



An Alternative Banking Inquiry: A Grand Narrative of Organisation Culture and Change from 1960 to 2000

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Abstract

The point of departure for this inductive study is to explore the often unseen side of banking organisations by drawing on the lived experiences of bank workers. The research is driven by recent public and political discourse that appears to contain little in-depth knowledge of the inherent culture of banking organisations and the changes they have gone through since 1960. This leads to concerns and queries regarding what is known about the culture of the whole organisation, what changes it has gone through and the social relations that exist between workers in banks.

The research is approached from a phenomenological ontology and an epistemology of social constructionism, which aims to give an uninterrupted voice to the workers understanding of their working life experiences. Often workers are considered passive entities in organisation change, a claim that this method of research shows to be untrue. Through organisation storytelling the workers narrate their experiences of working in a major Irish bank (the Bank) between 1960 and 2000. Their experiences provide a unique perspective of their culture and the changing organisation which they embraced and helped shape.

The stories are analysed in the form of a grand narrative that reveals much about culture and change in the Bank over forty years. The grand narrative is explored through theories and concepts related to work, identity, social relations and *modernity*. Commencing with the initial break with past traditions the research continues by exploring and describing how the changes affected working life. Nostalgic reflections conclude the grand narrative and provide scope to discuss the meanings attributed by the workers to the transformation of the Bank.

The research contributes to theories of organisation culture by presenting it as reflexive of happenings in the external and internal environment of the bank. Although considered as important in the development of organisational culture models, the use of the models often play-down the importance of reflexivity in the creation, change and maintenance of culture in an organisation. In terms of organisation change the research contributes by providing an emerging 'model of discovery', that could potentially feed into much needed new perceptions of organisation change in the contemporary environment. The contribution to change comments on the lack of agency that managers have in controlling change and finding an 'end' once it has been unleashed. In a contribution to practice, the research notes that banks should consider becoming less reactive to external influences and to provide a strong ethos and boundary for worker identity.

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Declaration

I hereby declare that, except where duly acknowledged and referenced, this work is entirely my own and has not been submitted for any other degree or qualification at Waterford Institute of Technology, or any other Institution.

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List of Abbreviations

AIB	Allied Irish Banks
NLI	National Library of Ireland
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IBOA	Irish Bank Officials' Association
JBO	Junior Bank Official
SBO	Senior Bank Official
WIT	Waterford Institute of Technology

Glossary of Terms

Each of the terms listed here appear in *italic* on their first usage in the document

Agency

In organisation studies agency refers to “a person or thing through which power is exerted or an end is achieved” (Merriman-Webster, 2016)

Agent

1. A person with agency. That is the capacity to act in a specified way.

2. A person who acts on behalf of a third party. In Bank of Ireland agents were initially appointed to carryout bank business outside of Dublin in the 1800s.

The term is used in both ways throughout the document, the context of the use will indicate its meaning.

Barracks

A building for housing soldiers. Used in this work as a metaphor to indicate the closely regulated traditional bank life that was present in the early part of the research period (1960s and 1970s).

Bureaucracy

The highly rational and procedural control of administration tasks. Decision making based on facts and calculated reasoning. Mostly Associated with Max Weber's work in the early half of the 1900s (e.g. Weber, 1922).

Bureaucratic

Acting within the principals of a bureaucracy. Often used as an adjective to describe a person who is deemed to be acting in an inflexible and rule bound manner.

Career Husbandry	Husbandry refers to the care, cultivation and management of resources. Career husbandry describes the way in which the Bank provided for all the needs of workers to develop their careers within the organisation. The workers had little input into their career progression.
Change (Organisational)	When an organisation embarks on a transformation. The transformation can affect a single element, multiple elements or the whole organisation. Organisations, for example, may change structurally, culturally or technologically.
Change Management	The methods used by actors in an organisation who have responsibility for ensuring an organisation changes or transforms in the appropriate manner.
Contemporary	Happenings in recent times. Used on occasion to refer to the later stages of the research period (1990 to 2000) and for the period during which the data was collected (2013 to 2016). It is used as a way of avoiding the term modernity which, when used academically, can often be linked with specific theoretical meanings.
Culture	“The beliefs, values, behaviour and material objects that constitute a people’s way of life” (Macionis & Plummer, 2008, p. 882).
Culture (Organisational)	The value systems of an organisation that are shared between members of the organisation. Organisational culture can occur at many levels, for example; as a purposeful attempt to present the values of the whole organisation or

within smaller local groups of organisation members.

Culture (Sub-Culture)

Localised cultures that are separate from the culture of the general population.

Discourse

Talk, conversation and “bodies of ideas often backed up by institutions” (Macionis & Plummer, 2008). There is a branch of academic research which particularly analyses discourse from varying perspectives. In this work the term is used in a general way to describe the many ways in which the Bank and the banking industry is spoken and written about in the mass media and how it is repeated with few challenges to its meaning, content or fact.

Emotion

A strong personal feeling. Expressions of strong and animated feeling towards a subject of discussion by the storytellers.

Iconoclasm

The destruction of symbols or artefacts that are cherished by a social grouping. It is part of the characteristics of the court fool as defined by Phan (2001) and used in Chapter 3 as a metaphor and descriptor of the management consultant.

Identity

Used in this work from a social and introspective perspective. “Our understanding of who we are and who other people are” (Macionis & Plummer, 2008, p. 890).

Isomorphism

The act of becoming exactly like another entity. In organisations it refers to the work by DiMaggio and Powell

(1983) who noted the increasing trend of organisations becoming similar to each other. It is further explored in Section 5.3.2

Litost

A word of Czech origin that is difficult to translate to English. It is an emotional state of anguish brought on by an event which causes a person to realise that a past failing has come to light in the present and caused them shame. Used by Milan Kundera in a number of his works but primarily in the *book of laughter and forgetting* (Kundera, 1978) where he develops a theory of Litost. It is linked to *shame* and used to describe the emotional response of some of the *storytellers* to the 2008 financial crisis.

Mode of Being

The way of doing something. Used in this work to express an individual worker's way of acting within the workplace and identifying with work and place at specific points in time.

Modern

The present or recent past. Sometimes relates to the most recent period of development (Merriman-Webster, 2016). It is used to refer to the later stages of the research era, see *modern banking*.

Modernity

Generally considered tolerate to changing "social patterns linked to industrialisation" (Macionis & Plummer, 2008, p. 886) and the decades since the industrial revolution.

Modern Banking

Used in this work to relate to the later period of the research era where work practices, culture and behaviours transformed from the traditions that

had been a feature of the bank for the preceding centuries. See *Modernising*. See *Traditional Bank*.

Modernise/ing

The process of becoming modern. Used in this work to identify the Bank as it transforms and is on a journey to becoming modern.

Narrative

An account of events that is either written or spoken. This concept and the debates on its exact definition in relation to *story* is discussed in Section 2.6.1

Organisation

The bringing together of people in an organised way to achieve a common outcome. "An organization is defined as social system oriented to the attainment of a relatively specific type of goal" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 63). This work is related to the academic discipline of organisation studies which is broad and explores the many layers which make up an organisation.

Professional

Traditionally an occupation that requires lengthy education and specific knowledge. Classic occupations are generally considered to be in Medicine and Law. This term is further explored in Section 4.5.1

Professionalise/d

The considering of occupations which do not fall into the traditional definition of a profession to be professional. The theories and concepts surrounding this term are further explored in Section 4.5.1

Professionalism	The act of acting in a manner which is perceived to be professional. The actor does not have to hold a professional occupation to be seen as acting professionally. This term is often related to service industries.
Story	The telling of past events. Considered different to <i>narrative</i> as it contains a plot. Stories are normally told in the order of beginning, middle and end. Stories can be factual occurrences or fictional tales. There is an ongoing debate by scholars of story and <i>storytelling</i> on the use of story or narrative and the exact meaning of each. This is discussed at length in Section 2.6.1
Storytelling	The telling of stories by a person. The storytellers in this work are linked by their work in the Bank and tell stories of this period in their lives, these are biographical stories. Storytelling can sometimes contain elaborations of events to make them interesting to audiences.
Shame	An emotional feeling that may be brought on by guilt, embarrassment, hurt or regret when something negative occurs or is experienced. Used in this work to describe feelings that some of the storytellers exhibit when reflecting on the 2008 financial crisis.
Tradition	Long established beliefs, cultures, actions or sentiments that are passed through generations.
Traditional Bank	Used in this work to describe the Bank of Ireland before the period of change

in the 1970s. The change from traditional to modern occurred at a variable pace so there is not exact time when the traditional Bank became the *modern Bank*. The traditions relate to work practices and behaviours expected of workers and had been developed over the previous centuries since the Bank was founded in 1783.

BANK MANAGER FAINTS AT THE MAYOR'S BALL

MICHAEL D HIGGINS (1977)

THE MAYOR WAS DANCING
WITH HER GOLDEN CHAIN,
NOT DANGLING,
BUT NESTLING ON HER AMPLE BOSOM,
WHEN SHE TURNED TO THE BANK MANAGER
AND SAID,
COME ON OUTA THAT AND GIVE US A DANCE.

HE WAS A FRIGHTENED MAN
BUT HE KNEW HIS DUTY.
WE'LL MAKE IT A SLOW ONE, SHE SAID,
AND HE TREMBLED.

THREE BRANDIES LATER,
FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE BANK
AND A SAFE BRANCH,
HIS CALL CAME.

HOLD ME TIGHT, SHE SAID.
I LOVE A TIGHT SQUEEZE FOR THE WALTZ,
AND I'VE NO TIME
FOR THIS HIGHFALUTIN STUFF.

THE FIRST CITIZEN AND THE BANK
DANCED CHEEK TO CHEEK.
EVERY USURIOUS FIBRE WAS TESTED
AS SHE BREATHED ON HIS BALD HEAD.
SHE JOKED OCCASIONALLY AS HE LAUGHED
AND MISSED A STEP.

OH, IF I HAD YOU IN MY TIME
ON THE KITCHEN FLOOR, SHE SAID,
I'D GIVE YOU A ONE-TWO-THREE
YOU'D NEVER FORGET.

THE PERSPIRATION BEADED HIS BROW;
HIS LEGS TURNED TO JELLY.
HIS EYES BLURRED AS HE SANK TO THE FLOOR.
DEAR JESUS, HE'S FAINTED, THE FIRST LADY SAID.
WHAT LACK OF RESPECT FOR THE DIGNITY OF MY
OFFICE.
BUT THEN I NEVER TRUSTED THE BANKS.

THEY PICKED HIM UP AND SAID HE NEEDED AIR,
BUT, TAKING HER HANDBAG AND WALKING AWAY,
SHE COLDLY LOOKED AT THEM ALL,
AND SIMPLY SAID,
WITH ALL THE DIGNITY OF THE OFFICE,

IT'S A POOR THING AT THE MAYORS BALL
WHEN THE CHAIN CAN'T WALTZ WITH SAFETY
WITH THOSE WHO FOR OUR OWN ACCOUNT
BOUGHT THE LITTLE BOX WE CARRY IT IN.
IT ISN'T AIR HE NEEDS
BUT A BOX

BLOWING HER NOSE, SHE LAUGHED,
AND THE BAND PLAYED ON
AT THE MAYOR'S BALL.

Meeting President of Ireland
Michael D Higgins at the
Economy and Society Summer
School, Blackwater Castle,
May 11th 2015



PART I

Introduction:

Context, Method and
Methodology

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION



Bank of Ireland Staff c.1931 (Poole, 1931)

1.0 Introduction to the study

Banks are *organisations* like no other (Fama, 1985). They are both interesting and unusual sitting somewhere between a commercial organisation and a government controlled utility. With a history relating to the often unsavoury and unethical practices of usury by individual and unregulated moneylenders, more ethical organisations began to appear in the 1400s. Despite their increasing complexity and product offerings banks are still most commonly defined in terms of their money lending functions (Longman, 2000; Chambers, 1998); and so, their core business is rooted in how their history is perceived and recalled. Banking institutions are often cited as being central to capitalism (Brown, 2013; Baer, 2010), however, as organised and regulated economic entities they pre-exist both capitalism and the industrial revolution. The nature of their business often places them central to commercial life of communities and, as such, they hold a unique place in society. Despite their persistence in everyday life and with the exception of some interesting ethnographic and social investigations (see for example, Silva & Navarro, 2012; Michel, 2011; Ho, 2009; Musacchio Adoriso, 2008; Weeks, 2004) we often have little insight into these vast immaterial organisations beyond their products, economic contribution or portrayal in the mass media. Often overlooked, outside the small but well-formed body of academic research, is that banking organisations contain a vast array of people who form social groupings which contribute to the organisational *culture* and identity of the industry. Such a positioning contributes to the reasons why banks are considered interesting and relevant organisations for study.

Exploring the “rational-instrumental behaviour” favoured by organisation theories through “the wider field of social

organisation" highlights the role that "social or interactional forces" play within organisations (Cooper, 1986, p. 299). While the overarching goal of this research is to develop new and interesting ideas that will contribute to theory, practice or method, a further goal, or perhaps hope, is that it will focus interested parties to consider banks as social organisations. Drawing on the words and ideas of Gibson Burrell (although not literally) in *Pandemonium* where

an attempt is made to run the text backwards to some extent in order to disrupt the normal flow of common sense which informs the vast majority of our reading (Burrell, 1997, p. 4)

this research aims to break the cycle of banks being considered as solely financial organisations and highlight the importance of experience and culture alongside facts and figures.

The research emerged from an initial research concern that the organisational culture of banking is not well understood or defined in any succinct terms. There is a tendency to focus on the risk culture of financial practices and ignore the social and human aspect of the organisation. For this reason the research looks to the workers for their personal histories and experiences of banking careers. Their stories lead the research to explore how their workplace identities are negotiated as the organisation and its culture are transformed, becoming a *modern* and dynamic place. The workers are in a pivotal position to provide a deep understanding of banking as it moved, and continues to move, through a period of unprecedented organisational *change*. The stories commence in 1960 where workers from Bank of Ireland (the Bank) tell of their unique and interesting working life surrounded by deeply embedded traditions. Over a period of forty years, the stories develop into a grand-narrative of a

banking culture that is in flux as the organisation and industry strive to meet the demands of modern commercial practices.

The transformation of the banking industry in Ireland has not been without its flaws. Over the forty year period from 1960 to 2000 there have been incidents of poor practice and decisions that incurred much public questioning of those in charge. While on occasion poor decisions have led some institutions to the brink none was as wide ranging as the global financial crisis that hit the Irish banking sector in 2008. Within the public and political *discourse* that has followed it is often mentioned that the culture of the banks was to blame and that a change in culture is needed. These discussions which problematise banking culture rarely put forward any real solutions and are constrained by a thinking that explores banking only in the recent past.

Through harnessing the stories of the workers and contemplating concerns regarding about the nature of banking organisations the research draws on the culture in the Bank to observe the nature of change in the organisation. This second research concern arose as the stories began to develop into a grand narrative and transformations in the Bank became apparent. The research is directed by both initial and emergent concerns that ask about the true nature of organisation change and culture.

1.1 Relevance and contribution of the research: Organisations, Culture and Change

The point of departure for this long-form research is an organisation on the cusp of profound change. The purpose of the research is to explore the organisation and draw out interesting findings that address the research concerns on the changes in the Bank and the effect that change had on its culture. In this

section concepts and definitions of organisations, culture and change are discussed as a backdrop to the research and its contributions. More detailed usage of these concepts are discussed in relation to the findings in Chapter 6 where the grand narrative of 40 years is brought together.

1.1.1 Organisations

The prevalence of banks in society makes them an interesting organisation for study. Organisations are generally defined in terms of their purpose and structure. Bittner describes them as “stable associations of persons engaged in concerted activities directed to the attainment of specific objectives” (1965, p. 239). Similarly Cooper (1986, p. 301) notes the importance of boundaries, which are “complex [and] ambiguous”, in the organising of social life and that “it is ordering of an intrinsic disorder that constitutes organisation”. Bittner continues by noting that to be organised requires a thorough formulation of purpose. Parsons similarly describes them as goal orientated, but with the added acknowledgement of the influence of society.

An organization is defined as social system oriented to the attainment of a relatively specific type of goal, which contributes to a major function of a more comprehensive system, usually the society. Such an organization is analysed in terms of an institutionalised value system, above all defining and legitimising its goal, and the mechanism by which it is articulated with the rest of the society in which it operates (Parsons, 1956, p. 63).

Drawing on Parsons' definition it would be difficult to explore an organisation over a lengthy period without giving notice to its wider environment. Organisations, especially banks, are very much part of the society, state, political and regulatory regimes within which they operate. It may appear that defining them

would come naturally once an organisation's purpose and environment are identified. This is not necessarily the case for banks.

Banks have many different economic and financial functions and their definition changes depending on the perspective of the customer; are banks utilities, investment vehicles, commercial lenders or personal lenders? Finding a succinct and comprehensive definition of a banking organisation is difficult. They are most often defined as financial institutions that take in cash and provide credit, with occasional mentions of specific branches of operation (Longman, 2000; Chambers, 1998). Not only is a thorough definition difficult to ascertain but banking organisations rarely fit neatly into theories of development favoured in organisation studies - for example, by their nature they have always been bureaucratic, long before the word was coined and eventually popularised as a way of analysing organisations. By way of example, Cameron and Quinn (2006, p. 37) declare that "the earliest approach to organising in the modern era" is the work of Max Weber who is most closely associated with the term *bureaucracy*. This supports the argument that banks are special types of organisations that do not easily fit into the prevailing descriptions of organisations.

Additionally, understanding banks solely from their financial contributions creates a deficit in how the organisation is perceived in the public domain. As Fineman, Gabriel and Sims (2010) state, perceptions of organisations often ignore the social and cultural aspects of organisational life.

When we look at organisations, especially the larger, older, famous ones, they seem solid, they seem permanent, they seem orderly. This is, after all, why we call them organizations. Images of organizations as solid, permanent, orderly entities run through many textbooks. But, in our view, these books tell only half the story. They obscure the other

half: the life and activity that buzzes behind the apparent order ... They also obscure the immense human efforts and energies that go into keeping organisations more or less orderly (Fineman, Gabriel & Sims, 2010, p.1).

The Bank is a prime example of what Fineman et al. (2010) are describing. It is an organisation with a long history and which is deeply embedded in the economic and social fabric of the state. However, beyond its external images of trust and power it is an organisation that works through the social interactions of humans.

1.1.2 Culture

Culture is a difficult concept to define and, sometimes, to identify. As noted by Van Maanen "culture is not itself visible, but is made visible only through representation" (1988, p. 3). Similarly Schein (1992, p. 1) describes culture as being "enacted" and a part of social interactions. Culture, like organisations, is part of the social world and contains social relations, and so, organisational culture ought to be viewed in these terms. Smircich (1983) noted a turn towards culture in organisations from late 1970s including its role in the success or failure of the organisation, and a large body of research work has emerged since then (Cameron & Quinn, 2006; Berrio, 1999; Trice & Beyer, 1993; Schein, 1992; Denison, 1990; Martin, 1985; Barney, 1986). However, like defining culture itself, perceptions of organisational culture varies and depends on the world views of particular researchers (Smircich, 1983). The difficulty in defining banking culture as being social is that banks are primarily viewed as scientific and rational organisations and so their culture is often viewed in a similar way. Such a stance is evident in Sands (2010) report on the UK banking regulator's interest in defining and regulating culture. With many of his interviewees describing the culture in banks as being "best

observed in risk-taking" (2010, p. 31) the report notes that banking culture is chiefly considered in terms of the risk appetite over social relations and prevailing traditions. Interestingly, the difficulty in not only defining culture in banks but regulating it is apparent in the aborted attempt, after just one month into its 2015 plan, by the UK's Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to investigate culture in banks. The FCA cited the reason as being the uniqueness of culture in individual organisations (Dunkley, 2015).

It is possibly no surprise that banking culture is viewed in this way since the immateriality of their business requires detailed record keeping and *bureaucratic* systems. They are technical organisations that are not far from the original scientific perceptions of organisations which initially overlooked human and social interactions. Jaques (1951) book *The changing culture of a factory* is believed to be the forerunner to the turn in organisation studies towards culture and the social (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). Jaques (1951) understanding of culture in the organisational setting describes how *traditional* behaviours within the organisation need to be learned before a worker is accepted. Later interest in organisational culture focuses on culture as a shared value and having meaning among groups, such as "the knowledge" shared by group members (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 3), or "shared *emotionally* charged belief systems" (Trice & Beyer, 1993, p. 2). In the large body of practice led studies authors have explored, among other elements, culture and its effect on behaviour and effectiveness (Denison, 1990), learning (Brown & Duguid, 1991) and the development of attitudes towards organisations (Boje & Baskin, 2011).

Many organisational cultural elements are categorised where patterns emerge; *subcultures* are the presence of a smaller social group within a broader culture, and countercultures, are groups

that oppose the prevailing core culture (Macionis & Plummer, 2008). Trice defines subcultures in organisations as “clusters of understandings, behaviours, and cultural forms that characterise them as distinctive groups within the organisation” (1993, p. 141). Countercultures in organisations are inclined to oppose managerial structures and power with “infinite aspirations” of individuals being a key element in the formation of countercultures (Trice, 1993). Subcultures exist in every organisation and in many different forms (Macionis & Plummer, 2008; Trice, 1993). A worker may be a member of several subcultures at the same time both inside and outside of the organisation. While these are interesting categories, beginning with the goal of defining them in the Bank may lead to a shortsighted view of the complete culture in the organisation. Should strong sub or counter cultures appear in the stories they may lead to interesting findings.

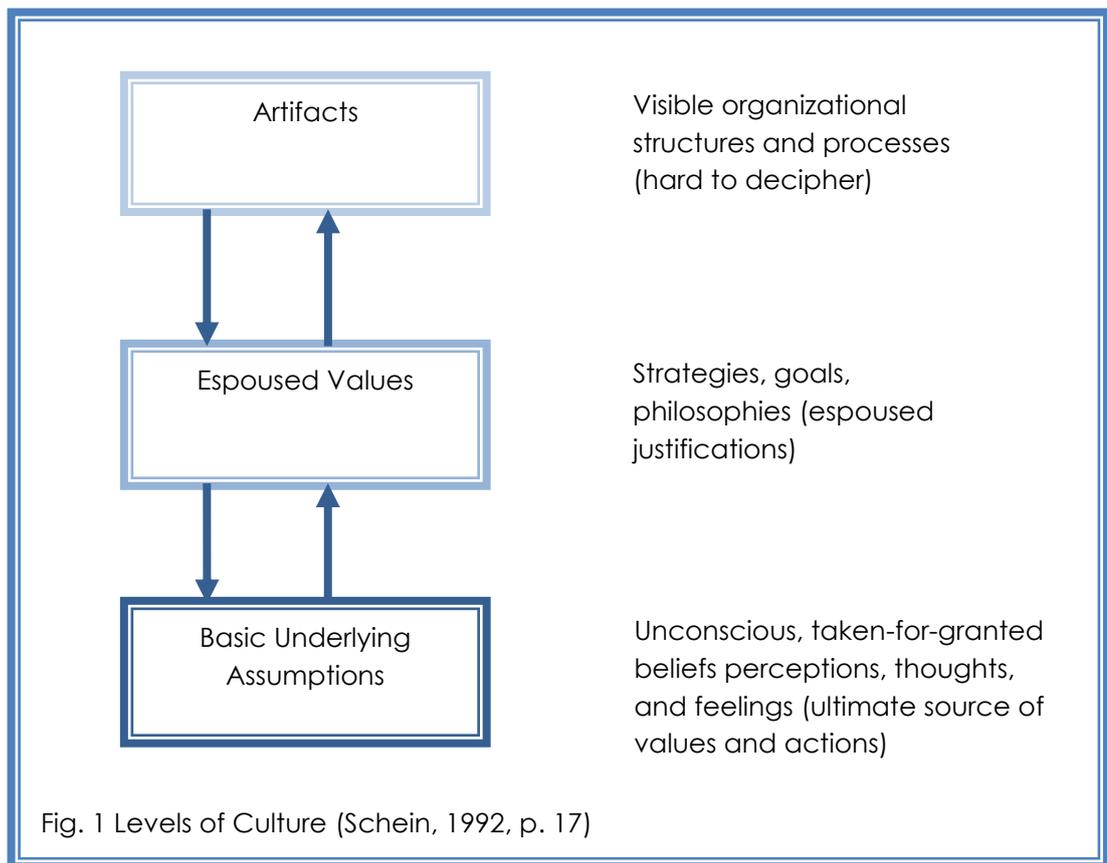
As an inductive study, it is important to acknowledge *a priori* reading and its formative impact on the project; certainly Schein's significant work on organisational culture was one of the starting strands of this inquiry. Schein's (1992) work on culture is arguably the most popular choice for studying organisations. His much cited definition of organisational culture is developed through observations of how culture is described and used, it is a comprehensive definition in that it includes both the view from inside a group and the need for induction of new members into the conventions of the group.

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

For Schein (1992) understanding culture is a powerful tool in discovering the intricate and often obscured qualities that are inherent in organisations. Schein's (1992) 3-level model of culture is depicted in Figure 1 and is an attempt to define the emotional attachments to the many different aspects of culture. The levels are indications of the visibility of culture from the most obvious displays of an organisations culture to the less visible tacit meanings and values.

This model not only explores the levels of culture but crosses over into organisational change and the ability to transform each level, with the *Artifacts* being the easiest to change and the *Basic Underlying Assumptions* the most difficult. *Artifacts*, which are the most visible representation of an organisation, can include products, logos, buildings, behaviours or attire. While they are most obvious to the observer, they tell very little about the deeper cultural values of the organisation and those who work there. Significant for this research, is that these observable symbols can only be really understood when the more deeply rooted cultural values are known (Schein, 1992). *Espoused values* are the bridge between the visible and the invisible, they are values or the "moral code" (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006, p. 186) of the group. They are philosophical underpinnings that are often linked to the formation of the group and sets of norms that can guide new members. They can be changed or transform over time, and eventually become taken-for-granted and normalised, if the group experiences a positive outcome to a suggested change (Schein, 1992). *Basic Underlying Assumptions* are the deeply embedded cultural values that are difficult to decipher since they are often taken for granted. They are values that tightly control acceptable physical and emotional situational behaviours and are the truth and reality behind members'

cultural beliefs (Schein, 1992; Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). They are difficult to change as they exist without questioning and observers may only really understand them when they have been immersed in them for some time (Schein, 1992; Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006).



Hatch and Cunliffe (2006) note that by not understanding the basic underlying assumptions of a culture an observer can easily conclude that a behaviour is improper, where, in fact, it is an accepted behaviour of that culture. This is a noteworthy observation for this research as it sets out to explore lived experiences of those who have been immersed in the cultural traditions of the Bank. They are well placed to articulate some of the deeply entrenched basic underlying assumptions of the Bank across a lengthy period.

1.1.3 Change

There are vast amounts of literature on organisation change covering a range of interests from the academic perspective to instructions for practice and retelling of actual events. Like with the culture literature, there was a good deal of *a priori* reading of this literature long before this research project was conceived. Since interest in organisation change became popular there has been very little variation in the point of departure for its literature. According to Chia “despite our preoccupations with change, little has been done to thoroughly examine its philosophical underpinnings” and that there is no “common basis for understanding what change really is” (2014, p. 18). Traditionally when considering the subject organisation change is divided into two streams - planned change and emergent change (Burnes, 2004a) - each containing a variety of ideas on the ‘best ways’ of implementing change. Chiefly the philosophical difference between the two approaches is “the degree to which change and innovation can be choreographed, scripted, or controlled” (Poole, 2004, p. 3).

Those who support planned change adopt the position that it is only possible to implement successful change when it radically upsets the status quo over a precise period of time (Burnes, 2004a; Peters, 1989). One of the most popular models of planned change is Lewin's 3-step model of unfreeze, modify, refreeze. It was an early model of organisation change that continued to be reproduced and enhanced over time (Burnes, 2004a). When planned change became challenged in the 1980s (Burnes, 2004b) a number of alternative frameworks for successful change emerged. Kotter (1995), identified eight reasons as to why planned change projects fail and in doing so created an eight step plan for how to succeed. These eight steps are; increase

urgency; build the guiding team; get the vision right; communicate for buy-in; empower action; create short term wins; do not let up; make change stick. They are a popular choice for organising change projects and were reprinted in *The Heart of Change* (Kotter & Cohen, 2002). In a similar practitioner oriented vein, Kanter, Stein and Jick, among a number of models, lists "The Ten Commandments for Executing Change" (1992, pp. 382-386); analyse the organisation and its need for change; create a shared vision and common direction; separate from the past; create a sense of urgency; support a strong leader role; line up political sponsorship; craft an implementation plan; develop enabling structures; communicate, involve people, and be honest; reinforce and institutionalize change.

The use of models and strict processes to instigate and manage change became popular at the cost of acknowledging the sometimes unpredictable nature of human agency. In more recent times as the quantities of failures in planned change have been noted such models have become questioned with the emergent approach being considered more flexible and capable of coping with complexity (Chia, 2014; Higgs & Rowland, 2005; Burnes, 2004b).

Current theoretical thinking on organizational change and innovation is dominated by rational, instrumental viewpoints, which tend to neglect or downplay the nonrational side of human experience. This has not always been the case. Early work by Lewin and the human relations school emphasised affective processes. It now appears that these concerns are resurfacing in current thinking (Poole, 2004).

Such approaches take into account the agency of the workers in change situations and that change can be driven from the bottom up rather than the traditional top-down approach (Chia, 2014; Burnes, 2004a). Chia suggests that by relaxing organisational structures and pursuing alternative perspectives "local interactions" can cause change to "emerge

spontaneously" (2014, p. 10). Similarly Higgs & Rowland (2005, p. 125) cite Reynolds (1987) suggestion of "having a general direction and a few simple guiding rules".

Chia (2014) believes that the literature on *change management* is weakened by a disconnect between academics and practitioners and that what actually happens during a change project is not well reflected in the literature on the subject. This, he suggests is because of an inherent human philosophy of needing to see active "heros" who plan, control and manage change to successful outcomes. Chia (2014) argues for the emergent approach of 'letting it happen' since, he believes, there is very little agency involved in change which, in *contemporary* organisations, is continuous. The lack of agency in controlling and managing change is the focus of more recent literature, leading Poole to comment that unplanned change is "susceptible to channelling, but not necessarily to control" (Poole, 2004, p. 4). Similarly, Mintzberg (2009) notes the delicacy with which change has to be handled by managers and that it is now part of the regular speech pattern of management. The continuous nature of change, according to Weick (2009), renders Lewin's 3-step model ineffective. He suggests a reverse of this; to freeze a situation and explore what is happening; to rebalance a situation by removing blockages and; finally unfreeze and allow the new conditions to resume action. Much of the alternative viewpoints on organisational change have arisen as modern conditions of complexity and flexibility undermine the ability to adhere strictly to models.

For the Bank, the need to change was largely driven by the opening up of the economy to outside influences. The decision to change may have been forced on the organisation, however, the decision to make use of a management consultancy, as will

be discussed later, indicates that some level of planning was present. As the grand narrative of this period of profound change emerges it will reveal the pattern of change and its consequences on the workers and the organisation.

1.2 Introduction to data and method

The research was carried out inductively and with a phenomenological philosophy. Its aim is the discovery of new and interesting stories of the lived experience of bank workers during a time of unprecedented change. The 25 storytellers are current and past workers from Bank of Ireland (the Bank). They represent workers from a broad range of backgrounds and work experiences across the research period. The stories they tell are envisioned as a grand-narrative (Lyotard, 1979; Boje, 2001) of the Bank as it embarks on a lengthy project of modernisation. Through this grand narrative themes emerge which are considered and analysed with respect to the aims of the research. At the very start of conceptualising the project various approaches to data collection were considered, but once the concern for understand culture emerged, along with the understanding of the sensitivity of the research site, the richness of data required; the use of ethnographically orientated method became necessary. Carrying out a participant observation or ethnography requires the researcher to become part of the phenomena they are studying (Macionis & Plummer, 2008). This was felt to be problematic for two reasons, the first was the researcher wanted to look beyond the global financial crisis which had begun in 2008 and had greatly affected banking. The second, somewhat related, was that given the sensitivity around banking at the commencement of this research in 2012 a researcher or stranger inside the organisation may not be well

received. The methods and methodologies employed for data collection and analysis are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

1.2.1 A note on limitations

Limitations are inherent in inductive research. The broadness of the data collection yields a great quantity of information. Not all this information is coherent and often the researcher cannot fully analyse it or have the ability to query the totality of the data. Areas of interest that could not be fully explored are outlined in the future research section. This is the goal of inductive research, to take an area about which there is not much knowledge and to allow future researchers to probe it in more depth.

This particular research is limited to a single organisation which risks giving a narrow and singular view of the data. However, over the time that I have presented this work, a number of people who worked in banking (in different banks) have confirmed that the overall atmosphere and culture in their banks were similar. Banking has developed from a relatively simple industry into a large complex one, to hear the voice of all bankers in all organisations would be difficult and time consuming. In terms of culture and change, the research would have only been able to focus on the culture and change common to all banks which would have diluted the analysis and findings.

The research is intentionally limited to a time period. At the start of the project it was expected that participants would be available to tell stories starting in the 1970s, but as the project evolved older stories from the 1960s tumbled out. More than half the storytellers stories commence in the 1960s, naturally enough the quantum of detail thickens from the period of the 1970s onwards. The later limit of 2000 was to create a break before the 2008 global

financial crisis. The reason was to avoid too much talk of the crisis and memories of working lives that may become skewed by the trauma and high emotions brought about by the crisis.

1.2.2 Introduction to the researcher

It is always important that the researcher be introduced to readers so they can understand the position of the researcher with respect to the research. As a researcher who is conducting research phenomenologically I am expected to take a neutral stance and clear any preconceived ideas that I possess about banking and bankers. I aim to do this but I am not so naïve to realise that by actively living in society I cannot help but have ideas and opinions that may influence my findings. By acknowledging this I can continue to check myself and my opinions throughout the process. Such a process is aided by keeping a diary and notes and reflecting on any opinions and ideas. Giving an uninterrupted voice to the storytellers I aim to develop my findings by asking myself “what do the stories say?”. Additionally, the research is conducted from a perspective that is my own world view that fits within the concepts of social constructionism. I come into the research as a bank customer without any special knowledge of banks; I have never been particularly close to anyone in the banking community or had any type of strong customer relationship with any workers in these organisations. This level of banking knowledge will not hinder my ability to let the stories of the workers drive the findings of the research.

1.2.3 Structure of the document

The document is divided into three parts. This part, Part I, contains the introduction to the research and a contextual background. As a long form, and sometimes historical, study I have outlined some areas that are contextually relevant to the time leading up to the changes in the Bank. During the study period of 1960 to 2000, there have been many changes in the environment for banking institutions as well as social attitudes and attitudes to work.

I have aimed to present Parts II and III as a *narrative* that fits with the iterative nature of inductive research; which is explored in further detail in Chapter 2. Part II is a culmination of many attempts to draw out themes and contemplate their importance to various theories and concepts. In Part III these theories and concepts are once again reworked into a conversation about the changes and culture of the Bank from the traditional to the contemporary. This is followed by contributions to theory and practice. Figure 2 is a brief overview of how the document is intended to be structured:

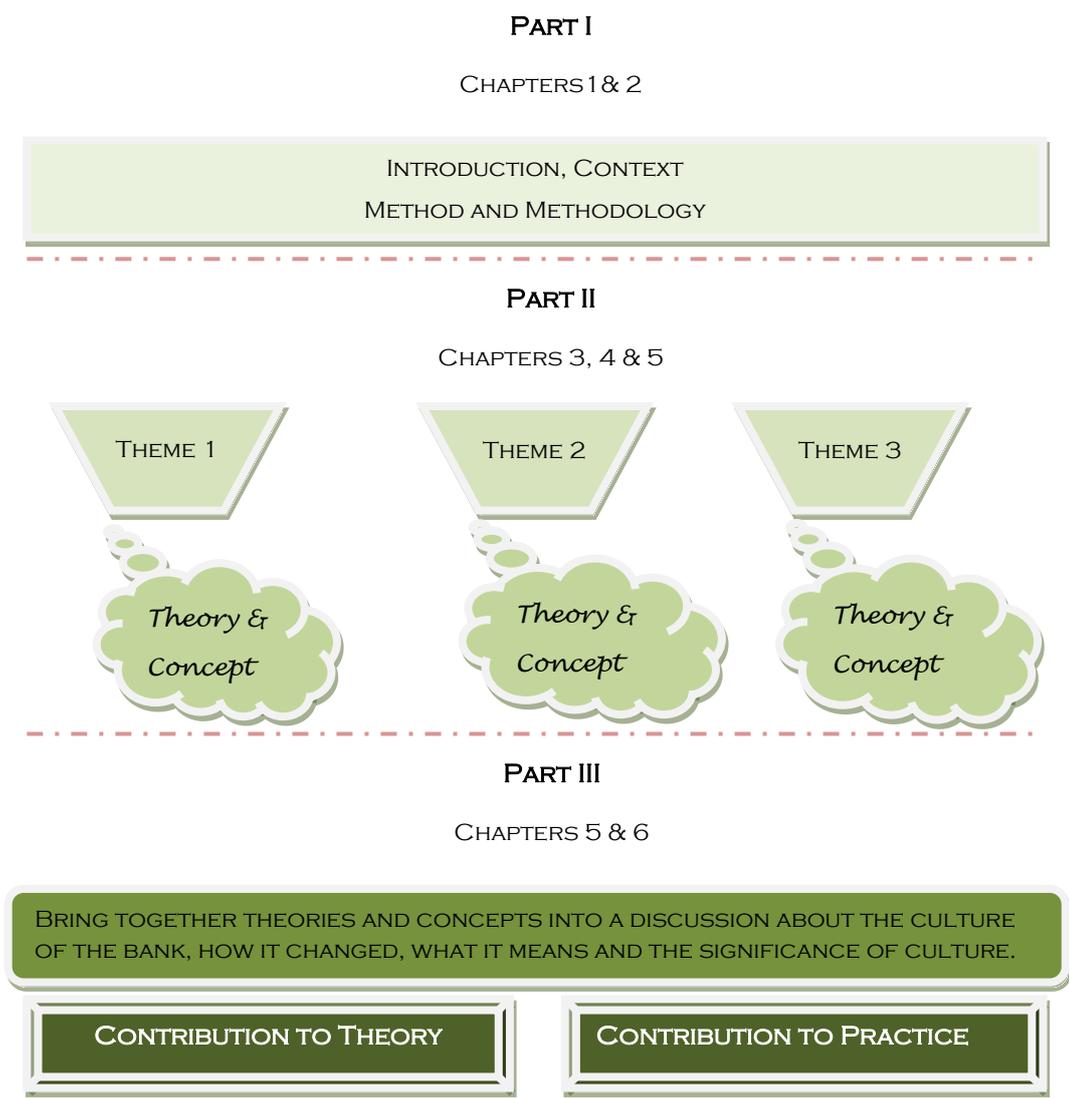


Figure 2: Outline of document

1.3 Work and Modernity: The Economic and Social Context of the Research Period

Banking organisations are a customary part of local and national economies and communities. The people that work there play a part in constructing the social sphere within which a bank operates. Exploring such organisations without giving thought to the outside world and how it has changed would snub the significant influences that the social world has on work, especially since “no economy can operate independently of the values

and the system of which it is a part" (Tansey, 1998, p. 98). This chapter aims to contextualise the research period and the external happenings that have influenced banking. The Irish, European and Global economies and societies have changed at an unprecedented level in the past half century and these changes have an important bearing on organisational culture and life.

In the last 50 years, Ireland has changed from being a very isolated, insular, Catholic rural society revolving around agriculture, to a more open, liberal-individualist, secular, urban society revolving around business, commerce and high-tech, transnational corporations. In the last 15 years, the pace of change has become more dramatic and Ireland is now identified as one of the most globalised societies in the world (Inglis, 2008).

The research commences during this period of change and the following sub-sections of this chapter highlights the key moments that have impacted on the Bank and its workers.

Ireland, although on the periphery of both Europe and of the Second World War, experienced similar changes as many of its European neighbours in the post-war years. At the time when this research commences the Irish economy was changing, primarily due to the removal of a policy of economic protectionism. This was followed up by a period of international development supported by funds such as the Marshall plan from the U.S. A booming economy in the 1970s gave way to high interest rates, a recession and emigration in the 1980s and finally towards economic recovery and a booming economy in the 1990s and 2000s. The global financial crisis in 2008 impacted the Irish economy at unprecedented levels resulting in government rescue packages to prevent multiple bank failures. This chapter aims to highlight the changing commercial and social environment in Ireland.

1.3.1 Work and Modernity 1930s – 1960s: The Free-State Economy

Following the foundation of the state in 1922, the Irish Government indicated a preference for economic independence in an “attempted to shun the new world order by imagining Ireland as a latter-day island of saints and scholars who delighted in a spiritual life based on frugal comforts” (Inglis, 2008). Seán Lemass, who was Minister for Industry and Commerce in the 1930s, set out to reform the post-independence Irish economy by developing indigenous industry and supporting the agricultural sector. The Control of Manufacturing Acts, which was first introduced in 1932, was the basis for his plan which would support and encourage national industry and only allow foreign industry where an indigenous version was not possible. Foreign imports, especially of agricultural products, were loaded with duties and exempt foreign industries, most notably tyre manufacturer Dunlop¹, were given a monopoly (Horgan, 1999). While this period did introduce some benefits to industrial development, overall the consequence was a stagnant economy, high inflation, poor standards of living and high levels of emigration by the time the 1950s arrived.

The post-World War II economy in Ireland was in a difficult position, as it was in the rest of Europe. Despite a desire to be self-sufficient and break with the United Kingdom, the Irish pound was still linked with British Sterling. Following the war it became apparent that using Sterling as a reserve currency was not beneficial to economic and industrial expansion as UK economic growth progressed slowly (Kennedy, et al., 1988). This led to Ireland joining the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the

¹ It should be noted that John Dunlop, although a Scottish Presbyterian was a resident of Belfast where he invented the first pneumatic tyre. He had long associations with Ireland (Motor Cycling Ireland, 2015) opening a factory in Dublin in 1890 (Dunlop, 2015). In post-independence Ireland the Irish Dunlop Company was given a licence to manufacture tyres in 1932 (Cork Independent, 2014).

World Bank in 1957 and an internationalisation of monetary policy (Whitaker, 1987). Much of this new way of thinking about economic development is credited to Ken Whitaker, a senior civil servant in the Department of Finance. He, along with others, had become interested in how other European countries were organising their post-war economies. In 1958 he authored the First Programme for Economic Expansion. This is considered a pivotal moment for the Irish economy and society and the driving force behind many of the changes and modernisations that followed. Embracing free trade principles and the lifting of trade tariffs encouraged foreign direct investment and economic growth during the 1960s. The Industrial Development Authority (IDA) had been set up in 1949, and, although an autonomous body, they initially had a protectionist mandate (Donnelly, 2010). Following the turn to an open economy the IDA led the way in securing new foreign business and “by 1965, 80% of all investments in Irish industry came from foreign capital and during the 1960s 350 new foreign companies were established in Ireland” (Rouse & Duncan, 2012, p. 126).

The decision to attract foreign business to Ireland and the dropping of protectionism are two of three policy changes that Tansey (1998) highlights as being the driving forces in a changing society. The third set of circumstances are related to education which “has been a catalyst for economic and social change” (Tansey, 1998, p. 250) and has a bearing on the cultural changes in banking that are observed especially from around the 1980s. These new policies on education introduced free second level education, increased the leaving age and expanded the availability of third level education (Tansey, 1998). These changes fed a young educated workforce into the new industrial based economy as agriculture declined and the population became

urbanised. The rate of change was rapid so that “by 1997, agriculture supported just 10% of total employment in Ireland” (Tansey, 1998, p. 11). Additionally, the attitude of the large youthful population in the post-war era had begun to change in line with that experienced in many other European and Western countries. Whitaker, who was only in his early 40s when he wrote *Economic Development*, notes how in the post war years there was an optimism and confidence among the young people. While Don Carroll, a Governor of Bank of Ireland in the early part of the research period, talks of his interest in geo-politics and the strategic lessons he learned while following the developments of the war (Carroll, 1987; Whitaker, 1987).

As the economy became more globalised and open, society continued to transform with the changes becoming most obvious in the latter part of the twentieth century (Inglis, 2008). During this time many of the traditions had disappeared and people “began to embrace a new lifestyle based on economic growth, the development of the European Union, and the pleasures of materialism and consumerism” (Inglis, 2008).

1.3.2 Work and Modernity 1960 – 2000: Uneasy Transformations in Banking, the Economy and Society

The shape of the banking industry changed dramatically in the latter part of the 1960s. In response to the opening up of the economy to outside competition a series of mergers took place in the banking sector. In a short space of time the industry changed from containing a number of smaller banks to four main banks. In 1958 Bank of Ireland had purchased the Hibernian Bank, a far smaller and predominantly rural bank. The two banks operated separately until 1965 when Bank of Ireland agreed a merger with the National Bank. Following a year of negotiations the three

banks merged under the singular title of, Bank of Ireland Group (Rouse & Duncan, 2012; Meenan, 1983). In September 1966, in response to the Bank of Ireland merger, the remaining banks in the Republic set about consolidating their assets. The banks in question; the Royal Bank of Ireland, the Munster and Leinster Bank and the Provincial Bank, merged to form Allied Irish Banks (AIB) (Rouse & Duncan, 2012; Ryan, 2001; Meenan, 1983). In Northern Ireland the 'Belfast Banks' had been looking to strengthen their position in the market since 1917 when Ulster Bank had sought out a London based partner, they were eventually acquired by the London County and Westminster Bank of London (National Westminster). Ulster Bank's ability to access finance from London through National Westminster had given them a powerful position in the Irish economy, they were the only bank able to raise funds for the purchase of trans-atlantic jets for the national airline Aer Lingus (Share, 1986). Similarly, in 1965 the fourth bank, the Northern Bank, was acquired by the Midland Bank (Meenan, 1983). These changes signified a new and stronger banking industry for Ireland as the economy faced new challenges. However, the transformation of social and working life around this time did not always run smoothly.

The banking industry was not immune to the changes in attitudes to work during from 1960 and during the 1970s. Europe was peppered with industrial action and calls for better working conditions throughout this period which is around the time that Peter Berger and his colleagues noted "a problem with the meaning of work" (Berger, 1964). Beginning in 1966 and continuing throughout the 1970s into the early 1990s workers in the banking industry became increasingly vocal on their dissatisfaction with working conditions. Their union, the Irish Bank Officials' Association (IBOA), was the singular trade union

representing bank workers in Ireland and, as a consequence, was extremely powerful. The union was largely concerned with ensuring that its members were treated in a manner that was befitting of the status of being a banker and were quick to recognise the changing market and working conditions for the sector (Rouse & Duncan, 2012). The first major episode of industrial action took place in 1966 where all banks in the Republic and Northern Ireland stayed closed for three months. In 1970 the banks closed for an unprecedented six month period with demands for wage increases, parity among male and female workers and better promotional opportunities (Ryan, 2001). Shorter strikes in 1976 and 1992 were mainly concerned with conditions of employment such as; the idea of transferability of workers and unsuitability of officials living in houses attached (or over) a bank branch (Rouse & Duncan, 2012; McAleese, 1983).

The final strike in 1992 is where many of the new modern work practices are regularised and for the first time lower paid clerical workers on short-term contracts are introduced to the workforce of the Bank (Rouse & Duncan, 2012). Tracing these strikes gives an overview of the changing attitudes of the workers as they sought to become part of the modernising banking industry and how the traditional cultural elements were being considered redundant. These strikes, their outcomes and the demands of the workers are not an unusual occurrence in Europe at the time. Boltanski and Chiapello noted how “the 1970s was marked by a series of long strikes” which resulted in “changes in the internal organisation of work” and the “casualisation of work” over the following decades (2005, p. 175). In their examination of the changing nature of work that culminated in the May 1968 strikes in France, they note that the narrative at the time was concerned not just with pay and

conditions of employment but with the nature of work. There was discontent with the static nature of work and authoritarian management styles with many were calling for increased autonomy and meaning in their work, while still maintaining job security (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005). The consequence these changes in attitudes eventually saw the introduction of more casual working arrangements, including temporary work and sub-contracting of work (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005). Similarly Dickson (1977) notes the changing trends in developing new work practices and organisation structures occurring around this time across Europe and the U.S. These occurrences are not dissimilar to those which transpired in the Bank which experienced a change in the nature of work from traditional forms of strict regimes to modern flexible and open working arrangements including the increasing trend for mobility and boundaryless careers (Arthur, 1994).

The many transformations that were occurring during the 1970s happened at a time when the Irish economy grew substantially; this growth, however, was followed by a recession in the 1980s (McAleese, 1983). Climbing out of the recession in the 1990s the economy moved towards a new period of unprecedented growth. Figure 3 shows the increase in employment levels as the economy expanded through the 1990s and 2000s. Driven by cheap and easy access to credit on global markets the consequences of freeing up the economy in the 1950s and 1960s was realised during this time.

Throughout this period, and especially in more recent times, banking in Ireland has come to align itself with the normal expectations of a modern international organisation with active and innovative workers and adopting the latest technologies for achieving their goals.

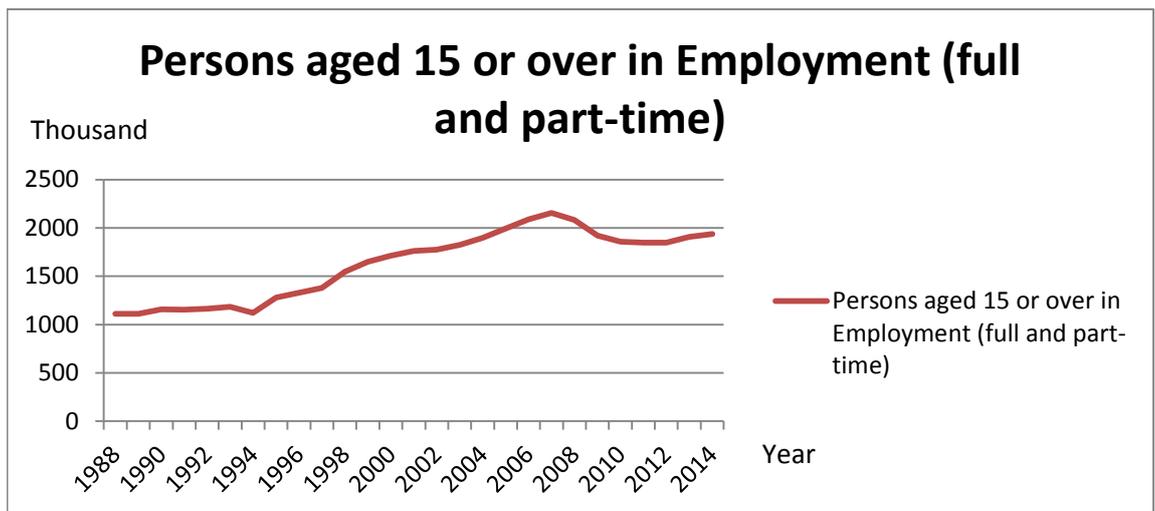


Figure 3: Historical Employment Chart. Source: Central Statistics Office (www.cso.ie)

There is a striving for efficiency which is most evident in the retail banks where human interaction is being replaced by technological advances, even to the level that new branches are almost fully automated. These 'zombie' like branches are equally a consequence of the changes instigated in the late 1960s as the recruiting of graduates in the 1980s.

In reacting to the demands of the global markets, that Irish banks were very much a part of, banking organisations exposed themselves to an increased level of external pressure. When the burden on the global financial system finally became too great and following some poor decision making in the prevailing climate a crisis arose in Irish banking in 2008 (National Economic and Social Council, 2009).

1.3.3 September 30th 2008; The bank guarantee and the aftermath

On Tuesday September 30th 2008 the Government passed emergency legislation aimed at securing the liquidity of the main Irish banks and building societies. The bank guarantee was a way for the Government to support the banks and ensure confidence in their future. It provided a two year guarantee of all deposits and some debt within six financial institutions. A later amendment allowed the government to purchase shares in the relevant financial institutions (Irish Times, 2008). The guarantee followed months of decline in the Irish and global economies. The banks and many of their customers had made the most of easy access to credit and following a decade of a booming economy and building speculation the economy went into recession (Nyberg, 2011). In the months following the guarantee it emerged that the banks and building societies were in financial distress and their survival was precarious. According to Peter Nyberg in his testimony to the state's Banking Inquiry in 2014, the guarantee came at a time when the economy and banks were under pressure "but everybody concerned with judging risk in the country had told each other as well as the Government that the banks were solvent and there were no problems and consequently one did not have to prepare for any problems. Then all of a sudden the problems were there" (Nyberg, 2014). This was an unprecedented position for the Irish economy and the banks. In the past there had been near failures and crises; most notably AIB was bailed out by the Government following the collapse of their subsidiary the Insurance Corporation of Ireland (ICI) in 1985 (Walsh, 1985). However, this crisis was different in scale and depth to any preceding financial crises (Nyberg, 2011).

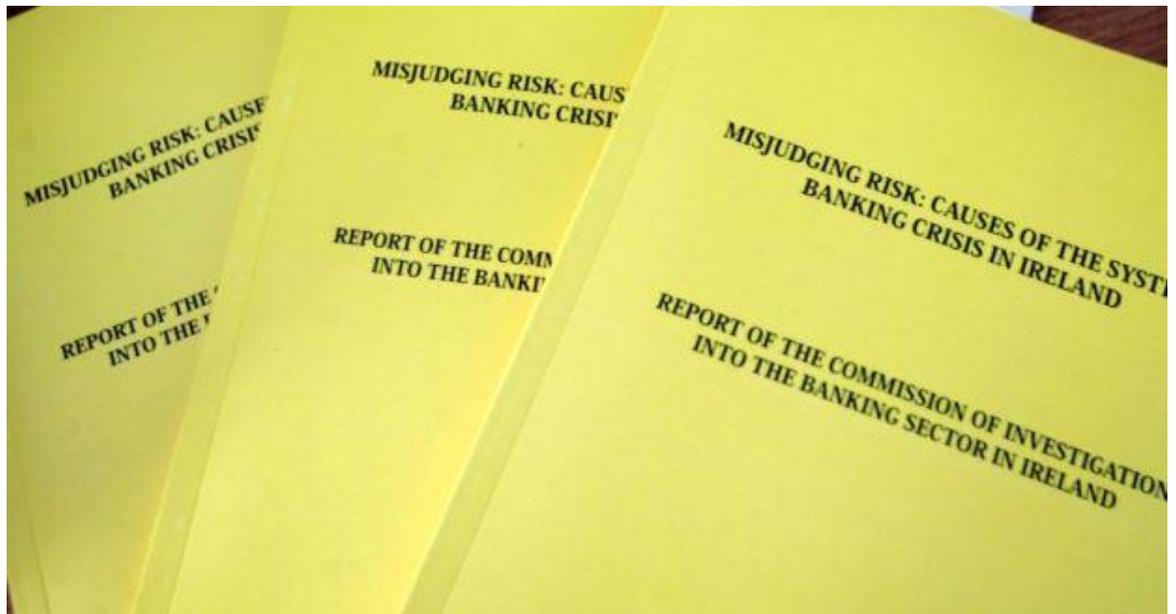
In the time following the financial crisis there has been much criticism of the banks and their workers. The criticism of bank workers can be observed on two levels; the upper management who are often blamed for the crisis and the branch workers who interact with the public. At the outset of the banking crisis it was the branch workers who took much of the direct public backlash. With their jobs and careers having an uncertain future the branch workers also had to face the public anger on a daily basis. In 2011 the Unite trade union and the IBOA both detailed the low level of confidence by bank workers in their organisations (Irish Times, 2011). The backlash towards the senior managers was largely based in the media with their salaries and bonuses being questioned along with their ethics and morals (Hennessy, 2010). The unprecedented levels of discontent and mistrust aimed at the banks and their workers in Ireland culminated in the commissioning of a number of reports and a subsequent banking inquiry in 2014 and 2015. In January 2010 the Government established the *Commission of Investigation into the Banking Sector in Ireland*. Initially two scoping reports were commissioned to provide context and the terms of reference for the main investigation and report. The commissioner appointed to investigate the banking sector was Mr. Peter Nyberg; he produced a report in March 2011 entitled *Misjudging Risk: Causes of the Systematic Banking Crisis in Ireland* (Nyberg, 2011).

The Commission's investigation was concerned with the time period January 1st 2003 to January 15th 2009 – the brevity of the period is commented on by Nyberg in his testimony to the Banking Inquiry (Nyberg, 2014). Additionally, the Commission was given only six months to complete the investigation into six financial institutions and compile a report, again a short period for such an important task. The Commission's main interest was to

address the question: *Why did so many professionally adept Irish bankers and public servants (as well as politicians, entrepreneurs, experts, media and households) simultaneously come to make assessments and decisions that have later proven seriously unsound in a number of ways?* (Nyberg, 2011). While the commission did interview a number of relevant people, it focused largely on the leadership positions and in the areas of strategy, decision making, operations and control. The interviews were conducted for the purposes of backing up the large amounts of documentation handed over by the six financial institutions (Nyberg, 2011, p. 10). As such, and to maintain full anonymity, the voice of these workers is minimal and tells us very little about the cultural elements of the bank. This is an example of a missed opportunity to fully assess bank culture and align it with decision making and economic and financial outcomes.

The commission's report is interesting in terms of observing the underlying cause and effect of changes in the market place and industry, elements which are affected by, and have an effect on, cultural developments in organisations. The time period under review by the commission, however, indicates a myopic view of the location of the root causes of the financial crisis. In a similar manner, testimony to the Banking Inquiry in 2014 and 2015 concentrates on the near past. Historical changes and culture only appeared on one occasion; in the introduction of the testimony from Professor John Fitzgerald of the Economic and Social Research Institute (ERSI). He mentions the economic recovery during the 1990s and the social elements which affected economic life; such as education and women remaining in the workforce (Fitzgerald, 2015). This brief mention of history and society is not unexpected from a contributor to the ERSI, however, it is once again a missed opportunity for the

Government to explore the crisis beyond the short term and an economic understanding of banking. The short term analysis of the banking crisis and the bypassing of cultural change are among the reasons that the initial research concerns emerged.



Report of the Commission of Investigation into the Banking Sector in Ireland (March 2011) Photo Credit: Bryan O'Brien/Irish Times.

1.4 Conclusion

In Summary, economic and social development both in Ireland and globally has had an effect of the banking industry and its culture. Tracing and commenting on the history of an organisation that is so intricately entwined in both the economy and society without remarking on the external environment would fail to tell the full story of its transformation. The research begins in a period where economies and society were coming to terms with the great upheaval from World War II. More locally, the Irish economy was beginning to open up and become outward facing after years of stagnation caused by protectionist policies. The events of this era had a lasting effect on the nature of bank work and the culture of the organisations. With changing social

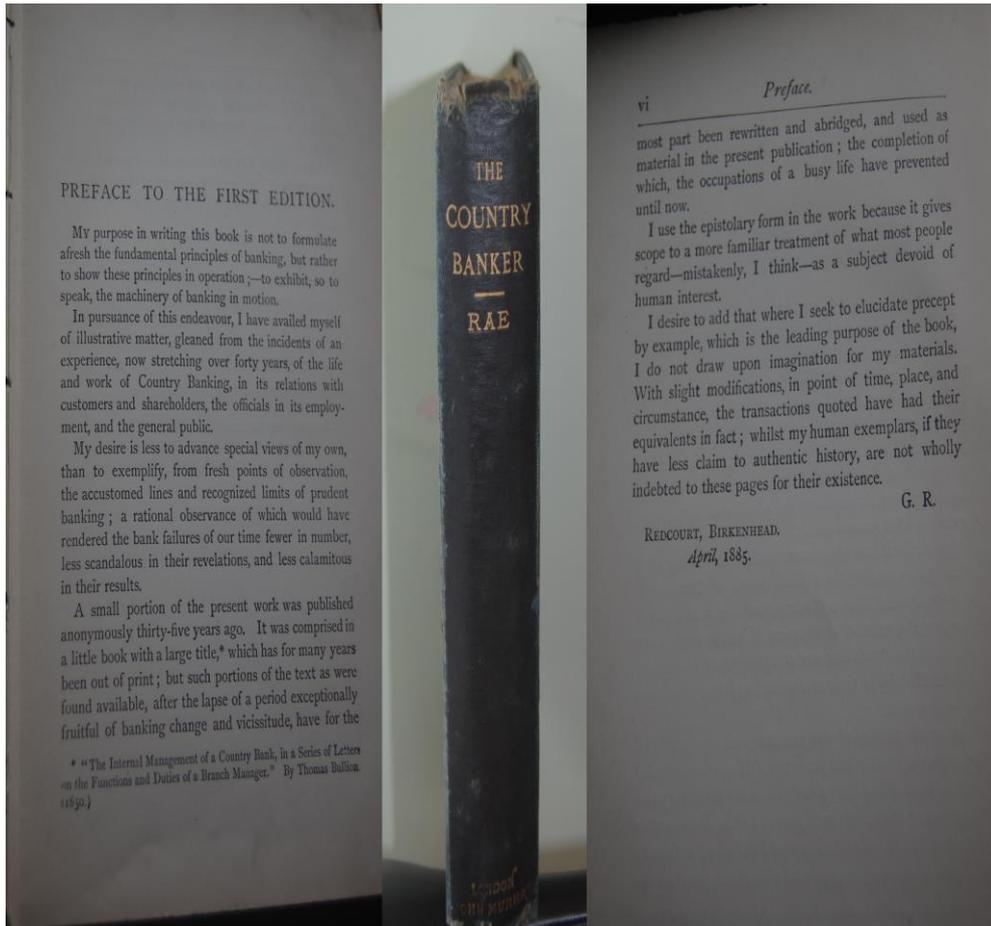
attitudes traditional work became questioned and, over time, modes of being in organisations transformed. The Bank and the industry in Ireland experienced similar industrial unrest as its European neighbours and slowly more flexible working practices were introduced.

Over the course of the research period the Irish economy went through periods of growth and recession which challenged the banking industry. The latest recession, brought on by a global financial crisis, impacted the banking industry on unprecedented levels. To survive this challenge government intervention was required across all banks. The following years placed banks in the spotlight and they were continually questioned over their decisions and failings to realise their vulnerability. Government commissioned investigations and reports go some way toward explaining the events leading up to the financial crisis but they are deficient in that they fail to delve into the culture of banking and they largely ignore the social elements of banking preferring to concentrate on the functional financial elements. Additionally, they ignore the effect of the profound changes that banking organisations experienced over since the removal of the protectionist economy.

This chapter is designed to give the reader a contextual footing on the broader environment in which the stories in Part II are told.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY, METHOD AND DATA COLLECTION



The Country Banker (Rae, 1890)

2.0 Introduction

The philosophy, method and methodology that are the foundation of the research are presented in this chapter. The purpose of this chapter is to position the research and inform the reader of the underlying assumptions that influence the collection, analysis and discussion of the data. Already outlined in chapter 1 are the points of departure that influenced the choice of research. This chapter commences with a brief discussion of how the topic emerged and how the methods and methodological view were adopted. It is followed by an introduction to inductive inquiry and notes on the philosophical and epistemological position of the research and researcher. The method focuses on the collection of data through *storytelling* and analysis through grand narrative. The chapter concludes by presenting the 25 storytellers and a brief overview of their careers.

2.1 Pathways into the work: The research and the researcher

How the researcher perceives the world is often responsible for the subject matter, shape and direction of their research. The researcher's knowledge and experiences may influence their attraction to a particular world view which is reflected in the findings of the research. It is important, then, that the researcher makes known to the audience their philosophical assumptions and any factors that have influenced the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

As is often common in PhD research I received financial and academic support through a scholarship. The scholarship is awarded by a research group within Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT), the Centre for Finance and Business Research (CFBR). The research group is supported through a bursary from AIB bank, however, the research conducted by this group is not

carried out for the benefit of this bank and members of the research group are free to choose research projects within the scope of the CFBR's aims (see www.cfbr.ie for further details). Any conflict of interest between funding from AIB bank and the data being collected in Bank of Ireland was addressed in a meeting with WIT's Ethics committee. This is discussed further in Section 2.7 and the relevant documents are available in Appendices A, B & C.

In my case I did not begin with a pre-arranged or detailed project proposal and, so, was free, within the boundaries of the CFBR, to choose my own research theme. The research came about through a of series idea brainstorming sessions where potential themes were explored that could fit with the expertise and interests of the three parties involved; the research centre, the supervisors and the student (as represented in Figure 4).

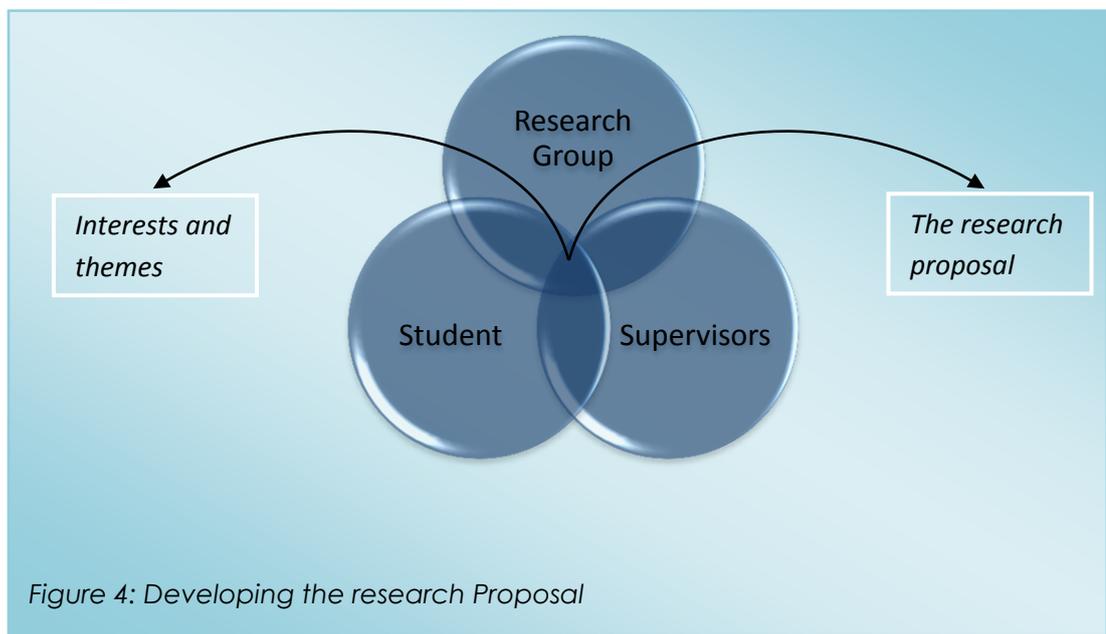


Figure 4: Developing the research Proposal

The subject matter was the main concern for the research centre; this led to the broad area of banking. As a sociology graduate

with a business masters I had previously studied work places, trades unions and personal experiences in social situations. A personal interest in social groupings in organisations and working lives strongly influenced the workplace setting of this research. Ultimately, the methodological approach was largely influenced by the supervisors and their areas of interest and expertise. As such, the preferred research methods and methodologies were strongly influenced by qualitative and interpretative inquiry. Approaching the research inductively and using storytelling was the preference of the supervisors, whereas the social constructionist philosophies were both the supervisors and my own understanding of how people experience and come to understand their social world.

Leading with this informal piece of how the research came about aims to provide an honest appraisal of how research at this level comes together. Under the guidance of experienced academic researchers it appears somewhat futile to give the pretence of the researcher having given much thought to methods and methodologies that sit outside of our combined research interests and experience. That said, I have still endeavoured to justify the reasons for using my chosen research approach in the remainder of the chapter.

2.2 Inductive Inquiry

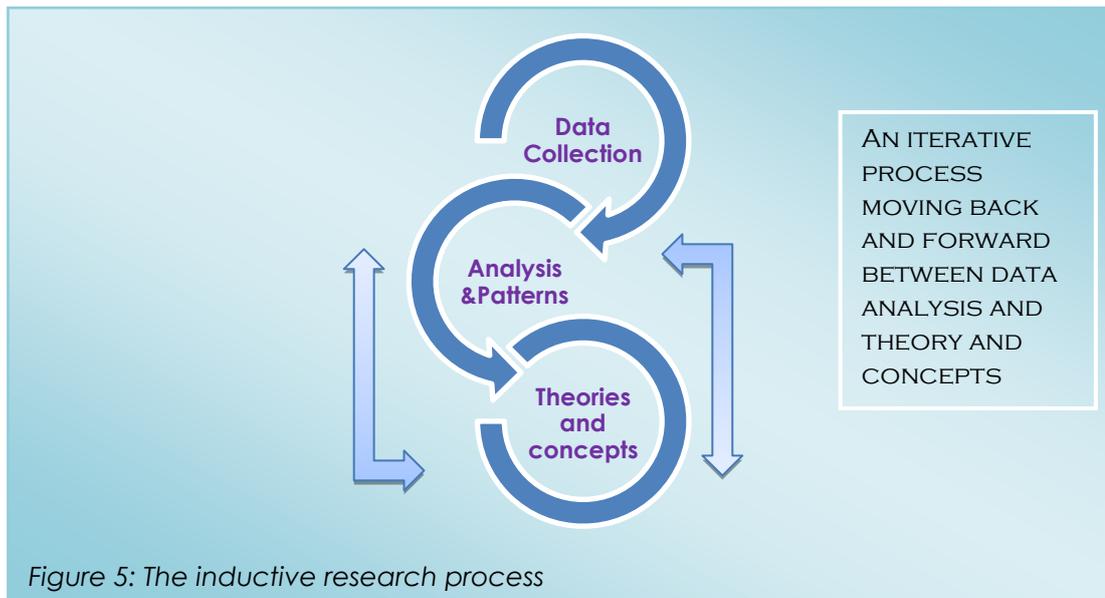
Inductive inquiry is a mode of discovery that sets about the “tracking down of patterns, consistencies” (Mintzberg, 1979, p. 108) that appear in raw data. It aims to observe and draw out from the data repeated, interesting and important themes in a way that is uninhibited by prescribed methodological principles (Thomas, 2006; Patton, 1990). In using it for researching change

and culture in the Bank the goal is to gather stories of working life that represent the experiences that are considered most important to the workers.

Inductive approaches are primarily used in social sciences to investigate the deeper relationships of social phenomena. It was advocated by Weber (1922) as a means of understanding the subjective inner states of meaning (Morrison, 2006) and focuses on a specific case from which generalisations are made (Reichertz, 2014; Mintzberg, 1979). The process of generalisation is, according to Mintzberg, the “creative leap” that is necessary to “break away from the expected to describe something new” (1979, p. 108-109). The generalisations, when analysed, have the ability to provide a deeper understanding of “organisational dynamics”. This is especially so when “preordained understanding” of experiences are removed and the researcher explores the data without taking guidance from existing literature on the subject (Gioia, et al., 2013, pp. 16-17). It should be noted that this method of data analysis does not exclude literature completely, it is brought in later in the process, as part of an iterative cycle of viewing data alongside theories and concepts. The stories that are the cornerstone of this research are broadly encompassing narratives of working life across a lengthy research period. These generalised stories when analysed are expected to produce interesting and novel perspectives on the culture of the Bank and the change it experienced.

The process of analysing inductively collected data often involves an iterative progression, as is shown in Figure 5, of toggling between “emergent data, themes, concepts and dimensions” (Gioia, et al., 2013, p. 21). Through this process interesting findings begin to emerge which are then further explored in depth. Data which has been collected inductively can be analysed through

many different “useful” theories (Mintzberg, 1979). While grounded theory is often associated with inductive research it is not the only approach available to inductive researchers. The method of analysis used in this research is presented in detail in Section 2.6



As already alluded to the process that lead to the development of interesting findings from the data does not take place in isolation. Exposing assumptions about how knowledge is produced within the inductive cycle is necessary for a transparent and robust piece of research. The findings and conclusions of inductive and interpretive research are driven by the unique path the researcher takes where ideas, interactions and inspirations weave together the researcher and the researched. It is not always possible to present this introspective process when formally presenting a body of research. In the concluding Chapter 7 (Section 7.5), I have reflected on this process and provide a short insight into my thoughts and the challenges of this research.

2.3 A Phenomenological Perspective

Since inductive inquiry does not begin with a specific and carefully developed research question the initial direction of the research relies heavily on the researcher's philosophical thoughts on how interesting findings and new knowledge can emerge. With limited real knowledge of what goes on behind the scenes in banking organisations this research commences with the aim of delving into this closely guarded world. In exploring the lived experiences of bank workers it follows that much of the new knowledge will arrive from investigating how the workers, themselves, interpret their careers. As such, the ontological basis for this research is largely a phenomenological philosophy of how human beings experience the world.

Phenomenology is concerned with how the world is experienced by those who live in it. Central to this ontology is the understanding of phenomena from the perspective of the individual human and their conscious interactions and experience of it (Moran, 2000; Van Manen, 1990). The principles of phenomenology are based on inductive reasoning. That is, avoiding exacting logical principles or philosophies and only aiming to understand phenomena through experiences that humans accumulate through living in the world (Fay & Riot, 2007; Moran, 2000). The phenomenological turn in philosophy is largely credited to Edward Husserl (1859-1938) and, according to Moran (2000), its transformation to Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). It arose due to Husserl's realisation that philosophy "had become limited to exploring a world by empirical means" (Creswell, 1998, p. 52) and his belief that phenomenological philosophy enabled knowledge of "the world in which we live as human beings" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 5). As such, "phenomenology was seen as reviving our living contact with reality [and]...returning it to the life

of the living human subject” by avoiding and “rejecting the domination of enquiry by externally imposed methods” (Moran, 2000, pp. 4-5). In this research the aim of acquiring inside knowledge of the bank, its culture and how it changed is challenged by pre-existing distinctions that categorise banks as economic entities or by public discourse that is often accepted without any challenge. Phenomenology, by rejecting the “strait-jacket of encrusted traditions” (Moran, 2000, p. 5), allows the research to view phenomena not just as noumena, in their physical and practical sense, but as things that are experienced in the world (Cohen, 2000).

Storytelling as research data is subjective to the narrator, a fact which is often pointed out by its detractors. Phenomenological researchers would suggest that it is the subjective nature of stories that reveal truths about events since being part of the *story* is part of human existence. It is what Heidegger terms the manifest or “that which shows itself in itself” (1967, p. 51). Heidegger (1967) felt that the question of Being had become overlooked and required indepth consideration especially given that humans are ‘inthe world’, that they are inextricably linked to their environment. To consider the question of Being, Heidegger, in his seminal work *Being and Time* (orig. 1927), drew on the concept of *Dasein* (being there) which speaks to an individual’s subjective view of their worldly experiences - “we are it” (1967, p. 36). In using *Dasein* Heidegger rejects the notion of humans as being ‘rational animals’ or conforming to a ‘class or genus’ and explores the notion of how human beings exist within the world (Heidegger, 1967). Phenomenological research following Heidegger is concerned with how individuals understand and experience their environment, how they come to exist, to be there, within their world and what this existence means. Taking on

this approach the research draws its findings from the voice of the bank worker as they tell stories of their ways of being in the organisation and the world.

Moving beyond the core argument of experiential subjectivity it is useful to discuss how this ontology sets about the interpretation of Dasein and existential phenomena. Heidegger called upon hermeneutics which, according to Moran, is "the art of interpretation" (2000, p. 197) of texts. As a brief aside it should be noted that texts include oral narration and symbolic gesture (Cohen, 2000). It is important to make this distinction as text is often conceived as being in written form which would overlook the main unit of data in this research, the oral account. Understanding experiences hermeneutically, through interpretation of texts, is conducted by exploring how people interpret and attach meanings to their experiences. Ignoring this position in favour of neutral views and "scientific understanding, presupposes our existential encounter with things" and, would result in "a theory of truth as judgement instead of an experience of truth as revelation" (Moran, 2000, p. 236). Being able to interpret phenomena requires the acknowledgement that when conducting research the experience is being relayed retrospectively and, so, it is important that the experience is not just a reflection but a description of a lived experience of daily life and mundane happenings (Cohen, 2000; Khan, 2000). In a fashion similar to the iterative analysis pattern of inductive research hermeneutics calls for research to be viewed in a circular pattern that is not closed but returns back to the text for further interpretation. In doing so, "parts of the texts are understood in relation to the whole text and vice versa" (Cohen, et al., 2000, p. 72).

2.4 Epistemology

Following on from the phenomenological ontology this section discusses the nature and meaning of knowledge. Similar to the ontological stance, the epistemological direction of this research is guided by the researcher's view of the world. In alignment with the interpretive and phenomenological positions already discussed, the research takes the view that reality and knowledge about the social world are socially constructed. A social constructionist perspective will explore the creation of reality through human interactions and the "collective generation of meaning" (Schwandt, 1994, p. 127). Which, given the communal bases of working life within organisations is a well-positioned perspective to aid in understanding the lived experiences of bank workers. The constructionist perspective puts forward the argument that people develop meanings about the world based on their experiences and interactions with others and with objects (Creswell, 2003; Crotty, 1998, Berger & Luckman, 1966). Knowledge, therefore, is socially constructed and is influenced by varying social and cultural factors since it is believed that "we are all born into a world of meaning bestowed upon us by our culture" (Creswell, 2003, p. 9). The stories that the bank workers tell are representations of how they understand and create meaning about their working lives and their social interactions within the Bank.

Approaching research from this perspective does not focus on "the number or frequency of measurable occurrences" but on how meaning about experiences are developed and comprehended by "knowledgeable agents" (Gioia, et al., 2013, pp. 16-17). The cultural or traditional influences placed on an individual do not imply that meanings and understandings of experiences remain static or are simplistic. A wide range of

meanings can be constructed over a life-time and, as such, the researcher “should look for the complexity of views” and give preference to the voice of the research participant (Creswell, 2003). This stance suggests that research should be carried out in a style that allows for the participant to engage in a meaning-making process and which does not focus on narrow questioning of experiences. It is an approach that is reflective of both inductive and phenomenological research and aims to draw out the meanings attributed to the lived experience of the bank workers. Through storytelling and by setting out with the principle of not interrupting or judging the workers telling they are more free to express their opinions, meanings and experiences. The challenge with a social constructionist view of the workers experience is to bring all the interviewees experiences together into a rich, multi-dimensional and meaningful representation that is a true representative of their understanding of their socially constructed life stories.

2.5 A Reflection on the ontological and epistemological stance of the researcher

Although I have declared my views of the world in relation to the research and detailed the scholarly definitions and descriptions of the ontology and epistemology, here I take the chance to discuss my understanding of these positions.

To start, I believe that humans are capable of choice and are free to reason as they wish on an individual level. However, I acknowledge that choice and reasoning are bounded by many different entities, for examples; legal, rules and regulations, socio-economic, physiological, family traditions, social pressures, or religion. Within our own individual worldly spheres we are free to draw conclusions about our experience and understanding of

the world around us. This comes to light when we have sudden realisations or epiphanies that make us change our mind on how we perceive a situation. Changing our minds indicates that we are thinkers capable of being aware of what is happening around us.

Dasein, or being in the world, is, to me, an awareness of our existence in the world either at a particular point in time or through reflections on an era or a particular event. Such awareness I do not believe is on our minds all the time but that we are prone to periods of awareness, reflection and contemplation about being part of the world and the social relations of which it is comprised. To research a phenomenon that is in and of the social world requires consideration of how individuals act, understand and interact with their social sphere and the broader social context. With this perspective I feel the researcher needs to give the individual freedom to express their own thoughts and experiences with minimum interference and take their words as being the truth of the individual's experience. It is these views that lead me towards the phenomenological philosophy for research.

While we may be free to develop our own unique understandings of experiences we are influenced by the social world that surrounds us. The conditions that humans experience their world are replete with wide and varied influences. I believe it is through these influences that we learn and make informed decisions on how to understand the world. How we conceive the world, and how we behave in it are guided by the social world and social interactions around us. Our peers, our family, our friends, our teachers, our team mates – they all influence how we learn and gather information about the world that allow us to make these informed judgements about our place in the world. Within a

broader social environment there are many sub-environments filled with different people and objects that influence our opinions, judgements, experiences and thoughts. This knowledge does not remain within the social group since when we pass from one grouping to another we bring with us our continually evolving thoughts. The way in which I think about our work environment and how we are influenced to act particular ways follow in Section 2.6.

In a document such as this it is important to position this personal ontology and epistemology in classic terms. So this work, approach and researcher are best understood through a Heideggerian philosophy and social construction perspective of our place in the social world.

2.6 Work, Culture and Performance

Defining 'work' is not an easy task and, according to Grint, there is no single definition of work that supersedes any other, and that each should be considered "as symbols of culture" (1991, p. 7). How work is conceived in this research is specifically included in the ontology and epistemology statements as the concept is similarly explored from the researcher's subjective position. This understanding of work from the researcher's perspective becomes apparent later in the document when the findings are discussed in light of the theoretical and conceptual observations. Work can be understood through many different permutations depending on the position of the observer. In this case the researcher, as an interested yet external observer, is focusing on culture and how work sits within it. Work is both an element of culture and imbued with culture, and, similar to culture, is laden with social interactions, as Grint points out.

The language and discourse of work are symbolic representations through which meanings and social interests are constructed, mediated and deployed. In short, the meanings of work do not inhere within the practices of participants but are created, challenged, altered and sustained through the contending discourses: if particular forms of activity are represented through discourse as valued or valueless then the activities themselves take on such characteristics for those appropriating such discourse (Grint, 1991, p. 9).

When work is conceived in a social sense and studies of work (such as Roy (1959); Berger (1964)) are analysed it becomes apparent that, like culture, work is often enacted. Similarly, Latour (2005) argues that an ensemble of social relations is only visible when it is being performed and through these performances noteworthy data can be found. Bank work is immaterial, they do not produce anything solid and, so, they are organisations comprised of people, talk, text, paper, uniforms and buildings. Text that is active or 'performative', according to Austin (1962), expresses an external reality where actions are declared, it goes beyond factual or 'constative' text and produces the reality that is spoken of (Culler, 1983). As such, conceiving bank work as being performative and performed can lead to an interesting perspective into how workers understand and construct meaning around their experiences.

2.6.1 Expected and Accepted Performances

Performativity, for Butler, is an enactment or an embodiment of "obligatory norms" (2009, p. i). These norms exist and act on the body "before we have a chance to act at all" (2009, p. xi) and are part of a regulatory process that determines identity (Butler, 1990). Performative norms are often deeply ingrained in culture and for workers once they enter an organisation they are led into

accepting a particular identity that represents the organisation's image. Performances and performative acts become normalised when they are repeated (Butler, 2009, 1990) which leads to them becoming "institutionalised", taking on "meaning and stability" as they develop into a "collective representation and a fact in its own right" (Goffman, 1959, p. 37). An individual who "takes on an established social role" will often find that they are entering a cultural role with a pre-conceived set of normalised mannerisms and a standardised appearance (Goffman, 1959, p. 37). To act within the appropriate cultural norms is to be accepted and to be "eligible for recognition" (Butler, 2009, p. iv). To be a successful bank worker is to be accepted in the guise of a banker; individual workers must take part in performative acts that are recognised as being suitable for the identity of a bank worker. Knowing how to act to become recognised as a bank worker is often a matter of imitating the norms as set out by those who are already producing acceptable performances.

2.6.2 Convincing Performances

There are many elements that make up a valid and acceptable performance. Social interactions and performances are, for Goffman (1959), primarily about sharing information between an individual actor and observers or 'others'. A combination of traits must be accepted by observers before an individual can be accepted as being genuine and fit for the role they are performing. The traits of a performance include both forthright verbal communication or subtle expressions and cues that are given off by the individual.

It is generally accepted in literature on performances that there is a correspondence between setting, manner and appearance. Consequently, performances are often required to be altered

depending on the setting and the audience. The expectation of a particular performance is often guided by “the principle that any individual that possesses certain social characteristics has a moral right to expect that others will value and treat them in an appropriate way” (Goffman, 1959, p.24). Social interactions and performances are flexible and are required to be suitable for particular social settings. And so, a bank worker is expected to behave in a particular way, for example, by their customers, and conversely the worker expects a particular performance from their customers.

A flawed performance can lead to an actor appearing to be non-conforming, thereby placing the individual in a vulnerable situation (Butler, 2009, 1990). When a social interaction becomes questioned through a “disruptive event”, it “may come to a confused and embarrassed halt” with the individual who has given the flawed performance feeling “ashamed while others present may feel hostile” (Butler, 2009, p. 23). It is therefore necessary for workers to continue to observe the cultural, social and organisational norms that are expected and alter their performance as their environment changes.

2.6.3 Idealised and Dramatic Performances

An individual may perform in a particular way for a particular reason. In some cases performances are believed, by the actor, to be a genuine reflection of reality; these are sincere performances. In other cases a performance may be cynical where the actor does not believe that the performance is genuine. Cynical performances may be conducted out of self-interest and for deceitful reasons and “to toy at will with something his audience must take seriously” (Goffman, 1959, p. 29). They may also be performed in the best interests of a social

situation or for the good of the community. To meet the expectations of others it is often necessary to present an idealised performance that holds up the moral principles and conventions of society (Goffman, 1959). Performative acts must be repeated continually so as to remain the accepted norm (Butler, 1990) and idealised acts are responsible for the “rejuvenation and reaffirmation of the moral values of the community” (Goffman, 1959, p. 45). Idealised performances often require the concealment or neglecting of other traits. In organisational settings if the core goals and targets are to be exhibited then other ideals are given the appearance of being active while at the same time being neglected (Goffman, 1959).

Within work settings the perception of efficiency and success requires a performance to be dramatic, quick and confident. This gives the observers the impression that the person is competent but does not indicate what their abilities are. It is not necessary to be concerned with the sum total of work routines “but only with the one from which his occupational reputation derives” (Goffman, 1959, p. 43). Workers are then expected to outwardly behave in a way that expresses the image of the organisation and, for example, a performance in a bank would need to instil an image of trust and efficiency. Idealised performances are, somewhat like Schein’s (1992) Artifacts, an outward, if sometimes superficial, expression of the values of an organisation.

2.7 On Method

Storytelling has become an attractive method in the social sciences and is viewed as a way of capturing unique and insightful data on life inside organisations. Storytelling is positioned as a means of allowing the voices of workers, independent of

their position in the organisation, to be heard while also contextualising the overarching atmosphere of being a banker over a 40 year period. Storytelling has been used as a method of understanding organisations, the insights of people who work in them and for the development of theories concerning the culture and social interactions within them (see: Boje, 2011, 2008, 2001, 1995, 1991; Czarniawska & Gagliardi, 2003; Czarniawska, 2004,1998; Dawson, 2002; Fineman & Gabriel, 1996; Gabriel, 2005, 2004, 2000; Leiblich, et al., 1988; Musacchio Adorisio, 2008; O'Leary, 2003; Sims, 2003). The ability of storytelling to capture the experiential uniqueness of culture goes towards addressing one of the initial research concerns; that banks should be viewed as more than scientific economic entities, but also as organisations that are people centred and cultural at their core. The stories are gathered from workers with a wide range of experiences and are brought together as a grand narrative, as described most notably, by Lyotard (1979). Developing a grand narrative brings together the two fundamental elements of phenomenology and social constructionism, the individual and the universal. In doing this a deeper understanding of the organisation, its people, structures, cultures and change, emerge. In summary, this section lays the foundation for the gathering and analysis of the data and findings which explore aspects of organisational lived experiences.

2.7.1 Narrative and Story

A discussion of storytelling as a method of research would not be complete without first addressing narratives and its many debates. Beginning with narrative is essential as the line between story and narrative is both fine and blurred. There is no universally accepted definition of what constitutes either form, furthermore,

an overview of the debate leads one to the conclusion that they are what Gallie (1956) would term *essentially contested concepts*, where there is an agreement on the idea of a concept but not of the definition. In this section I outline the differences of opinion between story and narrative and conclude with an appraisal of how these two concepts are used in this research.

The debate on the difference between a narrative and a story is generally confined among its practitioners. This debate, on delving into it, can become quite complex and, it appears that without agreement on the definition of both concepts, it will continue indefinitely. The result is that many scholars use the two concepts interchangeably (see Mullhall, 2013; O'Leary, 2003; Czarniawska, 1998). In a chicken and egg scenario, as described by Musacchio Adorisio (2008), the difference in understanding often comes down to arguing which concept comes first. On one side there is an argument that stories emerge from narrative only when plots are introduced, while the opposing argument proposes that stories emerge first and narratives follow and, as such "there can be story without narration but not narration without story" (Musacchio Adorisio, 2008, p. 612). While a definitive definition of story may be difficult to come by, one of the most widely accepted and commonly used definitions is one suggested by Paul Ricoeur.

A story describes a sequence of actions and experiences done or undergone by a certain number of people, whether real or imaginary. These people are presented either in situations that change or as reacting to such change. In turn, these changes reveal hidden aspects of the situation and the people involved, and engender a new predicament which calls for thought, action, or both. This response to the new situation leads the story towards its conclusion (Ricoeur, 1984, p. 150).

Concentrating primarily on the debate in organisation storytelling, the principal scholars (Boje, 2001, 2008; Czarniawska, 1998, 2004;

Gabriel 2000, 2004) have different understandings of how story should be defined. Czarniawska, following literary theorist Vladimir Propp, has a preference for narrative over story. She often uses the two words interchangeably (see Czarniawska, 1998) and describes narrative as "an original state of affairs, action or event" which is brought together by a plot. In contrast, Boje (2011; 1995) and Gabriel (2000) concentrate on stories as their unit of analysis. However, both Boje and Gabriel differ on what is an acceptable story to study. Gabriel (2000) is strict in his use of story. Akin to the folklorist definitions, there must be a beginning, a middle, an end and contain "simple and resonant plots and characters" (Gabriel, 2000, p. 22). For Gabriel stories are a subdivision of narrative which also includes "interpretations, theories and arguments" (2000, p. 19) and are only stories when they are complete from beginning to end. In this way he dismisses other forms of narrative and partly formed terse or proto-stories. Gabriel describes proto-stories as narratives that contain "the seed of a story without actually achieving the poetic imagination and narrative complexity that would make them proper stories" (2000, p. 60).

Boje (2011, 1995) in contrast to Gabriel is more accepting of the often 'messy' nature of storytelling, finding Ricoeur's definition too limited in its finite understanding of a story. Boje (2011, 2001, 1995) developed the idea of ante-narratives which being similar to Gabriels proto-stories, are stories "without the proper plot sequence and mediated coherence preferred in narrative theory" (2001, p. 3). That stories are not complete and may somehow be difficult to tell is of interest to Boje. He argues that ante-narrative can unleash much knowledge about how experiences are understood and how meaning develops. These incomplete stories are living and evolving narratives that are not

fully formed and are still in the process of being made sense of (Boje, 2001). He argues that they are not retrospective stories that have been “reified into the story, the consensual narrative” (Boje, 2001, p4) and while they may not have plot they do have emotion, and, so, are important snippets of information.

Within this research stories are treated as the unit of analysis, the driving force behind exploring the culture and change in the bank. Following Snowden (1999) it is perhaps better, when trying to provide a balanced argument, to draw away from determinist definitions of story and narrative. Snowden (1999) argues that stories should have the ability to retain the interest of the audience. They can be divided into those where knowledge can be uncovered and those where meaning is developed Snowden (1999). Since there is limited in depth knowledge or understanding of the cultural elements of banking and what it means to be a bank worker, both stories of knowledge and meaning are necessary to form an overall understanding of these storied organisations. The process of sensemaking (Weick, 1995) is often retrospective and so fragmented and partially formed stories are to be expected, and may yield interesting findings. It is of my opinion that fragmented stories cannot be ignored in the type of explorative and descriptive research that I am conducting. I draw on elements of all three scholars, and previous research in this method, and, as such, may sometimes be required to use story and narrative interchangeably as I seek to explain its validity as a research method. Ultimately, the direction of the research is guided by the words of the storytellers. Ricoeur's (1984) definition describes story as emerging from an environment undergoing change and how the changes can reveal previously unknown knowledge, it is in this way that story is used in this

research to reveal a deeper insight into banking culture and how it has transformed.

2.7.2 Storytelling as a Research Method

The turn to storytelling and narrative as a research method has not been without its detractors. Story and narrative is often censured for not being scientific enough, in that it is difficult to validate through repetition and can change from narrator to narrator depending on their personal and subjective perspectives.

At its most encompassing, storytelling and narrative research is an unparalleled vessel for the voicing of lived experiences. A turn to storytelling and narrative has the potential to alleviate the 'silence' that Thompson and Ackroyd (1995) attribute to a greater interest in leadership over workers. Stories and narrative enable others to grasp and comprehend lived experiences and the meanings that actors attach to them (Polkinghorne, 1988; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Narratives are conceived as a concrete means for exploring and understanding the personal experiences of others (Webster & Mertova, 2007; Flick, 2006). Such attributes make this method suitable for exploring the lived experiences of bank workers and teasing out of the events that have influenced cultural transformations. Story and narrative are additionally useful for inductive research since they provide a wide ranging, indepth and unparalleled description of phenomena, their uniqueness "is manifested in extremely rich data" (Leiblich, et al., 1988, p. 9). A turn to narrative is noted by Denzin (2001) and Somers (1994), while Leiblich, et al., (1988, p. 1) declares that it is "the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful".

According to Somers (1994), increased attention toward story and narrative from the social sciences and organisation studies has reconceptualised and reconfigured the essential features of narrative. As a consequence narrative moved from being just a representation to having ontological and epistemological values, allowing for the observation of how people understand their social world. Barthes (1966), drawing on his interest in semiotics sees narratives in all forms of human life.

The narratives of the world are without number. In the first place the word "narrative" covers an enormous variety of genres which are themselves divided up between different subjects...it is present in myth...short story...history...journalism, conversation...under this almost infinite number of forms, the narrative is present at all times, in all places, in all societies; the history of narrative begins with the history of mankind (Barthes, 1966 cited in Polkinghorn, 1988, P. 14).

Predominantly the attraction to narrative as a mode of research is its ability to give a central voice to individuals, or "knowledge agents" (Gioia, et al., 2013, p. 17), as they recount and attempt to make sense of their experiences (Webster & Mertova, 2007; Czarniawska, 2004). Narratives are constantly been formed and re-formed over time and are part of the sense-making process of lived experiences (Mallett & Wapshott, 2011; Webster & Mertova, 2007; Sims, 2003; Weick, 1995; Polkinghorne, 1988).

The challenge to narrative inquiry as being non-scientific and somehow prone to manipulation and false findings has been addressed by many of those who favour this method. Most will acknowledge the difficulty in validating narrative accounts and that often stories or narratives are embellished along the way. The argument in favour of narrative is that binary, true/false, scientific knowledge is not the only form of knowledge. For example, Czarniawska (2004, p. 3), when commenting on enacted narratives "as the most typical form of social life" notes that it is not necessarily "an ontological claim; life might or might not be

an enacted narrative but conceiving of it as such provides a rich source of insight". Similarly Webster and Mertova (2007, p. 4) point out that "narrative research does not represent the exact 'truth'" rather it "aims for its findings to be 'well grounded'". Leiblich, et al., (1988, pp.8-9) note that while narrative and stories may not necessarily be "accurate", they are "constructed around the core facts or life events" that result in "unique and rich data that cannot be obtained from experiments, questionnaires, or observations".

Narrative inquiry as a method seeks to understand and gain insights into events "in a comprehensive way" (Flick, 2006, p. 173), it does not seek to give undeniable facts. Lyotard (1979), Czarniawska (2004) and Gioia, et al. (2013) all highlight the paradoxical situation that narratives are often a key element in supporting factual research, providing it with rigour and being necessary to demonstrate why scientific knowledge is valuable. Rigour in narrative research, for Gioia, et al. (2013), is achievable through attention to detail and transparency in the methodology, analysis and discussion of data. This research endeavours to be transparent through its structure which attempts to mirror the iterative nature of inductive inquiry and slowly building theories and concepts into the stories until novel insights into banking culture and change are revealed.

2.7.3 Storytelling in Organisations

Life inside organisations, especially when large and dispersed like banks, is not understood and experienced in the same way and at the same time by all its inhabitants. For Czarniawska and Gagliardi, it is narrating that organises "this raw and fragmented material" while "organising makes narration possible, because it orders people, things and events in time and place" (2003, p. vii).

As interest in the social aspects of organisation has intensified, there has been a move towards understanding, not just structures, but, social interactions that are integral to organisational life (Soderberg, 2003). To employ a method of storytelling is to acknowledge that we live storied lives and that we are naturally inclined to tell our stories (Sims, 2003; Bruner, 1991; Polkinghorne, 1988). Through storytelling the human and cultural elements of organisations are highlighted and discussed beyond the normal modes of them being detached and impassive entities devoid of emotion (Gabriel, 2000).

For Soderberg, storytelling and narrative "gives voice to a wide range of organisational actors" and allows for observation of the similarities and differences of experience (2003, p. 5). Capturing stories awash with 'thick description' (Ryle, 1971; Geertz, 1973) exposes the sense making activities of people as they offer an interpretation of their work. Stories have the ability to provide a deep insight into an organisation as they belong to the individual. It is the story of their experiences, of how they create meaning and how they make sense of events, it is not the story that the organisation fashions for its public persona (Boje, 1995; Weick, 1995; Fineman & Gabriel, 1996; Denzin, 1989; Gabriel, 2000; Czarniawska, 2004). Lyotard suggests that narratives are the communal method by which knowledge is stored and exchanged: "they thus define what has the right to be said and done in the culture in question, and since they are part of that culture, they are legitimated by the simple fact that they do what they do" (1979, p. 23). As an organisation largely described in terms of its economic contribution, storytelling allows for the development of a social and cultural understanding of banks as told through the lived experiences of its workers.

2.7.4 Understanding Stories through Grand Narrative

Storytelling is intertwined in many traditions which, in turn, lead to a variety of ideas on how to analyse them. Gabriel (2000) notes that the form for analysis should be chosen based on the unit of analysis and the goal of the analysis, whether this is the organisation, an individual or group of workers or a specific event. Gabriel (2000) focuses his storytelling research on folklore type stories that he classifies into their type (e.g. comic, epic, tragic or a hybrid) and then draws out themes based on events which accumulated large quantities of stories. Czarniawska (1998) focuses on categorical modes of analysis that includes deconstruction, ethnomethodology and dramaturgical analysis. Similarly, Boje (2001) lists eight methods for analysis; deconstruction, grand narrative, microstoria, story network, intertextuality, causality, plot and theme. Leiblich, et al. (1988) go a step further and aim to develop a model that expands on the dimensions which are normally employed for analysis; “holistic versus categorical” and “content versus form”. They attempt to bridge the various elements of these approaches by exploring story and narratives in four cross functional ways; Holistic-Content, Holistic-Form, Categorical-Content, and Categorical-Form (Leiblich, et al., 1988, pp. 12-13).

With such a large choice of methods for analysis taking Gabriel's advice and focusing on the purpose of the research, selecting the best option for analysis is narrowed. It would be impossible, and probably tiresome for the reader, to give a lengthy description of each form and justification for not choosing a particular method. As an example of the thought process for choosing the method of analysis I draw on Leiblich, et al.'s (1988), model which is widely employed. All four forms have advantages but their limitations would make them counter to the underlying

aims of this research. The holistic approach would suit the ethos of this study, but, the content or form methods of analysis are prescriptive and, as such, limiting. To select a method of analysis a return to the underlying premises of phenomenology is required. If human beings and 'being in the world' is both individual and universal, an approach which can accommodate both is preferable. One aim of the research is to counteract the reproduction of a particular public and political discourse of banks that fails to adequately explore all dimensions of the organisations. To do this the stories have been gathered across a lengthy period and from a variety of workers. Through bringing these stories together to form a picture of the bank's culture and transformations a contribution can be made to enhance the deficient public and political discourse. The research is, therefore, drawn towards the grand (or meta) narrative method of analysis (Boje, 2001; Lyotard, 1979). In a paradoxical way the outcome of this method will be to produce an encompassing narrative that will upset the existing totalising grand narrative of banks. This choice is driven by the belief of the researcher that a new grand narrative of banking organisations is required.

Grand or meta narratives, which allow for analysis of stories based on their universality, are most closely associated with Jean François Lyotard's (1979) publication *The Postmodern Condition*. In this he is describing the demise of grand narratives in the postmodern world, although many have since sought to use his work as a way of defining the usefulness of conceiving story and narrative in this way (Boje, 2001). The types of grand narrative that Lyotard was criticising were the totalising accounts that provided legitimacy (1992). Such as the accounts of banks that draw only on their financial and economic functions and the actions and decisions of their senior leaders. Such narratives, that are the

culmination of several smaller narratives, become entrenched and are difficult to dismiss as being not the legitimate or totalising story (1992). In his criticism of grand narrative Lyotard (1979) does not deny that there are narratives that are constructive but he contends that in postmodernism localised stories have become favoured over the grand narrative. This turn to localised stories “does not stop countless other stories (minor and not so minor) from continuing to weave the fabric of everyday life” (Lyotard, 1992, p. 19).

Boje (2001) argues that it is through analysing grand narratives that local stories become apparent. Exploring the “hegemonic grand narrative” or the “privileged voice” of an organisation can reveal the local stories that are often intertwined with the grand narrative. Boje (2001) provides an example of such an analysis with his exploration of Disney as Tamara-land (1995). The hegemonic and official corporate image was of Walt Disney as the patriarch, yet beneath this he uncovers a hierarchy of jobs and stories that oppose the corporate story. In his analysis Boje (2001, p. 38) has juxtaposed the “local stories with the official narrative” and created a more complex and real story for the organisation. In a similar way banking organisations are highly adept at creating a corporate image that implies strength, trust and efficiency through its products, buildings and workers. Boje (2001) notes that there are often differences between the official and unofficial stories of organisations and that it is possible to “re-story” the grand narrative for the organisation. Restorying focuses on stories which have importance to the individual, they may be lengthy or brief but they are important in understanding organisations beyond the dominant corporate narrative. The analysis should not privilege the official stories over the local stories as this may cause researchers to “miss what is between the

lines of a story" (Boje, 2001, p. 44). Boje (2001, p. 44) suggests that "to analyse, reconstitute and restory grand narratives, then is to let a thousand stories bloom rather than dismiss certain stories as unworthy". In this light the stories have been gathered inductively, without any strict questioning towards a predetermined output. The next section describes how the stories were gathered, organised and initially evaluated.

2.8 Gathering the Storytellers and their Stories

Bank of Ireland is a historical and storied organisation. Through the pre-existing secondary sources such as the works by Hall (1948) and Lyons, et al. (1986) we can observe something of the exceptional way of life within the Bank. It is clear that the Bank has become a more complex organisation over its history and such comprehension is key in deciding which stories can produce a deeper understanding of the organisation's culture. Since the period of interest for the research spans forty years and the goal is to hear voices from as many experiences as possible, entering into a highly structured data collection method would be limiting. The overall ethos for data collection was to gather uninterrupted stories as chosen by the participants, whose demographic was unrestricted. 25 interviews were carried out among a wide demographic of workers which yielded 26 hrs and 20min of interviews recordings (23hrs 30min of recordings and three non-recorded interviews of 2hrs 50min).

The only limitation placed on the demographic of who should be approached for an interview was that they should have a minimum of three years of service in the Bank. This, it was felt, would be sufficient time for a worker to have gathered enough experiences and stories. With this loose participant demographic a snowballing method for selecting participants was employed.

While little attention was paid to the locations, gender and work profile of the storytellers initially, in the background, there was always an idea that the storyteller's voices should be polyphonic, for example it would aim to include voices from workers in non-finance related jobs. Initial contact was made through various personal connections of the research team, many of whom subsequently recommended a second person. Further contact was made through cold calling, letters and emails through LinkedIn. The senior members of staff were located through the Bank's organisation chart and annual report which was followed by internet searches to deem their suitability. Other storytellers were contacted through general internet searches and through their LinkedIn profiles. Overall, the acceptance rate was high. One person turned me down for an interview based on their understanding that they may be breaking the code of confidentiality and a second person was unwilling to be interviewed but sent two other senior managers in place. The interviews were voice recorded where approved and detailed notes taken where no recording was requested.

2.8.1 Ethics: Theory and Practice

The work and the researcher have a definitive moral and ethical stance. Banks are important organisations in the world, they impact society and individuals in profound ways and thus are worthy concerns of inquiry. This over-riding ethical view is the *raison d'être* for the project, and legitimises the act of inquiry. Beyond this stance to inquire, and (as sensitively as possible) to meddle in the world of banks; the work conforms to the ethical standards of the academic community, and follows the traditions of good practice in inquiry. So the work was at a first instance ethically parsed by the researcher and supervisory team, was

considered by the WIT Ethics Committee (a sub-committee of the Academic Council of WIT), and ethical issues were explored with the present administrators of the Bank, and with those who participated in the research. The ethical underpinnings of this work were never far from the life course of the project.

Ethical considerations are present in any piece of research and especially so when human interaction is involved. The ethical foundations of research are drawn from the morality and “the moral deliberation, choice and accountability on the part of researchers” (Edwards & Mauthner, 2012, p. 14). Ethics is a concern that continues throughout the research from planning to analysis and publication (Edwards & Mauthner, 2012, p. 2). Through consideration of ethical research the researcher can “protect individuals, communities and environments” (Israel & Hay, 2006). Ongoing and emerging issues concerning data collection and ethics are discussed in Section 2.8.4. The procedure for conducting research ethically for this study is governed by the Ethics committee in Waterford Institute of Technology.

Prior to the commencement of data collection the research proposal was considered by the Ethics committee in Waterford Institute of Technology. The committee rigorously examined and approved the research proposal, which included the informed consent form provided to each interviewee (Appendix A). The collection, processing, storage, right of erasure and rectification, sensitive personal data and fair usage of data is covered in Irish legislation under the Data Protection Act 1998 & 2003. The area of confidentiality was high on the committee's concerns given that banks operate in an environment where confidentiality and

trust is expected and practiced. The committee recommended communication with the Group Chief Executive of Bank of Ireland to inform him of the research and allow time for a reply. The recommendations of the committee and the letter to Bank of Ireland are available in Appendices B and C. We received no further communication from the Bank and take this as them giving passive consent to the research.

Other concerns for the committee was the possibility of a storyteller revealing information about criminal activity given the atmosphere surrounding banking at the initial stages of the research. It was accepted by the committee that the final date of 2000 and a focus on historical happenings rather than current happenings would minimise a whistle-blower emerging. An area of ethical concern for the researcher and research supervisors was the potential to raise bad memories that could upset the storyteller. While this was not raised or considered a problem by ethics committee, the researcher remained alert to it throughout the interviews to the well-being of the storytellers (Macionis & Plummer, 2008). This is discussed further in Section 2.8.4.

2.8.2 The Interview Process

Interviews were organised through telephone calls with the storytellers where a brief introduction to the research and control of the research data was explained. In an attempt to keep the interviews informal I suggested meeting in a café or hotel lobby. Occasionally I met some participants in their home or in their offices. The interviews commenced with some small talk during which I asked them to read and sign the informed consent. I had originally requested five stories of working life, however, after a number of interviews it became apparent that participants were more comfortable beginning with a chronological telling of their

careers. Using this method still allowed for the stories to emerge and as they became more comfortable the chronology disappeared and was replaced by a more natural flow of stories. I had opted for an unstructured type of interview, but kept in mind that prompts might be needed along the way to keep the conversation flowing. Appendix D lists all the prompts and hooks that the researcher used during interviews, in many cases little was needed, so it acted more as scaffolding and a safety-net than a formal list of questions, concerns or issues.

The flexibility of unstructured interviews allows the researcher to ask questions based on the individual conversation (Arksey and Knight, 1999; Patton, 1990). Taking cues from the Biographical Narrative Method (BNIM) (Wengraf, n.d.), but not adhering strictly to it, as its defined process is more suitable to deductive work, the participants were encouraged to talk at length and notes were made about points of interest about which further questions were asked during a break in the conversation. Initially the secondary questions were based on the current interview alone, however, as the number of interviews increased and patterns emerged a broad interview guide was produced as a way of seeking repeated experiences on a number of topics (Patton, 1990). Prior to the first interview I considered what I should do if the interviewee was not very talkative. To aid me should such an event happen I made a note of some prompt words that may help encourage stories to flow. During the interviews I noted key words or terms that I would like the interviewee to expand on and over time these were added to the prompt and question list which is available in Appendix D.

Following the cessation of each interview I took some time to reflect on the interview before I began the initial analysis to draw out themes.

2.8.3 Initial Analysis and drawing out of Themes

As is expected of inductive research and unstructured interviews it was difficult to predict what information would start emerging from the stories. Initially I fully transcribed five interviews and attempted a rudimentary system of organising and categorising the stories. Patterns began to emerge from these stories, but, in the spirit of inductive research I did not let these patterns influence the remaining interviews, however, they did add to the emergent prompt list that developed as the interviews progressed (see Appendix D). Initially I attempted a rudimentary form of coding to assess if this method of analysis was suitable. Ultimately, I felt that there were too many variables in the type of research, the rich character of the encounters would be lost and that coding may well be better suited to research where particular themes were known at the outset.

At this point I felt that I should not transcribe any more interviews and instead repeatedly listened to the recordings until all interviews were complete. The method of listening over writing allowed the stories to retain their personal, emotional and contextual elements as patterns continued to emerge. When all 25 interviews were complete and themes had begun to emerge I set about transcribing stories and pieces of informative narrative into each theme. Themes began to emerge based on how many of the storytellers repeated similar stories. For example, stories that detailed play and the social life became apparent early on with 15 out of the 25 storytellers discussing this theme early in their

interviews and without prompting. The division of the stories into three sections has is discussed further in Section 2.8.5.

I had made a decision not to return to the storytellers for validation as the method of research sets about exploring meaning and experience and I felt that re-validation of interviews would not allow for the spontaneity that make stories interesting. Asking for validation would, I felt, instigate a process of thinking about, and maybe over-thinking, the experiences; and potentially allowing them to tumble into structured narratives- an altogether different form of story. One storyteller, Grace ask for a transcription to be sent to her, to which she added some punctuation that I felt this did not add anything to her narrative and stories but just served to polish them into a grammatically correct form. On consideration, I felt that this exercise validated my decision not to return to the storytellers for validation of their interviews.

2.8.4 Emergent Issues

During the course of the data collection phase I remained alert to the quality of the interviews and the demographic spread of the storytellers. Initially I had some reservations about interviewing too many people from the same social network; however, it became clear quite early that a large number of bank workers have had varied careers, ranging from centrally located departmental jobs to urban and rural branch banking. Transfer of bank workers to locations far apart was normal and, so, even among friends and work mates experiences varied widely. The demographic spread naturally fell into place and in the end 9 out of the 25 interviews was female and job types ranged from senior management to customer service and non-financial aspects

such as architecture, art and communications. Out of the 25 interviewed all but 6 were retired or had left the Bank, but of those that were no longer with the Bank 3 had left within a year of the interviews and a further 6 had left after 2000. The interviews, while all having different challenges, were generally open and honest. It became obvious that the workers knew the limit of what they could talk about and, so, worries of them breaching confidentiality became less prominent.

Part of the PhD research process is the development of the skills of the candidate. When interviewing it is my opinion that the quality of the data is reflective of the interviewing abilities and skills of the researcher. During the research process I continued to assess my interview skills with assistance from the research supervisors. We listened to samples of interviews and assessed whether I was really keeping to my goal of letting the stories flow uninterrupted. We also questioned my skills at encouraging stories from the storytellers without being too prescriptive or pushy towards a particular direction. Remaining aware to my ability as a research interviewer I particularly paid attention to sections of interviews where storytellers revealed information that could be considered confidential or unexpectedly revealed a story that had negative memories for them. I felt that unstructured interviewing allowed me the freedom to nudge the interview away from these areas without breaking the flow to any great extent.

Bias is an important element to address for any piece of research. In interpretive research bias could be considered as the researcher bending the data or analysis for their own purposes. To overcome a perception of researcher bias I have aimed to present an honest description of data collection and analysis. The complete document is laid out along the lines of the inductive

process and is enhanced by with the reflective voice of the researcher that highlights the reflexive nature of this type of research. I acknowledge that another researcher may have collected different set of stories from the same storytellers and so the research is not easily reproducible. This is an element of all interpretive research which is acknowledged early in the document. In reviewing the interviews and my encounters with the storytellers I feel that most of the narratives and stories had the character of settled accounts that had already been through the process of retrospective sensemaking (Boje, 2011; Weick, 1995). In this way the influence of the researcher and any bias was of low importance to the outcome of the interviews.

2.8.5 Emerging Analysis

As the stories began to emerge I initially placed them in a chronological division based on three eras that I felt represented the research period. An example of this is shown in Figure 6. This allowed me a visual representation of how the stories tied in with organisational changes and external environmental changes. Ultimately when the iterative process of toggling between theory and data was completed for each theme this initial process aided me in the final document layout. Although I did not follow the three eras given in Figure 6, the final document represents the story of the Bank from the initial change through to the consequences of change and the final outcome of the 2008 financial crisis. In analysing the data I aimed to look out for the stories that would feed into the grand narrative of the 40 year research period. I explored what they meant to the initial research concern on culture and the emergent research concern on change. In this way I produced the final three-act

grand narrative of the Bank through local worker based experience.

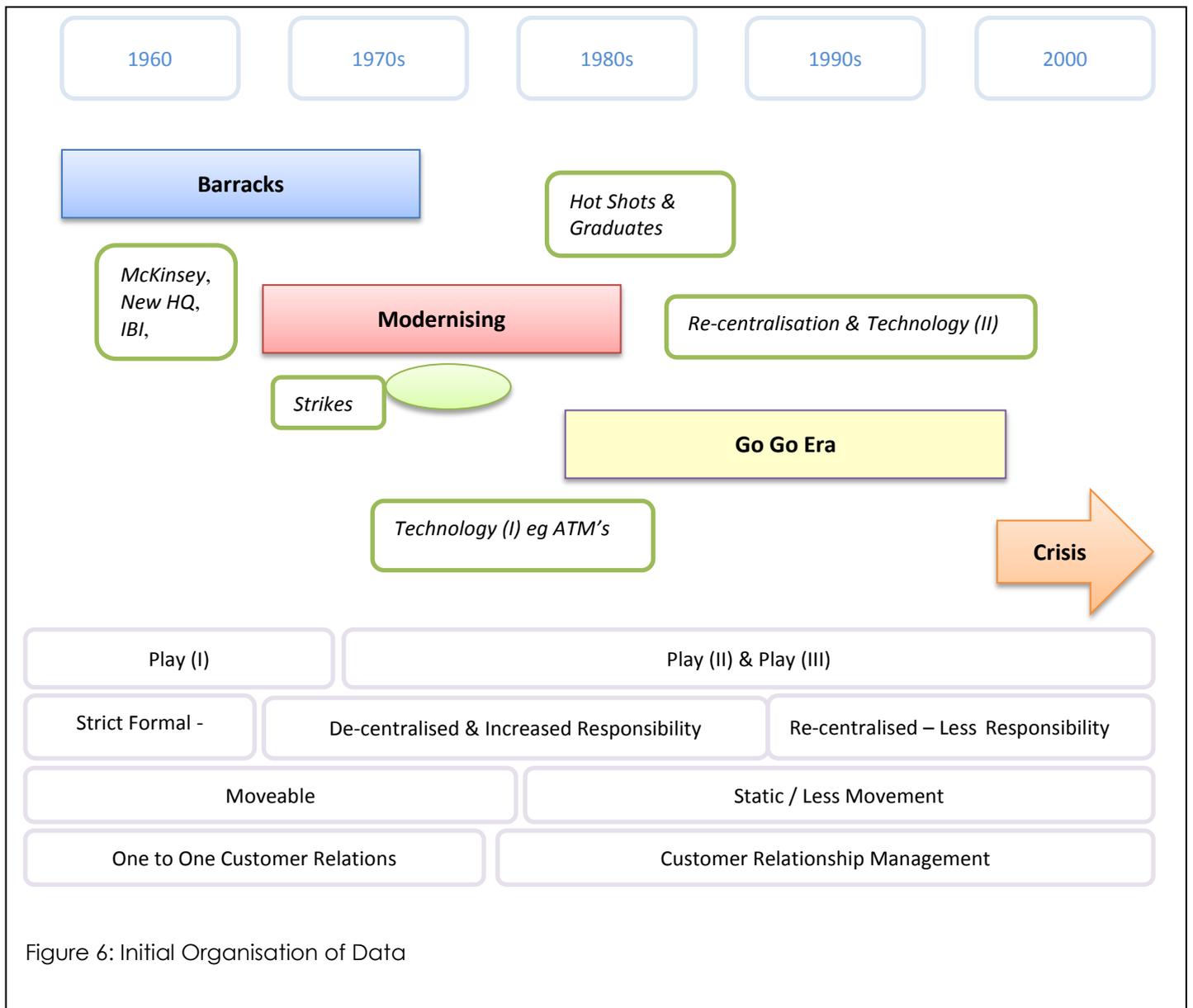


Figure 6: Initial Organisation of Data

Since alighting on this 3-act structure, it has been widely circulated and presented in academic and individuals with direct experience of banks. The key quality markers for this type of grand narrative is whether it resonates and feels intuitively right as a sense-giving, explanatory mode of understanding. Over the two years of presenting this work at the British Academy of Management, Irish Academy of Management and the Standing

Conference on Organisation Symbolism. The representation of the data into the three eras has been appreciated as authentic, as stories in and of the organisation as told by those who experience it, are in the best position to understand it and can make sense of it (Fineman, Gabriel, & Sims, 2010; Czarniawska & Gagliardi, 2003).

2.8.6 A Note on Secondary Sources

Over time banks have been a source for a wide variety of literature on their foundations and operations. As public organisations they published their finances and the proceedings of board meetings openly. This type of secondary literature has allowed the research to develop and contextualise the stories that have been told by the workers. In the spirit of inductive inquiry I limited my access to these sources in the initial stage of data collection.

Hall's (1948) comprehensive work on the Bank of Ireland claims that it covers the period of 1783 to 1946. In fact it covers a greater period and begins with a background of the state of banking and monetary transactions in the mid-1600 which eventually led to the initial attempts to set up a state organised bank between 1719 and 1721. Hall's work is both a history of the economy of Ireland and of the bank. It outlines financial conditions as well as the political negotiations that were required to set up and run a bank in Ireland. It provides a wealth of information on banking practice and a small insight into some of the people who worked in the bank from its outset to the employment of Bank agents throughout the country.

In 1983 on the 200th anniversary of the Bank a series of essays, edited by Lyons (1983), was published on the bank and its

development. The authors of the Bicentenary Essays ranged from historians to academics and economists to politicians. The essays both overlap and update Hall's work and provide more specific information relevant to the research period. The essays range from financial and economic to development of the bank in the 1970s to the programmes for art and architecture. This work along with some newspaper reports are the main source for the details contained in the consulting report from McKinsey. It was difficult to obtain a copy of this report and unlike subsequent reports is not archived in the National Library of Ireland (NLI).

The NLI is an invaluable source for published documents and searches there on banking included access to the handbook for the workers which gave an interesting insight to life inside the bank and the values that the bank espoused for its workers. Additional volumes that tell tales of working in the banking world add to this contextualisation, especially Des Smyth and Eilis O'Brien's (1998) collection of stories from workers from 1920 to 1970 and Bob Ryan's (Ryan, 2001) autobiographical account of his banking life. Giving out advice to colleagues was popular in banking circles and George Rae's (1890) letters to other bank managers is a testament to how banking life was primarily learned from peers. There are many pamphlets and publications of lectures that were used to inform colleagues on practices in banking. It was important for the banks to publish information and to disseminate knowledge in this way. In the early part of the research period the meetings of banking boards were published in national newspapers for customers and potential customers to be informed of the state of the bank and any new developments.

The secondary research has aided in contextualising the development of the Bank and the banking industry and has supported some key points in this research.

2.8.7 The Storytellers

In Table 1 I have attempted a summary of the working life of the storytellers. The table indicates the dates and length of service, how they were recruited and the types of work they did. It is designed to give the reader a focal point in understanding the perspective of each of the storytellers.

The varied roles of the storytellers need a small explanation. They talk of two different environments; departmental work is generally located in head office (H.O. Department) or one of the main (urban) regional offices (up until the mid-1990s or early 2000s). This type of work is the secretary's department, technology, treasury, HR or accounting. The second location is in branch banking and includes bank assistants, customer service, several types of manager from regional and general to loan and developmental. Bank workers begin as a Junior Bank Official (JBO) and then proceed after a number of years to Senior Bank Official (SBO).

Those whose recruitment status is 'Direct', were recruited straight from school with no third level qualifications (with one exception but this qualification did not secure him the job, he was recruited as per the policy of the time). Contract Clerical workers were a new grade brought in during the late 1980s (as is explained in the context section in Part I) they were generally lower paid workers with limited scope for career progression.

Other notes on recruitment and location will become more relevant when the stories are presented in Part II.

Pseudonym	Years Active	Recruitment Type	Key Roles	Geographic Spread
Joe	1958-1994 (Retired)	Direct	Manager in Treasury Dept.	Urban Branch Regional Department Short Foreign Assignment
Tim	1940s – 1993 (Retired)	Direct	Inspector, Regional Manager	Rural Branch H.O. Department Regional Department Regional Branch
Eve	1994-2012 (Voluntary Redundancy)	Contract Clerical - Non-Business Graduate	SBO – Business Banking	Urban Branch
Jim	1973-2012 (Retired)	Direct	Branch Manager	Rural Branch Urban Branch 1 year Foreign Assignment
Stuart	1966-2002 (Retired)	Direct - 3 rd Level in Business & Law	Manager Trustee Dept., Manager Income Tax Dept., Branch Manager.	Rural Branch Urban Branch H.O. Department Regional Department Semi-Urban Branch
Mike	1970-2000 (Early Retirement to set up own business)	Direct	Branch Development Manager, Regional Manager	H.O. Department Regional Department Urban Branch
Rory	1970-2007 (Retired)	Direct	Branch Manager	H.O. Department Rural Branch Urban Branch

Mark	1989-Current	Graduate with experience, Headhunted at Management level	CEO in a Treasury business unit	Investment Subsidiary H.O. Department Urban Branch
Anna	1984-Late 1990s (Left to change career)	Direct (First tranche of internal degree scholarships)	Manager Corporate Banking, Senior Manager Credit Control	Urban Branch H.O. Department
Grace	1981-2008 (Voluntary Redundancy to set up consultancy and further education)	Graduate	Non-Finance role.	H.O. Department
Liz	1991-2012 (Voluntary Redundancy)	Contract Clerical - 3 rd Level in Legal Studies	SBO – Customer Services Retail & Loan admin	Rural Branch Urban Branch
Adam	1988 - Current	Graduate with experience	Divisional CEO	H.O. Department
Chris (written notes only by request)	1970s - Current	Direct	Senior Manager in Group Communications	Rural Branch Urban Branch Regional Department H. O. Department Short Foreign Assignment
Sarah	1970 -1978 (Married) 1994 – 2013 (Voluntary Redundancy)	Direct	Manager Technology & Production area	H.O. Department

Elaine	1973-1977 1981-1994 (Part Time) (changed career)	Direct	Retail Banking & Customer Service	Rural Branch Urban Branch
Sam (written notes only by request)	1987-1992	Graduate	Corporate Banking	H.O. Department Short Foreign Assignment
Laura	1980-Current	Direct	Branch Manager, Manager Communications area	Rural Branch Urban Branch H.O. Department
Daniel	1963-2003 (plus 2 years post-retirement consultancy)	Direct	Accountancy/economist, Departmental manager	Urban Branch H.O. Department
Owen	1964-2006	Direct	Foreign Exchange, International Banking (various roles)	Rural Branch H.O. Department Regional Department
Alex (Written notes only by request)	1989-Current	Graduate (with experience)	Manager in a strategy role	H.O. Department Insurance Subsidiary
Paul	1969-1998	Applied for an advertised position (3 rd level qualification)	Accountancy Function	H.O. Department Overseas Department
Brian	1984-Current	Direct	IT Function	Rural Branch Urban Branch H.O. Department

Dave	1961-1993	Direct	IT, HR, Business Development	Rural Branch Urban Branch H.O. Department International Business
Miriam	1970-1980 (Returned part-time for 2 short spells later)	Direct	SBO	Rural Branch Urban Branch
Steve	1970-2003	Direct	Branch Manager	Rural Branch Urban Branch

Table 1: The Storytellers

2.8.8 A brief interpretation of the Bank's grand narrative

Collecting narrative can lead to powerful and interesting research findings; as well as large amounts of data. The trouble is that to preserve the full integrity of the many stories in a limited space is impossible. Not everything will make the cut but it is still important for how I have formulated a picture of the Bank. Here, I present a more informal piece on how I understood the narratives as they were told to me and which eventually shaped my research. My understanding of the narratives are inspired by Lyotard's (1979) grand narrative where the totalising story captures the whole story, Bahktin's (1992) dialogism where stories have a continuous nature and every story is part of the fabric of many stories, and Benjamin (1999 (c. 1927-1914)), who within his voluminous writings gives cover to a journalistic/social truth rather than actual scientific truth, thereby permitting journalistic licence. My goal with this piece is to give the reader a sense of my understandings of the stories and narratives and how I weaved them together to form this final volume of work.

I have a strong image of the Bank of Ireland's old headquarters in College Green (pictured on the front cover). It is of the porters outside the front door dressed traditionally in a tall top hat and a long coat. I am not sure when they stopped this practice but these porters, for me, represented image of the old bank. As I look back over the lives of the bank workers it strikes me that this is an organisation that, in a relatively short space of time, has changed almost beyond recognition.

The stories of the *traditional Bank* are not unexpected, but they are nice, and sometimes quaint, stories of past times. They really only become relevant when compared with the stories of the modernising bank. They are the starting point of a journey through modernity. The modern Bank is a modern organisation, it acts like a modern organisation and its workers are modern. By shedding its past outdated image it has lost much of what made the Bank and banking a special place of work. There are still glimpses of the old ways in the modern Bank, they may be used differently and are not considered as important, but they still persist. The financial crisis in 2008 has been hard on the image of banking, but banks are necessary in modern economies and so the organisation will persist. From listening to the workers as they look back on the things that made the bank unique and a place they could be proud of, the way the banks can become good again may be through listening to these old stories and re-using or rehabilitating some of the old ways and images.

Sometimes I have struggled to identify exactly what has changed in the Bank. Banks do not fit well with theories and observations of general organisations and I have often found it difficult to articulate the changes. What I have realised is that the core work has not changed, that is the taking in of money and giving out of credit. What has changed is not so much the way things are

done but why they are done and with whom. So, for example, the social life that runs through most of the stories is present in all generations but it has gone from being part of bank life to being divided between bank and home life. The changes are sometimes subtle and it is the workers who notice them most. I conclude my thoughts by accepting that the bank is a modern organisation and that this is not necessarily a bad thing and was a necessity in a globalising world.

PART II

Change:

Its Manifestations and its
Consequences

Preface to Part II

The data presented in the next three sections of this chapter represents the grand narrative of the Bank's culture and how it changed. The grand narrative has been formed through the stories that have been repeated in some form by the workers and therefore represent events that were experienced across the organisation. They are stories that provide a rich description of the atmosphere that prevailed in the organisation at various points in time. Occasionally facts and opinions, which may not be considered as pure story, are also presented, these are included to give some background and demonstrate norms of attitude and opinion in different eras.

In following the ethos of inductive inquiry each of the three data sections are laid out in a way that reflects the iterative nature of drawing meaning from the data through existing theories and concepts. The three sections represent three themes that embody the changes that occurred in the Bank from 1960. It begins with the controlled unleashing of organisational change; is followed by the somewhat messy and wild scramble to achieve change; and concludes with a reflection of what happened that is tinged with disappointment. Within each section the stories are sub-divided into smaller narratives of particular aspects of the theme. Each section concludes with an exploration of the stories through a range of concepts and theories. At this stage the conceptual exploration of the stories may seem quite loose but they will be pulled together in a more complete grand narrative in Part III.

CHAPTER THREE

INITIATING CHANGE



Bankers (Bob Ryan Painting)

"The prudent, worthy and far-seeing gentlemen who made up the banking fraternity... Friends always ask me to identify the faces in this painting but none of them was based on any specific individual. They probably reflect my impression of bankers when I first joined the bank, in the days when the N-Nib ruled" (Ryan, 2001)

3.0 Introduction: Initiating Change

Until the 1960 the Bank had remained a relatively sedentary organisation in terms of its culture, ethos and practices (Meenan, 1983). As the local marketplace began to emerge from its protectionist slumber the Bank and its contemporaries faced increasing pressure to *modernise* and play their part in the new economic vision. The Bank's goal was to modernise its image, its structure and its operations. To achieve this they looked to the management consultants McKinsey and Company. They were "*enormously helpful*" recalls the Governor Don Carroll as he outlines how the court of directors sought to "*push decisions down to management*" so they could concentrate on "*strategy*" and contemplating "*what should happen to Irish banking*" (Carroll, 1987). The change that was initiated in the mid-1960s dramatically altered the lives of those working in the Bank and those whose future careers would be in banking. In this chapter the stories of change are presented and discussed in relation to the role that the Bank's management and their chosen management consultancy firm had in unleashing profound and long lasting change.

3.1 Traditional Bank Life

In the earliest era of this research, from 1960 to the early 1970s, the Bank essentially maintained a form of *barracks* culture for its workers. Working lives, careers and social lives were constructed and husbanded within the walls of the Bank.

Young recruits were carefully selected upon finishing second level education. They were given around three weeks training before being sent out to various branches and departments to begin their careers. Working life in the bank was still heavily influenced by tradition and strict procedures.

I joined in 1961 and was in the head office, the Bank could be described as Dickensian. There were high stools and you had to get up on a step to get onto the stool at your desk. There were still ink wells on the desks, you weren't allowed to use biros, you had to use a pen and ink either a dip pen or a fountain pen.

There was an examination conducted in one of the Universities which was Dickensian. For example there was an Irish paper which consisted of translating the first few pages of Hounds of the Baskervilles, which someone had translated into Irish, back into English. I scored very highly in the maths paper, largely because they asked me to construct a four sided triangle and I suggested that couldn't be done, so they gave me maximum marks for that one. It was really irrelevant, it was far more important at that stage to have a reference from somebody of significance; my father went and got mine from the Bishop of Waterford. (Dave)

Initial training consisted of two or three weeks in the 'training bank' followed by a posting to either a department in head office or a branch. It was normal for the first number of years to be moved regularly between locations as a way of increasing the number of jobs that workers could perform and providing them with broader experience.

The training bank was literally like a kiddies bank. Playing different roles like customers coming in and doing lodgements and doing deposit receipts and things. That was about two or three weeks and was fun, before we all found our postings (Stuart)

There was a strict and formal relationship between bank workers and management. Managers were called 'manager' or 'agent' and workers were only referred to by their family name. Workers were expected to be efficient, courteous and well presented:

You had to wear a suit, but you were allowed wear a jacket and pants on a Friday and you were working on Saturday as well, but it was only on Friday you were allowed have the jacket off. You couldn't take off your jacket during the Summer, you couldn't work in shirt sleeves or anything like that. You had to stick to the code. It was fairly strict. (Joe)

The working day was quite humdrum, with each worker being assigned a task and little opportunity for variation. Banking

business was conducted manually with records being kept in a series of ledgers which had to be checked and double checked every day. Much of the work was conducted based on a set of instructions and it was not unusual for workers not to understand why they were carrying out certain functions.

I was part of the chief accountants department I never understood accountancy but here I was keeping the general ledger knowing very little about accountancy and working for people right up to chief accountant level who knew very little about accountancy. They were doing things by rote, so when I was posting the general ledger I was posting the monthly profit and loss balance sheet based on a little book that would say ring number 324 and get the items in transit figures and put that in the third column on the left hand side, you had no idea why and if you asked questions you were just told to do it. I remember the chief clerk was going away one day and he did the profit and loss accounts for the branches and he asked me if I would do them. So form 22 used to come in from the branches and he gave me a list of things to do, like you take a certain figure from the 22 and you put it into the column and you added something else to it and took a percentage. So I realised pretty quickly that I could do all these calculations based on one figure. So I did it that way and did the job in a quarter of the time that it would take him to do it. When he came back he said how are you going and I said it's finished here you go, and he said how did you do it that quick and I told him. He started the whole thing again in his way even though all the figures balanced. (Dave)

Not following the code and stepping out of line could have a negative impact on the career of a bank worker. There was little scope to be innovative and promotion generally came through seniority rather than ability. Bank workers had little control over their careers but at the annual review very personal questions were often asked and it was not unheard of for a manager to approve of a workers choice of marriage partner. However unusual the daily life of bank workers in the 60s may appear to a young recruit today, working in the bank was still regarded as a good opportunity and a solid choice of career. A young person securing a job in the bank during this era was considered lucky; it

was a job-for-life with a secure pension and a respected position in society.

I guess it was probably a big occasion back then joining the bank, it was seen as a career for life ... it was seen very much as I'm going to be loyal to this organisation for a career that is going to span 40, 45 years and then retire from Bank of Ireland....The bank was always seen as being conservative and the shares were blue chip shares, very solid with an income coming in twice a year. Customers always trusted the bank it was seen as a pillar in society.
(Jim)

In the fashion of organisations that ensured secure jobs-for-life, it was difficult to get fired and a job could be found for everyone. The only cause for being fired from the Bank was misappropriation of funds or anything that would shake customer's confidence in the trustworthiness of the Bank.

Bank work had a strong communal nature and bank officials had a collegial type of existence; often living and playing together. In the traditional bank a worker's whole life and family were centred on the Bank. They, and their families, could be relocated at short notice, as Owen explains. But, workers were aware of this; the first paragraph in the bank handbook sums this up; *"the entire time and service of every member of the staff are to be considered as at the disposal of the Governors and directors whenever required"* (Bank of Ireland, 1935).

I had only just got married and we had bought an old period house, it wasn't too far from where my manager lived. One night we were in the middle of pulling out a fire place and the manager came to the door and told me that I was being transferred to Cork. There were a lot of tears but that is the way it was. (Owen)

The Bank had great control of its workers, partly to create the right image and partly to ensure that their personal financial matters did not encourage them to commit fraud. Workers were not allowed to have overdrawn personal bank accounts and chequebooks were only issued when control of personal finances

could be proven. While this type of detailed involvement in the lives of bank workers could seem excessive, Laura explains the answer she received when questioning these practices.

At that stage the bank had a good place in the community, so you were conscious of it, that you were from Bank of Ireland so your behaviour, how you managed your own account was very important, you had to keep your personal affairs in order. Your personal life would have been somewhat of the banks business. I remember a fantastic line from a smashing regional manager who when asked one time by a manager that surely if someone was having a relationship or an affair surely it had nothing to do with the bank, and he absolutely agreed unless it had some impact on his work and then he paused and said invariably you will find that it will—it was the banks business. (Laura)

Not only does this memory of Laura's show the importance of maintaining the trustworthy and dependable image of the Bank and the levels that they went to so as to ensure that the workers maintained this image, but it is also representative of how the workers were viewed in the community. They were part of the Bank, their work identity and their home identity was inseparable.

3.2 Opening up of the culture

Driven largely by external forces in the changing markets, the Bank set out on a project of modernisation. The first and most visible change was the construction of a new modernist headquarters that was completed in 1970. Adorned with modern art and technological advances the new building (Baggot St.) was in stark contrast to the historical former parliament building (College Green) that had been home to the Bank since 1803. Images of these buildings and how they contrast in style can be viewed on P. 144.

It was the time after the 1960s where there was huge economic growth and Ireland was trying to change its image from backward looking into a kind of young European country, and the bank had started to open branches in New York, and I think one or two

Europe. When Baggot St. was built it was like nothing anybody had ever seen. It was a huge statement for the bank, they were saying they were coming from this type of institution, from the building in College Green, and they were moving into this modernist office block. There were saying we are positioning ourselves with American capitalists and really that was a huge change for the bank and the whole organisation as well, the way they were operating. (Grace)

The appointment of McKinsey and Company in 1964 was another break away from the past. Traditionally banks would consult within the banking community when considering introducing anything new or making significant changes. While the Bank had begun to implement some changes prior to engaging McKinsey; *“it is clear that the manner and sequence in which changes were made owed a very great deal to”* their involvement (Meenan, 1983, p. 188). Interestingly, despite being discussed in the media at the time very few of the workers knew of McKinsey's involvement in the changes that were experienced, Daniel being an exception.

I didn't have direct dealings with McKinsey but one of their recommendations was to change and improve the accounts reporting structures with the branches. We weren't given any details of what we should do so we came up with ideas and tried to implement them. It was trial and error really, some worked and others didn't. (Daniel)

Despite the lack of knowledge of the presence or influence of McKinsey at the time many of the stories from after the late 1960s are laced with the influences of McKinsey's recommendations. Meenan (1983) indicates a number of recommendations from McKinsey. Eliminating the formal communication between management and workers was one of the top priorities in McKinsey's recommendations.

It was about 20 years until I got a manager and he individually was a very nice man, it was unusual at that time for us. When he started he interviewed everybody, which was strange as well because managers before that, never talked to you, you had no idea where you were going or weren't going in your career. He said to us 'I'd like to be called manager inside the office but my name is John outside

the office'. That was the greatest break of all time because when you were outside with them before that, no matter where you were, manager...manager...manager... If you met him in the street 'hello manager', it was old world really. But he was the first fella I came across who didn't think it was right for the staff to be calling him manager out in public. That was during the 70's. (Joe)

After Joe had talked about the change in management I asked if there had been any specific communication from head office about these changes and he said that there had not. I repeated this question to others of Joe's vintage and for the most part they answered in the negative. Similarly, Owen notes that the changes appeared to be quite sudden.

I had a great experience with an assistant transfer officer, I made the great mistake of saying to him "Mr. Earl I think", and he stopped me there and said "young man you are not paid to think you are paid to do what you are told".

Then suddenly in the early 1970s that changed, they wanted you to think. They had actually discouraged third level education in the 60s but by the 70s they began to appreciate that that was an absolute requirement going on. In the 70s the place was just beginning to grow up. (Owen)

Additionally as many of the workers were themselves becoming managers, they had begun to become more open and informal with their staff, often this was due to negative experiences with past managers but also many felt that the culture in the Bank was changing.

I had suffered at the hands of one particular manager who had me transferred after a loan went wrong, just one loan out of how many that never had a problem. He took a dislike to me. When I became manager my door was always open and I had good communication with my staff. In one branch the previous manager, when it came to Christmas and customers were dropping in presents, he would put them away and never give them to his staff. So my first Christmas there I took all the presents into a room and had a draw for all the staff. They were delighted but it's the way it should have been. (Rory)

In 1966 Governor Don Carroll noted in an interview in the Irish Times that "*The object of our reorganisation is quite simply to better service the local community. We aim to do this in due course by greater decentralisation*" (O'Neill, 1966). The

reorganisation of management into a formal hierarchical structure was complimented by an increased responsibility in the branches through decentralisation developed at this time.

The whole organisation changed, where once the top man had only a few people around him there was suddenly many more layers and more top managers. (Tim)

Regional offices and new positions were introduced which removed much of the blockages to promotion which many had experienced. Where once workers would have had to wait at least 20 years to get a managerial position new roles provided a faster career path. In Joe's case, he began his career in 1958 with poor prospects for promotion; he did not reach his first management rank until he had surpassed the 20 year career mark:

To get to a cashier you had to be in about 15 years before you could get that. They might throw out a notice saying that an 'assistant manager' job was available, but you would want to be 20 years to get that one, and manager, you'd want to be nearly turning up the daisies before that would happen, and it was always on seniority. (Joe)

Whereas, Stuart, who began his career in 1973, had a far faster path to promotion.

In 1986 I was appointed assistant manager in the regional office, in 1988 I was appointed assistant manager accounts in a branch and in 1990 I was promoted to the rank of manager. (Stuart)

New positions such as development managers appeared in the regional branch offices. These were designed to identify business opportunities and assist branch workers in becoming better at sales. The days of passive competition had been replaced by an active sales force. The focus of responsibility shifted from governance by the executive to individual responsibility. One such example of individual responsibility is a story told by Daniel who was charged with implementing improved recording of

accounts in branches. Daniel was acting directly on instructions from McKinsey's recommendations, which he says recommended better reporting structures but gave no advice on what model to use or how to go about implementing them.

We were given the task of implementing new reporting structures for the accounts in the branches. We went about designing various programmes, all of which failed. It was trial and error, we didn't know what we were doing and if you made a mistake it looked bad even though everyone knew that there was no other way to do it but trial and error. In the end we came up with one that worked, but that was how we went about a lot of our work. (Daniel)

Increasingly the Bank began placing more responsibility on workers but with little training, workers then became responsible for their continued education and career development. Performance management was introduced but was highly subjective and dependant on who was conducting the review.

I was working in one branch and everyone struggled to get a 4 or 5, it was rare to get above the average on your goals. I had to go and cover maternity leave in another branch and there I had no problem meeting my goals and getting past the average to a 4 or 5 rating. When I went back to the old office and told them everyone got really upset, so it depended on who your manager was and how they viewed the review process. (Eve)

In the 1966 meeting of the court of directors Don Carroll stated that *"the strength of our Group in the future will be developed from the individual strengths of its members"* (Irish Times, 1966). The idea that workers were part of a familial group, cared and protected by the organisation was no longer applicable.

Historically it was more paternalistic but now it's all about yourself so they are promoting you to take charge, educate yourself, you find your next job, you develop yourself and that has moved from we will do it for you. We encourage staff to develop their careers themselves. (Laura)

Workers became individuals in an industry rather than a single organisation and were expected to negotiate their own identity and understanding of what it took to be a successful banker.

Even managers were given very little guidelines and were expected to be innovative.

The Governor at the time [early 1980s] had a saying *freedom to manage*. When he told the managers about this he got a number of replies requesting to know where exactly they had the freedom to manage. (Dave)

The changes that were initiated during the 1960s were a process that continued for many years in the Bank and continuously changed as expectations in the organisation, the market and society changed.

3.3 Play: A Banking Social Life

In the traditional bank the social life was of great importance to the workers. It is spoken about with enthusiasm and makes up a great part of their memories of working life. The social life became part of what it was to be a banker. This social life was encouraged by the Bank and they provided for it by paying towards membership of clubs; For example the 1932 handbook details that regular staff were given a maximum of £3 3s 0d for men and £2 2s 0d for women to join "*social clubs, golf clubs and other outdoor game clubs or libraries of their choice*" (Bank of Ireland, 1935, p. 21). Part of being a banker was to be present in the community and the social life gave the Bank a chance to show the character of its workers, which in turn reflected on its own image and character.

Customers always trusted the bank it was seen as a pillar in society, the bank manager was seen as a pillar in society and an advisor, a leader, somebody that would get involved in the local community. (Jim)

Being part of the community was seen as a way of securing business and showing the customers that the workers could be trusted to act appropriately. There were very few of the workers

who did not participate in some type of banking social activity in the traditional bank. It was a social life that encompassed all the banks and financial institutions in an area. As Jim explains below, often workers were located in locations that had poor transport links and it was rare for a young banker to own a car.

We were all pretty young back then, after the bank strike in 1970 a lot of staff were recruited in the various banks so there was a very young population, none of us were married, none of us had cars and there was very little money, so that probably led to us, staying in the digs and making the most of what we had. For me being in the bank, I was out and about and meeting people, it was new and novel for me and energising and I got great satisfaction with getting out and getting involved in the local communities, I was very involved in the Lions Club, golf club, GAA. We lived together in flats, occasionally going home at weekends, but it was difficult because of lack of transport. The staff joined various sports clubs, societies, drama groups and got involved in local soccer, rugby and GAA competitions and the bank, not Bank of Ireland but a bank team would enter into both men's and ladies competitions in rugby and soccer and hurling back then because you would have worked together, trained together and socialised together. We generally reverted to someone's flat for a few beers, music, poker and an odd bit of romance afterwards. You knew every staff member in each of the banks, you help them find accommodation if somebody new came to town, you'd bring them out and introduce them to your friends at the next social event and generally support their integration into the social scene and many a romance blossomed as a result, including my own. (Jim)

Such is the affection for the social life that often precise details are remembered. The Tops of the Town variety competition took place between industries and amateur dramatic clubs across Ireland. It comes up in many stories and many staff got involved in various parts of the production.

There was a fabulous lifestyle, all the banks got together, we did a sports club. We used to hire out [a local] school from 7 until 9 every Tuesday and Thursday and we had Ulster, Northern, TSB, Penny Bank, the finance houses we all came together, we played soccer in the factory league, we got to the national final of the Tops of the Towns in 1980, all the Waterford Banks and Finance. We were beaten by Irish Distillers, I know [the first judge] gave it to us by 2, [the second judge] gave it to us by 2 but [the third judge],

she was a choreographer in RTE, she gave it to Irish Distillers by 6, so even though we won 2-1 we lost by 2 points. (Rory)

Generally these stories of play in the traditional bank are punctuated with comments about how it is not the same now, that the social life is gone. Interestingly, these comments are also expressed by workers who started in the 1980s and 1990s. The social life appears to be a very personal and generational specific thing. The research is not interested in whose social life was better but how, through these stories, the changes to banking culture can be observed.

3.4 From Play to Competition among Friends

This walled garden social life of all the banks changed dramatically and very suddenly at the beginning of the 1970s.

With less recruitment and increased competition between banks the camaraderie petered out and in fact one of the main banks barred its staff from cohabiting with staff of other institutions for competitive reasons in case confidential information would be passed around back in the flats. (Jim)

This is very much the beginning of change in the Bank for the workers. It is the most obvious break with the old traditions and something which had an impact on bank life over a prolonged period. These changes fall around the time of the bank mergers and the opening up of the market to competition (as mentioned in Section 1.3). It is the time when the care-free banking life begins to change as selling and competition become the focus of the Bank's instructions to its workers.

You were thrown together with guys your own age and you'd share a house or a flat and you'd socialise in either the pub or the sports pitch. We didn't have a care in the world. Once you went in and you balanced the cash, that was your job. We used to finish in Callan at 3.30, you'd close at 3 and have the cash balanced by 3.30 and we used to drive out to the beach and we'd be there before the staff in the city got out there. But that all changed and there was extra work, the concept of selling came

in and you were on the phones with people after the doors closed. (Rory)

With regionalisation the practice of paying subscriptions to clubs disappears and is replaced by a local budget for worker and customer entertainment.

You had a budget for staff development and entertainment so we spent it and we had nights out, we celebrated achievements, like the league tables. You'd have customer nights out, customer seminars where someone would come and talk, like someone from Davys and again it was a status thing to be invited. To be involved in the community was a massive thing. We were out every night in some shape or form, sponsoring events, presenting trophies. (Mike)

In the same way as the traditional bankers there is still an expectation that the workers would take part in the planned social life.

We had a great social life and then there would have been an awful lot of us because there were 5 branches in town. The regional managers would be organising regional nights like table quizzes, and you were always told you had to go to these things, you were told that if you wanted a promotion you had to be seen at these events that the managers would be organising. (Eve)

However, the social life appears to have become more passive and there is less involvement in banking clubs and societies. Sporting and club events are rarely spoken when discussing the modern bank. When questioned on this many note that such activities have become part of the home life rather than the bank life. Those that do take part in sporting activities do so at the Group level and only if you are a competent athlete.

A guy in Dublin, he would ring and say the interbanks are on, on whatever day and you'd go to Dublin and he would pick people from all over the country. I remember going to Belfast one year for a bowling competition, 10-pin bowling, so that was open to everybody, whereas the basketball and the soccer and stuff were only for the people who played and they'd only want the best 10 in the country to play. Like when you'd be playing basketball you might have three or four national league players who played at club level, and AIB could have about 3 or 4 as well and the soccer would have been very competitive because a lot of them would have played at a higher level. We did cross country running, I never

ran but because you were any way sporty you would be dragged along. (Eve)

There is still a sense that the bank is involved in the local community, but this is done through planned charitable activities.

I couldn't really articulate the wider sports and social scene in the bank. Where we engage with the Group is in the charity activities like the Make-a-Wish Foundation or the 'give together' initiative, this is where if you raise money for charity the bank will match it. So about five weeks ago 9 people from here did a charity cycle to Athlone, there was about a hundred altogether across the group so that is how we engage with the rest of the group. (Mark)

Entertainment budgets changed to use as methods for securing business. The advent of corporate banking introduced a workforce trained in entertaining clients and showing the bank off as a wealthy and modern organisation.

We had very specialised training including things like protocol and what type of wines to choose for a meal. We didn't socialise with the rest of the bank but we didn't really socialise with our colleagues either, because a lot of our work was socialising with and entertaining customers or potential customers. At Christmas we would have cocktail parties, there wasn't much time to get involved with the sports and social side of the bank. (Anna)

The Bank has always integrated the social life into its organisational life, whether as part of its image creation or to secure business. The social life between generations is, in fact, very similar. It is used to bring a sense of community among the workers, to project an image of the bank, to secure business and for workers to show that they respect and are part of the bank. The difference is in how the social life is conducted. In both cases it is largely sponsored by the Bank but in the traditional bank there was little option but to participate, in the modern bank there is a sense that participation is out of careful consideration for career prospects. It is almost as if it is done out of a sense of duty rather than as an antidote to a sombre and mundane working day. The separation of home and work life is evident in these stories, which is a profound change for the bank and, as will be seen later,

dictates how working lives became more settled and how the Bank had less control over their workers' families and home life. Additionally, as new methods of securing business are required in the new competitive industry, play and entertainment becomes part of the plan to entice customers into the Bank.

With the introduction of open competition the nature of bank work can be seen to change. Selling and new forms of customer contact were required to maintain market share. The move towards active selling moved many of the workers, and customers, out of their comfort zone. Many embraced these changes, as Joe tells us.

It was the first time ever where there were visitations, where you went out and met the customer, they weren't coming into you. That was when the competition came in, there was cold calling, you were going out cold calling. It took a while to catch on, the companies didn't really want you calling on them. You got out a lot meeting people, you had to be able to handle yourself, you were out of your comfort zone but it was the most interesting part of my career. (Joe)

Others had problems with selling, especially as there was little training offered.

I hated selling on the phones. I would prepare myself before I would make a phone call and go over what I was going to say. My hands would be sweating and I would be a nervous wreck. Then I would make the call and if the customer said no to me I would get really upset. I was good at selling face to face, I loved talking to the customers but I couldn't do phone selling. (Eve)

The introduction of competition was such an unusual concept in the banking and finance industry that many former friends, or those who in the traditional bank would have been friends, had difficulties adjusting.

I remember a new manager from [another] bank calling in on me to introduce himself and shake my hand. I thought it was very naïve of him at the time because I was trying to pick his breakfast every day, but he just wasn't into that, the competitive piece. But there was only so much business to go around and there was competition to take it off each other.

When the 'lifetime' product came in we were selling a lot of life cover and I remember a guy from [a life assurance company] coming in to see me and he said, look can we have some sort of relationship on this, he wanted me to back off, and he said if you can't help me can you stop hurting me. I'll never forget those words, I didn't see why if we were lending someone half a million to buy something that required a life policy as security, why we shouldn't be getting that business too. (Mike)

Once the banks began to separate and break up the traditions of play and socialising between bank workers the environment in which business was conducted took on a new direction with new norms and expectations.

3.5 New Thinking Towards Change: Assessing the significance of the data.

The remainder of this chapter evaluates the stories of a dramatically changed workplace and attempts to draw out their significance by calling on existing theories and concepts. The discussion initially explores the authority of the management consultant and their role, in the guise of a court fool, in instigating change. As a consequence of the management consultant's power to create change the selection of stories on play, which demonstrate the effect and depth of the changes to the culture, is then further explored.

Facing into a changing marketplace in the 1960s the Bank found that it lacked many of the specialisations that new challenges would require. The opening up of the Irish economy had a knock-on effect on the banking sector which not only found itself exposed to potential takeovers by foreign banks but highlighted the lack of international experience within the domestic banks (Meenan, 1983). Recognising the changes emerging in the markets and global economies the Bank began to develop networks with American banks in the hope of gaining some

international exposure and knowledge (Carroll, 1987). The Bank began to send some of its officials to American banks for training; “a number of officials have visited banking institutions abroad and have benefitted substantially” (Irish Times, 1967). It is no surprise, then, that the Bank’s management chose an American firm of consultants to assist in leading the bank into a modern era. This break from past traditions is clearly part of a new, and somewhat radical, way of thinking for the Bank (Meenan, 1983). The Bank, it appears, is intentionally looking away from its traditional UK and European network to the U.S. which became the focus of many new business opportunities in the post war years (Carroll, 1987). It is contextually significant that McKinsey is an American company and it is also historically significant that their engagement by the Bank was their first to any bank in Europe. While the external pressures to change are well documented, it is the decisions and actions taken within the organisation that shaped the changing culture of the Bank.

3.5.1 A New Departure: Taking advice from an outsider and a fool

The principle characters in the project to bring change to the Bank appear to be its Governor at the time, Don Carroll, and the management consultants McKinsey and Company. McKinsey played an enormous role in initiating change in the Bank and their influence cannot be ignored. While much has been written on how McKinsey and other management consultants conduct their business, the concern here is their *mode of being* within the organisation and how their unique position contributes to their power to initiate profound change. What is significant about McKinsey, and is evident in this case, is that during this period, and for a time after, they are known for favouring reorganisation

along the lines of a multi-divisional or M-Form structure (McDonald, 2013; Kipping, 1996). However, it is more pertinent to addressing the research concerns and developing a deeper understanding of the changes and culture in the Bank that the focus is placed on the relationship between the organisation and the consultant. In this case, it is helpful to view the consultant as a court fool and an outsider; two characteristics which explain their formidable power in influencing change across a stable and traditionally embedded organisation.

The court or holy fool is a character that has appeared in many tales throughout history. Sometimes referred to as a wise sage, the fool is depicted as a character of wisdom and knowledge, of mysticism and quiriness, as someone who has an insight that ordinary people cannot grasp, and is a teller of truths. Through their unique set of characteristics their position in society is legitimatised and, consequently, they have the ability to accumulate great power. The power of the fool is held up by their independence and by them having a single sovereign to whom they are answerable. Within a social grouping they stand aloof as an outsider with a mystical quality that allows them to move unquestioning through the group, observing and reporting back to the sovereign. There are a number of public accounts of the engagement of McKinsey and their presence in the Bank (e.g. O'Neill, 1965, 1966; Meenan, 1983, however, there are very few of the storytellers who were employed at this time who were aware of their presence). Additionally, according to Meenan (1983), the Bank's management accepted and set out to implement the full range of McKinsey's recommendations. The management consultant was given the type of free rein and confidence that is given to the court fool.

Management consultants are essentially service providers, called upon because of their business knowledge and often because they are outsiders, not entwined in the politics or prevailing culture of an organisation (Kipping, 1996). The outsider who can move seamlessly throughout groups is a well-known character and has been described in many forms. Benjamin (1999) describes the *flâneur* in his *Arcades Project* as a detached observer who occasionally converses with passers-by and who has developed through experience the skills of a “hunter for meaning in the forest of signs” (Keohane, 2002). Additionally, Simmel (1908) spoke of the *stranger* who would enter a group and stay for a short period, often bringing qualities that are new and unique to the group. The stranger is an objective observer with the freedom to move around the group, possessing the ability to be both involved and detached while not being prejudiced by politics or tradition (Simmel, 1908).

Phan (2001) lists four characteristics shared by all types of fools which can equally be seen in the court fool, the wise fool and the management consultant. The fool lives a *carefree life* in the present, not lumbered by any past errors or plans for the future, indicating their independence and their role as an outsider who can come and go easily; they *live outside of the normal expectations of society* and are free to say or do anything without the threat of reprisal, including speaking freely and frankly to the sovereign; their *un-orthodox nature* can break down barriers and lead to “ideological iconoclasm”, “social anarchy” or “literary satire”; and, finally, their *knowledge or ‘wisdom’ is not learned through ‘formal education’*, through “reasoned arguments”, or, through the words of others but is bestowed and is manifest through “intuition”, “insight” and “illumination of the

mind” – it is in contrast to the “technical expertise of the specialist” (Phan, 2001, p. 738).

All four of these characteristics can easily be transferred onto the management consultant and are visible in McKinsey's time in the Bank. For example management consultants are employed because of their “*specialist knowledge*” (Curnow & Reuvid, 2003), and McKinsey was described by its lead consultant in Bank of Ireland, A.L. McDonald, as “*not technicians or experts in any particular sphere...we do not believe in set answers for complex situations*” (O'Neill, 1965). This mystical type of knowledge that the fool possesses (Kavanagh, et al., 2011, 2012; Phan, 2001) can be powerful and difficult to question. It is a trait that legitimises their truth-telling and allows the sovereign to present it to others as a truth. However, the stories draw attention to one particular characteristic – ideological iconoclasm. It is particularly relevant as the organisation was, up to this time, deeply entrenched in traditions, many of which went back to its founding 170 years previously.

3.5.2 Ideological Iconoclasm and Cultural Customs

Many of the changes that the Bank's culture and workers experienced are characteristic of the management consultants, as the fool, such as the breaking down of barriers and causing ideological iconoclasm. It is only through such drastic actions that an organisation, such as the Bank, so deeply embedded in traditional ways can change so dramatically. Iconoclasm is the purposeful destruction by a culture of its religious beliefs and symbols and the stories indicate that over time many of the deeply held traditions of being a bank worker were transformed or replaced. The project to modernise the Bank removed many of the long held practices of work and culture in the organisation.

At the bottom of Schein's (1992, p.26) model of cultural layers are "basic underlying assumptions" which are deeply held and protected values and beliefs which are difficult to change or remove. These beliefs are tacit and taken for granted ways of being inside an organisation. Schein (1992) believes that these elements of organisational life are the most difficult to change, however, over time in the Bank they have become altered from their traditional beginnings. The stories tell of how the long held practice of intense formality between manager and worker was replaced with more amiable and communicative manager. Workers are suddenly allowed to become involved in the organisation and are expected to think and speak their mind, to find solutions for problems, and to take responsibility for their career paths and educational needs. Workers are given new opportunities and the prolonged practice of waiting in line for a promotion is replaced by pushing workers to meet and exceed goals so as to show their worth to the organisation.

The changes and new ways of working that are told by the storytellers are changes that produced new sets of underlying assumptions of the role of the bank worker. These practices, which are embraced and reproduced by the storytellers, are generally accepted without much questioning at the time. It is only later (discussed in Chapter 5) following the financial crisis that they review the effects of these changes and contemplate the significance of their obsolescence. An earlier realisation of how the changes affected the culture and working life of the bank emerges through the stories of play and the social life. The stories of play and the social life were chosen as they are the most revealing examples of change. The following paragraphs discuss how the shift in the nature of 'play' was accomplished.

3.5.3 Play and Game in Organisations

One of the most symbolic and stark examples of the change in the basic assumptions of culture is apparent when exploring the stories of play and the social life. The stories of play take a prominent position in the interviews. They are spoken about with great enthusiasm across the generations and it is clear that when former colleagues get together that these are the stories that they replay as memories of their time in the Bank. Across these stories the changing symbolic order (Lacan, 1966) of play reveals much about the removal of icons from the traditional bank as they become engulfed by modernity. There has been increasing interest in play in organisations – how it is used in modern work practices, how the language of play has entered organisations, and how it is used to achieve success. Play in the Bank is unusual; in an era when many commentators suggest that play was frowned upon by business managers and owners, the banking industry of the 1960s, and earlier, accepted play and supported its staff in participation. For the Bank play was part of its image, showing off its workers in the community as clubbable, trustworthy and involved. For the workers, it was relief from their mundane working lives. For this research the focus is on play as being symbolic of the changing nature of workers lives, by exploring who they played with and why.

The seminal work on play by Jonas Huizinga (1938), *Homo Ludens*, is a popular place to commence studies of play and is well suited to exploring the changing nature of play in the Bank. Roger Caillois' work on the subject in *Man, Play and Games* is similarly a comprehensive study of play. Caillois (1958) commences this work by discussing Huizinga and praising his work before expanding on what he perceives as its shortcomings. Caillois (1958) focuses his work on the categorisation of play and

game and consequently his understanding of play - as being free and not forced, separate from other aspects of life, and unproductive – perhaps limits its effectiveness in exploring and describing play as it occurs in an organisational environment. In his own words Caillois indicates that his work is more of a specific study of games when he describes Huizinga's work as “not a study of games, but an enquiry into the creative quality of the play principle in the domain of culture and more precisely, of the spirit that rules certain kind of game” (1958, p. 4). In this way, play can be observed in the tacit form of Schein's (1992) *basic underlying assumptions* which is more appropriate to this research which explores play as it happens across generations in the Bank.

Huizinga's (1938) traces the concept of play which he claims has become much more than an activity within itself and for itself and has, over time, transformed into the seriousness of game with outcomes and winners and losers. For Huizinga (1938), play is a break from ordinary life; a key concept that he returns to several times – “it is never a task. It is done at leisure during free time” (p.8); “it is distinct from ordinary” (p. 9); “a free activity standing quite consciously outside ordinary life” (p. 13); “the action begins and ends in itself, and the outcome does not contribute to the necessary life process of the group” (p.49). While these statements have similarities to Caillois' work the distinction is that for Huizinga the separation is cognitive rather than the physical separation in Caillois' work. So, for example, Roy's (1959) banana time which occurs within the work setting is a brief period of play that is separate from the ordinary routine of work. Occurring at the work station, it is not physically separate from work life, yet cognitively it is a break from the mundane routines of work and occurs along a sequence of unspoken rules.

Play and game, for Huizinga, are concepts which have relevance in “the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their differences from the common world” (Huizinga, 1938, p. 13). Not unlike the walled-garden social life of the early stories of play in the Bank. Additionally, Roy argues that his observations of the casual moments of worker interactions endorse the general agreement that the “one key source of job satisfaction lies in the informal interaction” (1959, p. 166) of workers whom, through their enclosed interactions, develop into a social group. Exploring how the social life changed its symbolic order sheds light on the powerful influence of the management consultant in instigating lasting change and on how the culture of the Bank transformed.

3.5.4 From Play to Game

In the traditional Bank, play is the antidote to the strict and sombre working day, it is the point where many social relations are formed, and where new members are introduced to the social group. During the early period of the research (from 1960 and during the 1970s) there is little distinction between work and home life and play appears as an extension fitting neatly between both. It is sponsored by the Bank, and so workers are expected to conduct their social life in a manner befitting of the organisation with such activities like gambling prohibited. Play in the traditional Bank has meaning, rules, expectations and order. As described by Huizinga (1938), it can be serious, even if only temporary, players often have considerable personal investment in it and to be deviant to the rules, whether written or unwritten, is considered to have spoiled the play session. Similarly, as a place of “sociability”, the players are expected to act without self-interest and with sensitivity to their fellow players (Simmel, 1949).

So, while play might be considered to have “no material interest” (Huizinga, p.13) and perhaps frivolous, it is a place where social identities can be formed.

Huizinga (1938) noted how, over time, play had become superseded by game when ad hoc pursuits are replaced by organised fixtures and associations. “Pure play” is replaced when “business becomes play” and “play becomes business” (Huizinga, 1938, pp.197-200). The rules of game are more solidified than those of play, game is regulation and complexity. This progress from play to game has a marked similarity to the changing nature of the banking industry, which suddenly became competitive, dynamic and complex, and to the bank worker who begins to use the skills learned in play to get by in the new game of banking. Huizinga notes that “commercial competition...only appears to begin when trade begins to create fields of activity within which each must try to surpass and outwit his neighbour” and that the use of statistical data gathering sets the targets to be beaten in the game of commerce (1938, p. 200). The understanding of play has changed to a stage where “it becomes increasingly difficult to tell where ends play and non-play begins” and where the gentleman’s agreement in the spirit of play is lost (Huizinga, 1938, pp. 206-207).

In the traditional bank the workers played, whereas when the changes became embedded in the culture of the Bank the workers moved to game within the work setting. The stories tell of how play in the traditional bank was conducted for the development of social groups and was primarily an activity between bank workers. In the modern bank game includes customers and is used as a method for securing business from customers and maintaining this business over time. For the workers, it is necessary to be actively participating in the

organised social activities; it becomes less free and has an outcome beneficial to the career progression of individuals within the social group. Banking becomes a game as the workers continuously are faced with not only achieving goals but finding ways to better the minimum standard and appear successful. What was play among friends morphs into a game and a competition among individual bank workers. The crucial difference between how the bank workers played is whom they played with and why they played.

3.6 Conclusion

The stories of change indicate that the Bank was heading into a transformation that had never before been experienced. The project to modernise the Bank and keep it relevant in the changing market was instigated by the management, but the real change agents were the management consultant. Through their almost mystical characteristics they unleashed change that went deep into the organisations ethos and communal values. They broke down the deeply held traditions that were an integral part of work life and symbolic of what it was to be a bank worker. Through play and its transformation into game the power of the management consultants influence on organisational change is revealed. Play, a closely held symbol of the walled-garden life of a banker is transformed into part of the game of being a modern and independent worker. The theoretical and conceptual considerations of the stories will be brought together in a more comprehensive grand narrative in Part III where their contributions to theory and practice of organisational culture and change will be revealed.

CHAPTER FOUR

MANIFESTATIONS OF CHANGE: TRANSFORMATION IN BANK LIFE



Bank of Ireland's computer hall, Cabinteely, Dublin (Lyons, 1983, p. 175)

4.0 Introduction: Manifestations of Change

The previous chapter discussed the initial point where change was unleashed on the whole organisation. This chapter focuses on the stories where those changes become manifest in working life and how the workers come to negotiate and understand them. The result of the profound changes introduced by the Bank's management under the influence of their management consultant are evident across the board, emerging at a variable pace across the organisation but culminating in a modern and significantly altered organisational culture. The changing nature of work in the Bank is discussed in terms of worker identity, their moves to *professionalise*, and their changing relationship with the organisation. This is a somewhat large and awkward chapter that tries to make sense of the messy way in which the changes in the Bank affected the culture of the organisation. The manifestations of change which are presented here are interesting developments which have gone on to shape the culture and ethos of the contemporary bank.

4.1 The Modernising Bank Worker

Already explored in the previous section is the beginning of the transformation of the Bank and its workers. Here more detailed descriptions of the continued consequences of the changes are presented. As a brief reminder Jim's story, below, sums up the average career of a worker who commenced their service from 1960 and into the early 1970s. It represents a time where all the workers had to do was follow instruction and leave everything else to the Bank. Careers were developed and husbanded within the confines of the organisation and the industry. There was little opportunity to move quickly through the bank, promotions were based on seniority and strict guidelines on the length of service

were required before a worker could move from junior bank official to senior bank official to cash clerk and on to managerial roles. Often transfers and promotions were handed out with little warning or explanation.

My first posting was to Bantry, then in 12 months I got a transfer to the Parade in Kilkenny [230km away]. In those days when you got a transfer the manager got a letter, I assume the manager had a discussion of some description with the district manager or HR. You were called into the manager's office and he opened an envelope in front of you and he would advise you of your next location, you were given two weeks' notice to report for duty....I think all in all [over my career] I worked in 12 different locations. I was appointed to most roles, I did interview for some later. You were never sure why you were picked because there was no formal template for the annual review in the early years. I suppose someone was watching you and keeping an eye on your level of work. (Jim)

As the changes began to take shape modes and methods of work began to transform.

4.1.1 New Types of Workers: Education, Graduates and Outsiders

As the Bank attempted to negotiate the new demands of their market they realised the need for a more specialised worker. In the early years of change the Bank had begun a pilot programme of sponsoring its top workers to attend third level institutions for degree and masters qualifications.

To the best of my knowledge there wasn't a graduate in the Bank when I joined. The first graduates were the likes of Pat Malloy who went on to be Chief Executive. He was sent by the bank to do a degree in Trinity. It was getting to be a requirement to have a third level qualification and the Bank had started offering third level education at night to others. A lot of people took up the opportunity. (Owen)

Advanced and specialised education remained important to the modernising bank and the continuation of this programme for university education placed its participants on advanced career

paths with mentors to guide them and the opportunity to work in any department of their choosing.

I was given the choice of where I wanted to work when I came back after my degree. We had someone who was responsible for helping us plan our careers, if I wasn't happy I could speak to him and move somewhere else. I was asked where I wanted to go and I said I would like to do something in the computing area. I was given a job in the computer centre but it became apparent that there was a problem. The manager wasn't happy, he said to me that he didn't know who I was and that they had their own internal policy for recruitment and promotion. After a while I contacted the support person and I moved into corporate banking. (Anna)

Previous to this the traditional mode of specialist academic training for workers of all levels was through the Institute of Bankers who ran a variety of diploma courses in banking practice. Much of the encouragement for completing these courses came in the form of financial rewards but as the new era approached many of the younger workers turned to other educational opportunities in the hope of improving their careers, either on their own or through the Bank's sponsorship of night-time degrees.

It was stifling and very hard to get up the ladder. There were very poor quality managers, they were narrow minded and not progressive, they were not interested in educating themselves. I had to keep educating myself in the hope that I would progress. I did a 2 year company secretary course and after that moved into the legal department. (Paul)

During the 1980s the Bank began a graduate recruitment programme. These graduates were placed in higher level roles than the traditional workers, and although this caused some tensions at first, many later felt that it was a necessary for the Bank to be a successful organisation. Additionally, as part of the programme to target specialists the Bank, for the first time, began to recruit experienced specialists from outside the organisation. They had agreed with the IBOA that the maximum age limit of 21

would be dropped so they could begin to employ targeted workers. Paul is probably one of the first workers in Bank of Ireland to apply directly to a specifically advertised job.

I had worked in a building firm since 1964 and attended UCD by night. I wasn't old enough to be considered a mature student so couldn't do the degree. I did a diploma in public administration which was for two years, afterwards I was able to enrol in the second year of the B.Commerce at night. On the 1st December 1969 I replied to an advert for a vacancy in the Accounts department in the Bank. (Paul)

With graduates and experienced workers being brought in all workers were encouraged to broaden their horizons and become more dynamic.

We had a very good general manager, he had been in America for some time and he was very well known all around and when I used to meet fellas [from other banks] they used to give out about this man, *you're getting all the things because of this guy could you get rid of him like!* At that time it was new banking really. Because we had a small trading unit as well people would ring us up for rates, the staff were always bargaining with people and they were bargaining with them so even at a lower level we were more involved with day to day work. (Joe)

The introduction of outside influences brought new perspectives on work and the workers began to realise that new opportunities were available. In Joe's story he is beginning to see a shift to more open and inclusive work practices.

4.2 New Roles and Responsibilities

Regionalisation and decentralisation, a structural shift brought in on McKinsey's recommendation, introduced many new job and promotional opportunities. These were changes that were much wished for and embraced by the workers. Daniel speaks of his memories of his father, who was also a bank worker, waiting patiently for his chance to become a manager. Traditionally this

situation, referred to as the 'promotion block', was based on seniority and often the wait was long.

The growth in the Bank meant that there was a lot more opportunity. When I joined the Bank there was a general manager and an assistant manager in the branches, nothing in between and no opportunity for promotion until a manager role came up. We used to say that it would only take one heartbeat to stop and you'd get your break. That was what we called the block on promotion, if it hadn't changed in the 60s to the automatic Senior Bank Official after 7 years and then the growth in the 70s where there were new positions created I would have been stuck on a very low salary for the rest of my life. It made working in the Bank more acceptable. (Daniel)

There are many similar stories of these new opportunities, Stuart's experience indicates the level of new opportunity available to the workers and the new initiatives that the Bank was creating to meet the demands of the changing market.

On only seven years of service when most people would be only getting senior bank official I was being given the opportunity to move to Cork and open up a branch of the income tax department which was to coincide with the introduction of wealth tax, capital gains tax and capital acquisitions tax. That was back in 1974. Salary wise it was a huge increase but also an increase in responsibility and a chance to run my own office and to start off from scratch. (Stuart)

These changes largely fell at a time when the banking environment was opening up to competition. The banks had been involved in little direct competition and there was a strong relationship of mutual respect between all the banks. However, with the mergers and the opening up of the market competition was introduced and the close relationship between the banks and their workers ended. Competition meant a change in the way customers were treated as work became focused on sales.

If you had a customer who came into you and there was a problem you would ring the guy in the M&L bank and ask did they hear of him or you get a call saying if a fella by such a name goes into you don't touch him he's been down with us already. There was a sort of a relationship between all the banks. There was no competition until the break up, and the competition came in and then you wouldn't talk to them anymore. (Joe)

The modernisation continued to develop into the 1980s and 1990s as the business environment became more dynamic. Attitudes to progress changed with new forms of leadership.

When I started working for the Bank in 1988 I was two thirds of the way through working on a project for them as a management consultant. When we went in to meet the Governor and his top people to present this project we had to tell them that to improve their accounts reporting they had to start with a whole new system and it would take at least 3 years. After about 30 minutes the Governor, Mark Hely-Hutchinson said "Ok let's go with this". Everyone was looking around and saying we can't just go with it we have to have a debate on it. That was the culture in the Bank at the time, there was a lot of debate and analysis and not much inclination to do things. I think his [Hely-Hutchinson's] attitude was driven by having come from outside the Bank straight into the Chief Executive role around 1987. (Adam)

For the most part the largest indicator of change for the storytellers was the increasing shift to sales as a large part of their working day. As a result, customers were viewed differently as one-to-one customer communication was replaced by Customer Relationship Management. New products were introduced that would meet the entire financial and personal needs of customers and their families. The modernisation of the Bank brought many new opportunities and workers were encouraged to be innovative and free thinking. It is around this time that the Governor introduced the '*freedom to manage*' policy.

The development manager was a new role, it involved organising the branch and finding ways to motivate staff to find new custom. I was responsible for training the staff to identify potential sales, to have as many people identifying business. Everyone wasn't able to put it away so I would have people go after them. People would say I didn't join the bank to sell, well I'd say to them what did you join the bank for?

You were out every night in some form or other either sponsoring events or presenting trophies. We were perceived as the forward thinking bank. We'd organise customer nights out, we were heavily focused on relationship building, we were encouraged to tell the customer we are your partner in this and in fact we were goaled with saying this.

It was all about leakage, what your customer was leaking to other banks. The Bank was ahead of the posse, they bought a building society, then they formed Bank of Ireland life, private banking to look after the higher one and a big focus on pensions. Driven absolutely entirely by the need to increase profit and to capture every cent of revenue out of every relationship and to keep the customer away from everyone else. (Mike)

Overall, these stories tell of the influence that the change to education and recruitment policy had on the nature of working in the Bank. The language of the worker, especially Mike, changes to being more dynamic and indicates increased responsibility for the success or failure of tasks. The new types of worker, and other coinciding events, altered the demographic of the workers.

4.3 Changing Demographics and Flexible Careers

As the changes in the bank began to spread and pick up momentum new categories of workers appeared. In 1987 the Bank introduced a new grade of bank assistant, these workers were initially placed on short term probationary contracts, had limited career prospects and a “maximum salary that would reach only half that of existing bank officials” (Rouse & Duncan, 2012, p. 192). These type of arrangements, introduced as cost saving and restructuring measures, were widespread in the industry, and, according to Rouse and Duncan (2012, p. 193), was indicative of an “uncertain future” in Irish banks. Another change around this time was the lifting of the marriage bar. Ireland, like many other countries, had introduced a marriage bar for women in the 1930s, primarily it was for the civil service but many other industries adopted the policy. The marriage bar was lifted in the public service in 1973 and in all other industries in 1977, which had an impact on the age demographic of the workforce and the culture in the Bank.

There was a tremendous family in it, now I think since that last strike in the 80s and since the bank started taking in, I hated that expression, the 'yellow packs', ... that brought a big influx of young people into the bank, before when there was the marriage embargo and a girl had to leave when she got married there was always an influx of young people coming and there was no major age difference, that kept the continuity going but because they hadn't taken on anyone for a long time and then they took in these younger people ... it became a huge void between them and us and that was never bridged and it spoiled the culture. (Stuart)

With more married women who had families choosing to remain in the workplace part-time work was an attractive option. Elaine and Sarah had very different experiences of part-time and temporary work as the Bank and other elements of commercial life in Ireland came to terms with the changing realities of modern work.

I left around '77 after I got married and came back around '81 on a temporary contract. It was unusual as I had to work full time for a month and then take a month off. I found it strange when I came back because it was like I wasn't really a member of staff, even though I was being paid more than some there because they based it on my previous pay and experience. But they didn't want you taking any responsibility and if you took responsibility for something they never thanked you, they congratulated the whole office. It was strange because they all knew me, I had worked in every branch in the town but I felt that management didn't really see me as a proper member of staff.

I found when I was doing this work that there was a lot of negativity, both inside and outside the bank, people would say to me that I was keeping a job from a young person. This was Government policy at the time too, they only wanted young people and I was only 30 at the time. One day I got a letter from the Bank offering me 6 months work in a branch and then the next day I got a call from head office saying to ignore the letter that I didn't have a job in the Bank, I was incensed by this. My family had been thinking about going away and this was the last straw. I went [abroad] first and got a job and my family were to follow, then one day my husband rang and said the Bank had called looking for me to work. From what I could gather when I came back in the '90s on a part-time basis it hadn't worked out. The managers didn't have the time to keep training in new

people who had no experience of banking and I could walk into any branch and do nearly any job and they knew I was honest, which was a big thing. So that scheme never worked out for them and they dropped it. (Elaine)

Elaine's story shows how this transition was difficult for the Bank and the industry. However, later, in 1994, when Sarah wished to return to work the part-time option was used to ease her back in to working life.

I started in the Bank in 1970 and then during the bank strike I went to London and I met my husband over there. So after the strike I returned to London and resigned from the bank in 1978. I stayed at home with the family for around 16 years and I had done some voluntary work but was itching to get back into the Bank. I sent off a CV and then to accommodate me they allowed me to start on two days a week which was great and then I went on four days and then I was made permanent in 1998 and I went on five days. I had done a computer course but I was worried that I wouldn't be able to use the new technology. The two days was great for my confidence and opportunities were in abundance, if you were prepared to work hard and go for it, which I did. Initially I was in a specialised area dealing with the courts and then I moved into the production area, it seemed to suit me better, being on the floor and working with people. I was made manager in the production area in 2001.

I went back to the Bank partly because of lack of confidence and because I had spent so long there before and was happy working there. I went back to 2 College Green where I had been initially and I actually met some people I knew from the 1970s which I was astounded with but it was also comforting. I didn't have much self-esteem and I knew that there was a lot of opportunity if you didn't have a degree. It was the same in the '70s, a few people had done some third level courses but it didn't really matter too much, if you worked hard and had aptitude you would be given the opportunity, I felt there was a fairness all around, I think that is why I had the loyalty to the Bank. (Sarah)

This transformation in the acceptance of flexible working arrangements is indicative of the changing attitudes to work and the increasing move away from the job-for-life to a career of choice.

A consequence of the altering norms of work and recruitment practices during the 1980s and 1990s is the separation of home and work life. The stories that are told about the practice of transfers and relocation give an interesting insight into the character of the traditional banker as being inextricably associated with their organisation but slowly becoming more individual and being less accepting of the expected demands of the traditional bank. As the practice of relocation is questioned and is eventually reconfigured these stories indicate how workers became more individualised and responsible for their own careers. It was normal practice in the traditional bank for workers to be relocated across the country at short notice. Very little explanation was ever given as to why the transfer was happening but generally it was accepted as being part of banking life, for gaining experience and with the hope of promotion.

It was normal to have ten to twelve placements during a career. I'm on my tenth now. (Chris)

It is interesting how the stories about relocation develop. Initially they are told, like Chris, as a normal part of banking life. A transfer could not be refused and being given one meant that, if married, the whole family would have to move too. Over the course of discussing their experiences many of the storytellers eventually expand on the real difficulties of this practice. What these stories show is the acceptance that the family was inextricably linked to the bank and the acknowledgement that it was not always a good experience for them to be continuously moved.

As the new manager in town everyone would know you and you had to get involved in the community, you would latch onto someone who would introduce you to people. But for the spouse it was more difficult unless they had school going children which was an opportunity to meet with other parents but if your kids were at say teenagers they would be going to school themselves you didn't get access to other people, so it was very tough on spouses. I would say out of all the moves we had, I would say the younger the kids are the better, they would see it as an exciting adventure, whereas the older kids – we moved twice when the kids were teenagers

and I'd say they lost out, they had to leave their friends and they all had good friends in each location and they found it difficult to settle. There are downsides to moving on one side it an exciting opportunity and an adventure, it's an opportunity to move on and develop your career in the organisation. (Jim)

There are many stories that develop in a similar manner to Jim's story. Stuart talks of the absolute hatred his wife had for a city in which they relocated for an initial period of three years but ended up being a permanent move; and Mike talks of his memories of his young son standing in the driveway crying as he left on a Monday to spend the week in a new location that his family had not yet moved to. It is not difficult to see how these underlying emotions would come to the surface and fuel the questioning of this practice. As Irish society modernised and married women with families were permitted to stay in the work place the practice of relocation became more difficult to achieve. For these reasons, pressure was placed on the banks to alter the mandatory nature of this practice.

The practice of relocation was described by the IBOA as having "*lack of humanity and the lack of kindness*" but there was conflict within the union as some felt that taking transfers were important for career progression (Rouse & Duncan, 2012, p. 178). After many years of questioning this practice, in 1986 the IBOA succeeded in persuading the banks to show more compassion to the bankers and their families. The final agreement was for consultation with the bank official in question and on production of a good reason a transfer was not mandatory (Rouse & Duncan, 2012). The result was that the Bank introduced a transferability limit of 30 miles, which was agreeable to most.

However, from the stories of this time and interesting work dynamic appears to occur due to the limited distance of transfers and a second occurrence – the recentralisation of departmental

banking functions. Recentralisation occurred during the mid-1990s and led to many of the new managerial opportunities that were created in the 1970s being removed from the regions.

The country was broken up into 28 districts and the Bank decided to change this so all 28 of us and a few more were invited to a meeting about this new vision for the Bank and I was driving across the M50 on my way home that evening and I realised that I had lost my job. The districts were gone and there was going to be 12 regions in the country and there was going to be a high powered assessment process involving UK consultants. There was back to back interviews and assessment centres and development centres. You didn't apply for a particular region you had to apply just for a regional manager's job. Fortunately I got the area I was in but I could have easily got somewhere on the other side of the country. (Mike)

These types of changes became a regular occurrence and in the modern bank workers were increasingly responsible for their own career progression, as to move into management and to avail of the ample career opportunities that Sarah speaks of (4.3 above) workers would have to take it upon themselves to locate close to the head office in Dublin, as Laura explains.

I moved on from there fairly soon, probably less than two years and I was starting to get to the stage where I was thinking about getting a career as opposed to a job and at this stage I am seven years in the organisation and I looked for a move up to Dublin. If I didn't move to Dublin I would have just stayed in the branch and there wasn't much opportunity, there weren't too many women managers and I didn't plan it but intuitively I knew there must be more and that I would have to move away from the branch. (Laura)

The bank workers who took part in this research generally fit into the categories of the traditional worker who had a slow but steady career progression, those, like Laura, from the modernising era who took it upon themselves to chase promotion by relocating and workers who remained in the regional area whose careers progressed very little through the managerial ranks. These are just some of the internal and external events which influenced

the changing demographic of workers in the Bank which in turn had an effect on its culture.

4.4 Modern Bank Workers and Work Practices

With the introduction of new work practices the identity of the bank worker changes. They are no longer cared for in the community of the Bank and the industry but are ever increasingly becoming more independent and individually responsible for their education and their career. The stories related to the performance review show the increasingly individualisation of workers as the bank modernised.

The annual review was a bit of a joke at first, they would set very easy goals and everyone met their targets but after a while they began to concentrate on them. The goals they would set would be much harder to reach and they became more serious. In the mid-1990s we went from an increment scale of pay to pay per performance so every year at your performance review you got targets for the year. At the very start your targets were like, get 5 referrals for lump sum investments, but you were dealing with 100 people a day so it was very easy to pick out 5 for lump sums over a year, or keep a nice clean and tidy desk or be customer friendly or be friendly to staff, be courteous or answer the phone within two rings.

Then it just changed to sell, sell 25 credit cards or 25 loans. In the review there would be different categories, one would be sales, one being courteous etc., but eventually it ended up where 75% would be measurable targets.

At the start the performance reviews were like 'well, how do you think you got on?. I think I got on fine. I think you did too!'. Then it was way more specific, there was no chit chat, you had to get 25 loans and if you didn't it would be what do you have to say for yourself. You couldn't say oh well I got 24. If you just got 25 then you did what you were told to do, that was the average but if you didn't get over the average and if you didn't get the 25 you could never get the highest mark. A 5 was the highest you could get. 4 would be very good and 3 would be satisfactory, so even if you got 25 you only got a mark of 3, whereas years ago if you got all your goals you were brilliant.

In the business unit we were all in the one unit and we all supported each other and helped each other and then they decided that they would give each individual targets. It used to be that the unit would have a target but then they decided to change it to give each individual person their own specific target. So it wasn't a unit

anymore, you had to go get your business. Every single person were put out on their own so they had to do their own lending, their own sales and their own things. Everyone was monitored individually so people began to help each other less. (Eve)

The process of change from the traditional communal worker to the modern individual worker involves a scramble to identify what it takes to meet targets and be a successful banker. Experiences such as those told by Eve are the bridge between the traditional and the modern and illustrate how the workers are faced with negotiating this new identity. The 1980s and 1990s also brought with it rationalisation and the removal of jobs that were no longer relevant. Working in the Bank had, for the first time, become precarious. The idea of a job-for-life or being given an easy job to do became a foreign notion. To be a successful bank worker it became imperative to remain employed in the Bank by ensuring that targets and goals were met and exceeded.

In the 80s and 90s the bank became more focused. They began weeding out jobs that were obsolete; you had to justify your job, your department and all of your expenses. This was in the Hely-Hutchinson era, he was trying to make the place more efficient. It was difficult for some it was the first time ever that jobs were under the microscope and that there was a chance that your job could be gone. People were scared. (Paul)

Success and failure had an impact on working life and new challenges created the need for workers to become more aware of their competition both externally and internally among colleagues. Where once the identity of the banker was stable and easy to define, it became more ambiguous due to the subjective nature of the new type of performance management. Being successful became less tangible and more difficult to understand, especially by workers who had lengthy careers in the Bank.

As the type of bank worker changes the concept of loyalty is discussed by many of the interview participants. Primarily these comments are linked to the modern banker who is educated and mobile and falls outside of the job-for-life category. This type of loyalty to the organisation stems largely from the understanding that a hard-to-come-by job for life was a lucky break along with the care that was provided by the Bank.

I think people were a lot more loyal [in the past] to the Bank as an organisation. Not everybody was perfect and there was room for people who fell out of the norm, everybody was taken care of, it was a patriarchal approach to people. Whereas I think in later years everybody had to be the same and people who had quirks or were different were more considered as problems to be solved. (Grace)

As the Bank became more modern it is considered by the interview participants to have become less paternalistic and more focused on individual performance. However some elements of a caring bank remained, Brian's experience is from more recent years.

I got [an illness] which kept me out of my job for a long time. There is no real cure and you have no idea how long it will take you to get over it. The Bank were great they kept in touch and when I was ready to return they found me a job in a place where I didn't need to move around too much and if I got tired or couldn't come in for a few days it wouldn't really matter. (Brian)

The more sophisticated and complex bank became a truly modern workplace during the 1990s and into the 2000s. It was no longer a special place but a modern organisation filled with contractual employees over a close community of workers where careers and family life were taken care of.

4.5 The Transformation of Working Life

The stories that are told indicate a changing place of work. These changes appear to be widely accepted and embraced by the workers. Already discussed in Part I Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) note the changing attitude of the post-war workers and their assessment of this time is not too far removed from these situational stories of a modernising organisation. The acceptance of the changes, however fast or slow, altered culture in the organisation around work practices, social relationships and identity. The remainder of this chapter explores how these changes fit within discussions, theories and concepts of professionalisation, loyalty and care, and the location and identity of workers within an organisation intent on becoming efficient.

4.5.1 From the aspiration of a professional banker to a professionalised bank

In the classic understanding of a profession banks and banking are not often regarded as being professional organisations or a professional occupation. However much of the unique pieces of the traditional banker's identity and the culture of the traditional bank leads to an argument that the occupation, in fact, could be considered a profession. Viewing the traditional bank worker in this way is a point of departure for exploring how the identity of the worker transformed over the 40 year research period. This transformation, it appears, follows the pattern of professionalisation.

Those occupying the position of professional are generally considered to be individuals who are self-employed, autonomous and have control over their work (Evetts, 2011; Noordegraaf, 2007). They are often occupations which are considered "suitable

for a gentleman" (Marshall, 1939, p. 325) and from this position are granted a particular status in society. Much of this status is based on their intense knowledge of their specialist area and for their perceived service to the community (Sciulli, 2007). Professions are generally governed by an oversight body which ensures the occupations continued integrity through education and codes of conduct (Marshall, 1939) which in turn established a "normative value system" that creates a collective understanding of being a professional (Evetts, 2013, 2003). The professional body allows for the development of standardised knowledge and 'collegial' co-operation among professionals who, despite having membership of an organising body, always remain as autonomous and self-governing individuals (Evetts, 2011, 2006, 2003; Faulconbridge & Muzio, 2008; Sciulli, 2007; Noordegraaf, 2007; Bossers, et al., 1999; Marshall, 1939).

Traditional bank workers had many of these characteristics, supported by the Institute of Bankers and the all-encompassing IBOA, standards were set and education was formalised and status was granted by virtue of being employed in the Bank. Work was conducted, at this time, for the good of the Bank and increases in salary and moving up in rank were accomplished by doing a good and accurate job. The difference that occurs as the Bank sets out to modernise is the ability for workers to direct their own career and the requirement for flexibility in doing this. In a paradoxical way this, it appears, leads the workers to move towards adopting a professional image which in turn leads inexorably to the demise of the classic understanding of the professional (Evetts, 2011; Faulconbridge & Muzio, 2008; Noordegraaf, 2007; Bossers, et al., 1999; Wilensky, 1964).

Organisations and workers who make claims to be professionals are, according to Evetts (2013), merely emulating many of the

outstanding characteristics of the 'classic' professions. As organisations professionalise they seek to imitate the 'normative value system' inherent in the classic professions. The result is a superficial ideological 'new profession' that is based on the ideals and prestige of the classic professions (Evetts, 2003) and a change in the normative understanding of the term professional (Cooper, et al., 1996). Evetts (2003) term "Ideological professionalism" is based on the desire of workers to be an expert in a single area, having the power of decision making, a flat structure and the collegial ethos of the classic professions. In reality, however, "internal criteria for practice and performance are replaced by external criteria, such as customer satisfaction and financial success" (Svensson, 2006, p. 581) and, as such, ideological professionals are limited by budgets, regulation and performance goals (Evetts, 2003). While it may be an attractive idea to professionalise an organisation, it brings with it many challenges - one of which is the tension placed on previously understood workplace identities and culture. Increasingly organisations and workers are under pressure to ensure that they deliver 'professional' services externally, while, internally, remaining commercially focused. Consequentially, workers engage in a process of developing and adjusting their work identity to meet both the external and internal needs of the organisation. This, augmented by organisations that continuously change their expectations, has led to problems of identity (Evetts, 2011, 2003; Noordegraff, 2011, 2007; Faulconbridge & Muzio, 2008).

4.5.2 A New Professional Identity

The transformation in work practices and the culture of the Bank increasingly leads to stories of modern work practices that place the responsibility for success on the individual. Performance reviews and goal directed cues for success create an uncertainty in how to be successful. The breakup of the traditional bank and the introduction of new types of workers mean that the once understood and steady state identity of a bank worker is obsolete. Through the professionalising of bank workers both the organisation and the worker have the flexibility to become successful, but for the worker it is sometimes difficult to understand what is required to achieve this.

The professionalisation of organisations and individuals has created work environments which are devoid of class and which measure the success of workers by their ability to meet goals (Collison, 2003). Consequently an imbalance emerges which removes pre-existing ideas of identity and replaces them with an emphasis on character and the concept of "you can be who you want to be" (Collison, 2003, p. 530). In 1964 Berger noted that there appeared to be a "problem of the meaning of work" (p. 212). He argues that while there has always been some form of continuous division of labour, transformations during the Industrial Revolution intensified it, making the meaning associated with work "problematic" (1964, p. 213). During large scale transformations "constant changes in the social organisation of work" occur as "social phenomena" which were once "taken-for-granted" become difficult to understand and problematic (Berger, 1964, pp. 213-214).

Berman (1970), drawing on Rousseau, notes that as societies develop competition between man creates a continual need to

progress and surpass others. Change and transformation in the working environment has created continual discontent in the mind of man which drives instability and the understanding of identity based on possessions and causing workers to investigate alternative identity forms (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; Berman, 1970). As a result of this problem of identity there is "a wild scramble for status" among many occupations and individuals who "no longer humanly identify with ones work" (Berger, 1964, p. 216). Workers then begin to act in a way that projects a status with the hope of realising some type of social and economic benefit. Individual workers enter into what has become known as "identity work". Here they work at creating, reinforcing and preserving "the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness" (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003, p. 1165).

Where professionals once gained status and authority through access to exclusive knowledge; in the new classless system any level of worth and virtue is competitive and "has to be earned" (Collison, 2003, p. 531). Organisations identify certain favoured characteristics for the worker which are often evident through management discourse or mission statements, but to be truly successful in work often requires workers to "pick up the cultural cues and construct an organisational self" (Thompson & Findlay, 1999, p. 163). The organisational self and engagement in 'identity work' is a fundamental element of contemporary society where there is a separation between the private home life and the public work life (Tienari, et al., 2002; Berger, 1964). Home life, or the private sphere, is conceived of as being the location of an individual's "real identity", while a "pseudo-identity" forms within the working life, or the public sphere (Berger, 1964, p. 217). While Berger (1964) focuses on just two locations for identity creation,

Collison (2003) notes that there is potentially limitless areas for identity to be created. This has resulted in identities that both complement and conflict with each other (Collison, 2003). A conscious decision to continuously engage in 'identity work' has strong links to 'self-doubt' and 'insecurity' and is often driven by changing work environments, relations of power and surveillance (Collison, 2003; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). The search for identity never ceases and is often an obsession for workers who become susceptible to "the expectations and demands of power" (Thompson & Findlay, 1999). The overall result, then, is to transform the working environment into a "pseudo-reality" where individuals aim to act out the expectations of their work role (Berger, 1964, p. 217).

4.5.3 New Challenges for the Modern Worker

The opening up of the Bank to more flexible and contemporary work practices in a modernising society placed a great many challenges on its workers. Through professionalisation workers have control over much of their behaviours, but they are responsible for calculating the best behaviours that are expected of a bank worker. The Bank is also faced with uncertainty in this contemporary situation, and are required to indicate how its workers should act, which, like 'identity work, can be a continuous and fast changing process.

Prior to the modern transformations in work, and particularly in the working environment of the Bank, "the world was an organised place, made up of carefully closed-off spaces which could be rationally appropriated and controlled" (Thrift, 1999, p.141). In contemporary work environments the traditionally normalised ways of exerting power and control have become

questioned. Many of the old forms of control of workers were deemed to be outdated and contrary to new thoughts on workers' rights. Additionally customers have changed their perceptions of organisations, becoming more empowered through greater access to knowledge and increased freedom of choice. They question authority and seek value for money and, like organisations and workers, they have become dynamic (Noordegraaf, 2011; Svensson, 2006). Contemporary organisations are then challenged with motivating both its workers and its customers into seeing the value of the organisation.

Organisations must find new and acceptable ways of ensuring their workers outwardly act in a way that represents the value of the organisation and internally continue to benefit the commercial goals of the organisation. They attempt to attract customers and inspire workers through the marketing of ideological professional values (Evetts, 2003; Svensson, 2006; Fournier, 1999). Professionalisation and the loosening boundaries of identity allows organisations a convenient mechanism for control. This type of control is informal and evolutionary and is presented as being of motivational value to workers (Thrift, 1999). It is strongly linked to the rise of managerialism and managerialist discourses which perpetuate the contemporary organisational world and is referred to by Nigel Thrift as '*soft capitalism*' (Svensson, 2006; Thrift, 1999; Thompson & Findlay, 1999). Soft capitalism replaces 'hard' organisational values that are clearly defined and often highly rational and bureaucratic with soft values that are cultural, less tangible and aimed at winning workers "hearts and minds" (Thompson & Findlay, 1999, p. 162). As is the case with many aspects of contemporary life, managerialist

discourse is “made up of multiple strands of practice, it is contested and it constantly changes” (Thrift, 1999, p. 140).

Managerialism in contemporary knowledge economies focuses on the “management of meaning” for workers as they engage in ‘identity work’ (Thompson & Findlay, 1999, p. 162). It is perhaps best summed up by Thrift (1999, p.154) when he suggests that “management is no longer seen as a science. Rather it becomes an art form” with managers becoming “a kind of charismatic itinerant ... constantly imbuing the business organisations values and goals, constantly on a mission to explain and motivate”. The messages that are spread through this type of organisational control are value driven, are reproduced in mission statements and often have their origin within the traditions of the organisation. A common rhetoric is ‘the organisational way’, often traditionally conceived by the founders (Thompson & Findlay, 1999). The value systems, produced through managerialist rhetoric, are often opposed to “collective value systems”, such as those of classic professional occupations. They aim to instigate a sense of organisational loyalty rather than collegial loyalty (Thompson & Findlay, 1999, p. 163).

Managerialist discourse is not static; it often changes and as it becomes contested “its proponents foster new conventions” (Thrift, 1999, p. 140). This puts pressure on workers to continuously establish and re-establish workplace identities so they can fit in with the organisational “way” (Thompson & Findlay, 1999). Being successful in this pursuit means that those who “act like ‘professionals’, are self-controlled and self-motivated to perform in ways the organisation defines as appropriate” (Evetts, 2003, p.408). They will earn their status and “be rewarded with career promotion and progress” (Evetts, 2003, p.408). Since

managerial discourses continuously change workers will continue to attempt to develop new identities to achieve the rewards on offer. This, for Berger (1964), will be a continuous process since it is an expectation for workers that their work will provide them with meaning and fulfilment in life. However, because there is now a loss of meaning of identity through work a paradoxical situation is created. This situation is maintained since the belief in meaningful work is reinforced socially through the media, through education and by professional organisations and while it persists, according to Berger (1964), the “problem of work” will also persist.

So, as the working environment and demographic transformed in the Bank and the norms of career mobility shifted to individual responsibility and careers in an industry rather than a single organisation, many of the storyteller's from the traditional eras have come to develop a perception of their colleagues loyalty to the organisation.

4.5.4 On Loyalty and Commitment

The changing characteristic of bank work and bank workers is often mentioned by the storytellers as having an impact on loyalty. The nature of contemporary work is more mobile than in the past and there is no expectation placed on workers to remain with a single employer for the duration of their career. Additionally, the Bank's attitude towards career *husbandry* and creating a closed off barracks culture for workers and their families has changed the nature of care that the organisation provides for its workers. The care provided to the workers in the traditional bank was the cornerstone of the job-for-life era, which explains the perception of lack of loyalty towards contemporary workers. These workers are independent agents rather than part

of a bank wide family. It is important to consider concepts of loyalty and care as a means for understanding the changing nature of the Bank's culture.

Royce (1908), Victor and Cullen (1988) and Coughlan (2005) all view loyalty as being linked to morals, ethics, and decision making; "you can truthfully centre your entire moral world about a rational conception of loyalty" (Royce, 1908, p. 15). Loyalty and morals are part of the decision making process, according to Royce (1908), as loyalty or devotion to a cause guides the direction a person will take in their life. At a basic level Royce (1908, pp. 16-17) defines loyalty as "the willing and practical and thorough going devotion by a person to a cause". There are three steps by which loyalty can be recognised, according to Royce (1908, p. 17); first a cause must be found, second there is absolute devotion to the cause, and third this devotion is demonstrated "in some sustained and practical way, by acting steadily in the service of his cause". In a similar vein, Coughlan (2005, pp. 46-47) defines loyalty in terms of an "implicit promise" or "pact between interdependent individuals" in a community who, of their own accord, agree to universal "moral principles in pursuit of individual and collective goals".

Coughlan describes loyalty as repeated actions of individuals that uphold the values of the community, noting that in work situations discussions of loyalty tend to focus on "employees not harming their colleagues or the firm" and ideas around trust and ethics (2005, p. 45). Self-control is an important characteristic of loyalty, it is the restraint that prevents an individual acting on their own needs over those of the cause and allows for a totality of devotion (Royce, 1908). For Lueng, loyalty is synonymous with societies that have "collective cultures" and are "relation-orientated" (2008, p. 47). Such societies would be characterised

as having a high level of care and low level of individuality and instrumentality (Leung, 2008). From these descriptions of loyalty it appears that the traditional bank workers may be correct in their assessment of their 'modern' colleagues. Loyalty is something that is a stronger force in collective organisations like the traditional Bank. However, the idea of loyalty being linked to the pursuit of common goals is still present in the values of the modern worker. In fact, pursuing goals is the challenge of the 'modern' bank worker. It is possible that, as Coughlan (2005) notes, in contemporary parlance, the understanding of loyalty is often confused with commitment.

Commitment often becomes confused for loyalty in organisation studies due to one of its key psychological elements, that of obligation (Coughlan, 2005). People feel obliged to continue working in an organisation because of normative commitment, of which Internalisation is the foundation (Coughlan, 2005). Such feelings of obligation arise "because of a special investment that the organization makes to the employee" (Coughlan, 2005, p. 49). So when the storytellers speak of the loyalty of contemporary workers, they appear to be referring to commitment and their willingness to stay in the Bank for a lengthy time. Coughlan seems to be suggesting that commitment is based on a reciprocal perception of the level of care provided by the organisation. Following this line of inquiry it could be inferred that how workers behave within an organisation and at a particular point in time in an organisation has a relationship to how the organisation behaves towards them. Similar implications are investigated through organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB). OCB refers to extra-role behaviours of being involved in communal aspects of organisations and being helpful to co-workers and as a

consequence benefits the organisation positively and is explored within organisations by Leung (2008).

4.5.5 On Commitment and Care

Lueng (2008) studied behaviours of workers based on Victor and Cullen's five climate types that workers perceived as existing in their organisations. These were care and concern for others, law-and-code – the following of laws and professional codes, rules – whether the policy and rules of the organisation were being followed, instrumentality – the levels of self-interest, and independence – the levels of personal ethical beliefs (Lueng, 2008; Victor & Cullen, 1988). Lueng's (2008) findings indicate that where the climate in the organisation has high morals and ethics, such as care or law-and-code, there is a higher level of OCB participation and as such loyalty. Where the ethical climate is low and exhibits instrumentality and independence there is a lower participation in OCB and as such lower levels of obligation and loyalty. Lueng notes that these findings are not unexpected since it is widely suspected that in cases where "individual interests or personal morality criteria" exist, people are inclined to act towards "self-interest, regardless of rules, laws or the impact their actions may have on the organisation" (2008, p. 51). On the other end of the scale caring environments are more closely linked with the concept of normative commitment, obligations, reciprocity and a stronger identification with the organisation.

In the traditions of the job-for-life organisation, the Bank is perceived to be a collective organisation with an ethical climate of caring through its practice of husbanding careers and providing job security, a good social life and a supportive community. Care is a concept that it not widely associated with

work and employment - discussions of care tend to take place around the family, caring professions, disadvantaged or vulnerable members of society and provision of welfare. However, there is a long history of organisations providing for the needs of their workers beyond paid employment. Around the mid to late 1800s many companies in industrial centres created housing and living spaces for their workers which often included good sanitation and green spaces. For example; Cadburys built the town of Bournville in the late 1800, it was a town designed to give good quality out of city housing to workers in its chocolate factory; Pullman is one of the best known company towns in North America, following construction it became known worldwide and was awarded the title of *world's most perfect town* at the International Hygienic and Pharmaceutical Exposition in 1896 (Pullman Historical Foundation, 2015); in an Irish context the village of Portlaw in Waterford was built from 1825 by the cotton merchants the Malcomsons to house its factory workers (Foran, 2014); and the Guinness family who went beyond their own workers and provided lodging for the working poor across Dublin and London (The Iveagh Trust, 2016). While a cynical critique of these ventures might describe them as ways of maintaining paternalistic control of workers, they can still be considered a type of care for the worker provided by a commercial enterprise since the workers' standards of living and health were improved.

Definitions of care vary widely and are predominantly developed within the context of a particular subject area. While rarely applied to commercial organisations, viewing care as a set of social relations would give it a way in to organisation studies. Care is often described as having its beginnings in the family, it has, more recently come to be described in terms of the

relationships “within which it was carried out, relations that tended to be characterised by personal ties of obligation, commitment, trust and loyalty” (Daly & Lewis, 2000, p. 283). Care then becomes about ethical behaviours and social relations (Daly & Lewis, 2000). As a social relation care is tied in with normal expectations of commitment including “obligation and responsibility” (Daly & Lewis, 2000, p. 285). Within their interpretation of care Day and Lewis cite the states responsibility in maintaining care, however, if the state is substituted for the Bank's management then care can be considered in terms of how the Bank cared for its workers over the research period. Care has the dual dimensions of looking after the physical and emotional needs of people. In the case explored here care is largely concerned with providing a secure place of work during a career lifespan. This type of care then secures the loyalty of the workers who remain committed to the goals of the organisation for their working life. When the Bank can no longer provide this level of care, as work practices change, the levels of loyalty are perceived to decline.

4.5.6 Mechanistic, Instrumental and individuals – the modern organisation

In a departure from the preceding sub-sections this section moves towards its conclusion by briefly switching to an overview of the modernising Bank at an organisational level. How the organisation has become increasingly focused on the drive to be efficient has a strong bearing on the actions and behaviours of the bank workers. There is evidence in the stories that the Bank has moved in this direction, with job security becoming precarious and the placing of goals on workers to measure their worth and success.

Morgan (1997) in his seminal work on organisations notes the normality with which theories and thoughts about human life and society are approached from a primarily scientific perspective. This perspective arises, he argues, as society, life and work becomes increasingly mechanised and bureaucratised. Such an environment is most evident within organisational settings, since organisations lend themselves to being organised in instrumental ways. Morgan notes how within organisations workers are expected to begin and end their work at specific times, work according to set rules for particular tasks and have breaks at designated times; organisations “are designed like machines, and their employees in essence are expected to behave as if they were parts of machines” (1997, p. 13). In contrast to such organisations Morgan (1997) notes how traditional organisations operate similar to those of well-defined armies, such as those of Frederick the Great. The traditional operation, practices and culture of the Bank has many similarities to these armies.

The Bank workers were uniformed, trained to be regulated and homogeneous, and performed their tasks without questioning their superiors. The culture of the traditional Bank is one of a barracks; a closely guarded occupation where workers are moulded into acceptable forms that present the ideal image of the Bank. Everything from their social life to their family life is carefully shepherded by the authorities in the Bank. They were, as Morgan (1997) points out, essentially efficient parts of a greater machine. Not unlike a computer, they had a set of written rules to follow for each task from which there could be no deviation and, while each task contributed to the overall product of their labour, the workers had little or no knowledge or understanding of the significance of their tasks to the overall goals of the organisation. This is described by Cooper (1986, p. 303) as a consequence of

the framing of organisations as systems “of articulated unity and order”. Such a vision of organisations separates them from their “background or environment” but can be overcome by considering the relationship of the environment and the system as serving each other (Cooper, 1986, pp. 303-304).

From an overview of the grand-narrative it appears that the traditional Bank was as much a bureaucracy as the modernised bank. For banks, as immaterial organisations, record keeping and paperwork were the foundation for carrying out tasks correctly and earning the trust of their customers. Understanding the difference between the bureaucracy of the traditional bank and the modern bank goes a significant way in helping to understand the culture and how it has changed. According to Morgan (1997) the organisation as a highly bureaucratic machine creates an environment where problem solving abilities are disappearing. Workers become lazy when a problem arises and they do not have the experience or the will to find a solution. The machine, with its specialised working parts constantly relies on other parts to find solutions and if it is not necessary for their individual needs they will not seek out a solution. As such the limitations of the mechanistic organisation include “difficulty in adapting to change”, “mindless and unquestioning bureaucracy”, “unanticipated and undesirable consequences” due to self-interest over communal interest, and “dehumanising effects upon employees” (Morgan, 1997, p. 28).

These problems with the mechanistic approach closely resemble Lueng’s (2008) findings of ethical climates being related to behaviour, care and loyalty for the common good of the organisation. The difference between the bureaucracy of the traditional bank and the modernised bank is that the common good of the organisation always traditionally outweighed

individual self-interest. Additionally, despite the traditional bank workers having the general opinion that *they had a single job to do and everyone knew what their job was*, this was only a temporary condition as they were more mobile within the organisation than more recent workers. The more modern worker has become more specialised and so focused on specific areas, whereas the traditional apprentice-style worker was trained in many areas. They relied more on the ability to learn within the organisation which, according to Sambrook (2005), is necessary in adapting “to changing work environments, and a key factor in the pursuit of organisational survival”. A confluence of events that sees workers becoming more specialised and mechanistic, a drive for organisation efficiency and a move away from the job-for-life situation has the potential to create a fragile organisation. An organisation that loses the ability to pass knowledge through organisational learning and communal sharing becomes as, Paul (see Section 5.2) mentions later, could become focused on status rather than experience which only comes to light when a crisis happens.

4.6 Conclusion

It is not an easy task to bring these manifestations of change together into a concise episode, which is perhaps an indication of the breadth of influence that organisation change has on culture. The stories that are presented in this section highlight many of the variations to the working environment that were experienced as a result of the unleashing of profound change in the 1960s and early-1970s. As a consequence the modes and patterns of work became altered. The introduction of new categories of workers that broadly followed transformations in society and attitudes to work indicated that the Bank had

succeeded in altering traditionally embedded work practices. The workers and the Bank move away from the close knit communal setting of the traditional bank and accept the individualisation of workers. These new individual workers race to become successful by meeting goals and targets and are increasingly responsible for their own careers and education needs. Both the Bank and the workers are challenged into finding new ways of conducting their business. The theories and concepts discussed here are used as a way of exploring these changes and what they mean to the culture of banking. They are wide ranging and far from a concise picture of how working life became altered. To an extent this middle period of transition is difficult to corral and almost refuses essentialising or neat modelling. The theories, concepts and stories will be brought together more comprehensively in Part III where a complete grand narrative is presented along with the contributions to culture and organisational change. The final section in Part II explores the changes in the Bank as the workers reflect on the overall transformations during the research period.

CHAPTER FIVE

MODERNITY AND REGRET



Bank of Ireland Headquarters, College Green, Dublin – HQ from 1808 - c.1970 (Wiltshire collection, 1964)



Bank of Ireland Headquarters, Baggot St., Dublin – Occupied from c.1970 – 2008 (Lyons, 1983, p. 176)

5.0 Introduction: Modernity and Regret

In the previous chapters of Part II the stories paint a picture of an organisation negotiating a path through a profound period of change. While the research initially set out to gather stories of working life before the global financial crisis, the conversations with the storytellers eventually, and probably inevitably, turned to this contentious subject. What is interesting about these conversations is that, first, these stories are emotionally driven and are laced with nostalgia for the past with the storytellers declaring that such things present in the modern bank would never have happened in the old bank; second they tend to be missing the presence of the worker as being integral to the realisation of the changes. As a conclusion to this part of the research, which commenced with the initiation of change, these stories provide a powerful narrative and a unique insight into the feelings of the workers towards their organisation and a summary of how the effects that the changes in the Bank had on its culture and working practices.

5.1 Comparing old and new

The many positives associated with the project to modernise the Bank are outlined in the stories presented in the previous chapters. The opening up of the stifling culture was much wished for and embraced by the workers. The changes created a large amount of opportunity for career progression. Whereas once the hierarchical levels of management and management positions were few, the reorganisation of the Bank created new roles and exciting opportunities for the workers. The bank itself became more open and flexible, improving the level of education of its workers, adopting new work practices and technologies, and introducing new products. The Bank faced into the challenges of

the changing marketplace and the changing needs of its customers with apparent success.

As the storytellers reflect on their time in the traditional Bank they note the amount of time spent on the laborious tasks that dominated the day to day life of banking.

It was a very structured role. Every cheque came into the branch at that time and you had to post the cheque. It was a double posting, you had the banks own ledger and then there was a statement which was the customers copy. Two different people posting the same cheque so they had to be checked that they were posting the right amount to the right account and then the ledger balances had to match with the statement balances at the end of the day. If there was a problem you had to go back and rectify it. Then you would go into the manager's office and he would literally go through every single cheque one by one calling it to the bank account so there was a third checking procedure there.

The first 7 to 10 years in the bank I had gone through most of the routine jobs in a branch which were very labour intensive and literally you could do with one hand tied behind your back. It was so painfully slow that you learned if you did a job you did it right. If you filed a cheque under the wrong name by mistake you could spend hours looking for it. Even in the cash if you were a pound out it meant that you had to stay there for an extra couple of hours counting and recounting and searching everywhere, you weren't allowed to go home until everything was properly balanced which was an incentive to get it right first time. Now you assume the computer gets it right. And rightly so, if you had three or four staff looking for a missing pound for a couple of hours, the cost was huge compared to the benefit so later there was more leeway. It was more practical. The real problem was that a customer's affairs might be wrong and they were affected and not the bank. (Stuart)

The increased pace of bank life and the freedom it brought corresponded to the opening up of the Irish economy, an increase in urbanisation and a booming economy, largely fuelled by foreign companies. It signified a new way of thinking not just for the bank but for the whole of society.

You're talking about the 70s then when things started to at least become sort of reasonable and the hierarchy came down to people. Of course people were changing too, society was changing and they wouldn't put up with a lot of the carry on that was going on. (Joe)

While the changes were embraced and facilitated by the workers, occasionally, at the time, they would note that some of the changes were a significant departure from the ways of the past.

I remember a friend telling a story that he was looking over a loan application for a colleague and when he saw the name on the application he said to his colleague, do you know this guy is a criminal and a drug dealer?. He didn't but he had to put all the details into the computer and because he ticked all the boxes he was approved for the loan. (Joe)

Additionally, many of the branch workers note that the biggest change they experienced was the increasing loss of the ability of the branch manager to draw on their experience, intuition and knowledge of customers when making decisions.

The manager Paddy, he lived upstairs and he was great. There was no such thing as a bounced cheque with Paddy, you'd go up to him and he'd know all the customers and he'd say ah no he's fine he'll be selling a few horses in the next couple of days. I think a lot of the problems in the bank started when they began to centralise lending because the managers didn't know their customers any more, they had their powers taken away. I mean we used to know most of the customers signatures. We used to get what was called the morning letter. All the cheques were sent down from Cabinteely [central cheque and credit card sorting and later central IT department in Dublin] and we had to check everything, all the signatures had to be checked and that it was filled out right and that the dates were correct. I think when they started centralising that it was the beginning of the end in some respects and then they took away the lending from the managers. In the quay [in Wexford] there were loads of managers, two lending officers, two or three managers and the main manager, all were involved in lending.

I remember [at a later time] a well-known business man and customer came in to the lending manager for a loan and all he had ever given was his word and he went stomping out and we asked what happened and the manager said he had taken exception to being asked for security for the loan. He had always paid his loans and being asked for a lien was a great insult to him. The manager wasn't happy but it had come from the top and there was nothing he could do. (Elaine)

At no time did events such as those relayed by Joe or Elaine cause them to question, on a disruptive level, the project of modernisation. It was accepted that just as the Bank could not do without graduates, it also required technology to become modern. With technological advances the Bank focused on centralising many of its functional area and thereby leaving little room for managers to use instinct or local knowledge in assessing applications for credit. Such increase in centralised structure is one of the main causes for concern that appears in the stories. Although, ultimately there was an acceptance of change and the positives outweighed the loss of many of the past traditions.

5.2 Reflections on Contemporary Banking

The organisation only became seriously questioned following the impact of the 2008 financial crisis and the need for the Bank and the industry to receive financial assistance from the Government of Ireland and others. The general thread of these conversations was to question the events that lead to the financial crisis and criticise the actions that they felt would never have happened in the traditional bank and which caused them to question their own judgement.

When I was a loan manager there weren't many bad loans. When you look at all the loans that have gone into default you might ask was I just very lucky! But I think I was just conservative. I can remember people coming in looking for loans and leaving my office in floods of tears because I turned them down. The culture when I started lending was would you lend that much money out of your own pocket, so if you wouldn't why would you lend the Bank's money. That was the rule of thumb back then.

Then later people would come in with a huge credit card debt and say someone on the TV had said that it's a good idea to release equity on the mortgage to pay this debt because the mortgage interest rates were much lower. I knew they couldn't

afford to pay much more in their mortgage but if I said no they would threaten me with closing accounts of their whole family and moving bank. So I would approve it and then say you have to cut up your credit card and they would say no again. They have to take some responsibility for their actions too, I used to think if this was my child asking for that kind of debt I wouldn't give it to them so I didn't want to give it out to anyone else but it was difficult not to.

There were times when people would come in to you and say I have been preapproved for a loan and I want to draw it down. When you questioned them on this they would produce a letter, signed by me, giving the preapproval. Of course the letter wasn't signed by me it was a printed signature and the letter came from some computer in head office. I had no choice then but to give them the loan even if I thought they couldn't afford it.

When I joined the bank, if you were in the bank there was deference and respect paid to you, you were up there with the clergy. There was a level of respect paid to bank managers but now people just look at you like you're scum that you brought this country to its knees. Which is very sad because I think it is a very small number of people who have done that. No one wants to take responsibility. (Stuart)

While many in the Bank were able to negotiate these new demands, even if they disapproved, when the global financial crisis hit around 2008 they faced a new challenge. Their place of employment, where many had enjoyed prolonged careers and which had provided them with a livelihood, became exposed to public scrutiny and strong criticism. Consequently their working lives and how they conducted themselves were questioned by politicians, media commentators, their customers and the public.

The bank manager has fallen from grace with the Fingleton and David Drumms and Sean Fitzpatricks, they need to be seen in shackles to get trust back. (Rory)

While a strong affinity of some of the workers to the Bank leads them to defend it passionately,

I'm not sure if I would have got that without a third level degree in any other institution, so the bank has been very good to me.

To this day if I hear someone challenging the institution I will question them as to why and do they have a foundation for it or what is the reason for it. Is it just the media hype that is out there?
(Jim)

Others felt *shame* for the actions that had taken place,

It's an industry in decline, we shot ourselves in the foot, I don't now say with any pride that I was a former bank official. (Stuart)

On questioning what happened in the Bank Paul makes the observation that the Bank somehow went too far. As an example he points to the surpassing of workers who were educated and experienced with workers who held a prestigious education award but had little real experience.

When I retired they put a 28 year old with an MBA in my place and look what happened. They were too concerned with status and didn't place enough emphasis on experience. He had never been through a recession and didn't know how to handle it. I think the Bank just went too far, it needed to develop but at some point it went too far. (Paul)

The nostalgic reflections on the Bank are indicative of the fondness with which most of the storytellers have for their careers in the organisation. This is true whether the storyteller was from the job-for-life era or the modernised era.

There is a pining out there for the Bank to retain their credibility and respectability and people are crying out to have the respectability to their roles returned. They are fearful of retrospective regulation, we are seeing in the UK they are going back to 2003 or 2004 and asking people why they picked a product for a customer and did they give them all the options, we are really scared of things like that. But the Banks will come through it at some stage and it will be important later for regaining trust is not the story they tell but how they tell it. (Mark)

As for looking to the future, there is generally confusion about how the Bank and the industry will re-establish its credibility and trust. The causes and consequences are still very much under review by the workers.

5.3 Reflections on Banking Careers

The stories told here are laced with descriptions of the traditional and contemporary experiences in the Bank. They are laid out and compared for their benefits and failings. They are stories that primarily arise in situations where the recent global financial crisis is mentioned. The 'regret' in the title of this section refers to this and to the reflective and nostalgic nature of these stories. Such reflections are to be expected when asked to 'tell me about your life in the Bank' but what is interesting is how they are told and what they are missing. The stories that look back over the changes to the Bank in critical tones are done so without the presence of the storyteller as willing accomplice to the changes. In contrast the stories that describe their own experiences describe how these much wished for changes were embraced and reproduced. It is an unusual situation that can be explained to a certain extent by the paradoxical effects of modernity on the development of individuals. As a brief prelude to understanding the significance of these stories the processes by which workers and the Bank become 'modern' is discussed. This leads into a discussion of shame and anger through Kundera's (1978) theory of *Litost*. What makes this discussion valuable is that it highlights the process of coming to terms with the realisation that the project to change and modernise the Bank did not live up to its promise. It is a process that is a natural occurrence for the workers but is missing in the vast external and public discourse on the future of banking.

5.3.1 Modernity: Paradoxes and Isomorphism

The demands of modernity are vast and often complex and confusing. Modernity is a broad concept that has had many

different incarnations throughout history. It is safe to say that it is not a static occurrence or at all predictable. Its capricious nature results in the production of many paradoxical situations. Such situations are evident throughout the stories of working life in the Bank. Rousseau (1775) in his *Discourses on Inequality* contemplates the plight of 'natural man' who was moved to re-shape his self by a progressive and competitive society. In more recent times Keohane and Kuhling (2004) noted another paradox, that of the ability of modernity to benefit individuals on one hand and to cause them harm on the other hand. Both of these paradoxical states of modernity are relevant to this discussion and, when complete stories of working life are inspected, the paradoxes become apparent.

Berman describes modernity as being a continuous movement and a "state of perpetual becoming" (1983, p. 16). How the bank workers, old and new, came to understand their working lives as they were being re-shaped and transformed by the continuous change that is a central element to modernity can be somewhat explained through certain processes and paradoxes of modernity. Berman (1970) explores the modern fascination for continuous improvement through Rousseau's (1775) argument that modernity pressurises man to continually engage in self-development and the accumulation of wealth and goods as a way of distinguishing himself from others. In this way man is no longer self-referential but begins thinking about how others perceive him, their success is based on the success of others (Berman, 1970). To appear as different to others relies on more than just the accumulation of wealth and property but also on less tangible notions such as personality, abilities and social standing (Berman, 1983). These values could be considered "as weapons against other men" (Berman 1970, p. 148). The result of

the continued re-shaping of man leads to a paradoxical state of unlimited capacity for developing the self and a much reduced capacity to be genuine and authentic (Berman, 1970; Rousseau, 1775).

As individuals continue to develop and change through the processes of modernity they often get caught up in the journey and fail to realise the dangers that exist. The stories of the changes that took place in the Bank, for the most part, indicate that the workers wholeheartedly embraced the much wished for changes. It is only over time that they become a source of regret and the fickle animal that is modernity is revealed. Drawing on Berman (1983) and Rousseau's (1775) contention that individuals sought to improve themselves through knowledge, culture and "noble aspirations and high ideals" (2004, p. 167), Keohane and Kuhling note how modernity places these desires on a continuous path of insatiable progress and accumulation. Caught up in communities that reaffirm the normality and acceptance of the accumulation of symbols of modernity the cycle continues until an event, like the recent global financial crisis, causes misfortune for the community. The shock of the end of the journey is rarely predicted and is most commonly assessed retrospectively (Keohane & Kuhling, 2004). An observation that is not dissimilar to Chia's (2014) concept of 'unowned' change, which, he contends, happens silently and continuously causing inevitable transformations.

Through accepting the change and becoming part of the drive for modernity, the iconoclasm caused by the management consultant has led to a type of "repressive erasure" of the past traditions which is often seen in historical breaks (Connerton, 2008). However, in this case it is only temporary, as after a crisis interrupts their journey of modernity the memories of the past

resurface. This consequence of being entangled in modernity draws comparisons with the stories told by the workers as they come to realise that not everything that they had blindly and loyally accepted had positive outcomes in the long run. Both of these consequences, or paradoxes of modernity, have an effect on the relationship between the workers and the Bank. It is most probable that the increase in competition between the banks and within the industry as globalisation took hold influenced the direction that the Bank took as it continued on with its project to modernise. DiMaggio and Powell (1983), note that with modernity there is a drive towards change which in turn has led to an increase in competition. The consequence of competition can result in lack of diversity in an industry through isomorphism.

5.3.2 Modernity and isomorphism

As a way of understanding some of the pressures that the workers, the Bank and their culture faced while modernising the tendency towards homogenisation in modernity is explored. While there is a drive to accumulate capital, whether economic, cultural, social or symbolic (Bourdieu, 1986), how it is carried out by highly bureaucratised organisations is of interest to DiMaggio and Powell (1983). They argue that the homogenisation experienced in modern organisations can be described through *institutional isomorphism*. In such situations “organisations compete not just for resources and customers but for political power and institutional legitimacy, for social as well as economic fitness” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 50). The authors list three types of institutional isomorphism, coercive, mimetic and normative, all of which are apparent in the Bank as it modernises.

Mimetic isomorphism is driven by uncertainty in a market or industry. To overcome uncertainty organisations may seek to

copy other successful organisations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). One of the primary methods of mimicking other organisations is through modelling their practices and processes which may occur for a number of reasons including the use of consultants (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Consultants continually reproduce models in their different host organisations, a practice which was common in McKinsey's work (McDonald, 2013). The structural changes in the Bank, as mentioned earlier, were along the lines of McKinsey's much used M-Form hierarchical structure and so they began mimicking other organisations unbeknownst to themselves. Moving from a simple single line structure and setting in place a group structure of independent but interlinked business units the influence of McKinsey laid the foundation for the Bank to grow in a similar fashion as the many other organisations who had employed McKinsey.

Normative isomorphism is strongly linked to professionalisation and the need to establish an occupation identity and levels of autonomy and freedom (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In the search for occupational legitimacy professionalised workers operate within the codes and boundaries set out by their governing bodies (See Section 4.3) and therefore become homogenous. Such homogenisation of workers has an effect on creating organisations in a field which have little difference in their modes of being (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Isomorphic workers move between organisations as they have specialised skills and backgrounds which are known and expected, this ultimately leads to organisation leaders who are increasingly similar (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The bank workers appear to have always been homogeneous. In the traditional bank they were developed within their organisation and had little freedom or scope for innovation. The difference in the movement of workers,

the new career focused workers in the Bank have a more flexible attitude to moving within the industry. It is through the movement of workers across organisational boundaries that the strongest ideas on occupational identity are spread and become normalised industry wide. As noted earlier when discussing the influences of modernity on the workers, being part of modernity means accepting the norms that are reproduced in communities, in this case the community is now the whole industry.

Coercive isomorphism is strongly linked to the exertion of external power and persuasion on an organisation. Organisations or leaders pressure or coerce a target organisation or industry to behave in a certain way (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Beckert, 2010). The types of strategies, which are difficult to resist, that cause the coercion can be legal or technical and govern the way an organisation or industry do business (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). There is some suggestion that the bank mergers in the early 1970s were as a result of political policy to enhance the industry as it faced into open markets and requirements to support infrastructural developments in Ireland (see Section 1.3) but the outcome was not to make the four remaining banks homogeneous, it appears to have been more as a response to competition. Beckert (2010) notes that “entranced organisations” are difficult to change and therefore can result in divergence rather than convergence. Coercive isomorphism, for Beckert (2010), especially after a large scale trauma or institutional failing, can only be achieved through the presence of an extremely powerful leader. For some, such as Luyendijk (2015), the leaders who are responsible for regulating the banking industry have, between 2008 and 2015, failed to make any significant changes or increased regulation since the 2008 global financial crisis. However, it may be the case that over regulation is

against the “prevailing institutional logics” of the long-historied banking industry. This could certainly be an interesting argument in light of the storytellers reflections on the Bank and the arguments for a change to banking culture (Beckert, 2010, p. 154). It is most likely that the time for coercive institutional practices is now and has not yet fully emerged.

Isomorphism describes how the Bank and its workers negotiated institutional pressures as the project to modernise progressed. How the Bank and the workers negotiated these pressures could be used to describe any situation of organisation change, especially in a long serving and traditionally embedded organisation. Taking a snapshot of bank workers in 1970 and again in 1990, the cultural and normative differences are obvious. The long term job-for-life workers co-exist beside the graduates and externally recruited specialists. The identity of the traditionally recruited workers is deeply embedded in the organisation. The modern workers are more independent of their organisations and are more flexible in terms of moving employers. Their identities are partly shaped by forces outside of the bank. The individual stories give the appearance that after a short period of adjustment both sets of workers manage to work together successfully. It is only when the failings of the modernisation project are discussed the stories begin to give a deeper sense of unhappiness. When the stories are meshed to create the bigger picture it is evident that traditional banking ideas and modern banking ideas are in conflict and there is a realisation that at some point over the course of modernisation the concept of what it is to be a banker has changed. The paradoxes of modernity describe the situation that many of the storytellers find themselves in. Firstly, as a consequence of not being able to control the power and progress of modernity, its destructive powers eventually become

apparent. Those who embraced modernity then paradoxically become its victims. Second, the pressure of progress in modernity creates characteristics that are not authentic to traditional man. Self-progress is both necessary and limitless leaving behind a void in authentic self-expression. For Berman, inspired by Rousseau, the only way forward is that “men without selves would create selves for themselves” (1970, P. 155).

5.3.3 Litost, shame and anger

The narratives and stories that the bank workers tell allow us to understand how they perceive their self-identity in relation to their workplace. The interesting development in many of the biographies that lead to a nostalgia for some of their past traditions permits us to appreciate the trauma that occurs in the ongoing understanding of both the storyteller's identity and the identity of the bank when the 2008 financial crisis leads to criticisms of the public image of the organisation. Nostalgia is a strong emotion that has relevance to understanding identity, especially, as in this research, when the storytellers directly experienced both the past and the present (Brown & Humphreys, 2002). Nostalgia can be seen to afford the storytellers a form of “emotional support” (Brown & Humphreys, 2002, p. 143) as they go through, not so much an organisational change, as suggested by Brown and Humphreys, but the realisation of the failure of some parts of a planned change that they had previously admired. In this case nostalgia is used by the storytellers is part of a process of how they are re-inventing their self-identity so as to remove themselves from direct linkages to the elements of the modernity project that failed. In this way they move beyond nostalgia as a sentimental yearning for times past. They make use

of nostalgia to display their anger and disappointment at 'others' who they believe were responsible for the failures.

Nostalgia is examined through a different concept; that of *Litost*. *Litost* is a Czech word that is difficult to translate into English. It is a descriptive word that indicates a particular state of feeling. Milan Kundera makes use of this word in a chapter of *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* as a theory to describe a particular episode in the student's life that gives rise to this feeling. *Litost*, according to Kundera (1978, p.167), "is a state of torment created by the sudden sight of one's own misery". Kundera goes on to describe the word by its sound "the first syllable, which is long and stressed, sounds like the wail of an abandoned dog" (1978, p.166). This description goes beyond mere instruction in pronunciation; it is symbolic of its representation as a type of pitiful shame that rises up inside of people. It is a word whose meaning is difficult to articulate but which Kundera believes is necessary in describing the soul. It is a word that describes something that is intangible, mystical and transcendental. It is an emotion, which, as reflective of the past, is akin to nostalgia.

Kundera initially describes two scenarios where *Litost* emerges and which explain the emotional states that accompany it. *Litost* is brought on by the realisation, or the pointing out, of a failure that alters the balance of a relationship. For example, the student is unable to swim in the part of the lake where the girl goes, he is then reminded of physical inferiority to her and he becomes angry and ashamed – "he felt *Litost*" (Kundera, 1978 , p. 166). Feelings of *Litost* disappear when revenge is wrought which returns the relationship back to its balanced state. So, in Kundera's (1978) example, the student slaps the girl and claims that he was worried about her, she accepts this and the relationship returns to normal. In this case it was possible for the

student to rid himself of the feeling of Litost because the girl was weaker. When the opposite occurs and the “counterpart” is stronger revenge is harder and is Litost is often only removed through self-annihilation (Kundera, 1978). In the second scenario, the student has the idea that if he annoys a hated piano teacher so much that he throws him out the window, the teacher will be charged with murder and the student will have found revenge (Kundera, 1978).

Neither of these scenarios can be applied to the experiences of the bank workers. If a case of whistle-blowing came up in the stories it might be evident but the stories around the Bank's transformation are of acceptance, even if sometimes reluctant acceptance. What is visible here is the reflective period that is induced by Litost. The storytellers look back over their time in the Bank and question what went wrong. Litost is brought on by the realisation that many of the traditional cultural and practical elements of the organisation have been replaced with what they believe is unacceptable practices. But, the stories do not indicate any revenge. In this case the counterpart is stronger so, following Kundera's model, evidence of self-annihilation to force revenge on the Bank would be evident. While they are ashamed and angry there is no inkling that any of the storytellers are inclined to exert revenge in this way. Since Litost, for Kundera, represents “absolute love” and an “absolute identity” there is always a desire to work towards this balance. A more detailed retelling of a Litost experience, between the student and Krystina, appears to provide a third method of overcoming Litost, one which is more relevant to the bank workers situation of Litost.

5.3.4 Litost and the Idealised Bank

In Kundera's telling of another occurrence of Litost the student finds himself in a similar predicament to the bank workers – he is unable to use revenge to dispel his Litost. This situation explains how the storytellers may come to terms with their regrets for what has happened and that revenge is not always necessary to find balance.

Kundera (1978) tells of a time where the student brings his girlfriend Kristyna for a visit to the city. When he is with her in her normal rural setting their relationship is balanced. However, when she arrives in the city her mannerisms and attire are out of place. The student becomes angry and ashamed and so feels Litost. He is unable to find a way to seek revenge and so his Litost continues. While explaining his predicament to one of the poets he meets, the poet writes a description of Kristyna which venerates her and turns her into a "Queen" (Kundera, 1978, p.190). Kundera asks the question what happens when revenge cannot be taken? His answer is for the student is that "poetry's charm flies to his assistance" and all that "remains of this beautiful and thoroughly bungled story... [is] the poetry" (1978, p.211). When Kristyna has left all the student has is the piece of paper with the poet's idealised description of her. This is not dissimilar to the situation that the storytellers find themselves in, they cannot find a form of revenge and so, are left with the idealised version of the Bank at a time when it was not a source of shame or regret. In this mode of reflection and nostalgia the storytellers are creating a type of commemoration of the ideal bank. Such emotional actions are, according to Simko (2012, p. 898), natural reactions to a tragedy or crisis that "unsettles people's sense of ontological security".

At the beginning of this document is a poem about a bank manager, written in the 1970s it details the archetypical character, status and expectations of the banker in society. This is the traditional bank, but as has been detailed above once the Bank set out on its journey to modernise the organisation and its workers got caught up in the perpetual need to develop and change. The 2008 global financial crisis changed the course of this continuous development and left the workers questioning many of the changes that occurred in the Bank. Despite many of the bank workers looking back at their old traditions, this banker of the 1970s will not reappear to right the wrongs and bring the Bank back to a balanced state of “absolute love”. Like the student, what they hold on to is an idealised version of the Bank, one which is no longer there but is at the same time not completely lost. Why this is important is that it indicates a unique body of knowledge of the Bank and its culture that can only be found by those who experience it, or those who actively look for it. The old values that they revere may not be part of the future of banking but understanding them allows for the uniqueness of banks to be understood, especially when the organisation and workers are becoming increasingly isomorphic. These stories and reflections are perhaps part of the “institutional logics” that Beckert (2010) describes and knowledge of these would allow a better understanding of banking organisations.

5.4 Conclusion

Over the previous two sections in part II the grand narrative described experiences of working life and how it had changed since 1960. The stories in this section represent a slight shift in analysis and purpose. The comparisons of the old and new practices and cultures in the Bank allow for the opportunity to

discuss the workers and the Bank as they step out of their sheltered and protected existence and embark on a journey of modernisation. The Bank and its workers are caught up in the cycles, pressures and influences of modernity which has a profound effect on the culture of the Bank over the research period.

The storytellers' reflections on the Bank come at a time when the 2008 global financial crisis caused a shift in circumstances and stalled the path of development which they were on. This instigates a situation of reflection on the past as a way to make sense of what happened. The nostalgic reflections bring out emotions such as anger, regret and shame, not unlike *Litost*, the emotionally bound Czech word. Not being able to find any way to revenge the Bank, or anyone else, for their mistakes they create an image of the idealised bank as a way to console their emotions.

These stories are important as they provide a different perspective to the changes in the Bank and the effect these had on the culture. Previously the changes were accepted and embraced, but these reflections indicate that the project to modernise may have been flawed. The stories also point to the importance of the storytellers' perspective in developing a deep understanding of the Bank and its culture.

In Part III the grand narrative is brought together and the theories and concepts explored in the document are developed into contributions to theory and practice on organisational change and culture.

PART III

Modernity Change and
Organisations:

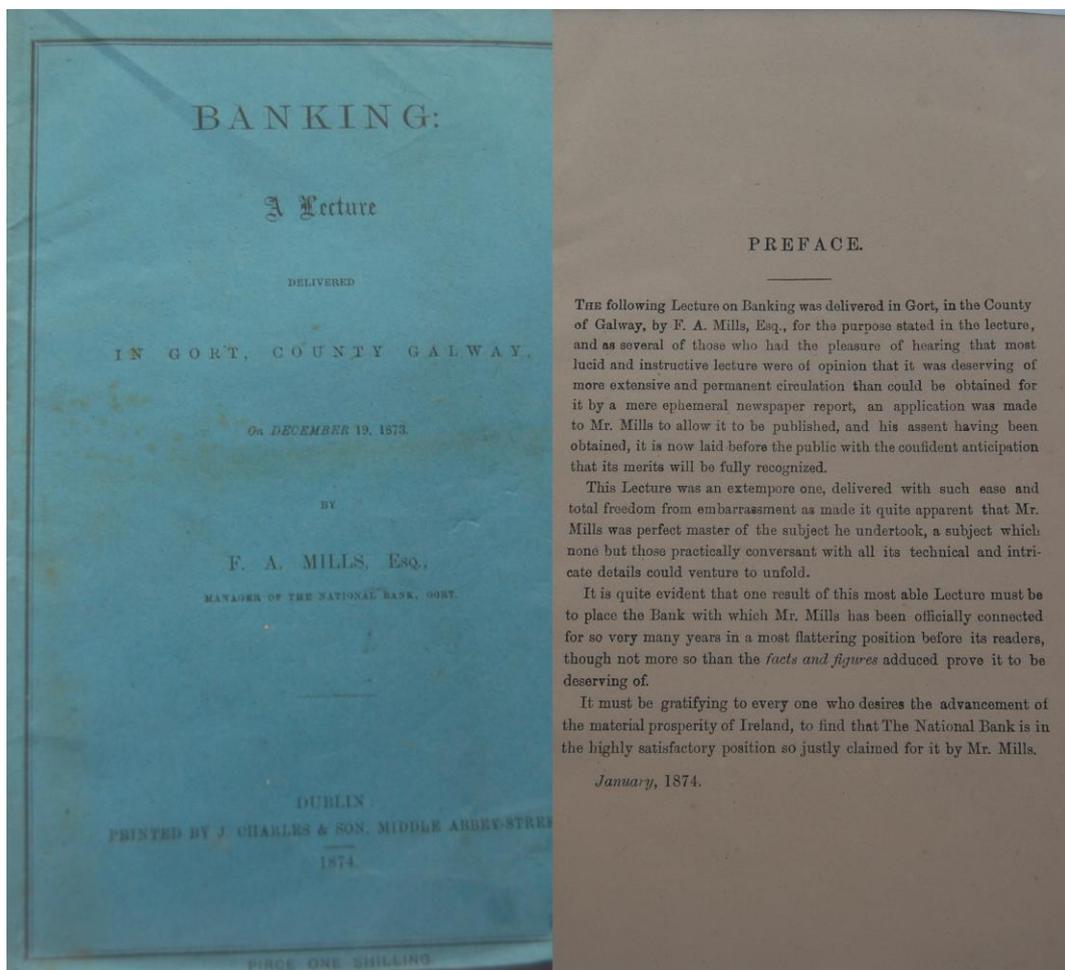
Understanding Culture,
Change and Modern Banking

Preface to Part III

Part III brings together all aspects of the research into a concluding summary. It begins with the grand narrative as it is viewed through the theory and concepts discussed in Part II and Part I. Following this, the summary is narrowed down further into the contributions of the research to organisation culture and organisation change. Finally, Part III concludes with some ideas for future research that have made brief appearance throughout this process. I have particularly left this as a sub-section of the contributions since inductive research is a process of broad questioning which sets about to find knowledge and information that is not widely known. As such, the ideas that have generated the potential for extending this research are a contribution of this form of research.

CHAPTER SIX

A GRAND NARRATIVE OF 40 YEARS OF BANKING: UNDERSTANDING CHANGE AND CULTURE IN THE BANK



Pamphlet reproduction of a banking lecture (Mills, 1874)

6.0 Introduction: A Grand Narrative of 40 years of banking

In this section I bring together the forty year grand narrative of working in the Bank and discuss its relevance in light of the theories and concepts outlined in Part II. By doing this the research will aim to make sense of this period of transformation and what it reveals about organisational change, culture and working lives.

6.1 A Changing Bank Culture

Upon entering into the Bank from 1960 and into the early 1970s the storytellers were quickly indoctrinated into the performative acts (Butler, 2009, 1990) of being a bank worker. The normative expectation of subservience to the organisation's hierarchy and its code of behaviours created a communal atmosphere that was easy to comprehend. Despite some minor deviances that tested the boundaries (for example Dave in Section 3.1) the workers in the traditional Bank understood what was required in this *well established social role* (Goffman, 1959). Emerging from the strict, sombre and often archaic traditions the bank workers of the 1960s and 1970s embraced and, with relative ease, adopted the transformations to their working lives. The workers were given new levels of freedom and were expected to contribute on a higher level to the success of the organisation. They were no longer just "paid to do what they were told" but were expected to add their thoughts and ideas to the knowledge of the Bank (for example see Owens' story in Section 3.2). Careers moved faster and opportunities were abundant. These changes were the result of external pressures to the banking industry which culminated in the internal decision to engage a management consultant to advise on how the Bank needed to change to meet the demands of the opening market.

While the Bank was on an inevitable course of transformation, the act of bringing in the management consultants, McKinsey and company, had an immense effect on the direction and depth of the change. Using the metaphor of the court fool is advantageous in explaining the management consultant's mode of being within the organisation. That is, how their mysticism and unique knowledge allows them to tell truths to the organisation's leaders and legitimises their power to make change. As an outsider, not hindered by any emotional connections to the Bank, the consultants can move through the organisation observing and gathering information, much like the flâneur or stranger. Following McKinsey's advice the Bank began to change in a variety of ways, most of which were acceptable to the storytellers. From the stories, the most profound change during the late 1960s and early 1970s was to the social life of the workers.

6.1.1 Changing lives and identities

Through exploring the social life and its changes it is possible to see how the project to modernise the Bank had a lasting effect on its culture. The early stories of play and socialising are indicative of the communal nature of banking and reveal that there was little competition in the banking industry. The social life, which was once innocuous but at the same time firmly rooted in traditional banking customs, transformed into a location for business practices and workplace identity. Play is transformed into game and now has winners and losers (Huizinga, 1938). With the onset of competition, the workers play the new game of sales; play, as game, is used to secure new business and maintain the interest of existing customers. Play for the storytellers becomes part of the game of being successful; it is part of their expected performance of the bank worker who is participating fully in bank

life (for example see Eve's story 3.4). The transformation of this most closely held and respected aspect of traditional bank life is an applied and practical representation of the power of the management consultant to instigate ideological iconoclasm. The removal of the communal social life or the 'break-up', as the storytellers call it, fundamentally changed the collective nature of banking culture and many of the basic underlying assumptions that were deeply embedded in the traditions of the organisation.

Further changes are noted throughout the stories and when brought together reveal the transformation in working life across a forty year period. The changes instigated in the 1960s proceeded to spread through the organisation and change the fundamental identity of a bank worker. Without realising it the bank workers were in a professional occupation, their ethos and ways of doing things were similar to the characteristics often linked to the classic professions. Their move to professionalise allows for an in-depth exploration into how the project to modernise the Bank affected their identity as a bank worker. By professionalising, an occupation takes on an image of the professional, described by Evetts (2003) as 'ideological professionalism', in response to the loss of the 'normative value system' that was once part of an organisation. The bank workers were faced with the iconoclasm of many of their 'basic underlying assumptions' that were a binding element their organisational identity. If, as Butler (2009) says, our identity is pre-determined and we enact that which is expected of us, there is a presumption that guidance will be forthcoming in determining what performances are required. As the Bank moved along with its project to modernise there appears to be a loosening of the boundaries and guidelines that determine the bank workers' identities. Explored through concepts such as Thrift's (1999) soft

capitalism, which replaces hard organisational values, and Svenningsson and Alvesson's (2003) continual practice of 'identity work', the stories tell of a continued search for a successful identity with little solid guidance.

In the modernising bank the practices of recruitment are altered and there is no longer an expectation of a job-for-life or for careers and education needs to be carefully husbanded within the confines of the organisation. New workers are more flexible and individualised as they become responsible for the success of their careers, leading to some of the earlier storytellers perceiving them as being less loyal. It appears, however, that this is not the case. If loyalty is concerned with not acting to harm colleagues and acting towards common goals (Coughlan, 2005) then there is no suggestion within the stories that the actions of contemporary workers are contradictory to this. It is possible that the perceived lack of loyalty emerges from the turn to individual responsibility. Since, as Leung (2008) notes care and loyalty is reciprocal, that a caring organisation tends to have workers who act in line with the ethics of the organisation, the contemporary bank workers are merely responding to the new modes of recruitment and working arrangements. So, by being flexible and mobile contemporary bank workers are etching out careers in an industry rather than a single organisation. They are responding to the lack of guidance and ever changing boundaries of what it takes to be a successful worker.

6.1.2 The 'Modern' Bank Worker

As the project to modernise moves through forty years of transformation there is pressure on the workers to follow suit and become 'modern' workers. The competition that came with the 'break-up' between the banks fed into a system of progress that

Rousseau (1775) had identified as driving man's competitiveness to appear more successful than others by, as noted by Berger et al. (1964), having a sense of status associated with one's work. In this quest to uncover the cues that are required to perform as a successful bank worker a new form of individualised bureaucracy takes hold. Despite having greater freedom and opportunity the bank workers still remain as working parts of a machine (Morgan, 1997) but in the contemporary bank they are increasingly pigeonholed into specialised areas and driven by self-interest. So, by being 'modern' the workers are pitted against their colleagues in competition which encourages continual competitiveness and search for status. The consequence is a fragile organisation that lacks experienced workers who are willing to assist with problems outside of their area of responsibility or expertise. This becomes apparent when, as a result of the 2008 global financial crisis, many of the storytellers reflect on the changes in the Bank and question what went wrong.

When the storytellers reflect on the changes to the Bank it reveals much about the nature of modernity and how external forces played a role in shaping the contemporary bank. One of the many effects on the Bank and its workers is revealed as they become much like other workers and organisations. The changes that come with being part of modernity happen continuously and silently (Chia, 2014) and they are not observed until the journey is interrupted (Keohane & Kuhling, 2004). In this case it is the 2008 global financial crisis that provides the shock necessary for the changes to become apparent and be considered retrospectively. The shame, anger and regret experienced by the storytellers as they reflect on the changes in the Bank and whether or not they contributed to the 2008 financial crisis is akin to Kundera's use of *Litost*. The storytellers are looking to return to a

balanced relationship and they do this by hanging on to an idealised image of the Bank. In coming to terms with the change, the storytellers reveal that what had once been a conforming and expected performance as a bank worker had suddenly and retrospectively become non-conforming. Some of the storytellers realise that their performances had, in Goffman's (1959) terminology, become cynical since that they did not feel that their actions in later times were fitting of the traditional identity of a bank worker. Overall, what it reveals is that the outcome of continuous change is difficult to predict.

6.2 Theorising the nature of Culture and Change in the Bank

The previous section is the culmination of the grand narrative built out of the stories and experiences of the workers. This section considers how the stories from an organisation in change reflect, refine or contradict what is known in the academic discourse on organisational culture and change. It starts by exploring the wider literature around change before commenting on how relevant it is to the grand narrative. The literature on culture is similarly explored and discussed. The grand narrative and these theoretical considerations feed into the contributions to theory and practice in Chapter 7.

6.2.1 Theorising Change in the Bank

The origins of a turn to organisational change and its management are difficult to locate and are often contested between scholars from differing schools of thought (Hughes, 2006; Burnes, 2004c). Burnes (1996) argues that it was during the 1930s when the concept of organisational change came to prominence in what later was termed the "planned model of change". Such

a position points towards Lewin's 3-step model, which was introduced in 1951, as being at the forefront of the discipline. Alternative approaches began emerging some time later, according to Burnes (2004b) around the 1980s, which falls after the Bank began its change project. This does not exclude it as being irrelevant to this discussion since the change in the Bank is long-form and evolving over time. Already discussed in Section 1.1.3 is a brief introduction to the dualism of planned change and emergent change. Ideas of emergent change arising out of criticisms of the planned approach, that it was too prone to failure of change initiatives, too linear and did not give enough attention to the often variable temporal state of change (Hughes, 2006). There are champions of each approach who have developed new models or modified existing models despite warnings that a single approach may not adequately serve the unique purposes of individual organisations or their change experience (Dawson, 2002; Pettigrew, 1990). Drawing on the experiences of the Bank and its workers existing models and frameworks only partially reflect the reality of their experience of change.

It is obvious that there was a gesture towards formal or planned change to the Bank, this is highlighted by the procurement of the services of McKinsey and Company. What followed is not well a well defined plan. The first stage of Lewin's model (see Section 1.1.3) maps well onto the case of the Bank, the current status quo was certainly unfrozen- things were shaken up. Similarly the second transformative stage is evident, but these movements were dialogical- between managers and workers, and between the bank as a hermetic community and society in general. Finally, the final refreeze stage has never been achieved, indeed the act of unleashing change to the status quo has created a stage of

perpetual change, again dialogically. There are, similarly, elements of Kanter et al.'s ten commandments (see Section 1.1.3); a need for change was established, a singular vision emerged from a powerful leader that was published in the newspapers of the day, there was significant separation from the past, political sponsorship and a strong leader. The remaining points on the list are either not evident or were not present, most notable communication. Kotter's framework is the most difficult to map to the case of the Bank. There was an increase in urgency due to the changing nature of the economic environment, but the remaining seven points are difficult to observe from the stories. The relevance of these models to this particular case is sketchy as they do not include the consequence that change has on modes of being and ways of working in the organisation. The successful use of frameworks in a generalised way is also questionable.

Higgs and Rowland (2005) cite change scholars as giving figures of up to 70 per cent failure rate for change projects, similarly, Meany and Pung (2008) cite a McKinsey report that states only one-third of change efforts succeed. Given the range of interest in researching and publishing ways to succeed, the failure rate, presumably from a management perspective- remains high. If effective planned organisational change is hard to come by (Burnes, 2004c) and there is a noticeable gap between the academy and practice (Chia, 2014), concerns must be raised as to how valuable change management frameworks and literature are to practitioners and managers. Change agents, managers and leaders are often placed at the centre of change literature (Armenakia & Harris, 2009). All this suggests that the change literature induces and encourages managers to gesture towards change with little prospect of realising their dreams, visions and

plans. As such these models are performative; all this talk of change, the sense it can be marshalled and set to a purpose are potentially perilous.

As an example, the concept of effective communication is explored. What appears to be a significant anomaly concerning the initial period of change in the Bank and a key feature of successful change management is effective communication. Eccles calls it "vital and almost impossible to over-do" (1994, p. 157); Kotter and Cohen includes it as one of the 8-steps for success and declare that it should "get as many people as possible acting to make the vision a reality (Kotter & Cohen, 2002); and Kanter, Stein and Jick (1992, p. 383) places it in their "ten commandments" for executing change with the caveat that it has to be in the form of a dialogue with many voices. Communication of the changes which occurred in the Bank developed as an interest during the research, as is noted in Section 3.2 and Appendix D. Communication in the Bank was poor at the time and the workers were unaware on a formal basis that change was taking place, as noted by Owen in Section 3.2 things suddenly began changing. In a case of limited communication, change was able to happen and appeared to be well embraced. It is a widely held shibboleth of contemporary times that effective and meaningful communication, but, that such compelling change could happen where communication was poor is, I argue, an indication of the strength, and perhaps power, that the traditional culture had in creating ideal workers. It also indicates that meanings of conceptually abstract terms change over time. The limited communication of the traditional Bank was normal in its time but would not be considered a good character in contemporary terms. The question must be asked, then, as to the suitability of theories and frameworks developed

decades ago on observing or explaining change in contemporary organisations.

Time and change are two concepts that are deeply entwined and relevant to the stories of change from the Bank. The speed and direction of change over the 40 year research period was not uniform. As an organisation spread across a country with variable and disparate transport and communication links change came quick to some and slowly to others, but over time it eventually spread throughout the organisation. Frameworks of change call on managers to control time as a way of succeeding. For example, Eccles (1994, pp. 257-258) developed the "time spectrum" to help organisations adapt through speedy recognition of the need to change, quick planning and timely implementation. The type of long-form and largely unmanaged change that was experienced in the Bank has one key feature in relation to time; from its initiation it has continued past the expected longevity of many managers. First, the governor and CEO are roles that are limited by time, second, the nature of mobility in the bank and in contemporary careers are limited by time. Don Carroll the governor who introduced the changes and brought in McKinsey (Carroll, 1987) completed his first term between 1964 and 1970. While he brought McKinsey into the organisation at an early stage it was only during the mid to late 1970s that the workers were experiencing many of the changes. His second term was from 1982 to 1985, however in between and afterwards new governors took control with, most likely, their own ideas and plans. The leader of the change in this case was only a temporary position. Long-form and continuous organisation change is limited in ownership and control by the career or role length of those who initiate or support change. Many of the changes Governors instituted took years if not decades to feed

through the bank. So for example the decision to end staff relocation took a number of years to be felt, and perhaps it was only after a decade when staff in a branch were unusually settled that it provoked a deeper cultural change.

From this single case, it is hard to point to much of use to managers in the existing theories and frameworks; certainly theory offers limited real insight and actionable guidance to managers. From this single case, with all the limitations of method, it suggests that organisational change is more long-form than most management careers. The existing literature, then, appears to place too much emphasis on intentionality and the agency of managers, but with the still high levels of failure rates it may be that managers have little or no agency in controlling change.

6.2.2 Theorising Bank Culture

As mentioned in Section 1.1.2 defining and even recognising culture can be difficult. In relation to banking organisations culture is often associated with risk and reward over any other form. The initial research concern and point of departure for this study was the many criticisms of banking culture in light of the 2008 financial crisis and calls for it to change. With limited knowledge of banking culture the research set out inductively thereby avoiding the draw to analyse it through any one of the many existing models and frameworks. Schein's (1992) three layer model (Figure 1) was employed at the initial level of the research as it provided a tool for differentiating between the strong organisational image that the Bank created for itself (Fineman & Gabriel, 1996) and the culture which lies beneath and was the focal point of the initial concern that instigated this research. As the research comes to a conclusion and the data has been analysed and formed into a grand narrative it is appropriate to

draw on types of culture, and some more models and frameworks of organisation culture and discuss their relevance to the findings.

There are many ways to describe and delineate culture and its diversity. Organisation studies has a long tradition of exploring culture through models and frameworks. So for example, Charles Handy (1993[orig. 1976]) listed four types of culture; Power, Role, Task, and Person. Power cultures are depicted as a web with the power at its centre. They rely heavily on the individual at the centre of power and can often grow to a large size. Role culture he depicts as a temple with each column having a specific role in supporting the organisation. This is an organisation where specialisation is required in knowledge and skills. Task culture is depicted as a net of intersecting lines and focuses on "getting the job done" (Handy, 1993, p. 188) and as such requires flexibility and adaptability to market conditions, Person culture is depicted as a cluster and serves the purposes of certain individuals within the organisation rather than an organisational goal. Such models are very useful in developing languages that allow managers to talk about culture. In a similar vein, Deal and Kennedy (1982) additionally speak of four types of culture. The "tough guy macho culture" risk takers who receive quick feedback on success or failure. The "work hard play hard culture" of those adverse to risk. The "bet-your-company culture" of large deals, high risk but slow feedback. Finally, "the process culture" where feedback on success or failure is rare and the focus is on how tasks are done (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, pp. 107-108). Cameron and Quinn (2006) aim to 'diagnose' culture in organisations through their competing values framework. This framework consists of four core values of culture placed along continuum of 'flexibility and discretion' v's 'stability and control' and 'internal focus and integration' v's

'external focus and differentiation'. Clan culture is akin to family or communal life with "shared values and goals, cohesion, participativeness, individuality" (Cameron & Quinn, 2006). It is internally focused and flexible. Hierarchy culture is bureaucratic with "clear lines of decision-making authority, standardized rules and procedures, and control and accountability" (Cameron & Quinn, 2006, p. 37). It is internally focused and highly stable. Market culture is related to organisational efficiency and effectiveness such as transaction costs and is driven by monetary success. It is externally focused and stable. Adhocracy culture is related to the information age and is underlined with creativity and innovativeness. It is a culture that constantly looks to the future and is developing new products and as such is flexible and externally focused (Cameron & Quinn, 2006). This framework leads into the 'organisational culture assesment instrument' which is divided into six categories each with four questions. It is through this framework that culture can be diagnosed.

Naturally enough, these models offer something to the interpretation of the the stories of working in the Bank Had the research set out on a deductive journey to discover culture it may have been possible to 'diagnose' (in the terminology of the Cammeron & Quinn, 2006) the culture of the Bank using organisational culture assesment instruments. Language is important here- it's the language of medical treatment; and so positions managers as physicans, perhaps with a touch of a God complex.

This is perhaps a limitation of this style of research and it is not possible to infer answers to their questions from the interviews. It is psooible to map some of the observed cultural characteristics onto their model, but such mapping feels forced, and more is lost than is gained. Of most uses is the rich decriptions of clan culture

in the traditional Bank, it is internally focused but does not appear flexible. Flexibility arrives when the Bank begins to transform. There is also elements of the hierarchy culture in the traditional Bank. It was highly bureaucratic, record keeping was (and still is) a necessity and clear lines of authority were present. The stability and internally focused traits are representative of the Bank. A market type of culture appeared in the mid 1990s when recentralisation occurred and perhaps in more recent times the uncontrolled change has created an adhocracy culture of continuous change. It might well be more useful to offer model exemplars, wherein the sense-making language and patterning practices of models are explored, rather than actual prescriptive cultural archetypes.

Similarly, Deal and Kennedy's (1982) model is difficult to map onto the Bank based on the data. There is certainly elements of 'work hard, play hard' but others might argue that the 'tough guy macho' might be more appropriate given the propensity to define bank culture based on risk. Since risk is an inherent part of how many understand banking culture, a very simplistic reading of how individuals respond to risk wears thin. Certainly banks are high risk entities, which in turn leads them to work assiduously towards mitigating risk in a fastidious way. So again, there is useful language frames, but each culture needs an unique contextual anthropologically informed analysis.

Handy's (1993) model could be applied to both the traditional and the modern or modernising Bank. The power culture was a strong aspect of the subversive nature of the traditional Bank. Similarly the role culture would be representative of the modern Bank's focus on specialisation. The task culture was also a feature of the Bank in the early part of the research period. The difference I argue is that the power culture was an corporate

organisational structure where as the task culture was part of the norms of behaviour of work practice, as we are told by Dave in Section 3.1 where he was admonished for trying to do a task a different way.

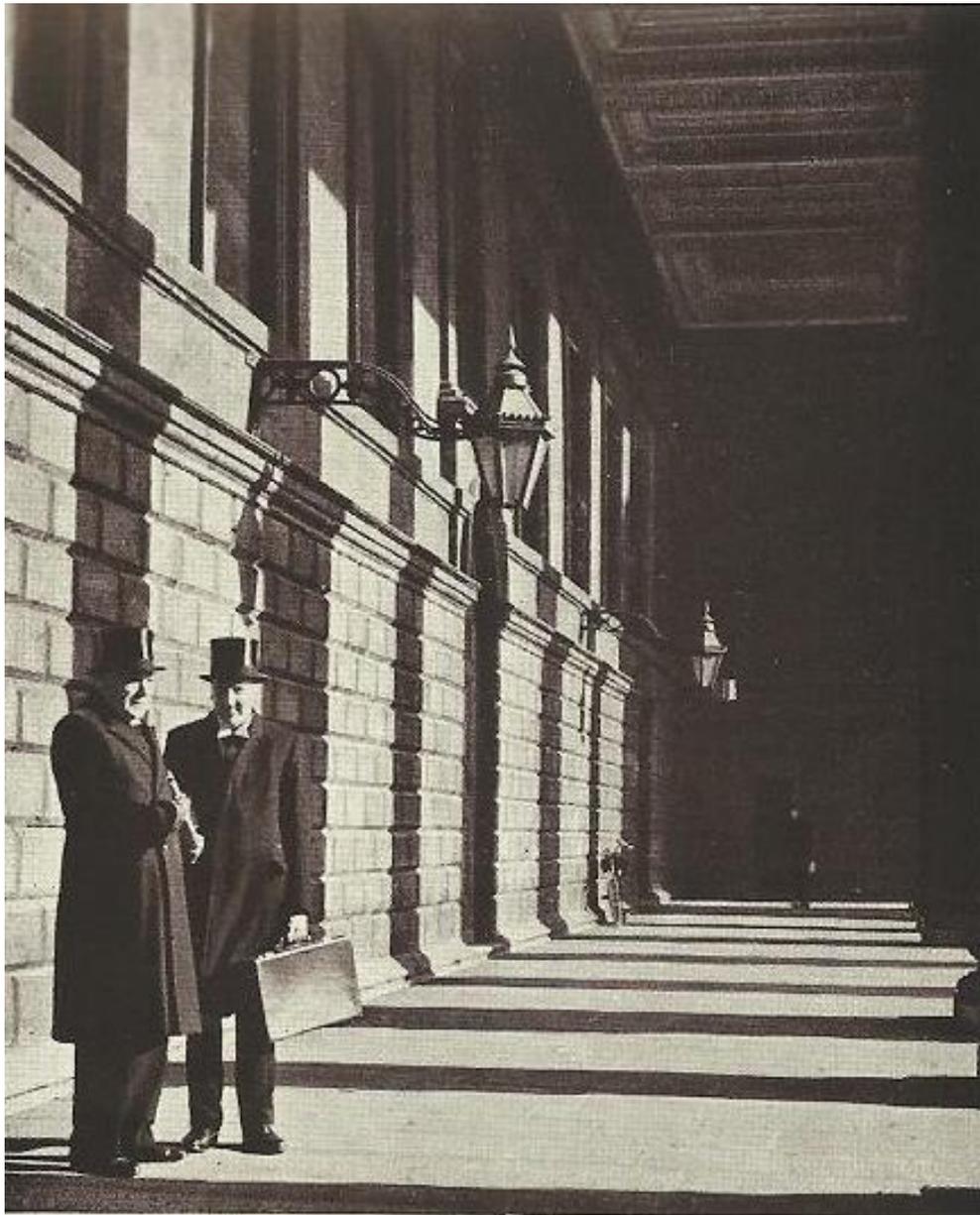
Taken as pure models that are a ready fit to any organisation these models are of limited use in understanding a culture that has been socially constructed by individual workers. Categorisation into the model's boxes are all problematic- for a model to be workable, categories have to be mutually exclusive, robust and the model needs to be comprehensive. On all counts the model making around culture is under-developed. They are more closely associated with organisational forms and structures. This is perhaps because culture became linked to organisational success or failure (Cameron & Quinn, 2006); (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). Use of such models would ignore the deeper meanings associated with working in an organisation in favour of a structured formula of culture. They are relevant for detailing culture where a research is focused on asking particular questions related to culture but not for the emergent and inductive form of this research. They are also limited, largely, to what is happening inside the organisation and do not discuss the external influences that may be brought into an organisational culture by its members.

What the three models presented above, and indeed Schien's (1992) model presented earlier, have in common is that the authors have variously researched and observed organisations to develop their understanding of culture. Handy is driven to understand organisations better and to try and define them in a "contextual interpretation" by his realisation that organisations were not well understood or written about with any certainty (Handy, 1993). He considered aspects of organisations from work,

roles, power, leadership and groups along with culture. The categories for his model of culture is based on existing literature and his practical knowledge of organisations. Whereas Deal and Kennedy (1982) base their four categories on their own experiences of organisations and through questioning and developing profiles of commercial organisations. In developing models author's consolidate a wide range of material for examination. They then produce an argument that leads to their model. In the production of the model it is not always easy for the reader to assess what has been left out of the model and consider what alternatives might be available. What they produce often becomes the victim of an exegesis that narrows down their work to a singular, a simplification of their detailed work. Those that produce models are usually deeply aware of the complexity they are attempting to reduce and synthesise. It raises a questions as to whether they are aware of the strangely simple exegesis that comes from their work. It is probably safe to assume that most model makers go through this process so that their model can be of practical use. So, for all their rhetorical complexity, nuances and subtalities they must recognise how they come to be used by managers in practice. Such a position draws parallels with McCloskey's (1983) 'The Rhetoric of Economics' and suggests that in a consciousness of both the explicit and implicit rhetoric of model making is required.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONTRIBUTIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH



Bank Messengers at College Green (Harvey, 1949)

7.0 Introduction: Contributions and Future Research

This research set out to explore the inner world of a particular banking organisation. The recent calls for changes to banking culture and criticisms of decisions that may have contributed to the 2008 global financial crisis spurred an interest in discovering more about banks and the people who work in them. As an inductive study the research was open to discovery, but, at the same time certain ideas were queried and concerns were raised as to knowledge of banking organisations. The primary aim of any research is to unearth interesting and novel findings about the subject matter. More specifically to banking organisations this research set out by contemplating the nature of banking culture, how and if it could be defined and what happened that it became so publically questioned. These concerns shaped the method and methodological forms that underpinned the study. As the research began to take shape a further concern emerged about the seemingly profound changes that the Bank experienced over the research period of 1960 to 2000 and the consequences that these changes had on the workers and their organisation.

Focusing on a broad range of workers, rather than just the more popular focus of the Bank's leaders, the research took a storytelling approach in an effort to interpret the lived experiences of bank workers across a forty year period from 1960 to 2000. This approach lends itself to a cultural slant for exploring the Bank as the workers experiences tell of social interactions and normative expectations in the work environment. What emerged from the stories was a grand narrative of working life that had become vastly transformed over the research period. The cultural elements of the stories allowed for the observation of these changes and the effect they had on the organisation and

worker's identities. The grand narrative of forty years inside a major bank has generated many insights that provide theoretical and practical contributions. The chapter commences with a summary of the contributions to theory and practice and is then followed by more expansive considerations about how these contributions were formed.

7.1 Contribution to Theory

Early on in the document (Section 1.1.) theories, concepts and definitions of the organisation, culture and change, both in general and specific to banking, were presented as an introduction. Later, in Section 6 where the grand narrative is brought together the findings are discussed within the lens of further literature on organisational change and culture. The contributions that this work makes to theory are detailed below.

Through exploring these stories from banking with a cultural lens the research was able to take a different perspective on organisation change and include the experience of workers who are an integral part of the change process. The research contributes the following to theories of organisation change:

1. Existing theories, models and frameworks that are typically used to describe organisation change and provide a blueprint for achieving change are a poor tool for providing comprehensive guidance for the realities of organisation change as it is experienced by workers, managers and individual organisations. These models tend towards encouraging managers to act- perhaps hastily and capriciously, rather than models that seek to aid interpretation of the world.

2. Existing theories and models of change place too much emphasis on the agency of management and their ability to manage organisation change towards a complete and stable conclusion. This is exemplified by the ongoing high level of failure rates in change projects and the failure to take into account that change is continuous and long form whereas careers of managers are limited. So in the next section, Section 7.2 a model of discovery based on the experience of change in the bank is presented- one that does not gesture towards neat resolution after a change, and one that emphasises the external forces strength, potentially overpoweringly strong impact on change within an organisation.

The initial research concern of this study was inspired by an almost unquestioned public and political discourse that criticised banking culture and blamed it as being part of the cause of the 2008 financial crisis. Exploring the culture of the Bank did not reveal anything that would support these claims directly, however, it did reveal interesting contributions to the way change is envisioned.

1. Organisation Culture is Reflexive. It is co-produced between the environment within which the organisation resides, including; the internal and external social and cultural influences of its workers and the ethos of the organisation. Such a situation is often marginalised in stand-alone generic models that hold out the promise of discover or defining an organisation's culture.
2. Culture in organisations resists being defined in isolation from the external environment or as being the creation of a

closed social group or closed organisation. To understand the full spectrum of an organisation's culture and the forces that cause it to change or remain the same requires consideration of these circumstances.

7.2 Towards New Models Frameworks and Theories of Organisation Change

The findings of the research have led towards a sense that current change theory inadequately explains the reality of experiences of organisation change. In response a potential and emerging model for organisational change has been developed. The basis of developing this model is to encourage a greater sympathy for external forces and the unpredictable path-dependencies that emerge when a change strategy is unleashed. The case of the Bank, as presented in this research, is difficult to fit into any of the popular models and frameworks for organisation change. Contemporary organisations have many different forms and cultures that cannot be represented by generic models and instructions. Understanding the uniqueness of organisational forms, cultures, histories and expectations is required to manoeuvre an organisation towards a desired outcome. The effect of change over a lengthy period of time is represented in the emergent model below. Uncontrolled and unmanaged change has fundamentally altered the shape of the Bank and the identity of its workers. How change is conceived, negotiated and handled has a profound bearing on the shape and form of an organisation. If organisation change is to be positive for stakeholders, new theories and frameworks should encourage the assessment an individual organisation's unique qualities. It should push leaders to identify the organisational form

that suits their needs. Having an identifiable form would lead to a better understanding of the organisation by stakeholders.

New theories and frameworks should be less focused on the direct management of change and accept that change agents have limited control over organisation change. The acceptance that large scale organisational change cannot be brought to a complete and acceptable conclusion will feed into the development of more realistic applied advice for organisation change. If the mind-set surrounding organisation changes take a similar view to Weick (2009), Mintzberg (2009) or Poole (2004) of accepting that change is difficult to manage, is continuous and that it can be emphasised, shaped, nudged, and channelled directionally rather than being considered a distinct project with a beginning and an end. Exploring and exploiting locally produced change within the organisation would allow for a more natural change process to occur, rather than something that appears forced and aloof to the realities of the experience of being in an organisation.

The model presented here, it is acknowledged, is preliminary and is limited in that it is based on a single case and a single interpretation of the data. The four stage model takes account of agency, modes of being and experience. The model is labelled a 'model of discovery', and its aim is to encourage greater recognition of the involvement of workers (and other stakeholders) in locally negotiated changing practices and culture. It looks at the uniqueness of a situation rather than an attempt to fit the change into a generic model or framework. Additionally, it comments on the need for organisations to consider what type of organisation shape is best suited to their needs, rather than blindly accepting the dogma that continuous change is good and necessary and an undeniable part of

modernity. Figure 7 is a brief summary that leads into the development of the model. It details the experiences of change within the case of Bank of Ireland, as told by the storytellers.

<p>Stage 1:</p> <p>Stability</p> <p>Agent:</p> <p>Management</p> <p>Mode of Being:</p> <p>Traditional Barracks Style and closed off</p>	<p>Stage 2:</p> <p>Initiating Change</p> <p>Agent:</p> <p>Management influenced by External Forces</p> <p>Mode of Being:</p> <p>Iconoclasm</p>	<p>Stage 3:</p> <p>Change and Modernisation</p> <p>Agent:</p> <p>Multiple – Management, Workers, Stakeholders, Environment, Law and Regulation, Politics</p> <p>Mode of Being:</p> <p>Contested and Continuous. Increasingly reactive</p>	<p>Stage 4:</p> <p>Search for Stability</p> <p>Agent:</p> <p>Management</p> <p>Mode of Being:</p> <p>Uncertainty and highly reactive</p>
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Figure 7: The experience of change in the case of Bank of Ireland

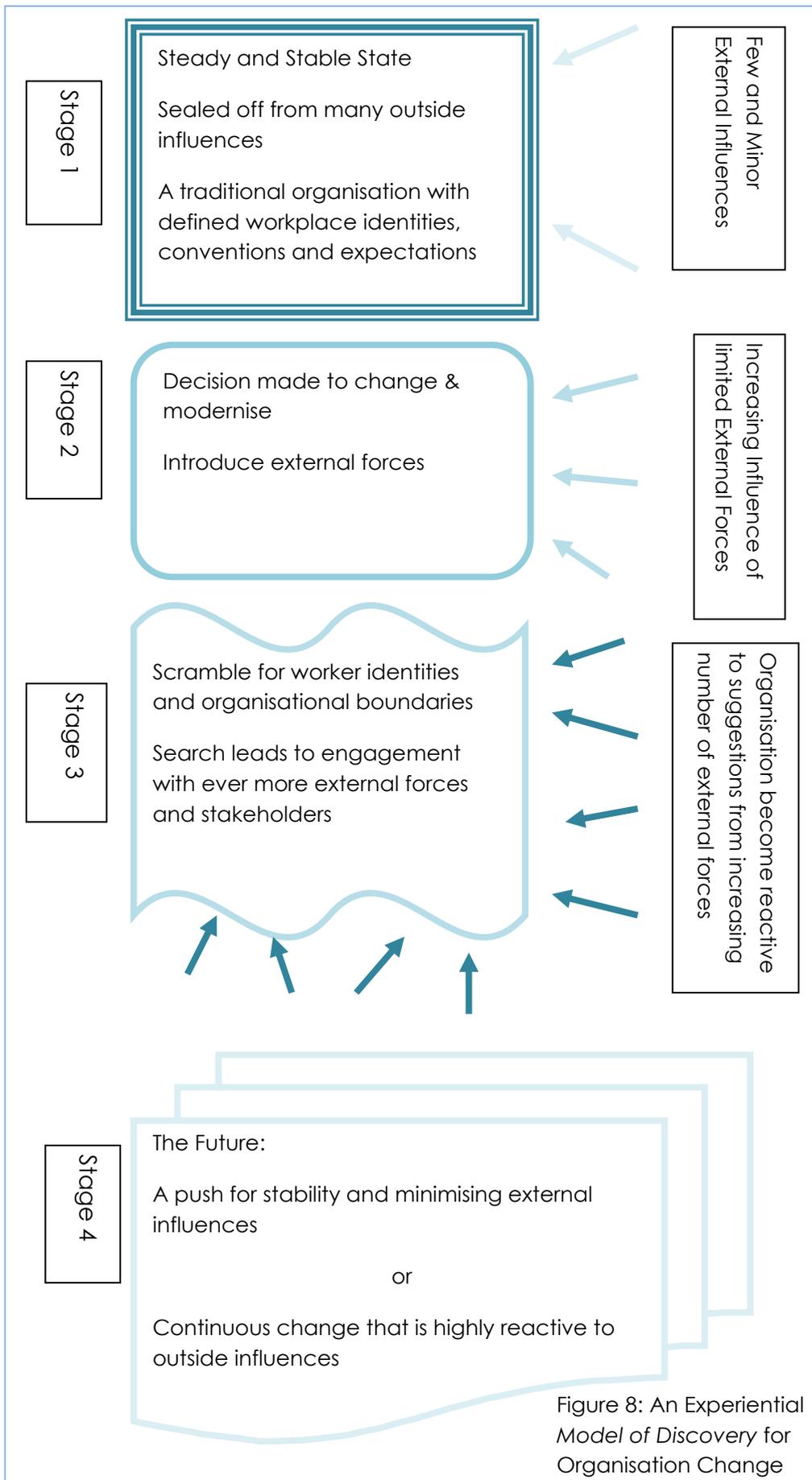


Figure 8: An Experiential Model of Discovery for Organisation Change

The model of discovery represents the changing form of the Bank's organisation. It begins by consideration of how to change from its current state, then moves to the point where change is initiated, next is the period where experiences of change become manifest and, finally, there is lack of focus in re-establishing organisation boundaries. The first two stages are not dissimilar to the instructions given in existing frameworks (e.g. (Kotter, 1995; Kanter, et al., 1992). In line with the criticism of the later stage of existing models, Stage 3 is more unusual and focuses on gathering information about the locally produced experiences of stakeholders. Stage 4 is an ongoing stage that if addressed would shape the future of the Bank and represents the idea of continuous change.

In stage 1 there are few external influences for the Bank and it has relatively stable boundaries and form that has been developed and honed over centuries. Stage 2 indicates an increasing number of external forces being allowed into the organisation which places pressure on the boundaries of the organisation where its form begins to change. Stage 3 highlights the experiences of workers as they endeavour to understand the changes to their identity and practices and to create new identities. It is the most likely the point where the range of stakeholders affected by the change begins to increase. Stage 3 is often ignored by change models, perhaps because it cannot be neatly defined and quantified and easy to fit into a model. It is the location of the uniqueness of change in individual organisations and forms the basis of a call in this research to reconsider how planning for organisation change is conceived. Stage 4 is the least understood phase of this model of discovery. It is the point where lack of management agency in controlling the change process becomes apparent. There is a tendency in

discourses of change to build up the need for continuous change as the only way to progress and to be modern. Cameron and Quinn (2006, p. 1) sum this up eloquently,

stability is interpreted more often as stagnation than steadiness, and organisations that are not in the business of change and transition are generally viewed as recalcitrant. The frightening uncertainty that traditionally accompanied major organisation change has been superseded by the frightening uncertainty now associated with staying the same.

Such a stance ignores the very nature of organisations, as described by Cooper (1986), as being bounded and structured. The idea of continuous change is contra to the idea of organising. However, organising, while concerned with boundaries, does not necessarily have to have rigid boundaries. The idea of organising with more fluid boundaries which are recognisable to stakeholders is the concern of Stage 4. Stage 3 and Stage are the seedling beds for new theories and frameworks of organisation change that would represent the uniqueness of individual organisations and the contemporary environment of organisational norms.

7.2 On a Contribution to Culture

Culture in banking has particular connotations most often relating to the risk profile of the organisation. With so many calls for a change to banking culture but so few acknowledgements of culture or how it should change, the research set out to discover if more detailed and concise definitions of banking culture could be determined. There is no doubt that there have been significant and lasting changes to the culture in the Bank since 1960. The traditional environment that was the normal experience of the workers from 1960 and into the 1970s was radically altered

as a result of moves by the Bank's management to reorganise in light of the opening up of their market.

Organisations, as social spheres, are influenced by the environments within which they reside and operate (Parsons, 1956). Researching an organisation, and especially its culture, without acknowledging the influence of external forces would neglect key aspects of organisational life – it would neglect the mutual influences of the system and the environment (Cooper, 1986). Although such a position is acknowledged by Schein (1992), amongst others, and reflexivity of culture and environment is not a new concept it is often an overlooked concept. It is overlooked by the over-reliance and use of models in isolation from their developmental backgrounds and perspectives. The use of models as a ready-to-wear tool for identifying or analysing organisational culture is representative of a perspective of culture

In the case of this research the Bank set out on a project of modernisation and, in doing so, exposed the organisation to many new external forces. These forces along with the transformations to work practices created an environment where workers were free and encouraged to develop new identities. The culture and their identities became transformed in a way that responded to the new norms of the external environment and the internal organisational changes. The workers brought into the Bank the effects of changes to their social environments and the Bank responded similarly by altering the normal expectations of banking life, this is also the case conversely. So, to be a 'modern' bank worker and to have a 'modern' culture is an inevitable path of the continual progress of modernity. How the culture has changed in the Bank is through a reflexive process of seeking to be in harmony with prevailing social and political expectations and norms while ensuring organisational goals are achieved.

Relying on over-simplified models for studying organisational culture plays down reflexivity with external influences makes it difficult to understand why and how a culture changes in a particular direction, as in the case of the Bank, which is the initial concern that instigated this research. Defining culture in isolation and through models alone ignores the social development or construction of culture at the human level.

The research contributes to theories of culture and the practice of calling for a change in banking culture by highlighting its reflexive nature to external influences. If banks are to change their culture it would be impractical to rely solely on efforts to succinctly define their culture or to find ways to control or regulate it but more practical to include an exploration of the range of forces that influence it and the social interactions that create, change and maintain it.

7.3 Contribution to Practice

In considering a contribution to practice I placed myself in a room with the managers and leaders of the Bank and other banking organisations and thought about what the research has led me to conclude about their organisation.

In summary, the Bank changed from being a tightly controlled and husbanded organisation that had become refined over 200 years of its life to an organisation with loose boundaries that became subjected to the influences of external conditions and stakeholders. In doing so, it transformed from being stable and closely bounded to having loose boundaries and uncertain identities.

Within the Bank workers had their long-standing and consistent identities set free to explore new identities and ways of working. Careers have become boundaryless (Arthur, 1994) as the societal norms of work have altered (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005) in the past number of decades and workers in the Bank not only became responsible for their education and their career planning but had the freedom to move between organisations. As such organisation boundaries became more porous and easy to cross (Arthur, 1994) and the Bank became caught up in a cycle of continuous change. The outcomes of this transformation had both positive and negative consequences over time. The positives related to the Bank's access to new markets and the worker's ability to use their knowledge to be more integral to the success and development of the organisation. The negative side only comes to light when the flow of development is interrupted by the 2008 financial crisis.

With the current spotlight on banking organisations and the loss of their reputation and status, this research puts forward informed recommendations to the Bank on possible ways to rehabilitate and re-stabilise their reputation and organisational conditions. Drawing on the reflections of the storytellers and their nostalgia for past ways, the research would recommend that the Bank, and other banking organisations, explore ways to create a strong worker identity. Despite careers now being mobile and boundaryless, it is still possible through the reciprocal nature of caring (Leung, 2008) for the Bank to create identities for the workers that induce ethical, communal and successful behaviours. In a similar way the Bank can strengthen its organisational boundaries while still remaining flexible to change and the needs of the market. Becoming less reactive and mimetic of other organisations the Bank could create a type of

semi-closed system of organisation that would enable it to retain memory and knowledge. Additionally, organisation change may become easier to manage and push in the direction required for continual development of the organisation. The challenge for banks and other organisations pursuing this route is to remain competitive while meeting the needs of the market. The recommendations are not necessarily calling for a return to the old practices that were deemed stifling by the workers but to re-create an internal environment that is less reactive to outside influences and creates identities and boundaries for workers. In a

The contribution to practice is not necessarily limited to banking. As an immaterial organisation that provides utility style services, Bank of Ireland has similarities to many other organisations, especially state and semi-state bodies. Additionally in the finance area, the contributions presented here could easily be applied to that equally unique organisation, the credit union².

7.4 Some more questions and ideas: Potential future research

Conducting narrative research leads to large amounts of data that has to be narrowed down into a concise piece of work. There are often interesting stories and leads that plant the seed of theoretical and conceptual ideas but as they are not fully formed or supported by the data require additional questioning and research. This is the very nature of inductive research, to dig up unknown knowledge and leave it open for more detailed analysis. In this section, I have outlined some of the possibilities for

²Credit Unions are “member-owned, not-for-profit financial cooperatives” that are owned by their members and normally run by an elected volunteer committee (World Council of Credit Unions, 2016). They are common in Irish communities and profits are returned to the members or the community (Irish League of Credit Unions, 2016). They have a world-wide presence but can exist in varying forms (World Council of Credit Unions, 2016).

future research based on the areas that I have found interesting but did not have enough data to support a full investigation.

7.4.1 Customer Service and Zombie Banks

As a continuation of the mechanisation of banks there is a broad programme of the removing of human interaction in branches, with workers being replaced with machines. Many of the storytellers who worked in customer service have lamented its passing and talk with strong emotions about the buzz and addiction of helping their customers. These stories take place outside of the research period and have only become a reality in the last number of years. I think it is an interesting concept to study as there are often comments from bank users about this new system. Interestingly, recently there has been talk that post offices might offer a current account service as they are in a position to fill the 'human' customer service gap. I also felt that it is necessary to explore this as a continuation of the permanency of organisational change from 1960. Since the practice has emerged in the last number of years it may fall victim to being described as a cost saving reaction to the 2008 global financial crisis rather than a continuation of the drive for efficiency.

7.4.2 Fragile Organisations and the Drive for Efficiency

Somewhat linked to the above idea, I would like to expand on the effect of continued efficiency on organisations. From the research there appears to be a move towards increasing concern for the production of status in organisations and away from ensuring the workforce is experienced and possesses the knowledge to assist in solving problems. I see this move as digging

out much of the traditional core values of organisations, the result being a fragile organisation that lacks experiential knowledge and instinct. For example many of the storytellers were rounded up and sent to assess and sort through serious financial problems in the First New Hampshire Bank in the 1990s. The Bank had purchased First New Hampshire Bank in 1988 at a price inflated by a property bubble which eventually burst (the irony was not lost on those who spoke about this). First New Hampshire eventually had to be broken up and sold off over a period beginning in 1991. It was a difficult time for the Bank and it appears that they were able to call on help from workers in all areas to assist. I, and the storytellers, all wondered if such collective action would be possible in the contemporary world. I feel it would be an interesting concept to explore.

7.4.3 The 2008 Global Financial Crisis

This research did not set out to specifically address the recent financial crisis, partly because of the belief that it is difficult to analyse something of this magnitude while it is still in progress. At some point in the future this crisis will need to be researched in a balanced way. As a continuation of this research it would be appealing if some of this research would continue with the theme of this piece of work by including the perspective of the ordinary worker who lived through the crisis and not just focused on the management and the decisions that they made. From a theoretical perspective this could be explored through the influence, positive or negative, of coercive isomorphism and Beckert's (2010) ideas about the dangers of over regulation. Banks seem to be continuing doing business and recovering but many, like journalist and author on banking and bank workers,

Joris Luyendijk, feel that little has been done to prevent the failings that led to the global financial crisis happening again.

7.4.4 What the Customer and/or Shareholder Says

Finally, it would be interesting to repeat this research from an external perspective. That is to explore how banking customers have changed since 1960. Throughout the research I tried to ask about new types of customers but I did not get enough satisfactory answers to explore this concept further. How the customers and shareholders have changed, and their expectations from the organisation is, I feel, an influencing factor in how banks are expected to behave. For example, in the years preceding the financial crisis a well-known media commentator and politician in Ireland criticised the return on his shares from the Bank. He felt that the Bank was being too conservative and 'boring'. As a former stockbroker one would assume that before investing in the Bank he would have been aware that they were traditionally a conservative bank with small but regular returns on shares, whereas their main national competitor, AIB, was always known as a more risky bank that gave a higher return. This leads me to question whether customers and shareholders understand the ethos of their banks, why do they choose one bank over another and has the traditional split between conservative and more risky banks disappeared. Subsequently, do customer and shareholder perceptions influence how the bank acts.

These four points are merely ideas that have come to mind as I trawl through the vast amount of literature and data that I have accumulated about banks and organisations in general. The more I look through this information, the more I realise how interesting, unusual and complex these organisations really are.

The research has told a story of a profound and complex period of change in a major bank and how this change affected the culture and identity of workers. It is a broad piece of work that represents only a snapshot of time and experience in an interesting and often mid-understood industry.

7.5 Final Reflections

The normal expectations for completing a PhD thesis is that it will add something to the depth and breadth of knowledge in a discipline. To get to this stage the researcher has to demonstrate scholarship through showing their abilities through the production of robust research and development of independent thought.

During this research, I have negotiated the demands of completing a PhD with varying degrees of aptitude and success. The inductive and interpretive research required the layering of ideas, thoughts and arguments in light of a significant body of theories and concepts. This process is both challenging and enjoyable. It starts with the wonderful freedom of being able to trawl through theories and concepts and putting forward arguments that range from wild to reasonable. At some point though these arguments have to be expanded and made into something sensible. This is the challenging part, creating sense out of the vast amounts of literature and theory. Initially I worked on singular themes and matched them with theories and concepts. I produced developmental papers with the plan of creating a paper based document. Over time it became apparent that this would fail – there was too much repeated data in all the papers. Surprisingly, for me, the challenge of producing and laying-out a PhD document that would read well and have an impact was as important as collecting data, analysing it and arriving at findings.

Throughout the research I have learned an amount about the Bank, banking, people, work, history and the economy. The Bank is more than the landmark building on the front cover. At the same time their insistence on holding onto that historic building is, to me, a symbol of hope that there can be a positive future for the Bank and that they have not fully shed off their past.

The process of producing a PhD is somewhat autotelic, a stand-alone piece of research with defined boundaries. I make a declaration at the beginning of this document that the work is my own, which is then followed by the acknowledgements that thank all the people who helped me along the way and in many different ways. As a successful scholar of PhD I am expected to have the skills of an independent researcher. But, like my findings on culture, we might turn a blind eye to these external influences and consider it the work of an individual. I see the process of becoming an independent researcher as moving slowly away from the influences of my supervisors and slowly gain confidence to push my own ideas to the forefront. The final step on this journey is standing alone, facing the examiners and defending my work. In between the work is shaped through the kindness of reviewers, fellow PhD candidates and those who commented during an eclectic range of conferences. In thinking about this state of affairs I now realise that being an independent researcher is being confident enough to put forward arguments and take in the advice and mine the knowledge and to always question myself and my opinions. It is about being independent but at the same time being part of the academic community.

With the benefit of hindsight it is often customary to reflect on the final document and the process that produced and ask if I would do anything different? In reality, I do not think that at the outset I had the skills necessary to do too much different, I would still rely

on the expertise of my supervisors. An ethnographic study of the Bank, which we initially side-lined due to nervousness around confidentiality, I would now see as a possibility. I can say this because of the openness with which I was received by the storytellers and in particular the high-level managers who would be in a position to accommodate a stranger wandering through their organisation, watching and making notes. A path open to me when analysing the research was to take a single theme, theory or concept and to develop this in more detail. It might have been a simpler approach and the document may have 'looked' better but I would have felt that I was leaving so much of the story out, and it is a story that is worth telling. There are always many paths available to researchers but in the end I am happy that I have been able to tell a sometimes forgotten story of workers who have first-hand experienced immense changes to their place of work and their identity.

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APPENDICES



Bank of Ireland Group Court of Directors 1969 (Lyons, 1983, p. 186)

Appendix A³

Informed Consent Form (page 1)



Waterford Institute of Technology
INSTITIÚD TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA PHOIRT LAIRGE

Informed Consent

Project Title	Working in the bank 1970-2000	Researcher	Aisling Tuite Email: aislingtuite@yahoo.com Phone: 086-8180498
Research Centre	Centre for Finance and Business Research	Supervisors	Dr. Ray Griffin – rgriffin@wit.ie Dr. Seán Byrne – sbyrne@wit.ie

The Centre for Finance and Business Research in Waterford Institute of Technology was originally set up with an endowment from AIB Plc. However, AIB have no input in selecting or editing research projects and do not benefit from the final piece of research. I believe their original endowment was altruistic and for the sole benefit of encouraging and supporting business research in Ireland.

The research has been approved by the WIT ethics committee and the Group Chief Executive for Bank of Ireland has been informed that we will be seeking information from past and current employees

1. PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH PROJECT

You are being asked to participate in a research study designed to gather information about historical events in Bank of Ireland between 1970 and 2000. The data collected from you will be used for a PhD thesis and any subsequent publications.

2. WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

In advance of the interview you will be asked to choose five stories from your personal experiences of working in the bank during the period 1970-2000.

The interview will focus on collecting these stories and will last for 1-2 hours.

Should we need clarification of some aspects of the interview we may contact you again at a later date.

3. POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORT

Confidentiality:

Due to the nature of business in banks we recognise that confidentiality is of critical importance.

As the research is historical in nature it is expected that a large amount of the information being discussed will already be in the public sphere. If I, or my supervisors, feel that any information given by you may be confidential I will confirm its status before using it and/or I will ask you to omit it from the study.

Anonymity:

The thesis and any publications will be written in a way which will protect your anonymity. The thesis and any publications will not link direct quotes to any individual. However, the position(s) held by you in the bank may be of importance when analysing the data or for the purpose of comparison.

³A note regarding the change of dates to the research period: Initially a decision was made that the early part of the research period should begin in 1970 as it was felt that there would be adequate numbers of workers accessible who lived through this period. However, after a number of interviews were completed rich data began to emerge from a period beginning in 1960. This data was important to the changes that came about in the Bank and in the Irish economy. An informed decision was made that as it was only the earlier date that was changed ethical issues were limited.

4. WHAT HAPPENS TO THE INFORMATION YOU GIVE?

Data will be stored and used in line with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 & 2003. Under this Act the data collected may only be used for the purpose of this research project. All raw data collected will be maintained in WIT for the duration of the project (approx. 4 years), after which, and upon agreement, it will be transferred to the 'Digital Repository of Ireland'.

Data records will be stored securely and will only be accessed by the researcher and research supervisors in WIT. You can ask for information to be omitted from the study either during or after the interview. You will be given a copy of the interview transcript or recording for confirmation and clarity.

5. TERMINATION OF RESEARCH STUDY

You are free to choose whether or not to participate in this study. You may decide to end your participation in the study at any time without any consequences.

6. CONSENT

	Yes	No
The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am participating voluntarily.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I give permission for my interview to be tape-recorded	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to allow my name and employment details to be listed in a table in the thesis and associated publications.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to allow the recording to be stored in the 'Digital Repository of Ireland'.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree for my name and employment details to be attached to the recording when it is stored in the 'Digital Repository of Ireland'.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that the information will be used for the purposes of completing a thesis and associated external publications.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signed (Participant)..... Date.....

Signed (Researcher)..... Date.....

Appendix B

Institiúid Teicneolaíochta Phort Láirge Waterford Institute of Technology

Port Láirge, Éire. Waterford, Ireland.
T: +353-51-302000 T: +353-51-302000
info@wit.ie www.wit.ie

Ref: 13/AE/01

7th March, 2013.

Ms. Aisling Tuite,
AIB Centre for Finance and Business Research,
Department of Accounting & Economics,
School of Business,
WIT.



Dear Aisling,

Thank you for bringing your project '*Changes in organisation structures in banks*' to the attention of the WIT Research Ethics Committee and for attending the meeting this morning.

Following on from our discussions today I am pleased to inform you that we approve WIT's participation in this project and we will convey this to Academic Council.

We would however ask that you put in place a rigorous informed consent process to include the following actions:

- (a) Write a letter to the CEO or equivalent in Bank of Ireland to inform them that you plan to carry out this research and will invite both retired members of staff and current members of staff to participate.
- (b) Allow 3 weeks from the time you send this letter to the commencement of interviews to allow a response from Bank of Ireland.
- (c) Inform participants of the level of consent received from Bank of Ireland and attach a copy of the letter to the CEO or equivalent in Bank of Ireland for their information.

We wish you well in the work ahead.

Yours sincerely,



Professor John S. Wells,
Chairperson,
Research Ethics Committee

cc: Dr. Ray Griffin
Dr. Sean Byrne
Mr. Ger Long
Dr. Denis Harrington

Appendix C⁴

Letter to Bank of Ireland Group Chief Executive

Aisling Tuite,
CFBR, AT121,
Waterford Institute of Technology.
086-8180498

22nd March 2013

Mr. Richie Boucher,
Group Chief Executive,
Bank of Ireland,
Group Head Office,
40 Mespil Road, Dublin 4.

Dear Sir,

On foot of our recent approval by the WIT Ethics Committee I am writing to inform you that I intend to invite both current and former employees of Bank of Ireland to participate in a piece of historical research which I envisage as an update to Hall's great work on the bank. I intend to begin collecting data in the coming weeks and the data collected will form the basis of my PhD thesis.

The research stems from the area of Organisation Studies, and Organisational Storytelling in particular, and will invite participants to relay their own stories of working in Bank of Ireland during the period from 1970-2000. This was a time of significant social, cultural and economic change in Ireland and I believe that Bank of Ireland with its strong historical roots in Irish society is the most appropriate organisation to reflect these changes. Naturally as part of approval for the project the research will be conducted with the highest standards of ethics, providing data protection, confidentiality and respect to the participants, which is demonstrated by this notification. Participants will be issued with a rigorous informed consent document outlining the nature of the research.

I have received a scholarship for completing this research from the Centre for Finance and Business Research in WIT (www.cfbr.ie). The CFBR was originally set up from an endowment from AIB Plc., however, AIB have no input in the selecting or editing of research projects and do not benefit in any way from the final piece of research. I gather that their original endowment was altruistic and for the sole benefit of encouraging and supporting business research in Ireland.

I feel that this distinctive piece of research will not only contribute to the academic body of literature in organisation studies but will also provide a historical recording that will be of benefit to both Bank of Ireland and social historians.

No action is required on your part, however, if you have any strong views on this piece of research we would be happy to discuss them with you.

Yours Sincerely,

⁴At the request of the Ethics Committee a 1 month period was to be given for reply to this letter. No response was received as of the end of April 2013.

Appendix D

Template for Unstructured Interviews

This template represents the initial and emergent questions and prompts that I used to encourage interviewees to reveal the stories of their experiences of working in the Bank. This is not an exhaustive list of questions asked during interviews. Many more questions developed naturally within the context of individual interviews.

Initial Introductory Question

Tell me about your life in the Bank?

Prompts & Emergent Questions

- Relationship with managers
 - What were they like
 - Any in particular stand out
- Day to day work
 - Describe particular roles/functions/departments
- Recruitment Process
 - How were you recruited
- Graduate Recruitment
 - How did you feel about it
 - How do you feel about specialisation of work
 - Was there much tension between traditionally recruited staff and graduates
- Human relations and promotion
 - Was there a HR department
 - How did it change
 - What relationship did you have with HR

- What promotions did you get
- How did they happen – i.e. interview or out of the blue
- Was there much in the way of performance management
- Did you notice any changes to the performance management system
- Were you given much guidance on becoming a manager
- Did you copy the style of any of your previous managers
- Did you try to be different to any of your previous managers
- Change & McKinsey
 - Were you aware that McKinsey were in the Bank at the time
 - Were you made aware of the changes they introduced in a formal way – e.g. memo
 - When did you begin to experience change
 - What did it mean to you
 - When did people stop referring to managers as 'manager' and 'agent' – i.e. when did communication become less formal
- Education
 - Did you improve your education on any of the Bank's programmes
 - Is education important
 - What is the reason for improving your education
 - Did you take on any training or education separate from the Bank's programmes
- Your opinion of the Culture

- What was important to you about the culture
- What was important to you about life in the Bank at that time
- Was there ever any issues of religion
- What was the social life like
 - Did you notice any change in it over the years
 - Did you participate
- What kind of clothes did you have to wear
- Is there anything interesting about the people you worked with
- Is there anything interesting about your customers
 - Did your customers change over time
 - How did you learn to trust a customer
- What do you know about the history of the Bank
 - Is it important to know the history of the organisation
- What traits are important to you/your career as a banker
- What perceptions did you have of the Bank before you started
- Was there much interaction/difference between you as a non-finance staff member and finance or 'core' staff member
- What was your best memory/moment?
- What was your worst memory/moment?