CREATING CULTURE FROM SCRATCH: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY INTO CREATING CULTURE IN ENGLISH FREE SCHOOLS

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis considers the introduction of the free school, questioning whether the culture of such start-up schools differs to that of existing schools. The research focuses on the extent to which the founding headteacher controls the formation and continuation of culture, and by what methods.

The research builds on existing theories of organisational culture to establish a current understanding of leadership of school culture within English schools and compares this to five secondary free schools. Within each case study a range of stakeholders were interviewed, and documents analysed to investigate how the intended culture was planned for the schools, and what emergent culture has resulted.

The findings presented show an explicit need to plan and embed a new culture and give some practical suggestions as to how to achieve this. Free schools studied demonstrated some distinctive cultural elements, unique in the consistency with which they were embedded. It is postulated these cultural facets are as a direct result of the political turmoil surrounding the free school, and largely result from the external opposition to such schools. The importance and power of the founding generation of staff and students in creating new culture has also emerged as a critical theme.

For all those who have waited patiently for this to be finished

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Some days you just need to eat ice cream.

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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

This thesis has arisen due to government policy creating a new type of school in 2011, a free school (Academies Act, 2010). The research asks if a successful free school culture differs to a successful culture of any other existing school, and if so, which elements of this unique culture headteachers looking to open new start-up schools should be aware of.

1.2 Aim

This study aims to develop existing thinking on the introduction of free schools, looking at examples of successful start-up schools conceived under this policy. Specifically the aim is to consider the introduction and leadership of a culture within these free schools and to compare this culture to existing theory on school culture to establish if there are unique traits of school culture found within a brand new free school.

The aim is not to consider the impact of culture on school effectiveness, nor focus on the definition of 'good' and 'bad' school cultures within different situations. Chapters 1 and 2 will consider the controversial political aspects of the free school initiative, but the thesis will not attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of free schools in terms of pupil performance, nor the success of the government's policy. Whilst the findings of such a small study cannot be assumed to be generalisable to the extent required by an evaluation as alluded to above, they may be relatable to other contexts. As such this thesis aims to consider the role of school culture within a start-up school and make some recommendations as to areas of further study which may be used to inform how new free schools are planned, how a start-up culture can be implemented, and highlight the importance of considering the impact of school culture on future educational reforms.

1.3 Context

Free schools are new, all ability, state funded schools which can be set up privately by a range of stakeholders under the 2010 Academy Act, the first piece of legislation enacted by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition (Hatcher, 2011). They are in effect new, smaller, start-up academies that the government claims will raise the standards of attainment, in particular for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Like other academies, free schools are outside Local Authority control, directly funded by government, not required to implement the national curriculum, without the influence of trade unions and can control their own admissions policies (Hatcher, 2011). Since the 2010 Academies Act (Academies Act, 2010) 383 new schools have opened under this new policy, in a variety of forms (Department for Education, 2016). In wave one September 2011 twenty-four schools opened, of which sixteen were primary free schools, five were secondary free schools and two were 'all-through' free schools. In wave two 47 mainstream free schools opened in September 2012, nineteen primary schools, twenty secondary schools and seven are 'all-through' schools. In wave three 75 mainstream free schools opened in September 2013, thirty-five primary schools, twenty-six secondary schools and nine all-through schools.

This thesis considers secondary provision in the first three waves of free school launches, 'wave one' in 2011, 'wave two' in 2012 and 'wave three' in September 2013 leading to the opening of 171 free schools as of September 2013, of which 69 schools were mainstream free schools with secondary or all-through provision (DfE, 2016).

1.4 Development of provisional research questions

This research aims to debate if there are any unique elements within a free school culture and therefore it is necessary to ascertain what constitutes discernible school culture and identify any trends or different perspectives on the issue between prominent authors. As such, the first research question that should be answered is:

1. What is currently accepted to constitute discernible school culture within established English schools?

There is a large current body of literature regarding this topic, which outstrips any comparative study that could be undertaken in the scope of this thesis. Therefore this thesis sought to answer this question by reviewing the relevant literature.

Once a basic framework for an accepted view on existing school culture has been established it was then possible to consider the specific cases of a free school culture as a start-up school and ask:

2. What makes a free school different? Are there any unique elements found only within free school culture?

Research question two therefore holds the crux of this thesis as it sought to establish if there are any fundamental differences between the culture of a free school and the model of culture extracted from the established literature. If this is the case, and there are unique characteristics, the next logical question was to ask from where do these characteristics originate? Are they intrinsic to the free school policy itself, attributable to the type of leader attracted to found a new school, or evolved due to a combination of factors specific to a particular free school? As such the third research question was concerned with the unique climate that has allowed creation of start-up schools within England:

3. To what extent has the free school government initiative created a unique set of conditions which impact on headteachers setting up new school culture?

The fourth and final question returned both to the origin of question 3, asking if the headteacher was personally responsible for the unique culture, but also it returns to the core aim of the thesis; if there were unique traits within free school culture, could the outcomes of this research help headteachers to become more aware of, and develop, these attributes. In order to establish this it was necessary to ask how much influence a headteacher had over the formation of a new culture, and if a culture can be specifically planned or if other factors operated outside of the control of the headteacher:

4. In practice, can a headteacher influence the emergent culture of a new school, and to what extent can this growing culture be planned?

In summary the four research questions sought to establish if there are any key differences between free school culture and the established understanding of discernible school culture, and to consider potential causes for any differences: that of the political climate and that of the leadership of a free school. These provisional research questions were reviewed (see section 2.5.3), in light of the outcomes of the literature review, and the final versions of the research questions were then established.

1.5 Research Justification

This thesis aims to form part of the emerging academic literature on free schools and contribute some concepts to the understanding and exploration of this new educational reform during a period of time when more and more new schools are being opened (Bolton, 2014). There is clearly a void of literature on the free school movement currently, due to its relatively new status as a policy, and it is hoped that this thesis may form the foundation for some future studies.

The researcher has worked as a deputy headteacher in a free school, and been part of several educational leadership programmes such as Future Leaders and Teach First. As such this thesis is written by an educational practitioner, who has genuine first hand interest in the formation of new schools, school culture and leadership. This research aspires to not only benefit the researcher herself and the schools she has worked in, but to also distribute key findings to other leaders and practitioners and hence inform schools and new school development directly. As a school senior leader and teacher, who has worked within Local Authority controlled secondary schools, free schools and academies, the researcher is ideally situated to observe and research the impact of this change within secondary free schools. This research project may have a direct impact on strategic direction of culture within these free schools, and well as identifying some aspects of this culture that may be able

to be replicated in other sectors. There are clear advantages to being a participant within the initiative, but this position also raises validity issues and the need to design a method to minimise insider bias (which is addressed in section 3.6).

It is evident that this latest government educational reform will impact pupils, teachers and school leadership across England, and hence has the potential to have a significant impact on individuals' education and prospects along with the structure for education within local areas. It is vital therefore that this reform is researched and debated both theoretically and practically, and that past theory and current research are combined to inform decision making and future practice and allow for the greatest positive outcomes for the pupils within this new policy.

Another key motivator for this research project arises from the apparent gap in literature about the impact of this particular educational change. Much has been written about the impact academies have made on the UK educational structure, and the effectiveness of this initiative (for example Gorard, 2009; Miller, 2011; Ball, 2013), and there is a huge expanding literature on defining school culture (for example Glover and Coleman, 2005; Van Houtte, 2007; Schoen, 2008; McLaughlin, 2005; Brundrett and Rhodes, 2011), changing school culture and the effectiveness of this culture but there is an emerging need for more published literature on the free school initiative in order to inform further expansion of the project.

1.6 Key Literature

This research is underpinned by literature covering a range of pertinent topics, primarily that of school culture, the impact of leadership on culture and planning new culture and cultural change. The context of the thesis is rooted in literature on educational politics, the introduction of the free school policy to England and the emerging literature on the US Charter Schools and Swedish Free School Movements.

A review of relevant literature was conducted, based on an exploration of key terms within the focus of this project. Very little existing literature was found specifically targeting the area of free schools, apart from some exploratory papers and government publications explaining and justifying the introduction of this legislation. Searching for "school culture" produced a wide range of key papers and extensive previous research, both in the field of education and a wider social science perspective on culture.

School culture literature was reviewed, arranged and critiqued thematically by key questions. The debate on the definition of culture, climate and ethos has been reviewed in chapter 2, which has allowed research questions to be re worded as a result of the literature review.

This is of interest as this research aims to clarify the use of the terms ethos and vision within the planning applications of a new free school (see section 2.3.6) and consider how these might be translated to the realities of culture. As such the thesis aims to build on this existing work defining these key terms and apply them to this recent initiative.

As an outcome of the literature reviewed (for justification see section 2.4.1) this thesis defines:

- Culture as written and unwritten expectations, values, beliefs, norms, rules, laws, artefacts, rituals and behaviours that permeate a school and influence how people behave socially (Ebbutt, 2002).
- Ethos as the subjective atmosphere or mood of the organisation underpinning policy and practice, which is brought about by social interaction with the culture of the school. In essence the *product* of the culture of the school.
- Climate as the measurable features of the school experience; a perception of how things 'are' on a 'day to day' basis in the organisation, in essence the *operational form* of culture.

As such the research questions focussed on culture and it will be assumed that ethos and climate are products of this culture.

Within the free school application the DfE have chosen not to focus directly on culture, but on another layer linked with school culture, as it asks a prospective founder to describe their "educational vision" (DfE, 2015d, p.6). There was therefore a need to draw on the literature in order to locate and explain the relationship between such an educational vision and culture.

1.7 Research methodology

This paper has a humanistic approach as classified by Gunter and Ribbins in their work on the six major knowledge domains of leadership studies in education (Ribbins and Gunter, 2002), which sympathises with the aim for this project to explore the culture within the context of newly opened schools in England.

This thesis focused on a case study of five mainstream free schools set up in wave one, two or three of the free school initiative and had been running for either one or two academic years. The case study schools were all sampled from within the population of the first sixty-nine wave one, two and three mainstream free schools offering secondary provision across England.

Therefore the methodology appropriate to this research was a multiple case study, (Denscombe, 2010). This methodology allowed a deeper insight into the details of these five cases, which aimed to highlight and discuss the general though looking at these particular examples, and fitted well within the small-scale research taking place. Within each of the five schools four interviewees were purposely selected in order to collect information on the formation and realities of the culture within the school, and to explore the differences between this culture and existing non-free schools. In order to collect a range of perspectives within each case the four interviewees were selected within the following categories: a head teacher who was involved in the application for free school status, a member of the senior leadership team, a 'main scale' teacher and a pupil.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant during the 2013-14 academic year, and each interview was approximately 60 minutes long. The interview questions, were structured from the theory studied (see section 3.4.1), piloted to ensure understanding and validity of data to be collected, reframed, and not seen by the interviewee prior to the interview. Due to the flexibility of the semi-structured interview some questions were adapted as the interviewee was allowed to talk on themes that were important and of interest. All discussion was recorded and then transcribed from recording. The transcript was then carefully checked, read and emergent themes highlighted. These themes were then categorised, collected and counted to assess importance and aid analysis. Themes were compared within each school studied to research how the culture has been disseminated and how the planned culture is reflected throughout the whole institution. The themes were then compared across the five schools studied, to investigate any possible emergent themes which may be common to all free schools.

1.8 Summary

This thesis aspires to add value to the existing work on both school culture and the free school policy by considering an extension to existing theories of cultural change, that of how to start a culture from scratch. Whilst the findings of a small multiple case study such as this cannot assume to be generalisable, this thesis does aim that they may be transferable and hence be of interest to founders and headteachers of current and new free schools as they open.

The forthcoming thesis will be split into five remaining chapters in order to structure the debate on the research questions posed:

2. A literature review considering all relevant existing literature on the topics of free schools, levels of school culture and creation of culture, and which create a conceptual framework within which to analysis research findings.

3. A research design chapter, which outlines the approach to research undertaken, the philosophical stance which underpinned the research and the ethical considerations of the thesis.
4. A findings chapter, which presents the key findings of the research undertaken, and considers similarities and differences between the five schools studied.
5. A discussion chapter, which links findings back to the literature discussed in chapter two in order to provide an informed response to each of the research questions.
6. A conclusion chapter, which aims to evaluate the research design, and consider the implications and recommendations from this research.

CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Purpose

This chapter considers the key literature relevant to the aim of the thesis and provisional research questions (chapter 1), with a focus on the political context behind free schools, school culture, creation of new culture and leadership of culture.

As such the purpose of this literature review is three-fold:

1. To provide a political, cultural and academic context for this study
2. To inform the questions asked by this thesis
3. To develop a provisional core conceptual framework under which to analysis data.

2.2 Literature Review Process

A range of literature types was used throughout this literature review: government policies, government advice material and published academic theory and research in the form of both journals and books, along with some media coverage to give context to the national climate into which free schools have been introduced.

All sources were considered with their potential bias due to nationality of research, political standpoint and date of publication and these factors have been discussed as a critical part of the review.

There is a clear need to consider the literature regarding the areas defined by the research questions in the context of school culture, the free school policy and any emerging literature on the new free school initiative. Literature on the existing free school movement in Sweden and the Charter School movement in the USA and how culture manifests itself within those initiatives were reviewed along with the extensive literature on organisational culture and school leadership in the UK.

The review of relevant literature was based on an exploration of key terms within the proposed research questions. An initial electronic search, via both Google scholar and library catalogued electronic journals, for "free school", "culture of free schools", "culture in new schools" produced very little existing literature specifically targeting the area of free schools, apart from some exploratory papers and government publications justifying the 2011 introduction of this legislation.

An electronic search for "school culture", "organisational culture" and "school leadership" demonstrated a comprehensive literature source around many facets of this research area. In order to further structure the search the research questions were used to highlight key questions required of the literature, and then review articles such Glover and Coleman (2005) and Brundrett and Rhodes (2011) were used as preliminary reading, to provide a starting point through their bibliographies for further authors to expand on these key questions.

A review of key publications relating to the areas of focus from the research questions (that of the context of free school policy, school culture and the leadership of culture) was arranged thematically by key categories, and critiqued with regard to the research questions.

2.3 The Introduction of the free school - Context

This thesis has come about due to government policy creating a new type of school in 2011, a free school (DfE, 2010). This thesis asks if a successful free school culture differs to a successful culture of other schools, and if so what elements of this unique culture should a headteacher looking to open a new start-up school be aware of in order to introduce a develop a successful culture?

In order to fully understand the aims of this thesis it is first necessary to introduce the concept of a free school, and the government policy underpinning this educational reform. This contextual background and the procedures that form the practical realities of the policy need to be understood in order to consider research questions two and three. Both research questions require an understanding

of what factors make a free school unique in its formation, and an understanding of the political climate which has governed their creation.

2.3.1 What is a free school?

A free school is a state funded, independently run school, answering directly to central government via the academies' legislation, and in the majority of cases is a new start-up school (DfE, 2010). Conceived by the Conservative-Liberal Coalition government in legislation introduced in the 2010 Academies Act (Academies Act, 2010), these new schools have proven to provoke controversy amongst political groups, teachers, academics and the media, many of whom have instead called for "the strengthening of current provision in the state sector" (Miller, 2011, p.170), championing the belief that resources are being siphoned away from traditional, existing schools. Despite this media attention, the concept of a free school is not new. The model stems from city technology colleges and the Labour introduction of city academies (DfE, 2010) and has strong links to grant maintained schools, a Conservative policy during Thatcher's leadership (Walford, 2014). The policy is seen to mirror charter schools in the USA and the Swedish free school system (Miller, 2011; Hatcher, 2011; Morris, 2014 and Wiborg, 2015).

2.3.2 Organisation of English Schools

In order to understand fully the political ideology that underpins the creation of the free school, it is necessary to have a basic understanding of current landscape of English education. English schools are either publically or privately funded and there are a huge range of types of school that have been developed, introduced, adapted and in some cases scrapped by successive governments over the reforms in the Education system in England (DfES, 2005; Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009; DfE, 2010; Ball, 2013). Currently all children ages 5 to 16 are entitled to a state funded education, and all children have to stay in education or training until age 18 (DfE, 2007).

Parents can choose where to apply to send their child, and there are a wide range of school choices now available to them.

Secondary education normally begins at age 11, and there are four basic categories of school a child can attend:

Independent (Fee Paying) School: Fee paying schools, which are not funded by the government. This type of school has never had to follow the national curriculum but are registered with the government, inspected by a range of bodies and accountable to the parents and pupils paying for the school (gov.uk, 2015).

Grammar School: these were formalised as part of the Tripartite System in the 1944 Education Act (Education Act, 1944), and some examples have remained after the Tripartite System was scrapped. These are selective schools for which a child sits an entrance examination and can now be either state funded or fee paying.

Local Authority Funded School: These maintained schools are funded and governed by the Local Authority (LA) and must follow the national curriculum and national pay and teacher conditions. There are four main types: community schools, foundation and trust schools, voluntary aided schools and voluntarily controlled schools (New Schools Network, 2015). In a community school the LA controls the building, the land, employs the staff and sets admissions criteria. Foundation and trust schools are run by a governing body who can set admission criteria and employ staff. The land, upon which the school is built, will be owned by the governing body in a foundation school or a charity in a trust school. Voluntary aided (VA) and voluntary controlled (VC) schools are usually faith schools and as such are associated with a particular religion. As with the other maintained schools, VA and VC schools have to follow the national curriculum, the only difference being religious studies where they are free to only teach their own religion.

Central Government Funded School: These are funded by central government and do not have to answer to a LA (DfE, 2010). These now include city (sponsored) academies, convertor academies, free schools, studio schools and university technical colleges, and hence include the focus of this thesis. Free schools and academies are exempt from following the national curriculum, are free to change the length of a school day or school term, and can set their own pay and conditions for staff (New Schools Network, 2015). The main difference between an academy and a free school, is that in general a free school is started ab initio whereas an academy has converted from an existing school.

University technical colleges are a specific type of free school that specialise in practical subjects and specific skills, leading to technical qualifications. The curriculum contains significant work experience and the schools are often sponsored by universities or employers. Studio schools are also a specific case of free schools "Studio schools are small schools - usually with around 300 pupils - delivering mainstream qualifications through project-based learning. This means working in realistic situations as well as learning academic subjects." (gov.uk, 2015, p.3).

In addition to the provision described above there are also single sex variants of the above, faith specific versions and special schools for pupils with special educational needs. The significance of this choice underpins the ideology behind education today, that parents have the right to choose where to educate their child, and that this choice and free market competition will drive up standards.

2.3.3 A Timeline of the Political Ideologies behind the free school

Education in the UK has been influenced by government policies for over 100 years, the influence of changing political rhetoric has changed education by empowering different groups from local government, to headteachers and parents. From 1997 education has been subjected to constant change and reform under New Labour and then the Coalition government (Ball, 2013). Over this time changes in government have led to many educational reforms, which have all, in their own way, paved the way to the introduction of the free school.

In 1902 the Conservative 'Balfour Act' established the first integrated view of all English secondary schools and introduced Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to coordinate schooling across England (Education Bill, 1902).

In 1944 the Conservative 'Butler Act' established the Tripartite System as the post war education solution in England (Education Act, 1944). Within this system every pupil sat a scholarship examination at age eleven, those who passed this examination attended a grammar school, and those who did not pass attended either a secondary modern or secondary technical school. This was abolished by the Labour government in 1976, forming comprehensive schools (Education Act, 1976), although pockets of state funded grammar schools do still exist alongside comprehensive schools in parts of England.

The belief that competition would drive up standards in education was first introduced in the 1988 Educational Reform Act (Education Reform Act, 1988) by the Conservative Thatcher government, which introduced both the National Curriculum and the concept of open enrolment. This free market approach to education produced a competitive market, which was designed to produce a drive for improvement amongst schools, and for the first time gave parents the right to choose where their child was educated (Miller, 2011). Education became a major political issue, and the focus of much media attention (Ball, 2013).

The 1988 Education Reform Act weakened the LEA's power, as with the introduction of the National Curriculum LEA advisors now had much less influence, and LEA school inspectors were quickly replaced with OFSTED (Education Reform Act, 1988). The 1988 Education Reform Act also gave schools the option to opt out of local government control, becoming grant maintained schools. This meant they were funded directly from central government, meaning they had more money at their disposal, but had to buy in services formerly provided by the LEA.

"In a pre-election speech in 1996, former Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair spoke of his primary political commitment to 'education, education, education'. This signalled a decisive repositioning of education onto the centre of the policy stage in England" (Ball, 2013, p.1). True to his manifesto when Blair came into power with New Labour in 1997 he did not revert back to the old Labour education policies decentralising power back to the LEA. Instead new Labour introduced the concept of an academy through the Learning and Skills Act (Learning and Skills Act, 2000) intended to drive up standards in failing inner city schools. Any failing inner city school was forced to come under central government control as a new type of school, a city academy, and take a cash injection from an academy sponsor, who come from a wide variety of backgrounds; universities, businesses, individuals, charities or faith groups. A city academy was a publically funded independent school, funded through central government rather than a LEA, and was built on the same site as, or took over from a failing school (BBC News, 2000). The leadership in these academies set their own school days and school terms and did not need to follow the national curriculum (New Schools Network, 2015). They did however need to follow the same rules on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions as all state schools. Labour also scrapped grant maintained schools and these schools could either re-join the LEA as a maintained community school or become a foundation school.

When the Conservative-Liberal Coalition government took power in 2010 they expanded the Labour city academy programme, splitting it into two strands. They rebranded city academies, allowing new academies to be sponsored by outstanding schools, and removing the need for the sponsor to give a cash injection to the failing school. They then also created the concept of a convertor academy, which gave any LEA controlled school the right to apply to become an academy, not just failing schools with sponsors as with the Labour city academy policy (Academies Act, 2010). This returned much of the governance and accountability of schools back to central government rather than LEAs, which they renamed as Local Authorities (LAs).

These policies were all founded within the Conservative-Liberal Coalition's concept of the 'Big Society' (Higham, 2014; Ball, 2013) in which their driving ambition was to "to put more power and opportunity into people's hands" (Cabinet Office, 2010, p.1). The wider social aims of this policy centred on giving everyone the power and information they needed to solve problems and take more responsibility over their own local communities. Free market competition is critical to the concept of Big Society and this reinforced the Conservative notion that competition in education would drive up standards. Whilst this thesis does not aim to debate the politics of the Big Society there is currently a raging debate as to if these policies, such as the proposed academisation of all schools and the creation of free schools, are centralising power to government or, as the Conservative government claim, distributing power to the people, and if accountability and governance can be separated (Cabinet Office, 2010; Higham, 2014).

A natural extension of the concept of the Big Society allowed anyone to apply to open a school and so free schools, new, all ability, state funded schools were introduced. A free school could be set up privately by a range of stakeholders under the 2010 Academy Act, the first piece of legislation enacted by the Conservative-Liberal Coalition (Hatcher, 2011). They are publically financed but run independently of local authority, under direct central government control. They are in effect new, smaller, "start-up" academies that aim to raise the standards of attainment, in particular for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, give parents greater choice and driving up competition between schools (Ball, 2013).

Free schools share the same freedoms and flexibilities as academies; they are outside LA control, not-for profit, have autonomy over their structures and can decide on their own school day and term times. They also control their own pay and conditions for staff, are directly funded by government, outside of the remit of the national curriculum, without the control of the trade unions and can control their own admissions policies (Hatcher, 2011). Unlike academies, but similar to independent schools, they can also employ teachers without Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). Free schools tend to be start-up schools and can be set up by groups such as: trusts, charities, parents, teachers, universities,

businesses, community and faith groups, and are free to establish a school culture in line with the group's beliefs.

Free schools therefore encompass the much of the current political ideology with regard to education, that of freedom from bureaucratic control, empowerment of parents and other stakeholders, raising attainment, especially in deprived areas, and the introduction of competition to education.

2.3.4 The international picture of free schools

The model behind the introduction of the free school in England was an example of "policy learning and policy borrowing" (Ball, 2013, p.22) based on the Swedish system of free schools which was founded in 1992 (Miller, 2011) and the U.S.A. model of charter schools (Ball, 2013, Miller, 2011) both of which are based on marketisation of schooling and freedom for school leadership from local bureaucracy. In 2008 Gove was quoted to say, "I have seen the future in Sweden and it works. Standards have been driven up. If it can work there it can work here" (Shepherd, 2010, p.1). In 2010 Gove referenced charter schools claiming they were doing "a fantastic job, free from local bureaucratic control, of transforming the life chances of young people" (Hatcher, 2011, p.490).

Wiborg, (2015) suggests that the Swedish educational reforms have received widespread cross party approval, and hence "extraordinary growth" (Wiborg, 2015, p.473), but does link some of this success to 'for-profit' organisations being allowed into the school market in Sweden, a contrast to the English free school system.

There is however conflicting research on the impact of both the Swedish free schools and the U.S. charter schools. The media have used the failure of certain aspects of the Swedish model as fuel against the free school model (Shepherd, 2010). Reports into the impact of marketisation of school systems have concluded that,

> It is far from clear that quasi-market forces such as increased autonomy, competition and choice have led to improved outcomes, which would indicate that educational innovations are occurring. Evidence of improved academic outcomes is mixed, and improvement in academic performance may result from factors other that quasi-market incentives. (Lubienski, 2009, p.27).

Similarly the charter school system has received a range of reviews questioning the impact of a charter school education on pupil progress, with some concluding charter school pupils obtain results that are significantly worse than their peers in traditional schools, whilst others contradict and claim "Charter School performance was generally positive compared to that of traditional public schools" (Hatcher, 2011, p.490). The Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP) schools founded in 1994 have shown to have made a significant impact in socially deprived areas, but critics of the KIPP schools suggest that their successes have led to other public schools in the surrounding areas being worse off as the most motivated parents apply for a KIPP school place. Critics also argue that KIPP schools have a high attrition rate and recruit few pupils with English as a second language or with special educational needs (Hatcher, 2011).

The strong, mixed, international research and political opinion on free schools serve to confirm the need for more rigorous research into both the academic impact of free schools, their impact on the local communities and political landscape, but also the stories behind these schools, such as forming an honest, non-politically biased view on the realities of education within a free school.

In summary it is clear that there is much divided opinion regarding the success of models of marketisation within school structure both in England and internationally. There will therefore be a need for a strong organisational culture within any new school that champions the potential benefits of such systems, such as freedom for leadership to lead in a way that is perceived to be best for the community, lack of regulation from local authority and potential to impact pupil progress. This is especially true within disadvantaged communities in order to enable pupils to flourish and not be impacted by any associated negative publicity if a new school is to succeed.

2.3.5 Free schools today

In 2014 Bolton, (2014, p.1) summarised, "The first 23 free schools opened in September 2011 and this has increased to 251 at the start of the 2014/15 school year". Free schools have opened in all of the English Regions, with the most opening in London Boroughs. As of 2014 there were 85 secondary free schools, 93 primary and 24 all through schools, with the remainder made up of Alternative Provision or Special Schools (Bolton, 2014).

In January 2014 there were 22,783 pupils on role in the free schools open at that time, 0.3% of the total number of pupils in state-funded education (Bolton, 2014).

> There is little reliable performance data on free schools at present. They have only been around for a few years at most, their pupil numbers are still small and secondary free schools tend to recruit to earlier year groups at first (Bolton, 2014, p.4).

At the end of the 2013/14 academic year 76 free schools had been inspected by Ofsted, 18 of these (24%) had been rated outstanding compared to 10% for all schools during that period (Bolton, 2014).

Free schools remain a popular policy within the Conservative party with the new all Conservative government pledging to open 500 new free schools in the next 5 years (Prime Minister's Office, 2015). However media attention has remained divided on the controversial free schools (Young, 2015; Millar, 2015) with particular attention to the funding granted to open new schools (Mansell, 2015) and if free schools are being opened in areas of most need in terms of both capacity for school places (DfE, 2014; Boffey, 2013) and in terms of the need to raise standards within disadvantaged communities (Higham, 2014).

This variation both in terms of perceived success of start-up schools, and political and media view of free schools, consolidates the view that any school which is to survive and become successful in this turbulence needs to quickly establish a strong internal culture which will enable pupils, staff, leadership and the community to focus on the potential successes of such a school, rather than the greater landscape of politics and media.

2.3.6 Free school application process

As part of any free school application the founders proposing the new school must outline their plans for the vision of their proposed free school,

> Your education vision should describe why you want to set up your particular free school in the particular area you have identified, its core features and the pupils you intend to cater for. This is your opportunity to tell us in your own words about the overarching vision for your school and how it informs your education plan. (DfE, 2015a, p.10).

The current application form (DfE, 2015c) and the slightly altered earlier application form (DfE, 2015d) both ask for this educational vision, but do not refer to 'culture', 'climate' or 'values' of a school.

The guidance (DfE, 2015b) and criteria for assessment (DfE, 2015a) and both application forms (DfE, 2015c; DfE, 2015d) all use the term ethos with respect to a religious ethos or faith ethos school. The 2015 application form includes a Self-Evaluation Form in which it asks schools to evaluate "Pupils' attitudes to learning and the creation of a positive ethos" (DfE, 2015c, p.37).

2.3.7 Summary

In conclusion, this contextual section has aimed to develop an understanding on the current literature surrounding the free school government policy, in order to start to question how these new start-up schools are created, and the potential importance of culture within their creation.

There is a stated expectation within the free school application form (DfE, 2015c) to develop and describe an educational vision for the new school. There appears to be an assumption that this planned vision will be automatically in place upon a school's opening and that a clear vision will have a positive impact on performance. There is a need for clarity on the topic of educational vision and an understanding of how this vision will be put into place by the founders and leaders of a new free school. It will then be critical to establish if the planned vision and the reality of the emergent culture match, and if this vision is relevant to what the local community need. Whilst the term 'culture' is not

used within the official application documentation the terms 'vision', 'culture' and 'ethos' are often used interchangeably when founders have submitted existing application forms (DfE, 2015d). It is therefore important to clarify the use of these terms and consider the links between a vision for a free school and the practical formation of a new school culture.

2.4 School Culture

2.4.1 What is Culture?

Culture is a challenging concept to explain states Prosser (1999), "(it) is popular and frequently used but despite over thirty years of research it remains enigmatic and much abused" (p1). Prosser continues to consider the roles of all the stakeholders within education, and concludes that;

> It is not surprising that a wide range of vocabulary is used to describe the overarching themes of schooling. Equally, it is not surprising that there is no agreement on the definition or meanings of the terms school culture, climate, ethos, atmosphere, character and tone, used to evoke what is too often assumed to be a common phenomena that needs little explanation. (p.4)

Prosser claims that much of the weaknesses in early school culture research can be traced to the use of particular terms, and an explanation of their use, a concept echoed by Glover and Coleman (2005), Poore (2005), Van Houtte (2007) and in response Schoen and Teddlie (2008) and more recently Brundrett and Rhodes (2011). Consequently it is essential to define these key terms in order to frame this study.

Culture is used as a broad term in much of the literature whereas others refer specifically to the climate (for example Freiberg, 1999; Heck and Marcoulides, 1996; Gillen, et al., 2011) or the school ethos (Donnelly, 2000; McLaughlin, 2005) offering apparently interchangeable terms. Van Houtte (2007) challenges this and uses his review of literature to "show that climate and culture are not interchangeable concepts and that researchers should be aware of their differences" (p.84). Practitioners also interchange the terms as demonstrated within Ebbutt's (2002) practitioner research,

and the wide variety of use of the terms within free school applications (DfE, 2015d).

The confusion around the conceptualisation of the facets of culture is further deepened with the issue of organisational cultures not entirely being made up of one entity, rather a collection of sub-cultures (Stoll and Fink, 1996). Cray and Mallory (1998) confuse this definition of school culture further by suggesting culture is governed by a combination of internal and external factors; the individual's cognition, the mix of cultures of the society and the culture of the organisation itself.

Whilst it is clear in the literature that the "slippery concept of culture is made less clear in the literature by authors' interchangeable usage of the terms 'culture', 'climate and 'ethos'" (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2011, p.31) there is an emerging trend towards defining these concepts (Glover and Coleman, 2005; Van Houtte, 2007; Schoen and Teddlie, 2008; McLaughlin, 2005; Brundrett and Rhodes, 2011). Several recent papers have found an agreement on these themes based around an understanding that:

> The terms school culture, climate and ethos appear to be used interchangeably. Within the context of differing national environments there is, however, a tendency to use climate when objective data is under consideration, ethos when more subjective descriptors are involved, and culture when these two are brought together as an integrative force in investigation or debate. (Poore, 2005, p.251).

Defining culture, ethos and climate is of interest as this research aims to clarify the use of the terms ethos and vision within the planning applications of a new free school (DfE, 2015c) and consider how these might be translated to the realities of school culture. As such it aims to build on existing work defining these key terms and apply them to this recent initiative and so the following definitions will need to be considered.

2.4.1.1 Definition of Culture

Deal and Kennedy (1988) formally define culture as "the integrated pattern of human behaviour that includes thought, speech, action, and artefacts and depends on a man's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations" or less formally, "the way we do things around here" (p.4). This definition only considers culture as a single entity, contest Brundrett and Rhodes

(2011) who highlight the need to consider sub-cultures and their contributions to a prevailing culture (Sarason, 1982; Stoll and Fink, 1996). Prosser (1999) describes school culture as:

> an unseen, and unobservable force behind school activities, a unifying theme that provides meaning, direction, and mobilisation for school members. It has both concrete representation in the form of artefacts and behavioural norms, and sustained implicitly by jargon, metaphors and rites. (p.13).

Hofstede considers culture as a collective phenomenon, "learnt, not inherited" and derived "from one's social environment" (1991, p.5), lying between the universal human nature and an individual's specific personality. Hofstede focuses much of his work on the conflict and differences between layers of culture, suggesting people belong to a number of different cultures at any one time, and differentiates national, regional, ethnic, religious, linguistic, gender, generational, social class and organisational culture as separate layers.

Ebbutt (2002) builds on the fundamentals of Hofstede's (1991) work and considers school culture at three levels, that of the macro or whole society level, that of the meso-level at which one organisation functions and that of the micro, or individual class room level. Schoen and Teddlie (2008) extend this model of culture to try to encompass and clarify much of the earlier research. Their "new integrated model" takes school culture as being composed of "four different dimensions: (I) Professional Orientation, (II) Organizational Structure, (III) Quality of the Learning Environment, and (IV) Student-Centered Focus" (p.140). Questions asked of free school culture must therefore consider the different layers of culture, and look for inconsistencies between these layers.

Schein (1992) looks at leadership and organisational culture as a whole and argues that culture is "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learnt as it solved its problems of external adaption and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems." (p.12). Ebbutt considers much of the earlier seminal work and concludes a definition of culture which is, "a constellation of both written and unwritten expectations, values, norms, rules, laws, artefacts, rituals and behaviours that permeate a society and influence how people behave

socially" (Ebbutt, 2002, p.125).

Glover and Coleman (2005) define culture as "the integration of environmental, organisational and experiential features of school existence to offer a context for teaching and learning, and its subsequent improvement." (p.266). Which is a viewpoint that Brundrett and Rhodes (2011) adopt after their own analysis of the literature. Van Houtte (2007) is fundamentally in agreement with this definition suggesting that culture provides "insight into what members of an organization assume, believe, think, and so on" (p.84).

For clarity this thesis will define organisational culture using Schein's view that culture is in essence the "basic underlying assumptions" of any organisation (Schein, 1992, p.26). Culture therefore encompasses the over-arching "written and unwritten expectations, values, norms, rules, laws, artefacts, rituals and behaviours that permeate a school and influence how people behave socially" (Ebbutt, 2002, p.125). In terms of this research this establishes that culture is hard to measure, and that a methodology will need to focus on finding indicators of school culture.

2.4.1.2 Definition of Climate

Heck and Marcoulides (1996) realised the need to use a working definition of climate in their work considering how visible culture impacted performance within an educational environment of secondary schools in Singapore. Heck conceded climate to be a teachers' perception linking this to culture as,

> Climate, therefore, is used in a more narrow sense to describe teachers' perceptions of "how things are" on a day-to-day basis. Climate may change more readily - depending, for example, on the actions of administrators - than the entire system of variables comprising the school's culture. (p.83).

In 1999 Freiberg considered the importance of 'school climate' and associated it with "that quality of a school that helps each individual feel personal worth, dignity and importance, while simultaneously helping to create a sense of belonging to something beyond ourselves". This was contradicted by Poore's (2005) more objective view on climate although Freiberg (1999) does claim to take both an "organisational climate and cultural view of schools" (Freiberg, 1999, p.13) and so appears to be

interchanging the definitions of both culture and climate within this associated quality. Glover and Coleman (2005) broadly agree with Poore (2005) that there is "a tendency to use climate when objective data is under consideration" (Glover and Coleman, 2005, p.251).

Van Houtte (2007) contradicts much of the earlier research and radically considers a much broader definition of climate as a conclusion to his literature review on the use of the two terms. He concludes, "climate entails the total environmental quality of the organization, and is, as such, broader than culture. Moreover, climate, being a multidimensional construct, encompasses culture." (p.84), Shann (1999) is in agreement with this. In an attempt to clarify a definition Van Houtte continues to,

> Climate should be reserved to describe organizations in their entirety, including – besides the shared beliefs – the relations between individuals and groups in the organization, the physical surroundings, and the characteristics of individuals and groups participating in the organization. (Van Houtte, 2007, p.85).

Schoen and Teddlie (2008) write in response to Van Houtte providing a theoretical framework for school culture, which differs from Van Houtte's description in which he places culture as a component of climate in contradiction to much of the earlier research (Poore, 2005; Glover and Coleman, 2005) which consider climate to be an operational form of culture. Schoen and Teddlie (2008) consider climate to fit into Schein's (1992) model as "espoused beliefs" (p.149) and place this in dimension II of their model for the dimensions of school culture, linking climate to "the style of leadership, communication and processes that characterize the way the school conducts its business" (p.140). As such climate is how people behave, an outcome of the culture.

Gillen, A. et al. (2011) writes about the differences between a classroom climate and a school climate, but in defining both concepts links them to both the organisational setting and as a reflections of the school's culture.

A general agreement between the contemporary literature which attempts to separate the terms culture and climate seems to be given by Brundrett and Rhodes (2011) who return to Heck and

Marcoulides' (1996) concept that climate is linked to perception of how things 'are' on a 'day to day' basis.

Whilst Van Houtte (2007) does provided an alternative view describing climate as the overarching term, this thesis prefers to agree with Poore, (2005); Glover and Coleman, (2005) and Schoen and Teddlie (2008), and considers the term climate to be used to describe an objective, operational form of culture, or put simply how things are on a day to day basis. Climate is therefore the more measurable features of a school culture; and fits into Schein's (1992) "espoused beliefs" as an observable quantity within a layer beneath the umbrella of the term culture. This thesis will use the term climate as a direct outcome of culture, the observable behaviours and beliefs of the school.

2.4.1.3 Definition of Ethos

The government defines ethos in the glossary to its directions on how to apply to open a free school as "The distinctive vision, values and principles that inform the way a school is run" (DfE, 2015b, p.43), but only refers to the term ethos in the document in relation to faith ethos free schools.

Allder (1993) considered the 'meaning of school ethos' in her paper questioning the meaning of the term. She concluded that ethos is intelligible from "four 'connecting words', spirit, ambience, atmosphere and climate" (p.68) and places ethos somewhere in the "social system of an organisation" (p.68). She goes on to conclude that that,

> The ethos of a school, that illusive item which is so difficult to recognise, measure or improve, is the unique, pervasive atmosphere or mood of the organisation which is brought about by activities or behaviour, primarily in the realm of social interaction and to a lesser extent in matters to do with the environment, of members of the school, and recognised initially on an experiential rather than a cognitive level. (Allder, 1993, p.68)

Donnelly, (2000) agrees with Allder that ethos is a 'nebulous' term that covers the "philosophy or atmosphere of an organisation" (p.134). Donnelly then expands upon this work claiming that the definition of ethos can fall into either a positivist or an interpretivist viewpoint. Positivists would argue that ethos is an objective quality, independent of people, that can be changed at will, a formal expression of the leaderships aims for the organisation. Interpretivists however would view ethos as

"informal emerging from social interaction and process" (p.136) in agreement with Allder's (1993) understanding above. Within her research on Catholic schools Donnelly identifies three dimensions of ethos, that of 'aspirational ethos', 'ethos of outward attachment' and 'ethos of inward attachment'. Each of which she concludes has equal importance.

McLaughlin, (2005) offers a more recent analysis of the notion of ethos and concludes that in order to seek clarity there is not a search for a correct definition, but a need to embrace the range of meanings of the term. "Ethos can be regarded as the prevalent or characteristic tone, spirit or sentiment informing an identifiable entity involving human life and interaction (a 'human environment' in the broadest sense)" (p.311). This work is then of greater potential interest as McLaughlin discusses the possibility of an 'intended ethos' and an 'experienced ethos' which can lead to tension between the two realities. Solvason (2005) supports this view that ethos is "the *product* of the culture of the school" (p.85) and extends this to associate 'intended ethos' as culture. The concept of a planned or intended ethos and the realities of an experienced ethos will become critical to the questions asked in the methodology as this thesis will seek to research if such a gap exists within a new start-up school, and if so can it be controlled by a founding leader?

McLaughlin (2005) delves into the range of modes in which ethos can be manifested and hence observed, listing the twelve ethos indicators as referenced by the Scottish Education Department, the twenty one aspects of school life which Irish education use to determine ethos and the thirteen aspects and twenty four questions posed by the Church of England for ethos related guidance.

Glover and Coleman, 2005 attempts to clarify this tangled situation as a tendency in the literature to use ethos as "the more subjective values and principles underpinning policy and practice" (p.266). Brundrett and Rhodes (2011) agree with this definition and consider this ethos to emerge from the school's culture.

This thesis will use ethos as the subjective atmosphere or mood of the organisation underpinning

policy and practice, which is brought about by social interaction with the culture of the school. In essence the *product* of the culture of the school.

2.4.1.4 Clarification of terms

As such the remainder of this literature review will focus on a school's culture and it will be assumed that ethos and climate are products of this culture. Culture is defined as the over-arching assumptions of any organisation (Schein, 1992, p.16). Both climate and ethos are products of this culture, with climate as the operational, observable forms of culture day to day and ethos the atmosphere or mood of the school. As such it is possible to research ethos and climate, which should enable definition of the culture of a school. One of the interests of a new free school, which aims to develop a culture before the school opens, is how this culture will manifest itself into an ethos and a climate, and how much this culture can be strategically planned and implemented.

It therefore follows that the written and unwritten expectations, values, beliefs, norms, rules, laws, artefacts, rituals and behaviours that permeate a school and influence how people behave socially (Ebbutt, 2002) are all created either consciously or unconsciously because of the culture of the organisation.

It is therefore possible to argue that the free school application (DfE, 2015c) could be considered to be short sighted when asking a founder of a new school to plan a vision and this thesis would seek to question why the founder is not asked to plan a culture to the new organisation, rather than focus on the practicalities of a vision, values and principles without considering the culture of a new school. This thesis would also dispute the glossary definition used within the guidance for ethos, "the distinctive vision, values and principles that inform the way a school is run" (DfE, 2015b, p.43) and suggest that ethos is a more complex atmosphere to the school rather than the practical facets listed.

2.4.2 What are the component parts of a culture?

Hofstede's seminal (1991) work primarily considers national culture and uses a metaphor of skins of an onion to consider the manifestation of culture. His framework considers that the outer most layers of culture: symbols, heroes and rituals, which he groups as practices, can change over time but the deepest manifestations of culture, the values, will remain. Practices, Hofstede describes, "are visible to an outside observer; their cultural meaning, however, is invisible and lies precisely and only in the way these practices are interpreted by the insiders" (Hofstede, 1991, p.8).

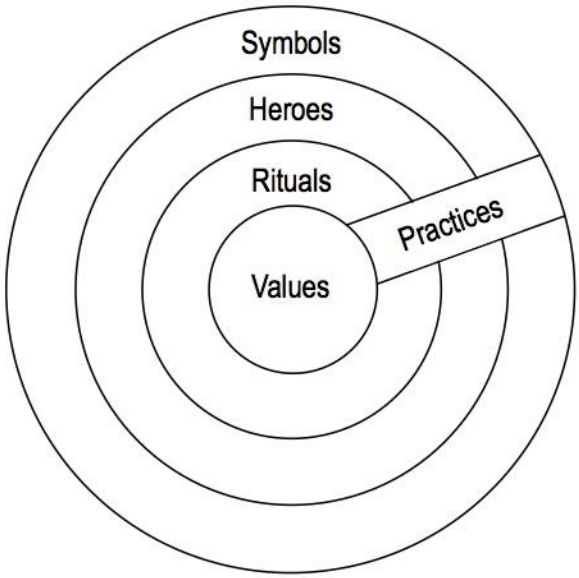

Figure 1. Hofstede's "The onion diagram; manifestations of culture at different levels of depth" model of culture (Hofstede, 1991, p.9)

Symbols in Hofstede's model are the:

> words, gestures, pictures or objects that carry a particular meaning which is only recognised by those who share the culture. The words in a language or jargon belong to this category, as do dress, hairstyles, Coca-Cola, flags and status symbols. New symbols are easily developed and old ones disappear: symbols from one cultural group are regularly copied by others. This is why symbols have been put into the outer, most superficial layer. (Hofstede, 1991, p.7)

Heroes are people, real and imaginary, who "possess characteristics which are highly prized in a culture" (Hofstede, 1991, p.8) and rituals are "collective activities, technically superfluous in reaching desired ends, but which, within a culture, are considered socially essential".

In parallel to this work, if we continue to use Schein's view that culture is "the deeply embedded, unconscious basic assumptions" (Schein, 1992, p.12) of an organisation then we also need to evaluate his argument that this culture can be considered at different levels which refer to how observable the cultural phenomenon is. Schein (1992) considers organisational culture as three levels, that of basic assumptions which he considers to be "the essence of a culture" (p.26), a second level of espoused values and a third level of artefacts, each of which presenting their own issues to observe and analyse. The definitions assumed above agree that the term culture would be synonymous with 'basic assumptions', and both ethos and climate would fit into 'espoused values' as the more observable products of culture. Hofstede's symbols, heroes and rituals, or practises, could be considered to fit under artefacts.

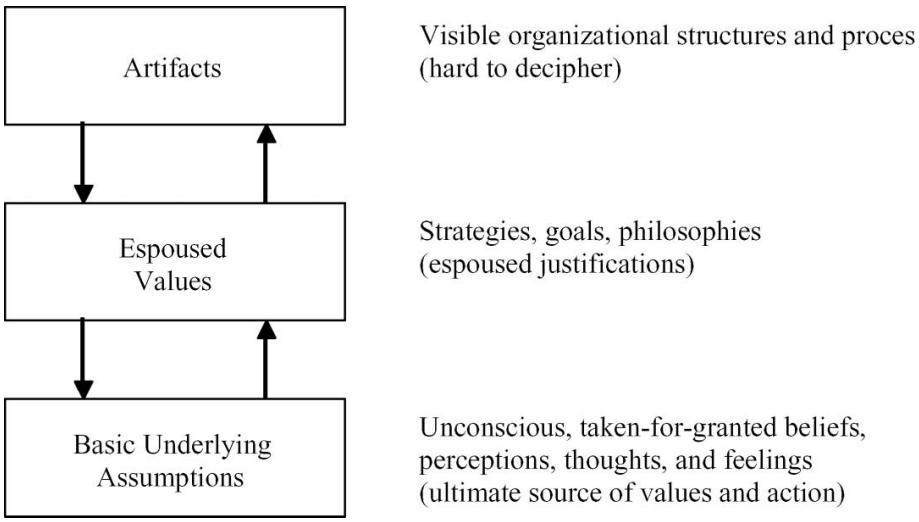

Figure 2. Levels of Culture (Schein, 1992, p.17)

Schoen and Teddlie (2008) integrate this research with contemporary studies and research methods into a model of organisational culture with school culture at the base, with basic assumptions which can be observed or found in non-structured interviews, building on this is the school climate or exposed beliefs (into which category we would argue ethos fits), which can be observed by survey or structured interview and finally the easily observed symbols of culture termed artefacts. This model fits the stance of this thesis to research culture, and to consider climate and ethos as contributing factors to, or products of culture.

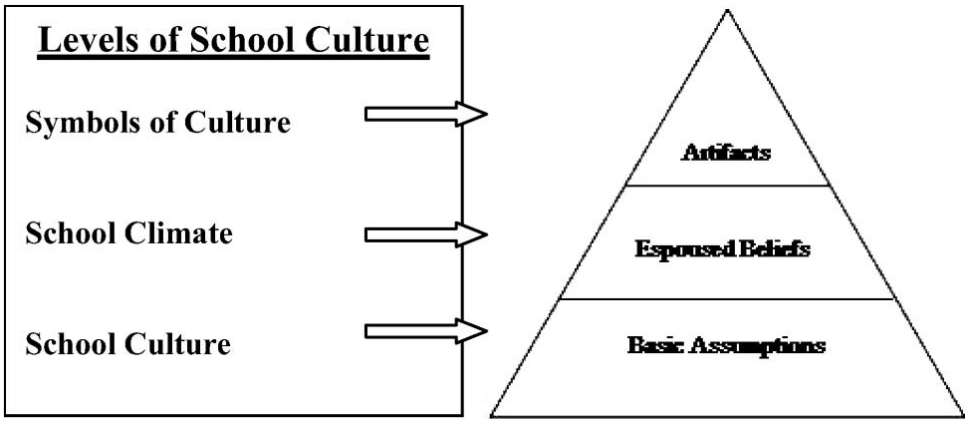

Figure 3. Integration of school effectiveness research into Schein's (1992) levels of organisational culture (Schoen and Teddlie, 2008, p.138)

This concept that culture can be split down into levels, defined by the ease to which they can be observed, links with existing work on the formation of culture being composed of different elements. For example Deal and Kennedy (1988) consider the formation of a prevailing culture to be identified by the following components, shared values and beliefs, heroes and heroines, ritual, ceremony, and an informal network of cultural players and stories. Deal and Peterson (1999) expand on this list further and suggest that school culture is comprised of,

> Unwritten rules and traditions, norms, and expectations that permeate everything: the way people act, how they dress, what they talk about, whether they seek out colleagues for help or don't, and how teachers feel about their work and their students (Deal and Peterson, 1999, p.2).

Following from this culture can be considered to in terms of "resultant symbols, rituals and interpersonal interactions that emerge when the prevailing values and beliefs of an organizational members are played out in every day working life" (p.30) claims Brundrett and Rhodes (2011) in their review of culture.

As such all authors quoted seem to agree that culture can be considered as a multitude of observable facets and these views can then be extended to suggest the division of all of these the observable aspects of culture into the categories of either espoused values or artefacts. The complication lies in

the links between all these components, and how they interact to produce culture, and the sequence that this culture can be uncovered (Hofstede, 1991).

2.4.2.1 Espoused Values

The core of culture, according to Hofstede (1991) is composed of values. "Values are broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affair over others. Values are feelings with an arrow to it: they have a plus and a minus side. They deal with: evil vs. good, dirty vs. clean, ugly vs. beautiful…" (Hofstede, 1991, p.8). Hofstede differentiates between a person's own national values which often remain unconscious to the holder, are learnt at a young age, and cannot be directly observed, and organisational values which are learnt in the work place, "which most people enter as adults, that is, with the bulk of their values firmly in place" (Hofstede, 1991, p.182). As a result of these existing values Hofstede summarises that "at the organisational level, cultural differences reside mostly in practices, less in values" suggesting that organisational culture differences can be found in learnt rituals, heroes and symbols rather than in core values. Interestingly he also creates an intermediate level between national culture and organisational culture called "occupational culture" and suggests "entering an occupational field means the acquisition of both values and practises" (p.182), which may suggest that in education core values are learnt joining the profession, rather than specific to an organisational culture.

Whilst Schein (1992) disagrees with Hofstede's (1991) view that values form the deepest level of organisational culture, he does agree that values comprise a critical level second in culture. Schein describes espoused values as "strategies, goals and philosophies" (Schein, 1992, p.17) which originate from the leader and their practical demonstrations of the culture. If these demonstrations are perceived to be a success then ultimately there will be a shared assumption amongst the organisation that that modelled solution is the 'correct' way to operate. As this process continues these views are gradually transposed into "non-discussable assumptions supported by articulated set of beliefs, norms, and operational rules of behaviour" (Schein, 1992, p.20). These assumptions then guide members of the group when dealing with situations and training new group members.

If these espoused values match the basic assumptions or culture of the organisation then they become values, which can give the group a source of identity and aim, and can become articulated values or aims for the organisation (Schein, 1992). It is possible that these espoused values fit with McLaughlin's (2005) definitions of ethos, and that his comments that "although ethos most commonly refers to something that is experienced, an 'intended' ethos as well as an 'experienced' ethos can be pointed to in the case of an ethos which is deliberately shaped or stipulated" (McLaughlin, 2005, p.312) then fit in as examples of espoused values. This research will aim to consider both the intended and experienced ethos and establish if there is a gap between the two.

As Louis and Miles highlighted in (1990), "we need to understand more about what themes and visions are, how they work in a school improvement project, and how they can be orchestrated, or we risk introducing abstract concepts that have little practical meaning for educators" (p.217). Whilst this is certainly the case there seems to have been little research following up the concept of vision within schools in the UK. Staessens and Vandenberghe (1994) followed up extensive research of nine Belgium primary schools carried out as case studies in 1994 with comparison of low vision and high vision primary schools. They concluded that vision is a core part of a school's culture, and that this vision is a "goal consensus" (p.198) between all the people within a school. This vision is reflected in many observable indicators, but it is difficult, Staessens and Vandenberghe claim, to describe its impact as an outsider.

Sammons et al. (1995) list 'shared vision and goals' as one of the 'eleven factors for effective schools elaborating that this provides a unity of purpose, consistency of practice, collegiality and collaboration. Prosser (1999) argues that despite all that has been written about culture, there is still a tendency to focus on behaviour rather than the value and belief system that underpins it. He goes on to claim that this weakens culture as it,

> Ignores the most fundamental attribute of school cultures, that is that they are rooted in a shared 'vision' or 'mission' which is itself the manifestation of jointly held and deeply internalized beliefs and values (p.66).

Prosser does therefore offer an alternative view that values underpin culture, however this thesis considers Schein's (1992) view that from culture comes espoused values, of which vision is an example, and as such values and vision are the observable facets of an underpinning culture, as more plausible. It does, however, agree that if values and visions do not align with the culture and hence there is a gap between the intended and experienced ethos (McLaughlin, 2005) then the vision and values can start to change the underpinning culture, hence making the Schein model of culture, espoused values and artefacts a complex two way dynamic process (Figure 1) in which culture defines values, but values in turn can change and shape culture.

Bell and Harrision (1995) consider the practical management of education and assume that "all leaders and managers in education will have a vision for education, and will work towards this through their own guiding values" (p.1). They then highlight that these "visions and values can only become worth something when they are enacted" (p.1). Whilst not defining the terms Bell and Harrision acknowledge that "the climate, culture, ethos and personal identity of a school or college, and the values that prevail there will necessarily have an influence on making the vision a reality" (Bell and Harrision, 1995, p.1).

A 'shared vision', and accompanying values, such as those proposed for an effective school by Sammons' et al. (1995) cannot by definition by owned only by leadership. They must show strategic planning and be effectively communicated. The culture of an organisation can therefore influence both the content of a vision, and the readiness of an organisation to adopt it as a 'shared vision'. Conversely a truly shared vision can lead to cultural change and impact on the ethos and climate of a school. This fits with earlier comments that the leader can distribute a vision as part of their intended culture, but that unless that exact vision is shared by all stakeholders it can, in turn, shape and change the culture which originally defined it.

2.4.2.2 Artefacts

Schein (1992) describes artefacts as the surface level of culture, everything that you can see, hear and feel. These are the most easily observable symbols of a culture, although their meaning can be hard to interpret. They arise either consciously or unconsciously from the organisation's espoused values (4.2.1). This matches Hofstede's (1991) practices, of symbols, heroes and rituals.

Examples of artefacts include written organisational structures and processes, rituals and ceremonies, myths and stories, interpersonal interactions, how members of the organisation dress, how they speak and interact, the physical environment, its language, its technology and products, published lists of values, and any other visible behaviour of the school or organisation. These are the observable facets which will form one layer of the methodology of this thesis, as they will be the easiest forms of culture to observe and record, although will be challenging to analyse.

The most important point about this most observable level of culture is "that it is easy to observe and very difficult to decipher" (Schein, 1992, p.17), one cannot reconstruct culture from artefacts alone without experiencing its culture at the level of its values and at its basic assumptions. There must therefore be two layers to the research conducted here, one to record the observable artefacts and or symbols as stated above, but secondly and much more critically to find the underpinning values and beliefs (Hofstede, 1991, Schein, 1992) to analyse if these two levels of culture match, as so to identify if there are gaps between the intended and experienced ethos, and ultimately culture. This then leads us to ask how much a founding leader can define and control culture, and if so which facets of culture can be controlled?

2.4.2.3 Summary of the Levels of Culture

We have concluded above that the culture of an organisation encompasses everything else, the over-arching "basic underlying assumptions" of any organisation (Schein, 1992, p.26). Both climate and ethos fit under the umbrella of culture.

Schein's (1992) model (Figure 1) suggests the organisational culture is synonymous with the basic assumptions of the organisation and forms the first level of culture. The next layer of culture is the espoused values of the organisation which include the ethos, climate, values, visions, aims, goals and strategies of the group. The final, and most observable level of culture is then the artefacts or practices (Hofstede, 1991) the observable facets of culture.

This model then generates the question of how the vision of a brand new organisation such as a free school can come from the culture, when the organisation is not yet set up. Is this model incorrect and the government application correct in stating that the start point for a new school should be vision, and not the culture? Schein argues that this is not the case because the personal and group culture of the initial founder or group of founders will have governed the initial vision and the goals. "All group learning ultimately reflects someone's original values, someone's sense of what out to be" (Schein, 1992, p.19).

2.4.3 What different types of culture have been identified?

2.4.3.1 Different models for types of organisational cultures

Many authors have split organisational cultures into categories; Handy (1993), Johnson and Scholes (1993), Trompenaars (1993), Deal and Kennedy (2000) and Hofstede (2003) are all examples. Cacciattolo (2014) has written a review of many of these models and has grouped analysis of organisational culture into examples of an interpretive view, in which culture is "shaped and continued through the organisational environment" (Cacciattolo, 2014, p.1) and examples of a structural view, which "focuses more on how positions are structured within organisations… rather than how they are perceived" (Cacciattolo, 2014, p.1).

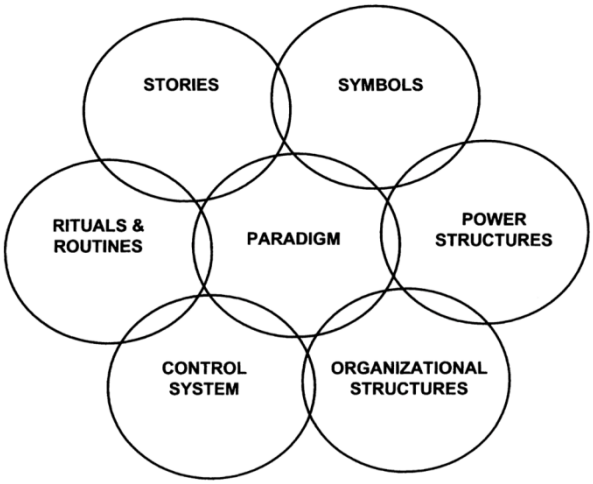

Figure 4. The cultural web of an organisation (Johnson, 2000, p.407)

Johnson (2000) builds a practical framework onto the cultural web of an organisation proposed by Johnson and Scholes (1993), an interpretive view. The premise of this web is that the culture is shaped through the organisational environment, and that all the facets of the culture listed in the web (stories, symbols, power structures, organisational structures, control systems, rituals and routine and the central paradigm or mission and values) all influence each other. Hence the culture evolves and is shaped by every facet. This framework may provide some measurable facets of culture to utilise during the methodology, in order to research if in the case of a new free school these facets do interact and evolve or if they can be controlled.

The more structured view on organisational culture can be seen in Handy's (1993) work linking organisational structure to culture. He identifies four types of culture; 'Power Culture', 'Role Culture', 'Task Culture' and 'Person Culture'. Handy argues that all of these cultures are valid, but need to be carefully selected to suit the type of organisation, and an employee, or type of culture successful in one situation may not be if transferred to another.

From these models and the guidance for starting a free school (DfE, 2015a; DfE, 2015b; DfE, 2015c; DfE, 2015d) it could be suggested that the government views culture as structural, and asks for educational vision to be planned and then implemented to produce an intended culture. In reality the literature also suggests the possibility that culture is more interpretive and therefore is shaped and

evolves into an experienced culture through the many stakeholders and organisational environment, so is harder to plan and control.

Is the reality that within a free school culture starts as planned by the leader (intended culture) and then becomes influenced by other factors, as Johnson (2000) suggests, resulting in the experienced culture? The size of the gap between the intended and experienced cultures would then define how much control a founding leader can have over culture within a free school.

2.4.3.2 Is there a literature to associate certain themes of culture to certain types of schools?

There is very little research into trends in culture observed within different school types. The exception to this is some research with regard to faith schools, and specific faith ethos, which may explain why the free school application form only utilises the word ethos to depict a religious ethos school (DfE, 2015c; DfE, 2015d).

For example Striepe, Clarke and O'Donoghue (2014) consider the ethos and associated issues for leaders in faith based schools in Australia and within their case studies found that the values underpinning the schools often echoed that of the personal religious values of their leaders giving them a unique perspective on educational leadership.

With the growing variety of school types discussed in section 2.3.2 there is a clear need to establish if school culture is developing to be specific to school type, or if school culture and specifically a successful school culture has the same characteristics regardless of the type of school. Whilst that research is outside the scope of this thesis we can ask if successful free schools have developed commonalities in their culture, and hence are there specific facets of culture which a founding headteacher should consider when applying to open a free school?

2.4.4 What is considered to be successful school culture?

Shann (1999) attempted to measure perceptions of caring and anti-social behaviour using a questionnaire to 1503 students and 92 teachers across four urban middle schools in New England who were ranked according to achievement. This is of potential interest as Shann attempted to both measure school culture (in his definition a part of school climate) and to look specifically at urban middle schools and the need for a caring culture. It does also highlight a possible discrepancy as Shann has used questionnaires to measure and observe culture, in contradiction to Schoen and Teddlie (2008) integration of culture with research design techniques.

In similar quantitative work Welsh (2000) considered the impact of the climate of a school, and if this has an impact on the behaviour of the pupils. Although the research was conducted in the USA Welsh does use an interesting model of five descriptors of disorder to quantitatively collect data on eleven urban schools. He concludes that school climate "adds significantly to our understanding of school violence" (p.104) and goes on to generalise that this research can now go on to guide future practice.

Another international approach to secondary school specific culture has come from Carrington and Elkins' (2010) qualitative work on two case study schools in Australia. He established a comparison between an inclusive and a traditional culture, which may inform special needs teaching in that setting.

Solvason's (2005) case study is of particular interest as she conducted qualitative research into an English secondary school. Solvason (2005) explored the "concept of ethos as a facet of the government's rapidly growing initiative of the 'specialist school'" (p.85) and the interesting culture change of the government's request that "schools accepted on to the scheme are expected to create a new identity" (p.85). Whilst the government does use the term ethos with regard to 'specialist schools' Solvason agrees with the definitions given in section 2.4.1.4 above and concludes that she "was actually looking at a change in school culture as opposed to ethos, as (she) believed that the

whole school 'ethos', that the DfES encourages schools to nurture, is, in fact, a product of the school's culture" (p.86).

Solvason's (2005) conclusion reinforces much of the earlier work on defining culture not as a school's established goal, but as forged from the interactions of people. As such she acknowledged that,

> The search for school culture was a complicated one. Though it was simple enough to prescribe categories that represented the topics that were universally accepted, for example, the fabric of the building, school organization, relationships between staff and students, and so on, decisions about which minutiae of interaction and experience held most significance were left to the discretion of the researcher. (p.93).

This draws into stark reality the differences between Welsh (2000) and Shann's (1999) quantitative work on culture, and supports Schoen and Teddlie's (2008) concept that to truly 'find' culture qualitative unstructured interviews are required. This builds on the conclusions drawn from section 2.4.2.2 that to research culture of free schools it will be necessary to evaluate the research completed in existing case studies and consider both the observable facets (artefacts) of culture but also to try to establish the underlying values and beliefs within the case study schools through unstructured interviews.

2.4.4.1 What impact does culture have on performance?

Much of the literature on organisation culture seems to insist that for a successful organisation it is vital to have a distinctive culture. Peters and Waterman (1982) argue that there is an informal link between performance and culture, using examples from business rather than education. However there is little research focusing on a formalised direct link between culture and performance, perhaps due to the complex question of how to measure a school's performance?

Gerrard (2013) considers the notion of excellence in education within the context of free schools comparing them to historical case studies. She concludes that there are many contradictions and counter-narrative when attempting to define educational excellence and that there is no conclusive evidence that competition will produce more excellence amongst English schools.

2.4.5 How is culture created?

2.4.5.1 From where does a culture originate?

An organisation's culture, claims Schein (1992), can be created from three sources; "(1) the beliefs, values and assumptions of founders of organisations; (2) the learning experiences of group members as their organisation evolves; and (3) new beliefs, values and assumptions brought in by new members and leaders." (Schein, 1992, p.211). He goes on to argue that although each element can be critical, that for an organisation in its infancy founders play the most crucial role in creating culture. This, Schein explains, is logical as the founder has, by definition, chosen the mission or aim of the organisation and also influenced the contextual environment into which it has been created. For a new organisation the founder also has extensive control over sources (2) and (3) as they will naturally bias recruitment of new group members who fit their own personal values and beliefs.

Within the context of a free school there are three potential founders who could take the lead in establishing the culture. In different cases these three potential founders could combine in different quantities to establish the organisational culture. Founder 1 would be the government who has created the political climate and therefore founded all free schools, the amount to which this influences the culture may create commonalities within the culture of all free schools. Founder 2 would be the proposers for the new school, which could be an individual or group as diverse as parents, local community groups, religious groups, a multi academy trust of schools or a teacher who has initially submitted the approved application for a new school to the government. The final founder would be the first headteacher who will be the first leader of the school (and may also form part of the group 2 founders). It could be argued that this first leader will have the greatest influence in establishing culture, however this mixture of founders will clearly all influence the emergent culture of the organisation. For clarity this thesis will consider the founders to be all of the above, unless specifically stated to be one group, but the leader to be the first headteacher of the free school.

Schein (1992) believed that culture is a dynamic concept, and could be influenced by the introduction of new artefacts, new visions and therefore new people joining the school. In his model of levels of culture (figure 1) arrows move both upwards and downwards on the diagram indicating that whilst culture governs espoused values and artefacts, that there is also the possibility for artefacts and espoused values to change culture. This then introduces the question of if the original founder's culture will continue to exist as the school matures, and grows in size. Within a new culture the founder is the critical factor defining the culture (Schein, 1992) but as the organisation grows culture becomes more dependent on the learning experiences of the group and new members to the groups bring in new ideas.

It can then be extrapolated that the intended culture originates from the founders of the free school, the government, original applicants and the first headteacher, but that this culture will quickly be influenced by the learning experiences of all stakeholders, leaders, teachers, pupils, parents and the local community and so the emergent culture will become a mixture of the intended founders' culture and the experiences and personal beliefs of all those stakeholders. It will therefore be necessary for the research to focus on these key stakeholders.

2.4.5.2 Leadership of the new culture

Schein (1992) focuses on the founder being the early leader of the organisation, which in the case of a free school would mean considering the critical founder to be the first headteacher. Schein claims that culture is embedded "not on the beginnings but on the early growth and development of the organisation" (Schein, 1992, p.228). This raises the question of how much the leader can influence or control the evolving culture of a new school, and what aspects they can control?

Higham (2014) analyses free school proposers, and divides them into categories; parents, teachers, faith groups, private schools, trusts/sponsors, state schools, charities and social enterprise companies (p.127). 52% of all proposers are made up of parents, teachers and faith groups, states Higham

(2014) and he continues to analyse the number of these proposers who have had applications approved. He concluded that the "proposers most able to negotiate the DfE Application process are not those on average those purposefully seeking to be serve disadvantaged communities" (Higham, 2014, p.136).

Miller, Craven and Tooley (2014) used a questionnaire with free school headteachers and concluded there were broadly three main motives behind their decision to open a free school. Namely "improving 'the quality of education in less affluent area', 'a desire to establish a school with a different philosophy from those schools in the area' and rectifying 'a perceived shortage of places'." (Miller, Craven and Tooley, 2014, p.369).

Much has been written about changing or modifying existing culture, Brundrett and Rhodes (2011) claim that "leaders need to have a critical awareness of how quality enhancement can be supported culturally, as well as structurally, if improvement efforts are to flourish and be sustained" (p.29). This further agrees with the seminal work of Fullan (2001) within his development of his 'framework for leadership' (p.4) in which he elaborates on five components of effective leadership, moral purpose, understanding change, relationship building, coherence making and knowledge creation and sharing and how awareness of these five strands is how culture can change positively. However little or none of this literature on cultural change extends into asking how to start a new culture.

We must therefore consider the literature on cultural change in order to utilise this research to link to creating new culture. Staessens and Vandenberghe (1994) conclude their Belgian study on vision asking for strategies on how to create one, having earlier suggested that vision is "not the result of rational planning and discussions; vision is far more than a list of written statements" (p.199). Writing a vision for change may be comparably easy, they state however this will not create a vision, goal consensus nor a culture. Staessens and Vandenberghe (1994) found some evidence within their case study that direct strategies could provide clarity to a vision but that indirect strategies such as meetings giving ownership to a decision, time given to changes in teaching and time lines for change

did slightly increase the degree of goal consensus within their case studies. They concluded there is a growing established need for 'dailyness' (p.199) from a leader in order to lead or change vision and culture.

Alvesson (1993) suggests that leaders are constrained within an existing culture, but can, over time modify this culture. In support of this ability to only modify Lumby (2001) suggest culture cannot be controlled but only influenced, and also highlights the issue of opposition within the organisation. Following from this idea that cultural change can be slowed or halted by groups within the organisation, MacMahon (2001) debates the influence of subcultures and concludes that the more subcultures that exist within an organisation the more difficult cultural change is likely to be.

Just as McLaughlin (2005) discusses the possibility of an 'intended ethos' and an 'experienced ethos' which can lead to tension between the two realities, Donnelly (2000) also divides culture, in her case ethos, into two strands. That of the expression of the formal goals of the school and aspirations of the founders and "something located in the realms of social interaction" the "lived reality" (p.150). She continues to conclude "that ethos is not a static phenomenon" and that the "direction which this process assumes depends on the key actors involved, their values and attitudes as well as attendant social and political culture" (p.150) implying that although there is part of ethos that the school formally aims for, but that the result emerges from social interactions and cannot be planned or controlled.

Donnelly (2000) takes the divide between formal school ethos "those values and beliefs which the school officially supports" and compares this to the observed ethos "defined as the observed practices and interactions of school members" (p.134) and finds that within the two Northern Ireland Catholic schools within the case study that there is a difference between the two definitions, and that this gap in ethos differs from school to school. She goes on to establish that neither ethos is more important than the other but simply that they can be considered as "a different lens for viewing the operations of the school and through each lens it is possible to construct an image of the variations within and

across schools" (p.152). She also highlights that these two branches of ethos may not exist in tandem but often form contradictions and inconsistencies within a school. Within this research there is a clear need to identify both a leader's intended culture and the experienced culture within the free school, which leads to the question; how much control can a headteacher can have over creating a new culture?

Solvasson (2005) returns to Donnelly's question of if school culture can be established, or if it is produced as a result of social interactions, she agrees with Donnelly's conclusion that "written or spoken aims in any organisation become null and void if human interaction points to the contrary" (Solvasson, 2005, p.92).

Although much has been discussed on how to change a culture nothing was found in the existing literature on school culture specifically on starting a new culture from scratch within a new organisation, and so at present this gap reinforces the need for this research into new starting new school culture.

2.4.5.3 Will the culture change as the school matures?

Schein (1992, p.226) observes that "even in mature companies one can trace many of assumptions to the beliefs and values of founders and early leaders", which would suggest that free schools will always maintain some cultural traits of their original founders and headteachers. As such it may be the case that a free school will always have unique "free school traits" due to the founders links with the overarching political ideology of the free school. Overtime however the influence of new leaders proposing solutions to problems will broaden the initial founder's culture.

Johnson's (2000) web model of culture suggests that culture evolves as the components of culture evolve. Therefore over time the original intended culture may evolve to a different intended culture,

or the leader may remain set on an intended culture where as in reality the experienced culture differs to the intended culture.

2.4.6 Summary

This thesis considers the creation of new culture. Climate and ethos have been defined as operational products of this culture, with vision, values, beliefs and artefacts all therefore created consciously or unconsciously as a result of the culture of the organisation. It is also acknowledged that changes to any facet of culture, or the introduction of new stakeholders to the organisation has the power to change the culture of the organisation and hence the model is dynamic, and always evolving. As defined by Schein culture is;

> a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learnt as it solved its problems of external adaption and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems. (Schein, 1992, p.12)

New free schools give a unique vantage point on how much a leader can influence culture at the formation of a school, and how many facets of this culture can be controlled by the leader. There is also a need to establish if there is a gap between the leaders intended ethos and the ethos experienced by those within the school.

Another set of questions centre around if the unique mix of founders and political climate for a free school give these organisations unique cultural traits? How much will each individual headteacher make each school unique? If there a certain type of leader who starts a free school? Will this mean they display similar cultures? Hence is there a new type of culture emerging; a free school culture?

2.5 Conclusion

In order to conclude we will return to the purpose of this chapter.

1. To provide a political, cultural and academic context for this study

2. To inform the questions asked by this thesis
3. To develop a core conceptual framework under which to analysis data.

2.5.1 Summary of Findings from the Literature

This review aimed to provide a political, cultural and academic context for this study, and focused on both the context of the introduction of free schools and on culture. The key findings are summarised below and will form the basis for the analytical framework.

From the review of free school literature there are clear political macro-level factors that must be accounted for such as marketisation and empowerment of local people with the introduction of the Big Society, which gave free schools a unique environment compared to existing schools. There are also commonalties between free schools and academies, previously grant maintained and independent schools which take away from some of this uniqueness. Free schools are mirrored internationally in Sweden and the USA, but the literature on the success of these programmes is varied and inconclusive. Media coverage of free schools is vast, but there is only a small emerging academic field covering their introduction and there is a clear need for more research, especially over how to help leaders establish these schools and what factors make a free school successful.

The free school application process does not use the term culture, despite a strong culture often being stated as a trait of a successful organisation, and only uses ethos in a glossary or in reference to faith schools. Applicants are asked to give an overarching vision to inform their educational plan, however this term may need additional clarification as existing applications show huge variation when describing their vision. There is a real need to consider this application and the links between planning such a vision and the practical formation of a new school, the realities of implementing a vision, or as this thesis would argue, focusing on planning a culture, and the realities of implementing this intended culture.

The literature on culture is complex, and the impact of culture on the success, excellence or performance of the school is hard to discern, but the literature has given some direction as to how to continue research in this arena.

Culture is defined in this thesis as the "basic underlying assumptions" of any organisation (Schein, 1992, p.26). Both climate and ethos are products of this culture, with climate as the operational, observable forms of culture day to day and ethos the atmosphere or mood of the school. Using Schoen and Teddlie (2008) it therefore follows that the written and unwritten expectations, values, beliefs, norms, rules, laws, artefacts, rituals and behaviours that permeate a school and influence how people behave socially (Ebbutt, 2002) are all created either consciously or unconsciously because of the culture of the organisation, and fit into two levels, that of espoused values and of artefacts.

Culture is not however a static phenomenon and changes to artefacts or espoused values by any stakeholder can alter the experienced culture. It is therefore possible for a gap to emerge between the 'intended culture' of the leader and the realities of the 'experienced culture'. There is a need to research both the planned culture, described as the educational vision in the application process, and the realities of the 'experienced culture' in order to identify which levels of culture can be controlled and planned by leaders and which evolve. The literature suggests that a leader can plan espoused values, but requires these to align and be modelled to key stakeholders in order to be successful. A leader can have strong control over artefacts, but predicting the impact such practices will have on the overall culture is exceptionally challenging.

A leader clearly has some degree of control over their school culture, especially in a new organisation such as a free school. The leader establishes the initial culture, based on a combination of the founders' personal beliefs. The literature suggests that a founding leader will have more influence on culture than a leader in an established school due to a smaller number of stakeholders and the ability to set up key artefacts, however this control over the culture could quickly diminish as new opinions and solutions change known behaviours. An interesting extension to this thesis in the future would be

to consider if a free school has a distinct type of culture when it is young, and conduct a longitudinal study as to if this type of culture diminishes as the school matures.

This thesis suggests that in a free school, a new start of culture provides a unique, fascinating opportunity for research into the impact a leader can have on shaping a culture. There is a clear expectation from central government to shape and implement a vision, or culture, but the literature suggests that in reality culture cannot solely be imposed but emerges. How much influence a leader can have on culture is the focus of the research to follow.

2.5.2 Emerging Issues

This review also aimed to inform the questions asked by this thesis, and to ascertain if there are gaps in the current research into which this study could investigate.

This thesis began by asking if a successful free school culture differs to a successful culture of any other type of school, and if so what elements of this unique culture should a headteacher looking to open a new start-up school be aware of in order to introduce a successful culture? This aim fits many of the questions asked by this review, that of if culture is specific to a type of school? If a leader can influence culture? And if there are unique facets to a free school culture?

It has emerged that there is a total lack of research into starting a new school culture, and no research into culture with relation to the new free school policies. It has also emerged that the government does not require specific planning of a culture within a free school application.

There is clearly a risks to designing and imposing a culture to a new school, as if it does not align with the community, parents and staff there will result in a large gap between the intended and emergent cultures which, this literature suggests, could lead to many subcultures forming, which the leadership would not have any control of. Similarly there are a clear risks to a laissez faire approach, under which the new school founders ignore culture, and the culture is therefore established organically by

members. Without an academic understanding of culture, and how to establish it within a free school a leader could leave something as critical as organisational culture to chance.

The impact of a culture on performance is also interesting, but exceptionally challenging to measure as it requires defining success of a school. Free schools are currently in their infancy and as such success needs to be defined outside of academic results. Ofsted reports give one indicator of external views on a new school, but qualitative research into case study schools will also be required in order to consider if culture impacts a free school, and which aspects of this culture a leader can control.

This thesis is therefore stepping into the unchartered territory of culture within new schools, and investigating in a unique setting the impact leadership can have on facets of this culture, in order to try to raise awareness of the potential importance of cultural planning when planning a new school. As such there will be a need to use a grounded theory approach to analysing findings, as there may be areas this review has not initially covered that may emerge during the research to become critical.

2.5.3 Review of Provisional Research Questions

The initial research aims and research questions now need to be re considered in light of the literature review, in order to allow the literature to inform the questions asked by this thesis.

In the light of this literature the term 'culture' will be used in the research questions, and it will be understood that this culture produces both climate and ethos. Research question 1 asked:

1. What is currently accepted to constitute successful school culture within established English schools?

The literature review has attempted to debate and discuss this question, exploring what is known about school culture in the context of English schools and the levels into which culture can be considered. The concept of a successful culture is very hard to define using the literature, and whilst

defining successful culture would be a valid piece of research it is much too broad to be undertaken in this thesis. As such the research question could be re written to utilise the establish literature on culture as:

1. What is the accepted understanding of school culture within the literature and how can this be linked to the leadership of culture within English schools?

Research questions 2 and 3 consider the unique nature of a free school:

2. What makes a free school different? Are there any unique elements found only within free school culture?

3. To what extent has the free school government initiative created a unique set of conditions which impact on headteachers setting up new school culture?

Based on the fact the government is in essence a founder of the school the political climate will form a key part of the emergent culture if Schein's (1992) conclusions on founders of new organisations is correct. This research question addresses the debate of if free schools have a unique type of culture and as such questions 2 and 3 might be combined and rephrased as:

3. Have free schools developed a unique type of school culture due to the government initiative founding them, and if so what commonalities do free school cultures show?

The final research question considers how much control a new headteacher has over creating culture and read:

4. In practice, can a headteacher influence the emergent culture of a new school, and to what extent can this growing culture be planned?

Research question four acknowledges the 'gap' between the formal intended culture and the emergent culture observed in practise, as Donnelly's (2000) research outlined and hopes to explore

the conflicts and inconsistencies that this gap in culture presents. The headteacher will be both a founder and the first leader and so should be the biggest influence to the new culture (Schein, 1992).

Based on Schein's (1992) levels of culture as a conceptual model, with culture at level 1, espoused values, which include ethos, climate, vision, values, at level 2 and artefacts at the third level research question four will now be rephrased to ask:

4. To what extent can a founding headteacher of a free school control the emergent culture of the new school? Which levels of this culture can they control, and what methods do they utilise?

This thesis would then suggest that the gaps in the establish literature regarding the impact of culture on a school and the choice of the government not to include the planning culture as an explicit part of their application procedures might suggest an additional final research question:

Do leaders perceive a value to leading a strong culture within a new free school, and if so should the application process be altered to include the planning of this culture?

In conclusion the research questions will now be:

1. What is the accepted understanding of school culture within the literature and how can this be linked to the leadership of culture within English schools? (This has been debated within this literature review)

2. Have free schools developed a unique type of school culture due to the government initiative founding them, and if so what commonalities do free school cultures show?

3. To what extent can a founding headteacher of a free school control the emergent culture of the new school? Which levels of this culture can they control, and what methods do they utilise?

4. Do leaders perceive a value to leading a strong culture within a new free school, and if so should the application process be altered to include the planning of this culture?

2.5.4 Summary

This chapter has formed the theoretical base on the contextual introduction of free schools, school culture, school leadership and developed some clarity around the key terms of culture, ethos, climate and vision. It has then informed both the research questions and allowed development of a methodology and interview questions, which can be seen in chapter 3. Finally this literature review has developed the core conceptual framework under which the data collected will be analysed (see section 4.1).

CHAPTER THREE - RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

This research, as established in chapter 2, aims to understand the introduction and leadership of a culture within a new free school, looking at examples of successful start-up schools conceived under this policy. Specifically it seeks to establish if there are unique elements of school leadership when planning and starting a fresh culture for a brand new school, and use this understanding to inform future practise.

3.1.1 Research Questions

The key research questions defining this project are:

1. What is the accepted understanding of school culture within the literature and how can this be linked to the leadership of culture within English schools? (This has been debated within the literature review)

2. Have free schools developed a unique type of school culture due to the government initiative founding them, and if so what commonalities do free school cultures show?

3. To what extent can a founding headteacher of a free school control the emergent culture of the new school? Which levels of this culture can they control, and what methods do they utilise?

4. Do leaders perceive a value to leading a strong culture within a new free school, and if so should the application process be altered to include the planning of this culture?

In essence the four research questions seek to establish if there are any unique elements found within a free school culture in contrast to the established understanding of successful school culture, and

consider two potential causes for any differences: that of the political climate and that of the leadership of a free school.

The literature review (see chapter 2) has enabled further understanding and identification of 'sub-issues' which will need close examination in order to answer the overarching research questions. These issues are:

- Clarification on the terms of culture, climate, ethos, vision and values
- Identification of the observable characteristics of school culture
- Identification of what is accepted to be successful culture within English schools
- Impact of leadership on culture
- Planning new culture and cultural change

In planning this research it has been necessary to take into account a number of factors that serve to frame the study. These represent:

- Government rationale underpinning the free school initiative
- The influence of the US Charter Schools and Swedish Free School movements
- Government change initiatives and educational reform

As a consequence the research questions, concerning the leadership of culture within a new school, naturally lend themselves to researching the perceptions of individuals, rather than a quantitative search for an absolute truth. This thesis will seek to develop practical understanding of the culture within start-up schools, and how potential improvements could operate within the competitive environment of the government policy for new free schools. The thesis will then consider how these findings link to the existing literature on the subject of school culture in order to inform future school development for interested school leaders both through professional organisations and academic publication. Whilst a small sample study such as this cannot be considered generalisable it is hoped that it will be relatable within the context of start-up secondary schools.

3.1.2 Positionality and Aims of the Researcher

Having located the research as seeking to understand and inform practice, seeking the views of individuals rather an absolute truth, it was necessary to consider the positionality and aims of the researcher. It should also be recorded that the researcher is a participant observer as the researcher is also a deputy headteacher currently working within a secondary free school and so is a participant in the free school movement. This brings an insider perspective to the research (Mercer, 2007) and therefore a need to consider the ethics of research from within the free school community and the potential bias this may introduce.

There are clear advantages to being a participant within the initiative, but this position also raises validity issues and the need to design a method to minimise insider bias (which are addressed in section 3.3.6 and 3.3.7). I was ideally positioned to access interviews across a range of free schools, and had a clear personal aim to seek to understand and apply knowledge gathered to my own and any future school's development. I was also ideally positioned within the development of the movement to share findings with existing and future school leadership teams and to publish within professional journals and publications to contribute to the future development of free schools with this research.

In summary this chapter aims to explain, justify and evaluate the research design that formed the basis of the practical research undertaken. It considers the research within the wider framework, linking the choice of research questions to the researcher's own stance on philosophical approach and then continues to establish how the research strategy of comparative multiple case study and methodology of semi-structured interviews were developed within this framework. It concludes with clarification on key issues such as the sample of five secondary free schools, validity and ethical considerations, manageability of the research and transferability of the findings.

3.2 Paradigm

In order to establish a method and methodology for research it was first essential to identify the ontological and epistemological position of this research. These are the philosophical positions of a researcher, and the type of knowledge and information sought by the aims of the research, and hence define how the researcher has approached the aims of this research.

Ontology is a branch of philosophy concerned with the nature of being and is concerned with matters relating to reality and truth (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2014). As discussed there are two contradictory positions, that in which truth and reality are a 'given' and are external to the individual observing them, and the converse, that both reality and truth are the product of an individual's perception of the world and hence can differ between people, which was the ontological stance of this researcher.

Epistemology is closely related to ontology but refers to the construction of knowledge. As with ontology there are two extremes, positivists argue that there is one objective world that can be discovered and understood. At the other extreme interpretivists believe that we construct the world with our own perceptions and understanding, and that these differences between how we experience the world are crucial (Denscombe, 2010).

The nature of the knowledge being sought, an understanding of the complex mixture of policy, leadership and culture, and the impact this mixture can have on pupil outcomes, dictated that this research was conducted from an interpretivist epistemological stance as it sought out the views of participants within free schools and theorised about the formation of culture based on these perceptions from the stakeholders inside of this educational policy. This policy, although constructed to aid leaders of new schools has also been externally imposed on leaders from central government, rather than being an evolving reality.

This interpretive perspective of the researcher, and the need to have adopted an approach that generated accurate and useful information on the opinions and attitude of interviewees, impacted on the approach taken to this research and dictated the methodology used. The ontology of this is that under which reality and truth are perceptions of an individual, and hence reality is an ever changing construct dependent on the frame of reference. It consequently followed that the epistemology welcomed a range of perspectives and was that in which knowledge was subjective and based upon experiences. This interpretivist approach is "people centred" (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2014, p.14) and looks for meaning from an individual's perspective. Within this paradigm the reality of school culture may be different for one individual to another, but each individual brings a valuable perspective. Within one free school shared experiences may lead to emergent trends and themes and hence there will be a need to consider a variety of individuals within a free school in order to canvas a range of perceptions both from leaders, teachers and pupils.

In order to clarify the position of the research it must be placed within a wider framework. Habermas (1972) produced the first typology of three kinds of cognitive interest, within his seminal theories on truth and knowledge, that originating from a technical interest, a practical interest or an emancipatory interest. Technical interest, often referred to as positivism, focuses on instrumental knowledge with an emphasis on replicable experiments in order to produce generalisable theories. Positivism describes the view that there is a truth to be discovered and lends itself to scientific or experimental research. In contrast practical interest or interpretivism, focuses on understanding relationships, people and socially constructed knowledge. Interpretivism describes a socially constructed reality and uses the subjective views and perceptions of individuals to construct theories assuming there is no absolute truth. The third typology, emancipatory interest focuses on promoting critical reflection and action and is often referred to as "Critical Theory" (Grace, 2000, p.245).

The nature of this study and the practical research questions posed, concerning the understanding of culture within new schools and individuals perceptions on the leadership of this culture, logically

required practical interest (Habermas, 1972), as it sought to understand the relationships between people and a culture, and how these are formed within a new school, rather than an absolute truth.

The purpose of this research was therefore to produce "knowledge-for-action" for existing and future leaders within free schools rather than "knowledge-for-understanding" as defined by Wallace and Poulson (2003, p.23) within their work defining five types of "intellectual project". Despite attempting to be as objective as possible and being interpretivist in nature this research was not conducted from a disinterested standpoint and so does not truly seek to understand as in Wallace and Poulson's (2003, p.23) "knowledge-for-understanding" framework, which was defined as research which:

> Attempts to develop theoretical and research knowledge from a disinterested standpoint towards an aspect of the social world, in order to understand, rather than improve, practice and policy and their underlying ideologies. (Wallace and Poulson, 2003, p.23).

It sought to:

> Develop theoretical and research knowledge with practical application from a positive standpoint towards practice and policy, in order to inform improvements within the prevailing ideology. (Wallace and Poulson, 2003, p.23).

Ribbins and Gunter (2002) identify six knowledge domains within studies on educational leadership, allowing research to be mapped within a wider framework. This research will take a humanistic approach which, "seeks to gather and theorize from the experiences and biographies of those who are leaders and those who are led" (Ribbins and Gunter, 2002, p.375).

Continuing with the interpretivist approach, the research questions dictated that the evidence collected was qualitative in nature, and took a phenomenological approach (Denscombe, 2003). Phenomenology (Scott and Morrison, 2006, p.170) places "strong emphasis on interpreting the meaning of phenomena and the focus is on human action and its interpretation". This focuses on interpretation of events and leads to "multiple realities" (Scott and Morrison, 2006, p.170) shared by groups of people. Within this study of start-up school culture the perceptions of different groups of people within this shared reality had to be considered as potentially significant and hence data had to be collected from a range of stakeholders. Qualitative research is concerned with perceptions and

attitudes towards set experiences, and so analysis looked to identify trends and themes within the qualitative data collected.

In summary the research undertook was interpretive with an aim to understand and improve practice within the framework of the new policy on free schools.

3.3 Methodology

As this thesis aimed to identify trends and themes present when a new culture was created within a school, within the context of the government's free school initiative, and then develop an understanding of how this culture was translated to practice, the methodology appropriate to this research was a multiple case study, with an aim to "focus on one instance of a particular phenomenon with a view to providing an in depth account of events, relationships, experiences or processes", (Denscombe, 2010, p.52). This methodology allowed a comparative study into a deeper insight into the similarities and differences of a small sample of similar cases with an aim to highlight and discuss transferable themes, and those which may be mutually exclusive, though looking at these particular perspectives, and was therefore manageable within the small-scale research that took place. It was essential that multiple cases were considered and compared to ensure that the research questions, which consider free schools as a whole can be considered. Due to the limitations on the scale of the research the multiple case studies were undertaken as a single day snap-shot of the cases, rather than a longitudinal study over their on going development, action research or an evaluative study. The element of comparative study possible within a multiple case study between several similar cases allowed for commonalities and differences to be discussed and the impact of different contexts to be considered within the limitations of this thesis.

A case study approach to research aims to study the complexities of a single case of interest. In education Stake (1995) suggests a case study may focus on people or programmes, and seek to understand them both in their uniqueness and commonalities. Denscombe (2010, p.55) states that

"the case study approach can use a wide range of social phenomena as the unit for analysis" which is supported by Yin who claims that the essence of case study research is in researching a, "contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 1994, p.13). The case study was therefore perfectly suited to considering creation of culture within a new social construct.

Similar to this research Stake (1998) bases his case study strategy in the interpretivist paradigm, claiming that truth is a relative construct and dependent on the observer's perspective on any case. The way that people perceive and construct the world is often similar but not the same supports Bassey in his work on case studies (1999). Throughout these case studies the participant is given time to tell their story on their perspective of the reality of a start-up school culture and this allows the researcher to develop an in depth understanding of the critical themes and context within this participant's experiences of the new school. As in many cases set within the interpretivist research paradigm data chosen to be collected is verbal, which is more in depth than the quantitative data collected by a positivist and allows a deeper understanding of the school considered in each of the case studies.

The case study does not aim to intervene or experiment on cases observed, but to develop a theory to help the researcher understand the context (Cohen et al., 2008) and then through reflection to inform new practice. Case study researchers must then accept that there may be multiple perspectives on the case studies, and also that there is no one correct or absolute perspective on the case (Stake, 1995). This supports the notion of researching school culture development within an interpretivist paradigm as there will be no singular truth, but a range of perspectives on the impact of the new cultures formed.

Case studies receive much criticism due to their lack of generalisability, possibility for bias and small sample size (Gorard, 2013). Even within a multiple case study such as this the small sample size reduces reliability but does allow for an in-depth understanding of the case in each of the sample

schools. Whilst it is difficult to generalise from such a potentially unrepresentative sample it does provide a detailed narrative and description of the culture within the free schools studied and allows for understanding of the complexities of the case.

Whilst this size of sample is invalid according to Gorard's (2013) work Thomas (2011) argues that a quest for generalisability can inhibit social science and that case studies "owe their legitimacy and power to the exemplary knowledge of these studies rather than to their generalisablity" (Thomas, 2011, p.211). Thomas (2011) continues to emphasise that a sample by definition is a "portion that shows the quality of the whole" (p.62) and that this contradicts the purpose of a case study which is to look in depth at a specific, chosen, case. Elliott (2008) agrees that investigating complex social interactions should not become a quest for a representative sample but "an inquiry into the ethics surrounding the creation and use of research" (Elliott, 2008, p.115).

This research will be explicit about the context of each school studied and it is hoped that the findings, whilst not being generalisable, may show some commonality between schools and hence be relatable to other new schools within a similar context, or may at least generate future hypotheses for consideration within new cases.

3.4 Research Methods

> Although interview can be used for the collection of straightforward factual information, their potential as a data collection method is better exploited when they are applied to the exploration of more complex and subtle phenomena. (Denscombe, 2010, p.173).

The complex phenomenon of the creation of culture, and what influences this culture and how it is reflected in practice is therefore appropriate interview material. This allowed for insight into opinions, emotions and experiences that would not have been possible through a written questionnaire (Denscombe, 2010).

3.4.1 Semi-Structured Interview

Within the methodology of multiple case study the method of a semi-structured interview with each interviewee was used. With a semi-structured interview the interviewer had a clear list of areas to be addressed and key questions to answer, but was prepared to be flexible in the order to which these are considered. This allowed the interviewee to develop ideas and have the flexibility to extend areas of importance (Denscombe, 2010, p.175). In the context of developing an understanding of free school culture semi-structured interview was chosen as it allowed clear topics to be discussed and questions to be answered, but a flexibility to let the interviewee develop ideas and answer open ended questions. Later, when analysing the data this then allowed for the interviewer to establish which themes were of importance to the interviewee, and identify congruent patterns between the cases. Within this research semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to ask similar questions to a range of stakeholders within each school (Appendix 1), focusing on their involvement in planning or first implementation of the culture, how explicit the culture was within the school, key stories to describe the culture and if there was a gap between the intended culture from the school leadership and the culture experienced by those within the school.

The conceptual framework from the literature established in chapter 2 was used to establish themed questions (Appendix 1) that were then asked to each respondent in order to allow for comparison between findings and reliability between cases. The method of semi-structured interviews allowed the interviewee to expand upon the themes within the questions that they placed most importance with, and allowed for key themes to be extracted and compared both within each case studied and between the different cases. This allows new themes to emerge from the interviews, which have then been analysed with regard to the literature framework.

It was important to address validity within the method of semi-structured interview as it was important to establish if the interviewee was telling the truth. The choice to interview a range of different stakeholders allowed the researcher to check facts were collaborated between sources, and

this triangulation increased the validity of the interview data. The perception of all respondents was considered equal due to the interpretivist nature of this research, and hence all perceptions are considered to be that respondents own truth. The semi-structured interview questions (Appendix 1) were constructed in order to address the research questions and used the conceptual framework built from the existing literature to shape questions in order to further enforce the validity of responses. Validity of emotions and feelings about culture, and if these observations were linked to the original government policy are much more difficult to triangulate (Denscombe, 2010), and so questions focused on asking the respondent to recall stories and experiences rather than feelings (Appendix 1), however ultimately any emotions must be considered to be the perception of the interviewee and within the interpretivist paradigm is to be considered valid. The use of a comparative case study approach allows for findings to be compared and any anomalous findings linked to personal situations identified.

Implicit in using any interview method is the significant role of the researcher in the qualitative data collected, and how this data is then analysed. Denscombe (2010, p.178) highlights this as the "interviewer effect" and discussed both methods to minimize this effect and the possible impact on data collected, which are discussed below.

3.4.2 Documentary Analysis

Interviews were conducted during a one day visit to each of the sample schools and following this visit a secondary method of document analysis and observation was used to triangulate findings. Such a short visit did not allow the researcher the time for ethnographic study of the organisation visited, but it did allow time for observation of activities and routines and collection of documentation such as photographs of key artefacts, prospectus', Ofsted inspection reports and websites, which could then be used to establish if the interview findings were corroborated. Denscombe (2010) refers to the use of document analysis of websites, specifically home pages and their analysis in terms of text and images. All documentation came from the public domain, and its validity needed to be established, due to the nature of the documentation as websites and prospectus' authenticity, representativeness

and meaning was defined by their purpose. Credibility however needed to be taken into consideration, all website and prospectus' documentation along with branding of the school will have had a huge impact as marketing material. In this context however, documentation has been used as a secondary source to triangulate the information provided by the interviews and so gave an additional layer to the artefacts of culture discussed. As such this documentation provided secondary data which allowed for some methodological triangulation during analysis of findings.

Burton et. al. (2008) describes documentation as "an essential source of information for a large proportion of research studies" (Burton et. al., 2008, p.109). In this thesis documentary analysis has been carried out on the external first Ofsted report for each case study school, an external, national publication; the home page for the case study school website, electronic media produced by the organisation and the prospectus for prospective new pupils, a document produced by the case study school. This was then supplemented with observation recorded during the interview day, photographs of key artefacts of culture, a visual source (Denscombe, 2010) and field notes from the researcher's observations. The use of documentation has the clear advantage of reducing bias, as "the data already exists in a definitive form" and "cannot be individually designed to suit a particular research purpose" (Burton et. al., 2008, p.111). Denscombe (2010) does however highlight the need to be aware of the purpose and author of any document analysed as the credibility and validity of this data needs to be established.

Documents have been considered individually and assessed for credibility, authenticity and representation. The author, audience and purpose of each document analysed has been considered along with its content. The style and structure of the language used, the choice of style and display have been coded using the same themes as the primary interview data, and then key aspects have been considered and linked to the primary findings.

3.4.3 Population and Sample

The research questions aim to understand how culture is developed within the new free school initiative in England, and therefore the population researched must be English free schools. In wave one, September 2011, twenty-three mainstream free schools opened, of which sixteen were primary schools, five were secondary schools and two were all-through schools. In wave two forty-seven mainstream free schools opened in September 2012, nineteen primary schools, twenty secondary schools and seven all-through schools. Finally in wave three, September 2013, seventy-five mainstream free schools opened, twenty-six secondary schools, thirty-five primary schools and 9 all-through schools (Department for Education, 2016). Due to the time limitations on this thesis the sixty-nine secondary and all-through mainstream free schools were considered for the population of case study schools as they were now established enough to observe the culture created and imbedded.

Bassey (1999) does not discuss the need for a method to sample the entire population for a case study, which contrasts with Gorard's (2013) view that without a truly randomised sample any generalisations would be invalid. In order to manage the practicalities for an in-depth, multiple case study research into culture this paper will focus on five schools, selected at random, from the government issued list of open free schools (Department for Education, 2016), from the sixty-nine schools which were mainstream free schools in wave 1, 2 or 3 and which offered secondary provision.

The sample will be selected purposely to ensure heterogeneity (a range of geographical locations and social contexts) and within the bounds of the purposeful sample of secondary free schools to ensure homogeneity (all schools in the same sector and age so that they experience the same political structure and climate). This sample will then allow for comparison as to how culture has been planned and implemented in different contextual settings, but still allow time and resources for an in depth study within each of the five sample schools, and hence the cultures to be descriptively analysed and different confounding variables to be identified. For this research a purposive sample within the population is essential in order to ensure a range of contexts is considered, within which the

leadership of the schools will be asked to consent to research. The headteacher of each of these selected schools will be written to, explaining the nature of the research and asking for consent to interview four members of their school (Appendix 2). If required this will be followed up by telephone to establish if consent is given for the research.

One of the advantages of conducting a case study within five free schools is that once consent and a relationship has been established there should be no attrition in the sample, and a very high response rate. Free schools can be encouraged to participate as in-depth research of their culture will help them to evaluate and improve internally, giving them an incentive to assist research.

Within each of the five case study schools four interviewees were purposely selected, in partnership with the head teacher, in order to collect information on the formation and realities of the culture within the school, and to explore the differences between this culture and existing non-free schools. In order to collect a range of perspectives within each case the four interviewees were selected within the following categories, a head teacher who was involved in the application for the free school, a member of the senior leadership team, a 'main scale' teacher and a pupil.

It was decided not to sample the initial founder of the school, if separate from the headteacher, the government personal responsible for the creation of free school policy or the parents who chose to send their pupils to the free school, despite all of these groups representing key stakeholders. Whilst these groups would represent a future extension to this research it was decided that they would not offer any substantial increase in data with regard to the specific research questions asked in this thesis and hence is beyond the scope and time restraints of this thesis.

Due to the small scale nature of the research has not be possible to ensure heterogeneity within the sample of each teacher and pupil in terms of their gender, ethnicity, age or personal contexts as Gorard (2013) recommends in order to allow for true comparison and generalisability between samples. Interviewees have been selected purposely due to the time they have spent within the case

study school and their experiences from setting up the school to the day-to-day realities within the school now. The four selected categories give some triangulation to any facts stated within the interviews, but also give a range of perceptions vital to this form of interpretivist research. The founding head teacher has a unique viewpoint on the original bid for the school with the department for education and also can share the original vision and intended culture for the school, a member of the senior leadership team is placed to discuss strategies for implementation of the culture and can also triangulate the head teachers explanations of intended visions at the bid stage. A teacher and a pupil can both give separate perceptions on description of the culture and the artefacts by which the culture is created and hence give data on any intended versus emergent culture gap.

The interviews were conducted in person, in the case study school building, by the researcher and each interview was approximately 60 minutes long. The interview questions (Appendix 1), were structured from the theory studied, piloted within the researchers school to ensure understanding and validity of data to be collected, reframed (Appendix 3), and not seen by the interviewee prior to the interview. All four categories of interviewee were asked very similar questions, re-worded for pupils in comparison to educational professionals (Appendix 1 and 3), but aimed to give the same strands of comparative data. Due to the flexibility of the semi-structured interview some questions were adapted as the interviewee was allowed to talk on themes that were important to them and of hence of interest to the research. All discussion was recorded digitally and then transcribed directly from recording.

3.5 Data Analysis

In order to maintain objectivity, and reduce personal bias, the analysis of qualitative data was carefully planned and considered to form a clear link between data collection, interpretation and how this then leads to the development of new constructs and theories (Denscombe, 2010). Within this thesis data from both the semi-structured interviews within each of the comparative case study schools and the documentary analysis was analysed using a common set of codes.

3.5.1 Analysis of Semi-Structured Interviews

As the interpretivist nature of this study has led to a method of semi-structured interviews a narrative analysis was required to construct the respondents stories. Within this filtering, and distilling, of research, the analysis of data was considered as the three elements described by Miles and Huberman (1994, p.10) as "data reduction", "data display" and "conclusion drawing and verification". These are considered as "three concurrent flows of activity" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.10) and so must be considered as interconnected processes which the researcher works concurrently between.

Data reduction is concerned with the selection of focused text from carefully checked transcripts. Within this research the 20 transcripts, from the five schools, have been carefully checked, read, re-read and pre coded with temporary constructs highlighted within the conceptual framework from the literature review. The nature of semi-structured interview allowed the respondent to focus their answers on themes of value and so emergent themes were also highlighted and given codes. Grounded theory was then used to establish key categories from the emergent themes collected to then loop back to the literature on these emergent themes and consider if the themes highlighted could be linked to or extend the conceptual framework established in chapter two. This process enabled findings to be validated when themes from within the established literature were identified within the transcripts and also allowed identification of any original findings within the transcripts.

Data display takes the reduced data and organises the information into clear categories of themes to allow conclusions and inferences to be found between establish literature and comparisons within and between the case study schools. Coding was then used organically throughout the data reduction and display to identify and classify themes using open codes which emerged from the data during collection and were used to categorise the text. These codes were then used to build up matrices to display and allow for concurrent themes to be identified between cases (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Each semi-structured interview was transcribed, and coded using emergent themes from the respondents. These themes have then been grouped and a further fine, detailed coding has been applied to allow for the analysis with relation to the research questions. The interviews have then been coded a third time, with relation to the conceptual framework developed in chapter two. The three levels of coding have then been transferred to a matrix which has allowed themes to be linked to research questions and the conceptual framework, the analysis of which will be further explored in chapter five. Finally close scrutiny of the key documentation collected for each of the five schools has allowed coding using the same themes which have been added to the matrix to allow for triangulation of findings.

In order to consolidate findings, highlight missing links and check the qualitative data collected for any missing trends all twenty transcripts were then word counted, using a specially designed program to consider all the text. Key words were then ranked according to frequency of use, and considered per school and per stakeholder group interviewed.

3.5.2 Analysis of Documentary Evidence

Documentary evidence collected was then also read, re-read and pre coded using the same codes as those identified by the conceptual framework for the interview analysis. Emergent themes from interview data allowed the documentary evidence to be further reduced and coded using the same key themes distilled from the interview data. The tone, use of language and purpose of the documents was considered within this distillation, focusing on the actual meaning of the words, and the impact of these artefacts on the culture of the school.

Both inductive and deductive reasoning was used, as codes from both the literature analysis and own emergent themes were combined to establish the key findings using a constant comparative method of analysis (Thomas, 2011).

Once the data from both the interviews and documentary analysis had been fully coded the final stage in analysis was the combined conclusion drawing and verification process, by which the researcher is "noting regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, casual flows and propositions" from the data collected (Miles and Huberman 1994, p.11). Themes and patterns from both the interviews and documentation codes were compared using matrices within each school studied to research how the culture has been disseminated and how the planned culture was reflected throughout the whole institution. The themes have then been compared across the five cases studied to investigate any possible emergent themes with an aim to understand and explain the underlying reasons, which may be transferable to other free schools, and may support or extent existing literature.

3.6 Reliability and Validity

It is important to consider the trustworthiness of data to be collected, as evidenced in Krefting's (1991) contextual work into qualitative studies in occupational health, and hence evaluate the authenticity and quality of the research (Bush, 2007 in Briggs and Coleman, 2007). Within this consideration it is important we also "strive to seek quality and trustworthiness within the context and frame of the research we undertake" (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2014, p.25).

This research aims to generalise only within the schools studied, due to the small sample size, and cannot be considered to be externally valid due to the variation between the contexts of each free school. Whilst it is not universally generalisable it may be transferable to other similar situations and may be used to inform hypotheses for further study, or reflection upon internal policies and strategies within the cases studied.

Validity "tells us whether an item measures or describes what it is supposed to measure or describe" (Bush, 2007 in Briggs and Coleman, 2007, p.91). Internal validity considers if the research accurately

represents the phenomena or case studied and describes the perceived truth, whereas external validity refers to if research can be usefully generalised.

Internal validity can be enhanced within a research project such as this, and can be assured using mechanisms such as piloting and triangulation, (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2014, p.36). However internal validity may also be compromised as objectivity is challenging within qualitative research and the researcher must take measures to ensure bias does not intervene whilst leading interview answers or during interpretation of findings. Every attempt has been made to ensure validity through objective structured questioning based on theoretical research, effectively piloting all interviews at an additional free school (Appendix 3), methodological triangulation, respondent triangulation and a strategic method for analysis of transcripts.

Reliability can be defined as a study in which the "operations – such as the data collection procedures – can be repeated, with the same results" (Yin, 1994, p.92). Whilst reliability was initially a positivist notion it is still applicable to qualitative research as defined by:

> A good level of reliability means that the research instrument produces the same data time after time on each occasion it is used, and that any variation in the results obtained through using the instrument is due entirely to variations in the thing being measured. (Denscombe, 2003, p.300).

Thomas (2011), in contradiction, claims that the "notions of reliability and validity have been imported from particular kinds of research" and that their "meaning in the case study is far less clear" (p.63). He claims by definition of a case study "there can be no assumption from the outset that, if the inquiry was to be repeated by different people at a different time, similar findings would result" (Thomas, 2011, p.63). He concludes that in a case study such as this validity, reliability and choice of sample are less important than your case, your description and the conduct of the case study.

In order for this study to be reliable the data collection instruments, in this case the semi-structured interview, had to be meticulously designed and piloted using a test-retest procedure. Questions asked must be accessible to the subject, unbiased and clear. Within this research the four interviews were

all piloted at the researcher's own school, which fitted the sample population as a wave two secondary free school. Questions were piloted on four interviewees which fitted the requirements for each category, and responses transcribed and analysed for key themes. Each transcript was then studied considering if any ambiguity in questioning style was apparent, or if any question had to be re asked in order to establish understanding, with a particular focus on if pupil responses showed understanding of questions asked (Appendix 3). Questions were then re worded to form the final interview questions where necessary to ensure the interviewee could comprehend all areas (Appendix 1).

Triangulation is used to describe the technique of data collection from more than one single point of view (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2014). This can be split into "methodological triangulation" which utilises numerous methods and "respondent triangulation" which poses the same question to different groups of respondents (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2014, p.30). Due to the nature of this study as a small scale qualitative multiple case study large scale methodological triangulation was not practical, although some document analysis has been used to triangulate responses.

Respondent triangulation has been used within each of the cases to increase validity. Within this study a variety of respondents have been drawn from a single group (in this case interviewees from five different schools) and respondents have also been selected from more than one respondent group (headteachers, senior leaders, teachers and pupils). This allows for triangulation of a range of perspectives both within a school, and between schools, to enable an enhanced validity of any themes or emergent patterns, as the questions asked will be the same of each group.

It should be noted that whilst outside of the scope of this research both time triangulation (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2014, p.30) which considers how respondent views may alter over an extended period of time in a longitudinal study, and "space triangulation" (p.30) which considers how respondents may differ between larger geographical cultures, such as the US charter school movement and Swedish free schools, would form an interesting extension to this work.

As already discussed in this chapter the researcher is central to interpretivist research and although objectivity will be a conscious focus the researchers own identity will have a "bearing on the research and the expression of its outcomes" (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2014, p.32). The choice of semi-structured interview further establishes the significant role of the researcher in the qualitative data collected, and how this data is then analysed. As the researcher is both involved in the study of Educational Leadership, and a free school practitioner herself so is inevitably imbedded in the situation and the analysis. It should be noted that as a result of awareness of these limitations the researchers own school will not be considered as a potential sample as there are some very specific issues with the bias of insider research (Mercer, 2007). Emergent themes must originate from research analysis and coding, and enforced by the literature, rather than due to existing personal experiences.

3.7 Ethical Issues

As the case study seeks to observe the culture of existing free schools and the potential links to an external government initiative it should not change any part of the education of the pupils involved, and hence has no ethical implications on the pupils within the schools sampled (Bassey, 1999). The issue of ethics within educational research contains many sub-strands which have been summed up as:

> Respect for the dignity and privacy of those people who are the subjects of research… the pursuit of truth … the right of society to know. (Pring, 2000 p.43).

Within this case study, the most relevant ethical issue is respect of the subjects of the research. All interviews have been conducted using the Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA, 2012) and additional guidelines from the University of Birmingham, as the research has obtained ethical permission from the University of Birmingham (Appendix 4). The researcher has strongly considered the responsibilities to all participants, including asking for voluntary consent both from the school and the individual participants after informing them of the style and area of research, and obtaining consent to have the interview recorded and transcribed as part of a piece of research (Appendix 5). Interviews have taken place at the case study school during a normal working day and participants

will be allowed to leave the research at any point during the interview process. All research collected has remained confidential and the participants have remained anonymous in this report and have not be referred to directly or linked to any school or institution.

3.8 Summary

This chapter has placed the research conducted as interpretivist, within the humanistic domain, qualitative in nature and taking a phenomenological approach. As such the proposed methodology is that of a multiple case study considering five purposely-sampled cases of secondary wave 1, 2 and 3 English free schools. Within each case the method of semi-structured interview will be used to collect and analyse data from four purposefully sampled respondents. The following chapters will consider these findings and their analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR – FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the research undertaken with relation to the research questions posed:

2. Have free schools developed a unique type of school culture due to the government initiative founding them, and if so what commonalities do free school cultures show?

3. To what extent can a founding headteacher of a free school control the emergent culture of the new school? Which levels of this culture can they control, and what methods do they utilise?

4. Do leaders perceive a value to leading a strong culture within a new free school, and if so should the application process be altered to include the planning of this culture?

This chapter will present findings relevant to the above research questions by theme which form the conceptual framework. They are consequently relevant to each question, but a more explicit and direct answers to each question will be considered in chapter 5. Findings will be linked to research questions, and analysed in depth with regard to the literature in chapter five.

Through a detailed literature review, in chapter two, key concepts were found that serve to structure this presentation. The complex nature of organisational culture, and more specifically school culture is represented in the literature under a combination of key terms. The findings are presented against key terms extracted from the literature, which were observed during the research, and demonstrate how different schools and different individuals use such complex concepts in response to the questions posed.

A second group of themes, those emergent from the data, have also been considered in line with Ground Theory as expounded by Corbin and Strauss (2008). The outcomes of the twenty semi-structured interviews have been fine coded using the key terms from the conceptual framework developed in chapter two and new themes that have emerged from the preliminary reading of the data. Close scrutiny of the key documentation collected for each of the five schools has allowed coding using the same literature and emergent themes, which have been added to a matrix to allow for triangulation of findings.

The key terms from the literature (See section 2.4.2) observed during the research are:

- explicitly stated values
- mission
- aim and vision
- school motto and branding
- routines and structures
- heroes and stories
- rituals and tradition
- recruitment of aligned staff
- moral purpose
- high expectations
- intended culture
- emergent culture.

The key themes emergent from analysis of the research were:

- challenge and opposition
- support and imitation
- personal risk
- the founding generation
- identity as a free school.

Findings are presented with relation to each of these deductive and inductive themes below, it should also be stressed that whilst each theme is presented separately below it is how these themes are linked into one culture that is of interest to this thesis.

4.2 Summary of Findings

Inevitably the precise culture of each school varies, according to its context. However, there is considerable overlap between what contributes to the culture in each school. Where a school culture is articulated and how it is enacted in a new school is of interest, and the similarities and differences reveal a range of approaches to establishing a new culture.

4.2.1 Context of the Five Schools

The five sample free schools were from five different local authorities, and so offered a range of inner city, town and rural contexts. Four of the five case studies were secondary schools, with one being an all-through primary and secondary school combined. Two of the schools were wave 1 of the free schools (the first cohort of schools to be given government approval), two were wave 2 and one was wave three. However the wave 1 and 2 schools all opened in September 2012. None of the sample schools claim to be faith based, all are mixed gender and all plan to be smaller than average sized schools with year groups planned to be from 60 to 150 pupils.

	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4	School 5
Wave of Application	Wave 2	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 1	Wave 3
Opening Year	Sep-12	Sept 2012 (Aimed to Open 2011)	Sep-12	Sept 2012 (Aimed to Open 2011)	Sep-13
Founded by	Multi Academy Trust	Teachers	Teachers	Parents	Parents and Community
School Premises	New Build	Converted Office Block	New Build	Converted Old Hospital	Converted Building on RAF base
Local Authority	Bradford	Bedford	Warrington	Wandsworth	Oxfordshire
Faith	None	None	None	None	None
Gender	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed
Age Range	11 to 18	11 to 16	11 to 18	11 to 18	4 to 18
Opened with	Yr 7	Yr 7 and 9	Yr 7	Yr 7	Reception, Year 1 and 7
Planned size of one year group	112	100	120	150	60
No of Pupils on Role when sampled	224	393	152	244	171
Oversubscribed	Yes	No	No	No	No
Pupils from Minority Ethnic Background	High	Low	Unknown	High	Low
Pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium	High	High	Low	High	Low
Pupils with Special Educational Needs	High	Low	Average	Low	Average
Ofsted Judgement	Outstanding	Requires Improvement	Good	Good	Good

Table 1: Contextual information on the five case study schools sampled.

4.2.2 Explicitly Stated Values

The literature search revealed that values are one of the core components of an organisation's culture. Within the research it has been apparent that the interview respondents all see the importance of explicit values. Indeed the research outcomes show schools 1, 3 and 4 all show how all staff and pupils espouse the same values and how important they are. Other schools, however, (e.g.

school 2 and 5) focused more on how the values are enacted, rather than how often they are recited. Evidently frequency of recital and the recognition of value enactment are key factors.

The word 'value' was used 178 times during the 20 interviews, second only to the word 'culture'. How and where these values are espoused does vary. For example, members of School 1 refer consistently to three values across all four interviews, its website, prospectus, newsletter and values are recognised within its Ofsted report. "The academy's core values of hard work, trust and fairness are fundamental", states Ofsted (2014a, p.1). In order to enact these values the school has three drivers of mastery (which they define as: the urge to get better and better at something that matters), autonomy (the desire to direct our own lives) and purpose (the yearning to do what we do in the service of something larger than ourselves). Schools 3 and 4 are equally committed to the explicit espousal of the values, and use an acronym to remember a higher number of values. School 4 states in the prospectus;

> At (School 3), all students will be taught to embrace seven distinct values, which will continually referred to throughout their journey in the academic, creative and leadership arcs. ASPIRE. A: Aspiration & Achievement: Having the highest of aspirations and ambitions to achieve and be successful. S: Self-Awareness: Developing a full understanding of oneself. P: Professionalism: Being Proud of oneself and acting accordingly. I: Integrity: being honest and truthful at all times. R: Respect: For one's self as an ambitious learner, one's peers and one's environment. E: Endeavour: the ability to work hard to achieve one's dreams.

Similarly school 4's prospectus enforces their values acronym as; "BE BOLD B: Be 100% No excuses. E: Excellence. B: Bravery. O: Opportunity. L: Leadership. D: Determination", and in addition their Multi Academy Trust has six core principles.

School 2 also has three values, states the headteacher, "we wanted to be a values driven organisation… respect, honesty, high expectations", however these values are quoted less frequently, both in interviews and documentation, and there is not a drive to regularly repeat the values. In contrast School 5 has no explicitly stated values.

The four schools that have picked explicit values can be seen compared by theme in table 2. It should be noted that whilst the theme of each value may differ slightly, the methods used to embed these values have been observed to be very similar. The most popular themes to use for values in these case study schools have been the concepts of respect for others, working hard and an internalised view of doing 'the right thing'. High expectations and academic success, aspiration for the future, resilience and opportunities also featured.

	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4	School 5
Aspiration			Aspiration		
High Expectations		High expectations		Excellence	
Academic Success			Achievement		
Resilience				Determination Bravery	
Respect	Trust	Respect	Respect, Self Awareness		
The right way	Fairness	Honesty	Integrity Professional		
Hard work	Hard work		Endeavour	Be 100% No excuses.	
Opportunities				Opportunity Leadership	

Table 2: The themes of the five case study school's values

School 1 and 3 have put a real emphasis on the importance of repetition of their values, which could be found in every avenue of research undertaken. School 2 and 4 also seem to be widely referring to values across the interviewees and documents analysed.

The interviews also revealed a strong belief across all stakeholders at schools 1, 3 and 4 in the power of the values to create culture. At School 1, the senior leader claimed,

> You will hear a lot of repetition amongst the staff and the students about hard work, trust and fairness being our values and our key drivers of mastery, autonomy and purpose, you will see that in every conversation, it is not falsified that is the critical thing.

This was supported by the teacher interview, "When you need to do something difficult it is on that value that your decisions turn". The pupils also utilise the values, "We have to abide by our core values and the drivers, they permeate pretty much everything we do" with the teacher confirming this, "it was incredible how the children reinforce the values". There was a real focus from the interviews at school 1 that the values had to be truly believed and used, "increasingly schools are talking about values but I think it is only, I think it can only actually work if all senior leaders believe in it", claimed the teacher interviewed. The senior leader also placed importance on the consistency of the values, "I call it cultural cogency. There is complete cogency in this organisation, there is complete cogency in what is said to teachers, in what is said to students, in what is shared with parents, everything is discussed and makes sense". The reality of the use of these values to set a culture is transparent in all the interviews:

> I saw what the school said on its blurb about values and culture and everything, but every school says it. But (School 1) it actually has this culture, and believes in it, or is values driven. There is no cynicism or reservation about having the culture permeate into everything. All the perfectly English teachers are still totally unembarrassed about total enthusiasm for the culture, for the values, for the belief that things can be achieved. As they (the students) become older, more sophisticated, they will have slightly less cliché ways of sort of conveying the beliefs. I do not believe the belief will actually chance and that is really exciting. (Teacher, School 1)

School 3 consolidates the importance of using the values, as the headteacher stated,

> We have got some really strong social norms here for the staff so it wouldn't be unusual after a meeting for me or Andy to take a member of staff aside and challenge them about their values in the meeting if they were being emotionally unintelligent or if they were showing a lack of integrity, because maybe they were trying to bury another colleague, that sort of stuff is absolutely forbidden at (School 3), and we expect the same from staff as the kids. The difference is how explicit you make those values and how you reinforce them.

The headteacher at School 4 supports this need to reinforce the values; "they are memorable the children know them", and the teacher "its entwined in the fabric of our school - its not a party line, it really is, and I actually find myself constantly telling, in any way shape or form, if someone isn't behaving that they are not one hundred per cent, they are not showing good leadership to other people. It really is entwined in everything we do." There was a clear need at school 4, as with school 1, to embed the vision and values and link it to day-to-day actions, "We obviously have our values that set us apart, that kind of 'be bold' and 'no excuses' that set us apart from people, that is what

culture is to us here. It aligned everyone as to what our school would be and how we would live out the values and how to develop a culture in a school by everyday actions".

School 2 also places importance on the creation of values but has found this to be a more difficult process than the schools with explicit, frequently recited values. As the headteacher said, "One of the first thing we defined as a school were our values. We wanted to be a values driven organisation" but also admitted, "The difficult bit is actually turning it into a reality". Again there was statement of a need to believe in the values from a teacher at school 2, "We needed to not just play lip service to these key ideals but actually we needed to make sure we were enacting on them, every conversation I would hope that I was modelling it."

Two of the schools, 3 and 4 use an acronym to remember the values by, "the values kind of made this acronym which students, parents, the community, staff could relate to and refer to at all times", explained the senior leader at school 3. This appears to work as the pupil described, "we follow the values which will keep us on track throughout life and as we get older as a person. The pupils who have left are going to regret it in later life because they are not going to have the experiences, the opportunities, and they'll like forget the ASPIRE code, but when we leave we will never forget it". Similarly at school 4, "BE BOLD, which is an acronym of our values", the headteacher says, "they are memorable, the children know them". Her senior leader expands, "the whole schools says the mantra".

School 5 is the exception embedding a less explicit culture without stated values; "lots of cultural things people are now taking for granted and they are not questioning, you just have to sort of hold the line," stated the headteacher. "There's always a buzz, like when people are looking forward to something, and you can feel it all around the school" confirmed the pupil interviewed.

Where there is a trend for explicit values and or, these schools embed these values in conversations, training, signs, marketing and as many routines and traditions as they can, "the values are in every

interaction with our young people, reinforced every day" explained the senior leader at school 1. "(The headteacher) still does 'state of the nation', you need to let the staff know regularly, on and on and on, you need to keep reminding them, this is what we are striving to do" reiterated the senior leader at school 2.

Interestingly, the word count indicates that the word 'value' was used 71 times by the four stakeholders in School 1, 60 times by school 2, 45 by school 3, 20 by school 4 and 25 by school five. This made the use of the term 'value' much more frequent than 'mission' which was only used 5 times, 'aim' with 4 uses or 'vision' with 42 uses, it therefore appears that explicit values, in four of the case study schools, more so than aim, mission or vision in these cases, are considered very important contributors to the culture.

4.2.3 Mission, Aim and Vision

The literature considered the terms mission, aim and vision to be discrete concepts, all created consciously or unconsciously as a result of the culture of an organisation. However, it is apparent in the research that these terms are frequently interchanged, and that stakeholders often regard them all to represent the same concept to the organisation. Each of the case study schools have chosen to embed a different mixture of the terms value, aim, mission, vision and motto, outlined in table 3. However the depth to which these terms are entwined into the culture of the organisation also varies.

In addition to their values, all of the schools also place some importance on the concept of an over-arching aim, mission or vision, but interchange these term in different ways, which can be seen in table 4.

		Aim	Mission	Vision	Motto	Slogan
School 1	Headteacher					✓
	Senior Leader					✓
	Teacher					✓
	Pupil					
	Application					
	Ofsted					
	Prospectus					✓
	Website					✓
	Newsletter					
School 2	Headteacher			✓		
	Senior Leader					
	Teacher					
	Pupil					
	Application	✓				
	Ofsted					
	Prospectus	✓		✓		✓
	Website	✓		✓		
	Newsletter					
School 3	Headteacher					
	Senior Leader					
	Teacher					
	Pupil					
	Application				✓	
	Ofsted				✓	
	Prospectus		✓		✓	✓
	Website		✓		✓	
	Newsletter				✓	✓
School 4	Headteacher				✓	
	Senior Leader					
	Teacher					
	Pupil					
	Application					
	Ofsted					
	Prospectus			✓	✓	
	Website			✓	✓	
	Newsletter				✓	
School 5	Headteacher					
	Senior Leader					
	Teacher					
	Pupil					
	Application		✓	✓		✓
	Ofsted					
	Prospectus					
	Website			✓		
	Newsletter					

Table 3: Evidence for usage of each of the case study school's aim, mission, vision, motto and slogan

	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4	School 5
Aim		✓			
Mission			✓		✓
Vision		✓		✓	✓
Drivers	✓				
Sentence	✓				
Motto			✓	✓	
Slogans	✓	✓	✓		✓

Table 4: Choice of language for aims, missions, visions and similar terms

School 1 chose not to use any of these terms but in the headteacher's message on the website replaces them with, "we all have a sentence that states the lasting impression we want to leave on the world. Our academy sentence is: "The academy ensured that all students succeeded at university, or a real alternative, thrived in a top job and had a great life". School 2 has an aim, stated on the website as; "Working with the community, our aim is to improve the prospects of students through a supportive learning environment, expanded curriculum, and top class teaching" and a vision, "(School 2) aims to become a centre of educational and personal excellence for students between Year 7 and Year 11, playing a key role at the heart of the community it serves". School 3 has a mission statement on the inside cover of its prospectus; "To develop in each of our students the academic skills, intellectual habits, qualities of character and leadership traits necessary to succeed at all levels and become successful citizens in tomorrow's world". School 4 has a vision in their prospectus; "Our vision: We have high aspirations for all our pupils. We aim for the highest standards of educational achievement. We respect and value every pupil and support each to reach their full potential". School 5 choose to have a linked mission and vision in their original application form; "Our Mission Statement for the (School 5) and its students will be: Unlocking their future today. Our Vision Statement for (School 5) and its students will be: by equipping them with excellent academic qualifications and a 'can do' attitude, students will be able to forge the right pathway for themselves as well as making a meaningful contribution to their society." In contrast to the frequency of recital of the values no one was able to quote the vision, aim or mission verbatim, and there was much variation in terminology

used between documentation and interviewees, but all stakeholders could articulate the same meaning and purpose behind the school.

For all five schools the themes behind the aims, visions and missions, when considered grouped together, tend to focus on achievement and academic success, aspiration and high expectations, a successful future, meaningful impact on their communities, resilience, respect and opportunities, as shown in table 5, and form part of the intended school culture.

	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4	School 5
Aspiration			*Aspiration*	High aspirations	
High Expectations	High expectations Excellence	*High expectations* Personal excellence		*Excellence*	
Academic Success	Achievement Mastery		*Achievement*	Achievement	Excellent academic qualifications
Future	Succeeded at university, or a real alternative Thrived in a top job		Successful life To succeed at all levels	Successful Each to reach their full potential	Future
Community	Diversity	Heart of the community	Environment Citizens in tomorrow's world		Meaningful contribution to their society
Resilience		Can do culture		*Determination Bravery*	A can-do attitude
Respect	*Trust*	Be Nice *Respect*	*Respect, Self Awareness*	We respect and value every pupil	
The right way	*Fairness*	*Honesty*	*Integrity* qualities of character		the right pathway
Happiness	Had a great life				
Support			We believe	Support	
No excuses	No excuses 100% Everyday		Proud *Professional*	*Be 100% No excuses.*	
Hard work	*Hard work* No shortcuts	Work Hard	*Endeavour* Work hard		
Opportunities	Autonomy Purpose		Leadership	*Opportunity Leadership*	

Table 5: The themes of the five case study school's aims, missions and visions *(Values included in italics)*

4.2.3 Motto and Branding

Only School 3 and 4 have chosen to attach much of their visible culture to a motto, both in Latin and translated. School 3 uses "Credimus - We believe" and school 4 uses "Fortiter ubique - Ever courageous", and both schools regularly use and value their motto, commenting on its significance in grounding each school in tradition. Ofsted state in their inspection of school 3, "This steadfast determination is reflective of the academy's values and motto, 'Credimus', which means 'we believe'" (Ofsted, 2014c, p.6). The motto at School 4 links back to the building's history explains the headteacher; "The motto was from the old hospital school, Fortiter ubique, the true translation is boldly everywhere. But because it was like 'to boldly go', like a Star Trek thing, we needed to modernise it, so they changed it to 'ever courageous'." Similarly to the frequent recital of values, where a motto has been chosen it is regularly recited, as the chair of governors writes in the prospectus, "Our aim is to create a school in which your child will be happy and successful, and live by our motto, Fortiter ubique, or ever courageous".

As a substitution or addition to a motto four of the schools have developed slogans or tag lines to remind stakeholders of the key values or aims of the school (see table 4). School 1 in particular uses these as artefacts, in all interview transcriptions, and found painted on the walls of the school, on banners outside the school gates, on the website and in the prospectus; for example, "Excellence is a Habit", "No excuses", and "Whatever it Takes". Similarly School 2, 3 and 5 use slogans on their prospectus, newsletters and business cards.

Branding the vision, motto or values of the school into everyday objects is a trend across each of the five schools. "You can get a badge for each value, so you have the word 'be bold'", explained the pupil at school 4 "my favourite thing about this school is getting badges, I love getting badges". Each school has a logo, used extensively on uniform, the school building, and all marketing material and paperwork. School 1 has three grey triangles, school 2 has a shield with three infinity signs on it in purple on gold, school 3 has a lion on a red and white shield with crown and two more lions either

side and their motto, 'Credimus' underneath. School 4 has a dog's head in brown on brown shield with blue and white check above and their Latin motto "Fortiter Ubique" below. School five has a green 'H' Logo with two hands reaching into it.

Each school has also chosen a colour, school 1 uses grey, white and red on much of their marketing, but strong bright colours to emphasis values and slogans around the building and website. School 2 uses gold and purple, school 3 red and black, school 4 uses shades of blue and school 5 uses bright green. There is a trend across schools 1, 2, 3 and 4 to heavily use their values and in case of schools 3 and 4, mottos, in their prospectus and marketing materials including their website and newsletter. School 4 chose to call their newsletter the "Courageous Hound" whilst school 3 have ASPIRE on every page. School 1 has a very simple six-page prospectus with very little text but each page dedicated to a driver or value and a sentence to define it.

All the schools, bar school 1, have opted for a serious academic and traditional school uniform consisting of a dark blazer with trim in the school colour and a school badge, a school tie, school v-neck jumper with coloured trim and a white shirt, along with dark trousers or skirt and prescriptive rules explaining accessories and sports kit. School 1 contradicts this trend, promoting choice and independence of students, and pupils can chose uniform in a variety of styles and three colours.

Signs and the school building are also heavily branded in some schools. School 1 has huge banners inside and outside with key slogans and values on in bright colours. School 2 has the vision up in reception and school 3 has a temporary building with many pull up banners depicting the logo, mission and ASPIRE code. School 4 relies on a grand building, as does school 5, but has heavily logoed and value driven signs and notices.

4.2.4 Routines and Structures

Embedding routines and structure within the school day were a key factor in creating culture within each of the case study schools, "We came down to a series of routines and practices we'd like kids to

follow, and the staff to follow in order to embed the academic culture", explained by the headteacher at school 2, a process that was mirrored at school 1, 3 and 4. School leaders at each of the schools emphasised a reliance on this strength of routine to allow freedom and creativity. "We have really strong routine, really strong structures. We strongly believe that through routines and rituals and structures it liberates learning and achievements", explained the senior leader at school 3. The teacher at school 3 gives practical examples of these routines, "So all the teaching in the lessons, they way they line up in the yard, how they come into school, how they dress, it's all underpinned by the ASPIRE values, the character we try to instil into them and their leadership values".

4.2.5 Heroes and Stories

There is a trend across all stakeholders and schools for telling stories about the founding of the school, "(The executive headteacher) comes in and tells us something new, like one time he said he went to America and he looked around all these private schools and he wanted to make one here, but he wanted to make it a free school and he wanted to make it successful" remembered a pupil at school 3. "We were moving (to the new premises) on Thursday and the phone call came in saying Ofsted were coming. We are ready for this, ready to show off our school", remembered the senior leader at school 5,

> That was then followed by them leaving on Wednesday and Thursday the children saying right we are going to help you move. The children being involved, at that kind of size where the children were involved and we had parents thriving to help and it is a real community school and it is very much a team the staff, parent the children in it, its everyone working together that then ran into the following week pay it forward week where the children went on a residential and those who stayed on site changed the front of the school from a strip of land into a garden that's out there now with the paved area, parents coming in to work alongside them Friday afternoon massive BBQ and primary school children running around with the secondary school children playing football together.

4.2.6 Rituals and Tradition

"The difficulty is that we had is that Wellington and Eton and Winchester have 100s of years of traditions, rituals, we had to try and deliver 100 years of tradition in the 12 months" stated the senior leader at school 3, but there is a trend in each of the schools to consciously try to introduce events

and rituals which depict the culture of the school, "There were tears streaming down my face because it summed up everything we were trying to do" described the headteacher at school 2 about his first school pantomime.

Schools have introduced a variety of annual or daily rituals, "In the morning we shake the teachers hand when we walk into the classroom and we do our mantra. So it like, its hard to explain, it just makes you happy", stated the pupil interviewed at school 3. "We have the tie ceremony, the aspire ceremony, staff have their gowns on" describe a senior leader at school 3. "We have the 'be bold' cup, which goes to the person who has done the most in the community", described the headteacher at school 4, she continued, "We also have annual prize giving and speech day which we have in September deliberately, so that the new year 7 get to see the standards and expectations that are being set and also reminds everyone".

School 5 admit that not all of these traditions are planned, "really good things happen by chance", described the headteacher. "We invented this thing called a tie ceremony because the ties were going to be ready on the 28th August and it was going to be chaos, but no its been brilliant, and every year we do it and I know other schools do similar things but it happened by chance, it wasn't part of the plan, and yet every parent is like 'are we having a tie ceremony? Am I invited?" described the senior leader.

The history of the area or building also plays a significant role in creating tradition at school 4 and 5, "We have our houses which are McGuire, Bader and Lind, they are named after pilots that were stationed at the air base" described a pupil at school 5. The head described the choice of school motto in school 4, "the motto was from the old hospital school".

4.2.7 Recruitment of Aligned Staff

School 5 highlighted the importance of recruitment, "It's come from (the headteacher) who always had a clear vision on how he wants the school to be, and I kind of think that was part of the

interview, that's why we were employed because we share the same kind of vision", explained a teacher, linking the vision of the school to the choice of recruitment of staff.

All adult respondents have considered recruitment of staff to be a key theme, "Values are the key thing that are conveyed through recruitment" articulated the teacher from school 1, "we recruit very hard based on our vision and ethos, you can't actually give them character" explained the headteacher from school 5, continuing, "it's hard to get the right people to fit the culture". The senior leader at School 1 agreed,

> Absolutely you can hire people into the school who are very talented and very capable and obviously have good track record but I think it is much more important to hire people that agree with our culture, or perhaps feel that the culture is something to do with their identity as well, we know they are going to flourish, staff induction is so important but recruitment is terrifying.

To complement recruitment there is a strong emphasis on induction and repeated training, for both staff and pupils, and in some cases parents, which has emerged from each of the schools. Again hanging much of the visible culture from values, "truly something we have imbedded within our induction process" described the senior leaders at school 1. "Right now this week we are doing reboot assemblies, he gets the children to buy in, its embedding the culture, the vision and really making sure that its communicated consistently, and repeatedly and reinforced, so that when parents buy in they know exactly what they are buying in to" explained the senior leader at school 2, she continued, "transition is so important, we've got to keep it contained so there's the least variation of the message".

This induction and training happened prior to the school opening, "We did a lot of get-togethers before the school officially opened" and with new staff each year, "I lead the (School 1) Way' for new staff, not indoctrination, but certainly to get people on-board with the culture" explained the teacher at school 2. "We have 3 days of INSET and then the first week back with the children we don't teach normal lessons, the children are inducted into the aspire values for a whole week" described the

senior leader at school 3. "It reminds everyone what they are about to go into in terms of hard work for a new academic year" stated the headteacher from school 4. Her senior leader continued,

> Every year we have an INSET week where all week we are off timetable and the children actually come in a week later than other schools, its all about gearing up the staff, towards getting staff on the same page, it aligned everyone in those two weeks on the school vision and what our school would be and how we would live out the values and how to develop a culture in a school by everyday actions.

As an exception school 5 is less explicit with its training, "I haven't had any specific training but it is always kind of embedded in our assemblies and tutor programme" explained the teacher interviewed. However the senior leader reflected, "This year we are going to have a proper staff induction day, and we are going to get people in and go through things like the culture and ethos of the school".

4.2.8 Moral Purpose

A strong trend observed when coding interview transcripts was repetition amongst many of the interviewees of a belief in every child, a drive to do the 'right thing', a moral purpose behind the leadership of a school. As articulated by a teacher at school 2, "This overarching idea that given the right circumstances every child should be capable of doing extra ordinary things". Repeated by the headteacher at school 3,

> You said what makes a good school? Well there has got to be a deep rooted belief that you can change a child's life chances that is not fixed or set, so it's the Future Leaders mentality, but it's also that idea that through values and personal beliefs you can change, you can change the way people think, and the way they perceive their own beliefs and change the outcomes for them that way.

Or as the teacher at school 1 articulated it, "the intrinsic motivation of wanting to see the children succeed". Every school mentions this; "here it is about the children and wanting them to do well", stated the senior leader at school 5.

Some of the schools talk explicitly about the concept of every child; for example "we believe every child, in the right circumstances, can achieve incredible things. And I do believe that... our job then becomes how do you create the circumstances so every child can be incredible?" (Headteacher school 2), who continues to say, "I was getting frustrated with the low standards, generally speaking - The

kids in Bedford are just as bright as everywhere else, we've got just as much money as everywhere else, the teachers work just as hard as everywhere else, something isn't right in our system - we want to put our roots down in Bedford, we want to be able to send our kids to state schools". Taking it to a personal level headteacher of school 2 concludes with, "We're in the salvation game aren't we? We are trying to save kids, you know. I haven't put my heart and soul and family life and my personal mental health on the line to just create another school where most kids can be successful".

Interviewees also discussed the concept of a growth mind set, "We are all incredibly self critical and really genuinely growth mind-set orientated" stated the senior leader at school 1, and the teacher school 1, "Intelligence and ability isn't a fixed thing so that we can constantly develop". The pupil at school 1 could also demonstrate an understanding of this theory, "they don't have to be clever, they just have to try their best, put in a lot of effort to prove their worth, because they want to make progress." Pupils at the other schools supported this, "(Do you have to be clever?) No I deliberately missed that out, because being in school is about education and gaining the intelligence, you do not have to be clever as long as you try" from school 2, "if you make a mistake the teacher puts you back on track", school 3, "It's ok to make mistakes, because no one is perfect", school 4, and "I don't think you have to be clever, it's just more of your attitude towards learning which is important" school 5.

4.2.9 High Expectations

High expectations of academic success and behavioural standards are central to each of the case study school's cultures. "If we want our students to achieve we are going to need a whole lot more than just compliance", explained the headteacher at school 1. "They do the right thing because it is the right thing to do", commented the pupil at school 1. School 1 claims to have very high expectations for behaviour of pupils, and embeds this by the use of routines, linked back to the school's explicit values and drivers. "The school is quite strict but in a good way. We have a lot of rules but we know they are all for the benefit of the students", continued the pupil. "You can't just drop a behaviour system into somewhere, it's about being values driven, that is very disciplined. If you don't have all the joy and the other stuff around it children will grow up to resent it" explains the

headteacher. "Our corrections are set incredibly high, we don't have a reliance on punishment here at all, we don't talk about it, we don't use the word. They put their hand up and very child in the school falls silent, so it took less than a minute for 224 children to respond to one adult. It sounds very draconian to have it so rigorous and routine driven but it is not at all, there is space to have joy, to go on, to be insanely creative", further demonstrates the senior leader. Ofsted agree, "Their behaviour in lessons and around the academy is exemplary, the academy is calm and orderly" (Ofsted, 2014a, p.1).

School 2 also aimed for high expectations for behaviour "We knew we wanted to have a zero tolerance culture on behaviour" stated the headteacher, "we came down to a series of routines and practises we'd like kids to follow, and the staff to follow in order to embed the academic culture". He evaluated the success of this, "were they well behaved? Yep… Do we have really strict at the start of lesson routines? Not as strict as I think they should be, within less than ten seconds they'll be silent. Other schools I have been in never attempted to get all their kids quiet." The senior leader linked the values back to the expectations for behaviour "this is what we are striving to do. So conversations with them (pupils), 'why have you come here?',' What sort of school do you want to graduate from?' You're going to make that excellent reputation because you are walking down the road in your trainers?" Ofsted only commented, "students are attentive" (Ofsted, 2014b, p.1) and the pupil agrees, "You tend to find at the start of the year the teachers are quite strict and ready, and then they kind of go downhill and start to become more lenient. I would not say it is military grade strict, but it is very firm but fair".

School 3 focuses on routines to embed high expectations for behaviour explained the headteacher, "we have very little, or no low level disruption, so the great thing is that the children are really self directed. It's all about having good character, we think that the rituals and the structures allow children to do that." Ofsted agreed, "they exhibit maturity beyond their years; they are polite, well mannered, considerate and caring" (2014c, p.5) and "students manage and regulate their behaviour well, both in and out of the classroom" (Ofsted, 2014c, p.5). Pupils also place importance on this,

"What is the most important thing to get right? Behaviour and standards." The senior leader links this back to the school's values, "we have really strong routine, really strong structure. We strongly believe that through routines and rituals and structures it liberates learning and achievements. Integrity is about doing the right thing at the right time in the right way when no one is watching, having a really strong moral compass."

School 4's high expectations for behaviour were observed by Ofsted,

> The academy put a very high emphasis on students' behaviour in and out of lessons. Respect for others, themselves and their new facilities are a key component of this ethos. All academy staff take an active involvement in the management and organisation of students; as a result of this, students are polite and courteous at all times. (Ofsted, 2013, p.5)

The headteacher also values high expectations of behaviour, "They all learn the social capital of how to sit, listen and be still and reflect", and the pupil's buy into this value, "you get a disappointment, and if you get too many you get a detention, and sometimes if everyone is talking and you are quiet you get a 'be bold' so that's really good".

School 5's use of relationships for expectations of behaviour was also commented on by Ofsted, "Students behave well around the school and in lessons. Their polite and enthusiastic demeanour is a strength and the result of teachers effective behaviour management. Mutual respect and positive relationships pervade the school" (Ofsted, 2015, p.5), however high expectations for behaviour were not commented on during interviews apart from by a pupil, "if pupils were being rude disrespecting the teacher, they'll give you a warning".

High expectations have also emerged with relation to academic success and aspirations for future life across four of the five schools. School 1 has focused on the aspiration outlined in their academy sentence that "all students succeeded at university, or a real alternative, thrived in a top job and had a great life", using the analogy of climbing a mountain to symbolise the challenge of achieving goals. The headteacher explained,

> We knew we wanted to raise aspiration through this idea of climbing the mountain to university. We have a transition day based at Leeds University and a residential... idea of actually getting them to climb a little mountain.

His pupil confirmed that this was working, "I want to go to a good university, maybe Oxford or Cambridge", and "their friends would want them to succeed". The headteacher returns his focus to academic achievement, "we have very high expectations, we sweat the small stuff… achievement first". The headteacher at school 4 supports this drive for high academic expectations and aspirations, "we do want them to have incredibly great GCSE results because C grades are not good enough for A Level and we want to have an academic sixth form that filters clearly into some of the best universities".

Pupils believe in these aspirations, at School 3, "I want a good education and I want and good job when I am older and no 'ah I have to get up for work' feeling", and at school 2 these expectations link back to the moral purpose "They just want the best for you. They not only want it academically but kind of socially."

4.2.10 Intended Culture

"We think you can actually create an ethos and a culture which is deliberate, which is intentional, which is planned and you can reflect on and improve as well", described a senior leader at school 3 on the advantages of a start-up school. The headteacher then elaborated on the process,

> Myself and (the executive headteacher) and (a senior leader) wrote the bid that was submitted to the DfE and that was the starting point to it all, myself and (senior leader) took (the executive headteacher's) ideas and made them into tangible systems. We took the Future Leaders values and rewove them through the ASPIRE code. We had the application that we gave the DfE because we had to tick boxes and the one we did in the background. The DfE wanted us to have all these policies that we churned out overnight that we were never going to use, in the background we were then working on what we really wanted our approach to be, what we wanted our approach on leadership to be, what we wanted our curriculum to look like.

Other headteachers who were involved alluded to culture planning in the application process, the headteacher at school 1 focused on what came after the application, "from when we put the application in I knew that I wanted, obviously, to replicate some of the best practise, obviously in the

application we didn't talk about the values because we didn't know what they were going to be. But I definitely think there was a flavour in there, in the application, that we would be values driven." The headteacher at school 2 also spoke a lot about the challenges submitting a wave one application,

> Actually I think in many respects for a lot of free school groups that haven't done schools before that's their starting point isn't it? They have a vision about how schools should be and how the kids will behave. The difficult bit is actually turning it into a reality, because you know, you will pick up 14 year old kids who have been to two or three schools in the last two or three years, and you know what they've been there, seen it, done it all before.

The headteacher at school five was not involved in the application process but was aware of the challenges, "the first application they sent was through one of the bigger chains, and it didn't succeed, it needed something that was much more local in concept". The headteacher at school 4 was also appointed after the application process, "it was about getting the philosophy and the mind-set of a head to align with the philosophy and the mind-set of the parent group and also aligning with the (MAT) schools. I was sort of the third person in the equation."

All leaders place importance to establishing a school culture. For example, headteacher at school 1, "School culture is not a means to an end but is an end itself, it's absolutely everything isn't it. I think teaching and learning is important, but actually if you get the culture right you can achieve anything". Head at school 2, "I always say that the culture is the things you do every day". Headteacher at school 3, "It's hard to separate culture and ethos, there are more semantic differences than there are quantifiable differences. The culture permeates the school, it's the rhythm that everyone buys into, so when you walk around a really good school there's like a rhythm about the place." Headteacher at school 4, "For me a culture is the unseen actions that underpin the way things work in a school, I believe you cannot achieve that high academic standard without a particular behaviour culture and ethos and so neither were considered in isolation". The headteacher at school 5, "School culture is your strong focus".

Senior leaders also gave opinions on what culture meant to them, the leader at school 1, "I don't think there is such a thing as an accidental culture. No that is not true there could be an accidental

culture, but I think it would be almost extraordinary for it to be as cogent as it is here". This was echoed at school 2, "I guess the way the school operates, and it can operate in a really efficient way, but it can also operate in a very dysfunctional way, and I think the culture is staff and students doing the right thing at the right time, without really any direction, almost a self-directed culture". The senior leader at school 5, "believe school culture is about the vision and values behind everything that you are doing and the drive for what you do for the children for the staff and those kind of element. Ethos is more of a feeling, culture being more of a, this is what we are setting out this is what we are growing as a team together".

4.2.11 Emergent Culture

For school 1, 2 and 3 the headteacher was involved in the writing of the original free school application, and so could plan to establish a culture from the application stage. For each school the application laid out an original "educational vision" however these have not necessarily matched the detail in the reality. A pupil at school 1 commented "(The headteacher) has an outspoken wish to be one of the best schools in the country, I think he had a clear vision of what he wanted to achieve for the school, he knew what kind of students he wanted and stuff like that". The headteacher at School 1 however said, "I didn't come up with the three values until I met with all the staff, we took them away it the first activity we did. I definitely think there was a flavour there, in the application, that we would be values driven". So the "values we came up with were with the first group of staff " but "I defined them (the values), I defined them which my executive principle thinks is significant. The drivers at the school I came up with, I had already worked those out". The ownership of this emergent culture, and therefore buy-in from staff, was clearly of real importance.

For each school there is a need to consider the differences, or gap, between the planned culture on the original application form, that believed now by the headteacher, and emergent culture. However, when questioned, interviewees appeared to recognise that changes have taken place, but often not to the underlying principles of the school since opening. Headteacher at school 1 supported this, "I think teaching and learning is important, but actually if you get the culture right you can achieve anything,

we tried to get that right straight away. We have refined it over time, but I don't think we have fundamentally changed anything". As did a pupil at school 2, "The kind of, I want to say aura, and the kind of values of the school are not much different now (to the start), you tend to find if people don't fit in with the respect and honesty they leave", and in addition the headteacher at school 3, "The values and culture are the same, the actual mechanism that we achieve and sustain those values and cultures have changed, I think that's the revolutionary part. The beliefs, they don't change, they're the self-guiding principles." In the less rigorously defined vision and values of school 5 a pupil explained, "They did have a vision for what they wanted the school to be like, but I don't think there has ever been like a set plan for the whole entire school. I think it's not made up as you go along, but it sort of works in harmony, and it just keeps flowing".

The application forms do show some features which have been changed such as a specialism for modern history at school 5 or redefinition of the meaning of the ASPIRE acronym at school 3, or the obligation to learn a musical instrument.

Some interviewees expressed an opinion that culture can be controlled, "culture is not something that you put on a piece of paper and it suddenly miraculously appears, it has to be cultivated, that needs to be done with everyone involved", claimed the teacher at school 2. "We have done values deliberately, or you can hope and do it by osmosis and hope for the best" explained the senior leader at school 3. The headteacher at school 5 also gave his opinion, "the question is, is that how we want our culture to operate here? And ultimately you set that tone".

4.2.12 Challenge and Opposition

Each of the schools has experienced challenges and oppositions during their creation. These have varied from school to school but consist of a mixture of building issues, local media opposition, local political opposition, Ofsted judgements and challenges recruiting staff and pupils.

For example, school 2 has had many challenges in its creation, so much so that its opening was delayed, as the headteacher recalls, "I think all free schools have been through political journeys. We're probably in the top three in terms of difficulties." The school had "huge planning permission problems right through to the first term after we opened, it was like the dance of the seven veils, half past 9 on the morning we opened we were issued with a breach of condition notice by the local authority. There has been massive politics, leaks or accusations put to the local press, it was so horrible, it's just disgusting". The facilities of the converted office block have created more challenges "We had snow on the inside of the windows that first winter" which the headteacher claims was because "I was so busy fighting the political battles I had no energy to fight with the EFA".

Political opposition also surrounded school 3 explained the headteacher, "Some of it was emotional and some psychological and some was political. Even parents you know, they don't understand necessarily what a free school is so we had to do a massive campaign through the community to promote the school". Despite making a reference to the LA in their application, "despite making early contact with the LA it was not possible for them to meet with representatives of the proposal until late May" School 3 met with challenges from the Warrington LA as they openly campaigned to re open a school where one had previous been closed, creating local political opposition, "the local authority had just closed the school so they actively marked it against us and ran adverts in the local paper, how dare we open another school without their consent?" recalls the headteacher. The headteacher also emphasised the challenges recruiting staff to a free school, "It causes a lot of problems for you from a recruitment point of view, because I think people have a perception of what a free school means, they're more inclined to look at it as a political device rather than an academic institution". They have still not been able to move into their new building, and so are in temporary premises, "its taken us three years, which is a long time, and I imagine that there would have been free schools that would have buckled under the pressure" stated the headteacher.

School 4's initial challenges involved the media portrayal of it as elitist, "there was a lot of controversy in the press, it was all over the Evening Standard saying it was a school for bankers children and it

was great for the elite" remembers the headteacher, which was followed with financial barriers, with a low number of pupils on role, "the funding is lower for free schools and it makes it incredibly challenging" worried the headteacher. After their disappointment at their Ofsted grading the headteacher reflected on this challenge, "we dug so deep into our spirits and our soul and into our practice, and we would never have done that level of reflection if we had got outstanding so I think ultimately it has put us in a stronger position."

The headteacher of school 1 openly admits most of their press has been positive but that, "you are under a lot of scrutiny, you don't want to get used as a political tool". This level of scrutiny means that for parents and the media, "all kinds of things get blown out of proportion".

School 5 also struggled with recruitment of staff and pupils due to its status as a free school explains the headteacher, "Year one was difficult to get the right people and then it has become a lot easier. A lot of things don't help, not having a set rating and being a school that no one has heard of, they are all taking a huge risk, so you are trying to persuade staff that the provision is strong enough, that you can create something that is worthwhile and then you were fighting lots of your first (parents) saying you have to stay with us, you have to hang in there."

The challenges and opposition each school has faced appears to have lead to a real resilience amongst staff, giving them an even great commitment and ownership to the new school.

4.2.13 Support and Imitation

Similar to the above section each of the new schools has experienced a unique mixture of support from sponsors, other schools, parents and community. This support has been critical to the successes of the case study schools, especially when faced with the challenge and opposition discussed in section 4.2.12.

School 1 and 2 have had strong support from a multi-academy trust, which sponsored the application for the free school "At first we were kind of piggy backing on (the MATs) reputation, but we are kind of developing our own now" explained the senior leader at school 1. School 2 is also heavily involved with the MAT sponsor that the parent group approached to lead the school, and the headteacher really values this support, "What is brilliant, and why I went to (MAT) over any other network was because you were given the freedom to create, but if it's not working they will come in and tell you what to do."

Parental support has also been key to the five schools, for example the pupil at school 1 claimed, "My parents are really supportive of this school, they are really glad I came here" and Ofsted supported that with, "parents are highly positive about the academy's work" (Ofsted, 2014a, p.1). Throughout their challenges opening the headteacher at School 2 said there was a "massive outpouring of support from parents" and Ofsted said, "Parents and carers are very positive about the school" (2014b, p.1). School 4 has always been about the parent group who founded it, and is still supported by these parents, who the headteacher describes as,

> A group of parents that got together, in order to establish a new school in the area and a new community school with really high standards and expectations. Having a parent group it was very much about what they wanted to happen so they knew they wanted a very academic school with an enriched curriculum. For me it was about getting the philosophy and the mind-set of a head to align with the philosophy and the mind-set of the parent group.

School 3 place much value in the support role of their executive headteacher, as the headteacher explained, "(He) is sort of lynch pinning this with all his massive experience".

School 5 was sponsored by the local community, which has been very positive explains the headteacher, "The fact it had a very local driver that was business involvement and definitely parent involvement. The proposal grid was led by the property developer on site working with the resident group on the site and then working with other local business people". The local press have been positive, "local press have been really good and even our Oxford press which is probably more

educated politically. We have had a really good ride from them, I think there has been two reasons, a genuine need for places and we have also had good parent response rates".

There was a trend for respondents to place importance in imitating strategies from established successful academies, private and grammar schools, and US charter schools along with concepts from academic literature. School 1's founding headteacher took much of his original inspiration from academic literature and "could also apply some of the things I learnt at Future Leaders, the behaviour system came from (a mentor's) school, going to America, the US Charter Schools and also best practise from schools I had been to visit and worked with in this country."

The headteacher at school 2 also lists in his interview a selection of school improvement books he has used, along with a long list of successful UK academies and free schools he has visited. The senior leader at school 3 really focused on learning from other outstanding schools in the UK and charter schools in the US. They also referenced a large collection of academic works and school improvement books. Interestingly the headteacher also, "looked at our own independent sector, what is it they are doing that is different, and why cant we you know bottle that and use it in any school? The values we use started off with trying to emulate the independent sector". The headteacher at school 4 named a collection of professional peers that work as a support network, "I had great advice from people" but relies heavily on the structure set up by her very successful MAT and the influence of other schools within that network. School 5 are also keen to "poach" ideas from other successful schools, and prepared to fund CPD into academic courses on school leadership, but are also enthusiastic about peer assessments of their own school explained the headteacher, "we kept exposing ourselves to everyone else, if they were a successful school, to come in and look at us, be really honest and say what you have seen today".

4.2.14 Personal Risk

Any involvement in a new school contains an element of risk, for founders, leaders, staff, pupils and parents. As described by the founder and headteacher of school 2, "The nice thing about being in a start-up school is all the successes I'm going to take credit for, but I then can't blame any of the failures on anyone else", but the risk he says, "put my heart and soul and family life and my personal mental health on the line". The headteacher at school 3 agrees, "if my neck ends up on the block at least I'll have been true to my convictions", as does the headteacher at school 4, "I had to buy in, to believe, to take it on". The headteacher at school 1 considers the risk of any headship,

> There is no guarantee you are going to be successful in any school, just because I have been successful here doesn't mean I am going to be successful at another school. It's got to be the right fit. Its like football managers isn't it, brilliant at one club, then move to another club and it doesn't work, so you have to be very careful with your career really.

Finally the headteacher at 5 reflected that there was a, "real sense of responsibility and accountability which is exciting, but if things are going wrong they can become very personal very quickly, a real sense of ownership".

Staff have expressed a variety of views on their identity as free school teachers, "I couldn't see how the particular form of the structure mattered, just the quality of the structure" stated the teacher at school 1. She continued,

> I don't understand how free schools could be at all different from academies, other than them always being founded. My old school was in a LA and provided very little structure or guidance or leadership whereas this school is not in a LA, but has a real strength of governance and leadership from the MAT group. The new school makes it easier, but I have plenty of friends who are in new schools, and they are now just bog standard comprehensives, they didn't take advantage of the opportunity.

However other staff contradict this and feel they take on a risk moving to a new school, "they are all taking a huge risk so you are trying to persuade staff" explained the headteacher at school 5, supported by the senior leader at school 3, "We took a leap of faith, there were four of us who started

in year 1, we'd handed our notice in, so we took a big leap of faith". The senior leader at school 1 didn't agree, "I was very aware and familiar with the process of free schools, whether or not it was going to drive my willingness to be here, not at all, absolutely not, it neither worried me or excited me, it was a neutral response." Other staff have been given warnings from friends and prior colleagues, "they say I wouldn't touch a free school with a barge pole" said the senior leader from school 5 and the senior leader from school 2 acknowledges the risk staff take, "I think the negativity, the spin around Free Schools" she continues with "His (my old Head's) first words were 'strange choice'. I just felt whenever I told people about I was going to work in a free school it was like the garlic came out and the crosses. I felt that really deeply when I came here, and for about a year afterwards, a little bit of embarrassment that I had come to work for a free school". This risk of buying in to the new school extends to parents and pupils, as articulated by the pupil at school 1, "you are kind of guinea pigs".

4.2.15 The founding generation

The personal values and moral code of the founding leader have emerged as an important trend to all respondents, "it comes back to your own values through, we want the best for the kids, and if my neck ends up on the block at least I'll have been true to my convictions", recognised the headteacher from School 3.

There are many examples of stakeholders placing importance and trust in the leadership of the founder, "I think it is the quality of the leadership, the quality of vision and leadership that permeates into everyone else. (The headteacher's) dream because of Future Leaders. I think it gave him a visionary, a real vision of what could be achieved in that frame. The model, the vision of the school, was a vision in his mind", stated the senior leader at school 1. This was replicated at school 2, "It was just (the headteacher) - you really need that s%&t hot leader, sorry, you do, you need someone with the drive, the energy, I get that strength from him, a really, really driven leader."

Many interviewees highlighted the concept of a 'free school teacher', for example articulated by a pupil at school 2, "There's a certain type of teacher that (the headteacher) chooses, a free school teacher". "This school attracts very keen staff. You don't have to be the best teacher yet, you have to have the belief of wanting to become one. It is more about your general attitude and values towards children, can they all achieve?" describes the teacher at school 1. She goes on to say, "It's not that the adults work harder than they did in my last school... there is just no embarrassment about being utterly enthusiastic". The teacher at school 4 also describes his attitude as a free school teacher,

> I am brought into a vision for this school and that's why I go the extra mile I would love to say I would sit in another job and I would push myself this hard, I would, but I am brought into this ethos at this school and that was achieved by good leadership when we started and was achieved by fantastic buy in and introductory staff, if that wasn't the case I don't think I would go as much above and beyond as I do.

There is an implied sense of pride and ownership in many of the interviews, "so we were involved planning the different aspects, it was nice at the beginning, we got the opportunity to literally try what we felt was best, ownership of our own areas" said the teacher at school 2. "We started a hash tag and our hash tag is 'never want to work anywhere else' and I don't ever want to work anywhere else", claimed the senior leader at school 1 in her interview.

The relationship between founding staff members and pupils was also an emergent theme, especially at school 4. The teacher at school 4 said, "The way the pupils respond to founding staff members are profoundly different". He continued to describe the values as, "part of my fabric because I am a founding staff member. If you spoke to a non-founding staff member then it might be a different outcome and that is what, as leaders of the school we are trying to eradicate because we want that consistent approach". The senior leader agreed, "It was really tangible to see how students react to founding staff members". The headteacher reflected on this, "I had created an ethos with ownership across the founding team, it was year two which was our toughest year because we didn't prepare as well as we should have for the new intake of staff, I assumed a little too much by osmosis and from deliberate guidance from middle leaders and that just didn't happen."

The pupils at all schools also seem to note a difference in staff, "The people that were with us the first year obviously know us a little better and they've got more memories with us, that sort of thing, I think they do sometimes get a little bit more respect than some of the newer teachers", pupil at school 5 or at school 2, "Everyone has a strong relationship with some teachers".

The first cohort of pupils form the final group of founders. "We found in our first year we got quite a reactionary intake of people who chose us because they didn't like another school" observed the headteacher at school 5. This original, golden generation, have caused some issues explains a School 4 teacher.

> We set out and we didn't want to have any groups that were golden children and have that first born scenario. I think unintentionally we created that, unintentionally we drew out a situation where our second year group feel like the middle child, they felt like the second children to us and we have had to do a lot of work with them to get them back aligned, in the second year we didn't have the ability to say you are the first to have ever done this so it was a challenge. You will still get some of the year nines at the moment still thinking they are favourites although we try to irradiate that.

4.2.16 Identity as a free school

Many respondents have articulated a particular identity as a free school, much of which has originated from the challenges described in section 4.2.12 and the risks the founders undertook described in 4.2.14.

It is interesting to consider the choice of name of each school, and the differences identifying with the term 'free school'. School 1, 3 and 4 have all named themselves ending in the term 'academy' whilst school 2 and 5 have 'free school' in their name. The headteacher at school 1, reflected, "we did not call ourselves a free school and that was a decision made on purpose. We didn't know what the connotations of being a free school would be in the future. I suppose we were conscious of it, otherwise we would have put free school in the name wouldn't we?" the headteacher at school 4 also chose not to use free school in the name, "Our roots are through the free school policy but now we are an academy". Whereas the headteacher at school 5 uses the name, "it is in the title, people refer

to us as the free school".

It is also interesting to consider if the schools acknowledge their free school roots in their marketing materials. School 1 does not mention being a free school, apart from to celebrate being the first secondary free school to be judged outstanding by Ofsted on the school website. School 2 has a section in the prospectus and website dedicated to "What is a Free School?" School 3 proudly states in its prospectus it is the first free school in Warrington, but refers to itself as an academy. School 4 does not mention being a free school. School 5 refers to itself as a free school throughout, and includes a page on "What is a Free School" on the school website.

The research undertaken links the concept of a free school to an opportunity to create smaller, more friendly, schools. A pupil at school 2 summarised how important this was to the concept of a free school to them, "I think I always thought that was what a free school was, a family and kind of friendly place". "I felt there was a gap in Bedford for a smaller school, maybe that's why kids in Bedford don't do as well, maybe we need to change the style of school", stated the headteacher at school 2, his senior leader emphasised with this, "we're a smaller secondary school and you do get that family feel", supported by the pupils, "the family culture of the school". School 5 really value their small size, "it is all about individuals. It's all about the fact I walked around with a visitor the other day and I could name check and have a personalised conversation with every child we met in the corridor, you know exactly what is going on for that child because you know them that well" described their senior leader. "Its very much about providing the very best for a small number of children in a supportive environment", although she did concede that this family environment did have an impact on high expectations of staff and students, "we needed to kind of break the niceness if that makes sense". School 1 also uses the family analogy, "It is very, very much like a family" states the senior leader. The teacher from school 3 comments, "You know pretty much all of them which is good, its like a little community", and the senior leader describes an event as "Its their kind of rite of passage into the (school 3) family". School 4 in contrast does not emphasise its small nature or family feel, apart from with regard to its family dining policy.

There is also a trend for discussing the links between small schools and happy and safe pupils in the interviews. The headteacher at school 1 focuses on the unique nature of these family interactions, "those moments where we all get together are quite, well it doesn't happen at other schools" and links this to "our children are really, really happy here, and understand why we do things the way we do".

School 2's pupil extended this friendly atmosphere, "Here, which is also small, you know the teachers, and you have that close bond with the teachers. You see the teachers more as friends, the fact I can be mates with the teachers" and "It is weird it is very strict but more relaxed, friendly and safer, more comfortable here. You cannot explain it is just a nice place to be and to learn. As far as I am concerned I am learning I am safe and I am happy." School 3 pupil's pupil comments that the school is, "completely different, they made you feel like you were at home and that you don't get all scared when you come into school".

The teacher at school 5 states, "A small school cares about every single child, knowing about every child really well, knowing families and parents really well" and their Ofsted report comments, "Students talk about a harmonious atmosphere in the school" (Ofsted, 2015, p.4). A senior leader at the school does highlighted some of her concerns with a small school," They had been such a small team with such a small group of children they had got very comfortable which I think can be quite dangerous so it was almost they needed the outsider to come in and go ok…"

Another key contributor to the culture of a free school has been an opportunity for freedom and creativity in a new school which the headteacher from school 3 summarises, "Free schools are out there to encourage innovation, and all the things that go with that like high standards and socially mobility".

The concept of a new start-up school has sparked creativity and innovation in some of the schools, the headteacher at school three values this, "really good schools are able to get consistency and

innovation and that's where you get really strong culture". "It's a sense of innovation, we set the rules rather than changed the rules", claims the teacher at school 2, which he gives as a reason to work at a free school, "I suppose it was the opportunity to do something new and different. I would have never got that kind of power at any other school". Following this trend the teacher at school three values this freedom to create, "Very forward thinking, very innovative, and you're allowed to put your own mark on it, your own stamp on it. You've got that freedom to create a curriculum that's going to be really forward thinking". The senior leader at school 3 agreed, "very unique experience to have the opportunity to basically build a school from scratch, you put your own ideas in and then see it all come to finish, you'd probably never get that opportunity to make decisions and to see those decisions become reality so rapidly". School 4 and 1 mirror this trend, although with less examples, the headteacher at school 4 again links this freedom to innovate to her recruitment, "What is brilliant about why I went to (the MAT) over any other network was because you were given the freedom to create" as does her teacher, "I like the attraction of coming and setting something new up and that's what drove me to a new school", or as the senior leader at school 1 valued, "space to be insanely creative".

However the headteacher at school 5 counters this, "our educational vision is not really quirky, its very common sense".

All five schools have chose to extend the school day to "give opportunities for personal development through experiences beyond the formal curriculum" for school 1, "ensure every student experiences the broad range of courses we offer", school 2, "ensure each child reaches their potential" for 3, "extend and enrich the curriculum" for school 4 and "we do an extended day, we like the fact it gives us opportunities to do English, Maths and science ever single day of the week" in school five, according to each school's marketing material.

Extra-curricular activities have an elevated position in each of the five schools, who all offer a large range of extra-curricular or elective offers from fencing to languages to musical instruments to

debating. There is a trend for compulsory enrichment or elective courses within the extended school day at each of the schools to ensure participation. For example school 4 has "Over eighty clubs at the moment for three academic year groups, which covers everything from every type of sport you could possibly want to drama, art and creativity to ensure they have breath to their curriculum".

The extended days fit with the values of hard work and no excuses that schools 1, 2, 3 and 4 advocate, the teachers from schools 1 and 5 clarify this, "the social norms are around hard work and around positivity" and "I know I work hard but I am prepared to put in the hours of work". It does however come at a price for some staff and students, the teacher at school 4 commented that the, "day to day difference is the extended day and that hits quite hard at times when she (his wife, also a teacher) is back home at five and I've still got kids teaching at five" and the senior leader at school 5 comments, "doing eight till four five days a week is a lot for an adult to do in a normal job, it's an awful lot for a child to do". The headteacher recognises this at school 2, "I think we do ask a lot of the staff here, but I think this was a school set up by teachers, so we recognise the stresses of the job".

4.3 Summary of Key Findings

This chapter outlines the key findings, grouped by concepts uncovered through the literature review, and also those which emerged through scrutiny of the data emerging from the research. This has highlighted some emergent issues, which will be debated in the analysis chapter.

It is very clear from the findings that the culture of a new school is already very complex, and is governed by a large number of interconnecting elements, which have been discussed in the chapter above. These themes are present in all of the case study schools, although to a lesser or greater extent dependence on what elements of culture the leadership of the school has chosen to focus on, and the unique external factors on each school.

On a basic level it is possible to consider the complex culture as cultural inputs and resultant outcomes, with the cultural inputs divided into those which the leadership of the new school can influence, plan and set up and those elements which are due to external factors to the school (Cray and Mallory, 1998), which can be seen in figure 5. It therefore follows that whilst no element of a culture is more important than any other in shaping a new school culture, there are some elements of culture a headteacher can plan, and some they need to be aware of and plan to integrate, rather than have absolute control of, and some will emerge as a result of other cultural elements.

<table>
<tr><th>Cultural Inputs</th><th>Cultural Outcomes</th></tr>
<tr><td>Leadership Controlled Elements:
explicitly stated values
mission
aim and vision
school motto and branding
routines and structures
rituals and tradition
recruitment of aligned staff
moral purpose
high expectations
a planned/intended culture</td><td rowspan="2">heroes and stories
the founding generation
identity as a free school
emergent culture</td></tr>
<tr><td>External Factor Elements:
challenge and opposition
support and imitation
personal risk</td></tr>
</table>

Figure 5 – Visual representation of how the elements of culture interact

CHAPTER FIVE – ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter contains analysis and discussion of the findings from the empirical research presented in chapter four. These findings have been linked, grouped into key themes and compared to the accepted literature (see chapter 2) and then subsequently presented thematically under the structure of the research questions, considering the similarities and differences between stakeholder's opinions on key themes.

5.2 Analysis of Findings relating to Research Question Two

5.2.1 Introduction to Research Question Two

Research question two considers if the unique climate of new government policy has impacted upon free schools and formed a unique 'free school culture' common to all new free schools. In order to consider this, it is necessary to reflect upon emergent themes within the individual school cultures presented and then analyse the commonalities and differences between these cultures for the five case study schools. The emergent culture of a free school then needs to be compared to the accepted characteristics of school culture discussed in relation to research question one in chapter two to see if there are any unique characteristics of culture found in free schools. This should enable conclusions with regard to research question two: *Have free schools developed a unique type of school culture due to the government initiative founding them, and if so what commonalities do free school cultures show?*

Analysis relating to this research question are grouped in three sections below;

- the key themes of each case study school's culture
- the perception of the stakeholders on unique school culture

- evidence linking the culture found in the case study schools to the government free school policy.

5.2.2 What characteristics define free school culture?

Culture has been defined in chapter two to be the underlying basic assumptions of any organisation (Schein, 1992). There is much debate in the literature between the interchange of the terms culture, ethos and climate especially when used by practitioners. To simplify this issue any use of the terms ethos and climate within the findings will be considered to be an individual's perception of the observable forms of culture.

Culture can be considered at three levels: basic underlying assumptions, espoused values and artefacts, argues Schein (1992). Hofstede (1991) splits culture into a concentric onion model with values in the centre, surrounded by rituals, heroes and symbols. The complication of analysis lies in understanding the interaction between all the components, to provide a culture (Hofstede, 1991).

Each of the five case study schools had a distinct context and history that has influenced their individual school culture. This was expected as organisational culture is accepted in the literature to be a combination of internal and external factors to the school (Cray and Mallory, 1998). What has been interesting in the findings presented is that along with the anticipated individual school cultures there has been a trend for commonalities between the school cultures studied, despite their varied contexts. Each of the cultures has been observed to be highly values driven, shown very high moral purpose, great loyalty, a small family feel and an obsession with high expectations.

Figure 6 below gives a visual representation of the findings relating to the characteristics of culture in each of the five schools and the context experienced.

Common Traits of a 'free school culture'	Individual School Context and Traits
Explicitly stated values Moral Purpose High Expectations Desire for tradition Desire to learn (imitation of others/literature) Trust in Visionary leadership Founding generation Motivated staff Personal 'Buy-in' and ownership Innovation and creativity Naivety – total belief that they will succeed Long days and pride in hard work Defensive Team (personal risk and external opposition) Identity and loyalty driven Small family school	School 1 MAT founded Highly structured and routine driven
	School 2 Local political issues Lone school Teacher founded Family cosy small school environment
	School 3 Local political issues Teacher/ Ex Headteacher Founded Latin motto
	School 4 Historical Building Parent/MAT Founded Latin Motto
	School 5 Historical Building Lone School Local Business Founded Family cosy small school environment No explicit values

Figure 6 – Visual representation of the overarching culture of the free schools researched

Deal and Kennedy (1988) consider the formation of culture to consist of shared values and beliefs, heroes and heroines, ritual, ceremony, and an informal network of cultural players and stories. Deal and Peterson (1999, p.2) expand this list to "unwritten rules and traditions, norms, and expectations that permeate everything: the way people act, how they dress, what they talk about, whether they seek out colleagues for help or don't, and how teachers feel about their work and their students". Hofstede (1991) gave these ideas structure, believing that values were in the centre of culture, with

rituals, heroes and symbols all encircling in his concentric Onion model. The analysis below will be structured to fit with Hofstede's model.

Values

As Hofstede (1991) suggested values appear to be at the centre of culture within the five free schools studied. Published lists of explicitly stated values are used as a vehicle to convey more implicit values of the organisation in four of the five schools. Often these values are regularly recited or visualised around the school, and there is a drive amongst leaders to embed these with meaning in everyday school life. As a result there is real clarity of understanding amongst staff and pupils. The frequency of recital was key to three of the five schools with all pupils and staff able to quote all values and definitions verbatim.

It would be simple to assume these values at the centre of Hofstede's 1991 concentric model, or as level 2 of Schein's 1992 model as espoused values. However in reality these recited and published list of values are an artefact, or symbol, of the schools, easily put into place by leadership and clearly observed, but with a less clear meaning. In order to consider if these values are truly the espoused values of the organisation there is a need to consider if they are truly "lived" within the organisation and hence show us the underlying culture. This gap between the intended culture (that of the planned and recited values) and the experienced reality of culture will be considered in section 5.3.2.

It should be noted here that the terms mission, aim and vision appear to be confused and interchangeable terms between interviewees, and in none of the schools could be recited. However the values chosen by the founding headteacher or staff articulated a more implicit underpinning vision to each school, but packaged in the vehicle of explicit values. The schools all clearly have consistent visions, but the meaning of these were articulated using different language by all stakeholders, unlike the recital of values. This may suggest that the recited values are espoused values, as they seem to be embedding a clear, if indescribable, underlying vision for the culture of each school.

The use of explicit values as a vehicle for culture is not unique to free schools, but there does appear to be fluency with regard to these values across all stakeholders, which might be distinctive to new schools. A start-up school is in a uniquely privileged position to start small, and grow a new culture based on values, ensuring that it is key to every new stakeholder as they join, and used to inform decisions at all levels.

So far we have considered only the existence of explicit values in the schools studied, however the choice of values embedded also appears significant. Each of the four schools that have used explicit values have chosen to focus these values on certain themes. There is a trend for themes of **high expectations** and **aspirations** and of **moral purpose**, **respect for others, hard work** and **doing the 'right thing'**.

The value of high expectations extends to both pupils and staff. In all five schools pupils are expected to aspire to university and given opportunities to experience future goals. Academic success is a key focus of all five schools, with high targets for individual pupil's performance as well as overall school performance. Hard work and resilience are marketed as the means to achieve this lauded academic success, and celebration, rewards and extrinsic motivation are heavily used to embed this drive. Staff also feel an obligation to work exceptionally hard to set up and maintain the new school, a theme that will be considered below.

Leaders in all five schools promote a value of moral purpose, to both staff and students, either implicitly or explicitly. To pupils this is articulated as **respect**, **trust**, **integrity**, **honesty** or **fairness** and a concept of **doing the 'right thing'**. Staff also buy-in to the value of moral purpose, all demonstrating a drive to do the right thing by their pupils, to give all pupils opportunity for the future regardless of their background. This moral drive within the five schools researched fit in with the first of Mill, Craven and Tooley's (2014, p.369) research which concluded the main three motives to open a free school were "improving 'the quality of education in less affluent area', 'a desire to establish a

school with a different philosophy from those schools in the area' and rectifying 'a perceived shortage of places'."

Rituals

The day-to-day routine and structure has varied between the five schools sampled. School 1 for example has been rigorously structured and routine driven from day one with an underpinning belief that structure liberates. At the opposite end of the scale both schools 2 and 5 have had little rigorous routine and day-to-day structure in their earlier years, opting for a flexible family feel to their daily routines. This variation in structure and ritual is in part due to the size of school and identity of all five schools as small family schools, and how this has manifested itself in the culture of the school.

Building tradition quickly has also been a conscious trend across the leadership of all five schools. Several of the schools have expressed desire to imitate the culture of successful private and grammar schools, much of which is based on decades of tradition, and so there is a passion amongst the headteachers to create traditions for their own schools which embed their values and culture. Two of the schools have used the mechanism of a Latin motto, which this thesis considers consciously or unconsciously has been used to give the impression of elite academia, and three of the schools have used local history to name parts of the school or give identity to traditions created. Association of the schools to established traditions or history has been used extensively to add weight to the newly created traditions.

Celebrations of success, annual events and ceremonies have also been consciously embedded in each of the schools to create the illusion of tradition. These are quickly becoming established in the school communities as genuine school tradition, despite the relatively few years of existence, due to positive promotion of events to parents, pupils and the community.

Heroes

Deal and Kennedy (1988) and Hofstede (1991) both agree that heroes play a pivotal role in creating culture. As with tradition above it is challenging to start a new school with heroes already in place, but several groups of heroes have established themselves and influenced the culture of each of the schools, rather than being consciously planned. The original leader of the school and the founding generation of staff and pupils have therefore had a huge impact on the creation of culture.

The first headteacher, in each of the schools researched, has been considered to be the visionary leader. There is huge personal trust in them from staff, students and parents and they appear pivotal in the culture of the schools. The small nature of new schools often means there is little or no additional leadership at other levels and so all staff and pupils directly access and learn from the headteacher first hand. If the headteacher personally validates a strategy there is trust in that plan and staff believe that the school is full of opportunity rather than risk. All five headteachers model a desire to learn, which is reflected in their staff. They validate many of their early decisions with academic literature or imitation of other successful schools and openly reflect and evaluate with staff, further enforcing trust.

This research has established the unique power of the 'founding generation' of both pupils and staff. There is a unique bond between first generation of staff and pupils, who took the initial risk to join the new school in its first year. This pioneer feel was further enforced by the small number of students and staff in this founding group, their direct access to the visionary leader, and often the external opposition to the school. There is considerable evidence within the findings presented that this has created a 'golden generation', which has created a distinctive set of opportunities and challenges to the leadership of the new school.

The continual praise and attention on the founding generation has created in each school a 'first born child' scenario. This group of staff and students will always be the first, and heralded as such as they move up the school. They are critical to the schools success as they will be the first head boy and

head girl, the first examination results and the first pupils into university. Their older age also means that as a generation they play the main parts in the school play, tour new visitors and become student leaders to the subsequent cohorts of pupils. The first staff also fit this pattern having assumed many of the middle leader roles in the school as it grows, planned and developed much of the curriculum and maintained their direct line to the headteacher as the school grew. This success for the first generation has then created a 'middle child syndrome' with both second year pupils and staff. There is often no time for specific induction or structure in this second year and nothing written down, with leadership assuming new members will learn by osmosis. This has caused friction between new and old staff in many schools, and a much higher staff turnover in the second year of opening from the second cohort of staff. By the third year leadership has become more established and additional cohorts of staff tend to be more successfully inducted and incorporated into school life, although there remains a distinction between the 'founding generation' and all those who have merely followed.

As an extension to the work in this thesis the founding generation of staff and pupils in a free school would make a fascinating case in themselves, a longitudinal study into the future careers of the golden generation of staff and pupils. Statistically are they more likely to because they were the type of person or came from the type of family who wanted to take risks, or because of the unique experience they got in year one in a free school? Can this be harnessed or recreated? To establish this would require a longitudinal study following this generation for many years, but might give an insight into how distinct types of education and experience of culture can shape the future of young people.

Founding staff members have been instrumental in creating an identity of a 'free school teacher' that was referred to repeatedly throughout the research. There is a trend to describe this as a specific identity, 'free school teachers' are hard workers with a huge personal accountability and pride in their work. The openly boast that they work longer days and work harder than teachers in established schools, and are proud to work harder rather than be resentful about it, they have fostered an elite feel in each of the schools. As intrinsically motivated staff they value the freedom that a blank curriculum has offered them but less predictably also value the creativity that limited resources, and

teaching outside of subject area required. Founding staff needed to be creative to manage low staff numbers and lack of specialist staff, designing novel curriculum structures and promoting innovation and creativity. Finally there was also a real sense of personal risk and personal buy in, this is much more than a job, there is real ownership and pride in the school they feel they have created.

The personal drive for moral purpose, and genuine belief that all pupils could, and would succeed, within all the staff interviewed was also exceptionally strong. There was an honesty and naivety amongst staff interviewed, with no fear they might not succeed in their ambitious targets. There are several possible explanations for this, the age of the staff as young and new to the profession, the age of the school with no experience of older pupils having failed despite their best intentions or because of genuinely strong visionary leadership. Section 5.3.3 discusses recruitment of these 'free school teachers', and if they are specifically recruited or created within the organisational culture.

Each of the free schools sampled identified as a team or family unit. This team appeared fiercely loyal to their headteacher and highly defensive of the school they had created. Much of this team culture appears to have been created due to personal risk and despite some external opposition to the school. Leaders, staff and pupils have been united against a variety of opposition from media, the local community, the DfE, Ofsted, funding, building issues, and politics. This thesis would argue that this negativity around free schools has made teams within the schools pull together to prove themselves and provided much of the culture, identity, and drive for success, that the opposition to free schools has created their greatest strengths.

This thesis would also seek to question if free schools will continue to have such a strong distinctive culture when this opposition goes away? When it is no longer a risk for new staff to join an unproven school, or when new schools opening are accepted by the media and communities and hence if this strength of culture is only true for the founders of a new school. The question for future work would now be if these schools can harness these hardworking, loyal teams and maintain their trajectories.

What will happen when the founding leaders leave the school, whether the school will peak at first generation's graduation, and if this momentum can be sustained without staff burnout?

We can conclude from the findings that without established heroes within a new culture the founding headteacher, and first generation of staff and pupils have assumed the role of heroes within the school culture. They play a pivotal role in establishing and maintaining culture, and therefore a unique power over the new culture.

Symbols

Many of the symbols or artefacts were presented in the findings in chapter four. Each of the schools has chosen to use branding to build identity and tradition, but it is the meaning behind these symbols, discussed above that defines the culture of the school.

In conclusion there do appear to be characteristics that define a free school culture. The model of this culture does appear to be values centric, supporting Hofstede's (1991) model, with leaders creating rituals, heroes, and symbols either consciously or unconsciously around espoused values.

5.2.3 Are these characteristics of "free school culture" unique to free schools?

Whilst section 5.2.2 considered what emergent themes have defined the components of cultures of each of case study schools, it has not considered if these traits, or others, are unique to a free school. This section compares these conclusions to the established literature on school culture and asks if free schools demonstrate a unique combination of cultural traits compared to those accepted in existing schools in the research literature, and if academies also fit this model.

The limited research comparing the culture of different school types in England makes any valid conclusions within this area of questioning challenging. Whilst the lack of comparative data means that we cannot conclude the common free school culture observed above is unique, we can consider

the combination of factors to be distinctive to a free school, and the coherence by which each factor was supported by all stakeholders to be a unique characteristic of a new school.

Whilst explicit values, high expectations and moral purpose could be argued to be true of many types of schools several of the free school cultural characteristics must, by definition, be distinctive to new schools, or those with a very select group of contextual situations. The drive amongst leadership to create tradition is unique to a new school, as is the concept of a founding generation. The reality of all stakeholders being new, from headteacher to pupil creates a strong culture of learning throughout the whole organisation, and a wish to read literature, understand and imitate success, whilst not a unique cultural trait, is one emphasised within the context of new schools.

The political landscape, which has created such polarised views on free schools, has given these new schools a unique context and created much of the defensive siege mentality and team culture within the schools. Whilst not unique, trust in a visionary leader, and much of the identity of a 'free school teacher' and loyalty of all stakeholders, appears to originate from the pressure of external opposition and the personal risk all school members took to join.

The realities of planning and implementing a brand-new school has also created distinctive characteristics in the staff body. Again these characteristics can be observed in other staff bodies, but seem to be emphasised and very coherent between free school staff. Staff appear very intrinsically motivated with great personal buy-in and ownership of the school, they are proud of their long days and hard work, show a strong moral purpose towards students, verging on naivety, with no fear they might not succeed. Innovation and creativity are the final key characteristics created from need to make a curriculum function with limited resources.

If these distinctive traits remain after the founding pupils and teachers leave, and if later waves of free schools share these characteristics, when there is no longer a risk to join, or the moral purpose is blunted due to a permanent exclusion or poor results, remains the subject of future research.

Whilst the characteristics of the school can be argued to be distinct to a free school the structure of the culture and the ways in which it is formed are not. The culture follows the accepted Hofstede onion model (1991) and mirrors the levels from Schein's (1992) theories, but from a much clearer, basic viewpoint. The simplicity of only a few years of culture enables the model to be observed with much more clarity than in an older much more complex organisation, supporting earlier work.

5.2.4 Is a 'free school' culture due to the government initiative founding a Free School?

This section compares the conclusions in sections 5.2.2 and 5.3.2 to the established literature on school culture and asks if free schools demonstrate these unique cultural characteristics due to the political initiative founding, and hence impacting, the culture of a new start-up school.

There is clear evidence presented in the finding of the unique influence of founding leaders and staff and student generations to the culture of a free school. The simple nature of the political context forming new schools has produced this generation of founders and hence influenced the emergent culture of free schools.

Findings have also suggested that the risk involved in leading, working in, or attending a new school and the multiple oppositions to free schools may have created much of their initial strong identity and team cultures. Personal risk and sacrifice has meant that staff and leaders buy into a free schools success as a team. This choice to take a risk, has created a more personal buy-in, the staff openly admit that they would not work so hard if they didn't buy in, and need to prove themselves. As social attitudes to free schools change over time, this risk and opposition will also change, and it will be an interesting extension to consider if the cultural characteristics also change, confirming this theory.

In contrast it could be argued that much of the free school cultural traits could be associated with all small schools, and that it is the size of the school that creates the unique culture, rather than the

political climate. There are clear links from small schools to the feelings of team and family ethos often described in findings. Smaller schools cannot offer as many subjects or employ specialist teachers in first few years, which in turn means teachers teach in a cross-curricular way, adding to the feeling that they are special and elite. This thesis would however argue that small mainstream schools are a result of the possibility of opening new schools, which had, previously to the free school policy, not been possible.

5.2.5 Conclusion to Research Question Two

Research question two asked: *Have free schools developed a unique type of school culture due to the government initiative founding them, and if so what commonalities do free school cultures show?*

This analysis has concluded that the free schools researched do have shared cultural traits compared to other schools in the established literature. Specifically free schools researched have consistently demonstrated:

- a explicit values driven culture
- moral purpose
- high expectations
- desire to create tradition
- desire to learn and imitate other success and academic literature
- trust in visionary leadership
- unique power in the founding generation
- motivated staff with personal buy-in and ownership
- innovation and creativity
- naivety with no fear they might not succeed
- pride in hard work
- a defensive team created from personal risk and external opposition

- identity and loyalty driven
- shaped as small family schools

A potential reason for these characteristics has been proposed as the unique political and media climate into which these schools have been created, which has formed a common, influencing factor on each free school.

It should be noted that whilst these findings appear congruent between the five free schools sampled, this is only a small sample of free schools and as such can only be suggested as a trend for future leaders to consider, rather than absolute fact. Many internal and external factors influence the formation of a new school, and the unique combination of these factors may influence each school culture differently.

This combination of cultural characteristics are describe here as distinct rather than unique, other successful schools have aspects of all of these elements. However it is the combination of these characteristics which was true of each of the case study schools which appears unique, coupled with the fluency of the stakeholders and how explicitly they describe the culture.

It would be an interesting extension to this thesis to conduct a longitudinal study of these five schools over time, and consider if the culture changes as the school becomes established in the community and the founding political and media factors fade. In ten years time will the unique characteristics of a free school presented above remain as a key part of the culture, or have been replaced? Will an established school created as a free school be any different culturally to any other established school once the founding generations leave? It would also be interesting to consider if these characteristics are unique to early free schools, who have been the pioneer schools in the early waves. A longitudinal study will be required to established if as free schools become accepted into the English education scene if the culture of new free schools ceases to be unique, and these findings prove to only be true of the early waves of free schools.

5.3 Analysis of findings relating to Research Question Three

5.3.1 Introduction to Research Question Three

Research question three takes the findings above and considers what influence the founding headteacher has on the emergent culture of a new school: *To what extent can a founding headteacher of a free school control the emergent culture of the new school? Which levels of this culture can they control, and what methods do they utilise?*

In order to consider this question findings will be compared to literature below and consider how a leader can control culture, and what levels of organisational culture a leader can control.

5.3.2 Can a founding headteacher control the emergent culture of their new school?

The role of the founder creating culture

Schein (1992) argues that for an organisation in its infancy founders play the most crucial role in creating culture. This is due to their unique position to control the three sources which create culture, "(1) the beliefs, values and assumptions of founders of organisations; (2) the learning experiences of group members as their organisation evolves; and (3) new beliefs, values and assumptions brought in by new members and leaders." (Schein, 1992, p.211).

The literature posed the question if founder 1 (the government which has founded all free schools), founder 2 (proposers of the new school) or founder 3 (founding headteacher and first leader) has proven to be the most critical in each of the cases studied.

The impact of the government founding all free schools, and hence influencing some of the cultural traits observed, has been discussed above. The findings have suggested that the founding headteacher has the greatest amount of power to plan and influence the intended culture, but as the organisation matures the experienced culture will become influenced by the learning experiences of

the group of stakeholders and the beliefs of new members and leaders, the success of the leader can therefore be considered to be directly proportional to the 'gap' between the intended culture and that experienced in reality.

Schein (1992) suggests even mature companies can trace cultural characteristics back to original founders and early leaders. As such findings of distinct free school traits may remain as a characteristic of free schools remnant of the original risks and political climate of the founders and first headteacher.

Intended and experienced culture

Donnelly (2000) considered formal school ethos (values and beliefs the school formally supports) and observed ethos (observed practises and interactions of school members) and concludes the gap between the two differs from school to school. This is reasserted by McLaughlin (2005) who focused work on the gap between the intended ethos and experienced ethos in a school, and then potential tensions that could arise. Solvasson (2005) returns to Donnelly's question of if school culture can be established, or if it is produced as a result of social interactions, and she agrees with Donnelly's conclusion that "written or spoken aims in any organisation become null and void if human interaction points to the contrary" (Solvasson, 2005, p.92). As this thesis considers both ethos and climate to be products of a school culture, the findings of this research present this gap as the intended and the emergent or experienced culture.

If culture is defined as the basic assumptions of an organisation, (Schein, 1992) this thesis would argue that it is therefore exceptionally hard to specifically plan and implement a culture. Headteachers in the five case studies appear to have tried to plan the espoused values (Schein, 1992), to plan the strategies, goals and philosophies, the second level of culture and have planned the artefacts, the third level in Schein's structure, that of the visible organisational structures and processes.

In the context of the five free schools studied there is a clearly planned or intended culture, much of

which relies on several published values for each school. However stated values can only be considered artefacts in Schein's three levels of culture (1992), unless they are espoused. The artefact of published values has been established very successfully in four of the case studies, but there is a need to than consider the real espoused values of the school, and if this experienced culture matched that which was planned. The findings show very little gap between the stated and the lived values . In particular school 1 has outstanding "cultural cogency" described by all interviewees. Pupils understand the culture of their schools through these values, and this culture has become more than 'lip service' they have learnt to recite. The gap between intended and experienced culture is largest in school five, which has chosen not to teach pupils and staff explicit values. The lack of a clearly planned culture in school 5 has resulted in a much greater evolution of culture, as the culture has depended much more on the learning experiences of the group of stakeholders and the beliefs of new members and leaders, than a clearly embedded vision of the founding leader. For example the senior leader describes culture as "this is what we are growing together", which is supported by the headteacher, "it is always evolving".

Headteachers appear to influence level two and three of Schein's model of culture, rather than tackle the basic assumptions of the organisation even at the inception of the school. This thesis would argue that this is partially due to the work that the DfE free school application would require (DfE, 2015c), with focus on the term educational vision and the process and structural of creating a school.

Some aspects of the experienced culture have been allowed to evolve by the headteacher. Hofstede (1991) believed that the outer layer of culture: symbols, heroes and rituals, can change over time but the core of culture, values, would always remain. The headteachers interviewed support this, and claim that some great things evolve, but that this was a mechanism for improving structures and processes not the core values of the school.

It is still early in the life of a free school to judge why there is little gap between intended and experienced cultures. This thesis would argue that the current small gap is due to time, and that in

the small amount of time that the school has been open, and the consistency of one headteacher in all cases, there is little possibility for a gap to result between intended and experienced culture. There is however already a difference between schools as to the size of the gap.

5.3.3 What methods do the headteachers use to control emergent culture?

In the case study schools headteachers have used a range of similar techniques to establish and control culture within their schools. If we take Schein's (1992) argument that three main sources create culture we can consider to what extent have the headteachers of the five free schools studied controlled each:

- Beliefs, values and assumptions of founders of organisations
- Learning experiences of group members as their organisation evolves
- New beliefs, values and assumptions brought in by new members and leaders

This could then be considered as a potential extension to Fullan's (2001) five components of effective leadership (moral purpose, understanding change, relationship building, coherence making and knowledge creation), which could be adapted considering leadership of a start-up school.

Beliefs, values and assumptions of founders of organisations

Each of the schools studied has been led by a visionary leader, as debated above. Without exception, in the five cases studied, these leaders inspire trust from their followers and tend to be charismatic, young, driven and well educated. The leaders have openly taken the biggest risk themselves and built a team around external opposition and personal risk. They have real strength of dream and vision, and a belief in the power of their leadership, "through values and personal belief you can change the way people think" stated one headteacher. The headteachers have built relationships and allowed stakeholders to buy in so they feel ownership and help push the vision forward. This extends Staessens and Vandenberghe's (1994, p.199) need for "dailyness" from a leader to lead change of

vision, to a need for "dailyness" to also create initial vision. This is clearly also true of creation of an initial vision based on the cases studied.

Leaders interviewed agree with the importance of the beliefs, values and assumptions of the founders in creating culture. To this end they model relationships, use of language, use of values, consistency in communication, and repetition as practical methods in which they have taught their values and beliefs to their staff and students. Headteachers agree that the use of a modelling method is much easier in year one, as everyone can see you first hand. Some of the friction between founders and subsequent generations of stakeholders originates from the concept that is much harder for the leader to model their values and beliefs directly as the school grows and there is a need to rely on others modelling the same basic assumptions, evidenced by the headteacher of school 4, "it was year two which was our toughest year because we didn't prepare as well as we should have for the new intake of staff. I assumed a little too much by osmosis and from deliberate guidance from middle leaders and that just didn't happen". When reflecting on improvements many headteachers have reflected on the need to change the method with which they communicate their core values in year two, with a need to become more procedural and structured in order to communicate the same culture, "If you spoke to a non founding staff member then it might be a different outcome and that is what, as leaders of the school we are trying to eradicate because we want that consistent approach."

Four of the founding headteachers in this case study have chosen to state explicitly their values for the organisation and have admitted that the school values were either chosen or defined personally. This supported Schein's (1992) theory that the beliefs, values and assumptions of founders of organisations are formative in creating and controlling the culture of the organisation.

Learning experiences of group members as their organisation evolves

Schein (1992) argues that the second factor contributing to the creation of culture is that of learning experiences of the group. Here the headteacher has less control of the emergent culture, but the findings would suggest still uses methods to control these learning experiences. Providing routine and

structure, rituals, stories and traditions are all suggested in the literature (Deal and Kennedy, 1988 and Hofstede, 1991) as methods that form culture, and there are examples presented in the findings of the headteachers promoting each of these elements.

A key technique used by headteachers to control culture, in addition to the list above, has been giving ownership to pupils and parents and staff. Staff, in particular, are seen to be intrinsically motivated, with a pioneer feel, and a great personal pride and responsibility in the outcomes for the school. This ownership, given by the founding headteacher to the initial group of staff appears to have enabled staff to build their own structures, rituals and traditions, but under the guidance of the headteacher's beliefs, values and assumptions that have been actively modelled one to one (see 4.2.2).

The thesis would argue that the element of culture not focused on controlling by the founding headteachers was the creation of heroes (Deal and Kennedy, 1988; Hofstede, 1991). Making the founding generation feel special, have ownership and form traditions has allowed them to become the heroes of the new organisations. This has turned out to be a dangerous tactic as it worked well at start, but has been shown in each of the case studies to be difficult to sustain into subsequent generations. The founders feel special, unique, and took the biggest risk, worked hard to prove themselves, and were always told they were the first, the best, which has now left a group of pupils and staff feeling entitled, and a subsequent cohort, without the modelling from the founding headteacher, struggling to buy into the culture or the heroes of the organisation (see chapter 4 section 4.2.15).

New beliefs, values and assumptions brought in by new members and leaders

The founding headteacher all refer to their concerns and efforts to recruit staff aligned to the culture of the school. The findings have shown that the cost of having the wrong staff, during the first years of a free school when staff body is small, is huge. There is a shared trend amongst headteachers that staff can be taught to become better teachers, but not taught values and morals. As the headteacher

articulated at school 1, "get the best staff in and give them an environment they can work in". This agrees with Schein's (1992) model, if new staff join with the same beliefs, values and assumptions, then there will be no change in culture.

All schools also run induction for new staff and pupils, and regular realignment events to refresh the culture and values of the school. Headteachers believe that this is key to consistency of culture and list modelling values, reboot assemblies where the headteacher re visits key values with all pupils and staff, residential trips, pupils and staff group morning meetings, whole school activities, family dining and lessons as example of ways in which they align staff to the school culture.

5.3.4 Conclusion to Research Question Three

Section 3 has considered research question three: *To what extent can a founding headteacher of a free school control the emergent culture of the new school? Which levels of this culture can they control, and what methods do they utilise?*

The analysis has concluded that founding leader does have a unique level of control over the formation of a new culture, although they do not have sole control of this formation. The findings presented appear to support Schein's (1992) argument that there are three main sources which can create culture, the beliefs, values and assumptions of founders of organisations, the learning experiences of group members as their organisation evolves, and the new beliefs, values and assumptions brought in by new members and leaders. Founding headteachers have an exclusive opportunity to control each one of these three areas, and the success with which they manage to recruit, induct and align staff and students, and influence group learning experiences creates the consistency of school culture.

5.4 Analysis of findings relating to Research Question Four

5.4.1 Introduction to Research Question Four

Research question four considers the importance of the earlier research questions to leaders. Research questions two and three have established that the free school government policy has created schools with a distinctive combination of cultural traits, and that a founding headteacher has a unique level of control over the formation and maintenance of this culture. Research question four now asks: *Do leaders perceive a value to leading a strong culture within a new free school, and if so should the application process be altered to include the planning of this culture?* Much of this has been answered above in section 5.3, establishing the value associated with culture within a free school.

5.4.2 Do leaders perceive a value to leading strong culture within a new free school?

Headteachers interviewed value culture in their responses, defining culture as "not a means to an end but is an end itself, it's absolutely everything", "the rhythm that everyone buys in to" and "the unseen actions that underpin the way things work in a school". They are passionate about the impact of culture, "if you get the culture right you can achieve anything". The free school headteachers and leaders interviewed really place importance in what other successful schools are doing, want to learn and develop their own practise. They therefore see significance in academic literature and learning from good practice, charter schools in the US, successful academies, grammar schools and private schools in the UK, which all refer to culture as pivotal.

This value placed on school culture in the free schools studied extended beyond the headteachers, all stakeholders value culture in their responses. A founding leader can have huge influence on the culture created at the founding stage, and this level of influence can never be repeated once a school

is operational. So there is a genuine need to train leaders to realise this, before the founding stage is completed. Culture, findings have suggested, is relatively simple to create at a founding stage, and much more challenging to change once created.

5.4.4 Should the application process be altered?

This thesis would argue that the free school application form should be reviewed to consider including a question asking the founders of the school how they intend to plan and implement a culture within the proposed school. Due to the unique power a founding leader has to shape culture, it does not happen accidentally so should be a conscious process. As this thesis is not generalisable it does not provide enough evidence to suggest a change in application policy, but it is a strong indicator that free school headteachers should be aware of the foundation of culture, and consider this when planning educational vision, policies and strategies.

Founding headteachers did not demonstrate a respect for the application process within their interviews, considering it to be of little or no value to focusing a founder on the real issues when opening a new school.

5.4.5 Conclusion to Research Question Four

The findings in chapter four, and analysis above suggests that free school headteachers value culture, and consider the current application an insignificant hoop to jump through when opening a new school.

5.5 Conclusion

This thesis aimed to give some practical support to future practitioners considering opening a free school, along with advancing educational literature on the subject of formation of new culture within these cases. The key findings of this thesis originate from a combination of agreement with accepted

literature, extension to accepted literature and new findings, which are hoped to add to the existing knowledge base.

The thesis has been presented around three key research questions, which have been concluded above.

The accepted understanding of school culture within the literature was established in chapter 2 and this theoretical framework has been compared to the leadership of culture within English free schools. The five case study schools have been found to have value centric cultures, appearing to support the seminal models of Hofstede (1991) and Schein (1992) who respectively place value as a core component or key second level to organisational culture. This thesis would argue that the infancy of current free school culture within the case study schools has led to a very clean model of culture being observed, which fits very well with the onion model Hofstede postulates with culture being found to compose of a core of school values, with rituals, heroes and symbols placed by leaders around the core values to attempt to embed them.

The five free schools studied appear to have developed a distinctive culture, which differs to that found in established schools. Whilst the individual components of this free school culture are not unique, the consistency with which they are applied within the case study schools does make it appear that free schools have certain distinctive cultural traits.

The five schools studied all placed some key values at the centre of their culture. Interestingly these values appear to follow a set of distinctive themes, high expectations and aspirations, moral purpose, respect for others and doing the 'right thing'. Whilst the practises to embed culture appear to vary between the organisations studied the core values appear to remain relatively stable between each school. This appears to fit with Hofstede's (1991) view that values differ at a national or occupational level but at an organisational level it is practices (symbols, heroes and rituals) that primarily differ.

The free schools researched also demonstrated other cultural commonalities alongside their explicitly values driven culture. There was a real desire amongst leaders to create tradition and to learn and imitate other success and academic literature. Staff employed demonstrated huge trust in visionary leadership and tended to be intrinsically motivated with personal buy-in and ownership of the school. School leaders and staff valued freedom to innovation, articulated a real pride in their hard work and long hours and approached the school with a naïve assumption of success. The founding generation of stakeholders appear to have a unique power to shape the culture and those interviewed were fiercely loyal and proud of their identity as part of the school. Finally all five of the school leadership teams considered the school to be small, with a family feel based on positive relationships.

Differences between the five schools stand out when they are first visited, however on closer analysis are founded in the practices of each school, rather than their underlying culture all of which, to a greater or lesser extent focus on the commonalities above.

It is challenging to separate this distinctive school culture from the government initiative which founded the schools as it has been this policy that has allowed for the waves of new start-up schools, and the culture appears to be fundamentally linked to the nature of starting a new small school. One of the findings of this thesis does postulate that much of the identity, team spirit, motivation and pride that staff, leaders and students have of their new school appears to be in part created by the opposition to free schools and personal risk to each of the early stakeholders. Whether these cultural traits with remain after the risk diminishes when the school becomes established, and if later waves of free schools without such opposition will still have similar cultural traits as a start-up school remains to be seen.

This thesis has also presented evidence on the unique power and potential dangers of founding stakeholders for creating culture. The early team of staff and students experience the headteacher's values and vision for the school first hand, and as such become strong advocates for the school culture. The original founding leaders, staff and students have become, unconsciously, the heroes of

the new culture, and as part of the practices that establish culture can influence culture in unintended ways. Issues appear to have risen when integrating subsequent generations of stakeholders into the culture as the schools grow, it appears to have been a common challenge to each of the case study schools that subsequent generations were expected to learn the culture by osmosis, which in general has been unsuccessful. All five schools now plan to run induction sessions to teach the school culture to new stakeholders to overcome this issue.

Founding headteachers of a free school appear to be in a unique position to shape, implement and control the emergent culture of the new school. Whilst any future leader of the school will easily control only the practices and artefacts of a school, and would be forced to use these to change the underlying values and culture, the founding headteacher introduces his or her own values as those of the forming school. Headteachers interviewed have used a range of techniques to embed their intended culture, empowering staff, modelling values, introducing rituals, routines and structures, recital of values, branding of objects, recruitment of aligned staff, shaping tradition and imitating successful cultures.

There has been some variation observed between the headteachers success in embedding their intended culture, which mirrors the work of McLaughlin (2005) on intended versus experienced culture.

Leaders and stakeholders interviewed value a strong school culture and consider the planning and formation of culture to be critical to the success of a new start-up school. As the current application process does not require any planning of school culture this thesis suggests that further work should be considered as to if this application should be altered.

CHAPTER SIX - CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter aims to draw conclusions from the earlier chapters considering the interaction between the literature studied, findings presented and analysis of these findings with relation to the aim of the thesis and research questions, whilst also evaluating the research methodology. It will then consider any recommendations from this work both to practitioners, policy and extension to future academic study.

6.2 Conclusion of Aim

This thesis has considered the Academies Act (2010) a new government policy which created a new type of school in 2011, a free school. This thesis, at its core, focused on if a successful free school culture differed to that of a successful culture of any other type of school, and if so what elements of this unique free school culture should future start-up school founders be aware of. It has developed existing thinking on the introduction of free schools, looking at examples of successful free schools and considered the introduction and leadership of a culture within these free schools.

The study has tentatively concluded above that free school culture does have common distinctive traits when compared to culture of other types of school as considered in the literature. The case study schools have demonstrated a, very explicit, values driven culture, based around themes of high expectations, moral purpose, respect for others, hard work and a concept of doing 'the right thing', which were articulated in a wide range of ways. There is a strong desire in each of the schools to create tradition and to learn from other successful schools and literature to embed these values. The research has also shown a real trust in the visionary headteachers and a unique power within the founding generation of both staff and pupils, who become the heroes of the start-up organisation. Staff embody the values of a 'free school teacher' with high moral purpose, personal buy-in, ownership and a pride in hard work. They are fiercely loyal to the identity of the school and the

leadership. The nature of the small start-up school has produced innovative solutions and relationship driven family schools, with a naivety and positivity intertwined in every aspect of school life. It is postulated that much of this culture originated from the unique political and media landscape under which these schools have been created, with external opposition forming much of the buy-in and personal pride stakeholders demonstrate.

This thesis has identified facets of culture a founding headteacher should be aware of when opening a new school, such as the need to explicitly plan a culture and to articulate this culture to all stakeholders, the use of values as a vehicle with which to embed new culture, the unique power of the founding generation and the need for awareness when inducting second year stakeholders to the culture and the use of external risk and opposition to build a team spirit within the new school.

Existing thinking on the introduction of the free school has been extended with five case studies on successful free schools, focusing on their leadership and the implementation of a culture within each case.

6.3 Conclusion of research questions

The four research questions considered throughout are concluded below:

1. *What is the accepted understanding of school culture within the literature and how can this be linked to the leadership of culture within English schools*

This was debated in the literature and focused on much of the work Hofstede (1991) and Schein (1992) have done modelling culture. Culture was considered to be the basic underlying assumptions of the school, and was created from first espoused values, and then a series of artefacts or practices such as routines, celebrations and recited values.

2. *Have free schools developed a unique type of school culture due to the government initiative founding them, and if so what commonalities do free school cultures show?*

Whilst no trait was found to be unique to a free school, the five case study schools did show a distinct set of congruent cultural themes and these fluently articulated by all stakeholders. Each school was, often explicitly, values driven and these espoused values followed themes of high expectations, moral purpose, respect for others, hard work and a concept of doing 'the right thing'. The creation of these new, small and politically volatile schools by government policy appears to have impacted culture creating innovative, loyal and motivated stakeholders at all levels, with a real pride and ownership of their schools.

3. *To what extent can a founding headteacher of a free school control the emergent culture of the new school? Which levels of this culture can they control, and what methods do they utilise?*

The founding headteacher of the new school has a unique level of control over the formation of culture, but they do not have sole control. The extent to which their planned 'intended culture' matches the realities of the 'experienced culture' is dependent on a multitude of internal and external factors. Headteachers studied focussed on controlling the artefacts or practices of the school, establishing routines, traditions and celebrations to embed their stated values. Recruitment and induction of staff and pupils who fit the values of the school becomes critical to the maintenance of the culture after the first year, and the impact and power of the founding generation of staff and students on the culture needs to be carefully guided.

4. *Do leaders perceive a value to leading a strong culture within a new free school, and if so should the application process be altered to include the planning of this culture?*

All leaders and stakeholders in this study placed large value and importance on school culture. Whilst not being a large enough piece of research to be generalisable this thesis would suggest an evaluation is required of the application process to create a free school to include explicit planning of school culture and training on practical ways to create and embed a new culture.

6.4 Evaluation of research design

The research design used was effective in meeting the aims of this research, with particular strength in the use of semi-structure interview as a method to allow interviewees to extend answers which has then allowed for identification of emergent issues, which has been critical when researching a new topic such as free schools, without much existing literature to build upon. The use of 'Grounded Theory' has been essential to this research, allowing for the researcher to establish emergent themes, and then to link these back to school culture literature to establish trends and adopt both an inductive and deductive method of analysis. With such a new area of study it was not possible to rely only on a conceptual framework drawn from literature and the use of emergent themes has been critical.

The sampling of four interviewees from each school, providing a range of viewpoints, has allowed rigour in the triangulation of responses, further reinforced by the use of documentary analysis to increase reliability. It should be noted that for practical reasons the headteacher selected the senior leader, teacher and pupil to be interviewed, which may have introduced bias into the method, potentially limiting negative responses from the selected interviewees. However as this method was consistent across all five schools, it should not have implications on the wider findings, as this thesis did not seek to judge success of free schools, only to allow for trends to be established and the study to be transferable to other cases.

As the study has only considered free schools, and not compared this to any other 'new' school, it is not possible for the findings to be distinguished between implications specifically for a 'free' school and implications for any 'new' school. This is not a concern within this study, as all free schools are

new schools and hence all findings relevant to any free school. However it does present an interesting future extension to this work drawing comparison between characteristics of new schools and characteristics of free schools to investigate if there are any differences specific to being free.

A real concern in the early research was the potential impact of insider bias, with the researcher herself a free school practitioner. However this concern has been minimised with a robust coding system of transcripts, a fine re-coding with reference to the established literature, cross referencing and triangulation using a coded matrix and then a complete word counting of every transcript to confirm trends and ensure no theme was missed, in line with guidance gleaned from research literature.

Although not possible within the scope of this thesis it would be a interesting extension to increase reliability further by introducing "space and time triangulation" (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2014, p.30), considering a comparative study with English and Swedish free schools or with examples of the US charter schools. A longitudinal study would allow for time triangulation, either considering cultural change of a free school over time, as considered in section 6.7, or considering a broad sample of free schools from early to late waves of introduction to see if the conclusions drawn in this thesis are consistent with findings from all generations of free schools, or are unique to early free schools.

A larger study could also consider widening a case within one of the sample schools, interviewing a larger range of stake holders such as parents, founding group members or government officials from the original conception of the free school.

The scope of this thesis also limited the sampling of the population to prevent random sampling. A valid methodological extension would be to randomly sample schools across the whole spectrum of free schools to include a faith schools, primary schools, special schools, studio schools or 16-19 provision.

6.5 Implications of Findings

Within the free school application this thesis would argue that planning an 'educational vision' is too narrow minded and that founders should instead be asked to plan a 'school culture' and give explicit practical strategies as to how they intend to implement and embed this culture.

There is still a need for more politically un-biased evaluation of the impact of free schools, both in terms of their impact on student outcomes, their bearing on other schools in the area and their influence upon local communities. The successes and failures of the policy need to be considered carefully, without political agenda, to allow for future educational strategies to learn from this policy to improve both existing schools of all types and any future polices.

6.6 Recommendations

This thesis has a range of potential audiences, academic researchers, current and potential free school founders and headteachers, policy makers and other interested school leaders and teachers. One of the key findings of this research has been the importance each of the case study headteachers has placed upon school culture, and the challenges for planning this culture from scratch. Much of the current application focuses on planning facilities, finances and structures for the new school, which whilst clearly important distracts from the core business of planning a school for people, a culture.

I believe that there needs to be some guidance for a founding headteacher to plan culture from the application stage. There is a clear, unique power and responsibility when founding an organisation to establish the culture, which needs not to be wasted. Forcing culture to be considered within the application stage, beyond educational vision, would encourage leaders to consider that a strong successful culture does not miraculously appear, it needs to be cultivated.

Beyond simply changing the wording of the application form, there is also a real need to continue to research and develop this new policy, much of which is yet to be considered. The academic

community, policy makers and educational practitioners need to work together to evaluate these new schools, outside of the media and political turbulence and influences, to learn what really works in a new school and can be transferred within education, and what support these new schools require. This is not an evaluation that will be easy, but as academics or practitioners we have a real duty to the education system, and the pupils within it, to work together to research the very best outcomes.

6.7 Further Work

The originality of this research, within the new field of the free school policy, and considering implementation of new culture, results in many potential extensions to this research. Some of the key emergent findings of this research could demand research of their own, to extend and compare if these are generalisable trends. For example it would now be interesting to look at the case of opposition and challenge to a free school, and consider a case study to compare the success and cultural trends of free schools with and without opposition to their creation. This research has suggested that this opposition creates resilience and staff buy-in to the school.

Additional research would also be interesting into the concept of the founding generation of staff and pupils within a free school. Do the unique conditions that created the initial 'golden generation' of staff and students mean that they have access to greater opportunity, altered careers and success, and if so can this be harnessed? Is their unique nature as a founding team it due to their personal characteristics, choosing to put themselves at risk in the first place, or is it due to the experiences being 'the first' gave them? Do they get better results than subsequent cohorts within the school? How can this 'golden generation' be used by future free schools to enable maximum impact on the future of the school?

Section 6.4 above considered some methodological extensions to this study. Space triangulation of the study could be considered with a comparative case study between English free schools, US charter schools and Swedish free schools. Hofstede (1991) suggests that a national culture would then come

into play within each school, which would show real difference between the core values of each nations free schools, rather than differences found primarily in the practises within countries. Free schools would provide a new policy within which these values would be clearly visible within which to consider this wider cultural study.

There is also a real and present need to consider free schools over time, both in terms of the differences between the first generation of free schools and the more recent waves of school creation, and in terms of cultural changes within one school as it matures. An interesting question would be if findings presented here are mirrored in the newer waves of free schools or if they distinctive to the initial, more controversial, early waves of free schools. A second extension would be to consider in a longitudinal study if the cultural characteristics of the five free schools studied here remain as they mature to become full, established schools, or if the distinct culture will change. Schein (1992) observes that even mature companies can trace beliefs and values back to their founders and early leaders, if this is the case a longitudinal study would consider if the culture will remain after the first headteacher, or founding generation of staff and pupils leave. As all free schools share the current government policy as a founder will a free school culture continue to define these schools even after they are established, or will they become no different in school culture to an academy?

There is also potential to extend these five cases over time to consider the success of the intended culture each headteacher has planned and the gap between this planned culture and the emergent culture (Donnelly, 2000; McLaughlin, 2005). It would be very interesting to establish which of the case study schools will end up with the biggest intended to experienced culture gap and to look at the causes of this with regard to the differences in leadership of these cultures.

There is also a need to compare free school culture to that of other types of school, to consider if each school type has a distinctive culture, and if so what each type of school could learn and improve with regard to other sectors. A comparative study on culture between cases of free schools, academies, failing schools, local authority schools, private schools and grammar schools could really

consider the relative strengths of each type of school and be used to inform school leaders of practical suggestion between these sectors of education. The methodology used in this thesis could form the core to such a comparative study. There may also be a case for comparing a start-up school to characteristics in a start-up business to see if lessons can be learnt from outside of education.

Finally there is a need for further research on the very complex links between culture and performance, which due to complexities in measuring both culture and school outcomes has very little substantive research. Free schools could provide an avenue into this complex field however, as due to their relatively simple, fresh cultures they may give a simpler case within which to consider what a good culture is, and how this impacts on school outcomes.

6.8 Conclusion

The current media and political turbulence around the introduction of free schools to the English education system has prevented any honest reflection and evaluation of the successes and challenges of such schools. With the high profile of education today it is vital that any school which is to be successful, especially a new school, needs a strong internal culture. This thesis has attempted to consider some practical suggestions relating to facets of this culture, how a founding headteacher could implement culture, and some of the potential challenges to be aware of, based on findings from five case study schools.

This multiple case study into five English free schools has considered creating a new culture, from scratch, in a new school. It has found that new free schools have a distinctive culture, driven by clear leadership and explicit planning and impacted by the opposition surrounding the free school.

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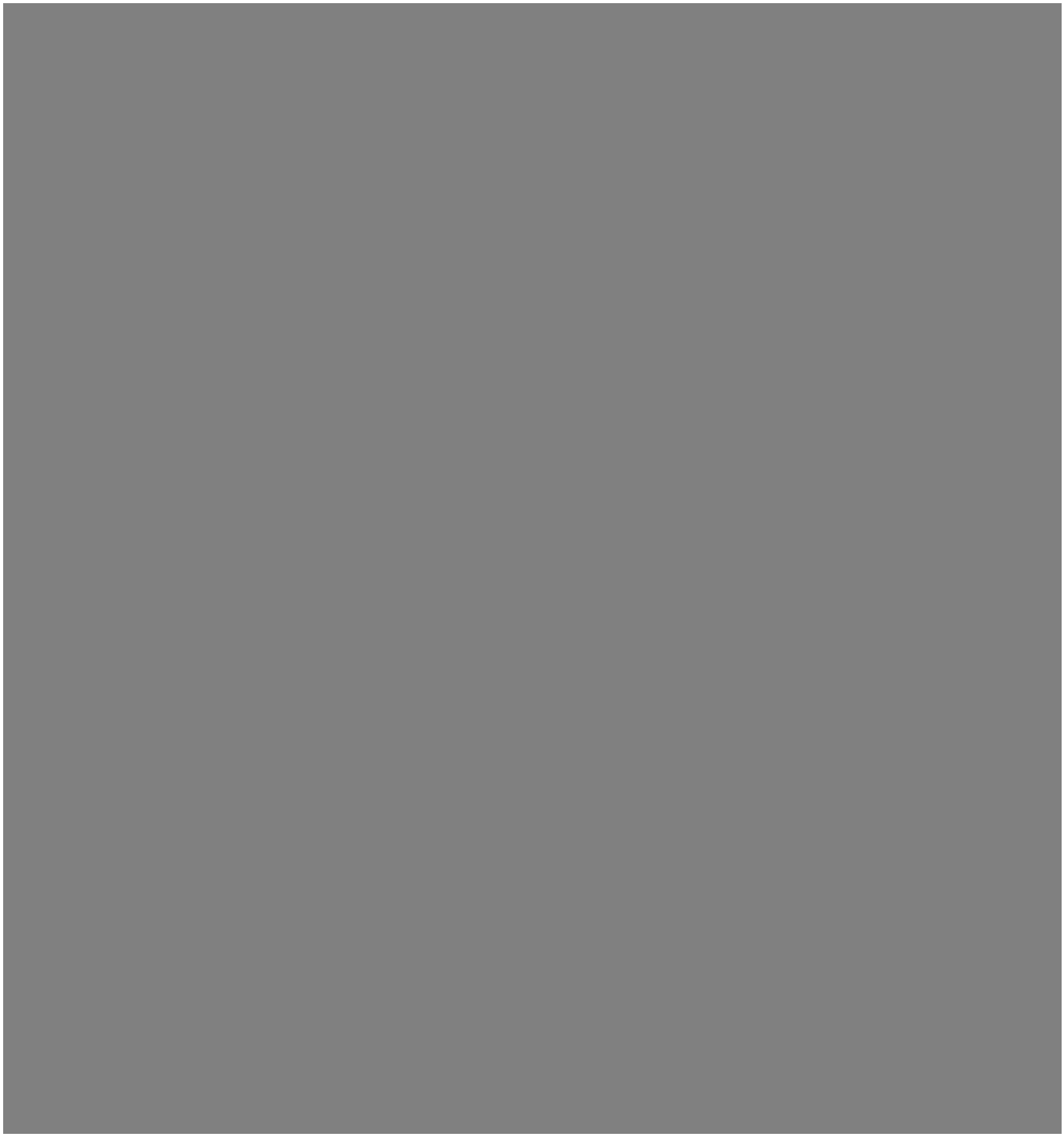
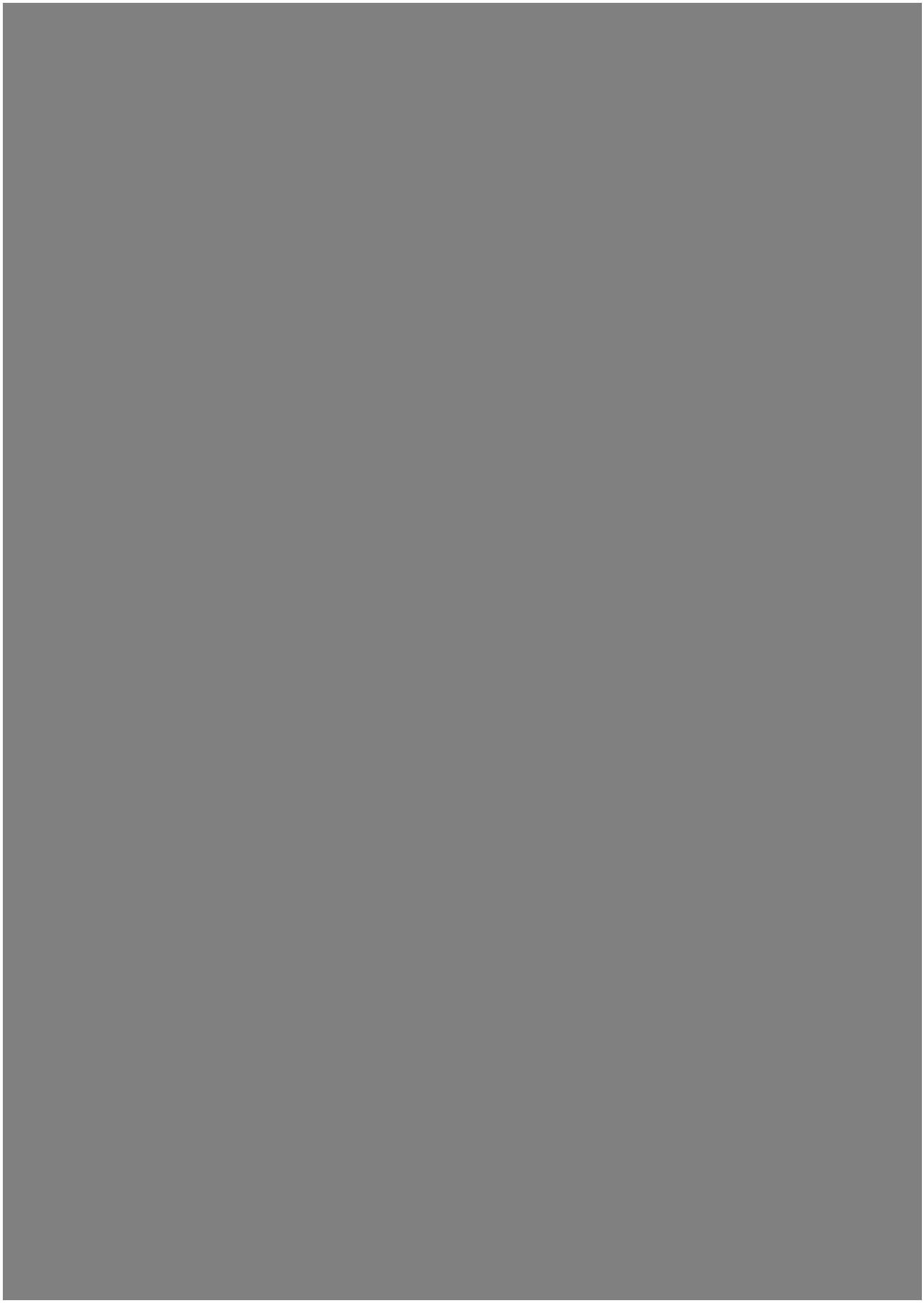
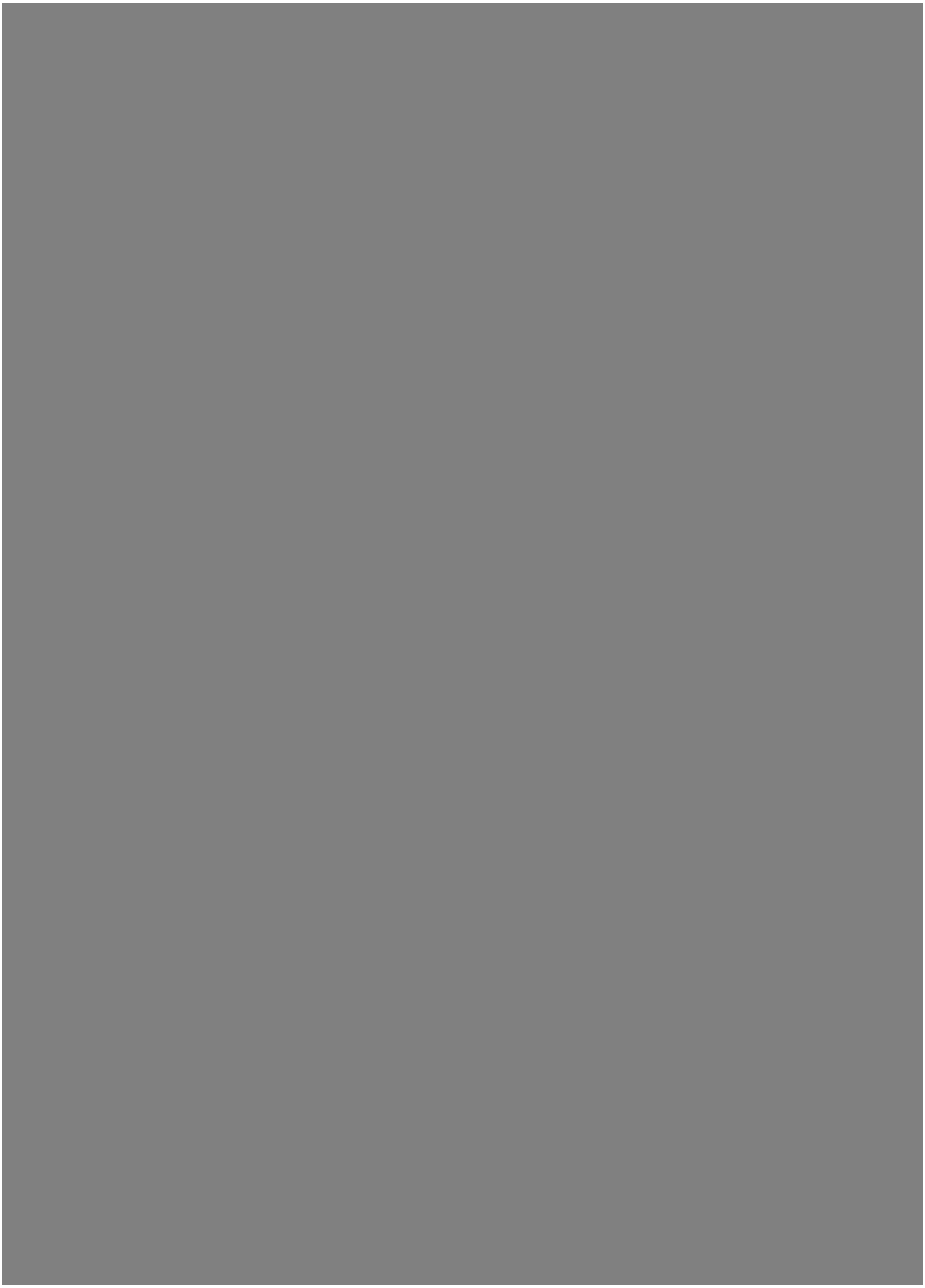
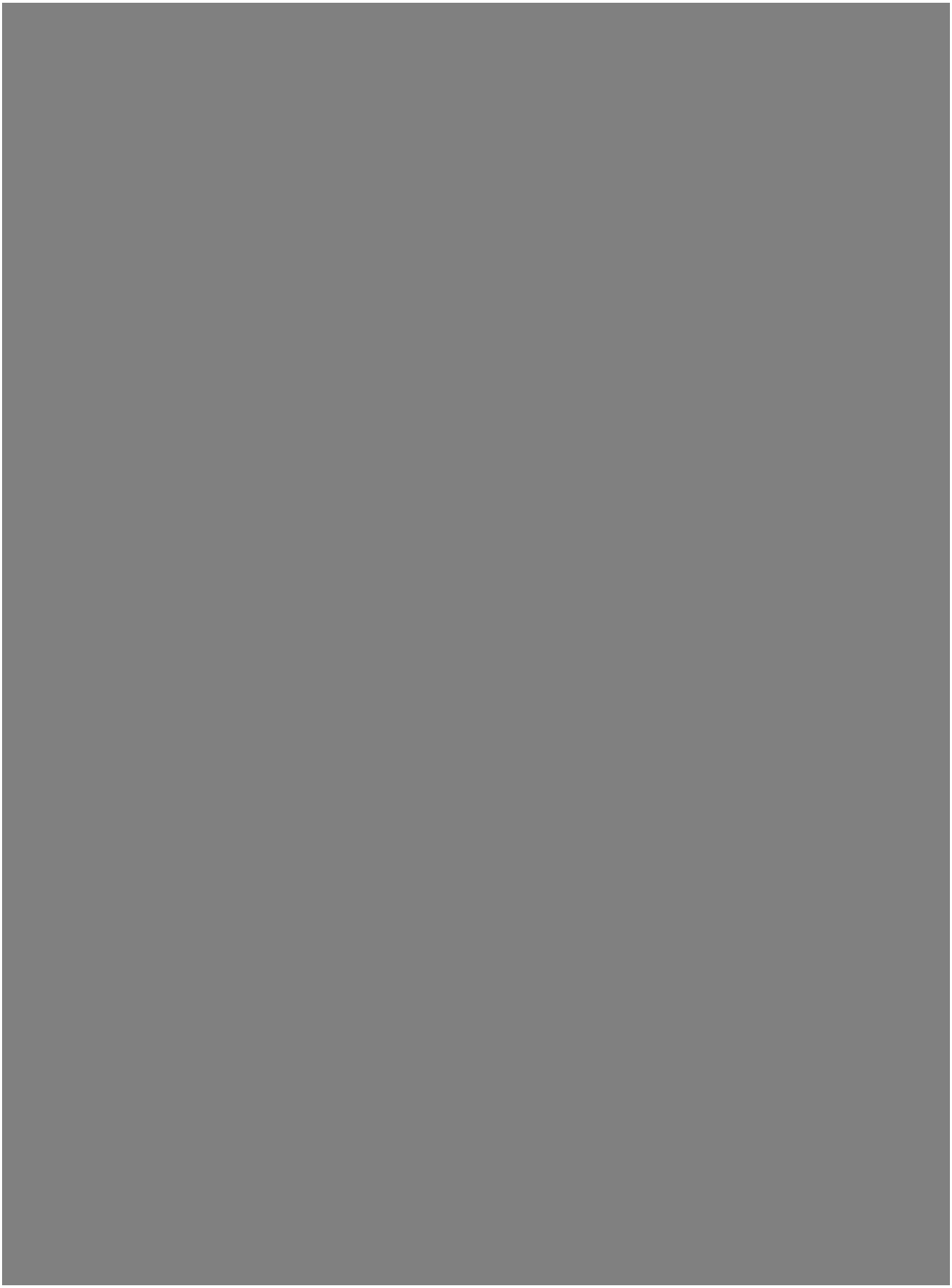
APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Final Interview Questions with Critical Justification for Questions asked.



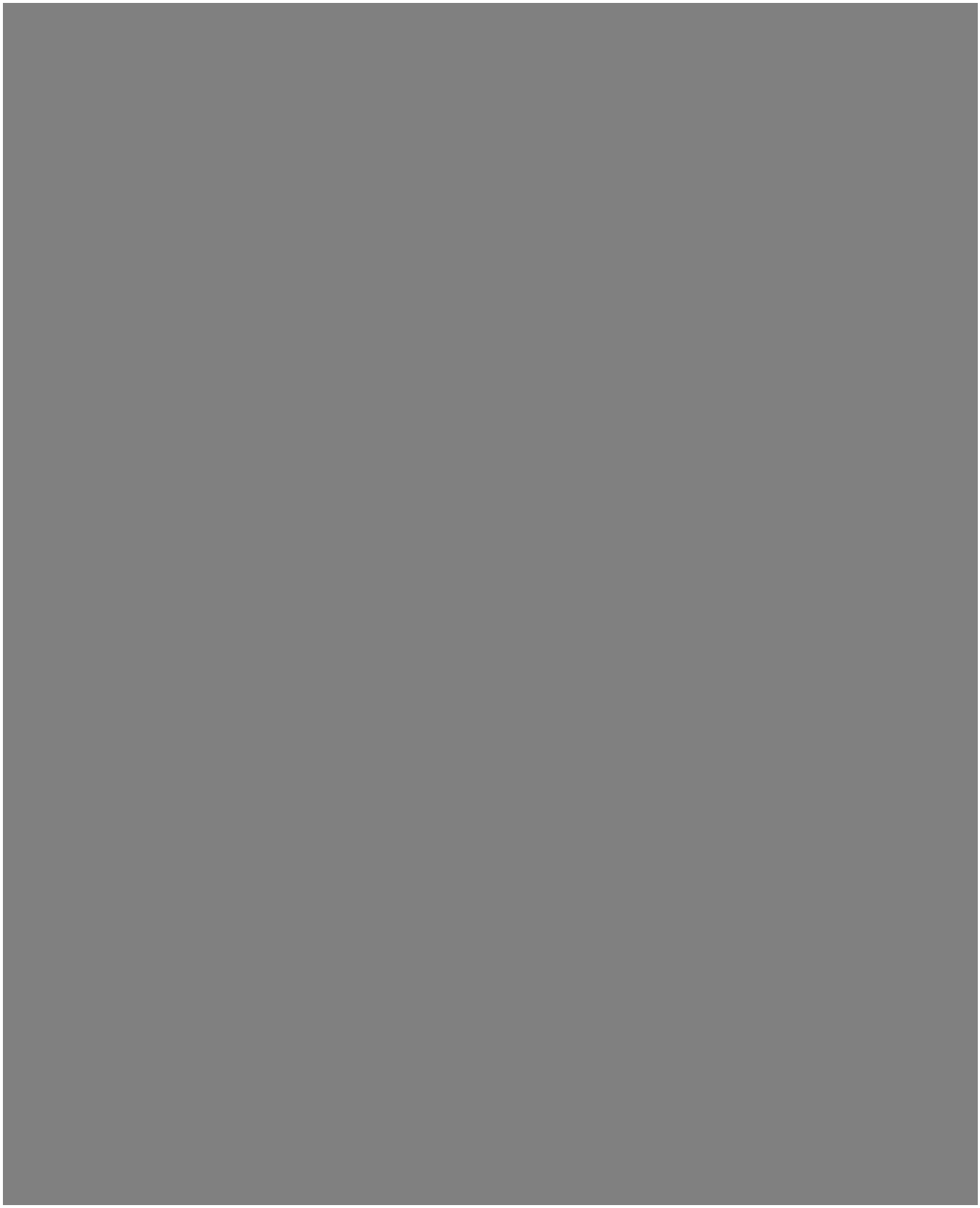


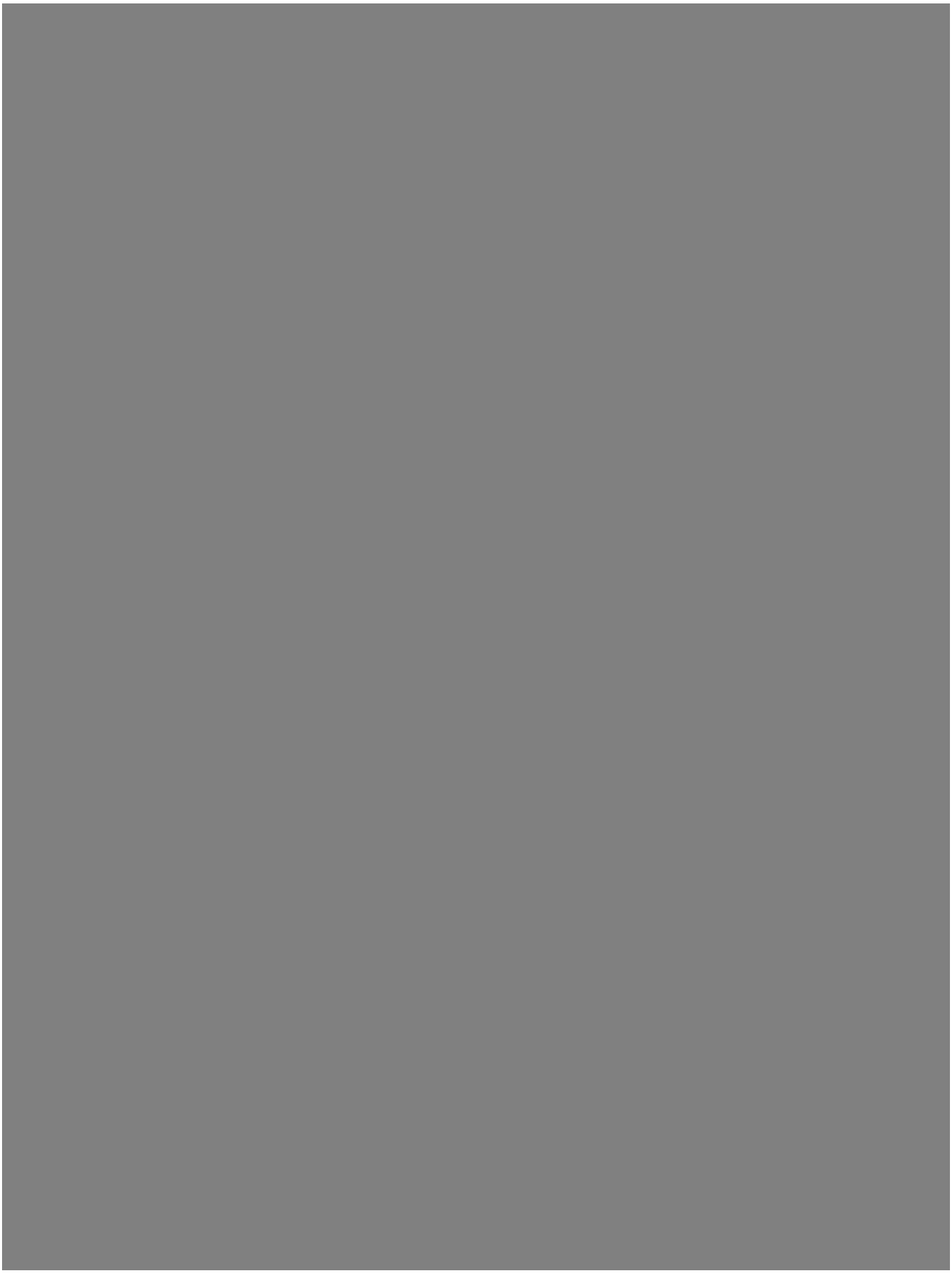


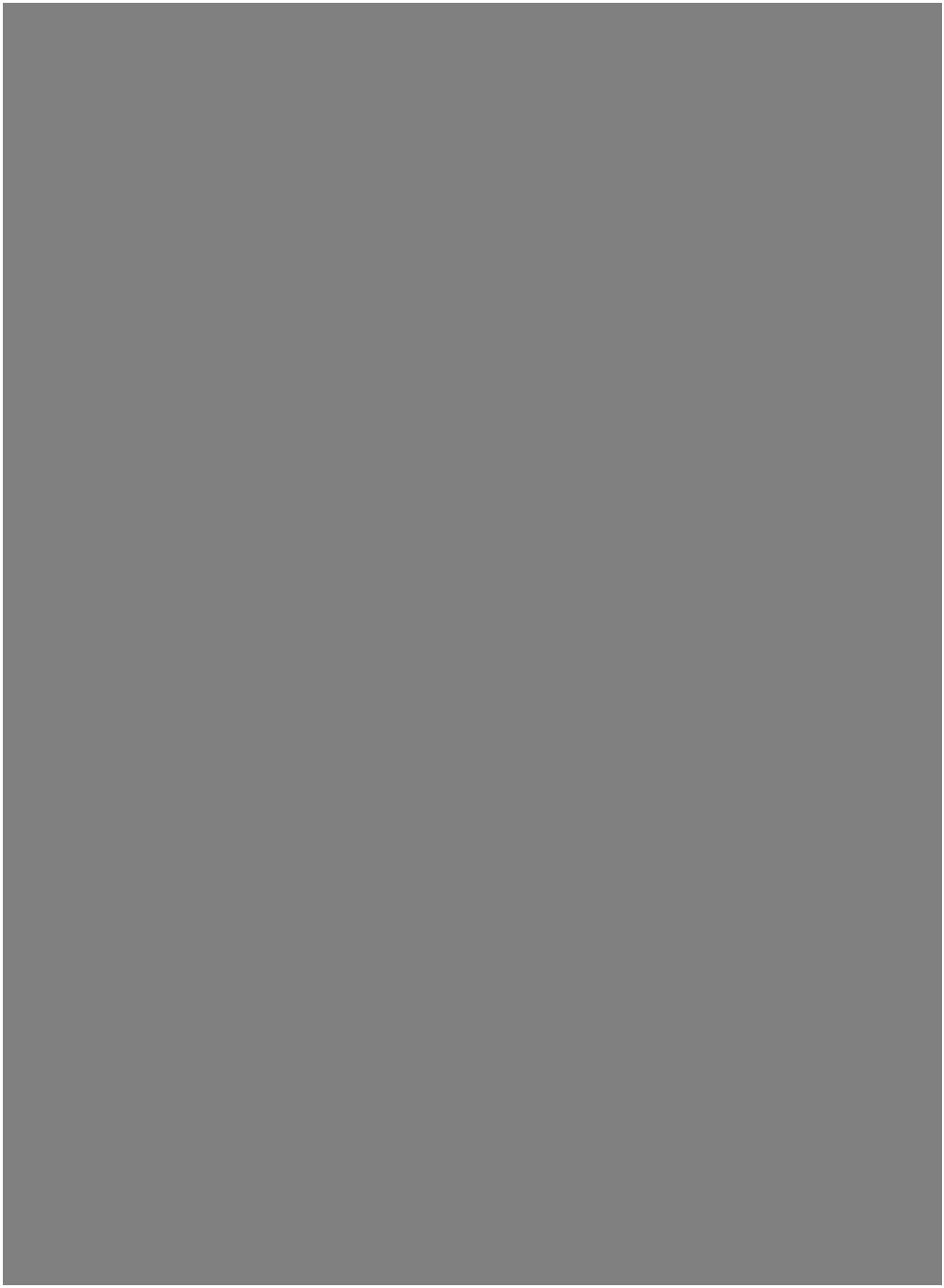


Appendix 2 Letter asking for consent of Headteacher

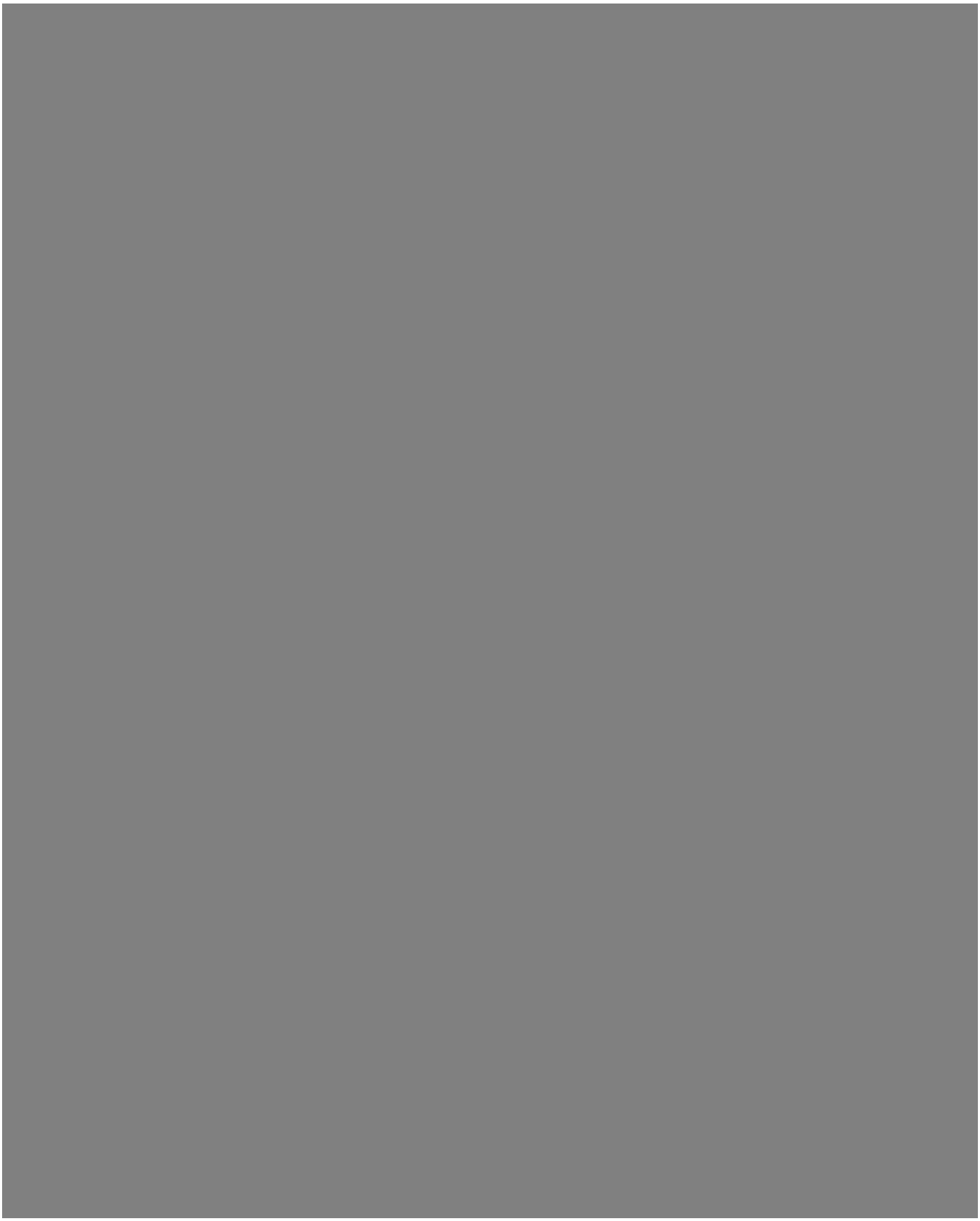
Appendix 3 Pilot analysis of Head Teacher interview and Pupil Interview



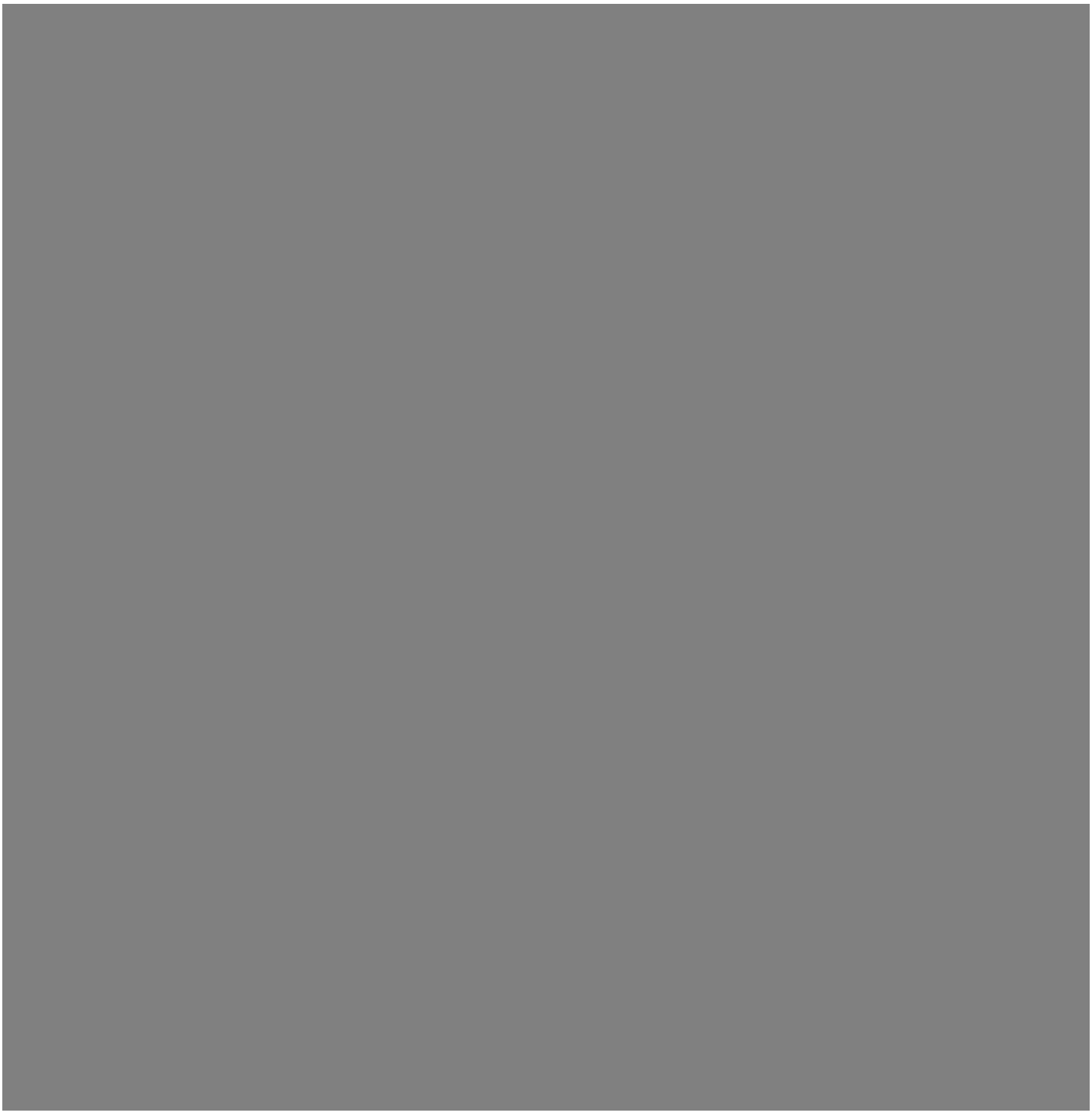




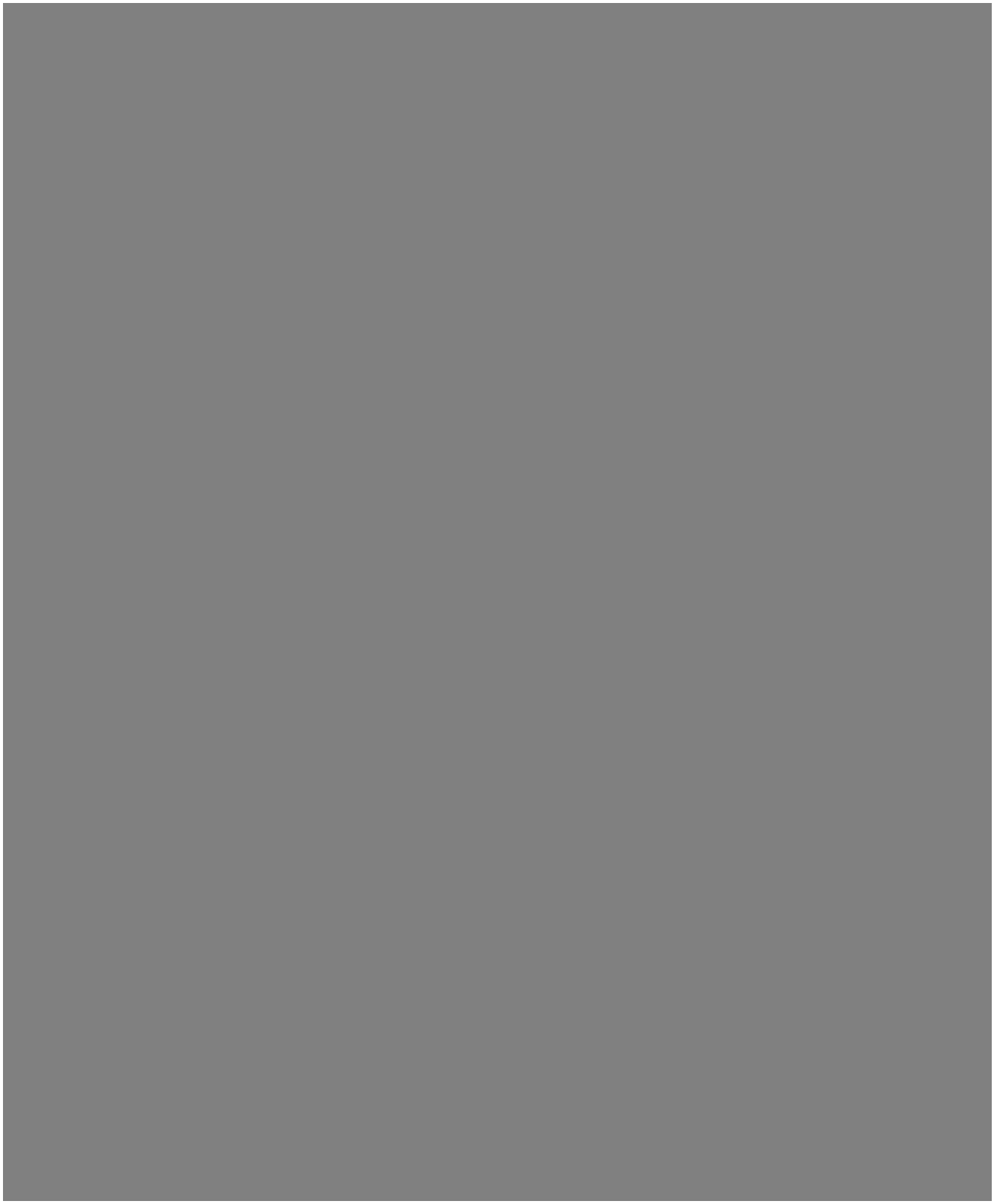
Appendix 4 Ethics Approval Form Completed



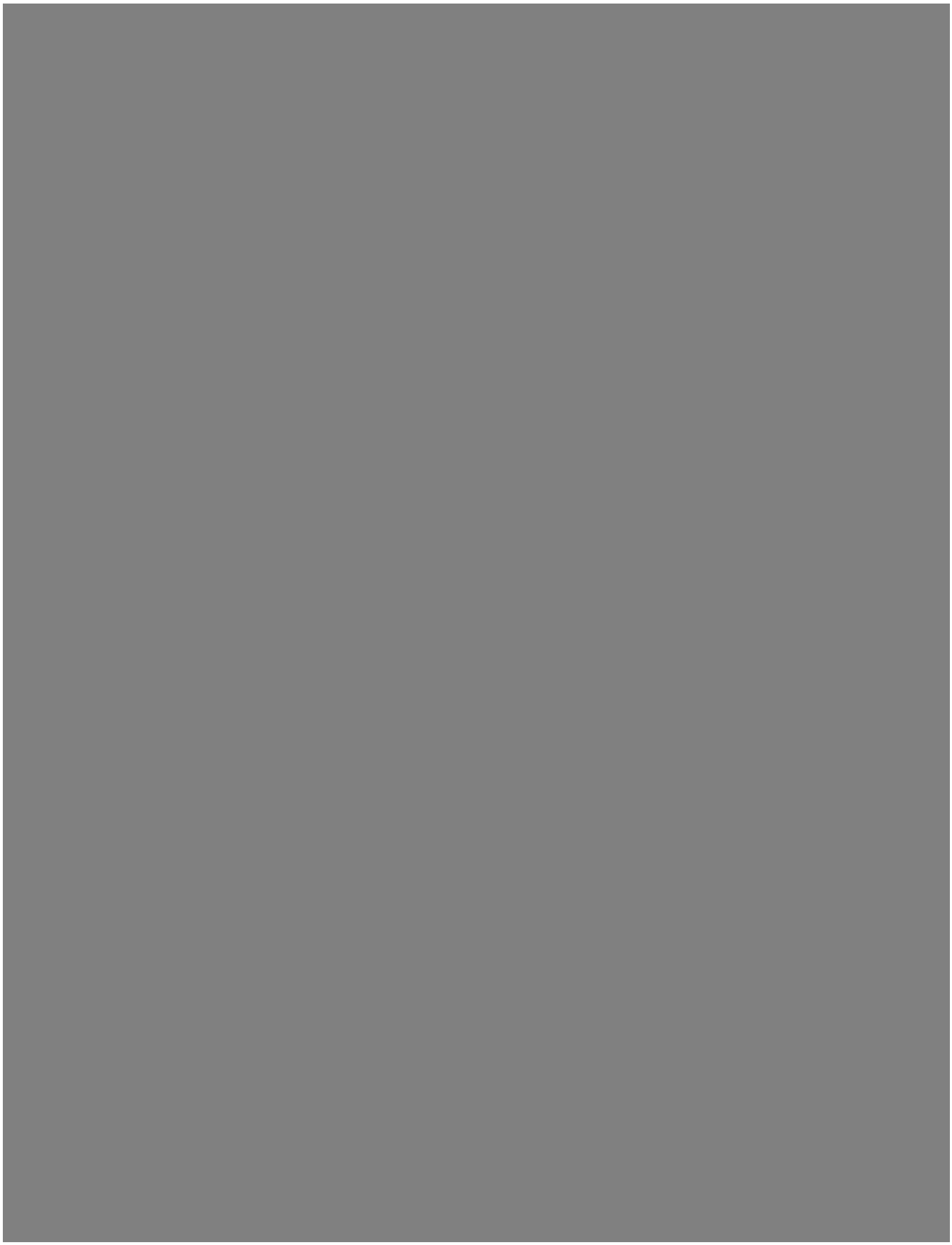
Appendix 5 Participant Consent Form

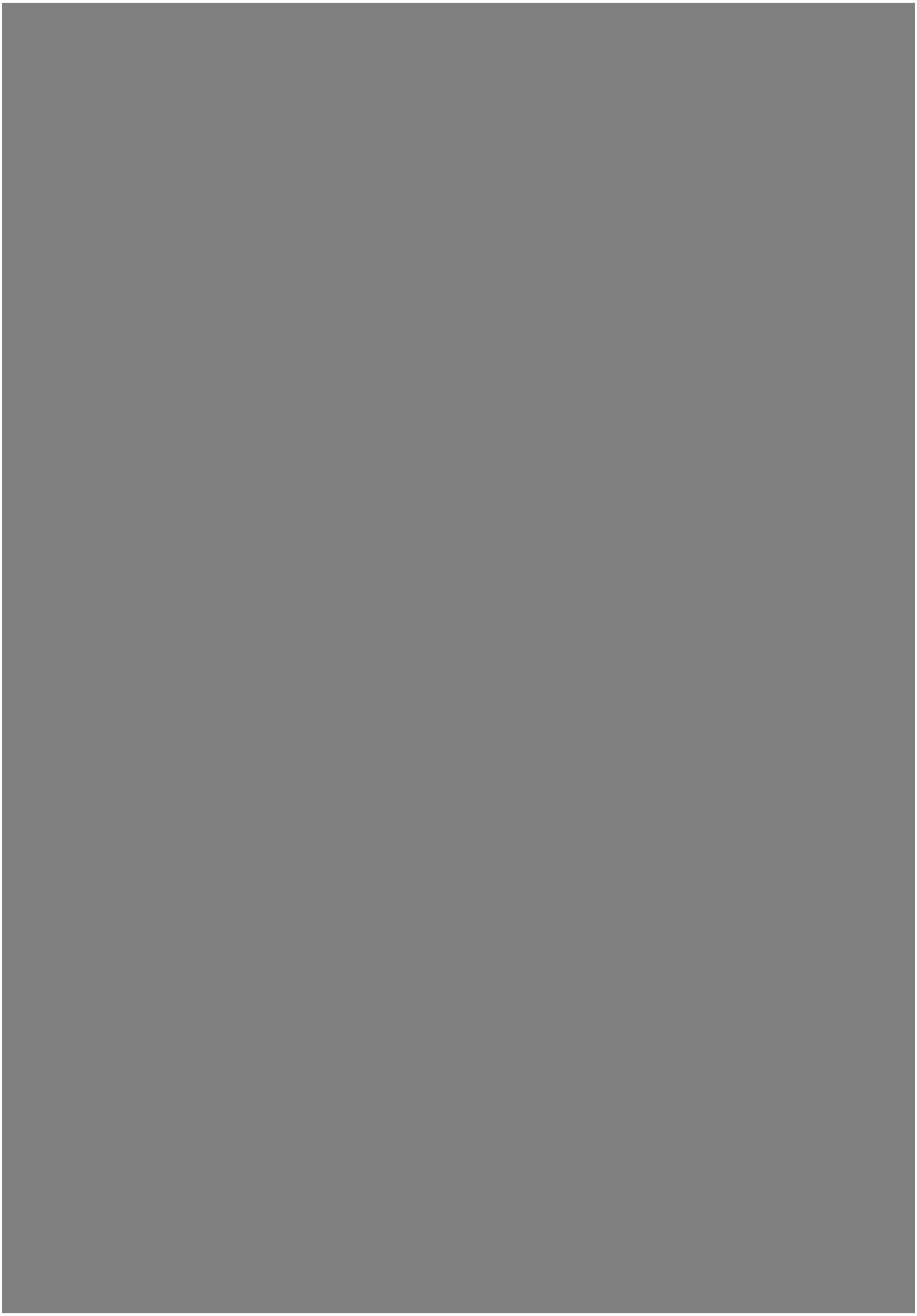


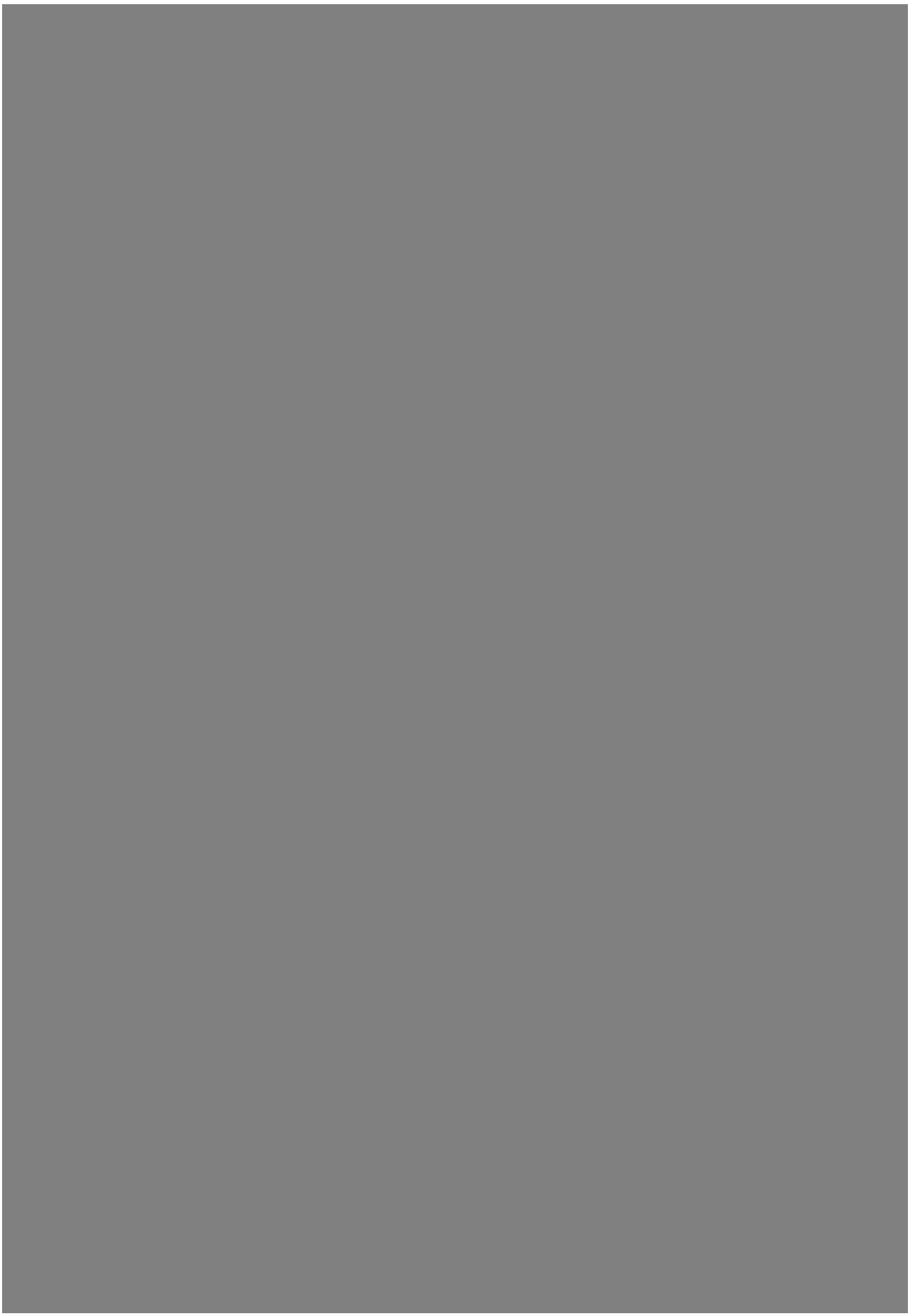
Appendix 6 Examples of Codes, Themes and Categories used when analysing Transcripts

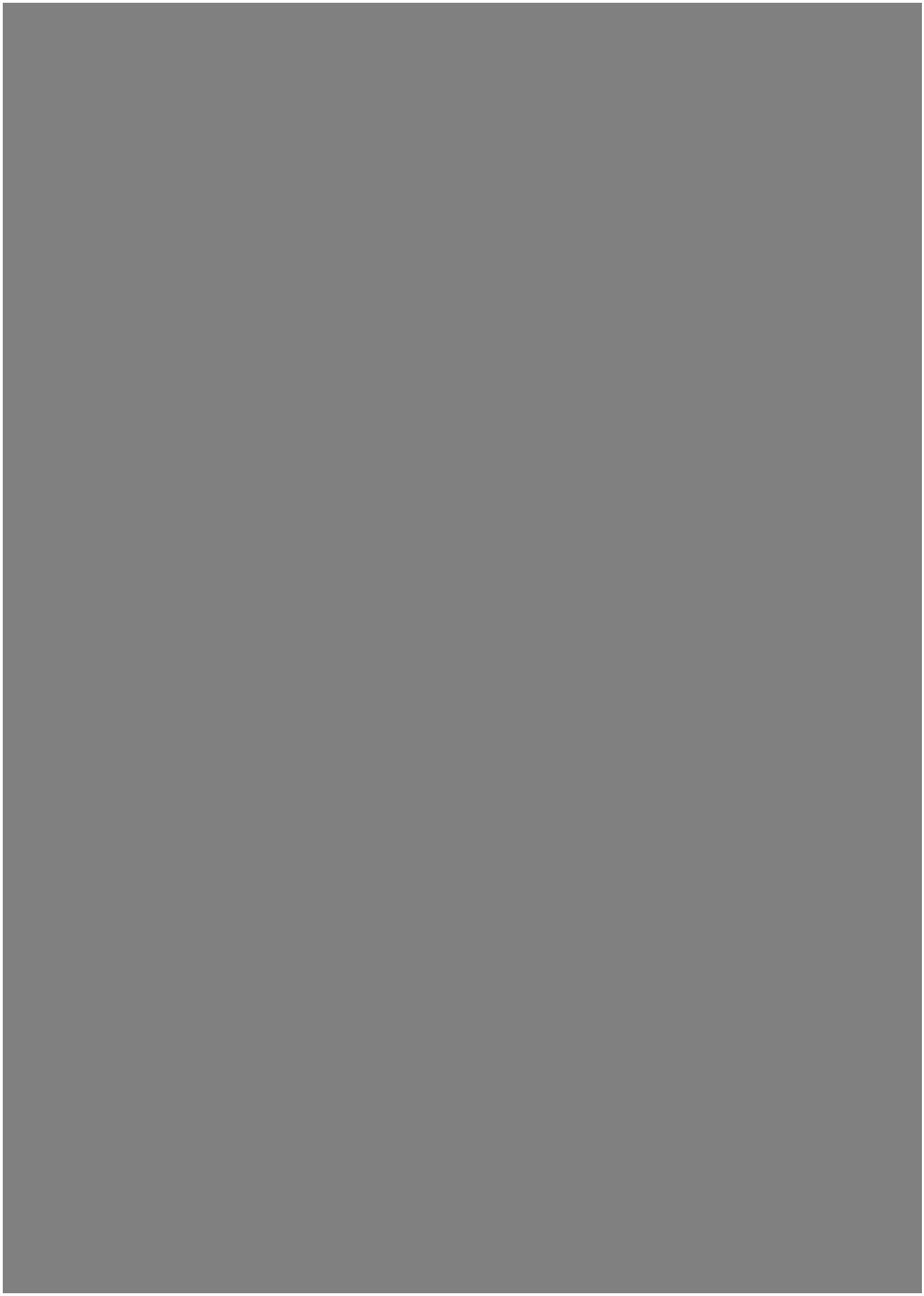


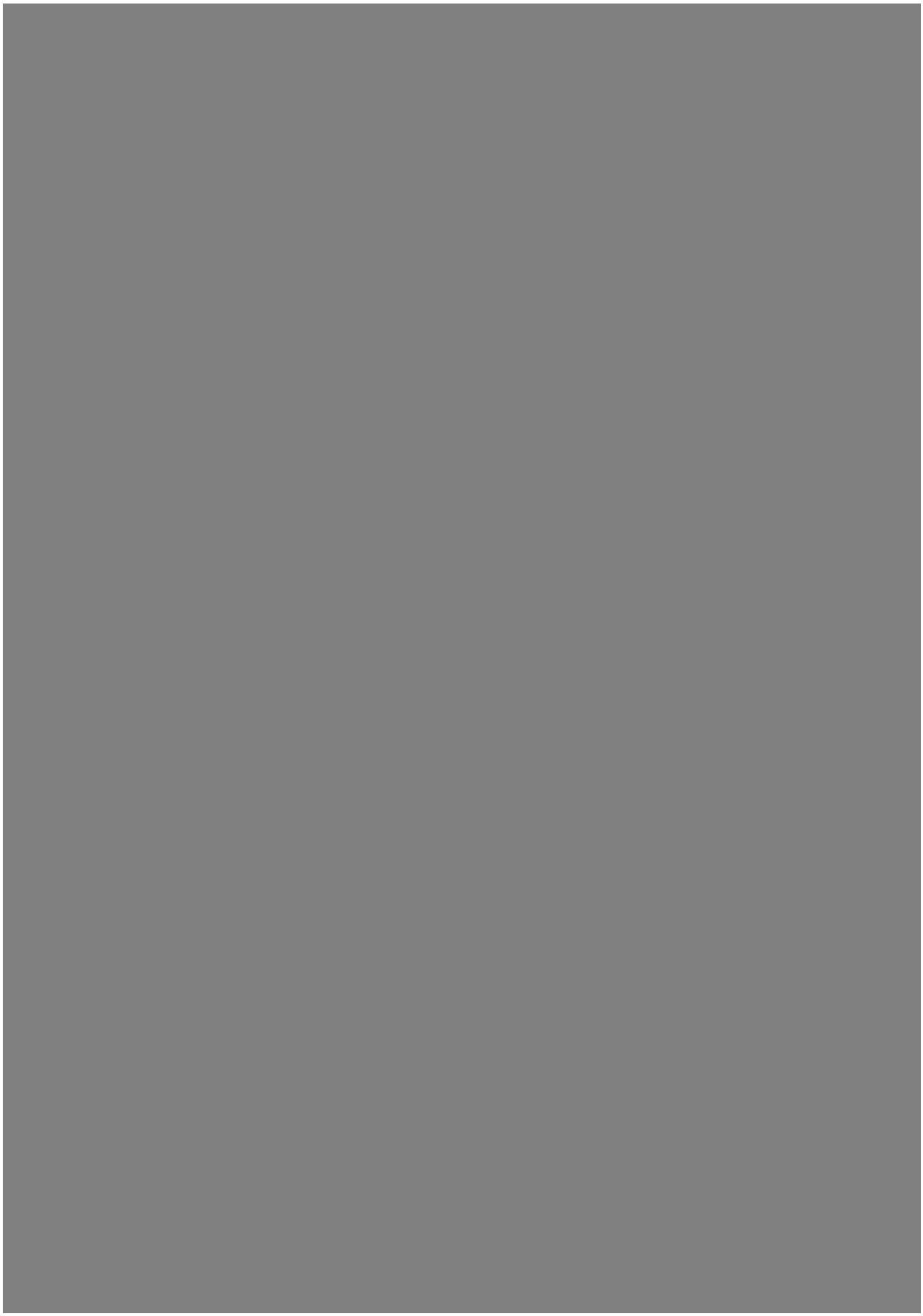
Appendix 7 Sample of Coded Interview Transcript

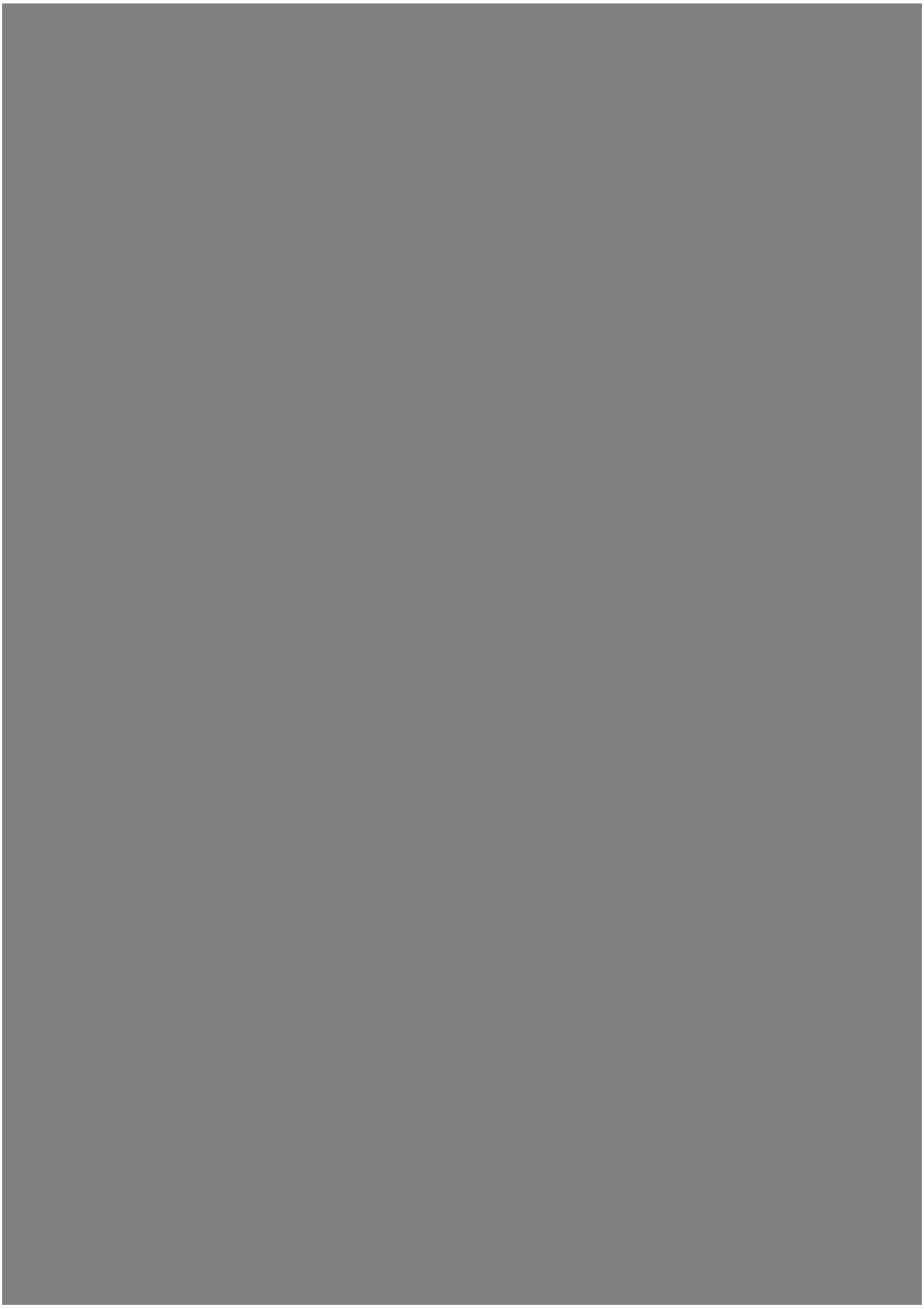


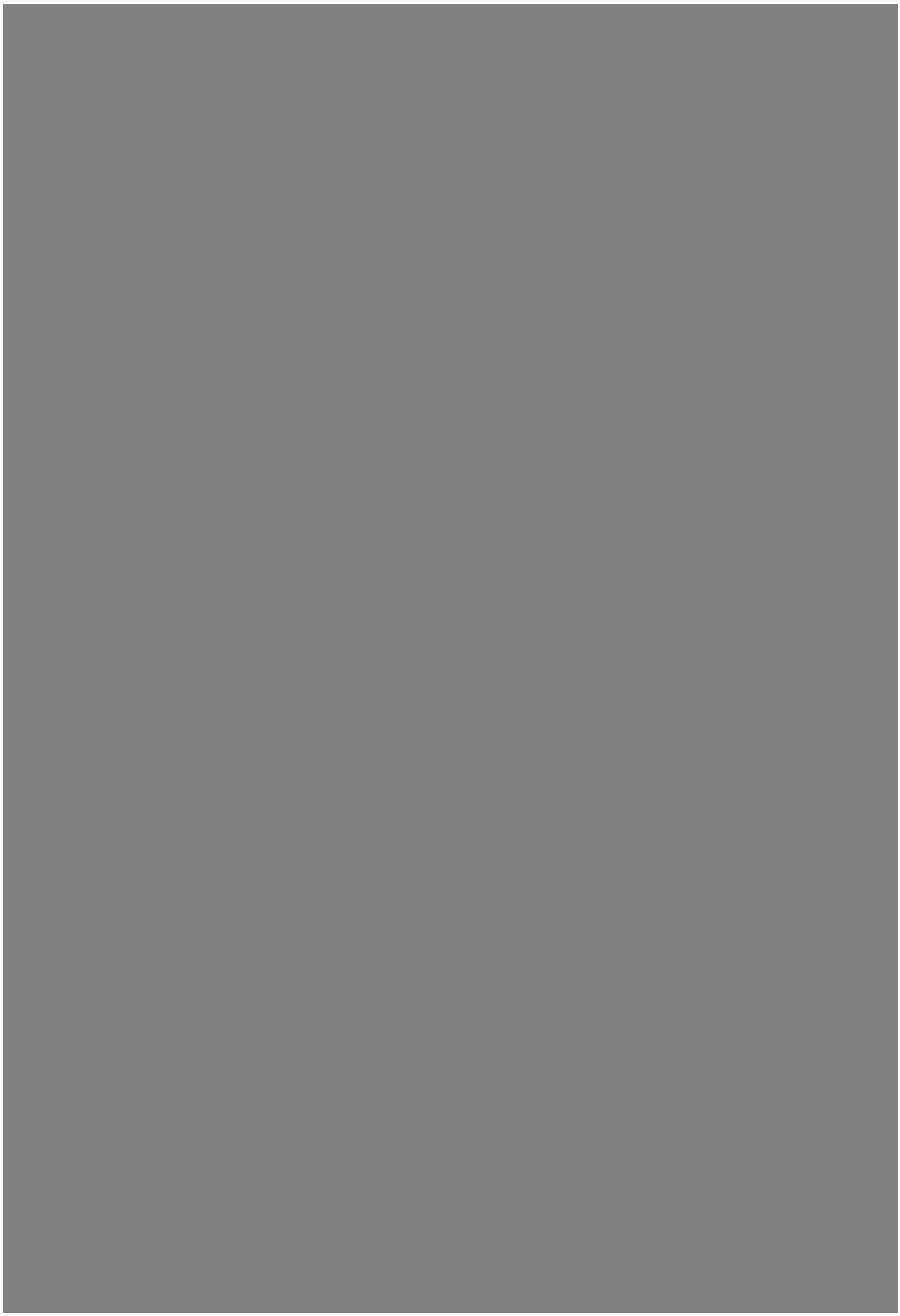


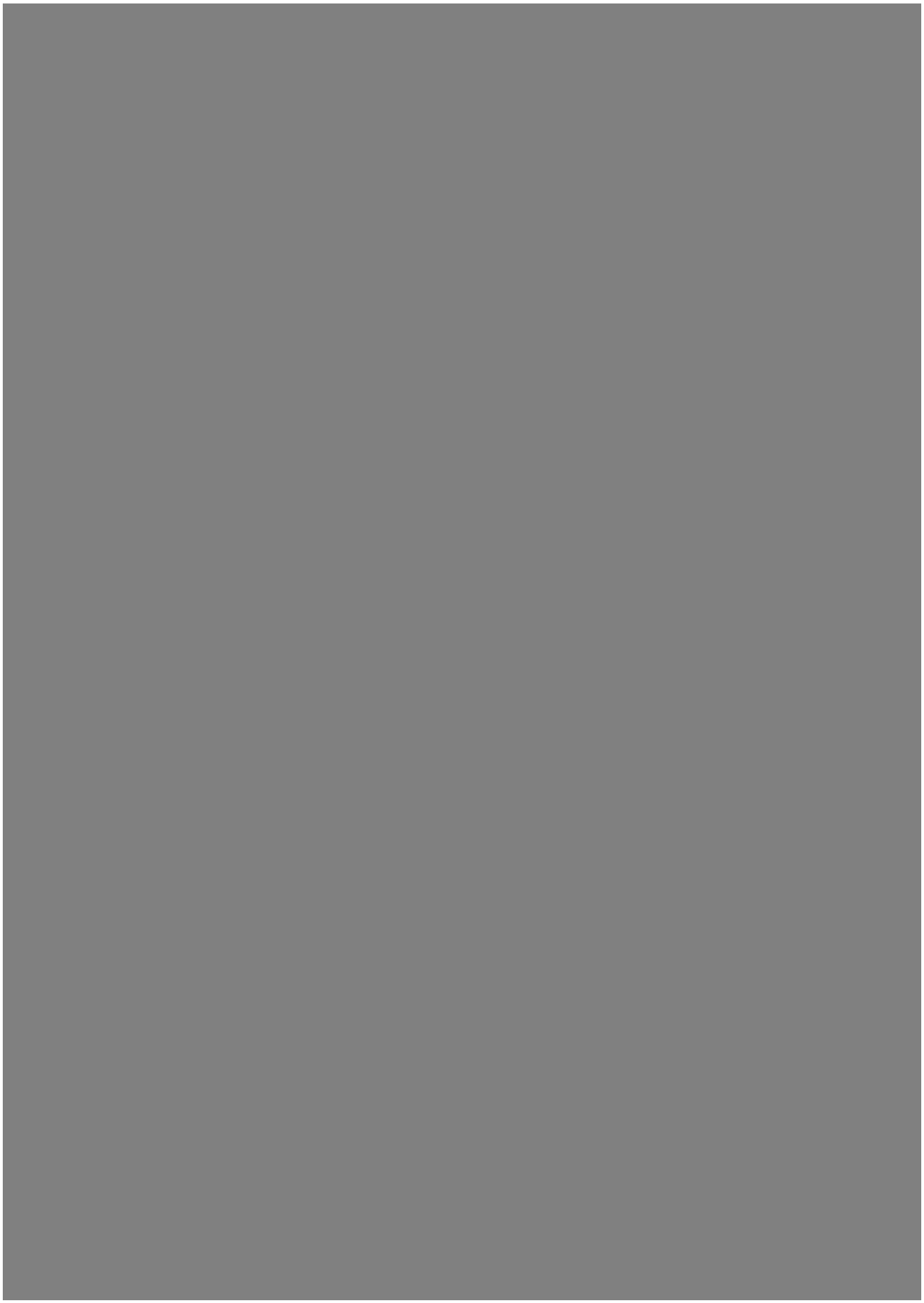


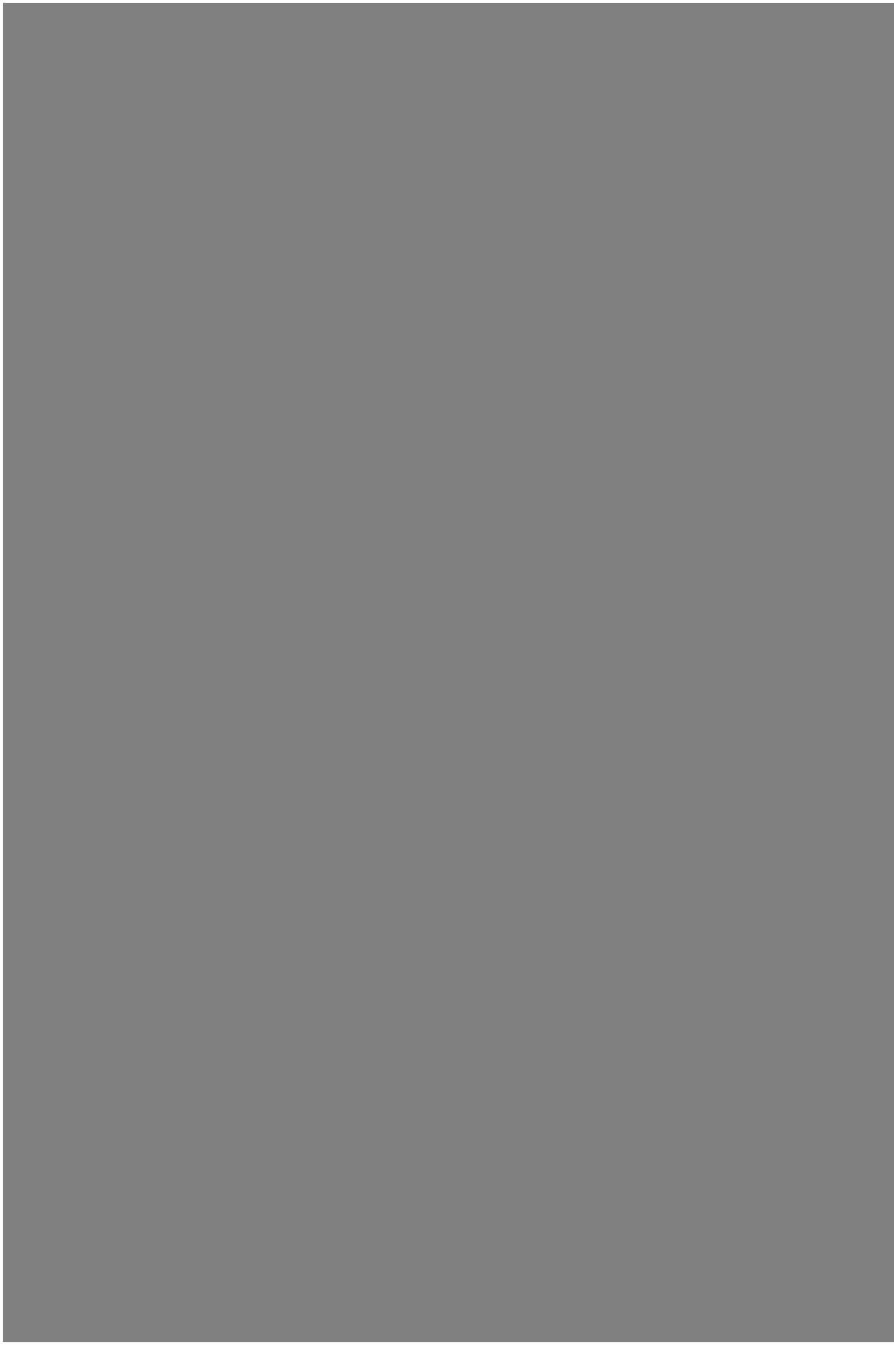


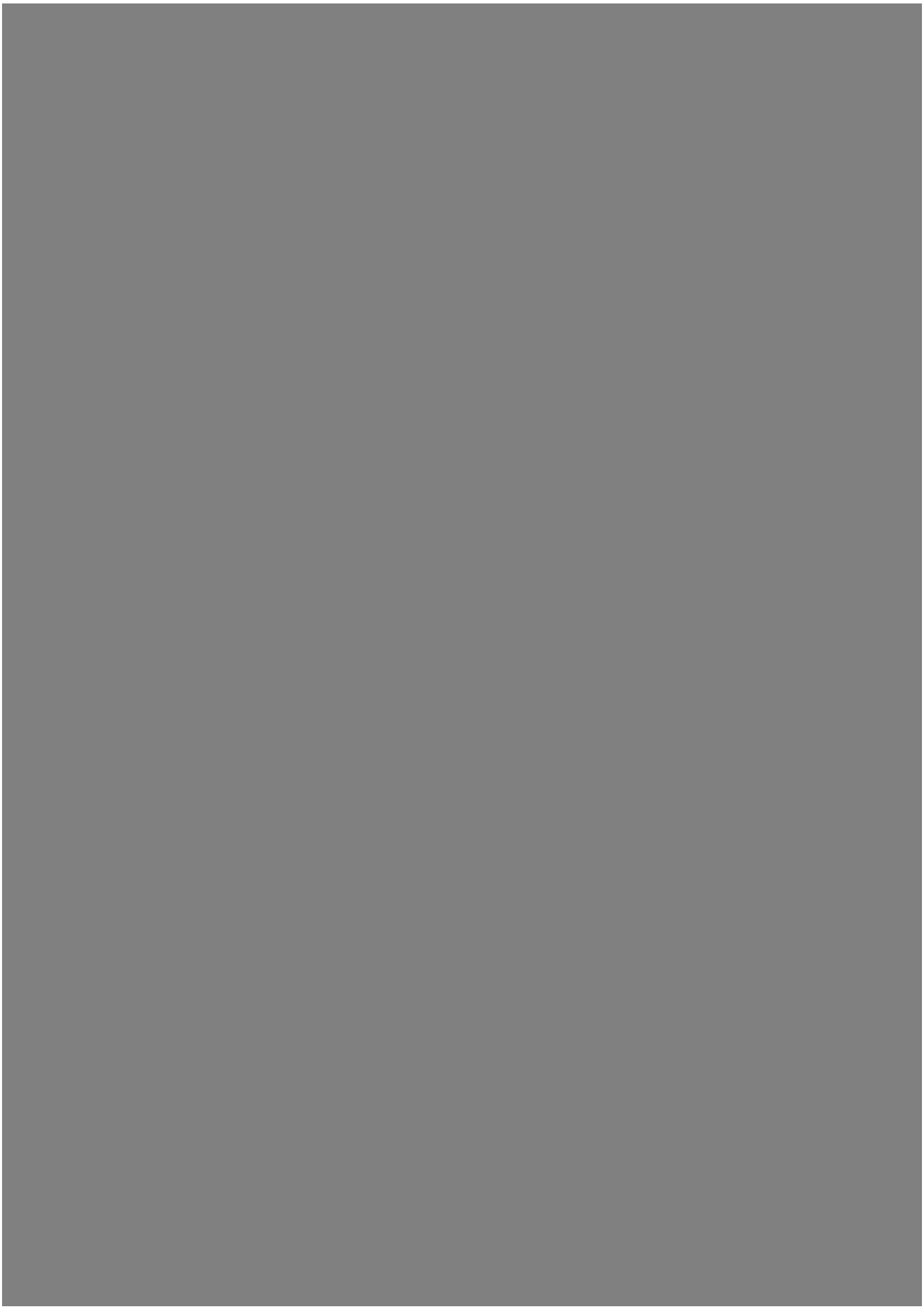


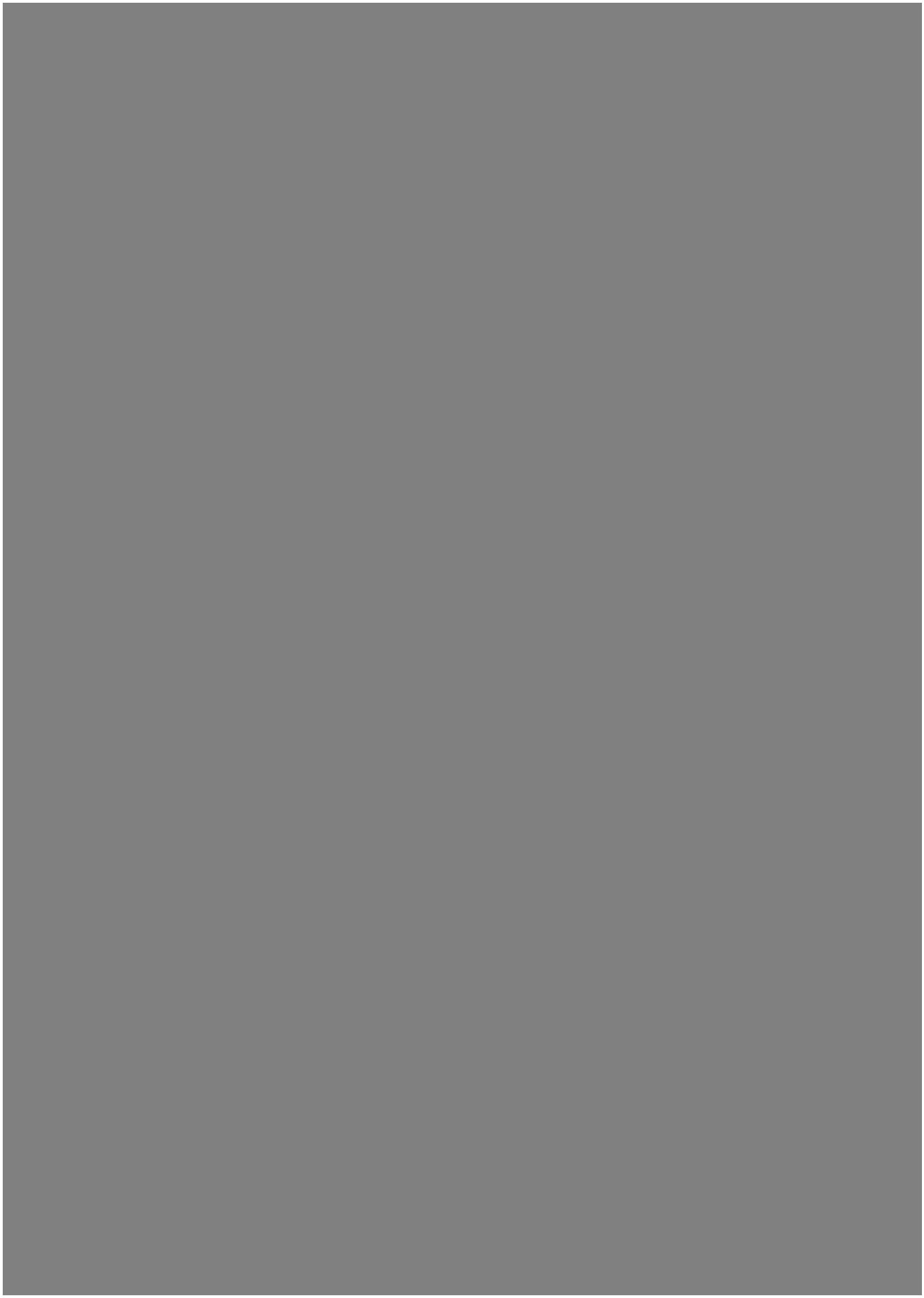


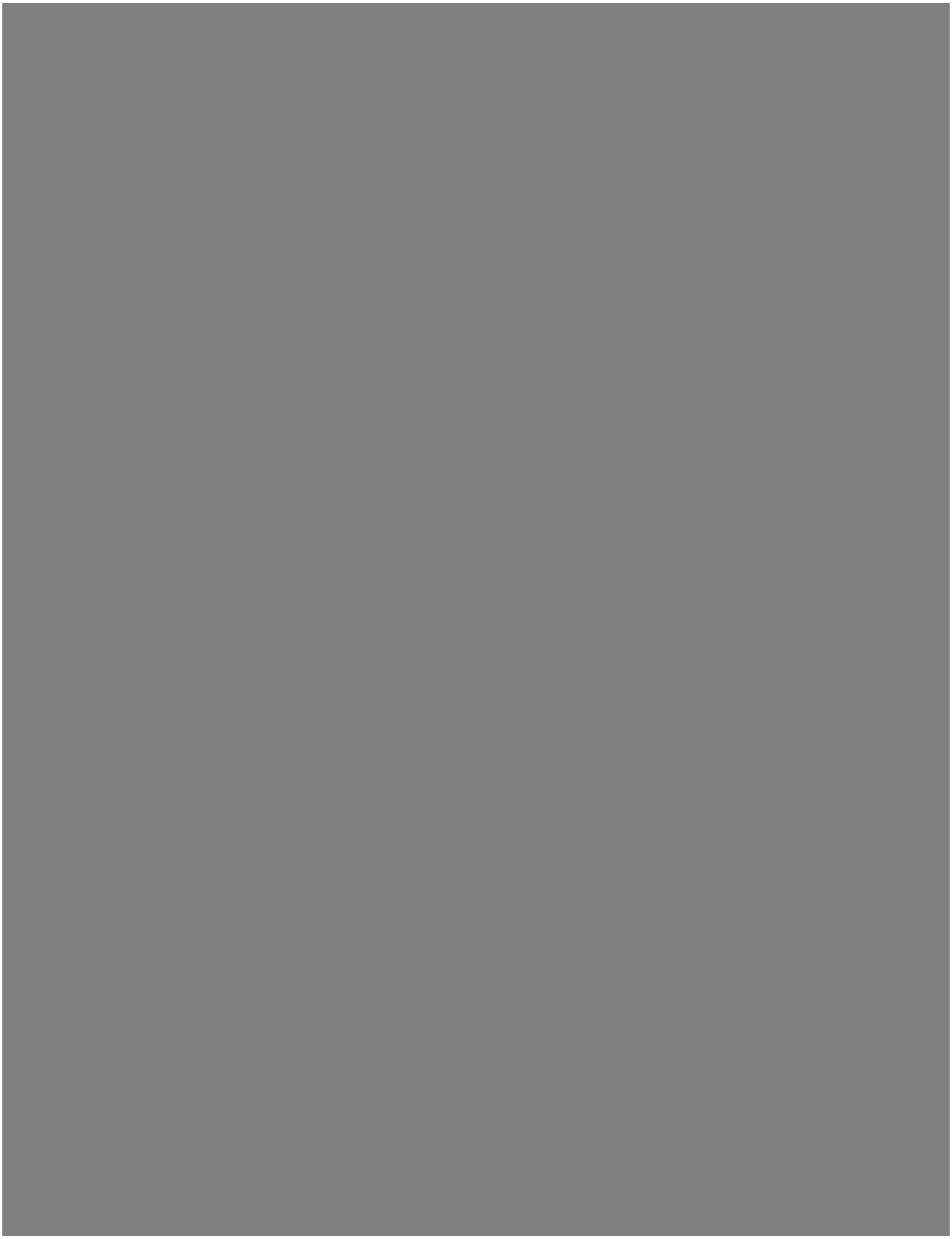




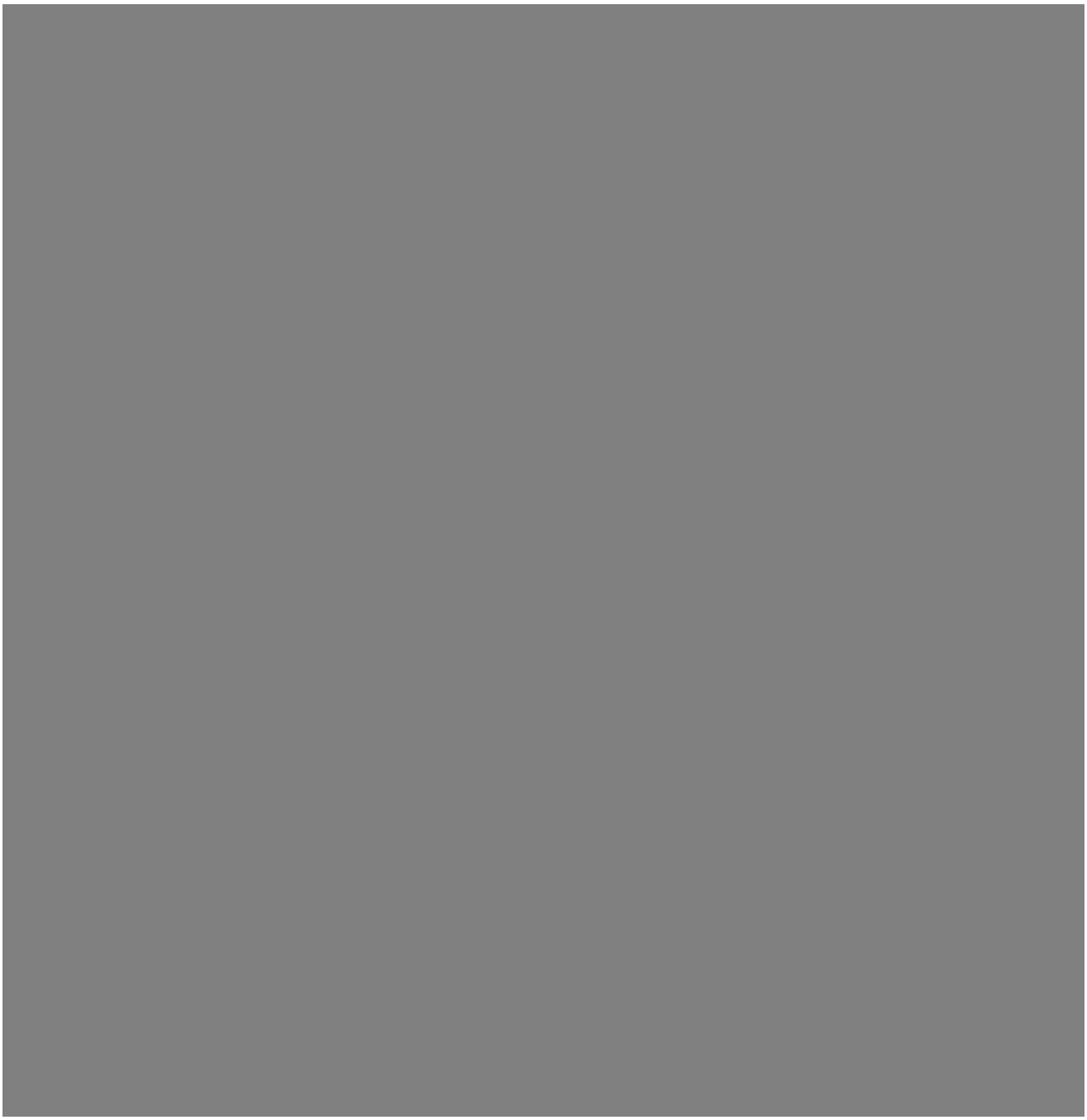




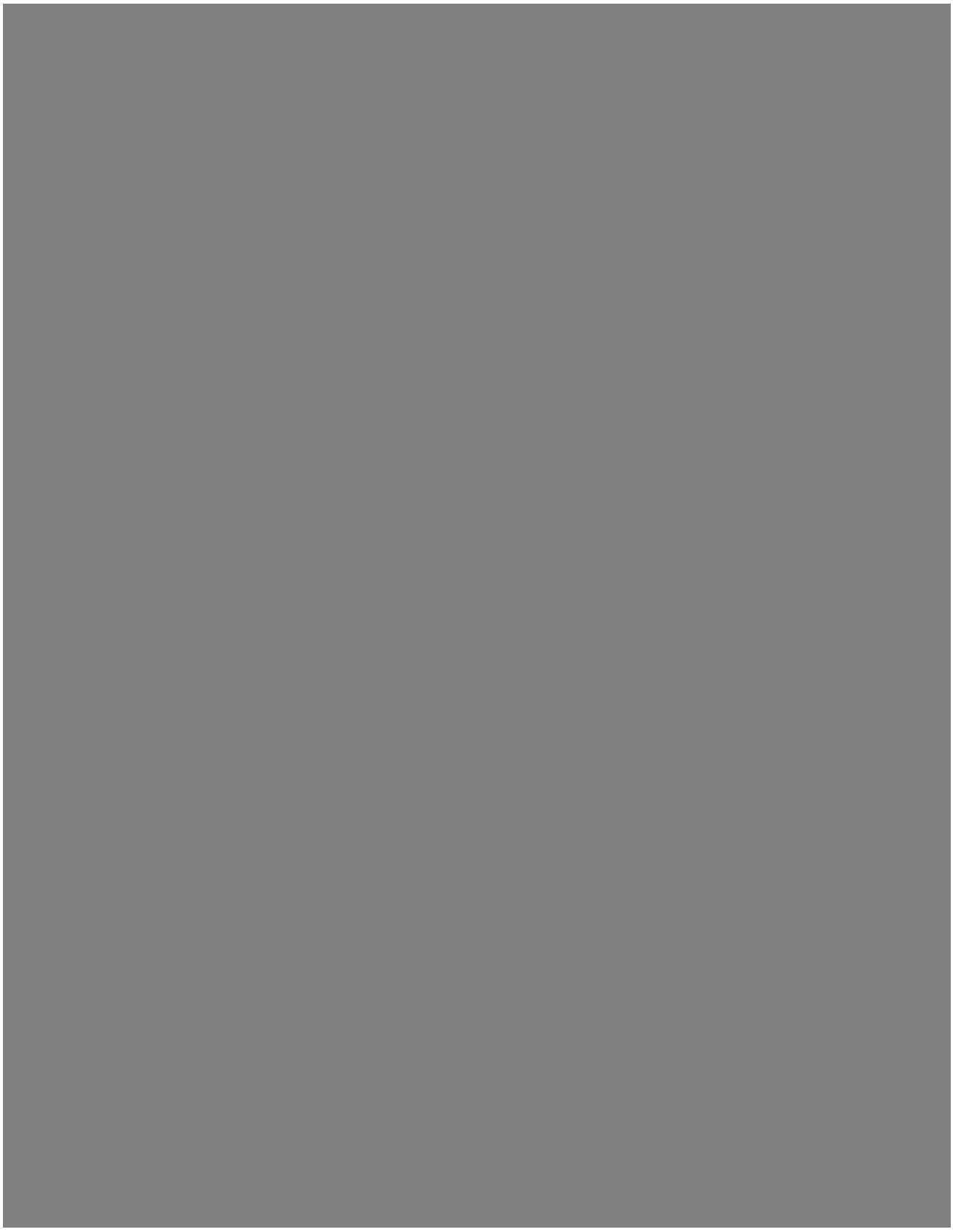




Appendix 8 Sample of Interview Matrix



Appendix 9 Word Counts



Appendix 10 Word Cloud Analysis