Using the Past: Authenticity, reliability, and the role of archives in Barclays plc's use of the past strategies.

Recent scholarship in organisation studies has begun to address how organisations perceive and use their pasts (Parker 2002; Holt 2006; Linde 2009; Suddaby, Foster, and Quinn Trank 2010; Foster et al. 2011; Anteby and Molnár 2012; Zundel, Holt, and Popp 2016; Hatch and Schultz 2017; Smith and Simeone 2017; Wadhwani et al. 2018; Van Lent and Smith 2019). However, how organisations preserve and access their pasts, and how this affects how they are able to use their pasts is less researched. This paper synthesises the findings from my thesis entitled *Using the Past: Authenticity, reliability, and the role of archives in Barclays plc's use of the past strategies*. This research analysed how Barclays Group Archives (BGA) contribute to Barclays plc and provide them with a competitive advantage. It asks, how does BGA, as a specific unit of the organisation, contribute to Barclays plc's competitive advantage? I was embedded in the archives, enabling me to gather observational data on how BGA operate as well as granting a unique level of access to archival organisational records. These were used to target and gain access to Barclays plc employees to conduct interviews to ascertain how they used BGA's resources and what benefits they felt BGA brought. This paper will present the four main findings from the thesis: BGA's role in bolstering the authenticity of the constructed narratives; the importance of the materiality of archival artefacts; the importance of BGA's archivists in preserving and making usable Barclays plc's organisational memory; and the role of BGA in the sense-making processes of Barclays plc managers.

The thesis focused on the period between 2012 and 2016, a time when Barclays plc made extensive use of their past in an attempt to manage and recover from the various scandals. In response to these scandals, Antony Jenkins, Barclays plc's CEO, launched the Transform Programme that was designed to overhaul the bank's operations and organisational culture. As part of the Transform Programme, Barclays plc utilised their past to underpin the new

organisational culture and corporate values it was promoting. The thesis showed how BGA, and the archivists in particular, were integral to Barclays plc's use of the past strategies, enabling Barclays plc to bolster their claims to be returning to a historically 'authentic' corporate culture that would inform the organisation's strategies and behaviour going forward. Drawing on the typology developed by Carroll and Wheaton (2009) on types of perceived authenticity as well as archival science understandings of authenticity (Duranti 1995; MacNeil 2009; Kastenhofer 2015), the thesis showed how Barclays plc utilised the archives, and the archivists, to bolster the perceived authenticity of the historical narratives that they were constructing.

This paper will then discuss the thesis's findings on the importance of the materiality of the archives for Barclays plc's use of the past strategy. These findings utilised the work of Latour (2005) and Actor-Network Theory that understands that objects are not neutral but can act to convey meaning, as well as the ability of objects to produce emotional effects in audiences (Dudley 2012; Rafaeli and Vilnai-Yavetz 2004; Steadman 2002). These findings highlighted the increasingly important role the showing or physical artefacts in the use of the past strategy that Barclays plc were pursuing. Although not initially a main part of the strategy; by 2015 Barclays plc would make heavy use of their artefacts, as well as the archivists themselves, in their use of the past strategy to construct historical narratives that resonated with the intended audiences.

The paper will then move onto the analysis of how the archivists at BGA are an integral part of Barclays plc's organisational memory. Using the work of Corbett et al. (2018) which differentiates between static memory and dynamic memory, the thesis showed the importance of the archivist in constructing and ensuring the usability of Barclays plc's organisational memory. In addition to this, the archivists are the main link between the static memory held in the archives, and other employees who are seeking to operationalise this knowledge. In this role, the archivists are the main users and researchers in the archives, transforming the static memory held in the archives into dynamic memory that their colleagues elsewhere in the organisation could then operationalise.

Finally, the paper will discuss the findings of the thesis relating to the use of BGA's resources for sense-making. These findings utilise the ideas of Weick (1979, 1993) and

Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005) related to how individuals make sense of their situation, as well as the work of Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) that differentiates between sense-making and sense-giving. Additionally, the thesis used two typologies of sense-making to categorise the sense-making processes of Barclays plc managers: Suddaby and Foster's (2017) types of history-as-sensemaking, and Sandberg and Tsoukas' (2020) typology of sense-making that takes into account the practice world of those performing the sense-making, as well as how perceived temporality affect the sense-making processes. The thesis showed how individuals form different practice worlds who were tasked with making sense of the organisation's situation in 2012, as well as key strategic decisions, made use of BGA's resources, engaging in all three of Suddaby and Fosters types of history-as-sensemaking.

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