Chapter 10
Trusting in Higher Education: An Anthropological Perspective

Kate Maguire

Introduction

I have taken an anthropological perspective to this complex notion of trust in higher education due to a form of fatigue in reading about higher education institutions, and the challenges facing them, through a lens that seems more confined by the very thing it is exploring than illuminating the dark areas and finding a voice to say what is known and felt, but unspeakable or unsayable for many employed in higher education in the UK today. Some may not need such a voice or perspective; however, my experience with a range of higher education institutions, students and staff would indicate that some would welcome perspectives which may contribute to understanding and improving the environments in which they spend most of their working lives, and in which they would like to recover joy through a commitment to learning and teaching, and a sense of belonging to a culture that celebrates such contributions. It is a conceptual lens on trust in higher education. It positions higher education as an amorphous object posing challenges to how we communicate with it and the role of leadership in higher education institutions which has a strong influence on whether the culture is enabling or disabling for its members. A cautionary note here is that an anthropological lens does not offer any solutions, but can only claim that a different perspective might lead to different understandings and different attitudes and actions.

Anthropological writings on values rarely include trust in their index while it is implicitly present in every discussion from alliances and exchanges to symbolism of totems. Trust, and recognition of its betrayal as heinous, is universal. It is probably our single greatest achievement and the barometer of the cohesion of any organised human system. It is arguably one of the most useful products of our imagination. It is both basic and complex, expected and given, initially in most cases, without much

K. Maguire (✉)
Faculty of Business and Law, Middlesex University London, London, UK
e-mail: K.Maguire@mdx.ac.uk

checking for its worthiness. It is a superlative fantasy in which we collude because, even on a bad day, it maintains a kind of order in the system. We understand it better when we look at it retrospectively or as Corsín Jiménez (2011: 193) puts it, "We need a realm that lies after trust to make trust meaningful. There is, in a sense, no trust in society except in an 'after-trusting' mode."

As a member of a higher education institution in the United Kingdom, increasingly characterised by an audit culture, my instinct is sometimes not to trust it but I cannot explain why. Higher education has shown that it delivers on its promise – for many people – and many advances are unlikely to have been made without it. My reasoning trusts it. My emotions, which are informed by my social background, want to tell many young people today to go and learn on the job, a university education is not worth the debt and its promises cannot be trusted. Yet without the free university education I received, I would not have had so many opportunities in my life. I do not think it is unusual for the average university teacher to hold such contradictory views, views that can change from day to day. That is why I agree with Campbell when he says, "Rather than using trust to explain things away, it is trust itself that requires to be explained itself and it is trust that needs to be made a central object of enquiry" (Campbell, 2011: 37).

This chapter explores concepts familiar to the field of anthropology that may contribute some ideas to this exploration of trust: its contradictions, discontinuities, use and abuse, and obstacles to having a dialogue with it including the obstacles of institutionalised authorities and vested commercial interests. It starts with the notion of a cultural ecology and moves on to the human relationship with objects and how objects have grown beyond the extrinsic teleos we have been able to impose on them, beyond the functions of the emic-etic and beyond the endogamous and exogamous principles in keeping the cultural ecology sustainable. This chapter considers how such conceptualisations can guide research into such objects and the values, such as trust, which have become enmeshed and misused in the imperative to control them through forms of reductionism and functionalism as defined by, for example, managerialism in higher education. According to Krawinkler (2013: 7), the state of research into trust is at this stage:

> There is no single definition of trust (Rousseau et al., 1998: 394) which has been accepted by scholars from diverse backgrounds. However, there is an agreement that the willingness to be vulnerable and confident in one's own expectations are constitutional factors to trust relationships. Trust fulfils important functions such as: enabling cooperation (Gambetta, 1988), reducing complexity (Luhmann, 2009) decreasing transaction costs, and supporting response to crises (Rousseau et al., 1998). Trust is dynamic and changes over time.

But what if one no longer has confidence in one's own expectations?

Conceptualising the Context

Since the contributions of Bateson (2000), Finke (2013) and Steward (1972), a number of anthropologists have come to conceptualise any groupings, such as disciplines, and societies generally, as cultural ecologies, which can be further

conceptualised as integral parts of a superorganism. These cultural ecologies exhibit similar behaviours to any other ecology system in nature, that is, interdependent, interconnected and adaptive to internal and external influences. The nature and role of culture and human societies have been the major preoccupation of twentieth century anthropologists seeking the source, function and maintenance of human beings in organised systems. Fundamental to this gaze is that human beings are both individuals and members of groups and are cursed or blessed with imagination. Organisation on such a level requires both coercion and persuasion, and cultural transmission through individuals and groups reinforce both. Culture then is both enabling and disabling (McDermott & Varenne, 1995). Culture is a construct that wields considerable power controlling our relationship to objects for the price of identity and belonging. In the anthropological sense, objects are everything in our environment and relationships with objects can be both transactional and symbolic. Each ecology, like the human body, has interlinked systems. If the purpose of an individual higher education ecology is a learning function, it has to demonstrate it is sustainable and is of value to the superorganism in which it sits. If the ecology ceases to be useful, it will not be sustainable. It will die and be replaced or merged into a more successful ecology.

Trusting Objects

Krawinkler (2013) focused on trust in an Austrian company during a period of economic crisis. The title of her book is: "Trust is a Choice: Prolegomena of Anthropology of Trust (s)." Prolegomena is an introduction, a word taster (literal translation – before a meal), an amuse bouche. Keeping with the metaphor, I am not a master chef of anthropology, more an amuse bouche, as I use my formative discipline to inform approaches to research across difference. For me anthropology is an attitude to research and its function is reflected in its methods rather than being a discipline with a structured apparatus. This attitude to research and its function helps to penetrate the most resistant ingredients and release their secrets; and there are a lot of secrets around trust; many unexplored and misused implicits (taken on trust, assumed contracts) and often ill-used or misunderstood pragmatic explicits (quality assurance). There is no shortage of descriptions of trust, its criteria, function and indicators. There is, however, a scarcity of what it is to be in its presence or absence, to experience its positive use and misuse.

Anthropology is about the exploration of relationships with objects, hence its vast writings on tools and artefacts, purpose and meaning, rituals, functions and structures, the sacred and the profane, the shaman and witchcraft, and kinship and clans. Our organisation of the world into cultures and societies is constructed around our relationships with everything and the extrinsic teleos we impose on these objects (including humans); that is, their purpose, directive principle or goal, is harnessed to our human needs and desires; a kind of ontological narcissism on our part.

The nature of human existence therefore is defined by this constant engagement with objects. On a rough scale, objects can be classified as animate, living entities, and inanimate, those currently considered as organically lifeless. Such inanimate objects include those that are shaped, managed and exploited for human purpose, and those that are the products of human imagination. Objects range from the simple to the complex, from the coffee cup and spear, to amorphous objects, such as ideologies and other belief systems, and to hyperobjects, a term coined by the academic ecologist Timothy Morton (2013) to describe objects that were here before us and will be here after us, or those we have created which we cannot get rid of or control, like climate change. A hyperobject might be a biosphere, the solar system and human produced microplastics. He postulates that objects like these are on such a scale that they defy any metalanguage, making having a meaningful relationship with them problematic for humans. Although Morton includes ideologies, such as capitalism as a hyperobject, I would prefer to keep these within the amorphous range. On the whole, Morton's hyperobjects challenge our relationship with temporality, as indeed does technology, but in fact, more importantly, call into question our capacity to have a balanced relationship with them at all. This helps us to question whether the complexity of objects is reversing the equation and imposing teleos on humans so we become tools unable to communicate or bridge the relational gap. In other words, we can be in a situation in which we are no longer able to do much beyond react. This raises the question of the role of trust in such a relational dynamic.

In anthropological terms, let us put higher education into the amorphous object category. With a coffee cup or a spear, we are clear that they are to serve our purpose. We experience an element of control over them. Higher education, on the other hand, is an object we have created through our imagined futures for certain purposes, purposes which have rapidly changed in the last 20 years posing increasing challenges in terms of the kind of relationship that can be had with it within our limited capacities or rather the limitations imposed on our capabilities. This creation has taken on a life of its own, shifting and shaping in its growing complexity with rivals vying to wrest control of it for a variety of ends. Perhaps the anthropological lens we might find ourselves using in the exploration of trust, is that of salvage anthropology be rituals that both directs us to what it is that can be saved or is worth saving about its previous purpose, and the objects it produced, before it becomes extinct.

For the anthropologist, the cohesion of society is based on implicit and explicit compliance to norms in exchange for identity and safety, supported by rituals which both confirm trust (rewards for good service) and release people temporarily from its compliance obligations (shamanistic practices of ecstasy and release) to avoid rebellion or social norm disintegration. For example, in higher education institutions in the UK, there are the periodic 'consultations' between the executive and staff which can, on occasion, be like rituals of temporary releases from relentless environments of compliance and conformity to the expectations of the higher order of the culture's guardians. For the leadership, they are about permitting the letting off of steam. For staff, they know that it is a ritual and not likely to produce much change but they partake and even enjoy it, not unlike highly trained soldiers

partying before a battle who get to throw the rulebook out of the window for a short time. For a moment we can be who we are without fear of punishment. We can be righteous and angry, critical and rebellious then mumble on the corridors before becoming silent and compliant again. Our task, like soldiers, is in the end to trust each other, look out for each other, rather than trust in the system, which can be a serial betrayer of principles that were once held dear. This task is not always successful as mistrust is contaminating and divisive in any culture.

Such cleansing rituals are repeated in a number of contexts, such as the quarterly 'meet the management' events in major railway stations in the UK where the public can have their say. It is a modern take on pillories. The management put themselves in the stocks to comply with government franchising requirements masquerading as care and to defuse dissent. For a moment we feel good complaining about the state of the railways to the guardians and operators of the system and then squeeze into crowded carriages for the long journey home without a seat and for which one is charged substantial amounts of money knowing that the listening is only a ritual, and that there is no point taking the complaints further as no one has time to take on the monoliths which are the rail companies. The most we can do is to give someone our seat. Pollock (1995) concurs with a number of other anthropologists (Lévi-Strauss, 1982; Urban & Hendriks, 1983) that this masking or masquerading is to do with semiotic identity.

> I consider masking to be an aspect of the semiotics of identity, that is, one of a variety of means for signalling identity, or changes in identity. My argument is that identity is displayed, revealed or hidden in any culture through conventional means, and that masks work by taking up these conventional means, iconically or indexically. In semiotic terms, an icon is a variety of sign that bears a resemblance to its object (Pollock, 1995: 582).

At any one time, communication could be solely based on exchanges between masks, which can be acceptable if one is aware of the game and adjusts expectations accordingly. It is when masks get in the way of authentic communication, through switching, for example, from demon to angel, that trust is eroded. Then there is a tendency to bow out and leave the stage to the most skilled masqueraders. However, a critical point in the betrayal of trust, or expectations of trust that have been disappointed over time, is soon reached; when truth is eventually spoken, it can no longer be recognised as truth and believed.

Trusting higher education is like trusting the United Nations or trusting wealth or indeed trusting trust. Within this amorphous range of complex objects different phenomena arise and disappear on a regular basis as, being objects themselves, they have their own ecologies subject to the nudges, penetration and stickiness of other ecologies around them. This raises the question of how communication is managed between objects. In ancient Egypt, where the realm of the gods could be seen as an amorphous object to mortals, the mortals created a translator god, Thoth, a neutral facilitator of understanding, between the two vastly different realms of experience. Thoth is the antecedent of the Greek god Hermes (less neutral), whose name is given to Hermeneutics, the philosophy of understanding. Such a translator is also known as the trickster god indicating that 'tricks' are often needed to facilitate

understanding between differences. Metaphors are 'tricks'. Even the most basic of societies, with no contact with the so-called high cultures, have produced such an interlocutor in the form of the shaman who translates messages from, for example, the realm of the dead or spirits to those still living. At the individual and group level the dialogue with the amorphous object of higher education has become more challenging, the characteristics of the dialogue superficially metaphoric, confusing and fragmented. It is a dialogue which has, for the most part, been taken over and interpreted by shamans who themselves, I would argue, belong in the masquerading category as masquerading is also part of the translator – trickster's portfolio harnessed for increasing understanding (if the shaman is skilled and neutral) by drawing attention to contradictions from which insights can be gained and creativity released (Hyde, 2008).

Such conceptualisations can bring more fully into the open not the function of trust, which seems quite clear, but in what we trust and whether our trust is deserved. For example, returning to the amorphous object notion, a manifestation of the amorphous object of higher education, dwelt among us, is a higher education institution. Like the Hindu gods, there are many manifestations of the same god. The guardians of each manifestation are the governors who need to ensure its ecology has an going value to the superorganism by competing successfully with other higher education institutions for resources; by persuading smaller units, such as families of new generations, looking for nurturing nests for their young, that their particular higher education ecology is better than another and can mature their young enough to negotiate successfully into bigger nests (external organisations who will employ them) and by attracting the big nest headhunters to look for talent in their ecology over another one. Here we begin to see the different ways in which higher education ecologies translate the sacred words of government policy.

Policy then comes forth from the amorphous object of higher education to which the manifestation has to respond if it is to survive. Its guardians choose, through fairly secret means, a shaman (a vice chancellor) to interpret this, often Delphic, riddle of the future. This shaman may or may not have the hermeneutic translator skills of the old interpreter gods nor the neutrality, which was their origin. The shaman is trusted to listen to the amorphous object (god) and interpret its Word, which is passed to the tribal chiefs in the form of pro vice chancellors and deans who create systems and roles to deliver the Word. Both the guardians and the tribal chiefs do not require trust from their ecology members but compliance to the Word. Quality assurance and human resources then manage and monitor compliance of the delivery to limit any deviations of the Word. Teachers and researchers are tasked with the delivery of the Word to students in a way that will engage students and ensure that the brand and identity given by the university is carried into the outside world as one to trust, generating new adherents and new investment from headhunters. A good experience of the university is what influences students to be ambassadors and icons of trust in the brand.

With respect to quality assurance in higher education, trust is generally regarded to be a central issue. However, a key problem when dealing with a more internationally active higher education sector is the historical lack of formal organisational and

institutional arrangements that stimulate, build, and maintain trust with respect to the quality of higher education across national boundaries. Consequently, there are considerable knowledge and information gaps on the quality of higher education if one moves beyond the national policy arenas and higher education governance structures. These gaps restrict trust among the actors involved and potentially limit effective cross-national higher education activities (Stensaker & Maassen, 2015: 3).

However, the higher education shaman also has a more purposeful duty to the ecology. The shaman is the guardian of the sacred, which is not the role of the guardians of the entity and the tribal chiefs. The shaman has a duty to keep the sacred and the structure in delicate balance. The sacred are the intangibles, from notions of truth and knowledge to compassion and trust, to the spirit of the culture. Members of higher education institutions in the UK, it can be argued, experience a growing imbalance, which is causing concern, resulting in a range of negative perceptions and an absence of the spirit, usefully and loosely translated here as creativity and belonging. There is a fear that the shamans, like Hermes, have moved from guardian and facilitator of truth to instrument of the gods. There is the perception that the teachers, managers and monitors do not have to trust the executive, they comply, or they may lose their jobs. Losing a job could mean displacement from other social ecologies to which they belong and which also define their status contributing to their identity in the world. The students trust the university to deliver what they need and the quality of the learning experience is intricately tied up with the quality of the teacher. Ironically, it is only in this delivery space that teachers can carve out some autonomy and be creatively non-compliant, which forms the basis of the trust the students have in the university. The sense of belonging comes from being happy with peers and trusting their teachers with, in many cases, all aspects of their lives. They trust them to guide them through the liminal and dangerous space (Turner, 1969, 1985) between young adulthood and responsible adulthood. They trust them with the rite of passage. Perhaps they trust them not to comply.

The Emic and Etic Principles of Cultures and Societies and the Endogamy Exogamy Principles of Alliances and Exchange

These refer to internal and external behaviours and practices, and the differences or anomalies between them. Trust in an emic context is often a mixture of mutual reciprocity and compliance especially when mutual reciprocity is a form of compliance to the rules of the cultural ecology. Trust in the etic context is that which needs to be engendered in the outward facing brand of the cultural ecology to attract etic or exogamous reciprocity, in other words trade for mutual benefit.

The emic and the endogamy principles are about awareness of the dirty washing in the bedrooms and the collusion is in concealing this from outsiders. An aspiring aim would be for these two sets of principles, the emic and endogamy and the etic

and exogamy, to be in closer alliance, resonant not dissonant. This was one of the original purposes of quality assurance, that is, to demonstrate reliability, and internal and external consistency of high standards to the other ecologies, particularly the big nests of the corporate and public sectors who are now having increasing influence on curricula development, perhaps because higher education has been too slow to respond to the requirements of the market. Reliability is a key indicator of trust (Lyon et al., 2011) and both staff and students need to explore with more awareness whether to trust their higher education institution to deliver on its promise to them of reliability, accountability and imagined futures and convince external employers that what they teach, and students respectively learn, will bring value to their organisation, their ecology through the institution's graduates.

One failure of reliability is the dissonance between espoused and practised values, between a promise and a deception, which raises expectations leading to disappointments and betrayal. In higher education this could be the mission statement promising a rich learning environment and the latest technology when the reality is everyone is doing their best to provide a rich learning environment, but the technical systems are outdated inhibiting a positive experience; or when the institution claims to prepare young people for employment when UK figures show that a large number of graduates feel unprepared for work CMI (Chartered Management Institute) research *Are graduates ready for work* September 2021. Additionally, young people are accepted on to courses to prepare for careers in a market that higher education knows will be saturated by the time they graduate. Young people engaged in the new Apprenticeship schemes in UK universities will not be so concerned with trust in higher education, but with trust in their employers to have co-created their higher education courses, which will facilitate their career development and with trust that their employers will follow through on expected promotions if they graduate.

Trust is not one thing. It is an amorphous object too. It is a shape shifter depending on the context and the purpose it is used for at any one time. For example, trust in a marriage contract does not need the same indicators of trust as a transactional contract that has limited or no emotional involvement of the parties involved. Trust should not be confused with compliance. Trust, like elusive dark matter, seems to be the cohesive stuff that holds everything else in delicate balance. At the same time, it can be difficult to pin down and have an honest conversation with because checking if someone or something is trustworthy can be seen as an act of mistrust. For example, the espoused function of staff work plans in higher education is to check whether anyone is above or below the required hours of their work contract to ensure fairness. In practice, because institutions tend to only respond to deficits in the hours and not to the considerable amount of free hours given to a university by many of its members, some managers actively discourage stating the real hours, and so a sense of the untrustworthiness of the university grows. Monitoring comes to be perceived as an act of mistrust towards staff. The lack of recognition of such a demonstration of commitment to education through free hours is a reinforcement of mistrust in the university's espoused care of its staff. The staff then see their extra

hours as commitment to the students and not to the university. The cohesion of the institution's culture then becomes fragile.

A cultural ecology can, to borrow from Snyder (2018), be committed to the politics of inevitability, for example, accepting technological advancement will drive the juggernaut into the future and that there is little that can be done to prevent its trajectory as a hyperobject so it focuses on STEM subjects; or it can be committed to the politics of eternity, for example, embedding itself in the historical narrative of identity, going round and round forever constantly re-enacting the historical drama of the chosen: for example, fascism, fundamentalism. In the higher education context, this could mean it is slow to change, with divisive discipline based claims to knowledge and truth. Both are replicative systems. A cultural ecology can also be generative, committed to Snyder's notion of the politics of responsibilities. "If we see history as it is, we see our places in it, what we might change, what we might do better. We halt our thoughtless journey from inevitability to eternity, and exit the road to unfreedom. We begin a politics of responsibilities" (Snyder, 2018: 279). This is not unlike Graeber's notion of possibilities (2007). Responsibilities could be seen as a precursor to possibilities: "the word encompasses much of what originally inspired me to become an anthropologist…because it opens windows on other possible forms of human social existence" (Graeber, 2007: 1).

Replicating systems will eventually fail in the fast moving markets of today. Therefore the pragmatic ecology of the higher education institution has to provide the conditions for generative learning to take place. Generative conditions or spaces are often sacrificed, squeezed or suffocated by compliance systems. The space that was once used for doctoral students to collaborate and for staff to share ideas is now an eatery or a classroom on a booking system. The system does not trust the space will be used wisely otherwise. The institution does not trust its members to be replicative or generative. It monitors the desired replicative of compliance and obstructs the desired generative by its lack of trust in creativity and our capacity for navigating uncertainties. The choice of 'politics' dictates or influences the preferred endogamous and exogamous alliances and exchange resulting in a cleansing of members to make way for those who can be trusted to be compliant to the processes and procedures of the Word, to be more compliant with the new order, although, in an interconnected world, the new order is fast becoming an old order as organisations look for the creative edge which higher education institutions are inhibiting through trust in compliance. Returning to the shaman, the interpretation responsibilities therefore are considerable, the balancing increasingly precarious as Jameson (2012) recognises by arguing that,

> the ability to resist the 'false necessity' of deterministic solutions in building staff trust to cope proactively with ambiguity and change. This capability is needed for academic leaders to maintain their role in shaping the enduring purposes of higher education during a recession, both in England and in the wider international environment. (Jameson, 2012: 391)

Anthropological Understandings

Anthropology expects contradictions and discontinuities. It is suspicious of uniformity as this can be an indicator of atrophy. It understands the positive nature of disruption and the value of negative capability in leadership. Negative capability in higher education leadership would be providing the conditions for understanding (Gadamer, 2013) to take place between all the parts and such a condition is a culture of trust. In such a culture, solutions can emerge appropriate to the context of complexity, which is rife with uncertainties rather than an intense all-consuming focus on government prescribed problems and government prescribed solutions that may set up a culture of mistrust. Higher education leadership often has to concern itself with financial sustainability, but leadership has also to protect and enrich the 'livingness' of its members just as a good shaman would. Livingness is also about the recognition that the larger part of human life is acted out in work and that not recognising that results in alienation of the worker and a failure to harness the array of talents in higher education that remain hidden because the conditions of compliance do not evoke their appreciation and contribution. Returning to masks as semiotic identity (Pollock, 1995: 582), the shaman leader/vice chancellor can become an icon, a "variety of sign that bears a resemblance to its object". This raises the notion that the object can become the resemblance of the icon, shaped in the image of the leader who wears it. The shaman is supposed to be comfortable in complexity and engage with the value of balance, which is dependent on trust. The shaman needs to be trusted and to trust the members of the culture to be able to support the structural, functional and creative, and differentiate the purposes. The shaman needs to trust that members too can hold uncertainties and not knowing (Jameson, 2012: 391).

How can we know more? Anthropological methods have been undergoing something of a renaissance since the world has become more complex and in which negotiating difference and learning from it becomes a necessity. As we are dealing with an amorphous object in which phenomena arise and disappear, where the locus of negotiation is a social context, that is the cultural ecology, and as the object has significant influence on whether an individual or group thrives or not, it is important to follow that other key concept in anthropology which is to explore the understanding of the members of the ecology's understanding of what anything is. It would seem then that ethnography, looking at something closely for a long time, non judgementally, may offer insights. Margaret Mead conducted the whole of her evaluation of the first Salzburg reconciliation conference after the Second World War through ethnography because of the complexities and sensitivities of the gathering together of human objects representing amorphous objects who had just committed considerable atrocities (Maguire, 2015; Russon & Ryback, 2003). Higher education institutions, as manifestations of higher education, can use more imaginative methods to explore how a manifestation can go beyond its reliance on compliance trust. There is a fear which has developed around trusting anything that cannot be measured. Yet, rarely is attention given to the appropriateness of the measuring tool to what is being measured. One would not use a ruler to measure the flow of water nor

a two dimensional template to evaluate a three dimensional object, yet such instruments are trusted as reliable while an approach, such as close observation is not. Perhaps this is because in the new management paradigm, if something does not lend itself easily to metrics, it cannot be trusted.

Autoethnography, an offspring of anthropology, has endeavoured against the odds to make reflexivity in researching human societies reliable and there are examples of its insights influencing practitioners, policies and systems at the site of practice. At its core is an examination of reflexive impact. Leadership in UK higher education institutions could benefit from a close examination of their own impact on the cultures in which they are shamans and chiefs; increase their hermeneutic skills in translating policies and grapple with presence and absence of trust and its impact on the health of the ecology. Such research could reveal the flexibility, or existence even, of the adaptive capacities of the ecology and the role senior management might have in reducing them or expanding them, and the direction in which they are going and developing. Narrative and phenomenology approaches can reveal much of what is hidden because they go beyond metric testing that replicates information within the bounds of the instrument itself. They embrace all forms of human expression not just the word. Anthropology excels in the interpretation of metaphors in diverse forms. It captures the discontinuities and contradictions of any cultural system. It surfaces the grey areas and the assumptions, such as the impact of the epidemic of hot-desking on student and staff experience and on the reputation of a higher education institution as one that can be trusted. "It treats the familiar as though it were strange" (Linstead, 1997: 85).

Trust Unchained

Trust has always been about making oneself vulnerable in the relational dynamic with objects. Trust mitigates risk; it forges alliances and strengthens as well as facilitates cohesion of groups. In the case of higher education where systems are notoriously hierarchical, the shaman becomes the pivotal figure who impacts the wealth, health and direction of its students and staff through the maintenance of a cultural ecology that is in a constant state of negotiation within and outside itself.

The shaman requires negative capability further explained by Jameson (2012: 394):

> As discussed by Simpson et al. (2002) 'negative capability' was first described by Keats in a letter to his brothers in 1817 with reference to the capability of a poet to exist in a state of 'uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason' (Keats & Scott, 2005, p. xxii). Applied to leadership, Simpson et al., citing Handy (1989), noted that the concept of 'negative capability' includes the 'capacity to sustain reflective inaction' to … 'create an intermediate space that enables one to continue to think in difficult situations…to create the conditions for fresh insight' (Simpson et al., 2002: 1210–1211). Inspired by the work of the psychoanalyst Bion (1965), Simpson and French (2006) took their analysis further in relation to the capacity of leaders to "think in the present moment" and, in dealing adeptly with the present, to employ "patience and the ability to tolerate

frustration and anxiety" (Simpson & French, 2006: 245). Arguably, if leaders are able to focus, listen, act with discretion and skilfully contain negative emotions arising from uncertainties rather than rush to implement imprudently deterministic solutions, they are more likely to inspire trust within their institutions.

To be deemed trustworthy, the shaman has to be an able interpreter of the amorphous object of higher education in a way that will not result in the sacrifice of the whole culture. The shaman is trusted by the guardians to deliver the message and to select those most suitable to enact the Word. The shaman figure is both apart from and part of the culture who has to facilitate understanding between different realms of experience: gods and humans. According to Heidegger (2000), understanding is a mode of practical involvement or concern with others in the world. Bruns (1992: 3) explicates Heidegger:

> Understanding is of forms of life, and also internal to them. It entails being able to speak the languages spoken around you and taking as natural or intelligible (not needing explanation) the ways of acting, thinking and feeling that are local and current.

The shaman is also a trickster but only in the service of deepening or facilitating understanding (Hyde, 2008). The higher education shamans need to embody trust in uncertainties and trustworthiness by reflecting on them. Most importantly, shamans have to provide the conditions for the creativity of its members to thrive, and engendering trust as it is the antecedent of the other values.

Trust is analogous with the cohesive dark matter of the universe. It links truth, freedom, reciprocity, cohesion, bridging, difference, complexity, relationship, belonging, identity, purpose, knowledge, everything that is held to be fundamental to organised systems and maintains them in some kind of intricate balance. Trust perceived as an amorphous or hyperobject is in constant flows and ebbs as it shapes and is shaped by its encounters in the in-between relating of humans and objects. Without it, cooperation cannot be sustained. Trust is visible and hidden; it favours neither the good nor the bad. There can be as much trust and distrust among politicians as there is among thieves. Its value can never be underestimated. There is a wealth of literature on its description and a paucity of literature on insights into its absence and presence and the impact this has at the individual and collective levels. It is like being able to analyse the construction, materials and design of a car and the functions of all the parts, but never see it in motion. Perhaps research approaches can be selected that have the apparatus to reveal the intricate layers of its dynamic being. It is elusive like dark matter, which in part is likely to be composed of some, so far, undiscovered subatomic particles. The humanities analogy here is trust is in part composed of, as yet, undiscovered insights.

The value of its presence in higher education is currently seriously underestimated, as symbolic and cooperative trust gives way to compliance trust in which transparency is a transparency of regulations, authenticity is loyalty to the brand. Trust is considered a positive value. There is currently an earnestness about this pursuit of such values in higher education perhaps because trust, truth and freedom have been eroded and we are desperately seeking all the soothing human attributes that might heal the loss of trust in a relationship: compassion, grace, happiness,

love. Graeber (2002) offers an amusing turn towards the end of his work on theory of value where he has examined ideas, including those of Mauss [1924] (2001) and Marx [1846] (1970) on values in terms of theories of desire, desire for what things could be. For Marx it is perhaps the notion of, "unalienated labour" (Graeber, 2002: 260) and for Mauss, "the delight in generous artistic expenditure, the pleasure of hospitality in the public not private feast" (Mauss, 1965). Graeber muses on a social theory of pleasure and the wrong footedness of contemporary market theorists to model pleasurable, rewarding experience (like eating) as solitary ones. "The idea seems to be an almost furtive appropriation, in which objects that had been parts of the outside world are completely incorporated into the consumer's self" (Graeber, 2002: 260).

In this context, trust facilitates a preventative measure against this form of cannibalism, the obsessive self-relating and extends the possibility of pleasure if trust is harnessed for the common good. What is not to like in a higher education environment that nurtures learning through a trusting relationship with all its members that is then reflected in the relationships it develops with its external alliances? It would be a pleasure.

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Kate Maguire is Associate Professor of Professional Practice in the Faculty of Business and Law at Middlesex University and head of its transdisciplinary research degree programs. Her background is social anthropology and organisational psychology both as a researcher and practitioner. Coming into higher education from careers in journalism, political research and conflict and trauma mediation, she has engaged with anthropologically informed innovative research methodologies and research pedagogy relevant to professional practice research with particular interest in bridging difference, embracing complexity and theorising professional practice to enhance professional learning and organisational change. She is engaged with research integrity that goes beyond metrics and compliance into notions of personal and professional integrity, the asking of uncomfortable questions, the protection of academic freedom, the conditions of climates of fear and conceptualising academic knowledge in new ways so that it can be shared with and be shaped by the many.