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**Authentic organisational change:  
The role of rhetorical history  
strategies in the creation of Barclays  
plc's company values**

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## **Abstract**

Organisation studies has experienced a growth in interest in the use of history at organisations. Scholars have shown the diverse ways that organisations have been able to use their history such as encouraging employee commitment, guiding organisational change, or achieving market place legitimacy. Additionally, many scholars have noted how the perception of authenticity is beneficial for organisations to strengthen relationships with stakeholders. However, how organisations can use rhetorical history strategies to create the perception of authenticity is not addressed. This paper will argue that judicious use of corporate archival resources can enable organisations to create narratives that may produce the perception of authenticity in stakeholders. It will use Barclays plc's launch of a new set of company values in 2012 as an illustration of this argument.

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# Authentic organisational change: The role of rhetorical history strategies in the creation of Barclays plc's company values

Ian Jones

## Introduction

Organisation studies has experienced a growth in interest in the use of historical knowledge at organisations (Suddaby, William M Foster, et al. 2010; Ybema 2010; W M Foster et al. 2011; Anteby and Molnár 2012; Mairi Maclean et al. 2014; Coraiola et al. 2015; Godfrey et al. 2016; Poor et al. 2016; Hatch and Schultz 2017; Donzé and Smith 2018; Maclean et al. 2018; Oertel and Thommes 2018). One of the concepts underpinning this renewed interest is the idea of rhetorical history, that organisations can seek to use their history as a resource to pursue their contemporary goals (Rowlinson and Hassard 1993; Suddaby, William M Foster, et al. 2010). Rhetorical history strategies have been used for a variety of purposes including being used as part of marketing strategies (W M Foster et al. 2011; Hatch and Schultz 2017), as a method of shaping employee behaviour and encouraging employee engagement (Anteby and Molnár 2012; Bal 2017), or as a way to build or maintain legitimacy in the face of new challenges to the organisation from sources other than competitors (Oertel and Thommes 2018; Smith and Simeone 2017). This lies in stark contrast to earlier understandings of history within organisation studies, typically understanding history as an objective chain of events that affect organisations in various ways, such as their organisational structure or access to unique resources, with managers at the whim of these positive or negative events (Stinchcombe 1965; David 1985; Barney 1991; Beckman and Burton 2008; Schreyögg and Sydow 2011).

This paper will argue that judicious use of the resources of the corporate archives and archival institution can help to construct narrative that can be perceived as authentic to its intended audiences. In order to illustrate this, it will use Barclays plc's launch of new company values in 2012. Using the multi-dimensional understandings of authenticity presented by (O'Connor et al. 2017) of moral, idiosyncratic, craft and type authenticity, it will argue that Barclays plc used their historical resources to attempt to restore perceptions of authenticity to their corporate identity in the eyes of their employees. It will show how Barclays plc uses their archival resources to construct a narrative that celebrated their new corporate values whilst also making authenticity claims for the new identity and values they wished to promote. This was part of their strategy to change the organisational culture at the organisation, and change the perceptions of the organisation's identity in the eyes of its stakeholders. It will show that through harnessing the skills and knowledge of the archivists at Barclays Group Archives (BGA) as well as use of the archives held at BGA, Barclays plc were able to create a legitimate historical narrative for these purposes. This paper will first give a brief overview of the relevant literature on rhetorical history, authenticity, and archival authenticity. It will then discuss the method of analysis and data sources with a discussion on the research, concluding with the current implications and limitations of the paper.

## **Literature Review**

Early works on rhetorical history and organisational culture showed how organisations use their history to produce historical narratives that could help to encourage stakeholder loyalty. Rowlinson and Hassard (1993) show how Cadburys use their Quaker founders as the basis for a narrative on their benevolent employment practices. Other scholars such as Cailluet et al. (2018) and Basque and Langley (2018) show how the identity of the founder can be used to create historical narratives that confer organisational identity. These narratives tended to concur with the experience and prior knowledge of the stakeholder, with such narratives being more likely to be accepted as legitimate interpretations of past events (Zundel et al. 2016).

Rhetorical history strategies can also be used to deal with change during uncertain times. Various works have shown how rhetorical history strategies have been used to shape change through creating a common future that promises to

return the organisation to its founding principles, or transforming the organisation in to something new that can escape the shackles of the past (Suddaby and Greenwood 2005; Ybema 2010; McGaughey 2013). Additionally, there is evidence that customers and employees are increasingly attracted to organisations and brands that are perceived as purpose driven and authentic particularly in times of change or crisis (Fritz et al. 2017; Kim et al. 2018).

The importance of authenticity for rhetorical history strategies has also been discussed, however, what is meant by authenticity is often undefined. Indeed, the issue of whether the rhetorical history strategies are genuine expressions of the “. . . managers’ commitment to founding values and their search for authenticity” was raised by Basque and Langley (2018, p, 1706). However, authenticity often remains undefined in this work, with the perception of authenticity assumed to be beneficial, but with little discussion on how it can be created or measured in audiences. Scholars such as Maclean et al. (2018) link authenticity to how well evidenced the details of a narrative are. However, if this was the core component it would mean that companies like Proctor & Gamble (P&G) would not be able to re-interpret their historical narratives in ways that run counter to the pre-established, evidence backed interpretations. However, work by Mairi Maclean et al. (2014) show that P&G changed their narrative as the organisation grew, and that the authenticity of their narrative relied more on the belief of the stakeholders than the evidence to hand. This shows that there may be multiple elements that contribute to the perceived authenticity of the narrative.

Authenticity in rhetorical history strategies has also been identified as an important quality by work by Hatch and Schultz (2017) on Carlsberg’s use of the phrase *Semper Ardens*. Hatch and Schultz link the authenticity of the narrative surrounding the phrase to Carlsberg’s archival institution, where the history was ‘discovered’ by various employees, including the archivist. However, the role of the archive is mentioned mostly in passing, and how the different audiences understood the authenticity of the narrative and its relation to the archival institution in establishing the authenticity of the *Semper Ardens* narrative is not discussed.

Work by Smith and Simeone (2017) offers suggestions on how the archive can be used as way of providing legitimacy to a rhetorical history strategy through their study on the Hudson Bay Company (HBC). The creation of HBC’s archive was part of their rhetorical history strategy, necessary to provide legitimacy to their strategy as archival research was considered a necessity for anyone conduct-

ing legitimate historical research. Therefore, the creation of a company archive was important to the success of HBC's rhetorical history strategy. The need for a legitimate source of information, such as an archival institution, as part of a rhetorical history strategy suggests that it not just providing evidence that matters when attempting to create a legitimate historical narrative, it is also the source of that information and the processes used to create the narrative. However, whether this creates a perception of authenticity by audiences in the identity or historical claims made by the organisation has not been discussed.

Studies have show that there are benefits to organisations if they are perceived as authentic by audiences. Research by Zuckerman (2000; 2004) shows how conforming to socially constructed categories held by audiences can affect how stocks are traded, with atypical stocks traded more often due to the difficulty in fitting these stocks into the interpretative models used by stock brokers. Organisations can affect the boundaries of these categories by engaging with taste makers, such as critics or journalists, thereby influencing the perceptions of authenticity (Ferguson 1998; Zuckerman 1999) However, current understandings of authenticity argue that it is a multidimensional concept that is understood and valued differently by different audiences (Fine 2004; Grazian 2005; O'Connor et al. 2017). Work by Radoynovska and King (2019) shows that different perceptions of authenticity, moral, idiosyncratic, and type; affect how well regarded potential projects from entrepreneurs were, and therefore how likely they were to contribute capital to the project. Work by Fritz et al. (2017) shows similar findings, showing that perceptions of authenticity comprise multiple facets of an organisation's identity, including its history, and that being perceived as authentic strengthens the relationship between consumer and corporation.

Archival science has discussed the concept of authenticity in detail, both in terms of what it means to be authentic, that a record is what it purports to be, and the processes involved in maintaining the authenticity of the a rchives such as provenance and *respect des fonds*. Work by da Silva et al. (2015) shows how ubiquitous the principle of preserving authenticity is across archives in different countries, with most countries sharing the definition of authenticity of the record being that it is what it claims to be. The ubiquity of authenticity as a core part of the archival institution's purpose should not be surprising considering the heritage of the archival institution and it original purpose as a place of custody and preservation of legal records necessary for the governing of the state (Duranti 1995; Derrida 1996; MacNeil 2000). Although the role of the archival institution has

changed from a central body responsible for upholding the reliability and authenticity of the state's records, to one that preserves the records of a multitude of public and private institutions and often being owned by the record creators, preserving the authenticity of the archives is still one of their core duties.

The authenticity of the archival institution is widely accepted by its users, including historians, those trained to be sceptical of claims to historical truth and authenticity (Duff et al. 2004) Belief in the authenticity of the archives persists even when there is evidence to the contrary, and despite the impossibility of any archival institution being certain that all the archives are authentic (Kastenhofer 2015). Indeed, the attempts to place forgeries in archival institutions is due to perceived authenticity and reliability that crossing the archival threshold bestows on the forgery (Starn 2002). This idea of authenticity is a socially constructed one, designed to suit the purposes of the field that has created it (Heather MacNeil 2009) and is therefore not the same as the idea of authenticity as discussed by Radoynovska and King or Fritz et al. However, this understanding of authenticity, supported by archival processes, is accepted by the majority of users and has resulted in archival institutions being considered a trustworthy source of information (Usherwood et al. 2005).

Part of the value of an archive is the physicality of the archive itself, able to demonstrate artistic or aesthetic value, potential for study as a physical object, unique construction or features compared to other records of the same type, or exhibition value. Exhibition value is defined as "Records with exhibit value impressively convey the immediacy of an event, depict a significant issue, or impart a sense of the person who is the subject or originator of the record." (National Archives and Records Administration 1982) Essentially, the object speaks for itself, transmitting information to the observer through its physical properties that cannot be appreciated through narrative or context alone. Keilbach (2009) shows how photographs are one such object that can come to stand for more than what they actually depict, imbued with more abstract meanings that relate to the events they represent. Even historians, those who would be used to working with historical materials more often than most people and would be less likely to be affected by the novelty of access to original sources, feel a connection to the physical record due in part to the "physical connection with the past or greater sense of context when using the original format." (Duff et al. 2004, p. 66)



## **Methodology and Data**

The qualitative research for this study included 19 semi-structured interviews with 21 professionals within the bank and 1 with someone who works for an organisation contracted to create content for the Barclays plc's website. Interview structures were drafted for each of the interviewees to investigate their awareness of Barclays Group Archives' (BGA) role within the bank, their knowledge of the history of the bank, and their interpretation of the historical narratives they were exposed to since Barclays plc introduced its new set of corporate values as part of the Transform programme. A draft version of the schedule was submitted to the research ethics committee along with consent forms and information sheets to be reviewed and accepted before the interviews began. However, interview schedules were edited and adapted depending on the interviewee's role and prior interactions with BGA. Interviews were recorded and an automatic transcription was generated using third party software. These transcriptions were then edited and corrected by the author to ensure the accuracy of the transcriptions and that anonymity was maintained where it was requested. The transcriptions were then analysed using Nvivo software to code interviews for content relevant to their understanding of Barclays plc's history and perceptions of authenticity using the definitions put forward by O'Connor et al. (2017) All interviewees were made aware how their information will be used, that they could cancel the interview at any time, that they could request to remain anonymous if they desired, and that they could request their data not be used and be destroyed anytime before it had been published.

Access to interviewees was negotiated through the BGA's head archivist who made initial contact with them and introduced the author to them. Interviewees were identified via discussions with BGA's head archivist and through analysis of the enquiry records kept at BGA to identify individuals and departments that made the most frequent use of BGA's resources. Although this means that the interviewees are likely to have been more historically conscious than other employees, their use of BGA's resources is also likely to have made them more knowledgeable about the company's history more generally and therefore more discerning when presented with historical narratives. Therefore, these interviewees were expected to be able to offer a more nuanced discussion of how they have used Barclays plc's history and the records of BGA in their role, and to be more ready to discuss their own view of the narratives being used to support the new set of corporate values

and the wider rhetorical history strategy.

Interviews were not the only data source for this study. This researcher has privileged access to BGA as they were embedded in the archive and able to observe its day-to-day operations. Being embedded in BGA also allowed the researcher access to internal documents, conversations, and the company intranet that would not normally be accessible to researchers. This has allowed the researcher to access a variety of sources, both publicly available such as speeches from AGMs, promotional material, and some of the training material that was later posted publicly on the internet; and other material that is not currently publicly available such as annotated scripts, research documents from the archive for the material, documents from internal presentations, and briefings for staff members working on parts of the project. These documents are held at BGA and access can be requested from them. These have been coded in the same way as the interviews, with the researcher coding for direct historical references as well as coded references to Barclays plc's history, BGA, the use of authentic artefacts from BGA, and references to how these link to the values that Barclays plc were introducing. While this search can not be completely exhaustive as items are taken down from the intranet, and as the intranet is not designed around searching for historical data, these records give context to the interviews by showing the types of constructed narratives employees were being exposed to on a regular basis. It also shows how BGA was used, or not used, as part of the strategy, and the reasoning behind the decision to rely on the history and archives as part of the strategy for introducing the new values. Use of these resources has been agreed before publication.

## **Terminology**

Key terms need to be defined for this paper. Barclays plc refers to the legal entity of Barclays plc which encompasses the UK ring-fenced retail bank, Barclays Bank UK plc; Barclays Bank plc which is their international bank; and Barclays Services Limited. Archives will be used to refer to the holdings of archival institutions that have been accepted for long term preservation, regardless of their type. Archival institutions refer the physical spaces that archives are held in providing that they also fulfil, or aim to fulfil, the purposes and processes that archival science literature considers the cornerstones of archival practice: preserving the authenticity and reliability of archives. Authenticity in the archival sense is as described above: that a record is accepted as being what it purports to be. Authentic-

ity claims or perceived authenticity refers to the multidimensional understandings presented by O'Connor et al. (2017): that of moral, idiosyncratic, type, and craft authenticity. In their framework moral authenticity is the perceived sincerity of the values based purpose of an organisation; idiosyncratic authenticity refers to the historical uniqueness of the organisation; type authenticity refers to an organisations adherence to an associated genre or type; and craft authenticity refers to whether the processes used for the operations of the organisation are considered appropriate.

## **Crisis and Scandal**

Preceding the introduction of new company values by Barclays plc under their new CEO Anthony Jenkins, Barclays plc had experienced difficult trading conditions due to the 2008 Global Financial Crisis (GFC) and a series of scandals that had damaged their reputation and relationship with British regulators and the wider public. These scandals had force Barclays plc to replace their CEO Bob Diamond, formerly Chief Executive of Barclays Capital and arguably one of the key people responsible for the steady growth and success of Barclays Capital, with Jenkins who had worked his way through Barclaycard to become the Chief Executive of Barclays Retail and Business Banking. The decision to replace Diamond came soon after the announcement of the fines that Barclays plc would face due to their role in fixing the LIBOR rate and, in part, due to the resulting pressure from Sir Mervyn King, then governor of the Bank of England. Diamond had all but become the face everything wrong with the banking industry at this point due to his high pay and bonuses; and of the LIBOR scandal more generally following repeated sessions in front of the Treasury Select Committee (Financial Times 2012; P. Jenkins 2012c; Patrick Jenkins and Brooke Masters 2012). Chairman Marcus Agius attempted to relieve some of the mounting pressure on the bank by offering his resignation but was forced to stay on in a temporary role due to Diamond's subsequent resignation 24 hours later until a new CEO was appointed (Brooke Masters and Burgess 2012; P. Jenkins 2012a; Sharlene Goff and Parker 2012; Parker 2012). Although the hiring of Jenkins was met with scepticism by some stakeholders, it was generally acknowledged that Barclays plc had a problem with its organisational culture and this would be something that Jenkins would have to tackle during his tenure, explaining the somewhat conservative choice (P. Jenkins 2012b; P. Jenkins 2012d; Sharlene Goff and Parker 2012).

As part of implementing the cultural change that was required, Barclays plc launched an independent review to be headed by the former lawyer turned banker Sir Anthony Salz which would be released to the public in 2013. Whilst the investigation was underway Jenkins initiated the Transform programme to overhaul the operations and culture of the bank, introducing a new set of corporate values and employee incentive schemes that was designed to overhaul Barclays plc organisational culture. As part of this effort, Barclays plc initiated a company-wide training scheme, producing material to be disseminated to various stakeholders, with the main focus on the organisation's employees.

### **Barclays corporate values launch: The video**

An example of the role of BGA and the use of the archives to add legitimacy to Barclays plc's rhetorical history strategy and authenticity claims was discussed during an interview with Stephen Doherty, Barclays Director of Corporate Communications in 2012. Discussing the first time he approached BGA, he discussed the importance of the archival research in making sure that the values Barclays plc were introducing were ". . . enduring values that were consistent with the values they had, the Quaker values, right back to the establishment of the firm. . . ." (Phone interview with Doherty, 20 July, 2018.) What was important for Doherty, and the campaign more generally, was that they could find records that allowed them to quote from the various "ancestor stewards of the business" (Phone interview with Doherty, 20 July, 2018. Indeed, others also mentioned this need to accurately reflect the history of the bank in the new set of company values, with one interviewee in the company secretariat also mentioning the importance of being able to go back ". . . to the bank's roots to show the history, and show the values base and that was really important to them in resetting the culture of the bank in the aftermath of the financial crisis." (Personal interview with Anonymous, 8 August, 2018) This desire to represent the history in an accurate way, supported by historical evidence from the archives can be seen in the subsequent promotional material. This material constructed a narrative of the history of the bank as one of enduring values that had underpinned its success.

One of the most influential pieces of material produced for the launch of the new set of company values was a video showing the history of Barclays plc called *Made by Barclays* (Wright 2012). This video was primarily designed to be shown internally to all employees as part of the the new corporate values training programme The video was initially launched to Barclays plc on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2012,

before later being shown at Barclays Annual General Meeting (AGM) in 2013 and thereafter being released to the public on the internet, although it was not used in any wider advertising campaign. Starring Joseph Fiennes, the video documents Barclays plc's history, its core values, and the effects they've had across nine different countries, condensing the history of Barclays plc into under four minutes themed around the past triumphs of Barclays plc and the enduring values that underpinned them.

The video begins with Joseph Fiennes giving an introduction to the founding of Barclays plc, filmed outside 54 Lombard Street adorned with a older version of Barclays Eagle sign that had been taken from BGA.<sup>1</sup> Fiennes describes the founders of Barclays bank, Freame and Gould, as goldsmiths, ready to enter banking when the chance occurred. He then goes on to describe their character, describing them as ". . . independent spirits, men of integrity, they wanted to do right by their customers, clients and the community. . . ." (Wright 2012, 0.26) Interestingly, the Quaker heritage is not mentioned directly during this description, although these are attributes that were commonly associated with Quakers in the past and present. However, the reticence in stating the Quaker connections clearly may be due to a lower level of general knowledge of who Quakers are and what they believe among contemporary audiences even if the general view of them is still positive (Philips 1932; DVL Smith Ltd 2010, p.70-78).

Using the model put forward by O'Connor et al. (2017) we can see that Barclays plc are making a claim to moral and idiosyncratic authenticity, using their founders as examples of the morals that the organisation upholds and the historical artefacts to show their idiosyncratic history and founding. Arguing that they were founded around a set of strongly held beliefs and principles suggests that the organisation's purpose, its identity is rooted in these moral values. Additionally, being able to show the historical corporate logos and headquarters of the organisation differentiates Barclays plc from their competitors who lack these artefacts or the historical connections to Britain. This can be seen as a response to recent events that had seriously undermined any claims Barclays plc had to moral authenticity. As (O'Connor et al. 2017, p. 10-11) show, perceived moral authenticity was beneficial in all three of their studies in improving customer ratings,

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<sup>1</sup>Whilst 54 Lombard Street was Barclays plc's historic headquarters, Barclays plc finished moving into their current headquarters at 1 Churchill place in 2005. Therefore, 54 Lombard Street was no longer the headquarters and not operating as a Barclays branch at this time.

with idiosyncratic authenticity also being beneficial, albeit to a lesser degree. As Barclays plc's moral authenticity had been damaged by recent events, historical events could be used to show that this is a recent aberration rather than norm. Additionally, Barclays plc can use their unique history to separate themselves from the financial industry, an industry with a poor public image at this time.

In the first 30 seconds on the video, Barclays have conspicuously used historical information linked with physical artefacts to construct their narrative. This use of physical artefacts, the Eagle sign and historical headquarters, shows Barclays understanding of the potential power of the physicality of artefacts in constructing a legitimate narrative and the potential for the objects to act as meaning making objects. (cf. Latour 1996; Latour 2005). The pairing of physical artefacts with historical narrative elements is not surprising given that video is a visual medium. However, its use from the beginning suggests the recognition of how the use of physical artefacts from Barclays plc's past can add legitimacy to their identity and authenticity claims, enhancing the persuasive power of the constructed narrative. Additionally, early versions of the script held at the archive show the input of two of the archivists on the historical details, both directly related to Barclays plc and more general contextual information on the environment that the organisation was operating in at the time (Barclays 2012b). The expertise of the archivists is being used to contextualise the objects to ensure the factual correctness of the narrative. This is something that would appear to be an important factor in making authenticity claims as factual inaccuracies would seriously undermine moral authenticity claims and cast doubt on any type and idiosyncratic authenticity claims.

The video moves on to document the achievements of Barclays plc in the past, linking them to the new set of company values that they are promoting. The first example of this is linking Barclay's forward thinking to "the first industrial steam railway" in 1819, referring to the funding of the Stockton-Darlington railway. Although accurate, this part of the narrative simplifies the events by ignoring the fact that it was the Backhouse Johnathon & Co. bank who were involved in this funding, one of the banks that went on to be a founding bank in the amalgamation. Therefore, the complexity of the events, and of Barclays plc's history generally, has been diminished for a more clear narrative that highlights Barclays character and drive for excellence. However, we know that this is a conscious choice by Barclays plc as the early version of the script shows that the archivists at BGA made the script editors aware of this fact (Barclays 2012b). Rather than complicate the narrative by ensuring that it is completely factually accurate, Barclays plc instead

decided to use a artistic license to simplify events and project a narrative of continuity that includes the history of founding banks pre-amalgamation. This does not appear to make the narrative less legitimate in the eyes of those who viewed it as none of the interviewees were commented on the simplification despite the full details being easily available on Barclays plc's website (Barclays n.d.). This shows that despite making authenticity claims that to some extent rely on the factual accuracy of the narrative for support, clarity of the narrative and the claims is still important. This may be in part due to their use of BGA's resources, providing a legitimate source of information as well as expert knowledge the ensured the narrative retained a general level of accuracy. Therefore, organisations have some leeway in interpreting events when constructing their historical narratives without undermining the authenticity claims they are making. This event also bolsters Barclays plc's idiosyncratic authenticity claims, showing them helpig to create an important new industry.

The video follows this up with other examples of Barclays plc being ahead of the times with the appointment of the first female bank manager, the creation of the first ATM, and the being the first British bank to launch a credit card in the UK. Again, whilst giving this information they use authentic historical imagery from their archives in mock-ups of period newspapers and billboards. These images would also appear in the *Made by Barclays* booklet that was disseminated at the launch even in December 2012. These booklets show the same images without the mock ups as well as pictures of the first ATM's opening events and the blue plaque associated with that branch of the bank commemorating the event (Barclays 2012a).

These can be interpreted as another moral authenticity claim, with Barclays plc are showing their authentic commitment to gender equality throughout their history. Additionally, here we see Barclays plc making idiosyncratic and type authenticity claims, showing that not only do they offer typical banking services to their customers; but that they are the innovative bank in the industry, creating services that have benefited customers and become so ubiquitous as to be considered standard retail banking facilities. Again, Barclays plc utilise their archives to provide evidence for these authenticity claims, demonstrating that regardless of whether recent events have made the viewer sceptical, Barclays plc can show that the authentic, historical identity of the organisation. has enduring morals and unique contributions.



1967

Barclays unveils the world's first ATM, offering 'Barclaycash' from its branch in Enfield, London.

Made by Barclays | 31

Made by Barclays | 30

Figure 1: Made by Barclays - Launch of the first ATM



Moving on to more recent achievement, Fiennes then discusses Barclays plc's purchase of Lehman Brothers in 2008, the funding of the Hong Kong underground transport system, and the launching of financial products in Tokyo. As these are more recent events there is no use of historical imagery in order to enhance the authenticity of the narrative, relying instead of either stock footage or footage filmed on location specifically for the video. However, the de-contextualisation of the purchase of Lehman Brothers is a clear example of how Barclays are constructing their own narrative of events that support their authenticity claims, with the Barclays plc interpretation stating "While other banks were looking the other way, Barclays saw a great opportunity of shareholders and clients." (Wright 2012, 1.17). This examples can be seen as an idiosyncratic authenticity claims, separating their behaviour in a crisis from other banks and showing that Barclays plc's impact and interests span the globe. However, the Lehman Brothers example may have been a mistake considering the context of the purchase, possibly undermining their prior moral authenticity claims.

Fiennes continues with discussing more contemporary events and charity schemes, such as Barclays Spaces for Sports initiative and their sponsoring of the English Premier League. Again, the highlighting of the charity work is another moral authenticity claim, showing their decisions on branding and sponsorship mirror their charity work, showing that their appreciation for the positive power of sport is a deeply held value that impacts their decisions on various levels.

Then back to more distant events, Fiennes briefly shares the story of how Barclays helped to fund Chris Bonnington's expedition up Mt. Everest in 1972, an event that Barclays would use heavily throughout their values program. Barclays argue that the desire to do great things regardless of the challenge that is embodied in Bonnington's expedition is shared by Barclays plc and its employees. The *Made by Barclays* video does not use artefacts from their archives, however, the associated booklet shows the the flag taken up Mt. Everest by Bonnington, showing their physical connection to the event. This is both a moral and idiosyncratic authenticity claim. Barclays plc's moral authenticity claim here is less clear than when they discuss their founders with Barclays plcs arguing that they are a bold and brave organisation, stating that their support for Bonnington and his decision not to "take the easy path" mirrored the attitudes of their employees.



Figure 2: Made by Barlcays - Flag taken up Mount Everest by Sir Chris Bonington

Finally, in a case of Chekkov's car, Fiennes then has us focus on the car he has been driving across these different locations, a car the camera has focused intensely on with close ups of the model and hood ornament. This Morris Motor car in Barclays plc shade of blue is the prop used to show Barclays historic investment in the Morris Motors Limited car manufacturing company, enabling it to at one point become the largest car manufacturer in Britain, highlighting the impact Barclays business activities have on the landscape of the British economy and her culture. This is an aberration from the other artefacts displayed as this is not something historical taken from the archive to represent the past, but instead something created for the advert to fulfil the same purpose. This is a clear example of Barclays plc recognising the power of symbolic objects, creating one specially to represent the stories and values of the past. It also acts as a claim to idiosyncratic and type authenticity: idiosyncratic due to the unique and recognisable nature of the Morris Minor vehicle, and type as it shows Barclays plc doing what banks are expected to do, loan money to business to help them be successful.

Fiennes then summarises the key points of the narrative: that it's Barclays plc's values that have been key to its historic successes and will be key to its future success. Finally, Fiennes encourages the viewers, who would primarily be Barclays plc employees, to be part of a new chapter at Barclays, taking these values into the future as part of a successful Barclays bank. Essentially, this is a call for Barclays plc employees to internalise these values and act in a manner authentic to Barclays plc's historic identity. The video ends with one final idiosyncratic authenticity claim as Fiennes rides away on a Barclays sponsored 'Boris bike', the public rental cycle scheme in London that was the first of its type in Britain. Still being a recent development, only running since 2010, this highlighted how Barclays continue to be pioneers and how they continue to create physical artefacts that embody and these values.

## **Barclays corporate values launch: Other material**

At the 12<sup>th</sup> December event there were also exhibitions, posters, table cards, and a *Made by Barclays* booklet that was designed around similar themes. These were based broadly around the same themes as were presented in the *Made by Barclays* film, documenting the history of Barclays plc and its achievements in a way that promotes the narrative of Barclays plc core values and principles, act-

ing as evidence for the wider authenticity claims in the *Made by Barclays* video. The booklet begins with the then CEO Anthony Jenkins stating that Barclays: “In looking to the future - our focus of our work at this meeting - we should take time to remind ourselves of the achievements and learning of the past” (Barclays 2012a, p. 3)

After Jenkins into, the booklet shows a timeline that also acts as a contents page, showing landmarks in Barclays history imposed over an image of the blue Morris Minor. This document details more events from Barclays plc’s history, showing resources from their archives to illustrate the events. Included in these are sketches of the original Eagle sign at Lombard Street, an image of the first of the Barclay family involved in the bank, James Barclays’ signature, a collection of bank notes from the banks that amalgamated in to Barclays Bank & Co in 1896, advertising material from Barclays DCO, and images of Barclays branches damaged during World War 2. Posters and table cards at the event also used the same imagery and basic information, whilst also reiterating that this was “Celebrating over 300 years of proud history”. However, outside of the speeches the booklet does not make any further authenticity claims. Instead, these booklet serves as an illustrated timeline to demonstrate events that Barclays plc are proud of, providing evidence to support the narrative and authenticity claims that were made in the *Made by Barclays* video. A possible reason for this comes from the final speech of the booklet from Jenkins: “Moments in our history show us what we can achieve when we commit to a common goal and are grounded in strong values.” (Barclays 2012a)

## **Discussion**

During this launch event the new corporate values or Respect, Integrity, Service, Excellence, and Stewardship are not announced, with focus instead on Barclays plc’s authenticity claims. Archival material is used as physical evidence of the wider authenticity claims being made, in particular the moral and idiosyncratic authenticity claims. Judicious use of the archival resources allowed Barclays plc to construct a narrative that was generally factually accurate, presented authentic evidence to support their authenticity claims, whilst also creating a clear and concise continuity that re-enforced these claims. Additionally, Barclays plc were able to show that the identity they were presenting was based in their history and was

an authentic representation of who they are rather than being purely a response to recent events. Whilst type and craft authenticity claims were minor, Barclays plc's archival resources were used often to provide evidence for their moral and idiosyncratic claims.

Claims that these values and this identity truly represented Barclays plc were made clear by later speeches by Jenkins. At Barclays plc's 2013 AGM Jenkins declared that:

These are values which will define the way we operate from now on. We will assess performance not just on what our colleagues deliver but on how they deliver it. . . Of course, actions speak louder than words and I fully expect to be judged against the standards we have set ourselves (A. Jenkins 2013)

This commitment to changing the culture of the bank and of the importance of the new values of the bank would be reiterated by Sir David Walker, then Chairman of Barclays plc, arguing that "Changing Barclays culture is critical if we are to rebuild trust." (Walker 2013)

We can see from this the importance Barclays plc's executives placed on their employees internalising this narrative and behaving in a manner that would be perceived as authentic with Barclays plc's corporate identity. Therefore, whilst the historical narrative and archival resources were important in bolstering Barclays plc's strategy to reconstruct an identity that would be perceived as authentic, it also relied on the contemporary actions of their employees being consistent with the authenticity claims they were making. This may explain why the authenticity claims that used history were moral and idiosyncratic rather than type and craft. Type and craft authenticity claims are more clearly linked to the current actions of the organisation, with stakeholders able to verify these claims through their everyday experiences. Moral and idiosyncratic authenticity claims are based more on the past events of the organisation, with the current perception of the organisation's moral and idiosyncratic authenticity being the amalgamation of its past actions. Therefore, Barclays plc's history and archival resources are better suited to supporting these authenticity claims.

The decision to use history and the archival resources as part of this strategy was explained by one of the interviewees. When asked about the utility of history and the archives in media strategies, James Greenhead, Vice President in the Campaigns, Content, and Planning team stated:

I think there's something about something about history that is less open to debate I guess you know before you go out there and we say Barclays did this or we're doing that there's a certain amount of cynicism perhaps but often when you look back and you say you know we did these amazing things in history you know first ATM all that kind of stuff no one's really gonna [sic] it's not something for dispute as much. (Personal interview with Greenhead, 24 March, 2018)

Greenhead's response shows that Barclays plc were aware of the scepticism that their authenticity claims would face and believed that historical examples, legitimised by the archival resources and evidenced by the authentic artefacts would be harder to dismiss compared to claims of organisational change without these factors.

Barclays plc's decision to maintain their archives internally through BGA appears to have been beneficial in other ways. Indeed, discussions on the development of the strategy to change the organisational culture evolved, it appears BGA played an important role in developing and shaping the strategy through their everyday activities. When asked about the strategy, Doherty stated that "the content for that [the video], I mean that was all originated from the archive telling us the stuff that we had financed for the years, the accomplishments. That all came from BGA" (Phone interview with Doherty, 20 July, 2018).

The importance of the history to this strategy was underlined by Greenhead stating:

During the times of crisis that Barclays had you know around particularly around the financial crisis you know we had to try to change the story a reputation was in a bad place and part of changing the story was to you know to look back at where we've come from and to use that to inform where we're going and I think yeah it just has a massive massively beneficial way of helping you to tell the story in a more you know authentic way. (Personal interview with Greenhead, 24 March, 2018)

Whilst Greenhead did not expand on his understanding of authenticity in regards to Barclays plc's use of history, the mention of history giving authenticity to the narrative shows that this was, at least in part, an intentional part of the strategy.

## **Conclusion**

As we can see from the launch event for Barclays plc's new corporate values, BGA was important in constructing and legitimising the narrative. BGA's re-

sources, both the archives themselves and the knowledge and skills of the archivists, allowed Barclays plc to construct a coherent, acceptably accurate legitimate continuity that provided evidence to support their authenticity claims. This work contributes to the literature in three ways. Firstly, these findings show that use-of-history strategies can benefit from engagement with archives and archival institutions, and that the explicit use of archives and artefacts as part of the dissemination of the narrative may strengthen the persuasive power of the narrative. Had Barclays plc not possessed these archival resources, a historical strategy would likely not have been possible although that does not mean that changing the organisational culture would not have been possible. This leads to the second contribution: it shows the importance of the archive in these strategies. Much of the use-of-history literature neglects how these strategies develop and where the knowledge and other resources that underpin these strategies come from. Appreciation for the sources of history used in these strategies would better explain why organisations decide on pursuing rhetorical history strategies and why they take the approach they do. Finally, use-of-history strategies can be used to create the perception of authenticity in an organisation when current events have damaged this perception. Whilst Barclays plc are a unique case considering their history, the events leading up to 2012, and the fact that they do not have physical products to rely on for customer loyalty; history or heritage as part of perceptions of authenticity can act as a positive force for organisation, as has already been discussed in work by Fritz et al. (2017). However, this work suggests that organisations can use their historical resources purposefully to create perceptions of authenticity that goes beyond merely signalling that the organisation has a heritage.

There are limitations to this research. Although there is some evidence that Barclays plc's use-of-history strategy had some success in creating perceptions of authenticity in certain audiences, primarily employees, this is taken from a limited data set. Barclays plc had over 144,000 employees at the time and all employees were required to undertake the training. This paper draws from only 21 employees at Barclays plc, with the majority being from the head office in London and is therefore not representative of the organisation as a whole. Future research would benefit from a much wider data set with responses from a more diverse group. Additionally, due to space limitations the current paper analyses the initial launch and narrative presented by Barclays. This strategy and these values has continued and evolved since. Future research would benefit from introducing temporality to the analysis of the strategy.

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