (1972) regarded these two activities, coupled with constant experimentation, to be essential elements in effective teaching and learning. He felt that compulsory, forcible education was of questionable value and that the concept of school was established more for the convenience of the teacher than the child (Tolstoy, 1954).

John did feel empathetic to those who held authority positions within schools and the difficulties they faced when confronted with staff, parents and students who spoke out. He felt that hierarchy isolated those in authority, who, unlike him, had people at 'his own level' to talk with. John gave the following example of the staffroom to illustrate his point concerning authority and the effect that hierarchy had on those without the same powers.

> *If they* [authority figures] *did come and sit in the staffroom for a general gossip, you would question* [why] *and you would not speak freely and frankly if they came and sat in the staffroom, you would feel so awkward.*

Handy (1986) considers the authority roles and choices that individuals have in an educational context. A professional organisation like a school must fulfil various statutory obligations as well as the expectations of students, staff and parents. In doing so, the school needs to be precise about the demands and constraints it imposes to ensure it is seen to function efficiently. Dunford *et al.* (2000) observe that whilst there is choice about how this happens, those in authority must manage and negotiate sensitively around roles and expectations held by staff, parents and students. The distancing of management roles from operational roles makes it easier, and less personal, to effect discipline and compliance on those within the institutional hierarchy.

Matthew expressed the view that speaking freely and frankly to authority figures in an institution was never a 'given'. Foucault (2004, p. 173) maintains that it is a 'popular society [mis]conception' that expressing truth leads to order and peace. Expressing truth freely and frankly can just as easily bring disquiet, disharmony and disorder. Matthew chose to be circumspect in his conversations with those above him in the hierarchy, to preserve harmony.

Euripides (1972) wrote that whilst 'truth', genuinely communicated, 'should need no subtle presentation' (p. 252), the effects may not always be welcomed. On issues concerning welfare or safety of children, however, Matthew felt confident in addressing authority figures. Despite this, Matthew still felt that one would need to 'pluck up courage' to speak freely and frankly. Hierarchy dominated John's workplace, making the expression of his views and issues problematic for him.

Dreyfus and Rabinow (2013) remind us that an educational institution functions through tight regulation of the space, rules and regulations that govern its operation. The promotion of institutional rules and regulations, coupled with what Ryle (1970, p. 28) refers to as 'know how' and 'know that' knowledge, work together to constitute the power relations at work within an institution.

Foucault (1991) notes that these relationships are worked out and boundaries created, subverted or bypassed by students and staff through apprenticeship of participation in an institution's day-to-day operation. These 'shifting, inherently

unstable expressions' (Hodgson, 2007, p. 49) occur within informal networks and alliances in all organisations.

Matthew and John were frequently irritated by the stifling nature of rules, regulations and expectations of senior managers but looked for opportunities to evaluate the boundaries at every opportunity. John felt that whilst it was easier to speak freely and frankly as an adult, one still had to be circumspect as to who in the hierarchy one chose to speak freely and frankly to. Bell (1992) describes such inhibited communication as practised to limit 'intra-group damage' or enhance better 'intra-group bonding', thus avoiding the negative consequences of 'mis-signalling' (p. 73).

Subira and Sharon touched upon similar concerns in their interactions with authority figures. Bell (1992) reminds us that what is said – the way the interlocutors react to each other – shapes the relationship and 'creates situations' of possibility (p. 111). The rituals around communication in hierarchies (Bell, 1992) act to reinforce social control and affirm identity.

Participant, Richard, had also found his brush with authority figures, as a student, unpleasant, however, unlike John and Matthew, when he assumed a junior authority position within a private boarding school, he felt no compulsion to model his approach as an adult on his experiences as a student.

> *I was always slightly terrified that people* [students] *would 'rise up'* [challenge his authority] *and you are not expected* [by parents] *to let them* [students] *speak their minds.*

Richard had a healthy recognition that within his institution, power could be exercised (Foucault, 2004) by both adults and students. The institution was one in which upsetting fee-paying parents needed to be balanced by the exercise of adult authority. He felt an unspoken pressure from his institution and his own schooling experiences that he should discourage students speaking freely and frankly. In his working role, he was disquieted in situations where students were questioning his judgements or actions when he was supervising activities.

> *I wouldn't be comfortable in a free and frank discussion with kids as they would probably be like, 'why can't we just do swimming all the time as the heated pool is fun.'* [Personally], *I see no problem with that* [laughs]

but that is not what I've been hired to do. It just leads to all these [stressful] *conversations with children.*

Richard wanted to avoid confrontation and any situation where the comments of students would lead to an undermining of his authority. Notwithstanding, he and participant, Emily, related incidences where – as Foucault (2004, p. xx) describes – exchanges with students occurred upon a 'strategic field' where opposing forces came together.

Emily's experiences also occurred within fee-paying schooling contexts. For Emily, her position as manager of a college Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) required her to juggle the expectations of pupils, parents and owners of the business in ensuring the smooth running of the institution. Foucault (2004, p. 39) noted that there was a perpetual confrontation 'between the mechanics of discipline and the principle of right' (p. 39). Emily described parents as paying 'extortionate' amounts of money to secure a place at the college, which gave both parents and students a sense of empowerment when it came to what, how, and when teaching occurred.

Emily felt that the transactional relationship she had with parents and students meant that the usual power relations she had experienced herself at school did not apply. Student placements lasted only weeks, and this gave little opportunity to immerse students into institutional rituals (Bell, 1992; Ham, 2014) of discipline and control. Consequently, Emily found herself in confrontations and verbal struggles with individuals, their parents, teachers and classes to ensure the smooth running of the college.

Emily describes that without the usual loyalty and rituals experienced by students in long-term relationships with their institution, her students felt that 'nothing mattered in the relationship' and that in a few weeks, they would be jetting off back home to their countries. Unlike a usual school experience, the goals for success were not the institution's but were those that the individual students came with, in wanting to learn English. Emily needed to be careful in her use of speaking freely and frankly to both students and parents whose first language was, often, not English. This resulted in occasional feelings of loss of authority, further impacted when having important conversations via *Google Translate*. Students, on the other hand, were not so inhibited and felt entitled to speak freely and frankly to all members of staff.

These random confrontations of relationship, Foucault (2004) explains, consist of three elements: first, the presentation of authority, which consisted of Emily ensuring that she dressed in a more formal manner than other staff; second, making a conscious effort, from the first meeting, to firmly communicate in serious tones, the expectations of the college regarding behaviour and cooperation; and third, the communication of institutional rewards and sanctions. Confrontations (Foucault, 2004) did occur between teachers and students with grievances about their accommodation or complaints that their needs were not being fully addressed in some other way.

Richard expressed the utopian view that if only those with less power always trusted the authority holder to act justly, then conversation would be more relaxed and less fraught,

> *If everyone always took good intentions and took things that were said as though they had good intentions and reacted* [positively], *but some students 'pick at it,' they look for 'things' that are wrong in it.*

Together with Matthew and John, Richard also feared (Bell, 1992, p. 73) 'mis-signalling' arising from communication with students and those who supervised his work. Richard's views on free and frank dialogue with students were, however, mixed. Although he saw such dialogue as threatening to his authority, he also acknowledged that if student dialogue was delivered in a genuine non-critical tone, then it was to be welcomed.

Sue reported that once she had made the transition from parent, at her school, to employee, she noticed that her views and opinions were listened to, although she still felt inhibited in speaking freely and frankly. Being 'on the inside', Sue felt her contributions were more easily accepted and valued than as a parent on the outside. A subject's actions (Presley-Sanon and Saint-Just, 2015) are shaped by the interaction of identity and context. Sue's identity as part of the institution, however, exposed her to also upholding the school's rituals and culture.

This caused Sue disquiet as a parent. Sue felt loyalties both to her child and to the expectations placed upon her as an employee. She found herself having to alter her perceptions of the parent–school relationship (Foucault, 2011b) to adopt a more institutional standpoint. Finding herself part of the 'complex practices, values and discourses' (Tamboukou, 2012, p. 861) that influenced

the performativity of the school in which she worked. On reflection, Sue recognised the effect of these split influences (Presley-Sanon and Saint-Just, 2015) on her current understanding of self and identity.

Taneesha felt no hesitation in speaking out freely and frankly and was not at all inhibited by her place in the institutional hierarchy. There were expressions of disrespect towards her immediate line manager, which contributed to giving her confidence to speak out freely and frankly. This took the form of challenging the authority figure's lack of knowledge and professionalism. The authority figure's reaction to this outspokenness was not positive. After a thoughtful pause in our interview, Taneesha recounted that there was a strong reaction to her, tinged with what she felt was an element of sexism:

> *Shock that I'd dare challenge him. He was quite old fashioned …. I feel like he thinks that men know everything, men should speak.*

These issues of negative stereotypical, gendered thinking affected the relationship between the male manager and herself. Barker and Jane (2016) point to the nature of sexism and how it continues to contribute to women's experiences in the world remaining quite different from those of men. Foucault suggests (Barker and Jane, 2016, p. 360) that discourses of 'polymorphous sexualities' are spread through institutions within society and these discourses contribute (Foucault, 1990) to attitudes and understandings.

In seeking to change those attitudes, Braidotti (2011) describes the dilemma of changing, or influencing new thinking discourses, as being caught between resistance to an injustice and creative problem solving. Taneesha assertively pointed out to her manager that decisions being made constituted a perpetration of grave injustice and this was contributing to feelings of opposition towards her manager's decision-making authority and preventing further dialogue.

> *Yeah, he had a sort of bad attitude every time we met after that, disregarding a lot of things I'd say. Everything he said just irritated me* [laughter].

Her working relationship with her manager was never the same after speaking out freely and frankly. Her belief in the ideals of equal opportunities and valuing of professional skills (Berlant, 2011) had been undermined by reality, but

Foucault (2004) noted that power relationships are always in a state of tension and struggle. Such struggles and tensions play out through myriad social forces, which act upon a subject in subtle ways to influence thinking and behaviour. The experiences Taneesha encountered undermined her sense of autonomy (Berlant, 2011, p. 117) resulting in much conflicted thought, but she took strength from the experience. As Euripides (1972, p. 45) points out, conflict in a 'just cause' is an honourable thing to engage in.

Both Taneesha and Sharon felt that speaking freely and frankly was slightly more acceptable among equals, but it was not always helpful to speak freely and frankly to senior leadership figures. Both felt that workplaces should allow employees to speak freely and frankly, but having protective measures would help. Alvesson and Spicer (2016) note that while workplaces have a statutory duty to allow employees to speak out freely and frankly, doing so often leads to negative consequences. Organisations act, through various legal means, to dissuade and silence individuals who are overly critical. Taneesha's views reflect those of Euripides (1972, p. 384) in that, a person with no 'hidden purpose' should be encouraged to speak freely and frankly, laying bare one's thoughts on an issue felt strongly.

Taneesha's second encounter with authority occurred in a different workplace. Her manager called together all employees to inform them of their impending redundancy. Taneesha recalls the meeting as being emotionally charged and feeling personally upset.

It was easy for me to speak out. It was quite impulsive, the way I spoke.

Her response was delivered 'without concealment or reserve' (Foucault, 2011b, p. 10) and in doing so, expressed a truth she felt moved to make explicit. Partly, this outburst of free and frank speaking was a reaction to the attitude of the line manager who came across as, 'very condescending, patronising and flippant'.

Her views left the authority figure flustered and shocked. Taneesha pointed out that whilst she did have respect for authority, her feelings of injustice prevailed, triggering an inner compulsion to speak out. After doing so, she did worry about the consequences for her future employment and references but felt that a person had to stand up for what was just and right.

> *I feel speaking freely and frankly is important. I don't think that speaking freely and frankly got* [me] *anywhere, but I think it is important to speak freely and frankly because if you don't, you might, later, wish you had said something, you might* [have] *thought you could have made a change. But I didn't.*

Such experiences are touched upon by Tolstoy in an interview with Maxim Gorky (Gorky, 1920, p. 15). Tolstoy described people as 'stumps, roots and stones' on the pathway of life; 'one stumbles over them, sometimes is hurt by them'. Taneesha's experience of her manager certainly left a negative impression. On a more positive note, Tolstoy (1894) reflects that the life of an individual, as with humanity in general, changes and advances as life unfolds, leading to new possibilities through reflection. It is at that juncture, in which 'transitions and transactions' (Berlant, 2011, p. 200) are worked through and old sureties abandoned, that new possibilities can emerge.

Taneesha displayed a strong 'moral compass' that firmly rejected her manager's actions as 'morally chaotic' (Maude, 1987, p. 37), adopting what Tolstoy believed was an attempt to seek out a better universal moral order. In doing this, Taneesha's actions made possible a reappraisal and re-thinking of the issues between herself, her fellow employees and the line manager. Her outburst may not have had any immediate, obvious effects; however, as Dreyfus and Rabinow (2013) point out, whilst a subject often knows what they did and why they did it, they can be left unaware of the full impact of their actions.

Emily shared some of the frustration described by Taneesha in her annoyance with authority figures who acted in ways she judged to be unprofessional. However, Emily was not so forthright.

> *Mmmmm,* [thoughtful], *well, I don't think I would speak to anyone freely and frankly. I think the objective is more important than, like, speaking truth to power for the sake of it, like, I don't think that gets you places.*

6.2.3 How participants changed, responded to or influenced their situations

Each participant found themselves in positions of both obedience and desire to speak out freely and frankly. Lerner (1996) notes the importance to the

individual of having the means and strategies to influence their situation. Lerner recognises the need for human beings to be recognised and cherished and that humans seek meaning as an essential component to their wellbeing. To be obedient and powerless, he describes as a 'corrupting' process, which, if not overcome, leads to feelings of impotence.

Each participant recalled being in what Foucault (1997b) describes as a relational 'strategic situation' (p. 11) within which many influential elements exist, giving opportunities for new thinking or the ability to 'revalue one's currency' (Foucault, 2007, p. 181). Emily found herself in 'strategic situations' in her employment in education. She was very career-focussed and keenly aware of the power held by those in authority. Although cautious about speaking out so as not to jeopardise her promotion within the hierarchy, she had thought through a strategy that worked for her. Emily likened simply speaking out freely and frankly as a tactic best left to Greek tragedies.

> *Something bad happens* [to the speaker] *and then they become a martyr, whereas actually, the people who get promotion are diplomats* [who say] *'O, um, err, this is a thing, I just don't feel we have quite got it right and I've actually been noticing that this works instead.*

By identifying herself as empathetic to authority, Emily was, in effect, speaking freely and frankly by pointing out deficiency and offering choices of action. Foucault (2001) draws from Plato to describe parrhesia within a democracy as more of a 'personal attitude, quality or virtue, and useful for political life' (p. 85). Emily was particularly irritated by her inept managers. She found ways, through tact and diplomacy, to exert her influence whilst not feeling able to directly speak her truth. Inwardly, Emily was feeling less polite and indulgent towards incompetent authority figures, explaining,

> *The implication being: you* [the authority figure] *are an idiot. You clearly have not done this properly. It doesn't work. Therefore, I have had to re-do it for you.*

Her strategy, in choosing this form of indirect free and frank speaking, arose from her need to 'care for the self' and meet her own needs. Foucault (1997) describes a subject's actions, whereby they seek to change or modify themselves or the situations they find themselves in, as technologies of the self. The skills adopted by Emily are akin to 'congruent communication' (Manning

and Bucher, 2001, p. 215) where ‘communication seeks to be harmonious, authentic and where words fit feelings’.

Working within a fee-paying language college, Emily required much tact in dealing with her incompetent managers, fee-paying parents and their children. Students and parents felt more entitlement to speak freely and frankly if unhappy. Students arrived with their own goals and Emily was concerned to ‘keep on the good side’ of students and parents for fear of complaint. It was important for her to develop good relationships with managers, teachers, students and parents. Foucault (1997) describes having to ‘create ourselves as works of art’ (p. 262). Emily can be seen working through this creative process as she adopted, adapted and applied skills strategically to fulfil her own work ambitions and meet the needs of others.

The need to fulfil both individual and institutional needs features in many other participant reflections. Subira was circumspect by using her strategy of silence in her interview with an OFSTED inspector for fear of letting down her colleagues and damaging her relationship with her headteacher. John, also, chose to be careful how he communicated with those in authority. Matthew, as with Emily, John and Taneesha, was conscious of possible negative consequences for career progression if he used unguarded speech. Each participant expressed concern that even when speaking out freely and frankly for the good of the organisation, it could be resented by immediate managers, being seen as disloyalty, or talking out of turn.

Rose, too, avoided direct interaction with authority figures but would have no hesitation in seeking intervention from her trade union to speak on her behalf. Taneesha, on the other hand, had no qualms about challenging authority when she felt moved to speak out. Sue was hesitant, however, saying it needed careful thought beforehand as speaking freely and frankly could lead to misunderstandings, later undesirable consequences, embarrassment or be interpreted as letting herself or her institution down.

Sharon was also quite circumspect and mindful as to consequences. Her strategy was to ‘sound out’ different authority figures before committing herself to speaking freely and frankly. As with other participants, she felt that once said, there was little control over reverberations or interpretations as it made its way up the institution’s hierarchy. Sharon stated that it was better to keep one’s own

counsel until being sure of who to speak freely and frankly to. Thucydides (1972) reflects Sharon's caution by counselling that a subject should always weigh up the possible consequences of being over-confident and thinking that their own power or influence is greater than it is.

Participants often expressed a sense of responsibility towards others to, somehow, find a safe way to express their feelings or thoughts. Alford (2002) found that whilst those who spoke out often, did so for their own benefit, they also felt a wider sense of responsibility to others. Attachment to the act, Alford suggests, is partly due to justifying the reasons why they choose to speak out and the associated personal costs that can arise. Refusal to identify with the authority figure often created a dichotomy between interlocutors leading to feelings of enhanced power differentials.

Taneesha felt that she was speaking out not just for herself but for her fearful colleagues. Thucydides (1972) declares that a person makes friends by doing good to others and Taneesha used her voice not just for herself but for those that chose silence. Compassion for others also featured in the accounts of Matthew and John, who, as students, felt restrained in their ability to speak out freely and frankly to authority figures. However, as adults in minor authority positions, their previous negative experiences informed their practice. Both felt strongly that they would not treat others in the way authority figures had treated them and encouraged free and frank exchanges.

Participants exercised what Foucault refers to as 'power functions' (2004, p. 29) and each participant working within their respective institution had both to submit to power and, in turn, were able to exercise degrees of power. Foucault (p. 29) talks of power 'circulating' rather than being fixed.

Participants, however, were less aware of their own powers to influence and more aware of power 'cascading downward' from above (Alford, 2001, p. 107). It was the power wielded by 'those above' that concerned participants the most, and the effects it had upon them. Few participants were conscious of their own abilities to resist or shape authority power. Participants certainly did find comfort and personal development arising from speaking out, despite the difficulties experienced. Euripides' (2003) notes that it is through trials and tribulations that 'virtue's crown is won' (p.113). The actions of participants often came with the cost of stress and anxiety.

Participants were always sensitive to how their interlocutor might receive free and frank communication. This was important in judging and weighing up consequences before committing themselves to speaking freely and frankly. Only Taneesha felt no inhibitions and reflected, thoughtfully, that although she needed to speak out for her own peace of mind, it did not 'get her anywhere' in affecting the decision of managers.

As with Euripides' Aethra, (1972, p. 203) Taneesha did not want to blame herself, 'for keeping cowardly silence'. Taneesha felt daunted by the powerful shadow of her institution but, like Aethra's son (p. 207) 'the humble man's just cause defeats the great' in seeking justice and freedom. The Greek chorus however cautions that sometimes it is 'safer to keep quiet' (p. 355).

Participants often exercised a measured consideration of their individual contexts, weighing up the benefits and disadvantages of speaking out freely and frankly before acting. More usual for participants was to consider all consequences and then embark upon a suitable strategy to lessen the possible consequences of speaking out freely and frankly. Some participants described a short process of contemplation, whilst others went through a longer process akin to Berlant's 'cruel optimism' (Berlant, 2011, p. 25) and 'impasse' (p. 199) before deciding upon a course of action.

Sue and Sharon agonised after, initially, losing hope that the institution could deliver a successful outcome for them. Their old sureties of attaining quick action required new thinking and strategies. Similarly, Matthew vividly describes a period of being exasperated by authority figures and simply being at a loss as to how to proceed. Matthew, initially, felt helpless, and this led to a reappraisal of understandings and expectations of the schooling process and his role within it.

Tolstoy (1997) describes one of his fictional characters as experiencing a similar process whose old sureties were swept away and, despite constant thinking about the troublesome issue, could not grasp a solution. Tolstoy describes this inner wrestling of thought as if 'the thread of the chief screw which held his life together were stripped, so that the screw could not get in or out but went on turning uselessly in the same place (Tolstoy, 1997, p. 375).

Employers often declare (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016) that they wish their employees to embody the enlightened ideals of problem solving, reflection and

knowledge, whilst at the same time, discouraging free thinking, questioning and individuality, which can be seen as subversive traits leading to questioning or undermining policies, procedures and decisions. Whilst such thinking can, at times, prove productive to an organisation, it can also disrupt its smooth running.

Strong cultures of loyalty, branding and 'best practice' all act to limit actions and creative thinking. Alvesson and Spicer (2016) give examples where independent and creative thinking is undermined when an institution decides that decisions can no longer be viewed as issues for debate and discussion. The adult participants in this study felt that they had the right to speak freely and frankly, but simultaneously, felt they were discouraged from doing so. This caused a certain amount of disharmony for participants and loss of employee insight by the institutions they served.

The disharmony felt by participants affects subject wellbeing, and Sutton (2018) suggests that there is evidence for a link between how a subject assesses their coherence and consistency at work and their wellbeing. Being less authentic to their sense of self interferes with a subject's intention to act professionally or desire to feel comfortable in the contexts they inhabit. Sutton identifies that inauthenticity at work is often regarded as a 'functional necessity' p. 126) to comply with demands of authority or avoid conflict or pressures of hierarchy. The ideal was a working environment where subjects felt happier and more confident in being able to express themselves in their relationships with others (Sutton, 2021).

Foucault (1997) recognised this dichotomy between authenticity and inauthenticity and the dilemmas for the individual it can cause. He saw that a sense of self was a fluid concept and the subject needed to constantly 'create themselves as a work of art' (p. 262) through developing new strategies to deal with different circumstances that arise. The experience of feeling both authentic and inauthentic can, therefore, be a 'transformative practice' (Cremonesi *et al.*, 2016, p. 3) where subjects can develop new thinking.

Foucault (1988, p. 22) points out that the ancient Greco-Roman thinking of 'taking care of self' gave rise to 'knowing oneself', but in the modern world, influenced by the Christian/Judean traditions, the importance of 'knowing oneself' became the precursor for 'taking care of self'. Participants were both

the ‘subject’ and ‘object’ of their encounters with authority in that whilst they exercised a modicum of power in their entanglements, they were, in turn, affected by the power exercised upon them.

6.2.4 Summary of experiences as an adult

An underlying theme of adult participants employed in educational contexts was obedience to those in authority and wariness of consequences if speaking out freely and frankly. Similar to their reflections of being school students, they all appeared to recognise that loyalty to their institution, and acceptance of a hierarchical authority structure, was required.

Each participant felt that it was important to their professional identities to recognise and adhere to their institution’s structures and procedures. Ahmed (2019) discusses the difficulty for employees of becoming a complainant. The feeling expressed by participants was that doing so fractured the comfort and security of their feelings of ‘doing the right thing’. Having a hierarchy in which problematic events can be passed ‘up the line’ for authority to deal with was a comfort.

Participants varied in their understanding of autonomy and the ways in which they could act within their different contexts. Boaz (1998) points to the dilemma facing school organisations between encouraging autonomy of thinking and action yet, at the same time, expecting employees and students to be directed by authority. Participants expressed various strategies to exert their autonomy. Participants spoke of being circumspect about who in authority they communicated with depending upon the outcome they wished to achieve. Others spoke of feeling ‘uncomfortable’ just being in the presence of authority figures in the staff room.

Similar to their reflections when they were students, there were issues of not wishing to upset those in authority by speaking out freely and frankly. Emily’s description of how she, effectively, compensated for the inadequacies of her line manager, whilst exerting her influence and tactful voice, proved a useful strategy for her. The language used by Emily to describe these events was always respectful of the authority held by the line manager whilst achieving outcomes for herself and her institution. Emily was determined not to be ‘imprisoned’ (Arendt, 1998, p. 58) in a hierarchical relationship that caused

frustration and isolation. It was important for her to be seen by others as ‘doing a good job’ in the hope of promotion.

Subira expressed suspicion at the attempts made by an outside authority figure to encourage free and frank conversation. Loyalty to her own school authority hierarchy influenced these feelings and consequently, she did not want to be seen as ‘stepping out of line’ or letting her colleagues or institution down by speaking freely and frankly. Subira spoke of the ‘fear that comes up’ when speaking to an outside authority figure, which influenced her to become very defensive in her responses.

Fear of becoming an ‘outcast’ or different from colleagues was a driving a factor in influencing several participants not to speak out freely and frankly. Participants often expressed the view that those above them in the hierarchy thought differently from themselves and that their own speaking out freely and frankly may be misinterpreted or misunderstood. Sharon was worried that once things were said, it ‘went up the line’ and you lost control of context and meaning. Consequently, it was important to seek out ‘friendly and trustworthy’ members of the hierarchy in the hope of expressing views to someone trusted.

Rose would only speak freely and frankly to her trusted trade union representative and counted on them to articulate her views to authority figures. John, comparing life as a student and life as a teaching assistant, expressed the view that speaking freely and frankly was, whilst limited, much more possible as an adult than as a school student. Most of the young male participants allowed their own students to speak more freely and frankly to them than they, themselves, had been allowed as a student.

Foucault (1991) describes the use of such reflection as an aspect associated with practising technologies of the self. In particular, within educational institutions, where one is both managing oneself and teaching others to manage themselves. This is a similar concept to that later popularised by Goleman (1996) who defined emotional intelligence as an understanding of managing self and others.

Most participants felt that being an employee in a school context allowed for more opportunities to speak freely and frankly than as a student. Their responses suggest, however, that although they had ‘the right’ to speak out freely and frankly, this was not often exercised openly. Participant stories clearly

illustrate feelings of restraint. Obedience to hierarchy and loyalty to institution were both cited as inhibitory factors.

This feeling of restraint was common to both male and female workers. Only Taneesha raised issues of gender and age as being relevant. Taneesha cited difficulties with an older, more experienced, male line manager who she felt simply dismissed her observations and opinions because of her gender and age. This caused great stress and friction, resulting in her, eventually, leaving the employment as all her inputs were simply ignored or dismissed.

6.3 Participant experiences as a parent in a school context

6.3.1 Introduction

Sue, Sandra, Louise, Narjis, Alisha and Ankita had been encouraged through government policy, local education authority and school institutions to believe that their children had an entitlement to a level of recognition, support and funding for their special educational needs. The struggle that participants found themselves in with their respective school institutions was one of seeking justice and entitlement to services.

Foucault mentions that feelings of injustice (Foucault, 2006) are always part of a social struggle. Participants were very keen to relate their experiences of ongoing dialogue with authority. As with student and adult workers' recollections, parent experiences reflect a range of understandings of authority and exercising voice. Ahmed (2019, p. 515) echoed a constant fear, writing that institutions often regard complaints as 'potential damage' rather than opportunities.

Parent influences on schooling are not always transparent (Wolfendale and Bastiani, 2000) even though they are increasingly recognised as playing a key role in schooling. Educators usually have a paucity of information and knowledge about the parents and families of the children they seek to educate. This is particularly significant in those contexts where culture, language and lifestyle of home differ from staffroom culture, life experiences and operation of the institution. As Wolfendale and Bastiani (2000) point out, parents bring to the school context a wide range of viewpoints, experiences, hopes and aspirations.

6.3.2 How participants perceived, understood and were affected by their situations

Many of the parent participants in this study harboured a fervent desire to seek justice for their child within their respective schools. Participants who experienced problems in their relationships with school found that there were, ‘no simple solutions to complex problems’ (Soan, 2004, p. 79) and were tenaciously attached to pursuing positive outcomes for their children.

Berlant (2011) claims that maintaining an attachment to a significantly problematic object or goal, where realisation appears to be impossible or too good to be true, is ‘cruel optimism’ p. 24). This describes a situation where what is desired becomes problematic and an obstacle to thriving. Seeking fairness and justice for their children in the schooling system became a stressful and emotive issue for parent participants.

In voicing their concerns, participants reported, with some frustration, that institutions appeared, at first, to encourage free and frank speech, but in the event, their critical discourse was not welcomed. Foucault (Young, 1981, p. 52) describes this in terms of an institution both ‘honouring’ what participants had to say whilst at the same time ‘disarming’ their petitions for change. Discourse did not simply ‘translate their struggle’ (p. 52) but functioned as ‘the power to be seized’. Through discourse, institutions, at times, however, granted some small concessions.

All participants experienced emotional cost when speaking out freely and frankly in meetings with school authority figures. Tolstoy makes the point (Pinch and Armstrong, 1982) that educators must encourage freedom by allowing ‘full power of expression’ (p. 33) if they are to know what is good or bad. Participants expressed concerns that authority figures simply defended their institution’s policies, practices and procedures rather than attaching any importance to what parents had to say. As Foucault (1991) comments, ‘the least glimmer of truth is conditioned by politics’ (p. 294). Participants hoped, after initially trusting that their institution would deliver for their children, to achieve some justice or results in the future.

In the case of Sandra and Sue, set on seeking help for their children, their experiences left them wary and fearful from their initial encounters with authority. The stress resulting from dealing with school authority created fear of

future encounters (Hern 2008) and needs to be overcome before any change can occur. Esteva *et al.*, also cited in Hern (2008) describe such feelings of fear as akin to service users being bound by the expectations of an institution that seeks to justify its own wellbeing and functioning. Institutions (Blaisdale 2013) are not always good at engaging with parent unhappiness and for them to continue with the 'language of hope and reality is dishonest' (p. 196). An institution must deal with the pain felt by those within its field of operation if it is to be true to the vision it holds.

Sue, Louise, Narjis and Sandra all sought justice for their children. They maintained an inner hope that functioned as 'an anticipatory virtue' (Braidotti, 2017, p. 192) motivating them to action. Braidotti (2011) describes the pursuit of hope as being embedded in the 'ordinary micropolitics of everyday life' (p. 237). Participants always sustained the possibility that they might influence outcomes through free and frank discourse. Zourzani (2002) indicates that new situations, inevitably, lead to opportunities for 'an adventure in thinking', which in turn, can lead to 'creativity and invention' (p. 245).

Rand (1984) declared that such thinking generates hope, which is the 'difference between probability and possibility' (p. 155). Without the possibility of hope, a subject becomes stifled, leading to a thwarting of ambition and aspiration. Sue, Louise and Sandra refused to allow themselves to be deprived of the hope that they could achieve a change in circumstances for their children. Louise described her exasperation in dealing with school institutions.

> *You just worry that you never gonna get anywhere with these* people [in school] *because they've already written you off as overly emotional, or just asking for too much, or being too involved, so I think it is really hard for parents, the process* [of accessing help] *is not transparent.*

To 'think' is to facilitate 'possibility against probability', Zourzani (2002, p. 246) has argued, implying that a situation has possibilities for change if a solution is sought. Foucault (1997) asserts that there are always possibilities for bringing about change and that power relations can be affected, even through resistance. Such resistance generates struggle, (Foucault, 1994) often arising through inconsistencies in attitudes that appear as contradictions.

Sue, Louise and Sandra pointed out inconsistencies in their respective schools between what they were entitled to and what services were actually provided for

their children. Often, the needs of the institution (Wearmouth, 2004) to regulate social interactions, resources, activity, time and discourse took precedence over individual needs.

The possibility of effecting change for themselves and others sustained participants in their struggles with school authorities. Each participant felt a sense of 'responsibility and accountability' (Braidotti, 2011, p. 237), which further encouraged them to seek ambitious outcomes that were rarely achieved. Nonetheless, 'dreaming up possible futures' (p. 268) motivated them to resist the injustices they felt were inflicted upon them. The reality of daily interactions with school authority figures was often a frustrating experience that promised much but delivered little.

Sue, who undertook many attempts to get help for her child, felt increasingly marginalised by the authority figures she encountered in her child's school. She tried, unsuccessfully, to convince school authority figures of her child's learning needs before finally giving in to the schools 'expertise and authority'. Sue felt powerless in the face of professional voices at the school.

> *We were completely side-lined …. I look back now, and I think I didn't fight* [the child's] *corner at all.*

She describes taking the professional advice she received from the school in terms of, 'I kinda took it on the chin'. She felt blamed and belittled by the school authorities for her child's learning problems. Ignoring her concerns, the school instead, referred both parents to parenting classes.

Sue felt pressured to follow professional advice from school even though she felt it wrong. Parents felt obliged to attend what the school advised.

> *So, the problems at school were just the same …. but you have to tick the boxes, don't you? And show you are willing to work with the school.*

Foucault (1994) points to the judiciary functions of organisations, which operate both overtly and less transparently within an organisation's culture. Sue felt 'blamed' and compelled to follow the decisions made on her behalf. Dutifully attending parenting classes, this raised further anxiety that those in authority were informally assessing, observing and evaluating both parents. Despite politely expressing herself to authority on several more occasions, the child's learning difficulties continued to be dismissed.

Sue felt her voice counted for little, recalling feelings of frustration whilst still intent on not upsetting or annoying authority figures at the school. ‘I suppose we never clashed. I try never to clash’. Against her better judgement, she reluctantly continued to cooperate with the school authority. She tried hard to reconcile her own feelings and observations of her child’s learning problems with the professional opinions she was encountering. Foucault (1994) describes subjects being placed within complex relations of power. Sue felt inhibited by these influences. At first, she felt daunted by the institution but gradually, began to recognise opportunities to influence her situation.

Louise’s experiences of authority mirror Sue’s initial failure to make headway in seeking justice for her children’s learning needs. However, Louise’s perceptions and understandings of her situation differed. Louise approached school authority figures with confidence and prior experience of interacting with authority figures outside of education contexts. Louise describes her experiences of talking with authority figures in schools as ‘quite a learning curve’ in which she needed to adopt different strategies and thinking to achieve her ends. Foucault (1980a) notes that whilst one can never be outside the influences of power, one can always find strategies to exert one’s own influences on a situation.

> *Talking about provision for my child*, *there seems to be a real trick with having to keep emotion out of it. I find you can’t be too critical* [of the school]. *You have to be a bit of a shrewd negotiator in terms of how you go about it.*

For all participants, being fearful of speaking out to professionals reinforced their feelings of distance from the institution. Sandra spoke of her meetings with school authority figures to get support for her children with learning needs as ‘tokenistic’ and her opinions ‘under-valued’. Louise spoke of a negatively ‘emotive response’ from authority figures and having to,

> *…tread very carefully, like walking on eggshells, not knowing how* [authority] *will react.*

Louise mentioned the importance of knowing not to go ‘too far’ in frank conversations for risk of ‘burning bridges’ and being thought of as a ‘problem parent’. She added that professionals want to be regarded as ‘knowing what is best’ and that there was an expectation that everyone should simply ‘trust the

professionals'. Participants felt it was hard to judge at what point you should concede that you 'are never going to get anywhere,' or are 'asking for too much'.

Sue and Sandra spoke of their institutions having pre-formed meeting agendas and expectations that parents would simply agree all outcomes. Narjis recalled being incredibly careful not to say or do anything that might be construed as critical, for fear of being misunderstood or dismissed.

Bell (1992, p. 220) notes that there are semantic cues within the culture of an organisation that are part of a 'ritual' that informs and influences what can be said. Louise felt strongly that if what she had to say was to have any influence, a different register needed to be adopted (Hamm, 2014, p. 24) to make her cause more acceptable to the rituals that governed the institution. Hamm identifies this mode of thinking as due to 'ritual bonds of belonging' which can foster a 'them and us' work culture. All participants, initially, felt positively supportive towards what could be regarded as a paternalistic legacy (Sennett, 1980) of institutional functioning. However, once they found themselves in conflict with school authority, trust was lost.

Te Riel (2009, p. 60) describes the importance of an institution 'establishing trust and connection' with service users. Te Riel advises that the culture of an institution is a crucial factor in helping service users to 'fit in', or 'feel comfortable' (p. 78), thereby, helping to overcome gender, cultural or other barriers to effective engagement. Where participants in this study found barriers or disagreements in their dialogues with institutional authority (Foucault, 1980b), they often found themselves questioning and rejecting the rules and procedures adopted by the school.

Foucault (1980b, p. 151) writes that 'history belongs to those who strive to change, pervert or invert rules' that are seen to be unfair or unjust. Rand (1984), similarly, laments the surrendering of moral authority and reliance upon others as problematic. Instead, Rand calls for a return to reason that actively questions authority to deliver just outcomes.

Not all the participants' encounters with authority were confrontational. Sandra, Louise, Sue and Narjis did meet some sympathetic professionals in their school institutions. Sandra related an experience where professionals had been solution-focussed and 'took on board what I was saying'. Sandra described

meetings at one school as being ’relaxed’ and in an ‘informal’ physical environment, achieving ‘mutual understanding’. Louise also recorded some positive experiences with professionals, explaining ‘we worked together’, although Louise always sought out staff members with a ‘bit more empathy’.

For Sue, finding a sympathetic professional was not easy. However, she recalls one more empathetic professional willing to acknowledge an ignorance of learning difficulties. Having researched children’s learning difficulties, Sue felt that this knowledge imbalance ‘flustered’ the authority figure who ‘completely changed’ and became more understanding. Narjis felt that professionals needed ‘careful handling’, but in general, it was nearly always possible to find at least one that would be empathetic. Alisha and Ankita also gave positive responses. Both had children with learning difficulties and were the most positive in their interviews concerning school–parent interaction.

Alisha spoke of professionals, at first, being doubtful of her evaluation that her child had a learning difficulty. ‘It took a long time’, but eventually, the professionals accepted what she said and ‘did the best they [could]’. At one-point, Alisha did make attempts to intervene on behalf of her child by continually raising issues, resulting in improved teacher interaction with her child. Ankita was the most positive of all participants and was supportive toward professionals. ‘I never been fearful of speaking to ‘them’ [emphasis]’. Ankita had complete confidence and respect for professionals, stating that it was always about 'giving and taking’, explaining that sometimes, one needed to be pragmatic in that if you ‘give a little bit, they will give a little bit too’.

Authority figures were often characterised as decision-makers with limited autonomy in a narrow field, but participants also expressed frustration with professionals who never took direct responsibility for shortcomings. Alvesson and Spicer (2016, p. 133) talk of authority figures ‘boxed in’ by specialist knowledge, caught up in a web of planning, procedures, rules and routines (p. 135) that demand compliance. Inevitably, the expansion of ‘specialists’ increases bureaucracy and contributes to a dislocation of different layers of roles, making the identification of responsibility between layers more difficult to navigate.

Frustration in service users often led to feelings of injustice towards institutions and individuals. Such frustration arises from heightened expectations; for

example, Sue, Sandra and Louise felt that legislation and institutions encouraged parents to be ambitious for their children and to expect help and support, yet the reality was that their institutions were unable to deliver consistently on these expectations.

Foucault (1980b, p. 199) describes tools to make sense of thought processes within institutions as ‘discursive practices’. Such practices draw from a broad range of wider, entangled influences, to define, and give legitimate perspectives to, the ways in which an organisation ‘thinks’ and acts. Participants felt frustrated at their institution’s transmission and diffusion of messages concerning, for example, the parent–school relationship, high quality teaching and valuing the individual. Foucault (1980a) asserted that such aspirational ambitions create ‘illusionary expectations’ (p. 248), which simply frustrate both institution and parent.

Parent frustration at not being able to achieve their goals often led participants to experience feelings of anguish and self-criticism. Roffey (2013) describes the possible effect upon a subject after having experienced encounters where their ‘inner self’ has been diminished by another’s actions. Sue blamed herself for ‘not fighting enough’ for her child and Sandra spoke regretfully of not being ‘brave enough’ in the early days of encountering institutional figures. Part of Foucault’s exploration of ‘knowing oneself’ and ‘taking care of oneself’ (Foucault, 1988b; 1997) involves subjects exercising self-criticism whilst also seeking to control their own emotions.

Goleman (1996) outlined a two-fold understanding of managing emotions, building upon research by Salovey and Mayer *et al.* (1990). This comprised, first, actively recognising and controlling their own emotions; and second, recognising the emotions of others and then, *influencing* or *managing* the emotions of others. Louise learnt, from her exchanges with authority, the importance of developing these skills to exert influence. Ankita felt that understanding how schools worked, and having knowledge of education, allowed her to interact more easily with those in authority.

> *As a parent, especially a first-time parent, you question yourself quite a lot. You’re sure* [of what is appropriate] *but you are not quite sure.*

Louise needed to make a conscious effort to adjust her approach to one of more deference and recognition to those in authority, recalling, ‘I have to tread

very carefully in terms of not appearing to be critical in any way'. When it came to pointing out factual errors pertaining to school finances, Louise felt her criticisms were more welcomed by the school. Where it became more problematic was in issues regarding teaching and learning. Here, Louise did not find a listening ear from those in authority and needed to be more circumspect.

Fairclough, cited in Jaworski and Coupland (2008, p. 151), notes that working together within groups across 'difference' is a natural part of our individual lives. However, negotiation of difference in group contexts can be very unsettling for all parties. Louise, Sue and Sandra were continually reappraising themselves, their abilities and possibilities. Louise gradually grew in confidence through increasing her knowledge of her child's learning difficulty and seeking outside advice, becoming less daunted by the frequent interviews she had with school authority figures. However, she felt that speaking out freely and frankly was not easy for parents to do when dealing with school and could have negative consequences. When asked if parents could speak out freely and frankly, Louise responded with an emphatic 'no'.

> *DEFINITELY NOT* [emphasis]. *I see from so many parents that they are just intimidated out of asking questions really*. [Talking to school] *is almost like a shut door*, '[the school] *knows what is best – trust the professionals'.*

Louise was very aware of the consequences of speaking out freely and frankly, from her own observations, and the experiences of other parents she heard through her voluntary parent advocacy work.

> *I don't see many parents being able to speak freely. With one parent, I know it's almost a case of: if you go too far and burn your bridges, then there is a real* [feeling] *you are a 'problem parent'.*

Becoming a 'problem parent' can have consequences for parents who need to develop good relationships with those in authority, especially if they are to support their child with special educational needs and access wider services. Developing a good rapport and relationship between professionals and parents is important when considering the needs of the child.

Ginott (1975) expresses concern that professionals should be more sensitive, when in discussion with parents about their child, as they 'intrude on family

dreams' (p. 215). Ginott advises that a child represents an array of parental hopes for the future and that 'deep feelings' are intruded upon when a child becomes the subject of dialogue. Long after the initial meeting, the 'words exchanged may be forgotten but the mood lingers on' (p. 216).

Professionals need to allow for parents to adjust and understand the workings of their institution. Louise stated, 'It's a real surprise to parents as, [the system], it's not fair'. She went on to explain that 'your child is not going to get anything unless you fight for it'. Louise felt that a parent required a 'sort of fighting mentality' and needed to control their emotions on arriving at school,

> *…and when you get to school you have to tone it down because you have to work with them* [the school] *on a day-to-day basis.*

Porter (2009) attests to the difficulties parents have in encountering school authority, describing such encounters as involving 'concealed powers' (p. 290). Educators possess 'power' by dint of their professional knowledge of learning and the workings of institution. Porter advises that an institution's regard for parents, either as active, informed subjects or as 'passive recipients of advice' (p. 291) inform the entangled influences that come into play.

Louise's need to 'tone down' language, feelings and concerns was an important strategy to forge effective working relationships with school.

> *You've really got to make that a workable relationship, otherwise, I don't think they* [the school] *engage with you properly.*

A 'workable' relationship, however, was one in which the parent needed to adjust their approach to 'fit in' with the institution. Louise related that 'failure to play by their rules' meant that authority figures, [laughs] would just refuse meetings and avoid you'. Sandra also related similar concerns where authority figures would refuse to meet, 'give no feedback', and then she would have to 'chase everyone up to get things done'.

With the advent of the government's Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015), a philosophical change of thinking was introduced, advocating a greater voice for parents, children and young people. Hellawell (2019) highlights the moral and ethical dilemmas this raised for educational professionals, concerning individual choices and decisions that conflicted with those of school, family and local

education provider. All these areas profoundly impact upon the parent–professional relationship.

Louise was sceptical about changes resulting from this implementation,

> *I have not noticed a culture change. At least, not in schools that I know of, and in our Parent Forum…*

adding that parents were waiting years to access help, diagnosis or specialist services.

> *Unless you are the pushy parent, but not too pushy,* [laughs] *I think it is really hard for parents to know what should be done* [thoughtful], *…. what they should have and [to] feel they have a voice.*

Professional knowledge and the 'control of the script', in terms of meetings content, was also an issue commented on by participants. Louise comments,

> *I think a lot of the terminology that schools use are things that lots of parents just don't know enough about to feel they can have an equal say. Schools just have their standard processes that they roll out for students, so asking for anything to be individualised is not an easy thing to do.*

Wearmouth *et al.* (2004) draw attention to the impact upon students and parents of how words, vocabulary and register are used in schools. Bell (1992) notes that technical and professional communication is possessed of meaning whose significance may not, initially, be understandable. Words and phrases can be chosen carefully, knowing that such language 'does things' (p. 110).

Barad (2007) writing in the context of scientific research, observes that communication should be clear, unambiguous and accountable. The 'intelligibility' (p. 199) of communication has effects upon shaping thinking and action. The 'ensemble of actions' (Foucault, 1994, p. 337) in relations between individuals should enable interlocutors to influence each other. Foucault notes (1997, p. 296) that 'knowing who' and 'why' a person speaks, as well as understanding the 'rules' governing that speech, are important. Communication can also have a more sinister function (Foucault, 1980b, p. 219) in excluding some, whilst imposing 'standards' upon interlocutors.

Another area that Louise reflected upon, which influenced her understanding of speaking freely and frankly to authority, was that of accountability. At times, she

found it difficult to locate a point of accountability within the schooling system. Barad (2007, p. 184) notes that accountability can be considered in terms of 'what matters and what is excluded from mattering'. From a 'diffractive', methodological perspective (p. 90) the divergences between professional and service user, how they diverge and for whom they diverge, are key. The problems that Louise and Sandra faced were that these points of 'divergence' varied radically between the educational service providers – the professionals – and the participants.

Before Louise become a parent, her business background was one in which clear lines of accountability had always been transparent throughout her working life. She found that dealing with schools and education service providers was more 'entangled' and accountability opaque. Louise notes, 'There is so much blame sharing and finger pointing'. Frustratingly, she found that 'you are never given one person who is accountable for delivering this stuff'.

The hierarchical nature of the school created barriers to engagement. Tolstoy (1894), writing of the complications of hierarchy in institutions, noted that the authority of those that give the orders and the authority of those who execute them come together like the two ends of a ring, which binds and encloses all that lies within. Each level of 'irresponsibility' within the ring 'throws responsibility of their acts on one another' (p. 266).

Sue, Louise, Sandra and Narjis felt their encounters were further complicated by the 'sensitivity' authority figures had to criticism. The working world familiar to Louise was one in which, 'If someone wants to criticise you, you just need to get on with it'. Louise continued, 'so, it took me by surprise when I had to tiptoe around educational professionals'.

A quite different and liberating experience was had by Narjis, who found the English schooling system to be a revelation.

> *When my kids went to school* [in England] *I started to see the difference. How they can express themselves, how they* [the school] *encouraged children to talk, to have opinions, to create your own voice.*

Narjis celebrated the freedom she and her family had to express themselves freely and frankly to authority.

> *Everyone has the opportunity to* [speak freely and frankly]*. It depends* [though] *on who you are, who you are talking to*, [but sometimes you need] *'tweaks' to what you say to them* [authority figures].

Narjis recognised that she needed to exercise restraint and adopt a strategy of 'tweaks' in the form of modified speech to convey, freely and frankly, what she wanted to communicate. Narjis's 'tweaks' always sought to maintain the professional standing of the teacher by appearing uncritical. 'I would speak in the manner that I was worried about something, or I didn't understand'. This allowed Narjis to speak freely and frankly in a more 'veiled' but assertive manner by questioning decisions, which was received by authority as less threatening. It enabled her to open a channel of communication with those in authority, both to gain information and to inform.

6.3.3 How participants changed, responded to or influenced their situation

Foucault (1988), in his explanation and reflection on the workings of power, morality and values, described three essential elements. The first concerned a refusal to accept anything as self-evident; the second, the need to analyse a situation; and the third, was what Foucault referred to as the 'principle of innovation' (1988, p. 1). Each participant refused to accept what they were offered as education for their child. All embarked upon analysis of their situation, and each put forward suggestions for improvement.

As a parent, Sandra, initially, experienced a good relationship with her local school. Meetings were conducted by friendly professionals in informal physical environments, Sandra's contributions were welcomed and there appeared to be a 'mutual understanding'. When her children moved to another school, the opposite experience occurred. In this school, the professionals were formal and distant, and Sandra became overwhelmed and frightened by attending meetings with large groups of professionals she found intimidating and aggressive.

Finding it difficult to speak out freely and frankly at meetings triggered feelings of being patronised and marginalised. Wolfendale and Bastiani (2000, p. 25) highlight a 'school-centric' view of parental involvement as simply based upon the 'willingness and capacity of parents' to support the work of teachers.

Schools achieve this through parental training, workshops, homework guidelines and policies, for example. This creates two key issues: the first is that it reduces the parent role to one of simply supporting the narrow achievement agenda of the school; and the second is that it fails to fully recognise the complementary nature of parental roles and responsibilities, thus denying any genuine role for parents to influence educational purposes.

Despite feeling marginalised, Sandra was resolved to muster up courage and stand firm before authority**.** She could not explain where her courage to persevere came from but set about informing herself of issues connected with special education by enrolling on a degree course at her local university and seeking help from parent support organisations. This helped give her courage in what she regarded as ‘a battle’ with those in authority.

As an ex-soldier, Tolstoy (1997, p. 855) puzzled over the ‘secret of courage’, concluding it was about ‘adapting oneself’ to an abnormally stressful situation. Maude (1987, p. 214) quotes Tolstoy as advising intense focus on the task in hand and having great resolve, declaring, ‘a battle is won by those who firmly resolve to win it’. Each of the parent participants found themselves in stressful situations when dealing with authority figures. Each made attempts to adapt their thinking, strategies and actions whilst becoming single minded in their ‘work’ to achieve desired outcomes.

Sandra was determined to overcome her fears, ‘to get the tools’ that would help in the battle. She describes how, before each meeting with authority figures, she had to deal with her feelings. Foucault (1980, p. 169) described such anxieties as ‘phantasms that haunt the imagination’. She recounts going through a process of deep reflection and speaking to herself to build up courage in preparation. The desire to ‘know oneself’ better, to take stock, contemplate, reassess and re-evaluate was recognised by Foucault (2001; 2011b) as important.

Re-evaluation and self-questioning gave rise to the ‘transitions and transactions’ of Berlant (2011, p. 200), which give scope for opportunities of new thinking and action. This was a challenging time for both Sandra and Sue, who each mentioned how exhausted they felt with constantly seeking out knowledge, accessing support and re-telling their respective stories to professionals.

Sue also, initially, tended to be very deferential when dealing with authority, even though she did not agree with their assessment of her child's learning problems. After many months of trying, unsuccessfully, to convince professionals that her child required extra help, an incident occurred, which Sue recalls as pivotal in empowering her. In a meeting with school, her child was accused of being lazy and not making any effort. Sue related, with some feeling,

> *That got my hackles up straight away. I said is* [my child] *lazy or struggling? And I thought, I'm NOT* [emphasis] *having you tell me that, so I asserted myself and stuck up for* [her child]*. And my husband sort of went, Oooow* [laughs].

Sue recognised this as a significant critical incident (Ball and Goodson, 1985), a turning point in attitude towards the institution. Ball and Goodson (1985, p. 62), outlined three 'critical phases' that can influence a person's decisions. The first concerns 'extrinsic' events, which are usually events outside of the person over which they have no influence or control. For Sue, the government's implementation of the SEND Code of Practice (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015) offered some hope for change within schools, giving parents, children and young people a greater voice in their education. The second was the 'intrinsic' phase, where an individual makes decisions or choices. Sue chose a strategy and actively pursued it to achieve her goals. The third phase focusses on the 'personal' decision-making a subject embarks upon. For Sue, her emotive encounter with a teacher was the catalyst for change. These three 'phases', described by Measor, are entangled events that defy clear analysis. Independently, each contributing factor may seem to be explicable but when viewed together, they reflect a chaotic coming together of events. Brzezinski and Urban (1981) assert that such chaotic events are inherent in the human condition, with a person struggling to deal with contingency and ambiguity.

From this point onwards, Sue's experiences held a 'deeper subjective truth' (Ball and Goodson, 1985, p. 166) and contributed to future strategies. Sue decided she needed a 'way in' to enter the decision-making processes within the school.

> *I decided I needed an 'in'. I needed to get closer to the school, so I went in and volunteered one day a week,* [laughs] *and I made sure my face was around.*

As noted by Wolfendale and Bastiani (2000), Sue began to be moulded by the school into a role that most suited the school's purposes. She was compliant with this, becoming more visible and acceptable, working alongside the professionals. Sue built up relationships and became more familiar with procedures and practices whilst keeping her own goals firmly in mind. She describes working hard to build a relationship with her school's special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) and in so doing, came to be regarded as a 'supportive' rather than 'troublesome' parent.

Sue's plan was partly successful, as it led to her child finally undergoing assessment and gaining recognition of a learning disability. However, once again, she found herself in confrontation with professionals over her child's education. Despite speaking out freely and frankly, she was not convinced that the professionals were listening. After one meeting, Sue lost patience and recalled leaving a meeting having expressed her true feelings about a lack of support for her child. She found herself becoming very emotional and assertively exclaimed,

> *NO!* [very strongly] *she* [the teacher] *is not making an effort! And* [reproachfully], *you get so downtrodden about it.*

Sue's next plan was to equip herself with knowledge to better converse with school authority figures on a more equal basis of professional knowledge. Sue enrolled on a degree course in special education. Reflecting upon this distressing time, and informed by her degree studies, Sue was full of regrets at not having spoken out earlier,

> *Absolutely I would have done. I should have taken it further; I never even wrote.*

Louise also shared many of the frustrations of Sandra and Sue. Louise's experience required her, like Sandra and Sue, to reassess her own thinking and strategies. Louise's working and professional experiences outside of education did not easily fit with the culture and attitudes she encountered in school. Louise

talked of having to reassess her own skill sets to enable her to 'talk the same language' as the school. Louise recounts,

> *It was quite a learning curve actually…. there seems to be a real trick with having to keep emotion out of it.*

Louise also noted that in her professional working life outside of education, employees were much more accountable and less sensitive to criticism than in education.

> *I've found it difficult that emotion kinda played more of a part with education practitioners.* [In her professional working life] *… one is kinda meant to leave your emotions at the door* [laughs], *if someone wants to criticise, you just need to get on with it.*

When dealing with school and local education authority officers, Louise noticed a heightened 'sensitivity to criticism' and 'so much blame sharing and finger pointing', describing having to be a 'shrewd negotiator' and 'not appearing too confrontational'. These strategies, Louise learnt to adopt and adapt, to engage with school authority, explaining that in her professional working life, she had been used to 'having difficult conversations'. With schools, however, she needed to be careful not to undermine their professional identities. As part of her strategy, she sought professional help and advice from outside the school, giving her the knowledge, skills and insight to engage with education authority figures more effectively.

Foucault (2004, p. 45) suggests that such experiences 'manufacture', or shape, a subject's sense of themselves. In Louise's case, she took on the persona of 'parent battler' to seek justice. This new persona was forged in the knowledge that she was both parent and outsider to the institution, with its ritual bonds (Hamm (2014, p. 25) of 'them' and 'us'. Foucault notes that there is no such thing as a 'neutral subject' (Foucault, 2004, p. 51) and inevitably, 'we are all someone's adversary'. Sue, Sandra and Louise certainly regarded their encounters with authority figures in adversarial terms, which often left them drained and exasperated.

Narjis described her strategy for successfully speaking freely and frankly to authority figures as her 'tweaks'. Narjis learnt, through her children's

experiences at school, what was acceptable in communicating effectively with authority figures.

> *I learnt with them* [her children] *how to express yourself, how it was OK to say, to talk about your opinion, the manners* [that] *if you reply, it was not talking back, it wasn't being rude.*

Narjis's 'tweaks', or strategy, consisted of assuming a humble attitude toward authority figures and adopting a stance of not directly criticising or offending.

> *I would speak in the manner that I was worried about something, or I didn't understand. I would approach the teacher, yes, confidently, because I saw this is how they do here* [in England], *they talk.*

Ankita's strategy was also cautious not to upset authority. Ankita was both parent and employee in her school. Developing good relationships was a priority.

> *It's down to individual people and the effort they go to, to ensure that these relationships and communication builds bridges. I do think it is vital.*

Ankita gave much time and thought to fostering good relationships with authority. She reflected, 'I use every tool at my disposal and using my cultural capital'. The chosen strategy was one of empathy toward authority figures, acknowledging their status and knowledge. Ankita also used words and phrases she knew would be recognised by a professional educator. This knowledge was built from her own training and personal research into areas of education.

> *If you can just reach someone in their 'home language'* [register] *they instantly feel comfortable, they will know that you tried and will be willing to try, it is showing a little bit of 'give', so they will give a little, too.*

For Sue, Louise and Sandra, their lack of response from authority figures, when speaking out freely and frankly, caused distress and further feelings of injustice. Each developed elements of endurance, which, whilst stressful, also contained optimism – an optimism born of overcoming perceived injustice. Berlant (2011) notes that any glimmer of optimism is essential for endurance. Participants each communicated the hope that through their lobbying, they would achieve improved access to services and understanding.

Braidotti (2011) describes endurance as self-affirmation, a force that bolsters a subject's 'capacity for interaction and freedom' (p. 314). Participants spoke of the need to be resilient in their interactions with authority. Participant accounts reflect Vailes (2017) in being socially competent, problem solving, exercising autonomy and having purpose. Participants were engaged in building their resilience (Braidotti and Hlavajova 2018, p.388) as a 'fully fledged methodology of power'.

Participants felt that authority figures should be more caring towards service users. Griffin and Tyrrell (2003) speak of the need 'to care and be cared for' (p. 101). Participants remarked that their resilience was also strengthened by occasional small elements of kindnesses in the form of words and actions that authority figures gave. This helped participants to 'feel understood and seen' (O'Donohue, 2007, p. 198), for which they were always grateful.

Participants felt it was not at all easy to speak freely and frankly with school institutions. Louise, remarked with great emphasis,

> *Definitely not!* [emphasis] *I see from so many parents that they are just intimidated out of asking questions.*

Louise felt that the general mood was one of 'trust the professionals', and not to 'go too far and burn your bridges' by speaking out of turn. The fear of being a 'problem parent', coupled with the added complication of souring a relationship, would mean, 'you never going to get anywhere', was ever-present. Parents worried that speaking freely and frankly would lead them to be dismissed as 'overly emotional', or 'asking too much', or 'being too involved'. Louise felt that it was,

> *really hard for parents to find the right balance. You've really gotta make a workable relationship, otherwise, I don't think they engage with you properly.*

Parental involvement in children's education is consistently highlighted in educational literature and government documents. Wolfendale and Bastiani (2000) and Hellawell (2019) look to a future time when a philosophical change in professional thinking may occur, enabling practitioners to embrace parents as more than simply supporters of institutional procedures and aims. Tolstoy stated

that rather than seeing parents as an obstruction to the work of the school (Maude, 1987) they should be ‘the chief motive power’ (p. 245).

One barrier to achieving an enhanced role for parents is highlighted by Carnie (2018) who laments that success in schooling only seems to relate to satisfactorily passing tests and exams. Whilst institutions recognise that acknowledgement of wider skills and aptitudes is useful, it is the certification element (Handy and Aitken, 1990) that remains key. Carnie (2018) speculates as to whether these developments in schooling have increased parental satisfaction in the schooling system in any way. Lack of parental influence in schools, limited curriculum choices and lack of confidence in policymakers, are all given as reasons for dissatisfaction.

These issues are broadly reflected in parent participant disquiet, which was enhanced when encountering authority intransigence in responding to issues of concern about their children’s learning needs. Carnie (2018) raises other problematic issues that annoy parents, such as limited reporting of their children’s progress; cryptic, computer-generated summaries of their child; little time to discuss issues with teachers and poor communication. Carnie (p. 75) also notes a reluctance on the part of schools to fully engage with parents on fixed issues such as curriculum, and a general ‘wariness’ or sensitivity to being undermined by parents.

6.3.4 Summary of experiences as a parent

Some participants were able to provide their experiences as school students, adult school workers and parents, thus viewing their interactions with authority from different perspectives. An underlying theme, expressed in interviews regarding parent experiences, was a perception of the need for obedience to authority. Feelings of battling against the authority of professionals were common, as were perceived injustices.

Sue, Sandra and Louise had children with special educational needs, which brought them into considerable contact with school professionals. They initially felt powerless in the face of authority to express their frustrations or criticisms, for fear of being labelled as uncooperative.

Parent participants expressed deep emotion when recalling their experiences of interacting with professionals to seek justice for their children. Sue, Sandra and

Louise eventually found ways to communicate more freely and frankly to authority figures. Their experiences reflect unique personal journeys that were not without considerable emotional and financial cost to themselves.

These three participants initially felt marginalised, and their voices continually dismissed by authority. Each sought support and encouragement from informed outside sources. These sources ranged from free advice and guidance offered by charities or parent organisations, through to paying for alternative professional advice. Sue, Sandra and Louise were also motivated to enhance their understanding by studying a relevant degree subject, in the hope that they would become better equipped in conversations with authority figures.

Each participant recalled different ‘trigger’ events that set them on their pathways to mustering the courage to speak out. For Sue, it was the school labelling her child as ‘lazy’. For Sandra, her travails began after feeling intimidated and rudely treated by an authority figure. For Louise, it was experiences of being rebuffed and accused of having unrealistic expectations of what the school should be doing for her child.

Each parent felt personally slighted by the responses they received from professionals and authority figures. Each was determined not to defer to unreasonable and ill-informed authority. Each, too, was very wary of becoming a ‘problem parent’ in the eyes of authority. They had observed the negative consequences that had befallen other parents who had come into conflict with their school authorities. The subsequent pathways adopted by these parents ranged from joining the institution, through to adopting different registers to ‘speak’ the language of school professionals.

Parents felt they had the right to speak and be heard but this was limited by fear of consequences. This did not always prevent participants employing strategies to avoid consequences. All participants reflected on the difficulty of not being able to accurately judge authority responses in advance. Narjis employed her strategy of ‘tweaks’ by assuming a humble position, so as not to appear threatening to authority. Ankita and Alisha made sure not to say or do anything that might threaten the professional personas of the authority figures they interacted with, by employing a combination of humour and empathy.

Each parent participant, initially, as Louise describes, was aware that they were ‘walking on eggshells’ when initiating conversations with professionals. This

often functioned as a disincentive to speaking assertively. The emotional cost in terms of self-doubt, worry of consequences and self-criticism was an ever-present reality.

6.4 Concluding thoughts

The above analysis of participant stories is informed by Foucault's technologies of production, sign systems, power and self, and these broad tools of enquiry connect with the thesis research questions. From each participant story, the focus was upon two themes: understanding how participants perceived and understood their experiences of speaking freely and frankly; and how participants changed, responded to, or influenced their situation. Both themes involved participants recalling past and more recent recollections of how they had interacted with authority figures and the extent to which they felt they could speak freely and frankly.

Common to each story reflecting experiences as a student, adult worker or parent, was the recognition that their obedience was expected by those seen to be in authority. In addition, all participants expressed a mindful wariness of the possible negative consequences to them if they chose to speak out freely and frankly. This wariness could take the form of not wanting to lose approval of those in authority, or fear of being seen as troublesome or being labelled as a problem.

Participants spoke of keeping their own counsel, so as not to upset those in authority, or simply going along with whatever was requested of them. Feelings of being a small cog, or being marginalised, were often alluded to. Avoiding confrontation was regarded as an important skill, as was the ability to judge in advance whether what was said might upset authority. One parent spoke of 'walking on eggshells' to describe how precarious the process could be.

Despite all these feelings, participants were all in agreement that they had the right to express their views and opinions freely and frankly. The strategies used to do this were rarely direct confrontations with authority. Usually, participants chose creative solutions to express themselves in ways which gave them room for manoeuvre to avoid, as much as possible, any negative consequences. Creative use of language, developing rapport, seeking support from others,

gaining new knowledge, or simply responding in silence were all strategies employed to engage with authority.

In the next two chapters, participant experiences are further considered with reference to Foucault's parrhesia and what I have coined as 'technologies of truth-telling'.

Chapter 7: The entangled aspects of parrhesia

7.1 Introduction

In Chapter 6, participants relate mixed experiences of being able to speak freely and frankly to authority. Foucault's description of parrhesia involves the entangled concepts that inform how parrhesia is experienced, expressed and exercised. The modalities in this chapter arise from participants' experiences, explored in the last chapter and developed further in Chapter 8.

Speaking freely and frankly to authority was a concept used specifically by Foucault and also by Tolstoy.

Maude (1987, p. 459) described Tolstoy as a novelist, writer and thinker who 'did not spare himself' in communicating what he thought to be true. The consequences were costly for Tolstoy and those in his circle. He became a thorn in the side of authority and many of his writings were banned in his native Russia and could only be published abroad. 'Happiness', writes the Greek, fifth-century historian, Thucydides (1972, p. 150), 'depends upon being free, and freedom depends upon being courageous'. Both concepts, those of 'freedom' and 'courage', are reflected in Foucault's description of parrhesia, which, in turn, incorporates a range of distinct aspects and experiences connected with speaking freely and frankly.

7.2 Socratic aspects of parrhesia modalities

Both Foucault and Tolstoy drew inspiration from ancient Greek texts. Both writers made recourse to Plato's *Laches* (see Glossary of terms). Tolstoy's writing (Tussing-Orwin, 2002) displays links in the dialogue and behaviour of his characters, whilst Foucault (2011b) describes a philosophic modality of parrhesia found in Plato's *Laches*. Foucault (2011b) charts the evolution of parrhesia from a political and juridical practice in the fifth century BC to a more philosophic one in the fourth century BC, describing this phenomenon as a 'Socratic-Platonic moment' (p. 340). Foucault characterises the 'philosophic life' (p. 122) as one concerned with 'seeking truth through the way in which one thinks, acts and teaches' (p. 344). The practice of parrhesia, Foucault writes, can be viewed as a threat to democracy and those in authority that requires courage to withstand the wrath of others.

Richard's story touches upon these issues, recalling his students expressing their voices in favour of spending their time at the swimming pool rather than lessons. He set aside his empathetic feelings, fearful that students might 'rise up' and undermine his authority. All participants expressed, in one way or another, how stressful speaking freely and frankly was, not knowing what consequences may result.

The *Laches dialogue* (Plato, 1987, 2005; Foucault, 2011b) is illustrative of the potential effectiveness of Socratic or philosophic parrhesia. Socrates is invited to intervene between two rich and idle aristocrats in dialogue with two persons of considerable power. Foucault describes these interlocutors coming together in a 'parrhesiastic pact' allowing the interlocutors to feel comfortable in speaking freely and frankly to each other, regardless of the differences in power, authority and social standing.

Despite the great discrepancies of wealth, ideas and power that separated each speaker, they were able to accommodate an understanding that allowed the less powerful to speak their minds freely. Within this ideal and safe dialogue, there were elements of epimeleia in the form of diligence, attention and care. The *Laches dialogue* consists of what Foucault (2011b, p. 122) elaborates as three notions of parrhesia: courageous frankness in communicating the truth; an element of examination or 'interrogatory frankness' (exetasis); and finally, an element of care. Socrates (Plato, 1987) has less social standing than all the interlocutors yet nonetheless, courageously questions each as it is his role to care for the education of the young.

Socrates engineers the gathering together of his politically powerful interlocutors. Foucault (2011b, p. 130) describes this strategy as necessary to facilitate the conditions for the 'zone of truth-telling'. Without this strategy, the opportunity to speak freely and frankly could not have arisen.

Sue relates a similar strategy of engineering a more favourable 'zone of truth-telling' in the hope of influencing authority. She embarked upon a lengthy process of transforming herself from an 'outsider' mother to a trusted 'insider' within the school organisation. As a support practitioner in the school, Sue became more able to speak freely and frankly to authority figures, thereby obtaining an element of justice and understanding for her child.

Within the *Laches*' 'zone of truth-telling', Socrates and his interlocutors hoped for a positive response to their questioning, and as with Sue's engineered encounters with authority figures, success was limited. Whilst Sue had more of a hearing, being on the 'inside' of the institution, she also found the authority figures, themselves, were hampered in their own relations within a bureaucratic, hierarchical system of determining need and allocating resources.

Participants often demonstrated a 'courageous frankness' in communicating their 'truth', whilst others engaged in creative epimeleia (diligence, attention and care). Participants also demonstrated Foucault's (2011b, p. 84) notion of exetasis (examination or interrogatory frankness), hoping to achieve peace of mind for self and others through challenging and questioning.

Participants rarely experienced an open forum of opportunities to participate in a Socratic, 'parrhesiastic pact', in which everyone involved felt encouraged to express themselves freely and frankly without consequences. Most took the approach of avoiding challenging authority figures, fearing it would escalate into a confrontation or they would be thought rude or impertinent. Rose declared that when she was a student, there was no reason, ever, to talk freely and frankly to her teachers, and as an adult teacher, she would never have dared to speak directly to the headteacher. Fear of consequences was mentioned by all participants, who felt they would be demeaned or disadvantaged by authority if they spoke out.

7.3 Autonomy and freedom

Parrhesia is intricately connected to ideas of autonomy and freedom and the extent to which a subject is ever free to speak or act autonomously. Cremonesi *et al.* (2016, p. 3) refer to Foucault's concept of autonomy as connected to 'transformative practices' that can usefully be employed to bring about change.

Nabokov (1944, p. 34) introduces us to a nineteenth-century Russian poet, Tyutchev, whose poem, 'Silentium', urges the subject to 'live in your inner self', mindful that thoughts can be 'blinded by the outer light' of historical, cultural and societal influences. Relating to this, Foucault (2007) discusses the influence of 'complex historical processes' from the eighteenth-century Enlightenment era upon modernity, in which the modern subject experiences a 'complex and difficult elaboration' (p. 108) as they attempt to 'invent' or 'produce' themselves

(p. 113) within a legacy of historical determination that permeates both inner and outer life and influences all ‘doing, thinking and saying’.

Tolstoy (1894, p. 106) also writes of the human striving to break free from restraint and to exert a measure of autonomy, but in a world where ‘life is defined beforehand by laws, culture and history’. A subject consciously lives ‘on his own account’ (Tolstoy, 1976; 1997; 2006; 2007), in freedom of will that functions as an instrument unconsciously influenced by culture and history. Stirner (2014, p. 145) similarly, writes that one becomes ‘free of much but not everything’, explaining that one can only achieve a certain degree of autonomy and control, and one remains ‘haunted’ by ‘wheels in the head’ or ‘bats in the belfry’ (Stirner, 1971, p. 58), which influence and guide our reasoning and autonomy.

Participants often reflected the view that they were not conscious of why they acted toward authority as they did. Richard assumed he must have picked up his views from his parents. Mamoona, on the other hand, firmly rejected her parents’ influence in responding to authority and, against all odds, continued to speak out freely and frankly.

The nineteenth-century philosopher, Schopenhauer, influenced both Foucault and Tolstoy’s thinking on autonomy. Schopenhauer (2000) did not regard a subject’s ‘will’ as being ‘free’ (p. 45), individual actions being strongly influenced by ‘motive’, that is, something either to be desired or avoided. This, together with character, personality or individual will, is partly shaped by experiences and influences in the world. When motive and character interact, the subject reacts to the motive by means of their character, which, itself, is influenced by their given nature and prior experiences.

Freedom of autonomy, therefore, lies in an ability to ‘do as we will’ (Magee, 1983, p. 192) but not that our will is fully ‘free to will as it will’. The theosopher, Krisnamurti (1975) reflects a similar view that whilst a subject must be encouraged to reach out for autonomy of action ‘there can be no freedom from the tyranny of symbols and systems’ (p. 16), nor can there be total freedom from the past or the environment one inhabits.

Foucault (2007, p. 115) explains autonomy as ‘limited and determined’ or, as what Mandelstam (1989) describes as a form of ‘constrained freedom’ (p. 173). Nonetheless, there exists a ‘struggle for freedom’ (Foucault, 2007, p. 116) in

which the subject exercises a limited influence in ‘organising or modifying rules and practices’.

This process occurs within what Foucault (2007, p. 117) places in the three broad areas of: ‘relations of control over things’, ‘action upon others’ and ‘relations with oneself’. One way in which a subject can express an element of ‘constrained freedom’ in these three areas is through the exercise of parrhesia, of speaking freely and frankly to those in authority.

Foucault (2001, p. 12) outlines the concept of parrhesia as, first, containing an element of frankness, an opening of the heart to express everything on one’s mind to someone of a higher status than oneself. The second element within parrhesia concerns expression of something true, or which the speaker holds to be a truth. Third, the essence of parrhesia is that of free and frank expression of truth, containing elements of courage and risk.

Parrhesia can take the form of advice (Foucault, 2001, p. 17), confession or criticism towards authority. Equally, parrhesia may contain a motivational element, of ‘duty’ or ‘necessity’ for a person to speak out freely. Participants were often motivated by ‘duty’ or ‘necessity’, which gave them the courage to speak out.

The act of parrhesia contains an element of freedom. Foucault (1997) describes the practice of freedom as bound to ethics when it is informed by reflection; although, ethics, themselves, are informed by rules, regulations, culture and historical precedent. Taylor (2011) advises that parrhesia allows the subject room to practice autonomy and freedom of thought and deed ‘within and through the constraints set by our bodies and the world’ (p. 83). Participant, Taneesha, sought that feeling of ‘freedom of thought’ in making the bold expressions of her truth to authority.

Dreyfus and Rabinow (2013) note that freedom, itself, is a precondition for authority to wield power, allowing resistance to the imposition of power. Subjects are ‘entangled in a web of human relations’ (Arendt, 1998, p. 223) and struggle to ‘liberate themselves from necessity’ (p. 121) but this need should not function as a reason to have no freedom.

The act of freedom can be exercised through practising what Arendt refers to as ‘non-acting or abstention’ and what Foucault calls ‘quiet resistance’. This can be

seen in participants, Richard, Emily, John and Matthew's quiet resistance towards their teachers, and Sue and John's reluctant partial compliance with authorities.

7.4 Resistance

Resistance can be witnessed in both micro and macro human experiences. Mandelstam (1989), writing in the challenging times of Stalinist Russia, describes her fearful feelings towards authority. Inhibited by an inability to speak out freely and frankly, Mandelstam developed strategies to thwart, side-step and respond without annoying authority. Mandelstam declares (p. 173) 'free is the slave who overcomes fear' by developing 'inner freedom' of thought, much as a 'blade of grass or woodchip can alter the course of the swift-flowing stream'.

Saul-Morrison (1985) relays an idea of the Russian philosopher, Bakhtin's, that a person's inner strength bolsters them against being overwhelmed, thwarted or intimidated by authority, in a process that Griffin and Tyrell (2011) describe as being aware of how our inner thinking adjusts to the outside experiences we encounter. This re-alignment of thinking, Griffin and Tyrell describe as 'removing the mind veils' (p. 365) that make reconciling inner to outer thinking problematic. This can be seen, particularly, in Sue, Louise and Sharon's stories, where, through a process of trial, error and reflection, they settled upon approaches toward authority that gave them hope.

Krishnamurthi (1975, p. 188) advises that freedom of fear comes through self-knowledge, leading to the mind 'looking at the fact' without translating it negatively.

Tolstoy sought to create a 'new consciousness of community' (Murphy, 1992, p. 235) in his experimental schools that allowed students more freedom to think and organise their own learning, thereby freeing themselves from a 'Procrustean bed' of imposed, rigid teacher-led curriculum.

Tolstoy criticised the intellectualisation of life and education (Baudouin, 1923), which he felt put obstacles in the way of a child's ability to learn naturally. He regarded children as possessed of an instinctive ability to learn; what functioned as a 'natural reagent' (p. 176) in their own, self-directed learning pathway. For Tolstoy, freedom was not just the absence of compulsion – which creates

resistance – but rather, it comprised a coming together of teacher and child to freely select the best method and materials to be studied. Tolstoy placed emphasis upon training his teachers to protect children from ‘mischievous’ or harmful teaching that may sway a child’s reason.

Murphy (1992, p. 89) notes that Tolstoy sought to create conditions conducive to fostering the ‘free assimilation of knowledge’ through informal and non-compulsory methods. This was not dissimilar to the ideas put forward by the eighteenth-century political philosopher, William Godwin, with whom Tolstoy was familiar. Both maintained that for education and learning to be effective, it was necessary to proceed by experiment and observation, to facilitate the natural, enquiring mind of the child or young person.

An ‘awakened mind’, wrote Godwin (1797, p. 4) was the most important purpose of education, and instrumental in that purpose was the ability of the learner to feel free and express themselves without fear or hindrance from those in authority over them.

The importance of exercising an element of freedom through Foucault’s parrhesia is that it allows the speaker to make clear their feelings, truth, hopes and fears. This is something that the fifth-century BC Greek historian Thucydides (1972, p. 75) hopes for when he implores his Spartan listeners not to receive his words in an ‘unfriendly spirit’ as he attempts to point out their ‘faults’.

For Foucault (2011), truth should be communicated in a personal way. The speaker communicates clearly what they think, with the hearer entering this process benevolently. To act otherwise, stifles enquiry and hinders learning. A good example of this process was described by Sandra, who experienced successful interaction with one of her headteachers, in a relaxed and informal context, to discuss serious matters of concern. The reverse can be detected in other participant experiences where, as Abdul and Richard reflect, keeping a ‘low profile’ and not coming to the attention of authorities was the best strategy.

7.5 Endurance

Participants spoke not just of resistance to authority but also the need for endurance, to have their voice heard. Foucault (2011b, p. 7) refers to this as a ‘will to truth’. Mamoonah spoke passionately about the injustices she

encountered through her school days and how these encounters with authority influenced her adult thinking. Louise and Sue repeatedly challenged authority figures, seeking justice for their children. Sandra and Sue grew in confidence, knowledge and understanding over their years of struggle. Such resistance and endurance influenced participants to develop new thinking and confidence.

Foucault (2011b) points to the last days of Socrates, in *Plato's Apology* (Plato, 1964) and *Phaedo* (Plato, 1999), to illustrate the importance of exercising autonomy and endurance – these being necessary to the process of deciding whether a situation is good or bad, or if advice and guidance are sound. Foucault (2011b, p. 105) advises that to 'care for the self', one must follow the opinion best suited to achieving an understanding of what is 'just' or 'unjust'.

Participants often felt their situations and experiences 'unjust' and sought to break free of the expectations imposed by authority. Tolstoy (1894) describes a horse, harnessed to a team pulling a cart, as being unable to break free whilst it is moving. Participants expressed frustration and unhappiness at having to endure what they understood as unjust or bad decisions at the hands of authority. The feeling that they must simply 'remain harnessed' and accept, compliantly, a judgement or situation, motivated them to resist or speak out. Small acts of resistance enabled them to exercise power to have their voice heard or concerns addressed.

Tolstoy (1954) constantly exercised his resistance to authorities through voice and the printed word. For years, he and his schools came under close observation by Czarist secret police. He had to endure constant observation, detailing everything from his dress to his speech and writing. Troyat (1967) reports that Tolstoy's house and schools were raided by secret police and his family held under house arrest.

Despite this, Tolstoy continued to speak and write freely and frankly, becoming a thorn in the side of authorities. Foucault (1980a) reflected upon a subject's ability to resist and endure in the face of authority, raising questions of what motivated, sustained and gave subjects the will to resist authority. The ability to resist and endure connects with care for self (Foucault, 1988b) involving cognitive processes of inner reflection to better 'know oneself' (p. 26) and seeking advice or support from others.

7.6 Care for self

Taneesha, in her accounts, talked of ‘something within her’ providing the motivation to speak out freely and frankly. Foucault (2011b, p. 239) describes being true to the ‘precepts one formulates’ for oneself. This involves new learning in the light of experience, questioning, or upholding beliefs. Mamoonah’s experiences, for example, shook her belief in her understanding of truth. Participants spoke of being shocked or unsettled by their experiences of interacting with authority.

Foucault (2011b, p. 124) notes the importance of being ‘true to oneself’ and expressing deep-felt truths freely and frankly. Nietzsche (2016, p. 88) notes that striving for truth exhibits an ‘unconditional will to justice’, which Mamoonah and other participants felt had been compromised. Foucault (2011b) regarded the notion of care for self and others as underpinning issues of parrhesia. Care for self and others, particularly the young, was paramount.

Sue, Sandra, Louise, Alisha and Ankita, in their encounters with authority figures, were motivated by inner ideals of fairness and truth. Narjis felt relieved to find a strategy that authority found less confrontational when exercising her voice. Most participants tried, always, to be polite, deferential, avoiding conflict or upset at all costs. As adults, Subira, John and Matthew, recalling their own negative experiences of authority as school students, felt moved to practice a more just and fair exercise of authority in their workplaces.

Care for others is an aspect of care for self. Foucault refers to Patocka (2002, p. 96) describing ‘care of self’, or ‘care of the soul’, as being the ‘ground upon which we move’ (p. 97) and the foremost duty of each person as they live out their lives. Drawing from Plato’s teachings, Patocka describes how this inner process acts as a ‘spark’ to ignite constant self-examination in three areas: relationship to the spiritual world; care for oneself as part of a community; and the ‘inner world’ of thought. Patocka (2002) notes that these three aspects of self, emphasised by Plato and Aristotle, underpin the thinking and action that comprise the ‘grounds upon which moves philosophy’ (p. 196).

Foucault’s (2011b) notion of parrhesia is tightly bound to testing, verifying and examining self. Sandra, Sue and Louise went to great lengths to consult widely, and constantly probe professionals in their quest for justice, whereas Sue and

Sharon adopted a more gradual, contemplative approach, mirroring Berlant's 'impasse' (Berlant, 2011, p. 200). Both participants took time to consider their approaches to confronting authority. This reflects Euripides (1972, p. 251) who counsels Eteocles to have 'less haste' as 'slow speech most often achieves wisdom' through reflection.

The notion of testing and examining oneself is illustrated by Foucault's (2011b) account of the Czech philosopher, Jan Patocka, who brought together the teaching of Plato and Aristotle to emphasise the responsibility one has when exercising autonomy. An aspect of this concerns the constant need to be 'judging for oneself the bar of truth' (Patocka 2002, p. xvi), being open to problematisation, seeking solutions via introspection and engaging with others; this being both a means of looking after oneself and a pathway to seeking justice.

Testing and questioning of self are a constant theme throughout the participant interviews. Berlant (2011) and Aristotle (1976) dwell upon the importance of deliberation, each providing insight into the reflective processes recounted by participants. Mamoonah illustrates this element of self-introspection in reliving her encounters with school authority long after she had become an adult.

Sue, Sandra and Louise, in their stories, mentioned processes of self-doubt, uncertainty and confusion as to whether they were thinking and acting effectively to achieve desired outcomes. Saxonhouse (2008) notes that despite reflection before speaking out freely and frankly, doing so does not always lead to convincing others. Nevertheless, as with the accounts of Mamoonah, John and Matthew, it remains important to do so for the wellbeing and care of self.

7.7 Power and hierarchy

All participants experienced and exercised power in their respective educational contexts. Foucault (1990) reminds us that we all have power, and resistance to power is, itself, an application of power, creating 'reciprocal interpretations' (p. 92). Whilst it may always be wise to recognise and acknowledge the power and authority others hold, it is equally wise to consider (May, 2023) whether, and to what degree, one's thoughts, intentions and actions are still able to change or influence a situation.

These tensions constantly play out in the narratives of participants in the different contexts they describe. Power is ascribed, by participants, to authority figures, through feelings of respect, avoiding being disrespectful, or through fear of negative consequences. Foucault (1980a, p. 139) suggests too, that subjects can be influenced by what he refers to as 'love of the master', a concept assimilated from socialisation, whereby the 'leader' is seen as a purveyor of truth, power and prohibition.

This view can be detected in Subira's account describing loyalty to her headteacher, as well as Sharon and Ankita's accounts. Participants felt comfortable in ascribing power to others in a hierarchy to shift perceptions of responsibility from self. All the participants felt it was useful to be able to discern who holds power, when it is exercised and how they should respond appropriately.

All the participants appeared willing to give deference to those they encountered in authority positions, even if they resented or disagreed with the way they exercised power and influence. Foucault (1994, p. 82) describes the workings of power within institutions as being 'polymorphous', occurring in different forms. Within schools, power and authority are often assumed by reference to position, expertise, or who acts as 'gatekeeper' to services.

Equally within schools (Foucault, 1994), there are those who hold judicial power through evaluation, reward and punishment. These forces shape and influence each participant in their encounters with authority figures. Mill (2006, p. 24) notes the dangers inherent in placing 'unbounded reliance' on the personal opinions of those to whom they 'habitually defer'. Foucault (1980b; 1994; 1997) regards these understandings as complex and deeply embedded in thinking and language. John and Emily's frustration with the way in which their schools' hierarchies limited their personal autonomy, reflect this.

Foucault (1994) maintained that power relations can directly impact upon status and feelings. All participants expressed thoughts and feelings indicating they often felt undermined when encountering authority. Foucault (1994, p. 338) describes communication and power within an institution as constituting a 'block of capacity', influencing not just the 'value' of each person within the institution but their ability to act. Foucault's 'block of capacity' reflects Klimova (2017), who brings together Tolstoy and Arendt, to highlight the problematic nature of

bureaucratic institutions where each level of hierarchy is subservient to the one above.

The cultural critic and social commentator, William Hazlitt (1901) describes the pressures upon people to comply within a work hierarchy. He speaks of the 'ruling passions' (p. 359) of every corporate body to ensure compliance and conformity. To be otherwise, an individual within the organisation would appear 'impertinent or improper', receiving 'ill blood' from those in authority. Hazlitt (p. 360) adds that 'remonstrance, or opposition being fruitless', inviting the disapprobation of those who hold authority and disrupting 'regularity and order'. Consequences of speaking freely can range from being alienated from 'good fellowship and society' (Hazlitt, 1901, p. 382) to dismissal. Such themes find resonance in May (2023) who reflects upon the tendency of institutions to put their own interests before those they seek to serve.

Saxonhouse (2008, p. 110) describes Plato's Socrates (Plato, 1964) being bold and courageous to 'dismiss any hierarchical structure' and speak freely and frankly. Whilst it did not end well for Socrates, the over-riding message remains that speaking freely and frankly can be good for one's inner self and strivings to be free. Alford (2002), in his research into whistleblowing, noted that despite the detrimental consequences of speaking out freely and frankly, his participants often concluded that they had few regrets, even when the consequences had been draconian.

Tragically for Socrates, freedom to speak out cost him his life. However, his boldness in doing so may have influenced those in authority. Foucault (1994) maintains that to live in society requires recognition that power relations between people are deeply rooted and an acceptance that 'some can act on the actions of others' (p. 343). Continual tensions exist between individual freedoms within institutions, as evidenced by participant stories.

Each participant exercised their voice and actions in diverse ways in the complex situations experienced. Whilst some found fulfilment in exercising their ability to speak freely and frankly in challenging authority, others found only frustration or resignation that their actions had come to nought. Few of my participants have come close to Foucault's (2011) account of Plato's *Laches*, where each interlocutor found full acceptance to speak freely and frankly. Not feeling bold enough to speak out freely and frankly can be inhibiting.

Alvesson and Spicer (2016, p. 91) speak of the ‘self-stupefying’ effect of always censoring our internal conversations to ‘keep the peace’ with others around us. Although this can play a part in affirming internal, comforting beliefs and sense of community, it can also inhibit autonomy, resulting in reduced possibilities of thinking. Being the ‘odd one out’ in a group of colleagues, by speaking out freely and frankly to authority, does not always endear a person to those around them (Scott, 1990; Alford, 2002; Martinez, 2017). Whilst it can bring respect from colleagues, it can, equally, result in social distancing, as some participants found.

Alvesson and Spicer (2016, p. 91) state that being in tune with what colleagues feel and avoiding ‘unpleasantness’ can give a sense of acceptance and security, as Subira and Sharon recalled. Organisations foster this atmosphere, which Alvesson and Spicer (2016) refer to as ‘functional stupidity’ (p. 92), whereby an employee avoids or deflects critical thinking. Functional stupidity helps to maintain a level of ‘certainty and faith’ (p. 92) but can result in loss of employee autonomy, narrow decision-making and dissonance, as seen in John’s account.

The practice of parrhesia can be beneficial to all those involved in relations of power. Foucault (2011b) refers to ancient Greek sources to illustrate this. One such example of parrhesia is the life of Solon. In Langhorne’s (1878) *Plutarch’s Lives*, the political leader, Solon, speaks boldly and courageously on occasions and always seeks common ground between opposing parties. Solon demonstrates in his actions that speaking freely and frankly can be advantageous to interlocutors in achieving and promoting justice.

Langhorne (1878) notes that it was often the case that ‘wise [men] pleaded causes and fools determined them’ (p. 60), implying that those in authority were not listening carefully enough to the people who were bold enough to speak truth to power. Solon, himself, risked his life by speaking freely and frankly to the ruling tyrant, Pisistratus. Solon’s supporters were so concerned for his safety that they urged him to flee the city. However, Solon’s forthrightness and courage impressed the powerful Pisistratus, who responded not with anger, as everyone feared, but with kindness and respect.

Speaking out freely and frankly is as relevant to the modern context as it was for Solon. Marshall (1950) notes that freedom of speech is a right, necessary for

individual freedom. However, for it to be practised, it needs to be taught through education (Marshal, 1950). It is enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Atkinson Report, 2012, p. 5) that children and young people's voice should be heard. Haste (2008) agrees, stating that one of the key domains of participation in citizenship is the ability to have one's voice heard. This strategy needs to be nurtured, taught and practised if it is to be effective. This becomes problematic in an industrial model of mass schooling where large institutions require close regulation to function efficiently.

Wearmouth *et al.* (2004, p. 322), points out that schools require conformity to mould staff and students into 'communities of practice', a process (p. 39), which requires institutional regulation of time, speech and body. Conforming requires a degree of suppression of self (Taylor-Gatto, 2005) to function within a school community. Taylor-Gatto explains that achieving efficient community functioning requires a teaching system that, inevitably, neglects individual creativity and learning needs and encourages dependency upon authority and a system in which teaching of place, supported by surveillance, regulation and coercion, dominates.

7.8 Coercion and authority

Tolstoy (1894, p. 144) describes authority in terms of compliance, 'the cord, the chain' with which one is 'bound and fettered'. For Tolstoy, the object of authority is always to restrain those who seek personal interests 'to the detriment of the interests of society'. Tolstoy encouraged personal freedom if it was not injurious to others. He advocated, ideally, freeing oneself as a bee might divert from the swarm. He lamented the tendency of subjects to try to obtain freedom by 'riveting their chains faster and faster' (1894, p. 188), thereby binding themselves into organisations and movements. The organisation of hierarchy, he observed, applied pressure on everyone to 'throw the responsibility of their acts upon one another' (p. 226), inhibiting autonomy.

Foucault (2011b) raises the issue of parrhesia in relation to such obedience and the contradictory nature of free and frank expression in different contexts; whereas speaking out freely and frankly can be a laudable, courageous act that seeks truth and justice. Equally, within a community context, it can be problematic, upsetting or undermining of authority. Foucault points out that

speaking freely and frankly to authority is not always accepted or welcomed in a democracy.

Those who practice speaking freely and frankly may not be respected (Foucault, 2011b) and cause irritation, whilst those who flatter, or say what is acceptable, may be listened to. Hazlitt (1901) describes remonstrance within a regulated community as ‘fruitless, troublesome and invidious’ (p. 360). Conformity, conversely, leads to ‘good-fellowship’ and a ‘quiet life’. Sharon shrank from causing a fuss to avoid upsetting her colleagues and threatening her livelihood.

Swidler (1979, p. 16) points out that power relationships consist of roles and rules that determine who has authority over whom. The authority holder needs more than simply to get their own way but also to protect their right to command. As Alford (2001) and Satterthwaite *et al.* (2008) record, in their accounts of speaking truth to power, authority is not always prepared to listen or countenance free and frank voice that potentially undermines obedience.

Wetherell (2002, p. 19) notes that obedience to authority is influenced by situation, group, individual differences and cultural expectations, hence the different perspectives of participants. Foucault (2011b) connects obedience and the practice of parrhesia as raising questions of whether free and frank dialogue can always be beneficial to a subject, something that some participants later reflected upon. Parrhesia may involve ‘breaking rules, conventions, customs, or habits’ (Foucault, 2011b, p. 339) endangering what Rowe (1996, p. 120) describes as ‘the power and authority relationship’, which has connections with modern and ancient forms of cynicism.

7.9 Cynicism and impasse

Foucault (2011b) links the ancient Greek concept of parrhesia, with its bold and courageous truth-telling, with the practice of ‘cynicism’. In the modern context, Allen (2020, p. 4) describes cynicism as a form of ‘hopeless criticism’, often born out of ‘frustration and despair’, something expressed privately or apologised for publicly. Whilst both ancient and modern cynicism have these elements in common (Allen, 2020), ancient cynicism is a bolder entity, often ‘deliberately deviant from conventional thinking’ (p. 3) and much more focussed on expressing a truth that reveals a different reality.

Participant experiences of speaking freely and frankly contained firm strands of what may best be referred to as a ‘well-meaning’ critique of those in authority positions. Participants were indignant at the treatment they experienced by authority, others were conscious that their rights as an individual had been affronted, whilst others related stories of moral injustice or unfairness.

Participants related their experiences of authority figures in educational contexts, reflecting Foucault’s (2011b) concepts of cynicism, truth-telling and parrhesia; the cynic’s function, of speaking out boldly without fear, being useful for both speaker and society at large. Through such actions, a speaker may seek opportunity to exercise a degree of ‘constrained freedom’ (Foucault, 2001, p. 117) to influence ‘relations of control over things, others or oneself’.

‘Constrained freedom’ of action and the simultaneous ability to influence one’s situation are illustrated in Foucault’s (2011b) retelling of the tribulations encountered by the Greek philosopher, Diogenes. The son of a money changer, on visiting the Oracle at Delphi was advised to ‘change or revalue his currency’ (p. 242). A meaning of this, in the ancient context, implies looking within oneself to question and re-evaluate beliefs and opinions, implying breaking rules, habits of behaviour and customs to inform a new way, or ‘currency’, of thinking.

This form of thinking is akin to cynicism, which questions, and does not hold back, when necessary, from speaking out freely and frankly. Foucault (2011b, p. 237) characterises cynicism as being both ‘inside and outside’ of philosophy, broadly reflecting characteristics of a philosophy involving being pre-prepared or trained to speak freely and frankly. Essentially, a philosophy of looking after oneself, studying life strategies and being true to oneself.

Understanding self and motivations, Tamboukou (2003) notes, is a useful starting point in understanding experiences and actions of speaking freely and frankly. A subject may, through an act of parrhesia, ‘shatter any pre-existing certainties’ (p. 19), leading to a period of inertia or impasse. Both Sandra and Sue experienced such impasse, finding themselves ‘adrift’ (Berlant, 2011, p. 199) not knowing what to do for a while, before moving forward with their strategies. Each of the parents were centred upon attaining a ‘significantly problematic object’ of desire (Berlant, 2011, p. 24).

Tolstoy, in his letters to the persecuted religious community of Doukhobor (Donskov and Gladkova, 2019), which had been exiled to Canada, reflects

Berlant's impasse, in which all that had previously been held dear was destroyed or questioned. Shock and inertia resulted, prior to improvisation and solutions. In a letter to Peter Verigin in March, 1909 (Donskov and Gladkova, 2019, p. 275), Tolstoy discloses that most of the important experiences and understandings in his own life arose from such 'inner struggles' within himself and with those in authority.

Through impasse, confidence can emerge in reframing perceptions of relationships with authority, or as Foucault (2011) describes, 'changing one's currency' (p. 226). Aristotle (1976) describes a similar process, naming it 'deliberation', whereby a subject harnesses external knowledge and combines it with internal knowledge and intuition to form strategies towards a desired end.

7.10 Concluding thoughts

The emancipatory aspects of parrhesia derive from Socrates on being able to speak freely and frankly. If one feels free to express feelings without fear of consequences, one may be 'true to self'. Saxonhouse (2008) declares that being able to reveal truth to power without fearing consequences is essential to the efficient functioning of democracy. Conversely, Foucault (2011b) argues that parrhesia can be regarded by authority as suspicious or undermining, adding that those who choose to speak freely and frankly run the risk of irritating, annoying or being seen as disloyal by those in authority.

To have power over others is only possible if those who consider themselves powerless recognise it to be so and give others the power to impose upon them. Tolstoy (1976; 1997; 2006; 2009) alluded to this in the epilogue of his novel, *War and Peace*. He sought to account for the thousands of soldiers from different nations who relinquished their individual freedoms to join an army that followed Napoleon to Moscow. Rowe (1996) states that when one accepts a higher authority, it requires much trust on the part of the powerless. Sometimes, as Tolstoy (1976; 1997; 2006; 2009) reflects, sometimes, human decisions defy objective understanding.

Thinking and actions may contain inconsistencies or complete antagonism, everyone having 'to think, to feel and to look at things' (Tolstoy, 1976, p. 116) in their own way. Tolstoy's approach to teaching and learning was tolerant of the individual, encouraging the learner to think and express themselves freely with

little or no restraint. Yegerov (1994) notes that this brought Tolstoy's schools and teachers into long running conflicts with rigid government curriculum and teaching methods.

Ancient Greek literature is an important foundational influence for both Foucault and Tolstoy. Sherman (1980) describes Socratic inner voices playing a key role in the characters of Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. Tolstoy admired Plato's philosophic method, which he describes as having the ability to reveal inner meanings of life, helping make sense of thinking and action. Speaking freely and frankly can, as Saxonhouse (2008, p. 145) notes, 'reveal truths hidden within the city'. Both Socrates, in his attempts to reveal truth, and Solon, when confronting the tyrant, Pisistratus (Langhorne, 1878), exercised voice. Parrhesia can be a useful communication tool when used wisely. As Pericles declares (Villa, 2001), proper discussion is most effective at moderating the passions.

Proper discussion, however, can be thwarted, as Thomas and Loxley (2004) note, when there is a clash of culture between subject and institution. This can be seen most clearly where the 'needs' of student, parent or worker do not easily coincide with operational 'needs'. The effect can trigger an institution to 'close ranks' and exert higher authority. This impinges upon what Godwin (1797, p. 4) referred to as an 'awakened mind', essential to learning and autonomy.

For Tolstoy (1967, p. 110), writing in the mid-nineteenth century, an effective education system that truly has the learner's interests and needs at heart could never be coercive. Compulsion of attendance and curriculum leaves little opportunity for student autonomy or voice. Freedom is not just the absence of compulsion, it comprises a coming together of teacher and child, with freedom to select the best method and materials to be studied. Without opportunity for student and teacher to exercise speaking freely and frankly, meaningful voice in education is compromised.

To this end, Foucault's highlighting of ancient Greek practices of parrhesia allowing unimpeded voice is important. The process needs to be meaningful, and not simply tokenistic, without fear of retribution or consequences. As with the ancient perception of cynicism, the free-speaking cynic needs to be encouraged, and given strategies to enable fearless expression to power.

Saul-Morrison (1985, p. 146) notes that the Russian philosopher, Bakhtin, draws attention to the need for ‘inner strength’, providing the starting point for encouraging feelings of ‘freedom from’ being overwhelmed, thwarted or intimidated by authority. Similarly, Mandelstam (1989, p. 279) advises that freedom is ‘won only through inner struggle’. A process akin to impasse, involving overcoming ‘both oneself’ and the ‘world at large’. To act otherwise stifles enquiry, hindering effective learning, schooling and education.

In the next chapter, I examine further the strategies that participants engaged with in their relationships with authority in educational contexts.

Chapter 8: Technologies of truth-telling

8.1 Introduction

Abiodun (1994, p. 69) cites a Yoruba proverb, “What follows six is more than seven”, which reminds us that to attain a fuller understanding of a subject, one must look beyond what is first observed. In this chapter, reflecting upon participant stories, I seek to ‘look beyond’, and explore the influence of what Foucault (1988b, p. 17) refers to as ‘truth games’ and how they relate to the strategies adopted by participants in this study. In this context, I have configured the notion of ‘technologies of truth-telling’, which are the strategies that shape the participant interactions when facing the challenges of speaking freely and frankly within the power regimes of educational institutions.

Foucault’s account of Plato’s *Laches* (Foucault, 2011b), and the ideal of a Socratic parrhesia, described an engineered, ideal, parrhesiastic stage, upon which speaking freely and frankly to authority was possible. Participants mirrored elements of this in their stories. In deploying the notion of technologies of truth-telling, I have also made connections with Tolstoy and Berlant, amongst others, to illustrate, for example, silence as being a technology of truth-telling. The effects of technologies of truth-telling can further be observed in participant’s understandings of space and identity, their sense of self, and their relationships and interactions with others, as I will further discuss.

Technologies of truth-telling led to Sue spending a period of two years bringing about a change in herself, her knowledge and skills, together with gaining a voluntary – then paid – position in school. This provided a platform from which authority figures could be challenged. Louise and Sandra also prepared widely for their confrontations with authority figures by involving outside professional opinion, actively seeking out knowledge, skills and strategies that would be useful in persuading authority figures.

Aristotle (1976) states that to act, a person requires both skills and strategies. Many participants consciously set out to acquire the tools necessary to pursue their aims. Ankita entered school already possessed of a range of strategies, learnt from her parents, to flatter and engage authority figures. Ankita continues to use these strategies as an adult and recognises them as successful in gaining the cooperation of others. Mamoonah, Richard, John and Matthew were

also successful in their encounters with professionals, finding their own ways (or technologies) of navigating the vagaries of the bureaucratic hierarchies they inhabited.

As noted above, in the following sections of this chapter, participant's stories are considered not only in terms of Foucault's 'truth games' but also within the notion of technologies of truth-telling. What constitutes 'a truth' is also reflected upon, alongside conditions of possibility for truth-telling (or not).

8.2 Truth-telling

Being bold enough, in an act of parrhesia, to communicate a truth, raises the question of what truth is. Tolstoy (2011, p. 79) states it is impossible to shine a light on light itself, making the truthfulness of truth problematic. Tolstoy (1894) describes the search for truth as akin to a person walking in darkness with a light thrown before them from the lantern they carry. The carrier of the light only sees what is lit up before them and not what remains in darkness. The light carrier can shine the light wherever they choose to dispel the darkness.

Tolstoy talks of these dark areas as unseen truths – truths not yet revealed, truths that have been 'outlived, forgotten and assimilated' (Tolstoy, 1894, p. 290) together with truths that 'rise up before the light' of reason and become recognised. The latter truths are those wherein degrees of freedom reside. Tolstoy concludes (p. 291) that a subject has a threefold relation to truth: first, that truths are embedded within consciousness, operating in an unconscious manner; second, that truths are revealed through experience; and third, truths that have been revealed but are not fully understood, recognised or assimilated require the application of reason to decide upon them.

Truth, for Foucault (Miller, 1993, p. 69), is not something that has a permanent, fixed existence, nor can it be found or discovered within or without the self. Truth is both 'invisible and discrete', and its effect upon the body can be identified through 'normalisation' and 'compliance', communicated through 'multiple forms of constraint'. This occurs, according to Foucault (1980a), via institutions, governments, science and politics.

Foucault (1997, p. 281) describes how 'subjects fit into games of truth' where they encounter specific effects of power and contest interpretations of truth present in 'production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation'

(Chomsky and Foucault, 2006, p. 169). The use of parrhesia to express a different truth through free and frank conversation constitutes participation in the 'politics of truth' (p. 170) and an act of freedom.

Donskov and Gladkova (2019, p. 215) recount Tolstoy writing to Peter Verigin, the leader of the persecuted Doukhobor community, advising them to be bold in communicating with authority. Tolstoy recognised that speaking a truth freely and frankly would be received by those in authority either with seriousness, ambivalence, or simply be dismissed or ignored.

In speaking freely and frankly, Tolstoy advises optimistically, that the hearer has a duty to listen empathetically to 'feel the soul of the speaker' (Donskov and Gladkova, 2019, p. 216), helping the listener to take notice and question further. The speaker, though, must be prepared for their words to be dismissed, misunderstood or ignored, while hoping that 'kindred spirits turn up' (p. 216) to support and affirm one's expressions.

In communicating freely and frankly, Tolstoy adds a note of caution (Donskov and Gladkova, 2019) that one still needs to take care of 'what you say and hear….print or read' (p. 217). In a further letter, Tolstoy cautions Verigin to communicate his feelings to those in authority freely and frankly, as long as those views seek only to bring about the 'wellbeing of all people' (p. 228) and do no harm to others.

Speaking out freely and frankly requires courage (Foucault, 2011b,) as well as a benevolent listener (Tamboukou, 2012). Each participant found speaking out freely and frankly challenging. Sandra spoke of being 'petrified and shaking' in the presence of authority figures at meetings. Richard, John, Louise and Mamoonah each indicated their quiet courage in encountering authority figures, both as students and adults. Taneesha demonstrated courage in speaking out freely and frankly to an authority figure in front of her work colleagues, yet when questioned about this, she was surprised at the suggestion that she had been courageous, feeling it was part of 'who she was' and adding that she had not thought about it as being courageous.

Tolstoy (1997; 2001) recounts examples of truth-telling, drawing upon his observations as an army officer in describing soldiers communicating unwelcome truths to higher authority. Tolstoy himself, endured persecution from state authorities (Redfearn, 1992) for expressly opposing war and conflicts. In

doing so, Tolstoy engineered what Foucault (2011b, p. 130) describes as the ‘zone of truth-telling’ by arranging for his writings to be published outside of Russia, away from censorship. The following sections illustrate how the participants in this study conveyed their feelings to those in authority.

8.3 Technologies of truth-telling

My participants made use of a range of technologies of truth-telling to perform bold, free and frank exchanges with authority figures. These ranged from nuanced, respectful, humble forms of questioning, periods of impasse (Berlant, 2011, p. 200) or silence, through to uncontrolled outbursts of parrhesia (Foucault 2001, p. 63).

Sue and Sandra both developed unique forms of technologies that allowed them to express their truth. As a parent, Sue planned a strategy of becoming employed by the institution for her voice to be heard. Sandra sought help and support through contact with parent advice groups to equip and embolden herself. Sandra, Louise and Sue began degree studies to equip themselves with knowledge to talk on more equal terms with authority. Their studies in higher education led to a ‘transformation in their thinking and confidence’ (Parsons and Chappell, 2020, p. 470).

Narjis adopted a strategy of carefully wording phrases to challenge authority without upsetting them. Louise adopted a more emotionally literate register to engage with authority and have her voice heard. Emily chose anonymity as, for her, direct confrontation was willing to engage in. Scott (1990, p. 136) supports that for the vulnerable fearing retribution, the ‘luxury’ of direct confrontation is rarely an option.

Avoiding direct confrontation in fear of consequences, Emily chose to author articles and plays that lampooned her headteacher. This strategy of truth-telling allowed for safe expression of feelings, contributing to general social interactions of rumour and gossip. Wolfe (1986, p. 220) suggests that Emily’s actions required both reflexiveness and what Mead (1962) refers to as ‘awareness of the other’ (p. 134). An ability to consciously adjust and modify oneself to the authority and potential consequences is a recurring theme in participant stories.

Habermas (1984) suggests that there is always an effect upon the individual as they react to authority when seeking strategies of survival. Dominating verbal discourse (Scott, 1990) can be a form of distorted communication as unequal power relations encourage strategic forms of understanding and response. One such response strategy to communicate truth to authority is the use of silence.

8.4 Silence as a technology of truth-telling

The act of silence was a common feature reported by participants when engaging with authority figures. Sometimes this was a deliberate action but more often, it simply emerged in their relations with those more powerful than themselves. The use of silence by children (O'Donnell, 2018, p. 826) can be a strategy employed to enable 'slow explorations of the material world', playing an important role in the development of a child. Similarly, Corbin (2018) and Brox (2019) reflect upon the importance and use of silence in lives, relationships and development of self.

Silence as a technology has a pedigree stretching back to ancient literature in Homer's (1977) *Iliad*. Authority can use silence to coerce others or inflict 'stunned silences' (Homer, 1977, p. 172) on those with lesser power. The effect can be creating a 'gloomy silence' (p. 179) or initiating feelings of 'speechless dejection' (p. 161). Similarly, in Homer's *Odyssey* (1991), a silent response is linked to thoughts of dissent, revenge, endurance and gloating.

Such feelings were often expressed in participant recall, along with regret at not speaking out freely and frankly. As Aethra in Euripides (1983) declares, 'I will speak, lest I should later blame myself for keeping cowardly silence' (p. 203). Writing in the nineteenth century, Mill (2006, p. 23) discusses the 'peculiar evil' of silencing expression, referring to it as an 'exhibition of infallibility'.

More recent perspectives on silence (Jensen, 1973) identify it as having five dualistic functions that impact social relations: silence can bring people together or push them apart; harm or heal; provide or hide information; and facilitate thought or no thought and assent or dissent. Pinder and Harlos (2001) explore issues of employee quiescence, where, fearing consequences, individuals choose a silent response, and acquiescence, where they adopt silence reluctantly, as a strategy. Chou and Chang (2020) investigated the growing concern with silence in the world of business, in what they identify as the

‘detrimental effects’ (p. 417) of employee silence. Fear of consequences and the passive avoidance of risks often mask the initiative-taking nature of employees.

Sue was regretful at not speaking out in her interactions with authority. Saint Augustine (1980, p. 142) describes silence as an initiative-taking act of resistance or attack, a way in which one can ‘bear pain’. Such pain was borne by Mamoonah and other participants, who recalled experiences where they had used silence as a form of resistance or assertiveness.

Foucault (1990; 1997) recognised diverse types of silence permeating discourse and outlines various forms of silence in communication. He describes silence being used both as a form of hostility and indicating deep friendship, affection, admiration or love. He notes the cultural diversity of silence in present day society as well as practised in ancient Greek and Roman societies.

Silence can play an important part in cultivating relationships with others as well as being a nonverbal strategy (Foucault, 2000) for punctuating moral or social norms. Rodriguez (2011, p. 111) notes that silence can function as ‘a voice, a mode of uttering’ or simply indicate a lack of noise imbued with a complex mixture of identity, race or gender.

Such silences can be misinterpreted by authority (Rodriguez, 2011), disadvantaging or marginalising those whose social standing, gender, race or ethnicity is held in less regard. Participants often spoke of being marginalised. In meetings, Sandra felt authority figures had verbally forced her into silence. During interviews, participants, occasionally, would lapse into thoughtful silence when recalling events. Mazzei (2007, p. 21) suggests that researchers should pay attention to ‘embracing the ghost of silence’ in their recordings. These instances often informed the overall meaning or gave significance to the stories conveyed.

Participants recalled instances of choosing silence as a response to authority. Sometimes, this was simply feelings of powerlessness but at other times, it was a conscious intention to communicate negative feelings toward authority. Richard, Matthew, Mamoonah and John’s responses to their teachers reflect the use of a direct strategy. Similarly, Sue, Abdul, Sandra, Subira and Sharon all related instances of deliberate or unintentional use of silence toward authority, which they found unsettling.

Participants often declared that they wanted to comply with authority, even though they did not agree with the authority figures they encountered. Scott (1990) states that any pattern of stratification in society acts as a guide to who gives and who receives orders. Each position or role defers, automatically or habitually, to those they perceive as above them. Each act of deference and compliance acts to give outward impressions of conformity. Scott holds that most acts of deference are routinised actions toward a person holding higher authority, an act of socialisation occurring through family, institution or peer interaction in the hope that it will keep one from harm. All participants recalled responding to authority figures with automatic deference even when they felt wronged or aggrieved.

Richard and Mamoonah identified the root cause of their deference to authority as stemming from parents. Mamoonah was particularly challenged in her desire to be deferential to authority whilst simultaneously recognising such deference meant accepting injustice. Mamoonah continued, for over a year, to convince her parents and authority figures that they were wrong in their understanding of the injustice she experienced.

Sue also faced a dilemma once recognising that being silently deferential would not achieve her desired aim. Sue's responses to authority outwardly demonstrated compliance whilst inwardly devising strategies to circumvent authority. Louise also faced similar challenges of balancing outward compliance whilst seeking to bypass and subvert authority.

Outward deference to authority and compromise conceals the seed of resistance, bringing into question relations to others and care for self. Foucault (1990) makes clear that where power is present, there too, dwells the seed of resistance. Foucault (1997) reminds us that resistance is a creative process that takes many forms, including that of silence. The Greek playwright, Euripides (2003) observed the uses of silence and secrecy when responding to authority. Being very circumspect was important as often 'there's no trusting the tongue' (p. 139) to deliver an acceptable response.

Sandra, John and Matthew reflect this in their accounts of being humiliated and angry to the extent of not trusting themselves to speak calmly when interacting with authority. Each spoke of feeling inhibited to express themselves freely and frankly through anger, fear of consequences or not expecting to be believed.

Stirner (2014) attributes a silent response to authority as arising from cultural socialisation acting to place ‘wheels in the head’ (p. 36) that influence thought and action.

Similarly, Freire (1996, p. 12) describes a ‘culture of silence’ which can inhibit the less powerful to speak out freely and frankly. Freire links this culture of silence directly to the education system. The human condition, Freire maintains, is not one that can comfortably remain silent, but one that is developed through word, work and ‘action-reflection’ (p. 69). Human nature requires encounters and dialogue with others, mediated by the world. Speaking truth to power will always remain a risky undertaking and one in which the less powerful must often be silently circumspect. John and Sharon mentioned how careful they needed to be when speaking freely and frankly to their school authority figures, for fear that managers would feel undermined, or their authority questioned.

The ideal experience is described in Euripides (2003, p. 139) where a lowly servant of the aristocratic Hippolytus tentatively addresses his master, asking him if it was acceptable to hear good advice from his lips. Hippolytus assures the servant that ‘it would show little wisdom to refuse’ and in the spirit of parrhesia, allows the servant to break from respectful silence to speak freely and frankly. The servant fearlessly delivers a criticism, which, fortuitously, Hippolytus recognises as beneficial.

Participant stories reflect a mixed reception when they ventured to speak freely and frankly to authority, often finding it was not encouraged or welcomed. Freire (1996) states that through uninhibited dialogue arises hope, and without dialogue, silence can lead to hopelessness. Foucault (1997), however, reminds us that to be silenced or cowed by those in authority does not mean that a subject is powerless, pointing out that wherever power exists, there are always elements of resistance available and possibilities for bringing about change.

Greene (1998, p. 167) quotes an Ethiopian proverb to illustrate that a subject is never powerless to practice even the mildest of resistance, “When the great lord passes, the wise peasant bows deeply and silently farts”. The outward expression of compliance does not necessarily indicate inner private thoughts. Satterthwaite *et al.* (2008, p. 117) point out that having the confidence to speak out freely and frankly is dependent upon whether such talk may be counterproductive, or interests harmed.

Each participant considered consequences before choosing their strategies of resistance to authority. Emily chose an anonymous silent strategy of writing humorous plays to lampoon authority; Richard and Mamoonah chose a path of reluctant, silent, outward compliance. Sue, Sandra and Louise chose a strategy of silence whilst gaining knowledge to challenge authority. Matthew chose to fabricate a story to placate authority. Narjis learnt to use silence coupled with strategies involving non-challenging language and Taneesha spontaneously spoke freely and frankly to authority.

Silence, being a conscious, active form of resistance, is not to be confused with inertia. Silence often acts as a chosen strategy by participants to communicate safely. Hazlitt (1901) writes that silence may be the result of an experience too powerful to be resisted. Sandra's initial response was to use silence as a time-buying strategy. John, Mamoonah and Richard all chose strategies of silence to communicate unhappiness or opposition, recognising the futility of stating their truths.

The use of silence can be linked to preservation of self and avoidance of unpleasant repercussions. The Czech philosopher, Patocka (2002), drawing inspiration from Plato, cautions that wellbeing and care of the soul, ideally, should focus upon the 'unconcealing of things, on the truthfulness of revealing things' (p. 77). This 'unconcealing' can be possible if one has opportunity. Silence as a strategy can be further reinforced by physical gesture, posture and facial expression, something Richard deployed.

Decleve (1992, p. 129) describes in vivid detail, the silent response of the Czech philosopher, Patocka, to the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia. Patocka felt powerless to speak freely and frankly, communicating feelings, through his physical presence, described as a silent deep sadness that 'spoke louder than words'. Scott (1990) describes individual forms of silent protest, reflecting Emily's actions, where individuals grumble, deliver well-timed silences, or outwardly comply with authority without enthusiasm.

Sharon alludes to this when deciding not to communicate with anyone in the hierarchy, confining conversations to trusted colleagues of the same status. Scott (1990) describes such actions as affording an element of safety to the speaker that can later be denied, thus stopping short of appearing insubordinate, mirroring Emily's account.

On the world stage, Scott (1990) mentions the acts of silent protest practised by Palestinian teenagers toward Israeli soldiers in the occupied West Bank as a strategy of safely communicating unhappiness, disagreement or hatred. Further examples are cited by Scott from Poland, where whole groups joined in silent protest to make their collective voice heard safely and avoid arrest.

Mandelstam (1999, p. 42) describes experiences in twentieth-century United Soviet Socialist Republic, where responding to authority with a 'contemptuous silence' was an effective strategy for self-preservation. The practice of silence, in this case, was an active, rather than a passive, strategy (Mandelstam, 1999) designed to demonstrate outward compliance while masking an inner, judgemental non-compliance.

Silence as a form of resistance can also be observed in two fictional writings: Tolstoy's (1976; 1997; 2006; 2009) nineteenth-century *War and Peace* and Rand's (2007) twentieth-century defence of capitalism. Both epic novels vividly portray the lives, moods and social interactions of their characters. Both Tolstoy and Rand use silence to convey different responses to authority ranging from shock, through awe, contemplation and happiness, to resistance. The instances of silent resistance contained in both novels give insight into the diverse ways a subject can seek to resist, change or influence power relations.

Tolstoy's four main English translations (1976; 1997; 2006; 2009) describe silence as a means of challenging authority, communicating antipathy or expressing deep feelings of aversion and disdain. Equally, silence can function as a form of resistance (Tolstoy, 1997), conveying irritation. Rand (2007), as with Tolstoy, also uses silence as a strategy her characters adopt to resist authority. Rand (2007, p. 67) describes characters exhibiting a 'battle of silence' when confronted with authority and gives examples of silent responses involving indifference, resignation and resentment. Participants, in their interviews, described similar strategies and experiences of what Rand (2007, p. 75) describes as a 'heavy silence' toward authority.

Foucault notes (1980a) that silence does not, necessarily, indicate fear in the face of authority. Sandra described feeling completely marginalised by authority figures and in response, was silently disdainful. John and Matthew both communicated silent facial gestures of disdain toward authority figures when feeling powerless to respond. Tolstoy (1997) explains that such uses of silence

to communicate disagreement as well as scepticism can convey ‘assertiveness’ (p. 1037), shock or awkwardness.

Foucault (1980a, p. 111), on experiencing opposition to his own ideas from fellow French intellectuals, writes, in 1968, of being met with ‘a great silence’ that spoke clearly to him without a word being uttered. He describes diverse types of silence (Foucault, 1997) ranging from hostility to admiration and friendship. Subira related an uncomfortable series of silences that occurred when she was questioned by an Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) inspector. Her silence communicated annoyance and fear toward the inspector’s intrusive questioning. Similarly, Mamoonah, John and Richard all exercised safe silent responses.

Foucault (1997) states that silence in Western culture is a largely forgotten and underused aspect of relationship and just as important as having freedom to speak without fear. Grossman (2006), in his epic account of events in twentieth-century Russia, describes silence as articulating a response of resistance to questioning by authority, and the act of silence, itself, calls into question the legitimacy of authority that the interlocutor seeks to hold over the less powerful subject. Through silence (Grossman, 2006), conversations can be diverted or thwarted, allowing a degree of resistance on the part of the less powerful.

Silence can, therefore, be seen as a technology of communicating freely and frankly to those in authority. The ancient Roman lawyer, Pliny the Younger, (1963) recognises this, and recalls that he found in his career, remaining silent can be just as effective a form of oratory as eloquence. Silence as a response to authority is integral to Berlant’s (2011) concept of impasse, where a subject is silenced through events or experiences that result in deep periods of inertia and reflection.

8.5 Impasse and rites of passage

Emerging from a time of impasse can lead to developing skills and strategies that may be useful in speaking with authority.

Participants in this study experienced periods of impasse, where feelings of fear and insecurity led to helplessness and self-doubt. Taneesha touched upon this in her account of speaking truth to power, and Mamoona and John experienced periods of anger, anxiety and insecurity that led to a thoughtful inertia.

Sue's impasse stretched over a period of two years before she arrived at an effective strategy. Louise adapted more quickly to the culture of each school. Analysing institutional deficiencies, such as lack of structural accountability and desensitised approaches to parent or child needs helped her to respond more effectively. All participants were influenced by their previous experiences and observations in their roles as students, parents or employees.

Sandra spoke of her periods of anguish and self-doubt when dealing with school authority figures. All participants had to learn how to be critical in a non-confrontational manner, thus avoiding becoming a 'problem' person to authority. Narjis learnt phrases that were both unassuming and deferential whilst, at the same time, challenging to authority. Most participants spoke from less confident positions than Louise, either because of their place within a hierarchy, their role or their prior understanding of deference.

Every change of place, social position or understanding, Turner (1977, p. 94) refers to as 'rites of passage'. Participant experiences functioned as a 'rite of passage' in which they journeyed from naivety to a better understanding of how to interact with authority. 'Rites of passage' are associated with transitions or 'limens', which signify thresholds to be crossed. Participants journeyed from initial, limited understanding of self in relation to authority, through periods of passivity, resistance and questioning, culminating in further transitions of reaggregation.

Emily, for example, developed her understanding of authority from her school experiences and built upon them when she became a manager herself. John spoke of his observations and experiences from school informing his interactions as an employee and his future intentions to become a manager. Ankita related her interactions with authority from school, which informed her later experiences as a parent and employee in an educational context.

Examples of such experiences can also be found in fictional writings. Dinega (1998, p. 81) observes change in character depictions in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. Tolstoy's characters encounter challenging situations that initiate a break with the past, resulting in changes in thinking and acting (1976; 1997; 2006; 2009). Euripides (1957) declared that all is change and one must persevere courageously in uncertainty, trusting in whatever hope can be mustered to achieve desired ends.

Each participant can be observed displaying hope and courage in their actions. Mamoonah continually spoke out to maintain her innocence; Taneesha boldly communicated her anger. Sue, Sandra and Louise mirrored van Gennep's threefold process (Turner 1977, p. xi) of separation, transition and incorporation, where they abandoned initial understandings of authority, accessed new sources of knowledge and were then able to use different strategies.

Each participant was always wary of consequences that may arise, each driven by feelings of hope for a more just outcome, a desired change, or simply to be listened to. Euripides (1957) portrays the wife of Heracles declaring that hope is of things possible. Participant stories suggest they experienced significant changes in the ways they perceived their situations, themselves and others.

8.6 Identity

Technologies of truth-telling contribute to the formation of identity. Foucault (1980a) suggests that individuals are shaped and formed through multiple, observable and opaque influences of power. Wetherell (2002) suggests that such influences of power are enacted through everyday relationships that combine social histories, acting together and forming fluid identities.

Within the concept of identity, we find a convergence of views between Foucault and Tolstoy (Schonle, 2013). Foucault (1973) outlines the complicated, intertwined historicity of identity formation, and Tolstoy (2007) points to the difficulty inherent in fully understanding the totality of influences that contribute to thinking and action. Where they differ is that Tolstoy suggests there also exists an innate spiritual aspect to identity.

Of course, there are more readily apparent influences on identity. Mead (1962), for example, together with Weatherell and Mohanty (2010) remind us that *relationships* within educational contexts shape thinking and action. Similarly, Habermas (1984) points out that *experiences* inform and construct understandings of identity. Educational *institutions*, themselves, also play a part in the formation of identity. Reflecting ideas from Tolstoy and other libertarian thinkers, Smith (1983) acknowledges the restraints placed upon learners, which range from time, place, content and manner of learning, each having a profound effect upon understanding, thinking and identity.

Literature on identity construction is vast and diverse. Wetherell (2002) and Wetherell and Mohanty (2010) illustrate the interactional formation of personal and social identity that acts to inform, guide and shape behaviour. Davis and Love (2017) suggest that identity formation can be a gradual process of change, intricately bound together into multiple understandings.

Participants reflect these understandings in their stories of dealing with authority, their strategies and thinking developing continuously because of their interactions, informing understanding of self. Scott (2021) notes the fluid and changing nature of identity, with its consequent challenges to public policies and how individuals adjust their sense of identity, thoughts and behaviour to match the collectively defined attributes of the social groups they are part of.

Each participant experienced changes in how they regarded authority and how they responded to challenges or opportunities presented. John and Matthew wanted to be regarded by those they worked with as more approachable and empathetic, and Sue and Sharon developed new skills and understandings resulting from their experiences. Mamoona continued to be affected negatively by her experiences, which contributed to her being wary of authority as an adult.

Identity, therefore, becomes an evolving property, in which one constructs a special sense of attachment to self and others. Scott (2021) explains that identity is linked to what subjects care most about in the natural, practical and social world, as well as being a signifier of difference through language or behaviour. Martinez (2017) points to decisions arising from interaction of identity with real or imagined contexts, whilst Mead (1970) recognises identity as a coming together of the known past and the expected future.

One of Foucault's oft-quoted passages (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 2013, p. 187) relates to how the interactions with self, others, rules and structures encountered in everyday situations affect our understanding of self, 'People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what they do, does'.

Participants often reported, in interview, that relating their stories helped them to make sense of their experiences with authority. Identity issues pertaining to self, memory and time are ever-present in shaping thinking and behaviour (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 2013) leading to 'actions upon other actions' (p. 217).

Ricoeur (2006) draws from Augustinian thinking to describe the fundamentally private character of how such thinking pertains to memory, which he refers to as ‘mineness’. The formation of memory, impressions, feelings and experiences, together, constitute a conscious self. Ricoeur (2006) recalls John Locke, whose understanding of identity included a reflexive dimension, in which consciousness of past and present combine to create identity of self.

With regard to connections between memory, consciousness, passage of time and present, Ricoeur (2006) recalls Husserl, who maintained that an understanding of self combines all these elements with the ever-present danger of forgetfulness. During participant interviews, past experiences were recalled, together with recent memories. Participants related memories of feelings and emotions connected to their encounters of speaking freely and frankly that continued to influence their current thinking and actions.

Plato (2004), in the *Theaetetus,* has Socrates comparing memory to a wax tablet upon which experiences are recorded. The more significant the event, the deeper the inscription, leading to easier recall. As time progresses, the original inscription can undergo multiple interpretations, changes and explanations as new experiences or knowledge are encountered. The wax tablet of memory constantly integrates experiences gained through the senses. Such experiences, Rand (1984) maintains, combine to inform future actions through reason, abstraction and conceptualisation.

Each participant recalled significant experiences that contributed to future encounters with authority. Not all were pleasant, as in the cases of Mamoonah, Richard, Taneesha and Matthew, where memories of difficult encounters continued to influence their relations with authority. Each participant drew from their wax tablet of memory, enhancing, erasing, modifying and re-assessing. Ricoeur (2006, p. 81) describes this as the ‘fragility of identity’, intertwining past, present and future. The ‘fragility of identity’ indicates, not so much weakness, but its potential for agency in matters of resistance or compliance. What each participant recalls in their stories continually constrains or enhances action.

Each subject held truths important to themselves. Augustine (1980) points out that it is difficult to claim that memories are true – one can only call upon others to open their ears to listen. As with Butler’s concept of ‘performativity’ (Salih, 2002, p. 10) and Foucault’s (1997) approach to genealogy, Ricoeur (2006, p.

120) draws attention to the effect of Halbach's 'collective gaze', where personal memories and recollections are reinforced and influenced by society at large, which in turn, inform memory.

Foucault (1980a) points to the significant roles that individual thought and verbal discourse play in society. He highlights 'low-ranking knowledges' (p. 81), which may be regarded as unimportant or naive, or having no potential for influence. He maintains that it is through these 'local popular knowledges' that 'criticism performs its work', not just in shaping individual thinking and identity but in beginning to influence wider change processes.

Individual thought and thinking, often hidden from view, nevertheless, drive everyday behaviour. For Foucault (1994, p. 456) even in the 'most stupid institution' one may find silent habits of thought that can foster critique. Helping self and others to question the familiar, the taken-for-granted aspects of life, is a prerequisite for change and one that participants engaged in.

Processes of change arise through conflict, confrontation, struggle and resistance (Foucault, 1994) within relationships of power. Foucault reflects that his own attempts at critique have arisen from the identification of 'cracks, silent tremors and dysfunctions' (p. 457) he saw around him. Similarly, in participant stories, there were experiences of injustice, overly bureaucratic lines of communication or institutional barriers, which gave rise to critique; these being 'a fragment of autobiography' as each participant described significant experiences in their personal stories influencing thinking, memory and identity.

Encounters with authority constantly probe the boundaries of knowledge that arise within contexts (Foucault, 2007). Participants constantly reflected upon, and evaluated, their experiences. Foucault uses a medical term – 'sacralization' – to indicate that whilst unique freedoms exist within, and between, these thinking spaces, they are, effectively, joined in the manner of a spinal cord, an ensemble of relations within spaces that define understanding of self and others.

The private, inner space of self can, at the same time, be present in a physical space whilst inhabiting an alternative, inner space of choosing. Sandra and Richard for example, as with other participants, attempted to keep an assertive, outside persona, whilst their inner selves were beset with anxiety and fear. Foucault (2000, p. 179) describes such inner space as 'heterotopic', being one

that functions as a point of silent deviation, or resistance to, an outside, inhabited physical space. This inner space can have connections with gendered thinking and understanding of experience.

Three participants, Taneesha, Sandra and Louise, raised the issue of gender as being an element in their experiences. Taneesha felt that her age and gender negatively influenced the relationship she had with one of her older, male managers. When disagreements arose between them, Taneesha felt that her views and actions were ignored or ridiculed because of her age and sex. Taneesha could not explain why she felt marginalised because of her gender but assumed it to be so.

The age difference between Taneesha and her manager was something she felt keenly, feeling his decisions to be outmoded and overly supportive of the institution rather than the student. Taneesha felt constantly ignored and marginalised by her older, male manager in meetings, explaining that he may have felt undermined by her contributions. Taneesha's perception was that being assertive and outspoken was not consistent with her manager's expectations of someone of her age and gender. Taneesha felt that her contributions may have been outside the norms of gendered behaviour, and this may have been the cause of conflict between them.

Sandra related her negative feelings about the meetings she attended in her role as parent. The female authority figure chairing the meeting constantly referred to her as 'mum' instead of using her name. Sandra felt this was used in meetings with professionals to marginalise her and 'put her in her place'. Only when Sandra finally objected strongly at a number of meetings did these linguistic assumptions begin to change.

Louise, too, encountered what may be regarded as gendered assumptions, when advised by authority not to be 'overly emotional' when discussing issues in meetings with authority figures. Louise was accustomed to dealing with professionals in meetings from her previous career and not daunted by the process. Burke *et al.* (2007) raise the issue of gender and connections between how a subject perceives their own identity, and how, in turn, they are perceived by others.

Burke *et al.* (2007, p. 27) note that 'higher status' actors of all genders, who hold some kind of authoritative position through training, education or status,

are more able to easily communicate through applying relevant skills and strategies, so affirming their self-identity. Burke *et al.* also note some gender differences regarding communication strategies. Both Louise and Emily, in their interviews, reflected Burke *et al.,* in that that, unlike men, women appeared to effectively adopt the communication strategies of turn-taking and back-channelling (that is, signalling that one is listening) to assert authority. Women seemed to be more inclined to use verbal or physical signs to gain attention and assert their authority than were men. Such strategies were not seen to be as effective when adopted by men. It was unclear whether these strategies used by women were simply a response to competing for equal gender recognition within a group.

How different genders perceive and respond in a group often reflect the views of wider society and can lead to discrimination and marginalisation (Burke *et al.*, 2007). They note that the task performance of women can be underrated by group members even when their self-views are high, whereas men's task performance often reflects their own self-views. What is clear is that a subject's own perception of their identity needs to reconcile wider society perceptions and the resources available to adopt or adapt appropriate strategies. Such strategies inform a sense of self.

8.7 Sense of self

The inner, heterotopic self that inhabits the external world is integrally bound up with a subject's sense of who they are and what they care about (Scott, 2021). Participants acted in hope, continually reflecting upon their prior understandings. Outcomes for participants from speaking freely and frankly was often difficult to quantify, and disappointments were common. Euripides (1957, p. 209) states that when 'sorrows bite' and actions come to nought, such experiences work to inform judgement and identity. Barad (2007, p. 26) describes this process as the 'dynamics of changing topologies of space, time and matter' – an ongoing process, where a subject is continually configured, re-configured and reworked through interaction and relationship.

Arendt (1998) notes that a life without speech and action is a limited life. Through speech and action, the unique distinctiveness of each subject is witnessed as character. Volition (Rand, 1979) enables a subject to use critical

faculties, responding with either acceptance or rejection of knowledge. The dilemma faced by most participants was always between speaking out freely and frankly, risking possible negative consequences, or remaining silent. Whether as employee, student or parent, participants risked good relations with their managers, colleagues or a gatekeeper by speaking out freely and frankly.

Vygotsky (1981) noted that the relational role played by verbal discourse enables a subject to think and act. In this respect, Sue and Sandra found their interactions with school authority figures became easier after they had grown more familiar with the language and terminology used by educational professionals. Narjis listened carefully to the language used by her school-age children and developed similar skills to achieve positive results when interacting with authority. These newly learnt skills proved effective for developing a non-threatening form of critical questioning with education professionals.

The language used by educational professionals reinforced a relational divide felt by participants that inhibited their confidence to speak out freely and frankly. Confusing verbal and written discourse is often present in exchanges with authority. Stubbs (1983) points to the indirection often contained in such discourse, which manifests in what is said and what is meant, bound up with multiple layers of meaning held by different subjects. As Halliday (1986) points out, language has an active potential, with many meaningful possibilities. The act of language, being performed in relation to a particular context or relationship with others, can be ideational, interpersonal and textual. Thought, language and meaning all actively combine to inform identity and understanding of self.

Subjects are, as Butler (1997, p. 2) states, constituted in terms of being ‘linguistic beings’ shaped and moulded through experiences of language. Corker and French (1999) illustrate this further by describing how concepts are socially created through the use of terms in text and speech, over time, coming to reinforce what becomes ‘normal’. The discourses encountered contribute to an understanding of self, enabled by Foucault’s (1990) concept of power relations as a multiplicity of forces.

Foucault (1988c) notes that all actions involve relationship with reality and relationship with self – actions involving moral boundaries, consequences and goals, requiring one to act upon self, to monitor, transform and test, work

towards constituting and re-constituting a subject. This occurs through relationship, reflection, self-knowledge and self-examination, contributing to what Foucault (1997, p. 262) describes as creating oneself as a ‘work of art’. The next section further examines and explores issues connected with relationship.

8.8 Relationship, strength and dimension

Butler (2005) describes the constitution of a subject, the essence of what might be referred to as the personal ‘I’, as having no story of its own that is not also the story of relation, a story that includes multiple relations to prevailing societal norms. Conformity to these norms can be influenced and internalised by fear of punishment or consequences. All participants expressed this fear in seeking to avoid the stigma of being a troublesome parent, student or employee.

Foucault (1988c) looked beyond simply fear of punishment, preferring to view the formation of the subject from a perspective of historical processes, evolving and unfolding over generations, that come to influence norms of societal behaviour. He recognised that at any given time in history, the subject is partly restrained by prevailing societal norms. In common with Tolstoy, Foucault (1997) regarded the control exerted by institutional and governmental agencies as impoverishing, rather than promoting relationship between subjects.

Within these restrictions, Foucault (2007) gives the subject credibility for being inventive and influential within the boundaries of prevailing societal norms. Foucault discusses a subject’s ability to deviate from what authority declares as truth, describing it as ‘an anchoring point in the problem of certainty’ (p. 46). Such an ‘anchoring point’ can be observed in participant stories, in which they simultaneously appear to conform to the norms expected, whilst also, deviating from those norms in acts of resistance.

Conformity and defiance can, similarly, be observed in the actions of Tolstoy when setting up his experimental schools in 1860s Russia. Tolstoy’s approach to schooling (Eikhenbaum, 1982) sought to work within government and societal norms, whilst simultaneously, exercising considerable deviation. Maude (1987) reminds us that Tolstoy’s experimental approaches to education constantly brought him into conflict with the Russian government.

For Foucault (2007, p. 47), such actions can be explained in terms of ‘critique’, emerging from interrelated relationships involving elements of power, truth and the individual. It is through ‘critique’, Foucault (2007) maintains, that a subject gives themselves the right to reassess the prevailing societal norms in what he describes as ‘the art of voluntary defiance or insubordination’ (p. 47). In doing so, the subject becomes ‘intractable, difficult to manage or control’. Participants often avoided openly questioning or challenging the norms and expectations of those in authority. Nevertheless, they acted in ways that did challenge authority, or what they regarded as meaningless policy and procedures, by asserting their identity and adopting strategies to communicate their feelings or ‘truths’ toward authority.

Davis and Love (2017, p. 500) assert that identity, and understanding of self, develop through positions of ‘strength’ or ‘dimension’. Strength is defined as acting from a position of surety to identify or adjust a set of meanings, and ‘dimension’ is assuming a submissive position, where a subject experiences a less assertive, task-related role (thus describing most participants in this study).

The status of the participants, their past experiences and positions in their hierarchies all impact upon how identity may be understood and perceived. Louise had more elements of ‘strength’ as she had already attained a confident professional identity within her own area of expertise before interacting with school authority figures. Davis and Love (2017, p. 497) suggest that having this prior self-confidence helped Louise to maintain ‘identity stability’ in confrontations with school authority figures.

Louise continued to speak freely and frankly, despite opposition, and was confident enough to enlist outside support through becoming active in a parent pressure group. Despite her initial feelings of lacking professional knowledge in an educational sphere, Louise utilised her existing professional skills of negotiation and sought out other professionals to increase her knowledge of the education sector. Due to her prior experiences, Louise was able to avoid much of the self-doubt and negative reflection that other participants reported when identifying the opportunities and pitfalls in their encounters with school institutions.

Foucault (1980b) and Castellani (1999) assert that the individual is both an outcome and a process through which strategies of power emerge. Louise

adapted professional skills to inform her strategies towards authority. Participant memories and experiences occurred within educational contexts. The stories related were also shaped and affected by the spaces within which these stories played out, as is discussed in the next section.

8.9 Foucault, Tolstoy and the influence of educational spaces

The influence of educational spaces has a direct effect upon the participants' abilities to speak freely and frankly. The nature of schooling is that it is often practised in a dedicated and regularised institutional space, with its own rules and enforced expectations. The inflexibility of such spaces can contribute to anxiety and stress, which impact upon the ability of users to speak freely and frankly.

Each educational space in which participants were involved had a recognised hierarchy of control, often giving rise to participant frustration.

Louise, Sue and Sandra, in their stories, refer to frustrations arising from difficulties conversing with gatekeepers who would not take responsibility for resolving issues affecting their children. Sharon referred to the uncertainty of being able to control information once passed up through a school hierarchy and feared being misunderstood. Sandra reported feeling intimidated when called into formal meetings with professionals who sat around a large boardroom table.

Handy and Aitken (1990) state that the need to control and regulate use of space is an important function of an institutional context. They argue that institutional needs often contribute to conflict with both students and parents as it is, 'hard to be friend, judge and guard-dog at the same time' (p.39). Wearmouth *et al.* (2013) also recognises the need for institutions to be more humane places, where emphasis is upon the individual, rather than the institution's need for order, calm, routine and predictability. Younge (2001) also highlights the effect of space, noting that most school buildings in the UK were designed on nineteenth-century lines and are often not conducive to enabling interaction but designed more for efficient operation.

Foucault (1991a) charts the development of school spaces to illustrate how they train, control and influence children and their parents. Tolstoy also recognised

the controlling nature of school spaces (Baudouin, 1923; Murphy, 1992). Service user relationships are also impacted by the spaces they inhabit (Roffey, 2011; te Riel, 2006; Noddings, 1984; 1991; 2003).

Various kinds of spaces or 'heterotopias' (Foucault, 2000, p. 175) can co-exist alongside, and within, a main space. Such heterotopias can be found within mainstream educational provisions and although different, also have common goals. Robertson (2015; 2016) describes such a semi-autonomous, heterotopic space operating within a large secondary school. Characteristic of this heterotopia were interactions between service users that were more relaxed, less authoritarian and allowing more autonomy than in the parent institution. Once a learner crossed the threshold back into the main school space, students and teachers reverted to main school expectations of relationship. Teachers were, once again, addressed as 'Sir' or 'Miss', and codes of dress and behaviour enforced in accordance with main school expectations.

Foucault (2000, p. 175) draws attention to these types of spaces and their (often) contradictory natures. Spaces can be 'public' or 'private,' 'family' or 'social', 'leisure' or 'work'; each space defined and bounded by different rules, understandings and relationships and 'laden with qualities' and perceptions that shape speech, action and thinking. Spaces can be 'utopian' in nature, and exist only in the consciousness of people's aspirations, hopes and dreams. Space can also be seen in terms of private or 'internal space' rather than simply physical or public.

Tamboukou (2003, p. 128) discusses spaces that influence thinking and action. Space can, for example, be 'real or imagined,' 'metaphorical', 'reflexive' or 'gendered'. Space can also function as a 'utopian' influence in which thoughts of freedom and control can safely be played out. Within an institutional space, students may experience 'barriers' and 'obstacles' to their thinking and learning that impact upon their experience.

Space is widely recognised as influencing voice and action. Massey (2005) notes that space acts as a setting against which a dynamic juxtaposition of events and people occur. Giddens (1990) cited in Barker and Jane (2016, p. 516) distinguishes 'place' (describing face-to-face encounters) from 'space' (an abstract idea relating to connections between absent others). Both place and space function as containers for social action and compositional aspects of

human behaviour. Participants spoke of their expectations of ‘space’, often informed by government legislation, wrongly leading them to believe that institutions would welcome their voice.

Mahon (1992, p. 148) notes Foucault’s ‘spatial obsessions’ in issues of power and knowledge regarding the effects of rank, partition and discipline. The ‘tools’ of this analysis, drawn from Nietzsche’s ‘will to truth’ (Foucault, 1980, p. 65) pose questions concerning the effects of relations of power within a given space. Giddens (1984, p. 513) argues that understanding of human activity in each space is ‘fundamental’ to analysing cultural life.

Tolstoy was extremely critical of the school spaces he visited across Europe. Both Tolstoy and Bernard Shaw (Greenwood, 1975; Troyat, 1967) were critical of regimented, coercive spaces. Shaw (1914, p. xxii) declaring that ‘there is nothing on earth so horrible as a school’, making comparison with freedom and coercion in a prison. For Tolstoy, creating a space within which to foster and facilitate a free, collegiate and mutually supportive community was especially important for learning.

The school spaces Tolstoy and his teachers created in their experimental schools of the 1860s, in Yasnaya Polyana, recognised the need for relaxed spaces for students to assert their autonomy (Mittal, 1966). Only when a student ‘feels right’ can they ‘behave right’ (Faber and Mazlish, 2013, p. 12) and thus, attain an appropriate mood to ‘learn right’. Lilge, (1969) suggested that what concerned Tolstoy was that a schooling space offered an environment that met the ‘natural need spontaneously expressed’ by the learner (Murphy, 1992, p. 89).

Within Tolstoy’s twelve schools (Steiner, 1914, p. 159) ‘perfect liberty was the watchword’ with learners free to come and go at will. Tolstoy (1904) describes the importance of allowing full expression of voice and learner autonomy.

According to Smith (1983), his experiments in teaching and operating schools were influential in later libertarian approaches that sought to establish more humane schooling spaces. Holt (1972; 1977; 1983; 1984; 1989) wrote extensively about children’s learning and the influences upon quality and effectiveness of learning in school spaces. Goodman (1962; 1964) and Dennison (1970) also criticised state-maintained approaches to schooling, and Levy (2016) described them as ‘ill designed for human flourishing’ (p. 311).

Martinez (2017) states that to enhance creative freedom, it is necessary to spurn the negative influences that arise from arbitrary authority and coercive power wherever possible. Martinez points out that a democratic education can only be made possible if it is receptive to the needs of those it wishes to educate. Tolstoy and later 'libertarians' sought to set in motion alternative educational spaces that fostered and encouraged greater awareness of self and a more humane, less coercive approach to education.

Knight (2011) highlights the significant difference in student attitudes and engagement when taken out of their institutional spaces into more natural environments. Thoms (2003) advocates for the transformative influence that natural green space can have upon people and Mortlock (1989; 2009; 2011) highlights the impact of green space upon learning and emotional development.

How space is defined and operates in alternative education provisions constitutes a unique feature of the education space (Hamm, 2014). Hamm interviewed teachers and students from mainstream and alternative educational provisions in Germany and Ireland in his study of ritualised practices. Alternative education provisions were characterised by renunciation of coercion and the promotion of student autonomy. Such alternative provisions sought to create and organise a space within which students were able to speak freely and frankly, satisfying their needs for freedom of movement, spontaneous self-expression, independent time management and friendships (Hamm, 2014).

Burke and Grosvenor (2005) interviewed students on their experiences of schooling. Common themes of freedom, autonomy, choice and comfort were liberally raised. Students regularly cited their lack of control over learning and the custodial purposes of schooling, their opinions of school spaces mirroring those of the nineteenth century, documented by Humphries (1984). Wearmouth *et al.* (2013, p. 322) discuss the regimented and timetabled organisation of learning, necessary for efficient institutional movement of bodies, and proscribed curriculum as contributing to feelings of vulnerability and inferiority.

Tolstoy (1911) and other libertarian thinkers (Smith, 1983) regarded institutional approaches to be at odds with natural learning and motivation. Refusal to accept institutional restrictions can lead to students being labelled negatively (Wearmouth *et al.*, 2018), with the seat of the 'problem' being shifted from the institution to the individual (Fredrickson and Cline, 2009; Soan, 2004). Foucault

(1991a) discusses the ways in which such ideas become normalised and accepted through disciplines like sociology and psychology, and so influence how teaching and learning continues to be organised and practised.

Holt (1984) argues that from an early age, a child absorbs cultural messages within the spaces they inhabit, discouraging them from speaking out freely and frankly or complaining. Holt describes the artificial learning space of the classroom as an example of how children, from an early age, simply must 'put up with' the experience of being in regulated and strictly controlled social situations. Students are coerced to interact with others and learn whatever is deemed appropriate. This process, Holt describes as the 'fiction' (Holt, 1984, p. 284) communicated to children from an early age that 'school is a wonderful place, and they will love every minute of it'.

Tolstoy and Holt (1984) advocated learning guided by the innate curiosity of the child, thereby building up a personal 'mental model of reality' (p. 293) without fear or guilt.

Hentoff and McPhee (1966) maintained that reality, for many children, is that coercion, whether kindly done or harshly applied, results in fear. Fear of failure, fear of being kept back, fear of looking stupid, fear of non-approval. Fear is inseparable from coercion (Holt, 1984) and therefore, not productive or conducive to effective learning. How space is organised and administered can, therefore, either facilitate or inhibit effective learning and free and frank speech.

8.10 Further connections and concluding thoughts

Tolstoy (1968, p. 91) declares that some of the most powerful 'weapons' an individual possesses are thought and expression. Yet, he reflects, there are real barriers that place themselves in the way of free and frank expression. Subjects may feel bound to the people they are engaged with or reluctant to cause upset or offence. Inhibiting factors can also be anxiety about reputation or losing a profitable position, all of which may disturb the peacefulness of their situation or incur negative consequences. Tolstoy (1968) longed for the day when people can feel free to express their truth, to speak what they think, thereby inspiring new thinking in others.

The participants in this study have shown that whilst the fear of consequences is ever present, inhibiting free and frank conversation, they, nevertheless, find

ways to express themselves through what I have termed ‘technologies of truth-telling’. Wetherell and Mohanty (2010, p. 207) identify the context of schooling as being a place where identities are formed through a sense of ‘what we are not’ as well as notions of how others perceive us. Understanding of identity and the development of self-image contribute to how a subject understands, feels and acts. Subjects develop strategies, or technologies, of outer compliance toward authority that may not always coincide with their feelings. Similarly, in dealings with others, a subject may access a variety of strategies of resistance to divert, disagree or influence.

One effective form of resistance can be the use of silence to communicate feelings, intentions or actions. Gandhi (2000) writes that silence allowed him to grow and aided his quest for truth. However, Bondurant (1988) argues that silence makes little sense when it is necessary to speak out. Foucault (1997) reminds us that there always exist, within human relationships, a wide range of strategies or technologies that can be adopted to act in the presence of power.

Participants did not find the process of acting easy, but in diverse ways, were able to adopt various direct or indirect strategies to communicate and exert their voice.

Tolstoy’s wife, Sonya (Tolstoy, 2009, p. 280) recalled in her diary that Tolstoy, himself, practised a ‘murderous new habit’ of cold and stubborn silence to communicate resistance. Silence, too, can be a strategy or technology adopted (Satterthwaite *et al.*, 2008) through fear of expressing opinions or having lost confidence that one will be heard.

Illich (2012) maintains that resistance to authority within a school context often occurs because of the imposition of one person’s judgement, or will, determining what, when and how another must learn. Foucault, Tolstoy and Illich all regarded a school system built and ordered upon compliance to be an impeding obstacle, interfering with freedom to learn effectively. Tolstoy and Illich believed strongly in a noncoercive pedagogy that emphasised freedom, choice and natural learning. They felt that education based upon these principles had the potential to facilitate a less hierarchical and autocratic approach to school organisation that would allow learners more autonomy in what, when and how they learnt.

A more liberal approach (Mill, 2006) has the potential to facilitate learners, workers and parents to assume more responsibility and embolden them to speak out freely and frankly. Liberal systems of education (Miller, 2002) have not always been favoured by society, having had a brief renaissance in the 1960s. Presently, they manifest mostly in small, independent, democratic institutions outside of government control. Such schools are often referred to as 'democratic', characterised by approaches to learning that allow self-directed learner autonomy, where students and parents have enhanced freedom of choice and voice.

Tolstoy's approach to education (Smith, 1983), and promotion of autonomy, rejected techniques of coercion or extrinsic rewards. Instead, it relied upon developing a close relationship between student and teacher. More personalised approaches to teaching and learning (Noddings, 1992; 2003; 2007; te Riel, 2006; 2007; Raywid, 1994; 1997; 1999; 2001; Pykett, 2009) promote the importance of relationship. Such approaches have the potential to reduce hierarchical structures, facilitating the possibility of more open, freer, communication.

Chirkov (2009) upholds this idea with his self-determination theory. He regards autonomy as essential to effective learning and states that hierarchy and external control inhibit freedom. Foucault (1997) points out that liberation from control and hierarchy is not, in itself, sufficient to attain a measure of freedom, as society expectations can lead to self-imposed influences upon thinking and action. Developing an awareness of possibilities through adopting technologies of truth-telling has the potential for all to exert power and influence.

The starting point for doing this is one in which a subject should be able to feel comfortable and confident that their voice will be encouraged and not lead to negative consequences for themselves or others. Mulgan (2006, p. 201) suggests that such reform fuels the under-used 'muscle' of hope, which only 'twitches into life' when welcome changes can occur through the exercise of autonomy and voice.

Chapter 9: Conclusions

9.1 Introduction

This thesis set out to investigate the effects on participants of their encounters with speaking freely and frankly to authority, through the lenses of Foucault, Tolstoy, Berlant and Barad. Through this study, my intention is to inform deeper understanding of the schooling process. This thesis suggests a need for more tolerance in allowing students, workers in education and parents to have the freedom to speak freely and frankly to those who hold positions of authority.

The issues raised by participant stories highlight complex and 'wicked' problems (Cudworth and Hobden, 2018, p. 72) concerning the nature of institutional schooling. Solving such issues across different institutions requires a rethinking of the purpose of education and contemplating 'models of multiple alternative futures'. 'Top down' notions of hierarchy and control, driving policy and curriculum, often ignore the complexity of issues. Opening wider conceptualisation of thinking about the purposes of schooling, enabling service users to feel less inhibited and more engaged, would facilitate new insight, ideas and engagement. This chapter seeks to revisit and connect with the research questions outlined in Chapter 1 and finish with my personal reflections on completing the thesis.

9.2 Revisiting the research questions

- What effect does speaking freely and frankly have upon the individual?
- How does thinking about fearless speech in education contribute to issues in education and social justice?
- How can the experiences of speaking freely and frankly be interpreted through the lens of Foucault, Tolstoy, Berlant and Barad to inform the process of schooling?
- What are the experiences encountered by those who speak freely and frankly within an educational context?

The first two research questions concern the effect upon participants of speaking freely to authority and the experiences encountered. Participants have told their stories of how their experiences of dealing with educational institutions have impacted their lives. Participants dealt with their experiences in diverse

ways using technologies of truth-telling to communicate their feelings, even when feeling powerless or confused about how best to act. Each participant was very keen to reflect, and join in, on an opportunity to relate their experiences. Each expressed a desire to be listened to and respected and hoped for what Martinez (2017, p. 280) termed ‘a more participative decision-making process’.

Participant stories, as Carr (1991) notes, reflect upon life experiences as an active process that everyone engages in from time to time; a process that helps to make comprehensible both present and future. Each participant is both ‘actor and author of their story’, which is influenced by an ‘amalgam of roles and stories’ played out in life’s interactions. The stories that participants relate from their present and past experiences function as ‘grit’ or sediment, informing their current thinking and action.

Foucault (2000, p. 221) questions how a subject can objectively relate their story, while at the same time, ‘penetrate the density of things and give it meaning’. Similarly, the listener, as Foucault (2000, p. 270) points out, must try to take account of each story’s context, listening carefully, ‘trying to intercept beneath the words’ a ‘more essential discourse’. Conscious of this advice, I have attempted to represent the views and perspectives of each participant in recounting their experiences. Participant stories may, at first, appear prosaic, however, Carr (1991) reminds us that they are, nonetheless, important in navigating our way in life, writing that ‘our lives may not be works of art or things of beauty, but we muddle through, nevertheless, to get things done’ (p. 90).

Being able to speak one’s mind freely and frankly to authority is as important to everyday life as it is to the intellectual’s vocation of critique. Miller (1993, p. 316) quotes Foucault as talking of the ‘unrelenting practice of ‘critique’ and challenge toward those who wield power’. This is echoed by Mill (2006) and May (2023), who declare that to silence an individual bent on speaking their truth, is to rob a subject of their ability to gain a ‘clearer perception’ of the truth of things. Silencing of discussion, Mill suggests, is an assumption of infallibility, with May (2023) recognising the damage and hurt caused to relationships.

Participants in this study have demonstrated that whilst they often did feel discouraged or silenced, they also exerted power through silence. A silent response is often characterised in terms of being powerless or oppressed

(Parsons and Chappell, 2020). Whilst this is not to be denied, participants in this study also used silence as a technology to challenge or influence events. This can be seen, particularly, in the student accounts where silence is used proactively. As adult workers in education, and as parents, each participant chose silence to make their points, or as a catalyst for reflection and action.

There is, as Mill (2006, p. 43) states, ‘always some other explanation possible of the same facts’. What is, however, very striking is that although participants spoke of feeling powerless, frustrated and ignored, they were still able to find strategies to influence their situations. The stories related by participants in their attempts to speak freely and frankly to authority give insight into these experiences.

Witherell and Noddings, (1991, p. 69), describe the stories people tell as, ‘the masks through which we can be seen’. It is through the ‘flood and swirl of thought’ that others can glimpse a person’s thinking and experiences, the value of story acting to ‘mediate the space between the self that tells, the self that told and the self that listens’.

The stories we tell comprise part ‘archaeological reconstructions’ (Baudouin, 1923, p. 45) and part how we see ourselves, or how we would like to be seen. Listening to other people’s stories (Baudouin, 1923) aids examination of personal understandings and thinking. Darwall (1977, p. 138) suggests that respecting what others say involves a ‘complex relationship’ comprising two aspects of respect – ‘recognition respect’, that is, towards the law, institutions, positions, roles and, at a basic level, towards all persons; and ‘appraisal respect’, whereby, one personally chooses to bestow respect upon another whom they hold in high esteem. Participants were often disappointed in their experiences of interacting with authority figures and institutions who, they felt, should command their ‘recognition respect’. Participants did, however, bestow ‘appraisal respect’ where individuals or institutions had listened and acted positively towards them.

Wietmarschen (2021) urges society to be less authoritarian and, like Tolstoy, calls upon institutions and governments to centre more upon participation and democratic deliberation in terms of decision-making. One step towards this would be to pay more heed to the concept of parrhesia, outlined by Foucault (2011b), to give individuals an uninhibited voice to speak their truth to authority.

To achieve this, Foucault (2011b) recommends turning to the example of Socrates. Whether as adult or child, the focus needs be on ‘care for self’, in which one is guided by the inner voice of reason. The implications of this for individuals are to constantly question and reflect upon their experiences and seek out sources of information and knowledge. These sources, Socrates declares (Plato, 2004; Taylor, 1960), whether read, heard, seen or taught, have the potential to function as midwives, delivering innovative ideas and thinking.

Participants achieved changes in their relations and thinking with regard to authority figures. Peters (1971, p. 59) points to the dangers of authority figures simply ‘taking a hatchet’ and ‘trampling upon the inchoate formulations’ of those they teach or serve. Authority figures should be sensitively open towards those who question and speak freely and frankly, as this is a natural element within the learning process.

In ancient Greek society (Arendt, 1998, p. 97), a ‘labouring fight’ to have one’s need to ‘speak and be heard’ was acknowledged. Such daily challenges can be interpreted as ‘heroic fights’, as in Greek mythology, where overwhelming odds of power or authority are resisted through courage and strength. Speaking freely and frankly can be a risky process (Foucault, 2001) involving the need for great courage in speaking out.

None of the participants in this study would claim to be heroic or possess courage or strength. Each was motivated to perform acts of persistent and ‘relentless repetition’ toward authority in pursuit of justice for self or others (Arendt, 1998, p. 101). The consequences of using one’s freedom to engage with others ‘entangles’ a person in thought patterns as ‘active doer’ and/or ‘victim’. Barad (2007) recognises these entanglements as having no singular cause or end points. The consequences of participant decisions to speak out freely and frankly function as uncontrolled ripples that emanate outward, having far-reaching effects.

For some participants, absence of voice was a stimulus to devising strategies to become more confident in dealing with professionals. Avoiding being labelled a ‘problem’ student, worker or parent led to adopting different strategies and registers. Participants experienced life changes, prompted by their interactions with authority, such as enrolment on degree studies to strengthen their voices with professionals, an experience they described as akin to ‘bildung’ (Parsons

and Chappell, 2020, p. 470), the German tradition of self-cultivation or transformation of self through education.

Mill (2006, p. 23) raises the injurious nature of silencing expression in that it deprives one of abilities to ‘exchange error for truth’ or develop a ‘clearer perception of truth’. Being dissuaded from speaking out freely and frankly for fear of consequences can involve being caught in ‘inaction’ (Barad, 2007, p. 395), leading to ‘endless reflection’ or ‘watching life from a distance’, which relates to ‘impasse’ (p. 200).

Fearing real or imagined consequences often led to inaction for participants. Barad (2007) refers to an Alice Fulton poem in which taking account of the entangled experiences of life, whilst being responsive to possibilities, is vital to wellbeing for self and others. Fulton talks of ‘faith in fact’ contributing to creating ‘those facts’ and that ‘nothing will unfold for us’ unless we first take steps to ‘meet the universe halfway’ (Barad, 2007, p. 397).

Here lies the importance of allowing free and frank expression in communicating a ‘truth’ to those in authority. Participants had an unswerving belief that their experiences were unjust. Through ‘entanglement’, Barad (2007, p. 234) illustrates that possibilities can be both ‘reconfigured and reconfiguring’ if institutions (May, 2023, p. 300) would only ‘allow for difference’ and divergence in thinking. Thus, avoiding what Mill (2006) maintains as expecting a mechanical response to authority.

Entangled experiences of thought and action also play out in Berlant’s (2011) concept of impasse. Participants’ experiences of attempting to speak out freely and frankly to authority left them, initially, shocked, giving rise to inner turmoil. In one of her novels, Rand (2007, p. 64) mirrors these initial feelings of confusion and stress in dealing with their situations, ‘She did not know why; she could not define her own feeling; she knew only there was, in her feeling, a scream of protest against injustice’.

Participants often experienced the aftermath of encounters with authority as a loss of traction, frustration and inner reflection. Old sureties and faith in ‘the system’ dissolved, resulting in them embarking upon new processes, being ‘reconfigured and reconfiguring’ of both thoughts and actions. Foucault (1991, p. 388) describes thought as allowing one to ‘step back from a way of acting or

reacting'. In so doing, reflecting Berlant's process of impasse (Berlant, 2011,) allowing a subject time to question meaning, conditions and goals.

Foucault (1990, p. 92) recognises this process of impasse or entangled thoughts and actions as coming together to form a 'multiplicity of force relations' arising from 'ceaseless struggles and confrontations'. Such struggles act to transform, strengthen or reverse previous thinking. From such entanglements arises the potential to create 'conditions of possibility' (Foucault, 1990, p. 93), enabling new thinking and making possible new modes of action. For each participant, interaction with others, coupled with periods of impasse and reflection, helped them to make sense of their situations, as well as think through and plan a new course of action.

New thinking or 'revaluing currency' (Foucault, 2011b, p. 227) occurred for participants as it did for characters in Tolstoy's short stories and novels described by Jones (1978). Each participant responded to authority in diverse ways, reassessing their thinking, considering possibilities and developing strategies. An element of loneliness or sadness, when engaged in this process, can also be discerned from some participant accounts. Feelings of aloneness are difficult to define (Alison and Alison, 2020) as what is problematic to the extrovert can be beneficial to the introvert. Participant aloneness was experienced as a disconnect from their working relationships with others and (May, 2023) a mistrust in institutional authority.

This was most noticeable in student recollections and those of participants working in education settings. Arendt (1998, p. 214) refers to the 'biological rhythm of labour' bringing individuals into relationship with fellow students or workers. Disconnect can occur through inability to connect effectively with others, thereby creating distance (Alison and Alison, 2020). Some participants, initially, felt an overwhelming individual sense that they were somehow lacking, or at fault in their reactions to the stressful incidents they experienced. Alison and Alison (2020) explain that social relationships with others that include 'competitiveness, politicking, put-downs and unfairness' all contribute to feelings of disconnection (p. 21).

Parents began to look outside themselves for help, support and guidance to cope with their institutions. Louise eventually became highly active in a local parent support group. Sue's struggles to overcome difficulties with authority,

initially, led to feelings of loneliness and distance from others, even in her own family, but she continued to seek justice from authorities, encountering difficult, challenging and stressful experiences. Participants found that connecting with more empathetic others helped to define relationships (Noddings, 2007) and redefine thinking.

The process of connection can be challenging for the subject and have unpredictable outcomes. How to govern oneself (Foucault, 2011a) requires self-knowledge, understanding of one's 'defects' (Sennett, 1998, p. 130) and a continuous process of self-monitoring, helped by input from others. Berlant's impasse (2011) involves just such a process, requiring on-going self-involvement, maintenance of self, fidelity to self, often motivated by a belief in cause. For each participant, it also required an openness to areas within themselves that could be strengthened. Some participants adopted a different register, gaining qualifications, reaching out to charity or other information sources.

Participants often displayed great courage in the face of authority. Tolstoy describes courage (Tussing-Orwin, 2002) as the ability to suppress feelings of fear in favour of a higher feeling. Aristotle (1976, p. 103) identifies a 'field of fear and confidence' where the 'mean' is courage. Braidotti (2011, p. 223) points out that 'desire and fear' are the motive power of 'scientific quest' and equally, they are motivators for the individual. Each participant took risks in confronting or subverting authority figures they encountered.

Sennett (1998) describes the process of risk-taking as one necessary to rejuvenating and recharging one's energies. It implies strategies of 'daring', 'bravado' or 'confidence' on the part of the risk taker (p. 80). Participants found that taking risks can have negative consequences and that authority figures were quick to react adversely to unaccustomed challenges to their sense of self-importance. Aristotle (1976, p. 127) explains that if a person feels no fear, then their actions cannot be described as courageous. What was common to all participants was the acceptance of risk when dealing with authority figures.

None of the participants were keen to say or do anything that threatened to upset their relationships with authority figures, but where a participant engaged in risky behaviour to achieve 'noble', or 'worthy' ends for themselves, Aristotle (1976, p. 131) describes such actions as 'moral courage'.

Expectations played a part in informing the actions of participants, who felt that students, parents and employees were entitled to voice their feelings and concerns and seek justice. The reality for participants was quite different, however, as they experienced opposition and barriers to their efforts in voicing what they had been led to believe was an entitlement. Joranger (2018) describes such experiences as the product of a society in which mainstream psychology has underpinned the values, assumptions and norms of dominant institutions at the expense of individual social welfare concerns. Joranger (2018) in a critique of mainstream psychology indicates that the needs of an institution are quite different, and often contrary to that of the individual who has been led to regard equality and freedom as their right.

Wearmouth *et al.* (2013) echoes these themes in illustrating that the needs of a school institution can be quite different from the needs of both students and parents. Similarly, Hazlitt (1901, p. 359) describes the needs of a corporate body in relation to the ’delicacy and decorum’ of the individual as being a powerful influence. Tolstoy (2009) considered all human action as a conjunction of freedom and necessity. These tensions between the individual and institution contributed to participant expressions of exasperation with their authority interlocutors.

Participants always recognised the power and authority held by the representative of the institution as decision-maker or gatekeeper. Participants all perceived themselves to be at a disadvantage when speaking with those holding greater power than themselves, even though they were able to subvert or influence. Some participants lamented the futility and frustration of dealing with holders of power, who, themselves, declared impotence to affect any changes due to the hierarchical structures they inhabited.

Parent participants often felt that being outside of the school institution put them at a great disadvantage. Some participants, particularly, mentioned feeling like outsiders when dealing with school post holders and an unseen barrier separated them from being heard or taken seriously. Barad (2007, p. 175) notes that the meeting and interactions of two distinct entities lead to ‘causality’, which affected each as a result. This is what determines actions and thoughts filtered through myriad, entangled, prior thoughts and experiences.

When two people come together (Deleuze and Guattari, 2011), each attempts to understand the other's position whilst also considering their own. Cause and effect arise through these interactions (Barad, 2007) and contribute to understanding the other in terms of categorisation. Foucault (1980b) explains this in terms of each interlocutor seeking to recognise and place the other within their understanding of the truth they hold. For some participants, it became clear that they had been categorised as 'difficult' students, workers or mothers when they were not willing, simply, to comply with what the institution thought best.

Each participant expressed disappointment or anger that faith in their ideal of how authority should act towards them had been diminished. Berlant (2011) describes this disappointment as 'cruel optimism' (p. 24), a situation where a person's relationship to the ideal concept carried within them is compromised, giving rise to inner turmoil and introspection.

For some participants, their childhood encounters with their teachers had the effect of influencing, positively or negatively, their later adult attitudes. For each participant, though their prior ideals may have been compromised, there also grew from each experience more optimistic, centring moments.

Thurman (1980) describes such centring moments as having the potential to 'redefine, reshape and refocus our minds' (p. 85). Influential changes of thinking are evident in participant experiences, some becoming more empathetic themselves, gaining new skills or perspectives. Tolstoy, in his writings on education (Tolstoy, 1972; Pinch and Armstrong, 1982) recognised the challenges that face all individuals in attempting to harmonise their personal ideals with lived realities. For participants, it became problematic when their personal ideals did not easily harmonise with institutional requirements.

Apple (1990, p. vii) points out that one of the most fundamental questions in education is 'what knowledge is of most worth'? Apple highlights the ideological and political dimensions this question poses to ask a further question, 'whose knowledge is of most worth'? For Tolstoy, the answer to this lay within the learner themselves. For each participant, in any of their roles, their personal truth was paramount.

The second two research questions concern how participant experiences of speaking freely and frankly can be viewed through the lens of Foucault and

Tolstoy as well as contribute to issues of education and social justice. Tolstoy's writing on the process of schooling and education has at its heart, the necessity to recognise and promote the innate abilities and autonomy of every learner. Tolstoy regarded the new-born as possessing instincts for 'truth, beauty and goodness' (Pinch and Armstrong, 1982, p. 244) that become compromised and distorted as the child grows in the reality of worldly experiences.

Tolstoy regarded the imposition of pedagogies as hindering these innate instincts. He felt that teaching and learning should affirm what the child possesses at birth rather than trying to instil and impose a predetermined ideal. Krishnamurti (1990), similarly, declared that education should be concerned less with shaping the student into idealistic patterns and more with developing an 'integrated individual', enhancing their natural interests (p. 22).

For Tolstoy, concentration upon schooling should be about allowing the child to seek harmony with innate elements rather than ignore them at the expense of imposing a pedagogy of development. Berlant's 'cruel optimism', with its associated ideals and disappointments, mirrors Tolstoy's ideas of allowing and assisting the child to seek out ways and means to reconcile the areas of truth, beauty and goodness and achieve harmony through choice and freedom in what, when and how their learning is organised. These ideals were influential to later educationalists such as Holt (1972), Krisnamurti (1990), Meighan (1997), Gardner (2004; 2006), Robinson and Aronica (2016), Martinez (2017) and others who promote a more democratic approach to education.

Tolstoy's recognition of the need for individuals to reconcile ideals with lived realities extended to free and frank expression. Foucault (2001), in his wide-ranging historical account of parrhesia, raises awareness of the importance of facilitating free and frank exchanges between those of unequal power or status. Neither in ancient Greece, nor in the modern world, are speakers fully immune to suffering the wrath or indignation of a more powerful hearer. As noted by Young (2019, p. 15) in Chapter 1 of this thesis, obedience to authority from early schooling onwards inhibits development of the ability to speak up freely and frankly, being subject to the perceived need to please the teacher and institution.

Speaking out freely and frankly has always involved courage on the part of the speaker, especially when it may be received as unwelcome. Goldman (2009,

p. 56) reflects that leadership and authority struggle with ‘truth’ as opposed to ‘manufactured narrative’. Goldman suggests that leadership can be very selective about what it is willing to hear. Frost (2007) explains that when a speaker is dismissed, or encounters negative consequences for speaking out, their trust in authority is shattered and future relations impacted.

Participants found comfort in meeting others (Frost, 2007; Alford, 2002) who had suffered similar experiences. Not having their truths accepted or listened to was deeply impactful. Especially so when this was experienced with authority figures they had previously trusted and respected. Some participants described their understanding of democratic values (O’Hanlon, 2003) in terms of equality between themselves and the person in authority, that is, they began with an assumption that they had the right to speak out freely and frankly but found that this did not reflect their lived experiences of authority. Lipman-Blumen (1984) describes a deep-seated need of some who hold authority to seek all means to maintain it.

In her objectivist accounts of philosophy, Rand (1984; 2007) upholds the right of a subject, using reason, to achieve self-determination and individual expression. In her fictional novel, *Atlas shrugged*, (Rand, 2007, p. 199) declares that ‘contradictions do not exist’, advising instead, Aristotle’s’ advice to examine closely each premise – a subject being required to recognise a given situation as it is (Rand, 2007) rather than how they would like it to be.

Each participant found they needed to balance contradictions between what they wanted and how it might be received; contradictions being part of the human experience that need to be resolved in life. Tolstoy points out the contradictions between the declared objectives of schooling and what a child experiences in the process. The child seeks harmony between the understandings of truth, justice and goodness with which they entered the world and the realities of life. Tolstoy (1967) advocated his libertarian approach to schooling as one that would address these contradictions.

However, Foucault (2001) outlines the contradictions inherent in ancient Greek society in their adoption of democracy and the exercise of parrhesia. Whilst encouraging free and frank speech, the results may lead to difficult decision-making, or calling into question common unity or underlying justification of an institution.

Parrhesia, therefore, might better be regarded as a ‘personal attitude or quality’ (Foucault, 2001, p. 85) that a subject performs in pursuit of their personal needs to convey something of importance, rather than the exercise of a given right to speak out freely. In speaking out freely and frankly, a subject can exercise care for themselves, their own wellbeing or peace of mind in the hope that they may be listened to and heard.

To be more effective at speaking freely and frankly needs to be encouraged from an early age, through schooling, and fostered throughout life. This requires an understanding and acceptance from those in authority (May, 2023) of the value such a concept can have in creative problem-solving and decision-making. The freedom to exercise autonomy in schooling, and within adult hierarchies, would contribute to a more questioning and participative approach to problem-solving. Knowing that a parrhesiastic contract could be assured would help alleviate the fear of negative consequences for those in less powerful roles addressing authority.

Mill (2006) cautions against ignoring human nature by imposing mechanical uniformity and silencing self-expression, maintaining that genius can only ‘breathe freely in an atmosphere of freedom’ (p. 74) if it is not injurious to others. Allowing unhindered free and frank expression can lead to ‘new truths’ (Mill, 2006, p. 73) and a reassessment of previously held beliefs – a phenomenon that Foucault recognised in his work highlighting the importance of the ancient Greek concept of parrhesia, which offers something of value to every generation.

Combining Foucault’s parrhesia with Tolstoy’s emphasis on student freedom and autonomy has the potential to facilitate a more liberal approach to teaching and learning. May (2023) advocates a rethinking of the importance of service, where the individual is placed above that of the institution. This, however, would require a profound philosophical re-think concerning the purpose and process of schooling and education. The benefit for the learner and service users would be an increased focus upon learner need, rather than imposed institutional or political needs.

9.3 Personal reflections on completing the thesis

This final section of the chapter is a self-reflection about my work on this thesis; how I feel about it, the things that were enjoyable, or challenging, any aspects I might do differently and my thoughts on potential future research.

I have enjoyed bringing together participant experiences with the theoretical concepts of Foucault, Tolstoy, Berlant and Barad.

Tolstoy's nineteenth-century writings of his experiences of teaching and learning are both detailed and descriptive. When I first read them, I felt I could readily identify with his recollections of the learning stages and the difficulties and joys they gave rise to, as they were not so different from my own experiences of teaching.

Foucault's technologies and writing grew in importance and interest to me as I progressed in my study and understanding of his work. In particular, I am pleased to highlight issues concerning lack of voice and autonomy in schooling that I have observed from my own teaching career. I have also enjoyed the opportunities and insights the thesis has given me to delve into and pursue links and readings from classical studies and the wider humanities.

Challenging aspects of the thesis include times when I have struggled with refining my academic writing style and voice. As a part-time PhD candidate, it has been difficult fitting in study and research around full-time teaching. Unexpected personal issues were a further distraction. Foucault's philosophical concepts required much cognitive marination. I feel my thesis has only scratched the surface of full comprehension and application of Foucault's approach to questioning the workings of society. I am also aware that reliance upon English translations of both Foucault and Tolstoy may not, fully, do justice to their work.

Aspects I would approach differently in the thesis concern both structure and content. From the outset, I would begin to order material into chapters earlier than I did. I would also, now, be more confident in early exploration of my initial thoughts and observations of schooling and how these might be reflected in participant stories. A smaller theoretical base would allow for more detailed analysis, as would a closer examination of influences of gender and ethnicity. Equally, including the views of authority figures on their relations to, or

responses to, service users would also have been interesting. I have learnt so much, from travelling the journey of this thesis, concerning academic writing and research.

Potential future research could examine in more detail issues raised by participants into how authority functions in educational settings. The workings of educational institutions allow for little personal autonomy in choice of content or pedagogy. Further research into the opportunities afforded by more liberal or alternative forms of education could provide a useful basis from which to inform a more effective and inclusive system of education. Foucault's technologies provide a platform from which to acquire deeper understanding of the exercise of power by individuals and institutions. Silence, fear, resistance and parrhesia are especially linked to the concept of 'whistleblowing', which can be problematic for individual and institution alike. The concept of whistleblowing, however, is an important one and can be regarded as a moral barometer, a regulator of actions for both individual and institutions that is essential for a healthy society.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Participant overview

Transcript ID	Details
Emily	Female. Twenties. White. Two separate interviews recalling interactions with authority as a school student and employment in an education context.
Richard	Male. Twenties. White. Two separate interviews recalling recollections as a school student interacting with authority and as an employee in an education context.
Taneesha	Female. Mid/Late twenties. Black African origin. Two interviews. Recalling difficult workplace encounters as an adult in different education contexts.
Sharon	Female. Mid/late twenties. White. Employed in a school interacting with authority.
Sue	Female. Early forties. White. School context. Involving interactions with authority as a parent, a volunteer and employee.
Subira	Female. Forties. Black African origin recalling instances of interactions with authority employed in a school context.
Sandra	Female. Early forties. White. Parent experiences of authority in three different school contexts.
Louise	Female. Forties. White. Parent experiences of authority in two school contexts.
John	Male. Twenties. White. School experiences of authority as a student and employed in a school context.
Matthew	Male. Twenties. White. Recalling authority experiences as a student and as an employee in school contexts.
Narjis	Female. Fifties. Middle Eastern origin. Recalling experiences of authority as a school student and as a parent.
Rose	Female. Sixties. White. Recalling experiences of authority as a student and employee in school contexts.
Alisha	Female. Thirties. West Indian origin. Recalling experiences of authority as a school student and as a parent.
Ankita	Female. Forties. Mixed West Indian origin. Recalling experiences of authority as a school student and as a parent.

Mamoona	Female. Twenties. Asian origin. Recalling experiences as a school student and as a parent.
Abdul	Male. Thirties. Asian origin. Recalling experiences as a school student and employee working in education contexts.

Appendix B: Indication of question areas for semi-structured interviews

I want to gain understanding of the particular exclusionary, constraining or liberating discourses that are present in the narratives. To identify the extent to which individuals are able to play an active role in their relationship with both individuals and institutions; to consider and analyse the process of problematization of events involving 'frank and fearless' discourse.

- Can you recall the context of your recalled encounter e.g., place, time, etc.
- What were the precursors leading up to the event?
- What was the particular issue you felt strongly about?
- How can you best describe the form of language and the manner of delivery you used?
- Why did you feel a moral compunction or duty to speak out?
- What made you feel in anyway encouraged or enabled to express your views frankly?
- What was the response of the authority figure(s)?
- What was your response/reaction?
- To what extent was your relationship with the authority figure/institution changed?
- To what extent did your experience impact upon your learning in general?
- Were others involved?
- What were your reflections about the incident at the time?
- What are your reflections subsequently?
- In what way have your experiences influenced or informed your present thinking?
- Do you think that speaking 'freely and frankly' is well received by others?
- What did/have you learnt about yourself or others from your experiences of speaking 'freely and frankly'?
- How and why do you remember the events of speaking 'freely and frankly'?
- Did you know of others in the school who spoke 'freely and frankly'?
- What topics or areas did you feel constrained to speak out about? (before and after the event)
- Do you think it is easier for people today to speak 'freely and frankly'?

How can things be improved?

Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?

Appendix C: Areas of analysis/ordering of data:

Research Questions

- To explore the activity of speaking 'freely and frankly' to those in authority in a school context.
- To investigate who and in what circumstances a person can speak 'freely and frankly,' and what can be told.
- To investigate the consequences of speaking 'freely and frankly' and the role of power relations.
- To understand the importance for the individual of being able to speak 'freely and frankly.'
- To identify why and how such an activity can become a problem.
- To explore alternative approaches to schooling practices.

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Semi-Structured Interview Questions.

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Labov and Waletzky (1967) Six key elements of narrative (used to initially organise material)	
Abstract	Summary of the subject matter.
Orientation	Information about setting; time; place; situation; participants.
Complicating Action	What actually happened, what happened next (core of narrative).
Resolution	The result of the 'action'.
Evaluation	What the events mean to the narrator/point of the story.
Coda	Returns the speakers to their present, here-and-now situation/how it all ended.

⇩

	Influencing Theory – Foucault (1988b; 1997).	Brief Lay Explanation
1	Technologies of production which permit us to produce, transform, or manipulate things.	How and in what ways participants were able to change or influence their situation.
2	Technologies of sign systems which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification.	In what ways participants have understood/responded to their experiences.

3	Technologies of power that determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivising of the subject.	The way in which participants have perceived, experienced power relations and the effects.
4	Technologies of the self that permit individuals to affect their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations, on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality.	To what extent participants are/were able to use personal autonomy.

⇩

Organising themes/areas. (Foucault 1991; Tamboukou and Ball 2003)		What are the power relations, historical and cultural conditions and practices under scrutiny?
How has the subject interpreted and understood the meaning of the events?	1	
What are the multiple and contradictory practices that emerge?	4	
What are the repetitions, recurrences, or 'disappearances' in the material?	1,2,3,4.	
What are the unsaid issues or elements?	3,4.	
What are the contrasts, oppositions or counter-discourses that emerge?	3	
What are the spatial and social relations?	3	
What are the 'insignificant details'?	1,2,3,4.	
What kinds of practices are in evidence?	1,2,3,4.	
Self-evidences understood/not understood?	3	
What rules/institutional constraints were there?	1,2,3,4.	

The themes above were captured, analysed and reviewed for each interview transcript in the 'My Comments and Notes' box for each technology area on the grid below.

Appendix D – Labov and Waletzky's six key elements of narrative

Labov and Waletzky (1967) Six key elements of narrative (used to initially organise material)		**My comments**
Abstract	Summary of the subject matter.	
Orientation	Information about setting: time, place, situation, participants.	
Complicating Action	What happened, what happened next (core of narrative).	
Resolution	The result of the 'action'.	
Evaluation	What the events mean to the narrator/point of the story.	
Coda	Returns the speakers to their present, here-and-now situation/how it all ended.	

	Influencing Theory – Foucault (1997) Ethics	**Brief lay explanation**	**Organising themes/areas. (Tamboukou/Ball)** (What are the power relations, historical & cultural conditions & practices under scrutiny?)
1	**Technologies of production** which permit us to produce, transform, or manipulate things	How and in what ways participants were able to **change or influence** their situation.	• How has the subject interpreted and understood the meaning of the events? • What are the repetitions, recurrences, or 'disappearances' in the material? • What are the 'insignificant details? • What kinds of practices are in evidence? • Self-evidences understood/not understood? • What rules/institutional constraints were there?
My comments so far:			
2	**Technologies of sign systems** which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification	In what ways participants have **understood/responded** to their experiences.	• What are the repetitions, recurrences, or 'disappearances' in the material? • What are the 'insignificant details'? • What kinds of practices are in evidence? • Self-evidences understood/not understood? • What rules/institutional constraints were there?
My comments so far:			
3	**Technologies of power** which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject	The way in which participants have **perceived, experienced** power relations and the effects.	• What are the repetitions, recurrences, or 'disappearances' in the material? • What are the unsaid issues or elements? • What are the contrasts, oppositions or counter-discourses that emerge? • What are the spatial and social relations? • What are the 'insignificant details'? • Self-evidences understood/not understood? • What rules/institutional constraints were there?
My comments so far:			
4	**Technologies of the self** which permit individuals to effect their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations, on their own bodies, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.	To what extent participants are/were able to **use personal autonomy**.	• What are the multiple and contradictory practices that emerge? • What are the unsaid issues or elements? • What are the 'insignificant details'? • What kinds of practices are in evidence? • Self-evidences understood/not understood? • What rules/institutional constraints were there?
My comments so far:			

Appendix E – Approval letter

6th March 2018

Dear Graham,

Project Title:	**Doctoral Research Project Proposed title of thesis: Speaking 'freely' & 'frankly' in a school context: A Foucauldian approach to 'schooling'**
Principal Investigator:	**Prof Maria Tamboukou**
Researcher:	**Graham Robertson**
Reference Number:	**UREC 1718 31**

I am writing to confirm the outcome of your application to the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC), which was considered by UREC on **Wednesday 24 January 2018.**

The decision made by members of the Committee is **Approved**. The Committee's response is based on the protocol described in the application form and supporting documentation. Your study has received ethical approval from the date of this letter.

Should you wish to make any changes in connection with your research project, this must be reported immediately to UREC. A Notification of Amendment form should be submitted for approval, accompanied by any additional or amended documents: http://www.uel.ac.uk/wwwmedia/schools/graduate/documents/Notification-of-Amendment-to-Approved-Ethics-App-150115.doc

Any adverse events that occur in connection with this research project must be reported immediately to UREC.

Approved Research Site
I am pleased to confirm that the approval of the proposed research applies to the following research site.

Research Site	Principal Investigator / Local Collaborator
UEL Campuses	Prof Maria Tamboukou

Appendix F – Approved documents

Approved Documents

The final list of documents reviewed and approved by the Committee is as follows:

Document	*Version*	*Date*
UREC application form	2.0	26 February 2018
Consent form	1.0	28 November 2017
Appendix 1 Introductory letter/Email to Participants (UEL students)	2.0	3 March 2018
Appendix 1a Introductory letter/ E-mail to Participants (not UEL students)	2.0	3 March 2018
Appendix 2 Information for participants	3.0	3 March 2018
Appendix 3 Interviews indication of question areas for semi-structured interviews	2.0	3 March 2018
Appendix 4 Reflective exercise	2.0	3 March 2018
Appendix 5 Areas of Analysis/ordering of data	2.0	3 March 2018

Approval is given on the understanding that the UEL Code of Practice in Research is adhered to.

The University will periodically audit a random sample of applications for ethical approval, to ensure that the research study is conducted in compliance with the consent given by the ethics Committee and to the highest standards of rigour and integrity.

Please note, it is your responsibility to retain this letter for your records.

With the Committee's best wishes for the success of this project.

Yours sincerely,

Fernanda Silva
Administrative Officer for Research Governance
University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)
Email: researchethics@uel.ac.uk