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**Changing minds: subjectivity, trust and change in
British manufacturing.**

by

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Industrial and Business Studies.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is all my own work and has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Summary

This thesis attempts to provide an explanation of how changes to subjectivity occur in TQM change programmes. Through an examination of the TQM and management of change literature, the thesis argues that existing analyses are limited in their presentation of changes to subjectivity by their dependence upon either neo-Marxist or postmodernist thought. Using three medium-sized, privately-owned manufacturing plants in the West Midlands the thesis uses grounded theory and phenomenological methodologies to construct a theory which explains how changes in subjectivity occur. The theory that is developed uses a combination of structuration theory and existentialist philosophy to understand how trust, distrust and angst mediate structural forces, organisational conditions and employee subjectivity.

There could be several implications of this framework, but three are stressed. First, it is argued that habit, in the form of trust and distrust, allows a modelling of workers that is neither under- nor over-socialised. Second, it is argued that the traditional distinction made between attitudes and behaviours is unnecessary in a processual study. The distinction hampers our understanding of how change works in practice. This argument raises serious questions regarding the validity of notions such as 'acting out'. Thirdly, and consequently, the thesis argues that researchers' methodologies need to be much more sensitive to hard-to-measure intangibles than many are at present.

1. Introduction

**‘We’re downcast because we just don’t know anything’ -
Rover Longbridge worker, *BBC News* 28th March 2000**

This thesis attempts to answer the question ‘how do changes to subjectivity occur in the workplace?’. The obvious retorts to such a statement are ‘why does it attempt this?’, ‘how does it attempt this?’ and ‘what are its findings?’. It is the sequential answers to these questions that take up the most of this chapter and, indeed, much of the thesis. As one of the main themes in the thesis emphasises both the inseparability of structure and action and the reflexivity of the subject, it will also be pertinent to examine my own motives as the agent through which any ‘structural’ forces were enacted. Finally, the section will conclude by introducing the reader to the chapters ahead.

1.1 Why?

Although a more rigorous justification of the thesis will be presented in the literature review, this section will first aim to sketch the historical context of the study and introduce the reader to the forces that contributed to its creation. It will then focus upon the context of the thesis in relation to its specific subject area.

1.1.1 The major context: subjectivity

The twentieth century was, for many, the century of the subject. The ostensible ‘progress’ of the enlightenment project left a bitter taste in the mouths of many who had lived through the ‘rationalities’ of the Great War, the Great Depression, the Holocaust, Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Whilst it is possible, and probably desirable, to follow Parker

(1992) and Legge (1995, p. 298) in distinguishing between the 'post-modern' period and 'postmodernist' philosophy, the two are symbiotic in nature. The precise relationship between Husserl's *Ideas* (1913), Dadaism (1916-1920), Freud's *The Ego and the Id* (1923), and the rise of Fascism (1919-1945) need not be expanded upon here. It is sufficient to say that they were united by their wholesale rejection of universalism, rationality and order, whether in the form of democracy, progressive teleologies or any form of philosophical idealism. In post-1945 art, literature and thought, trends were correspondingly away from the external and knowable (especially in terms of the white, western, male) and towards the internal, the local and the different. From socio-psychological studies of immigrant populations to the influence of India (and LSD) on the Beatles, society began to accept anti-enlightenment movements into everyday life. As fringe movement became adopted as mainstream, the development of the 'post-modern' world was necessarily accompanied by the development of 'postmodern' philosophy. Concerning subjectivity, the move was one away from the type of 'objective' subject envisaged by Descartes, Hegel and Kant who could postulate knowledge as an absolute truth, to a more local and fragmented self, constructed and rendered knowable only by discourses of power as envisaged by Foucault, Derrida and Lyotard. The artistic, academic and increasingly public assaults upon the institutions and practices of modernity have been reflected in changes at the political, cultural and economic level. It would, therefore, prove surprising if such monumental forces remained distinct and aloof from an essential component of each: the workplace.

Given that workers and managers spend much of their time engaging in extra-workplace economic, cultural or political activity, it seems likely that changes in these structures would necessarily have implications within the organisation. A cursory

examination of the development of this sphere shows a parallel movement away from the external, universal and measurable to the internal, individual and intangible. In the early part of the century, Taylorism, Weberianism and Fordism were (viewed as) well suited to mass-production, economies of scale and inexpensive goods. The rationalisation and bureaucratisation, which were seen to have served well in science and war, could be applied to considerable effect in the workplace. The scope for efficiency through purely deductive reasoning was, however, always going to be limited. At the same time that society was experiencing the 'efficiencies' of the Great War and the Great Depression, the model of (wo)man utilised for organisation was, unsurprisingly, being reassessed through the development of psychoanalysis, the Hawthorne experiments and the subsequent rise of the Human Relations school. With the increasingly cut-throat world of corporate capitalism being based upon an more demanding and consumerist culture, competitive advantage could, it was believed, be gained by recognising the social and emotional requirements of (wo)man. Thus, in the second half of the twentieth century, the academic theories, consultant programmes and practitioner prescriptions diversified and multiplied their attempts to create and manipulate worker motivation and attitudes. The development of the Human Relations school through Organisational Behaviour (OB) and Organisational Development (OD) to Human Resource Management (HRM) and Total Quality Management (TQM) is often presented by IPD or undergraduate texts as an evolutionary or teleological fetish. It is, however, evident that the external criteria by which the 'fittest' fads have survived is their ability to sell the control of worker subjectivity. Whether one agrees or not with the descriptive or predictive tones of these texts, it is difficult to deny the transformation in the espoused aims of managerial control. Despite a counter-reformation of 'managerial science' in the 1960s and 70s, the twentieth century's development of socio-psychological practices in the workplace has at

least been symbolic of a shifting locus of control from externally observable behaviours to internally experienced phenomena such as motivation and attitudes. By the 1980s, the search for control had begun to take a new twist in the proponents of organisational culture. Whilst sharing some of the assumptions and beliefs of OD (see Legge, 1995: 176) corporate culture protagonists sought a more 'total' control of emotions, identities, feelings and values. 'The controls of today's corporation', Gabriel (1999: 180) argues, 'are seen as infinitely subtler and going far deeper than those figured by Elton Mayo and his co-workers in the 1920s, reaching to the very core of each employee's sense of selfhood and identity, defining his/her very being'.

It is this issue of identity that has caused the most problems in the field of Organisation Studies (OS). The question of whether HRM and TQM are best viewed as a part of the modern or the post-modern world, depends, as Legge (1995: 228-301) implies, on the evidence one selects. Several writers who have argued that TQM, as a method of (and a mask for) work intensification, has little different to offer from Taylorist time and motion studies (Garrahan and Stewart, 1992) and is, therefore, very much a part of the modernist historical period. Others, examining examples of strategic integration, flexible specialisation, delayering and team-working have argued that HRM and TQM constitute a radical break from previous work forms (Clegg, 1990; Townley, 1992; Peters and Waterman, 1982) and should accordingly be depicted as part of a brave new (post-modern) world. However, the question of whether TQM and HRM should be studied through modernist or postmodernist analyses is not so simple. Even where post-modern accounts aim to be descriptive, rather than ironical or playful, they differ from many modernist accounts in their language, assumptions and methodologies. One of the core differences that has separated the modern from the post-modernist accounts of

HRM and TQM has been their relative accounts of (wo)man. It will be argued in the literature review that modernist accounts, such as that offered by labour process theory (LPT), still retain a highly essentialist notion of the worker. Interests of those in the workplace, therefore, remain fixed, and the intensification agenda of management is necessarily contrary to the needs of the workforce. Postmodernists, on the other hand, have been charged with removing the subject completely (Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995). Their analyses detail the '(de)construction' of the worker by power/knowledge discourses such as race, gender or the customer.

As the lines of division between labour process theorists and the postmodernists on the nature of subjectivity become increasingly distinct in journals, conferences and business schools, there is a general consensus that the schism is doing the subject area few favours. The recent blossoming of literature on organisational change has not ameliorated the situation. The inability of either camp to agree on the question of 'what is subjectivity?' is, if anything, worsened when faced with the question, 'how does subjectivity change?'. It is uncommon, for example, to find an article in the field, regardless of perspective, which does not call for better, different or new studies of the impact of TQM or change, or both, upon worker subjectivity. Several examples are given below:

'more qualitative work needs to assess the ways in which workers *experience* new dynamics of control' (Edwards et al. 1998: 471 – italics added),

'We still appear to be looking for a means to arrive at an understanding of subjectivity and organisation which attends to agency and materialism yet avoids dualism, essentialism and reductionism' (Newton, 1998: 440),

‘It is time to allow agency back into discourses of power at the workplace, not as a coherent transcendental subject but as a struggling, interacting, feeling, thinking and suffering subject, one capable of obeying and disobeying, controlling and being controlled...’ (Gabriel, 1999: 200),

‘A number of questions remain unanswered. Do employee reactions [to change] remain stable or do they alter over time? Is it possible that the reactions to change discussed represent incomplete management change efforts? Are reactions to change determined by other unidentified factors? We therefore conclude with a call for further - possibly longitudinal - research into employee reactions to change’ (Ogbonna and Harris, 1998: 91)

‘Much more rigorous research is needed before we can know how to ‘change the deal’ while minimising damage done to both individuals and organisations.’ (Turnley and Feldman, 1999: 920)

‘Much research is needed, therefore, to ascertain the extent to which, and the ways in which meanings are being reshaped [in TQM programmes]’ (McCabe and Wilkinson: 1998: 19)

‘There is a clear need for radical and fundamental change in the ways we theorise, understand and research organisational change’ (Hosking 1992: 2)

‘[We must] get into the ‘black box’ that explains how and why people perform as they do’ (Ichniowski et al., 1996)

It appears, therefore, that the self-proclaimed ‘crisis’ in organisation studies (Knights and Wilmott, 1989) is a very real and urgent issue. With both labour process theorists and postmodernists having reached stale-mate in their sniping over subjectivity and change, this thesis attempts to build an alternative framework to help improve the understanding

of how changes in subjectivity occur (or do not occur) in the workplace. For this reason the thesis avoids reliance on observations which are, for example, found in traditional sociology, such as fiddles, shirking and games. Instead it focuses upon the accounts of change given by the workers themselves either in conversation or in interviews. It is hoped that by taking this approach, a phenomenological presentation of subjectivity during periods of change can be attempted.

1.1.2 The minor context: size, voice and methodology

Given this general aim of the thesis, there were several other ways in which a study in this area might contribute to the subject. First, contrary to most studies of TQM which focus on one large case study, the thesis focuses on three medium-sized cases. This loosely comparative approach helps avoid the tendency of some writers to make erroneous inferences from their (single) case-study that their findings are applicable in other cases. Some examples and implications of this are detailed in the methodology chapter, but here it is sufficient to report that the qualitative differences found in the three cases presented later serve, at least, to highlight the dangers of such generalisations.

Second, the thesis aims to give voice to both managers and workers within the same factory. Several writers have already commented upon the fact that most workplace studies give precedence to the managerial voice (Clarke et al., 1998). There is a danger, however, that the revisionists will go too far the other way in emphasising the voice of workers at the expense of management. Too often, even in case study analyses, managers are treated as unified agents of capital, strategically exploiting the workforce. This study

attempts to move beyond such generalisations by treating managers and shopfloor workers as individuals involved in complex and messy relationships.

Finally, the thesis responds to calls made in many camps for research to be based upon processual, contextual and ethnographic methodologies (Hatch, 1993; Pettigrew, 1997; Wilkinson, 1997, 1998; Purcell, 1999). Although writers such as Huselid (1995) and MacDuffie (1992) have provided excellent research in linking HR or TQ practices with organisational performance, the quantitative nature of their work allows little enlightenment as to *how* the relationship works (Purcell, 1998; Edwards and Wright *forthcoming*). Research that allows insights into the hard-to-measure aspects of the employment relationship will, therefore, be sensitive to time, relationships and historical and cultural contexts.

1.1.3 The researcher's context

The theoretical or structural justifications for any project are, however, only evident after one has searched for them, and the justification for the search is usually personal. In this respect, my own impetus to start the thesis came primarily from a need to understand how one should act. A sustained period of illness at the end of my undergraduate degree spurred a questioning of the assumptions that I had accepted uncritically throughout my life. The opportunity that was presented by my MA and later this thesis to read, learn and discuss such issues in an environment of exploration and discovery was very welcome. Although the thesis went through several subject areas (and three supervisors) in its search for a 'substantial original contribution to

knowledge’¹, all of the subjects areas were concerned with asking how humans create, change and fit with the ‘structures’ around them.

Although the personal, reflexive and uncertain nature of my own impetus correlate strongly with the ‘existential’ tone of the thesis, the relationship is not necessarily causal. In the methodology chapter, I trace how existentialism was eventually used through a series of events that involved luck, coincidence and the advice of others. A further proviso that should be made in relating the thesis to my own personal phenomenology is that whilst my personal investigation was radical (i.e. concerned with how one ‘ought’ to act), the thesis itself is more descriptive and concerned with the ‘is’. This having been said, I would not necessarily follow Hume’s² distinction separating the two. In many respects, the thesis *does* accommodate my personal aim in hoping that a better description of the description of the ‘is’ will make one’s decision on the ‘ought’ an easier task. In the concluding chapter, the potential for bridging the descriptive account of the thesis with a more radical concern with ethics is explored as a potential area for future research.

Finally, for the record, my position as a white, British, middle-class, twenty-seven year old male will arguably have placed some limits upon what evidence is ‘visible’ to me and how my view is constructed and interpreted. My choice of an industry which was almost devoid of female or ethnic employees, for example, *may* be traceable to my cultural heritage. However, given that the thesis is built upon a theoretical foundation that places reflexivity and self-awareness at the heart of the human

¹ Guide to examinations for higher degrees by research, The University of Warwick Graduate School, 1996.

ability to overcome structural constraints, it would be both inconsistent and unwise to over-emphasise cultural determinism. Whether or not such reflexivity or empathy is successfully utilised in the thesis, it is likely that the reader will be a better judge than the writer.

1.2 How?

The general aim of the thesis, as stated earlier, is to explain how changes to subjectivity occur. However, this aim was slow to emerge. Back in 1996, the investigation started off by examining sex discrimination in organisational procedures. The idea was to keep investigating the literature and (hopefully) some case-studies until something new was found (or created). The search was an interesting one, taking me through several subject areas and three supervisors before settling on this topic. The exploratory description of using what was later learned to be ‘grounded theory’ is retold in the methodology chapter. However, the thesis is, for the sake of clarity, presented as a holistic investigation, organised thematically rather than temporally.

The ‘theory building’ process consisted primarily of getting as close as possible to the subjects within my case studies and then comparing what they were experiencing to what the literature reported that they should be experiencing. There were, of course, many inconsistencies, with different journals and different schools of thought bickering amongst themselves, not just about what happens in TQM programmes but also why these things happen. It proved very difficult however to find a root cause or a simple

² Hume, D. (1740) *A Treatise of Human Nature*, III, i, 1.

argument which could summarise or 'ground' these inconsistencies. Several pointers were evident however. First, the TQ programmes in my case studies were so varied that it was virtually pointless generalising about the nature of TQM as an abstract concept. Second, it became clear that, contrary to the reportage in much of the literature, changes in attitudes and behaviours could not be held to be distinct (at least in the case-studies investigated), especially if examined over time. My initial weak attempts at abstracting these findings to an actor/structure hypothesis caused a kindly professor to point me in the direction of Anthony Giddens' structuration theory. Coincidentally, it was by reading the works of Giddens more generally, that the third point was clarified. It had been clear fairly early in the investigation that the creation of trust played a crucial role in enabling different managing directors to change the minds of their workforce about their jobs. Indeed, several other authors had commented (mainly as an aside) that trust was an important factor in the change programmes they studied (Knights and McCabe, 1998; Wilkinson et al., 1997, Collins, 1996). The difficulty arose, however, in theorising trust. The literature concerning trust in organisations tended either to consist of static structural descriptions of trust within workplaces which ignored how trust was created at the micro-level (Fukuyama, 1995; Lane and Blackman, 1998), or opposed trust and distrust as elements that determined factors such as discretion, autonomy and supervision. Despite the plethora of publications in the area of trust, change and TQM, many questions have been left unanswered: How is trust related to changes in subjectivity? Why are so many workers and managers so averse to trusting? What, in fact, is trust?

Why/what?

The spark which ignited the format of the thesis came from a reading of Giddens' *Consequences of Modernity* in which he argues that 'the antithesis of trust is thus a state of mind which could be best summed up as existential angst' (1990:100). After reading

this, observations from my case-studies that had clearly contradicted the literature began to make more sense. Grey areas became sharper and a framework for analysis began to form in my notes. Given that Giddens left his comment largely unexplored, the concept of angst was hurriedly searched for in the texts of existentialism and phenomenology. Much of what had been read fitted with the previously espoused aims of placing the human at the centre of the enquiry and getting as close as possible to the subject. Here was a model of (wo)man, not based upon totalising discourses, nor upon essentialist notions of 'real' interests³. The existentialist notion of the human was one based upon knowledge, habit - what Giddens terms 'ontological security' and Willmott (1995) terms 'personal stability'. In the theoretical framework it is argued that such a proposition is better suited to explaining changes in subjectivity, for habit, whether in the form of trust or distrust, is disrupted during periods of change. It is this disruption, the lack of habit, both in existential philosophy and in the cases studied, that created anxiety, stress and sometimes psychological disorders. Such a postulation of 'existential (wo)man', it is argued, can be studied within the theory of structuration: trust, distrust and angst, as ontological phenomena and as mental states, are experienced and created especially in the behaviours of the workforce – an argument which reflects that proposed about attitudes and behaviours above. It is this framework of trust, distrust and angst which forms the main chapters of the thesis. In each chapter, the explanation of how changes in subjectivity occurred (or did not occur) is made with reference to the building of trust and distrust or the creation of angst.

³ Whilst existentialism can be viewed as essentialist at a metaphysical level (as indicated by the existentialist creed that 'essence precedes existence') the model utilised throughout the thesis uses reflexivity to avoid essentialism. Indeed, given the disparities between the existentialists themselves as to

1.3 What?

The main argument in the thesis is concerned primarily with fitting a view of human nature to a sociological framework: that habit, in the form of trust or distrust, allows humans 'ontological security'. The disruption of this security through changes to subjectivity can temporarily lead to angst, where individuals have no 'trustworthy' knowledge on which they have the basis to act. The application of the trust, distrust, angst framework is argued throughout the thesis to add a more sensitive and grounded description of (changes to) subjectivity than that provided by either labour process or post-modernist analyses. The reason for this, it is suggested, is that the framework is based upon a more realistic 'model' of (wo)man in the workplace. Partly as a consequence of this framework, the thesis also makes two related arguments which make a contribution to the existing knowledge in this area.

The first argument is concerned with the relationship between attitudes and behaviours. There is a tendency in TQM, HRM, and organisational culture writing to argue that changes in attitudes will lead to changes in behaviour, or vice versa. Concepts such as 'acting out' make clear the separation of behaviours from employees' attitudes and values. By examining the everyday interactions of workers and managers in the case study companies, it was clear such models fail to describe adequately the changes that were taking place. In the three cases studies, as attitudes gradually changed so behaviours reflected and reinforced those attitudes. Behaviours such as filling out suggestion forms not only reflected the attitude of an employee but also tested the

what actually constitutes existentialism, any dogmatic adherence to an existentialist creed would be an exercise in futility.

correctness of their attitudes with regard to the trustworthiness of management. The *quality* of an employees' behaviour was, especially when viewed over time, a direct reflection of their attitudes. The removal of this distinction also allows an assault on another established division between the 'essence' of a programme and the manner in which it is carried out. The disposition of many of the quantitative 'contingent' writers has led them to create abstract notions of 'teamwork', 'performance pay' or 'communication' which can be statistically related to performance criteria. The revisionists, generally more disposed to qualitative work, have countered such suggestions with the argument that the context in which such schemes are implemented are more important. A recent paper, (Curral et al., 2000), has attempted to bridge the gap by arguing that 'it's what you do and the way that you do it'. Making analogous employee behaviour and employee attitudes renders such a distinction redundant. How you do it, the thesis argues, *is* what you do. The quality of the team-working schemes, communication channels or performance pay systems in the case-studies were entirely reflective and constitutive of managerial attitudes. That the argument also supports the relationship between structures and actors posited in structuration theory is useful in strengthening the theoretical propositions of the thesis.

The importance of the 'quality' of behaviours in organisational systems, as opposed to the mere existence of such systems, supports those who in recent years have been arguing for the importance of qualitative methodologies in understanding the 'black box' of organisational change. As we will evidence later in the literature review, such arguments have recently been supported, even by those using quantitative research methodologies (see, for example, Cully, et al. 1999). It will not suffice, however, to simply assign such inconsistencies to the difference between organisational rhetoric and

organisational reality. The reason for this is that the ‘rhetoric’ of a PRP system, for example, will often lie in the quality of the practices of that system. The difference, therefore, between rhetoric and reality can depend on the sensitivity of the researchers’ methodology in differentiating the two. If trust is crucial to creating changes in subjectivity, and the ‘how’ of any change is essential in creating that trust, then the sensitivity of the researchers tools to that ‘how’ is vital to the analysis of the area.

The question of how changes to subjectivity occur is not one confined to the TQM literature or, indeed, business schools. For this reason the thesis makes occasional forays into literature from psychology, sociology, anthropology and philosophy to help put the ‘human’ back into discussions of subjectivity. In attempting to refresh the debate which is rapidly ossifying into a structuralist/post-structuralist set-piece, the thesis asks more questions than it answers. Moreover, in tackling the subject, the literature analysed must necessarily incorporate the vast tracts written on TQM, subjectivity and the management of change. It is hoped that the reader will, therefore, understand (and share in) much of the frustration where interesting asides and discussions have had to be footnoted for the sake of brevity.

1.4 The chapters ahead

The next chapter, by proposing a critical typology of the literature that has been written on TQM and the management of change highlights weakness in two respects: First, the *a priori* assumptions of writers that present TQM from either a positive or negative perspective - often their theoretical perspective takes precedence over the case-study evidence that they gather. Second, the tendency for writers to present either under-

or over-socialised models of employees. It is argued that whilst the emergent 'contextualist' school has helped move the debates on from whether TQM is a 'good' or a 'bad' phenomenon, it has done little to address the weaknesses of the subject area concerning subjectivity and socialisation. The Theoretical Framework examines the roots of this weakness and argues that whilst the over- and under-socialised debates are still very much founded upon either Marxist essentialism or postmodernist determinism, the contextualist accounts often ignore any theoretical assumptions of subjectivity. In attempting to overcome this deadlock the chapter turns to the work of Anthony Giddens in using both structuration theory and, more importantly, an existentialist model of (wo)man that is based upon trust, distrust and angst.

The methodology chapter examines how this theory was developed through the use of grounded theory and argues the importance of a longitudinal, ethnographic and comparative study in (re)creating the argument. Using the headings of distrust, trust and angst for the subsequent chapters, the thesis uses case study evidence to argue that this model allows a more processual and sensitive presentation of how changes to subjectivity occur. In the conclusion, the implications of using the framework are examined and it is argued that as well improving existing understandings of subjectivity and change, the thesis also adds to the debate regarding the relationships between attitudes and behaviours.

2. TQM: a critical typology

'Evolution is far more important than living'.
Albert Camus *The Rebel*.

2.1 Introduction

Despite, and arguably because of, fifteen years of practitioner and academic writings on the subject, there is little consensus on how TQM works in practice. As indeed there should not be. Given the differing needs and perspectives of the various stakeholders within the field (Legge, 1995) it would prove alarming if such consistency of intent and purpose existed. Even excluding those studies based on shoddy workmanship or inadequate methodologies, it would grind the modern economy to a standstill if consultants paused to consider all the inconsistencies and tensions in their ten-step guides to change and (all) academics swept aside their methodological doubts to sell their wares to the highest bidders. A problem does remain, however, in the typology of the literature. At present, there exists a confused and disorderly collection of differing schools of thought, all of which appear limited in their presentation of the mechanisms of TQM and the management of change. This chapter first proposes a critical typology which helps demonstrate some of the limitations of these schools. It argues that traditional accounts of TQM have been constrained by both their *a priori* assumptions concerning the nature of TQM and also their tendency to either under- or over- socialise employee subjectivity. Next, the chapter argues that, although an emergent contextualist school has helped overcome generalisations as to whether TQM is inherently 'good' or 'bad', it has yet to underpin its analysis with a solid theoretical base or a consistent view

of human subjectivity. The reasons for this and the potential for a solution are investigated in the theoretical framework.

TQM has been analysed by gurus, consultants, practitioners, Marxists, labour process theorists, post-modernists and organisational psychologists. The subject is further complicated by those who are preoccupied with transforming businesses by using TQM and are therefore concerned with the issue of change. It is with understanding then that recent attempts to map the area into a relative and systematised form have experienced some difficulties. Thus far four approximate categorisations have been made by recent critical literature, all of which have been summarised or proposed by Wilkinson et al. (1997), Rees (1998) and Edwards et al. (1998) as 'bouquets' (TQM as good), 'brickbats' (TQM as bad), contextualist (it all depends on historical and cultural contexts) and the 'disciplined worker thesis' (workers enjoy the discipline which enables them to perform better). The typology is representative of a field which has developed in a sporadic and multi-paradigmatic manner: the last twenty years have witnessed many differing groups presenting their own perspectives upon the TQM phenomenon attempting to render the subject more understandable for their own readership.

The difficulty with many of these perspectives on TQM, which is evident in Edwards et al.'s (1998) categorisation, is that there appears to be a confusion of moral, descriptive, explanatory and normative models. An opening up of these categorisations will demonstrate the point in hand. Labour Process theorists and gurus naturally differ as to the morality of such programmes, even within the 'bouquets' perspective there exist several variations on the theme: the normative charismatic guru accounts (Peters and Waterman, 1982), descriptive practitioner examples (open any issue of People

Management), explanatory models (Beer et al., 1990) and contingency theories (MacDuffie, 1995). Similarly, the 'brickbats' category includes descriptive accounts (Delbridge and Turnbull, 1992), ideological critiques (Wilmott, 1993) and methodological concerns (Edwards and Wright, *forthcoming*).

2.2 Mapping TQM

It is evident from this confusion that the Bouquets/Brickbats polarity is inadequate to the task of presenting the field of TQM in any meaningful manner (Edwards et al., 1998; Knights and MacCabe, 1998 and Wilkinson et al., 1997). The distinction is too general to distinguish between those Marxist or evangelical gurus that hint at an ethical message (TQM is morally bad/good) and those that are merely descriptive in arguing that TQM either empowers or intensifies work for employees. Moreover both perspectives fall into the trap of making *a priori* judgements about TQM by generalising from their own case-studies (i.e. TQM is intensifying work here, therefore TQM intensifies work). But nor is it sufficient to 'bolt-on' descriptive or explanatory scales (e.g. contextualist, disciplined worker, contingency) to what is essentially an ethical or normative judgement⁴, for this only serves to confuse the boundaries between inputs, outcomes and processes. The answer to this dilemma may be found in the assumptions of two recent additions to the TQM debate - culture and change: 'despite the growing awareness of cultural issues, comparatively little attention has been paid to the practical, day-to-day processes involved in creating, managing and changing organisational culture' (Wilkinson et al. 1991: 28). The issue of changing (as

opposed to describing) cultures has provoked a strong critique focused around whether or not culture can be managed, and thus whether or not subjectivity, can be manipulated or not (Ogbonna and Wilkinson, 1988; Smith and Peterson, 1988). The implications for TQM have been significant - any model of TQM⁵ could be argued to have implications for the control of subjectivity and the socialisation of the workforce (Collins, 1998). It is this issue of control which has recently caused a revisitation of questions of power in the area (Hardy and Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998), and more importantly for present purposes, highlighted the assumptions of existing models for the (potential) socialisation of humans. This focus upon socialisation and theories of human nature provides us with an alternative and complementary scale to that of bouquets and brickbats.

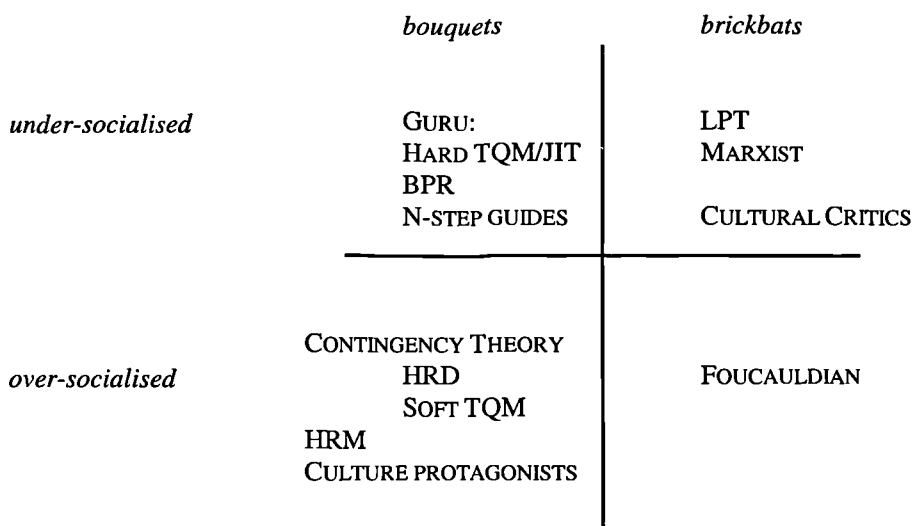
In his book *'Organisational Change: Sociological Perspectives'* (1998) David Collins follows the classical sixties debates in dividing most of the existing literature on change into under-socialised and over-socialised categories (c.f. Wrong, 1977). In the former he places those writers 'who fail to acknowledge change as a social activity, involving people from diverse social groups who will tend to interpret issues and situations in different and often divergent ways' (1998:82). Thus, the unitarist perspective of the gurus' 'N-step' programmes of change fits clearly into this categorisation, especially those proponents of 'hard' TQM who do not take into account the human element of change. Indeed, it was this weakness, many writers have argued, which led to the high failure rates of BPR in the 1990s (Peltu et al., 1996; Valentine and Knights, 1996). In the 'over-socialised' category Collins places those writers who take

⁴ The guru and LPT perspectives on TQM can simply be argued to be simply different analytical accounts, but the evangelical terms of the former and the 'exploitative' accounts of the latter separate them as 'radical' compared, for example, to the more positivist accounts of the contingent school.

an overly deterministic perspective on human subjectivity. He explicitly names practitioner TQM/HRM literature as a chief offender in assuming that organisational mechanisms and procedures can alter employee subjectivity, motivation and commitment without (valid) resistance. Given the proliferation of ‘best practice’ prescriptions in the practitioner literature (e.g. Marchington and Wilkinson, 1996:394) it is easy to understand how many in the field view the function of TQM (or HRM) as being to render employees’ hearts and minds as malleable as other organisational ‘resources’.

If we combine the scale of bouquets/brickbats with the over/under-socialised dichotomy we can map the area of TQM with greater precision, allowing a deeper understanding of the weaknesses of each area (see Diagram 1.1):

Diagram 1.1 A typology of TQM and organisational change



⁵ Even the ‘hardest’ forms of TQM that do not even mention employees make assumptions regarding the continuance of the status quo concerning motivation, commitment *et cetera*.

This representation provides a mapping of TQM literature on the two scales which seem most controversial within the discipline, descriptive of TQM (whether or not it is concerned with exploitation or empowerment) and descriptive of human nature (whether or not TQM can achieve control of subjectivity). In the bouquets/under-socialised quadrant we can evidence those protagonists of TQM whose accounts do not consider the human aspects of the organisation, or the differing ways in which groups interpret and react to change. Here we can find the early writers on TQM who focused upon Statistical Process Controls (SPC) as enabling organisational change (Crosby, 1979), the Just-in Time (JIT) gurus that focus on supply chains and new technology and the Business Process Re-engineering writers who argued the secret to 'successful' change was to be found in radical change and organisational process re-mapping (Coombs, 1995; Teng, 1994). In their unitarist and utopian visions of the future, these evangelists 'implicitly assume that management control is an unproblematic and simply linear function of rational decisions from the 'top'' (Knights and MacCabe, 1998:434). Moreover, their take is one where humans are, at best, conspicuously absent, and are usually replaced by the determinants of technology, strategy and above all, rationality. The weaknesses of such writings have been well documented for over thirty years and there is little point in retreading this ground. If there is any quadrant which has been more slated by critical scholarship in this period, it is the next.

Writers in the bouquets/over-socialised quadrant, as well as maintaining their unitarist assumptions concerning the validity of their claims, argue for the possibility of controlling people's hearts, minds and emotions through organisational procedures. Thus, articles such as those written by Beer et al. (1990) and MacDuffie (1995) suggest that an organisational transformation of subjectivity might occur through new

procedures, while writers such as Harvey-Jones (1988) and Schein (1985) promise a transformation of organisational culture primarily through charismatic leadership. In practitioner HRM, Organisational Development (OD) and 'soft' TQM literature we find a common (unitarist) assumption of that which as early as 1960 was identified as 'identity-plasticity' (Stein and Viddich 1960: 30): the presentation of the unproblematic malleability of human subjectivity and identity. 'The result is a situation where management is seen to be all powerful and able, almost unproblematically, to implement change with little or no resistance' (Strangleman and Roberts, 1999: 48).

On the critical side of organisational analysis, a similar pattern emerges with the under-socialised quadrant, which finds its roots in the work of Braverman (1974). Following Braverman (1974), Labour Process Theorists have developed their critique based upon the assumptions of 'real interests', ownership of power (Lukes, 1974) and a view of the workplace that is 'relatively autonomous' (Edwards, 1989). As with Braverman many of these texts are seen to be 'lacking an adequate discussion of the reactions of the workers as themselves, knowledgeable and capable agents' (Giddens, 1982: 40). The LPT view eliminates both the cultural influence of structures such as gender, family and society (as proposed in Fox, 1985) and the notion that interests are formed by these cultural structures. 'QM is seen as simply the latest in a long line of work intensification techniques' (Rees, 1989: 35) and is, therefore, not only necessarily aimed at exploitation of the workforce (Scott, 1998; Delbridge and Turnbull, 1992, McArdle et al. 1995; Garrahan and Stewart, 1993; Delbridge, 1998) but also that much of the ostensible changes in employees are merely employees 'acting out' (Ogbonna and Wilkinson, 1990) or 'role distancing' (Kunda, 1992: 163) in an effort to avoid managerial discipline. As actors, with both 'back-stage' and 'front-stage' roles, a simple

line of demarcation can be drawn between that self 'put on' for others, and that self which is most representative of our 'true selves'. Where workers genuinely appear to have internalised the managerial message, they have, in all likelihood, been duped. Their consciousness is one which is necessarily 'false' because it does not match their own 'real' interests. As Legge (1998: 15) argues after watching B&Q workers enthuse about their £3.50 jobs, 'I guess I wasn't the only one to find the words 'false consciousness' to my lips...[y]et I also felt such sentiments were patronising'. A final point on the assumptions of this quadrant is that the essentialist tendency that underpins its analysis means that negative judgements are made (only) when the 'real' interests of the workers are transgressed. Work intensification is, therefore, presented as the ultimate transgression of 'management' (a phrase often used too clumsily). This, together with the usual neglect of worker psychology in LPT, often means that change is analysed in terms of its content (i.e. are workers working measurably harder?) rather than its process (how workers feel about their new working conditions). The tricky discussion of whether the former matters more than the latter has, therefore, often be side-stepped. The resultant 'invisibility' of subjective change is a matter which arise throughout this thesis.

Surprising bedfellows in this group are those cultural critics who argue that culture, as a root metaphor (in the form of values and assumptions) cannot be managed. Following the division of organisational culture made by Smircich (1983) into something an organisation 'has' and something an organisation 'is', several writers have argued that those managerial success stories regarding cultural change concern a much more shallow view of organisational culture than the one which they take (Meek, 1998; Ogbonna and Harris, 1998). Arguing that managerial/practitioner accounts of cultural change tend to focus upon behavioural rather than attitudinal change (Martin et al., 1998; Legge, 1995:

185), the overlap with LPT assumptions becomes clearer. Whilst remaining critical of the cultural guru assumptions of the malleability of human values, these writers make a distinction between behaviours and attitudes (Ogbonna, 1995; Hope and Hendry, 1995: 70), with the former being presented as open to managerial manipulation (in the Taylorist style) and the latter remaining essentially untouched by capitalist design. Later in the thesis we see how the distinction between attitudes and behaviours is blurred as a study becomes more processual and temporally sensitive.

Contrary to LPT writers, many post-modernists *would agree with their TQM* counterparts that the subjectivity, interests and motivation of the workforce are determined by forces (or constructed by discourses) external to the employees themselves (though not necessarily using the same conception of power). In following postmodernists such as Foucault (1972, 1977) and Derrida (1981, 1982) writers such as Townley (1992), Sewell (1998), Wilmott (1993) and Knights (1994) have presented TQM as an inescapable discourse in which electronic surveillance and managerially defined knowledge/power ensure a self-discipline reminiscent of Orwell's 1984. Indeed, the deterministic tendencies of this approach have led some critiques to argue that it effectively removes the subject from any analysis (Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995). Writers exploring the 'softer' elements of TQM have thus based their analyses on the manner in which it can produce a 'democratic anti-humanism' which provides a more effective method of controlling the hearts and minds of the work-force than traditional Taylorist means (Wilkinson, 1992; Delbridge and Turnbull, 1992). It should be noted that most of the postmodernist writers studying TQM have their roots in French post-structuralism rather than neo-Nietzscheanism. Their analyses, as we shall discover later, follow a pessimistic tone where the individual is presented as ensnared in (or constructed

by) inescapable discourses rather than following the 'will to power', 'creative transformations' and 'multiple identities' that many other post-modernists have emphasised in discussing identity. The thesis, therefore, in critiquing postmodernism, deals primarily with French post-structuralism (Foucault included!) and its applications in the TQM field.

2.3 Critiquing the literature

The analysis above implies a critique of much of the TQM literature and in many respects this critique has been founded upon a recent 'second wave' of revisionist writing by writers such as Edwards et al. (1998), Purcell (1999), Collins (1998), Knights (1998) and Wilkinson et al. (1997) who have attempted to break out of the typology and move beyond generalisations regarding the bouquet or brickbat polarities, arguing instead for a more contextual and case-specific approach. Summarising their arguments, three of their main valid criticisms of existing literature can be proposed:

2.3.1 Historical and cultural context

Drawing on findings that have shown that worker expectations (Beer et al., 1988), management implementation style (Legge, 1995) and employment relations history (Marchington et al., 1994; Cully et al., 1999) will have considerable impact upon the workings of TQM, writers have concluded that 'TQM initiatives cannot be analysed in isolation from the other company policies that impact upon the employment relationship' (Wilkinson 1997:814). 'Research', therefore, 'needs to move on from the polarised debate in terms of success or failure' (Edwards, 1998:471). The implication is

that writers who view TQM as a Platonic entity which is forever and always concerned with empowerment (or conversely work intensification) not only simplify a complex social and political programme but also pre-empt their findings by making a priori assumptions regarding the nature of TQM. Similarly, those writers who generalise from one or two (or ten) cases to argue that TQM will be the same anywhere else are doing the subject area few favours.

2.3.2 Processes and change.

A recent invitation (letter 7/7/99) for proposals by the Institute of Personnel and Development asks for longitudinal cases study evidence to 'help us understand how various [HRM] practices contribute to business performance' (note the causal certainty). The writings classed as contingency theory⁶ and the associated bundles (or complimentarity) theory (Milgrom and Roberts, 1990; MacDuffie, 1995; Thompson, 1998) have hitherto provided a line of argument which has equated HR and QM practices with efficiency or performance but not presented the mechanisms by which this takes place. Thus, what has been erroneously assumed by many users of this research (e.g. the IPD) is a direct and universal causal link between bringing in HRM or TQM systems and improvements in worker performance or changes in worker attitudes. According to the critics of this research the problem is primarily with the methodological emphasis on quantitative, rather than qualitative (or ethnographic) research: 'What is much more worrying is the way in which hard-to-measure items get to be ignored. In

⁶ It should be noted that 'contingency theory' here is concerned with the output of an organisation being contingent upon specific high-performance practices. The 'contingency models' category used by writers such as Rees (1998) refers to writers such as Adrian Wilkinson which here are placed in the 'contextualist' school (which is covered shortly).

particular the huge research and literature work on management processes seems to be side-stepped because it cannot fit the research design' (Purcell, 1999:29). Therefore, in order to open up the black box to examine the way in which these initiatives work (or otherwise), 'we need to be much more sensitive to processes of organisational change and avoid being trapped in the logic of rational choice...the focus on change will allow us to move on from the utopian cul-de-sac of 'best practice' and the chimera of best fit contingency analysis' (Purcell, 1999: 37-38).

The neglect of matters processual can be evidenced in much of the cultural literature of both the protagonists and the detractors. The division implied between attitudes and behaviours reinforces the actor/structure duality which has plagued the area for some time. For one to change the other is seen to have to come first. It is of little surprise, therefore, that much of this literature is (loosely) based upon social constructivist views of the workplace. Whilst the social constructivist perspective adequately describes the process by which actors reproduce structures (and vice versa), such an analysis is limited in its description of how the system is capable of change.

2.3.3 Subjectivity and socialisation

Whether or not TQM empirically always involves a 'paradigm shift' of subjectivity (Knights and McCabe, 1999: 200) is, for the moment, irrelevant – we need only note that the *normative* model of TQM involves the realignment of values away from pluralism and towards unitarism necessitates a theoretical explanation of how this might occur (Wood, 1986). Those writers who have explored the connections between TQM and cultural change have rightly stressed the role of changing people's attitudes, values and

assumptions (Tuckman, 1994). Changes to attitudes and values are important because they concern the subjectivity of the worker and presume the reproduction of the systems which support that subjectivity.

The difficulty with this debate thus far is that by using a framework which inadequately conceptualises the actor, critical writers have either under- or over-emphasised the potential for changes to subjectivity. Thus, those from the under-socialised quadrant, adopting a labour process perspective, regard TQM as a contested terrain which forms the battle ground for the differing interests of management and workers. Power and interests stem from different resources and outcomes are decided when management win (McArdle et al., 1995), lose, or find overlapping interests with the workforce (Edwards, 1998). Maintaining understanding of 'real interests' as dependent upon the 'structured antagonism' of the labour process has led to charges that '[r]arely does this theorising encompass an analysis of subjectivity. Nor is an appreciation of the significance of subjectivity much advanced by authors who focus upon workers' involvement with class struggles or negotiations' (Knights and Wilmott, 1989: 545). The reaction against this critique has been strong (Edwards, 1990; Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995; Smith and Thompson 1992), but for many, Labour Process Theory remains limited in its assertion of the autonomy of the labour process and its potential in exploring subjectivity.

It is from the over-socialised camp that these criticisms have been loudest, but judged by the same criteria they also appear to fall short. Foucauldian writers have been less concerned with the outcome of TQM programmes than with the implications for identity, subjectivity and knowledge/power. They have viewed the process of TQM as

one in which workers become subsumed within a managerially enabled power discourse either through surveillance (Sewell, 1992), language (Townley, 1994), or identity fetishism. The totalising discourses of postmodernism have, according to Newton (1998), forced Foucauldian organisational analysts to fall into the same determinist traps that labour process writers experienced. Thus, when examining the work of Townley (1994) or Sewell and Wilkinson (1992) we encounter the kind of determinism which precludes resistance and portrays workers as 'cultural dupes'. The 'fragile' identities (Wilmott 1994) assumed of the workforce make them unable to pursue their 'own interests' by 'rational choice', for neither concept exists for the postmodernist.

David Knights is rightly regarded as one of the leading Foucauldian writers on subjectivity and TQM and has written extensively on the limitations of the LPT view of the subject (1985; 1989; 1990; 1994). His conclusion that 'labour is rarely the committed robot that the quality gurus assume, nor the shackled subject that quality's critics have identified' (Knights and MacCabe 1997) summarises the weaknesses of much of the literature. However, in his empirical analyses he tends to fall back upon the arguments that have been made by previous LPT writers: that TQM is usually concerned with rhetoric not reality (Knights and MacCabe, 1998), that TQM rarely changes existing power relationships or there are inconsistencies within the employment relationship (Knights 1999). Despite, or possibly because of, his Foucauldian insistence that 'power is not the exclusive property of any one group' (1999: 220), his case-study analyses have great difficulty in explaining resistance. His paper on retail banking, for example, appears to argue that if it were not for managerial self-interest (which he sees as opposed to the practices of TQM) and managerial misunderstandings of TQM, the project could be implemented successfully. Hardly a ringing endorsement of employee resistance. Nor

is his Foucauldian presentation of the self suited to explaining how *changes* in subjectivity occur (or do not occur). In many respects, the dominance of ‘unowned’ discourses and the elimination of any notion of independence with regard to actors, prevents change from originating from or happening to human consciousness.

Thompson and Ackroyd (1995) argue that Postmodernist Theory, in attempting to counter LPT essentialism, has thrown the baby out with the bath-water, leaving the actor impotent when the great discourses of language, capitalism, and culture are stripped away. The neglect of both local conditions and reflexivity or choice have caused TQM to be viewed as an abstract entity which should be the same wherever it is imposed. This view of TQM which elevates the deterministic role of age, gender, capitalism and race subsumes the individual will leaving them incapable of ‘real’ resistance. However, if TQM is viewed as something which is strongly influenced by the choices and subjective interpretations of reflexive humans, the discussions of whether the programme is generically ‘good’ or ‘bad’ start to disintegrate in the face of local circumstance and specific cases.

With the reported use of ‘emotional labour’ increasing (Taylor, 1998) and as change is incorporated increasingly into studies of TQM it is clear that an understanding of how assumptions, attitudes and behaviours are inter-linked is necessary in order to define the possibilities and mechanisms of organisational (and personal) transformation. As the human element in TQM and HRM becomes more important, ‘there is a need to remove the blinkers and put TQM initiatives into the context of each organisation, studying not only the market situation, the industrial relations history and the HR practices used, but also how ‘quality’ is understood by all the parties involved’

(Wilkinson et al., 1997:816). Models based upon 'acting out' (Ogbonna and Wilkinson, 1990), 'rhetoric versus reality' (Legge, 1995) and 'attitudes versus behaviours' (Beer et al., 1990) seem particularly limited in their ability to present the subtleties of changes to subjectivity. Again, many argue the weakness is methodological,

'understanding how and why change has taken place requires some evidence of the ways in which new attitudes have been associated with changes in behaviour. A more comprehensive study of the new ideas and practices which are emerging on the shopfloor must therefore lead one beyond extensive surveys, factory tours, short interview programmes and documentary research. It must involve evidence of change as reflected in the daily routines of the shopfloor. This is the only way to make the important link between attitudes and behaviour' (Scott, 1994: 28).

The need for sensitivity to the historical and cultural context of an organisation combined with a methodological approach open to dynamic ethnographic and qualitative processes is characteristic of what Edwards et al. (1998) and Pettigrew (1997) term the 'contextualist' or 'processual' school. Whilst not all the writers mentioned might necessarily subscribe to such a label, it is fair to argue that all are united by an attempt to break out of the typology presented in Diagram 1.1 and improve upon the stylised debates that have characterised the subject thus far. Whether they have succeeded in this aim is another matter.

2.4 Breaking out of the typology: critiquing the critiques

In recent years contextualist writers such as Edwards et al. (1998), Wilkinson et al. (1998), Collins (1998), Rees (1998) and Knights and MacCabe (1997) have attempted to break out of the typology presented in Diagram 1.1 by using multiple cases, longitudinal and ethnographic methodologies to focus on the context of the specific companies they are studying in order to provide more local and sensitive studies. Many interesting findings have come out of these studies such as the ‘disciplined worker thesis’ of Edwards et al. (1998) that worker empowerment and the tightening of managerial control need not be mutually exclusive. However, whilst arguments such as these have helped move debates on from generalisations about the nature of TQM, the contextualist movement has provided few examples of work that has taken on board the advice they meted out to previous studies. This is especially so with regard to the methodological aspects of their work which are often not as processual or as methodologically sensitive as readers might have hoped. As well as being weaknesses in themselves, these problems also contribute to the most important flaw in the contextualist armoury, a reluctance to tackle questions of subjectivity.

2.4.1 Processual studies

Many writers who have criticised previous work for being overly static or aprocessual have often confused their own presentation of an input and an output (separated temporally) with a ‘process’. Thus, even qualitative analysts who draw on such theories often provide a descriptive account of change in which an input is equated unproblematically with an output (e.g. TQM or HRM equals efficiency/ exploitation/

mind-control). It is such a presentation which has allowed several tensions within the field to become overly static and linear. The 'attitude versus behaviour' debate, for example, has presented either one or the other 'variable' to be causal of its counterpart (see for example Beer et al., 1990). Other polarisations such as 'rhetoric versus reality' or 'intensification versus empowerment' often appear the result of the clumsy either/or theories which have informed their development. Theorists such as Foucault (1972, 1977), Hatch (1993), Schein (1984) and Lukes (1979) have all provided theories of how change can occur to human subjectivity, but none have provided a description of how this subjectivity works. It is for this reason then that, despite recent calls for studies to become more processual in order to 'reveal the dynamics of the process' (Pettigrew, 1997: 343), writers have found it problematic to break out of their theoretical straitjackets. Whilst this criticism is most often levelled at the statistically based and the guru literature (Purcell, 1999), it is evident that the advice has often not been incorporated by those from whom it originated.

This weakness is especially evident in studies where the 'black box' is complex. One such example is the case of subjectivity, where tendencies to avoid processual study can lead to an over-simplification of the human role in change. In aiming to demonstrate that 'TQM is not nearly as effective or rational in controlling employees as its gurus exhort or its critics fear' (1998: 443), Knights and MacCabe state, 'this paper adopts a more critical 'processual' (Pettigrew, 1979; 1985; 1988) or 'emergent' perspective....[B]y getting close to the dynamic developments of TQM within 'Qualbank'...we seek to provide an account of TQM which goes beyond the polarised interpretations of the critics versus the advocates of TQM' (1998: 434-5). Despite this intentions, Knights and MacCabe provide an analysis that does not capture fully the

dynamic nature of temporal relationships. For example, in examining the practice of TQM in their case-study, they compare the rhetorical aim of achieving 'a change in attitudes and culture' (1998: 440) with the a snap-shot view of reality which is far from this goal. If the focus of the inquiry is placed upon the attempt to *change* rather than the *ends* of certain attitudes or behaviours, then the study requires a different focus - a more representational and less judgmental perspective sensitive to the fact that such situations are in flux. The charge here is that as well as seeing TQM as contextual by place it should also be seen as contextual by time - even the gurus argue that 'change is seen as a long term process by most quality gurus of between five and ten years' (Wilkinson, 1994: 277). Therefore, if the process of change is going to be studied, there should be an understanding that such programmes are in flux, and that their impact upon human subjectivity will be gradual and not absolute. The failure of many commentators to relay the stage of TQM which their study has reached (and how it has reached it) is indicative of their tendency to sacrifice presentation of process before simplistic causal relationships. Thus, when attempting to explain the slow diffusion of New Manufacturing Practices, Whittington et al. (forthcoming) argue that this is due to 'institutionalisation of structures over time....[and] structural inertia' (8-9). Such reification misses the key points that such inertia can only take place as a subjective phenomenon, a point made over two decades ago (Hyman, 1975), and that subjectivity is necessarily temporal, for socialisation and habit forming, by definition, take time.

A related weakness in failing to incorporate an understanding of change into TQM is, ironically, a neglect of issues of quality as opposed to quantity. Thus, whilst there is considerable discussion concerning work intensification by job enlargement, there has been little discussion of the quality (or even speed) at which workers are

working. This perspective is epitomised in *Life on the Line in Contemporary Manufacturing* (Delbridge, 1998). After describing the processes of work under Japanese management systems, Delbridge goes on to describe, in his opinion, 'why workers do what they do'. In providing an answer, the author assumes that because workers generally comply with management demands they do this because they are told to. Thus, resistance for Delbridge is focused primarily upon explicit insubordination (such as the refusal to wear company uniforms) rather than an answering of a more pertinent question: 'why don't workers do *more* than they do?'. One question that is left unanswered therefore, is 'why don't workers work better?'. The focus upon the explicit and easily observable nature of work is understandable, but inevitably skirts round the more difficult, but yet vital, issue of worker subjectivity. One reason for such omission may well be that the methodological practices of researchers are often as clumsy as the performance measurement practices of management.

2.4.2 Methodological considerations

One major difficulty with studies of TQM is that its content is often 'discovered' through the managerial voice (Legge, 1998; Marchington et al. 1994). As the 1998 WERS survey (Cully et al. 1999) recently found, one implication of this is that the existence of high performance work practices is often exaggerated, or at least misconstrued, by managers. Thus whilst the survey found that '83 per cent of managers stated that at least some employees in the largest occupational group worked in formally designated teams', this was 'whittled down to just 3 per cent of workplaces where these teams correspond in full to the model of autonomous team working' (1999:42). The focus on observable behaviour in both managerial surveillance and quantitative studies

has, it could be argued, led to a distinction between the behaviours of the employees, and the values and subjectivity that inform those behaviours. It therefore becomes possible to argue that 'it may not matter to management whether or not employee behaviour is based upon internalised values, as long as it is the right behaviour' (Rees, 1999: 38), a sentiment echoed by Sturdy (1994) and Ogbonna (1992). If, then, it is possible to make a distinction between what is done and the manner in which it is done then the tricky question of 'why don't workers work better?' neatly disappears. Both quantitative and qualitative studies can focus on the mere existence of TQM or HRM practices without worrying too much about whether or not they are practised effectively. The issue becomes, therefore, *whether* something is done (as implied by the behavioural measurement of contingent writers) rather than *how* it is done (requiring a greater sensitivity to employee subjectivity).

One consequence of viewing TQM as an abstract entity is that it is often presented as the same phenomenon, regardless of the organisational context. Thus, when Knights et al. (1998) express confusion as to why their findings regarding TQM differ from those of Rosenthal et al. (1997) it is not just contextual, but also methodological factors that should be considered. The tendency of many critical writers either to compare cases of TQM, or to generalise from such cases without explaining what form and character of TQM they are examining is typical even of the processual genre. Often a simple listing of TQM and HRM procedures and features such as teamwork, quality circles, performance related pay or suggestion schemes is considered sufficient to satisfy the reader that cases are genuinely of the TQM ilk. If context, culture and implementation style are important factors in determining TQM forms then the matter requires better consideration. That even the most simplistic of cultural models

incorporate some notion of 'strength' of culture (Harris and Ogbonna, 1997; Payne 1992) is often disregarded for the appealing, but fundamentally unsatisfying, argument that a weak culture is itself, in fact, a cultural form (Feldman, 1986). Such a self-referential proposition does little to encourage the interpretation of TQM through the socialised perceptions of workers. Despite calls for more ethnographic studies of organisations (Edwards, 1995; D'Iribarne, 1997) such weighted and contextual analysis is still lacking in much of the modern literature.

Such problems are not helped by studies which use one case-study to demonstrate their point, (Casey, 1995; Knights and MacCabe, 1999; Martin et al., 1998; Ogbonna, 1992; 1998; Strangleman and Roberts, 1999; Taylor, 1998) or by many contemporary case-studies being large companies, often in the service sector (Harris and Ogbonna, 1997; MacCabe and Wilkinson, 1998; Rees, 1995). If a contextual understanding of the possibilities and limitations of TQM is to be sought then it is not good enough simply to argue that 'it all depends on the case' (and worse - then to generalise from this case!). If contexts can be varied by sector, type, and time, a sensitive analysis informed by a consistent view of subjectivity could provide a better understanding of how TQM and humans interact. It is important to understand that not only will the type of TQM implemented vary by case, but also that each case will construct and view TQM differently according to their cultural and structural conditions.

2.4.3 Tackling subjectivity

Given the criticisms voiced concerning either over-socialised or under socialised models of change or TQM, there appears surprisingly little to offer in its place. This

point will be taken up later (see the theoretical framework), but some examples may be illustrated here. Collins (1998) aims to 'force a passage between under-socialised and over-socialised models of change and organisation' (1998:194). 'Most of the study of change and its management', he argues, 'is weak theoretically, it lacks a view of context and....a real understanding of culture as a social and dynamic phenomenon' (p.196). He argues that the processual and contextualist approach outlined by Pettigrew (1987) should allow a writer to study 'the interaction and contradiction between the various multiple realities of all those who exert an influence on the contours of organisations and organisational change' (1998:136). However, despite these sentiments and a consistent stress upon the importance of a theoretical underpinning, Collins fails to theorise sufficiently his own understanding of cultural change or socialisation. This is fairly important considering this is what the book spends seven chapters critiquing in other writers' work.

Collins' attempted avoidance of the under-/over-socialised trap is found on page 117: 'Culture', he reports, 'does not totally predetermine our thinking or circumscribe opportunities for action and innovation...in everyday life all of us to some degree bend the rules'. He illustrates his point with reference to the fact that when he was a young Scot, marriage between Protestants and Catholics was frowned upon - and it isn't anymore. This much is indisputable, but Collins fails to theorise what, if not culture, enables us to act, choose and believe different things at different periods. What is missing here is a theory of (wo)man - a discussion of how action is undertaken and how it relates to structure, choice and change. How, for example, have the belief systems of people altered enough to allow Protestant/Catholic marriages? Where is the discussion of the enlightenment project, the diminishing power of the church and the effects of

capitalism - and more importantly the effects of these structures and forces upon human agency? Sadly, these are not to be seen as Collins' argument remains devoid of any ontological discussion. Up to this point, few writers outside of the OB departments (and often not even these) make explicit their psychological assumptions when discussing TQM or change. One example of those that do (albeit briefly) are Edwards et al. (1998) whose assumption is that that managers and workers may, in some cases, share a common interest in the disciplining of the work process. Even so, in arguing that intensification or 'enjoyment' is dependent on context, Edwards et al. neglect the role of ideological control in determining what workers are inclined to enjoy. Thus, whilst the 'disciplined worker' thesis does give a viable account of TQM processes, its own validity is dependent on contextual factors. What for example, happens in cases where changes to worker subjectivity (rather than empowerment) is the aim of management? How does this relate to behaviours? In situations of attempted ideological control, providing descriptions of what workers (including management) believe (for example, Guest, 1998; Ogbonna and Harris, 1997) is only half the story.

Whilst (rightly) waspish in their attacks on those making over- or under-socialised assumptions regarding the nature of subjectivity, many more 'contextualist' writers have done little to further the debate in their own writing. Strangleman and Roberts (1999), for example, though criticising both neo-Braverman and Foucauldian texts in their treatment of the subject, have little to replace them. Their promotion of the idea of an 'autonomous culture' (1999: 66) and the essentialism that can be inferred from their title *The Cultural Cleansing of Workplace Identity*, does little to reassure the reader that improvement on the two traditions is possible. Taylor (1998) provides a further example. Taylor both points out that 'the limitations of labour process theory must be

recognised in terms of interrogating the *subjective experience* of such phenomena' (p.85) and recognises 'the possibility of emotional labour being directed at the self if it is demanded by an employer in order to serve the dictates of capital accumulation'. However, whilst attempting a theoretical distancing from LPT essentialism he falls back on the essentialist crutch by suggesting that 'deep *acting* means *deceiving oneself*' (p.33) and that employees sometimes interacted with customers in their '*own personal or 'natural*' manner...[which is]..influenced by their *own personality*' (p. 91 – italics added).

The weaknesses of the contextualists in tackling theories of subjectivity then, occur either because they avoid the issue completely or because they implicitly fall back on old explanations in their empirical analyses. It may well be that having given up the possibility of generalisations regarding the nature of TQM, such writers have given up on theorising abstracts of any degree.

2.5 Summary

The typology presented in this section implies two contradictions in much of the TQM literature, that is makes *a priori* assumptions regarding the nature of TQM and that the literature is either under- or over-socialised in nature. The emergent contextualist school, sharing many of the concerns outlined above, has attempted to utilise more sensitive and localised case-studies in arguing for a more case-specific judgement on TQM. However, the contextualist reluctance to utilise adequate methodologies in presenting processual studies has often contributed to their reluctance to engage with any theoretically informed discussion of employee subjectivity - a factor argued to be crucial

to the discussion of TQM and change. However, the solution to the problem is not to be found simply in a methodological readjustment. In the next chapter it is argued that the dispute between the under- and over-socialised quadrants has its roots in the theoretical differences between the Marxist and postmodernist views of the self. Without tackling these theoretical foundations, the contextualist writers will, it is argued, flounder in their attempts to move beyond the limitations implied here.

3. Developing a framework for the analysis of subjectivity

'Pappenhacker says that every time you are polite to a proletarian you are helping to bolster up the capitalist system'.

Evelyn Waugh, *Scoop*.

3.1 Introduction

Whether the presentation of subjectivity in organisational theory is 'in crisis' or not, the broadsides being fired by the postmodernists (from the over-socialised quadrant) and the LP theorists (from the under-socialised) are desperately in need of some empirical ammunition and a theoretical reassessment. The area of TQM especially has become a contested arena in the field of organisational studies because it is argued that, unlike many change programmes, TQM can be seen as a significant move away from the Fordist and Taylorist workplace. Contrary to the behavioural focus of early manufacturing systems, normative models of (especially 'soft') TQM can be argued to propose the alignment of subjectivity, emotion and identity with the aims of the organisation. The notion of TQM is, for many, therefore, intricately connected to issues of subjectivity and identity (Wilmott, 1993; Knights and McCabe, 1998; Knights and McCabe, 1999), and, therefore, the topic of cultural management (Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992; Wilkinson et al. 1997). This connection is important because an analysis of subjectivity necessarily demands an explanation of how it is determined or controlled, and how power may be best associated with individual subjectivity. It is this latter point which has not only led to a lively debate within organisational studies, but also reflects more widely what has been termed a 'crisis' in social theory (Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995).

As argued in the last chapter, the methodological limitations of the contextualist writers can impair their ability to tackle questions of subjectivity in the workplace. However, this chapter argues that the underlying limitation of many of these writers is that they fail to tackle the theoretical issues which underpin the over- and under-socialised analyses. It first examines the Marxist essentialism inherent in much of the under-socialised work, and the postmodernist determinism evident in much of the over-socialised work. It then argues that these assumptions have translated to the field of TQM. It introduces the work of Giddens and its connection to existentialist philosophy as a possible development to the debates which are taking place within the area at present. Arguing that TQM could be constitutive of what Giddens terms the 're-embedding mechanisms' of a radical modern world, the processes of this phenomenon are examined through his related theories of trust, structuration and time. Thus, it is argued, an empirical application of the theory would allow a clearer understanding of the way in which subjectivity can be *altered*.

3.2 The crisis

3.2.3 The origins of crisis

The origins of the rift between LPT and PM, at least in the field of OS, can be traced back to the conceptions of power on which they are based. Neo-Braverman analyses of the workplace have drawn on Marxist analyses in presenting the control necessitated by the ownership of capital, as the 'fundamental part of man's experience in acting on the world and reproducing the economy' (Thompson, 1989:242). The resultant theory of the labour process is one which is 'relatively autonomous' because it mediates

external influences such as race, religion and gender (Edwards, 1989). The dominating theory of power in LPT is therefore, one in which the differing interests and resources of workers and management are set against each other as 'structured antagonism'. The notion of 'real interests' opens the LPT construction of the subject open to the charge of essentialism: 'it is assumed that beneath the alienated, fragmented surface of human consciousness there is an autonomous individual striving to come out' (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992: 440)⁷. The notion of power which presupposes 'real interests' or the ownership of power (Lukes, 1974) is the fundamental point of departure which separates LPT and PM.

Although many post-modernist writers have emphasised the role of difference, playfulness and instability in their writings these texts have followed a Nietzschean rather than a Derridian genealogy. Most, if not all, postmodern organisational writers dealing with TQM have drawn upon Derrida (1983, 1987) or Foucault (1979, 1982) in developing an alternative notion of power and, therefore, the subject. Power for these authors is relational and cannot be 'possessed' (Hardy and O'Sullivan, 1998). In literary terms, there is nothing 'outside the text', no objectivity and no ownership. Instead, postmodernists argue that notions of power should be examined through knowledge producing discourses which render identities visible (Du Gay et al., 1996; Knights and Willmott, 1989). Unlike the LPT camp, the workplace is not presented as relatively autonomous from these discourses, but instead is constructed by discourses such as gender (Collinson, 1992), age (Strangleman and Roberts, 1999), professionalism

⁷ The essentialism suggested by Marxist analyses is often over-stated by postmodernists (such as Alvesson) in order to support their own arguments. LPT writers such as Armstrong et al. (1981) and Batstone et al. (1984) suggest a notion of identity more rooted in relationships than self. However, writers on TQM from a LPT perspective tend to follow earlier Marxist trends if and when they make their assumptions clear.

(Armstrong, 1987) or the customer (du Gay and Salaman, 1992). These discourses produce genealogies of knowledge / power at a local level which are not owned so much as known (Townley, 1994). One of the strongest critiques of Labour Process Theory has come from writers who have maintained that LPT rests erroneously upon a polarisation of actors and the structures which constrain them (Collinson, 1990; Knights and Wilmott, 1989; Wilmott, 1990). It is argued (Knights and Wilmott, 1989) that the structural analyses of managerial control (Braverman, 1974), technology (Child, 1985) and competition (Littler, 1985) have been too deterministic, leaving individual subjectivity either inadequately theorised or overly essentialist. This separation, it is argued, fails to adequately account for the subjectivity of the individual and their experience of power: 'only a more adequate concept of the subject....could retrieve the debate from this 'crisis'' (Knights 1990: 298).

The counter to the Foucauldian critique has strengthened in recent years (Thompson, 1993). Radical writers have reacted against the implications of postmodern discourse for resistance. In arguing that '[r]esistance cannot therefore be justified on the basis of reform of society....[s]imilarly, support for human rights cannot be a justification for resistance in general', Knights (1990:16) has been critiqued as rendering workplace action impotent (Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995). Indeed, Knights himself admits 'that an expectation for a general theory of resistance is premature, or alternatively, misconceived once traditional grand theory narratives (e.g. class, gender) are abandoned' (1990:10). More recently writers such as Newton (1998) and Giddens (1994) have argued that Foucauldian analysts have failed in their attempt to provide an adequate theory of the self, suggesting instead that their dependence upon discourse, whilst avoiding the sins of essentialism, have rendered any notion of an independent

subject meaningless. Analysing the work of Townley (1992), Newton rightly comments, 'just as managers were once portrayed as the automatic agents of capital, so Townley almost appears to suggest that organisational psychologists will act as the unthinking 'pre-programmed' puppets of their discourse' (1998: 427). Furthermore, the tendency of Foucauldian analyses to provide deterministic accounts of discourse has, according to Newton, 'squashed the actor' (1998: 420). Thus, the stick of determinism once used to beat LPT, is now being used to thrash Collinson, Knights, Townley and even Foucault in their assertions of the construction of individual identity and subjectivity.

The crux of the problem presented is not so much a consistent view of subjectivity, for the difference can be presented as one of perspective. The difficulty really occurs when one asks '*how do changes to subjectivity occur?*'. With LPT, the essentialist tendencies clearly pose problems (if humans have 'real interests', do these ever change?). With Foucauldians, if subjectivity is presented as a construction of discourse and genealogy, one is left with the choice of either denying the categorisation or asking the question '*how do changes to discourses occur?*' which suggests a circular argument: 'this analytical conflation of interactional processes and institutional constraints robs social action of its innate capacity to transform existing arrangements' (Reed, 1997: 28). Without tackling these more metaphysical problems, it is unlikely that any rapprochement by the contextualist writers on the matter of TQM is likely.

As argued earlier, the assumptions already employed by many contextualist writers do not advance their cause. Abstracting TQM to a Platonic level or viewing change as 'A' being replaced by 'B' (i.e. aprocessual) does not help the understanding of how changes to subjectivity occur: if TQM is a definite *something* then how can its

changing be theorised? An analysis which avoids structural determinism necessarily flounders in the face of change, if action is not sufficiently accounted for. Describing which structures or discourses have created an identity is one thing, but explaining why that identity has changed if the structures have not, is a completely different matter. In short, the frameworks of postmodernism and LPT have shown themselves incapable of explaining subjective change without recourse to 'structural determinants', 'discourses' or genealogy.

3.3 Giddensian analysis

In his critique of social analysis, Giddens argues that the failure of structuralists and postmodernists to provide an adequate theorisation of the subjectivity of the actor, necessitates a reconceptualisation of the nature of social action. Giddens follows Bourdieu (1977) in arguing that '[t]he unhelpful contrasting of framework and interaction can be overcome by conceiving of structure as a complex medium of control which is continually recreated in interaction and yet shapes that interaction : structures are constituted and constitutive' (Ranson et al., 1980: 12). Thus, Giddens' refutes the structure / action duality found in both Neo-Marxist and Neo-Saussurian thought, and instead proposes a theory of structuration in which reflexive agents draw on their 'practical consciousness' to reproduce social structures. For Giddens, structures cannot be external to social action, though he does acknowledge structuring in terms of 'relations of absences and presences' (1979: 61). Recent work in the application of Giddens to organisations has called for an application of his writings which goes beyond structuration theory to incorporate the wider writings of the author (Whittington, 1992).

In attempting this, the paper emphasises three overlapping ideas of Giddens: structuration and time, agency and reflexivity, and trust.

3.3.1 Structuration and time

At the core of his analysis Giddens places 'structuration theory'. This asserts that 'structure exists, as time / space presence, only in its instantiations in such practices and as memory traces orienting the conduct of knowledgeable human agents' (1984: 17). Such a focus on action as the only factor in producing and reproducing structure, which Giddens himself uses as *analytically* separate from action⁸, has important implications for the way in which we understand the world. It does, with the analysis of actors below, provide a method by which dualistic views of the world can be avoided: 'one of the main propositions of structuration theory is that the rules and resources drawn upon in the production and reproduction of social action are at the same time the means of system reproduction (the duality of structure)' (Giddens, 1984: 19). Recently, such a proposition has been argued to remove the need to take one level of analysis when discussing organisational change (i.e. either macro or micro) (Greenwood and Hinings, 1996: 1023; Chikudate, 1999: 70). At the same time, Giddens' theory of structuration avoids a teleological notion of structure, arguing that 'according to the theory of structuration, social systems have no purposes, reasons or needs whatsoever; only human individuals do' (1979: 6). Associated with the theory of structuration is the need to place time at the

⁸ There is considerable overlap in this area between Structuration Theory and Critical Realism, possibly one reason why Giddens escaped much of the critique aimed at 'flat or compacted social ontology that has debilitating explanatory and political consequences' (Reed, 1997: 22). One key difference between the two schools of thought is that the distinction Giddens makes between action and structure is proposed for analytical purposes while that made by Critical Realism is suggested to be 'real'.

centre of social analysis which 'moves theory away from a view of individuals as separated from the social structures that they actively reproduce' (Tucker, 1998: 71).

Giddens argues that time and space are integral not external to being or doing, and the condition of trust is no exception. The ontological security which, as we saw above, necessitates a reliance upon trust also requires the reproduction of environments which require that trust. Indeed, time-distance is a necessary prerequisite for trust, as it is the absence of knowledge and visibility that renders trust necessary (Lewicki et al., 1998). Drawing upon the Annales' tripartite division of time into everyday life, the life-cycle of the organism, and *longue-durée* (Braudel, 1969), Giddens stresses the importance of the life-cycle in reproducing and sustaining societies. Thus, Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* (habits shared by a group) becomes not only essential to analysing society in the micro (ontological security) and the macro (reproduction of society), but also in locating the timing and spacing of that society. This is not to say that habits or patterns of behaviour must be reflected upon continuously and monitored - to better understand the relationship between the subjective and the reproduction of structure, Giddens uses a new concept of agency.

3.3.2 Agency

In aiming to progress beyond the duality of actor / structure analysis, Giddens' understanding of agency comprises three aspects: 'discursive consciousness refers to the conscious reasons that people give to explain their behaviours.....Practical consciousness is the unarticulated beliefs and knowledge that people use to orientate themselves to situations and interpret the actions of others.....The unconscious is that which cannot

easily be put into words and resides beneath our conscious existence' (Tucker, 1998 : 81). Individuals, in the Giddensian framework, are conscious and reflexive agents, who can be aware of the forces which are acting upon them. 'Human agents never passively accept external conditions of action, but more or less continuously reflect upon them and reconstitute them in the light of their particular circumstances' (Giddens, 1991: 175). The tensions and contradictions between gender, race, knowledge, capitalism and the state may be enabled and exploited by reflexive actors for their own ends in the creation of legitimate rules of action (Whittington, 1992). Thus, in attempting to overcome the dualistic tendency of social sciences, Giddens has provided a framework of analysis which helps challenge not only the actor/structure duality but also the polarisation of micro and macro studies.

3.3.3 Re-embedding systems and trust.

Giddens argues that the Enlightenment project produced disembodied notions of time and space. 'By disembodiment I mean the 'lifting out' of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space' (1990:21). Giddens is, therefore, not simply discussing the Enlightenment separation of time from space by means for example of the clock, the calendar and the map, but also the 'rationalisation' of these categories and their removal from intimate, emotional and local spheres of knowledge and action. The dimensions thus become 'empty' (1990:20). He argues that this disembodiment could be visualised in abstract systems (such as money, or expertise) and their working or continuance. This, Giddens believes, 'with the development of abstract systems, trust in impersonal principles, as well as in anonymous others, becomes indispensable to social existence' (1996:113). It is for this reason that

Giddens argues that many of the claims of postmodernity are unfounded, that the globalising tendencies have not destroyed trust but have reconstituted and re-embedded the systems which require it: 'His approach no longer dismisses interpersonal trust as a declining or vanished traditional form, but rather investigates its changing features and its continuing or renewed role in modern society' (Miszta, 1996: 90).

Unlike postmodernism, which 'sees the emptying of day to day life as a result of the intrusion of abstract systems', Giddens argues that we are not in a postmodern period, but one of 'radicalised modernity' where life is 'an active complex of reactions to abstract systems, involving appropriation as well as loss' (Giddens 1990: 150). Thus, his belief is that the same forces of globalisation and technological innovation, which some argue to have transformed pre-modern into modern societies, have in turn necessitated the transformation to radical modernity. The re-embedding process which takes place with radical modernity refers to the personal and intimate contacts (facework trust) necessary for the interaction with disembedded systems which require trust in abstract systems (faceless trust). Facework for Giddens refers to 'trust relations which are sustained by or expressed in social connections' (1990: 80) and are of a more personal and intimate nature. Faceless trust is concerned with abstract systems and is of a more cognitive nature. Both types of trust are, according to Giddens, usually present, but it is his notion of radical modernity that expressly requires the re-embedded notion of facework trust.

Third way

3.4 Giddens' Potential for TQM

The argument thus far has been that some of the limitations in understanding TQM are linked to inherent weaknesses in traditional theoretical frameworks. If this is the case then any progressions in the area of ontology may be relevant to a better understanding of the field. As such, the works of Giddens may offer some help as it has not yet been convincingly applied to TQM. Writers using Giddens have, for the most part, been concerned with theoretical debates rather than empirical analysis. Even in the field of organisational studies Whittington found that 'only 28% of the pieces citing Giddens report the author's original empirical work. Only six make any significant reference to....wider social structures (of class, state and knowledge)' (1992: 669). In organisational studies, the use of Giddensian analysis has been primarily restricted to management studies in helping to overcome the strategy / structure problem (Pettigrew, 1985; 1987; Spybey, 1984). However, even with these analysis (as with Ranson et al., 1980), the authors quickly fall back to the secure simplicity of unrelated inner and outer contexts, thus defeating the main point of using Giddens' structuration theory (Whittington, 1992).

Regardless of these attempts to apply Giddens, it is safe to say that the framework of analysis has not yet been applied to TQM, and such an application may be warranted for three reasons. First, TQM could be argued to be a practical example of what Giddens terms the 're-embedding' process of radical modernity. For Giddens the disembedding of the Enlightenment 'lift social relations... out of specific time/ space contexts, but at the same time provide opportunities for their reinsertion' (1996: 142). Following the Taylorist and Fordism 'disembedding' of work experience, TQM could be

seen to demonstrate the promise of re-embedding human experience. Modernist institutions such as Fordism or Taylorism, with their expertise of management and 'rational' work organisation fit neatly into Giddens' notions of disembedding systems: *'The nature of modern institutions is deeply bound up with the mechanisms of trust in abstract systems, especially trust in expert systems'* (1990: 83 - original italics). However, the processes of technology and globalisation have also created workplaces atypical of modernism and founded more upon emotional and intimate work systems. This is the same process of transition that Giddens witnesses in everyday life: 'the impact of disembedding mechanisms which act to deskill many aspects of daily activities. Such deskilling is not simply a process where everyday knowledge is appropriated by experts...because specialist information as part of the reflexivity of modernity is in one form or another constantly reappropriated by lay actors' (Giddens, 1991: 22). The rhetoric of the TQM phenomenon, rooted in platitudes of empowerment, delegation, multi-skilling and problem solving, suggests a similar re-appropriation of knowledge, if not power, by shopfloors in the Western world.

If TQM is a useful illustration of Giddens' theory, then conversely Giddens' theories may help us achieve a better understanding of TQM. If TQM is viewed as a cultural project which can change identities and values, this may allow us to examine the very issue which LPT and PM have had difficulty with: explaining the alteration of subjectivity without recourse to structural determinism or Marxist essentialism. Giddens, in attempting to solve this problem, would seem a reasonable application. As outlined above, a new theorisation of action and structure is needed which can be applied empirically to move the TQM debate beyond the dualism of labour process theory or the 'squashing' of the actor by postmodernism. The concept of enacting structure through

action could play an essential part in understanding the ways in which change can be theorised without resorting to Marxist essentialism or the postmodern removal of the subject.

The final and most important point comes not directly from his own theorising, but from a school of thought to which he alludes in his statement that ‘the antithesis of trust is thus a state of mind which could be best summed up as existential angst’ (1990:100). In the section below, this school of thought, existentialism, is briefly examined in relation to trust and TQM. The section argues that despite the frequent references to trust in the TQM and management of change literature the concept has rarely been explored in terms of its ontological position. When trust has been analysed in the organisational literature it usually follows (either implicitly or explicitly) Fox’s (1974) notion of high-trust and low-trust workplaces. The re-conceptualisation of this framework with reference to existentialist notions of angst, it is argued, allows a better understanding of how subjectivity can change in the workplace setting.

3.5 Existentialism, trust and change

3.5.1 Notions of trust and angst in existentialist and Giddensian philosophy.

Giddens’ two-fold categorisation of trust as faceless and face-work can arguably be related to two forms of relationships in organisational programmes. Faceless trust, being more concerned with trust in abstract systems, can be seen to relate to cognitive reasoning, perhaps workers assessing managerial intention or ability. These reflexive concerns regarding the change agents’ trustworthiness are added to by a cognitive

assessment of their abilities to make the right decision and enforce it. Face-work trust on the other hand can be seen as a more personal, relational and, therefore, reciprocal nature. It is not simply a cognitive assessment of the ability or intentions of another party but requires that the other party reciprocate that trust over time. In the same way that Mauss' (1970) gift exposed the gift giver to the possibility of loss and rejection, the investment of time, money and reputation of the manager or employee would not receive a dividend with any certainty. Trust, according to Giddens allows us the 'ontological security' to act without fear. In other words Giddens sees trust as both an individual and a structural phenomenon, as a process intricately connected to our formation of habits. Not worrying about planes falling out of the sky, our own mortality or our freedom from pain come about not so much through 'rationality' but through our development of habit. One can now begin to understand why Giddens called the opposite of trust, not distrust, but existential angst. Without 'trustworthy' knowledge and habit, the meaninglessness and confusion experienced is directly counterpoised to the 'ontological security' which Giddens argues is necessary for meaningful action.

Although Giddens does not develop his argument on trust (for example by telling us what distrust is) we can see how such an argument has the potential to be much more sensitive to time (and thus processes): if habits requires time to develop then it becomes necessary to move away from input/output views of humans and focus instead on the processes which enable such development. The importance of habit can be seen not only in allowing a more processual understanding of human subjectivity but also in connecting the phenomenological and the ontological levels of analysis. In critiquing post-structuralist studies of the self, Newton (1998: 423) argues that 'reference to the 'material' is of interest to the extent that its use may reflect power relations which have a

stability, deriving from repeated patterns in their social construction and reproduction over the medium to long term...such stabilities are significant to the extent that they condition the way in which discourses are *established*. As Wetherell and Potter note, there is a need to examine 'how a new piece of discourse is established and gains in its plausibility in terms of what is already there, already in place' (1992: 86)' (*original italics*). Surely, the focus upon 'establishment' of 'stability' at a phenomenological level can implicate few human conditions more than trust?

It seems somewhat unlikely that Giddens intended to resurrect the whole existentialist framework by his innocuous sentence on page 100 of *The Consequences of Modernity*. Much of his writing is at odds with the philosophy and he did not develop his point with reference to time, structuration and reflexivity with which it fits fairly well. However, for those readers who at some point grew unfamiliar (or bored) with existentialism, it is probably a good idea to retrace the main points. Angst is a rather grandiose and a seemingly pretentious term which may initially appear to have little to do with organisation studies. However, as argued earlier, at the heart of any perspective on the workplace, be it Marxism, postmodernism, unitarism or pluralism, is an underlying perspective on human nature and its relationship to its environment. The origins of the term 'angst' are no different. Founded in the phenomenological reactions against the totalising discourses of Kant and Hegel, 'existentialist' philosophy stressed the potential freedom⁹ of (wo)man from external forces such as religion, the heroic code, societal norms or law and order. Heidegger, contrary to Giddens, pointed out that most humans are not conscious most of the time, our trusting existence ('dasein') in our

environment means that when conducting everyday activities such as opening a door, we do not need to reflect upon the door handle or of what it consists. However, it is precisely this consciousness and reflexivity that allows humans to realise their own freedom to act and thus to become what Heidegger terms 'authentic'. The difficulty for humans is that the realisation of this release is unlikely to be a pleasant one. Without unthinking trust in external teleologies (or at least structures), human action is perceived as meaningless (by definition) and governed by choice rather than society. The term used to describe this emotional state varies as 'abandonment' (Heidegger), 'despair' (Kierkegaard), 'absurdity' (Camus), 'nausea' (Sartre) and, most commonly 'angst' (a German variation on the English 'anxiety' and the French 'angoisse'). The acceptance (and consciousness) of 'nothingness' (das Nichts) in place of external authority rejects all the deterministic tendencies of Marx, Freud or the behaviourists, and allows an 'authentic' existence.

Although the thesis argues that angst is directly implicated in Giddens' notion of trust and fits with his arguments concerning structuration and time, it does not intend to charge Giddens with being existentialist, as he is clearly not. Much of Giddens' writing does not concern this area, and it is important to make clear that he differs somewhat from the existentialist line (and the line of the thesis) in places. His proposition of 'knowledgeable human agents', for example, incorrectly assumes that humans are always reflexive, a concept that Knights and Vurdubakis (1994) follow Heidegger (1927: 1962) in finding problematic. For the purposes of the thesis, it is argued that employees are most reflexive in times of subjective change, for it is then that their habits (and,

⁹ The freedom described in existentialist philosophy is not, unlike Marxist, concerned with 'essential' features of human subjectivity. Rather it argues that the freedom of all essentialist or determinist tendencies

therefore, trust) is being most seriously disturbed. Moreover, at times, it follows the politically incorrect argument that some humans are (or have the potential to be) more reflexive than others, a point which moves away from the abstract theorising suggested by Giddens and towards a more phenomenological understanding of subjectivity.

3.5.2 Trust in Organisation Studies

Trust, at both a structural and a psychological level, holds an important, yet ephemeral position in organisation studies. Although it is held to be crucial in the creation of economic (Harrison, 1992), national (Fukuyama, 1996) and organisational (Kay, 1995) success, a coherent and agreed definition of trust is something that has eluded most organisational commentators. The 'confusing potpourri of definitions' (Shapiro, 1987: 624) has not deterred theorists from asserting the importance of trust in enabling action at either the micro- or macro- level of organisational study.

By several guru accounts, the ability of an organisation to create trust among its 'stakeholders' is of key importance in creating a good reputation, productive efficiency and success (see, for example, Forbrun, 1996). This is presented especially in the development of Y-Theory organisational practices such as soft HRM (Noon, 1992; Truss et al., 1997). In the field of TQM and the management of change, the guru accounts (Peters and Waterman, 1982; Handy, 1997) consistently cite the creation of trust as a key concept in motivating unitarist behaviour and enabling transformational processes (such as culture change). However, the centrality of trust is also evident in the arguments of the

can be found through reflexivity, authenticity, and ultimately, angst.

'brickbats' and 'contextualist' schools which have argued that it is often low-trust relationships that lead to QM failure in organisations (Guimaraes, 1996; Wilkinson et al., 1998) or that QM programmes have little impact on trust relationships (Edwards et al. 1998). Studies attempting to provide either a descriptive or an explanatory account of TQM are found to be making at least a cursory mention of trust in their investigations (see, for example, Rees 1998; Knights and McCabe, 1998; Wilkinson et al., 1998).

Even those studies which make more explicit references to trust often leave the concept obscured or ambiguous in their treatment of it. Using case-study evidence Wilkinson et al. (working paper) argue that 'TQM demands a high trust set of relations...a factor which appears central to employee commitment to the company and to TQM. Differences in the level of trust are apparent in different companies and this appears to have a significant impact on the success of TQM' (p.14-15). The paper goes on to provide examples of how low trust (e.g. clocking on and off) restricted the success of a TQM programme in one of their cases. 'Development of trust', they argue 'is likely to require a change in management style'. Similarly, Edwards et al. (1998) identify 'trust in management' as one of two key variables in understanding how responses towards TQM are shaped by the context of labour relations. The ensuing discussion provides a good insight into how contextual factors such as job security, trust, union relations history and even customer relations impact upon perceptions of quality management. Finally, in arguing that 'both the traditional and 'new industrial relations' explanations of change have been uncritical of the way in which management has implemented its plans, and uncritical in the belief that workers have simply accepted new management initiative', Scott (1994: 155) suggests that 'improving industrial relations will not

depend upon obscuring differences of interest between management and workers, but on improving trust between them’.

All three of the texts cited above explicitly recognise the apparent quandary which their analyses suggest - that if trust is essential for the acceptance of quality initiatives, how can that trust be generated without recourse to similar procedural mechanisms? The question is made more pertinent, in that if the analysis is to avoid reification, then both trust *and* changes in attitudes towards quality (or resultant changes in subjectivity) are primarily psychological phenomena. Whilst Legge (1998: 21) is right to point out that ‘all organisation rests on an assumption of some level of trust’, it has been the assumption of this statement that has allowed the concept to escape rigorous investigation. The study of trust in TQM has left several questions unanswered: How is trust generated and how does it relate to the actions and attitudes of the workforce? Can trust exist in situations of ideological manipulation (i.e. under TQM conditions)? If management can achieve some degree of ideological control over the workforce (Lukes, 1974; Tuckman, 1995; Jermier et al. 1994), are workers cultural dupes to trust them? If we are to move away from a circular reification of trust (trust is necessary for TQM, but TQM creates and sustains trust) it is necessary to make explicit what constitutes our understanding of trust.

Although classifications and definitions of are diverse most taxonomies include two core experiences¹⁰ of trust which conform loosely to Giddens’ classification of face-

¹⁰ The term ‘experiences’ is used to differentiate the phenomenological process of trusting from the object that is being trusted which may be institutional, individual, sensory or ontological. This confusion between the process of trusting and the object that is being trusted is one core reason why classifications have not yet made a rapprochement. The term ‘experience’ also avoids the classification of trust into attitudes

work and face-less trust. Although the writers may not necessarily group themselves together, the similarities between their definitions are, at least, greater than the disparities. The first type is personal or affective trust, which is built up through personal contact and familiarity. MacAllister (1995) terms this 'affect-based trust', Rousseau et al. (1998) call it 'relational trust', Luhmann (1979) uses the classification of 'personal trust' and Coleman (1990) calls it 'identity-based trust'. Dunn (1988) stresses that this type of trust is based upon human emotions and Sheppard and Sherman (1998) argue that the condition must be interdependent. The second classification is usually known as calculative (Williamson, 1993), calculus (Rousseau, 1998) or cognition-based (MacAllister, 1995) trust. As the terms suggest, this type of trust is based upon a rational 'economic man' where the process of weighing up the predicted response of another party. Unlike affective trust, calculative trust does not require parties to know each other or even both be human. As such it can be argued to include deterrence-based trust (Ring and Van de Ven, 1992; Shapiro et al., 1992) because the (in)effectiveness of a deterrence is conditional on the calculative process of the person being (un)deterred. It should be noted that either calculus based trust or personal trust can be used (consciously or subconsciously) both at a personal level (I trust my dog) and at an institutional level (I trust the government)¹¹.

Although, with some effort, it is possible to agree relational and cognitive as the two forms of experience that trust may produce, any further agreement between authors proves problematic. For example, Meyer et al. (1995) and Rousseau et al (1998) argue

(Deutsch, 1960; Mellinger, 1956) or behaviours (Hosmer, 1995; Mayer et al., 1995); as the thesis goes on to argue, the distinction is one which makes little sense in the light of empirical evidence.

that writers are united in their view that trust involves a 'willingness to be vulnerable', which is unarguably true. However, they give little idea of what exactly is being made vulnerable. As we shall see in this thesis, the vulnerability usually associated with calculative trust (belongings and money) is treated completely differently to the vulnerability associated with relational trust (identity and meaning). Another example is the oft stated phrase used in trust definitions of 'positive expectations' of another (Meyer et al., 1995). An expectation appears to be a conscious, and, therefore, a calculative phenomenon. If, subconsciously, I trust that the sky will not fall on my head, is this a 'positive expectation'? Is a positive expectation still trust if it is enforceable, i.e. the other's future action is controlled? If I believe that an enemy will burgle me (a bad thing) do I trust or distrust that enemy ? Is the answer still the same if I use me prediction to have the police waiting in my home to arrest them (a good thing)?

At this point, the debate begins to get very messy. There is little agreement of how trust relates to distrust, whether they are independent phenomena or opposites. There is practically no discussion of the absence of trust and distrust and very little on the creation of trust at a psychological (as opposed to institutional) level. One possible reason for the absence of the latter in sociological texts is the absence of a tried and tested analytical framework which allows the analysis to take place at an individual and a structural level. In attempting to overcome these limitations, the thesis develops an empirically based view of trust which can be loosely connected to Giddens' assertion that the opposite of trust is not distrust but angst. Trust, it argues, is habit. It is created through time and familiarity and allows the individual to develop meaning (and thus

¹¹ Also note that the classification presented here does not include faith. This is not so much because it could be argued not to constitute trust (see Lakatos, 1974; Little and Fearnside, 1997), but because faith

subjectivity). Once created¹², trust becomes subconscious and habitual and such is independent of calculative trust. Contrary to Giddens trust is not a reflexive phenomenon, although the creation of trust is. Trust is taken to be a pre-modern¹³ essential in the creation of one's own identity. It is subjective, phenomenological, unenforceable and unmeasurable. It is developed through the individual need for identity and meaning and the habit of trusting allows action without fear. It is build up slowly through reciprocity of respect, justice and 'goodness'. This form of trust is closest to 'relational' trust.

The thesis argues that the other form of trust, 'calculative trust' can actually be seen to be distrust. Calculative (dis)trust will also form into a habit, but this will be devoid of meaning and subjectivity. The risk taken with distrust may be with one's wages or one's property but will never be with one's identity or the meanings in one's life. The behaviours associated with distrust are, therefore, 'dogged mimicry' (Hope and Hendry, 1995), 'resistance through distance' (Collinson, 1992) and 'role distancing' (Kunda, 1992). Distrust, as with trust, while requiring reflexivity in its creation, will quickly petrify into a habitual response. As with trust also, it requires information to be created – though in both cases this information is probably better termed experience than knowledge. Distrust is, therefore, a modernist phenomenon it does not require personal relations, it is the result of rationality and it requires enforceability (and, therefore,

adds little to the understanding or presentation of the experiences detailed in this thesis.

¹² For the argument that trust (or distrust) tends to be self-reinforcing see Fox, 1974 and Hardin, 1993. The reaction against this (see, Lewicki et al., 1998: 443) rightly argues that trusting relationships are easily knocked into a state of discomfort and unease (which this thesis terms angst). However, the two propositions are not mutually exclusive. A verdict as to which is the most common state is probably neither useful nor achievable.

¹³ Although Bigley and Pearce, for example, argue that trust is a pre-conscious expectation, this thesis does not produce enough evidence to give an opinion on this. It does, however, note that the forms of trust

measurability) to create action. The institutional trust of which Fukuyama speaks is often simply a mechanism for allowing distrustful relationships to produce action. The law, the government and the banks allow the functioning of society even though individuals who do not know each other may distrust each other. As we will see later in the thesis, the action that is produced by distrust is always qualitatively inferior to that produced by trust. This, fundamentally, is what constitutes the 'frontier of control' experienced by employers. The maximum gains to be made in the workplace actually involve relinquishing control, measurement and enforceability. The inconsistency of this with the modernist paradigm means that for the most part employers attempts to maximise quality in the workplace will always be 'routes to partial failure'.

Although such a view of trust and distrust extends beyond Giddens' own usage, Giddens' work adds much support to this study. If trust (or distrust) are the product of knowledge and habitus then, at least in this theory, disruption to this will result in angst, a highly reflexive and turbulent state of mind. To change people's minds in the way that TQM suggests, avoiding will require guidance through this period of anxiety to the establishment of new habits. Here we can see how the metaphysical theory of structuration interweaves with the ontological assumptions of existentialism. Without trust (or distrust) as guiding forces of social action, the 'inauthentic' experience provided through religious, political, or social ideology is stripped away leaving the individual in a state of self-reflexive angst. The disruption of (dis)trust at a personal level is an instantiation of the (at least temporary) structural failure of trust. Such a proposition is not particularly essentialist because it does not ascribe (dis)trust as a predeterminant of

which allow changes to subjectivity and identity are not, primarily, cognitive. As Simon wrote over forty years ago 'rationality does not determine behaviour' (1957: 241).

human existence, only as an enabler of human action (being). Trust, therefore is a necessary process for ontological security, rather than *trust in something particular*, which would be essentialism at its worst. Additionally, structuration theory allows a method for studying both personal trust and institutional trust as they create and recreate each other. Although the thesis focuses upon the creation of trust at the micro/psychological level, it makes clear the role this phenomenon plays in creating (or not creating) new characteristics of (hyper?)modernity, what House et al. (1995) term the meso level.

3.5.3 Angst in Organisation Studies

If trust has been under-theorised in writings on TQM, then angst (in its relationship to trust) has hardly been mentioned at all. However, there are several texts which suggest the value of the concept. Whilst admitting that the critique of dualism that has emerged in sociology may originate from our own existential condition (Knights and Wilmott, 1989: 536), (thus self-validating the theory!), Knights has failed to point out the overlap between his own writings and those of the existentialists. Though claiming to use a Foucauldian basis for their enquiry, many writers (with Knights) have tended towards language which appears to be more existentialist than post-modern. As Knights later admits, 'Foucault does not directly concern himself with explaining his subjects ready consent to the various technologies of power' (1990:321). This deficiency allows Knights to expand on how this might occur and argue that discourses 'render individuals uncertain and insecure [so that] the sense of what we are (that is, identity) can no longer be taken for granted' (Knights, 1990: 321) and 'are known to provide the individual with a sense of security and belonging' (Knights and Wilmott, 1989: 550). 'In effect, the

sense of ourselves becomes so tied to the continuous participation in... a set of practices..that any potential disruption is defined not just as change in behaviour but as a threat to our very identity' (Knights, 1990: 326). How the disruption occurs or the threat is experienced, however, is necessarily skirted around due to the limitations of the framework Knights is utilising. As Newton (1999: 416) points out, 'such *psychologisation* of the self appears out of kilter with both the decentring of the subject in Foucault's earlier work, and with the attention to an ethics of the self in his later work'. In an earlier piece Newton (1998: 420) is worth quoting again, 'at the level of the self, the 'motor' for human agency in the account of Willmott and Knights appears to be that of a discursively related desire for a secure identity. Their account rests on an assumption of the fragility of the self (arising from modern discourse) which prompts the desire for a secure identity'. Whilst the overlap with existentialist writing is evident, Newton fails to make the connection, instead arguing that Knights and Willmott are 'as close to the Frankfurt School, critical theory and labour process theory, as to Foucault' (1989: 420).

In one of the best pieces discussing human subjectivity in the workplace, and under the (apparently neglected?) heading '*Existential separation and the limits of humanism*', Willmott (1993: 539), points out that we are living in a world where 'human beings are required to make their own identity, yet lack access to the moral resources that are critical for fulfilling this requirement'. Arguing that Giddens (1991) fails to analyse the role of the corporation in this condition, Willmott continues that 'submission, facilitated by the identity protecting device of 'cool alternation' [is]... a syndrome that is no less crippling in its impact upon human existence than dogmatic devotion to a deified individual' (1990: 539). What this excellent piece of analysis fails

to achieve, however, is the essential link to the structural that is provided through the relationship of angst to trust and the structuration of this experience.

Moving on to more empirical studies, there appear to be several that hint at the potential of existential philosophy and its relationship to trust. In explaining how employees come to undertake actions in their organisations that would appear reprehensible to the outside world, Schwartz (1987) argues that 'people's sense of identity is tenuous in the extreme....that having an identity is not something that we can take for granted' (1987: 328). Though not explicitly naming angst (or the need for ontological security) as the motor for this, Schwartz argues that humans necessarily seek out stable identities, which is why 'social institutions..specifically work organisations, develop an ontological function' (1997:329). The organisation thus provides an ideal which the individual, in order to be 'free from anxiety at the level of identity' (p.333), must protect at all costs, a comment echoed by Fukuyama (1995: 6). The protection of the organisation through illegal activity, therefore, amounts in many instances to be the protection of the individual's own identity. It needs to be said that although Schwartz draws primarily upon Freud in arguing his case, his argument appears equally, if not more, applicable to the existentialists.

Two further empirical examples can also be found in the relevant literature. John Coopey's (1995) examination of the effect of managerial culture on organisational commitment draws on Geertz (1964) to argue that 'at times of cultural, social and personal dislocation newer ideologies are necessary to reduce social strain and individual tension...New knowledge to achieve this resolution is produced through relationships between those who have both an interest in the potential changes and the power to affect

?

the outcome' (p.57). Whilst Coopey does not make explicit the connections between 'new knowledge' and trust, (i.e. why should employees internalise new knowledge if they don't trust it?), he does point out the importance of 'trust-based' personal relationships to 'processes through which attitudinal and identity change takes place'. Effectively, he connects the Giddensian argument concerning face-work trust (or at least notions of personal trust) with identity changes in the workplace - the very purpose of this thesis! However, whilst this connection is being made at the empirical level, it is left un-theorised in terms of an ontological or metaphysical discussion. A second example can be provided by Nobuyuki Chikudate's (1999) phenomenology of resistance to change in Japanese business communities. Following Giddens (1984) in stressing the reflexivity of the individual in changing their 'knowledge structure' (p. 71), he argues that the 'myopia' of the Japanese community was due to his belief that often members of organisations were not highly reflexive, and did not possess the 'competence of moving from a state of enmeshment to a transcendent state' (p. 72), a point reiterated by Pollner (1974; 1987) in her description of 'mundane reasoners'. In terms of existentialism, what is being described is the state of inauthenticity, where habits have become so strong (dasein) that reflexivity is impossible. Again, with this article, the theory is only partially developed, leaving out the implications for subjectivity and change, but it does, with those cited above, provide evidence that re-examination of the applicability of existentialist thought (supported by a structuration theory) may well be overdue.

3.6 Conclusion

It has been argued here that the difficulties experienced in the area of TQM can be traced to the crisis in OS between LPT writers and Foucauldian writers in defining

subjectivity and explaining how changes to subjectivity occur. In attempting a solution it has been suggested that the structuration theory of Giddens can be linked to a more empirical analysis through the utilisation of an existentialist model of (wo)man. Trust, through the interpretation of structuration theory, may be theorised as both a structural and a phenomenological condition. Moreover, if Giddens' conceptualisation of trust (as opposite to angst) is assumed, changes in subjectivity may be better explained. This is first because 'angst' allows change to be viewed as a phenomenon in its own right, as a disruption to habitus, rather than a change *to* something. This proposition, therefore, allows a more processual and time-sensitive analysis of change. Second, if 'instantiations' of trust can be viewed to be both a personal and a structural phenomenon, then a connection can be traced between the actor and structure dualities that have plagued the area up until now. Finally, the theoretical exposition gives a more grounded framework to trust, a concept which seemingly is at the heart of TQM and change, but often remains unsatisfyingly untheorised.

Whether arguments can be (in)validated in practice will very much depend upon the quality of the evidence gathered. However, if structuration theory is anything to go by, such vague concepts as trust, distrust and angst, will have real, everyday manifestations if the relationships exist at all. The most important facet of such an investigation will, therefore, be to get as close as possible to those living the lives on which such theories are based. In adopting the processual, ethnographic and longitudinal methodologies utilised by the better contextualist writers, it is hoped that such an aim is achievable.

4. Methodology

‘I have called this principle, by which each slight variation, if useful, is preserved, by the term of Natural Selection’.

Charles Darwin *Origin of Species*, Ch. 3

4.1 Introduction

So far it has been argued that existing investigations into TQM have been hampered by their failure to theorise adequately the nature of subjectivity⁶ in organisations and, relatedly, their failure to adopt processual studies examining how (and if) subjectivity can change. The purpose of this thesis is, then, to provide a more sensitive description and explanation of how subjectivity changes can (or cannot) occur in TQM. Rather than present the search and development of this theory longitudinally (as it happened), the thesis, for the sake of clarity, presents the inquiry as a *fait accompli*. The previous chapter, therefore, was not an *a priori* theoretical exercise but a result of three years of matching empirical findings with theoretical explanations in the literature. The resulting construction using Giddens and existentialism is, it is argued, a ‘best match’ explanation for the findings of the thesis. The most appropriate methodological process for developing theoretical explanations from empirical research is usually presented as ‘grounded theory’ (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978).

Both grounded theory and the theme in this thesis of attempting to understanding human subjectivity are founded in the philosophical perspective of phenomenology. Phenomenology, as a philosophical movement originated as a reaction against the positivist abstractions of Kant and Hegel. As a investigative methodology, therefore, it denies the ‘truth’ of objectivity (Husserl, 1973) but allows for the processes by which

objects come to be seen as 'real', known as 'objectivisation' (Berger and Luckman, 1966). Those utilising phenomenological methodologies, such as Zuboff (1988), Chikudate (1999) and Riemen (1986) 'search for...the central underlying meaning [essence] of the experience and emphasise the intentionality of consciousness where experiences contain both the outward appearance and inward consciousness based on memory, image and meaning' (Creswell, 1998: 52). They argue that the presentation and validation of their findings should not rest upon 'objective' measures but upon the empathetic, sense-making processes (or 'inter-subjectivity') in which the researcher, the researched and the reader share (Burns, 1989; Husserl, 1973). However, although phenomenology and grounded theory overlap in their inductive and subjectivist nature, grounded theory is (as its name suggests) more suited to abstraction. The purpose of the thesis, though, is not to provide generalisable abstractions, but to provide better explanatory schema for the cases under investigation. However, the theory-building process of grounded theory provided limitations which the study had to overcome.

First, grounded theory is usually presented as a structured, inductive investigation into a defined research question involving the 'systematic comparison of small units of data (incidents) and the gradual construction of a system of 'categories' that describe the phenomena being observed' (Langley, 1998: 18). However, Orton's summary of Daft's (1985) distinction between deductive research (theory, method, data, findings) and inductive data (method, data, findings, theory) simplifies concepts which are frighteningly out of step with those researchers who have given a 'warts and all' account of their methodologies (Ferner, 1989; Barley, 1995). As will become evident, this study went through several research questions (and long periods where there were no clear questions). Second, grounded theory generally assumes the knowledgability of the

researcher as to the body of literature that surrounds the research question (O'Mahoney, 1998). As a novice to the areas of TQM, sociology and philosophy, I was not familiar with much of the literature a more seasoned researcher might have taken for granted¹⁴. Several of my early 'original contributions' had, therefore, to be scrapped as they were later found to be less original than I had thought previously. Finally, if we accept that research questions will change and familiarity with the area will increase as time progresses, how can one be sure that the cases that were originally chosen will necessarily fit with the final form of the investigation? Contrary to the usual presentation of grounded theory as an ordered, systematic process, this chapter attempts to recreate the iterative and dynamic flows that existed between different research areas and the methodology. The purpose of this chapter is, thus, three-fold. It first attempts to trace the manner in which the evolution of the subject matter of the thesis influenced the methodologies being utilised. In doing so it explains why some perspectives/ frameworks were dropped in favour of others. Second, it shows the fit between this methodology and the final area of concern in the thesis. Finally, and simultaneously, it provides details of the methods used to collect, interpret and analyse the data collected.

4.2 The 'evolution' of ideas

Any evolutionary processes is usually thus named from the easy vantage point of retrospection. It is only from this perspective, then, that the evolution of research areas can be evidenced through notes and diaries kept since 1996. Table 1.1 (below) details some of the main areas that have been covered as research topics. As with evolution, the

¹⁴ Not necessarily a drawback according to phenomenological studies - the bracketing of one's own preconceived ideas is argued to be a difficult but fundamentally essential prerequisite to the study of any

table should not be interpreted as a plan, for it was not. Nor should it be read as a series of distinctive research ideas: each idea was inextricably linked to its predecessor and each 'phase' was dogged by uncertainty, confusion and inconsistency. Before moving back from this privileged position, it is worth noting a general theme to the evolution, that of investigating the question 'how does mankind fit with the structures/discourses it creates?'.

Table 1.1 The development of the thesis

Area of Focus	Key Aspects of Research / Methodologies	Date	Reading Areas
1. Discrimination in organisational systems? How are attitudes embodied in structures?	Disagreement with supervisor (Gender). Changed to supervisor (OB). New topic sought.	Sept. - Nov 1996	Gender Studies, culture, Qualitative Research
2. Can quality cultures be managed? How does this affect worker attitudes?	Member of upgrade board argues that this has been 'done to death'. New topic sought.	Nov. - March 1997	TQM, Guru texts, culture, Qualitative Research
3. Building a model of workers reactions to change. How are attitudes and behaviours related?	Supervisor (OB) interested in attitudes and behaviours. Idea to survey for suitable companies. Change as important.	March - June 1997.	Power and resistance, ethnography, attitudes and behaviours, Processual analysis
4. A comparison of how BPR and liP change affects management / worker relationships.	Survey of BPR / liP medium sized companies in Midlands. Interviews with 11 companies : identification of 4 case studies.	June - Sept. 1997	Labour Process Theory; structuration theory, psychological contracts.
5. How can cultural change work?	Interviews and participant observation: BPR and liP not existing as distinct programmes. Change seen as important: plan 2 phases of interviews and participant observation.	Sept. 1997 - July 1998.	Trust; Critical HRM, TQM and BPR, contingency theory.
6. The political process of change - how is the change process translated and created by the organisation?	Supervisor (OB) leaves, new supervisor (LPT) accepts me. I believe that working practices will not change significantly over a year.	July - Oct. 1998	Grounded theory, actor network theory, social constructivism.
7. How does power relate to the processes of change management?	Clear that BPR/liP division is unviable. Focus on TQM and HRM instead. 2 nd phase of interviews focuses on themes of change. New second supervisor (PM) suggests postmodernism.	Nov. 1998 - Feb. 1999	Management of change, Foucault, Postmodernism and post-modernity.
8. How do changes to subjectivity occur in TQM programmes?	After progress review, supervisor suggests Giddens' literature. Find 'trust' reference. Theoretical framework created and write up commences!	March 1999 - Jan. 2000	Giddens, existentialism, trust and phenomenology.

area (Field and Morse, 1985; Schutz, 1967).

Originally intended as an investigation into how organisational systems can become discriminative, an early disagreement with a supervisor necessitated a change, not only of supervisor, but eventually of subject matter. As my readings at this stage had already incorporated some literature on cultures, it appeared to be a small step to examine how so called 'quality cultures' could be created, a subject which fitted in with the Organisational Behaviour (OB) background of my new supervisor, and one which appeared prominent in the reading I had done to that date. My reading had not, however, been extensive enough to discover that the field of managing organisational culture was arguably a spent topic in terms of research in the 1990s. This was, nonetheless, kindly pointed out to me by a member of my upgrading panel in February 1997.

Even at this early stage, I had a strong inkling of what my methodology would consist. Although I had studied mathematics at an advanced level, the thought of solely statistical analysis held no appeal. My first degree in Ancient History had opened my eyes to the delights of anthropological and ethnographic research. The depth of feeling and sensibility which this perspective permitted beckoned so much more than that which I perceived to be the dry and shallow world of numbers. Although I (eventually) discovered that interest was cited increasingly as justification for research (Pettigrew, 1997; Lawrence, 1988) it seemed more usual in the qualitative literature for the research area to form the methodology, rather than the other way around. I had, at this stage, not yet grasped the concepts and principles governing qualitative research, grounded theory or indeed the philosophy of social science, and relied instead upon common sense, an instrument I consequently believe to be more useful than (and probably constructive of) most tools and theories. Having stated this, this opinion has given me some distinguished soulmates! In his autobiography, Whyte states, 'I started my junior fellowship with a

vague idea that I wanted to study a slum district..in my early weeks in Harvard, I walked up and down the streets of Boston and sought advice.....I made my choice on very unscientific advice' (1994: 96). Whilst there is much work on how science is constructed by humans, maybe a more productive avenue would be how 'scientific' human nature can be.

To say that there was a point where qualitative, ethnographic or case-study research was chosen as the preferred method of investigation would be misleading. The methodology was always contingent not only upon the area for investigation, but also the reading which had been done and the advice of my supervisors and peers. The accumulation of knowledge through reading in the research process is something very often taken for granted by the research texts. Students rarely come to a Ph.D. with perfect knowledge and this fact has two important implications. The first is that a cumulative process of knowledge acquisition exists by which the Ph.D. researcher learns which areas are saturated, what the main debates are, and who the important writers are in the field. Thus, especially in the literature-intensive qualitative field, researchers must be constantly aware of the changing nature of their thesis in order to make an 'original and substantial contribution'. Secondly, the researcher must learn the language of his or her research field. Depending on whether one is a labour process theorist, an organisational behaviourist or a postmodernist, a new vocabulary must be learned, as must different interpretations of words such as structure, agent or identity.

My enlightenment concerning the limitations of cultural management as a research field forced me to fall back upon the support of my supervisor, whose OB background prompted an interest in the related area of attitudes and behaviours (which

many have argued amount to the sum of culture: Schwartz and Davis, 1981; Eldridge and Crombie, 1974): how are they related and how do they interact? It was at this point (March, 1997) that change became an issue in the research: change in organisations seemed to provide an area in which relationships and causation could be examined more thoroughly. At the same time, my colleagues alerted me to the writings of Pettigrew concerning processual analysis. If I was to be studying phenomena within a real-life context, it seemed antithetical to use a snapshot of this reality rather than to examine the histories and processes which are at work in the workplace. Two sets of interviews separated by several months and possibly a similar approach with participant observation and / or a survey measuring attitudes seemed applicable. This was meant to allow a comprehensive and longitudinal examination of different measures of attitudes and behaviours within the case studies¹⁵. An obvious constraint was the four year limit for the thesis which, for all practical purposes, meant that I could not afford to spend more than 18 months studying empirical changes.

By choosing case-study research I had also chosen a camp in one of the major debates concerning the measurement of culture. I had chosen to ally myself with those researchers who maintain that ethnographic case-study research provides a strong tool with which to understand the deep-seated attitudes and assumptions which form organisational structures (Alvesson & Berg, 1992; Despres, 1995). In doing so, I turned away from the methods used by those researchers who argue that organisational (or indeed any) cultures can be usefully assessed from an objectivist and statistical perspective (Denison & Aneil, 1995; Migloire & Martin, 1994). In taking a side within

¹⁵ In ATP, my first case, I also carried out consultancy work which included an attitude survey. The relevant results are referred to later.

this debate, I was also choosing a paradigmatic perspective. While accepting that positivist, statistical methods of measuring cultures are often based upon sound methods and internal coherence, I believe(d) that any meaning which is to be attached to the interpretation of findings must inevitably be contextualised within the culture itself. To choose a well-known example: the findings of Hofstede (1991), concerning the differences between national cultures, become problematic without an understanding of how each culture interprets the questionnaire which he sent out or indeed what motivated Hofstede to send out that type of questionnaire. This belief necessitates an alignment with the subjectivist school of thought which maintains that unless a researcher understands how his or her subjects attach and create meaning, any findings must, by definition, remain meaning-less.

The benefits listed by Yin concerning case study work (1994) were all applicable in my research. I wished to understand phenomena in their real life contexts, I wished to analyse at differing levels of the individual, the organisation and even inter-organisation. I also believed that multiple sources of data would strengthen my enquiry. If I was proposing to model how the attitudes and behaviours of workers responded to change, it seemed that the most suitable approach would be exploratory, which sat well with my inclination towards qualitative, ethnographic work. It also seemed that an empirical case-study comparison would allow any model or theory to be explored in other contexts, and thus prove more applicable for other researchers. Given that the study required an in-depth understanding of the workforce, and that I had four years to finish, I decided that a small number of firms would need to be identified (later found to be congruent with Pettigrew, 1997), with some characteristics held as constant as possible, and others to be varied. If possible, I reflected, geographical location, size, sector and ownership should

remain relatively constant, to give other features freedom to vary and thus be studied over time. Which phenomena then, were to be studied in differing contexts?

Two ideas were suggested by my first and second supervisors. My first supervisor (OB) believed that I could compare two very different change programmes, Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) and Investors in People (IiP). Both schemes were based upon differing assumptions of the best way to improve productivity, and it was thought that these assumptions might be examined empirically. The rationale behind choosing these two schemes was that they were two polar types of organisational change, one very orientated around top-down management, fast and radical change, and the second focused upon incremental and arguably bottom-up change. This diametric approach to studying phenomena was, as I was later to discover, an established methodology (Pettigrew 1990). My (then) second supervisor, a Labour Process/contextualist (LP) writer, suggested that the former idea might be incorporated with a study of unionised and non-unionised companies. It was suggested that the study could be based upon four case studies with different combinations of IiP or BPR and unionised / non-unionised.

At this point it seemed necessary to begin moving as concerns fieldwork. I decided to stay with the idea of comparing organisations which were similar in some respects, which I later found to have been used by other researchers (Rieger, F. and Wong-Rieger, 1995). Accordingly, I identified all medium-sized (100-1000 workers) privately-owned manufacturing companies in the West Midlands. These themes of size, ownership, sector and location were chosen as they might feasibly impact upon the processes of change within a company, and too many differing elements might prevent

focused study of the phenomena which were important to me (i.e. unionism and change programme). Medium-sized was chosen primarily because most of the case-studies that I had read were dealing with large companies: dealing with a different size, it was felt, might provide another justification for the thesis. From 213 companies which were identified on this criterion, 90 responses were collected, from which 11 detailed the implementation of TQ, IiP or BPR schemes and allowed some level of access. The companies were separated into six which would permit full case-study access to documents and interview data and five who simply preferred to provide minimal information about themselves. In order to gain a basic understanding of what the company were doing and what changes they were implementing, interviews were undertaken with the managing directors of the six companies that were allowing full access,.

The issue now was whether to tackle all six case studies or whether to focus upon four that would satisfy the matrix criteria. The introductory interviews made this choice easier: it was clear that companies five and six were far more advanced in their change programmes than the other four. Moreover, company six made wooden chairs which was an entirely different style of operation to the others, which specialised in machine-intensive metal-based manufacturing. Company seven was also much larger than the other companies, employing over 500 people, whereas the others all employed between 250 and 350. The four companies were similar in that they were Midlands-based, employed between 250 and 350 people, were privately owned, based in the manufacturing sector, and were (ostensibly) implementing either BPR or IiP change programmes.

By this stage (September, 1997) my reading had rendered problematic some of my previous assumptions. My understandings of behavioural and attitudinal linkages had drawn me away from my Industrial Relations background towards psychological literature. Not only was I unfamiliar with the arguments and language, but the details of the subject seemed to be firmly embedded within psychology rather than IR. It also became evident that studying workers' reactions to change without incorporating management into the model would be foolhardy. Even the most radical of the Labour Process Theorists had incorporated an idea of management into their work. These points combined with my inclination towards political rather than psychology analysis helped make two adjustments to the research. The first was to reduce the emphasis on attitudes and behaviours as central concepts to the study. The second was to incorporate management into the research as a more important factor. This shift meant that the role of relationships became more important in my enquiry: I now needed to examine the ideas of psychological contracts, trust and stakeholders.

I now had to begin collecting my data, and by this stage a reassessment of my research methods seemed due. The original methods still appeared valid, but in some cases, for different reasons. The longitudinal (i.e. two stage) aspect of the study was maintained, not solely to introduce time as a factor, but also so that early ideas might be developed and validated later. Interview data and participant observation were kept so that a deep understanding of issues such as trust, psychology and culture might be approached. I hoped to achieve a process 'by which a participant observer gradually makes organised sense out of what he (*sic*) sees, hears and becomes a part of [the culture]' (Fox 1974: 230). It was also felt that more honest answers in interview situations might be achieved if I had worked on the shopfloor with some of the

interviewees, an assumption which I believed subsequently to be correct. The four case studies were also maintained as opening up possibilities of comparison along the lines of type of change programme and also of unionisation.

4.3 Methods of data collection

After negotiating access to my case-study firms, ATP, Whale and Firmin, I began to collect data. During the first phase of research, interviews were begun with about fifteen people in each company. The research area necessitated interviews with management and workers, and especially those who were affected by the change programmes. Given these constructs, semi-structured interviews were completed with the managing director(s) of each company, the personnel manager if in existence, the production managers, with union officials (if in existence), and with worker representatives. After this, managers and workers were interviewed in areas which were being affected by change (as numerically representative as possible of departments, sex and hierarchical position) and those who were involved with the 'ownership' of the change programme. Once this was complete, interviews were held with those who were named by other interview respondents as having important characteristics (having been with the company since its foundation, made redundant and re-employed, resigned from being a shop-steward etc.).

The interviews, in the first phase, were little more than exploratory or fact-finding, and were aimed at setting the context for the change. What changes were taking place and why? What did people feel about the changes and why? Although specific questions were asked, themes were also developed if the interviewee drifted from the

question in hand. Although it would be comforting to believe that a 'point of saturation' of information was achieved, it is my belief that in this methodology, this assumption is problematic. If one argues that the research questions are necessarily in flux due to the iteration between data, theory, reading and circumstance, then it must follow that the information one requires to answer these questions must also be changing constantly. If one accepts that 'knowledge' is not an objective, measurable and limited body, and is subject to the expectations and questions posed of it, then any notion of a 'point of saturation' must be incorrect : the process of accumulation will change what one wishes to accumulate.

Concerning document searches, there were no preordained ideas concerning what data would be valuable, primarily because I was not sure what would be accessible. The documentary data varied from company to company, not only because each company placed different limitations on what I was allowed to see, but also because different companies possessed different information in terms of production figures, employee surveys, customer surveys, profit margins and sales. Whilst this information was important, it was equally important to ask oneself why each factory possess such information, and if they did not have it, then why not. Both interviews and document searches were longitudinal in that they enquired both into past history and (in the case of interviews) enquired of future expectations of the workers.

In a similar manner, symbolic ethnographic material was dependent on the value each company placed upon it. In Whale, for example, important sayings were painted all around the factory, in ATP managers had the company philosophy framed on their walls and in Firmin company products were emblazoned on the walls, as were historical

documents. These artefacts in themselves possess little meaning, in that they may or may not be indicative of the organisational culture(s). In order to enhance the understanding of both organisational artefacts and organisational data, it was important to discover the meanings different groups attach to them and how they come into existence in the first place.

In examining issues such as trust, psychological contracts and relationships, it was necessary to have an in-depth understanding of the behaviours, attitudes and assumptions of those working within the case-studies. In order to gain an 'insider's' perspective on these facets, I decided to use participant observation to study the processes of work which were not available to me through interviews and document analysis. With the constraints of time, money and company patience it was only possible to get a maximum of two weeks at each company working primarily on the shopfloor. Although such a short period is probably insufficient to gain a detailed understanding of all aspects of the organisational culture, I found the experience invaluable in supporting my interview data and increasing the trust and openness with which I was treated by workers and managers alike. It surprised me how quickly and effectively these participant-observer periods provided me with useful information. Most of those workers in my immediate vicinity knew that I was doing a 'project for college' but this did not stop several of them constantly mistaking me for an apprentice or someone that was trying the work for size. I often got comments such as "*are you coming to work here afterwards?*" or "*I know it's boring here, but if you work hard they'll look after you*". Generally, I was well received by senior management and the shopfloor, although many middle managers (already feeling threatened by the change programme) viewed me with suspicion and would often put me on particularly nasty jobs.

The level of access I gained was also constricted by the period for which I was working. Although I was allowed access to the 'smoking group' at Whale without too much trouble, I had a great deal of difficulty accessing the union stewards at Firmin who (unsurprisingly) appeared bitter at much that was happening in the company and somehow associated me with the MD, Jimmi. However, it helped that with all three companies I was living and working locally. I would meet many of the workers in the pub later and went fishing with two of the workers at Whale. Whilst I was at ATP, the European Football Championships were on television, which allowed me (especially as a young male) to quickly become friends with a large group of the shopfloor workers. Mid-way through my period at ATP I watched England lose to Germany on penalties (again) in a pub packed with ATP workers – the next day (possibly due to the hang-over) was the closest that I had become to any workers in the research. Indeed, another thesis could be written on the politics of race, gender and age that took place both socially and on the shopfloor, but for the purposes of this study, these occasions will only be mentioned when relevant to the issues in hand.

The type of work that I undertook depended greatly upon the manager who was put in charge of me and the company that I was in at the time. At Firmin much of the work is highly skilled and although I was allowed to observe I didn't get to know much about the highly trained people or their work. Instead I was kept with the die stampers and the painters. At Whale I was generally kept in the paintshop, but was used as a 'spare man' to speed up low-skill jobs that were taking too long. As most of the work (other than spraying) was not highly skilled I was allowed to help out in many areas. Similarly, at ATP, I helped out all over the factory, in stripping, cleaning and assembling

gearboxes. In all three factories despite short periods (e.g. half a day) on some complex jobs I was generally kept to work that involved lifting or simple mechanical work. This did not really hamper my investigations because I was usually working alongside more skilled workers and could interact with them fairly freely. This said, the amount of interaction that was possible with the shopfloor and management was highly dependent upon the type of work being undertaken, how busy they were and how closely supervised they were. At Firmin, workers were generally more closely supervised and busier than workers at Whale (though they accomplished less) and correspondingly had less time/for chit-chat. Nevertheless, it was still possible to observe interesting and revealing interactions between shopfloor workers and management.

The taking of notes was done mostly on a mini voice-recorder which I could keep in my top pocket of my overalls. However, this process did cause some concern in managers and shopfloor workers, and I would feel guilty talking into the recorder in the presence of some workers. In these cases I would usually scribble notes down when I was alone or in the toilet. I didn't feel less guilty but it stopped workers and managers getting worried about my intentions. Although only a fraction of the thirty tapes I used for recording were transcribed, this still amounted to just over two hundred sides of A4 (most of which was taken in the first few days at each company). The interviews which they supported came to almost nine hundred sides.

This method of research provided several benefits. Firstly, I could get a detailed first-hand understanding of what work was done and why it was being changed. Secondly, working alongside people enabled me, in some cases, to develop a level of trust which would have not been available in simple interviewing. In living locally,

drinking in the same pubs and eating in the same canteen some workers treated me as a work-mate, friend and confidant. The details, stories and information which I gleaned from this period enabled a much richer understanding of the data than would otherwise have been the case. Very often, the quality of the accounts that I was provided with meant that I could directly use people's quotes in the thesis. This is a technique which I feel is justified not only because of the quality of the stories but also because I can see no reason to prioritise my own account over theirs. Verbal evidence in this thesis is treated as importantly as visual evidence. Later on in the research process the insights which this approach allowed gave me invaluable material to construct and support many of my arguments. At this stage I intended to repeat both the interviews and participant observation in 10-12 months time in order to gain a longitudinal perspective on the cases.

4.4 Fitting research questions to data

As the case-study research accumulated, I began to notice a disparity between the data and some of my assumptions which were implicit in my earlier methodology. The main problem was in the conceptualisation of BPR and IiP: the examples I had of companies attempting these programmes possessed two problematic characteristics. The first was that I had chosen companies which were in the process of what *they* termed BPR and IiP. Although the notion of going for, or being 'committed to' Investors in People was initially presumed to be a standard and universal phase, the companies varied considerably in their expectations of this notion and indeed their likelihood (and method) of gaining accreditation. The conceptualisation of BPR by the companies involved was even more ambiguous. As with many companies claiming to implement BPR the notions

of what BPR comprised were partial, and were only vaguely related to the academic classifications of what BPR should have been. There was, for example, little evidence that key processes had been clearly identified and certainly nothing as radical as the prescriptions of Hammer and Champy (1996).

The second point was that each BPR or IiP project was inextricably linked with other aspects of the organisation and as a result I was having difficulty isolating the programmes in order to analyse them. Those being interviewed would often confess to never having heard of IiP or BPR, but on hearing of the specifics of the schemes would often link them to named individuals, or schemes under different names, or they would isolate small parts of the programme and profess knowledge of only those parts. In many of the cases these schemes were in themselves related to other changes, which some might term Human Resource Management (HRM) or Total Quality Management (TQM). It was becoming difficult to justify isolating the schemes as separate or distinct from the rest of the organisation.

These findings were useful for my research, and were the basis for a paper presented at the EGOS Colloquium in 1998. The writing of this paper revealed another interesting aspect of the research process, and that is that the actual process of writing up one's ideas encourages the more precise formulation and understanding of those ideas. Whilst the paper was a useful exercise in itself, it was not enough to support a Ph.D., especially as I was increasingly finding authors who were writing on this subject. These two realisations from my early data provoked a period of confusion and questioning concerning my research: Who should define BPR or IiP if not those using those schemes? How can one conceptually separate a project from its environment? How can

one define the becoming (or not) of IiP or BPR? What classifications should be used to separate BPR or IiP? The instability associated with exploratory research poses considerable problems, both methodologically and psychologically. Grounded (and associated) theories, necessarily involve explorations of areas which may, or may not, have been trodden before, and when one finds footprints in the sand of academia it can cause both comfort and frustration.

The problem lay with the focus of the study. If the conceptualisation of IiP and BPR were causing trouble, then maybe to focus upon change or the more generic TQM, rather than the formal titles of the programmes, would prove less problematic. If this were the case, then the study could focus upon themes which would facilitate the change process, and how they would do so. I was encouraged in this pursuit by being forced to drop the case-study which was most serious about its pursuit of IiP (a new personnel manager refused the access I desired) and by my new supervisor (the previous had now left to move elsewhere). My reading began to turn towards trust and related concepts, the old readings on processual analysis were recovered, as were those on psychological contracts. From my data, a new theme was emerging. It appeared increasingly (to me) that the change programme itself was not the important issue, but instead how the programme was implemented. The genuine relationship between management and the workforce seemed to be the essential ingredient which flavoured the projects most strongly. It was here, in the 'hard-to-measure' areas of perception, politics and relationships, that the true key to successful change seemed to be resident. I had, with many other analysts of TQM programmes, begun to connect trust, which allows (and needs) intangibility, with the success of interpersonal relationships.

In attempting to theorise this empirical relationship that I had witnessed between management I first (under the advice of my new second supervisor) turned to postmodern philosophy. However, although the reading of Foucault, Lyotard and Baudrillard (I gave up on Derrida) opened my eyes to an alternative way of conceptualising ideology and power, the reading did not help explain the more 'direct' actions of management in controlling the workforce. For this reason I created a longitudinal representation of how the cases temporally utilised different forms of power (unitarist, pluralist, ideological) in gaining different forms of control over the workforce. To my disappointment, however, it was again (rightly) pointed out to me in a progress review that the framework was, well, wrong. If I wanted an innovative method to examine actors and structures, my second supervisor informed me, try reading Giddens. As mentioned earlier, it was in doing this that I found Giddens' reference to trust and angst, and then began my foray in to existentialist literature. As my second round of interviews was underway, I used my readings to focus down much more on their personal feelings and experiences of trust, distrust and anxiety.

4.5 The outcome

Despite the time lag between the original choice of methodology, case studies and first round interviews and the eventual topic, can it be argued that the original topic 'fits' the methodology which preceded it? In some respects, the answer is *necessarily* yes, because, as with most works utilising grounded theory, the thesis is an *outcome* of the early methodological assumptions. It would have been impossible, for example, for the outcome to have been a statistical correlation between two variables, as the thesis, at the outset, was necessarily, exploratory. However one outcome which surprised me was

the closeness of the relationship between the phenomenological methodology and the existentialist outcome.

Despite an office-mate of mine commenting back in 1997 that mine was a phenomenological project, I did little reading on the subject and it was not really until the end of the study (when I was researching existentialism) that I realised what the term really meant. It appears unlikely, therefore, that my use of existentialism as part of my theoretical framework can be directly attributed to the study being phenomenological in nature. A more likely explanation is that my own personal preferences informed both arguments. Although I had not previously been conscious of it, I had always assumed (either rightly or wrongly) the veracity of the foundations of both phenomenology and existentialism. For example, although I would not have used such terminology, I had always assumed the subject-object dichotomy to be nonsense. How well thought out this had been or indeed whether this perspective informed, for example, my presentation of the attitude/behaviour dichotomy remains unknown, but the connection does raise questions as to whether one's assumptions can ever truly be 'bracketed' as the research texts suggest. As it happens, the phenomenologically grounded methodology and the comparative, ethnographic and longitudinal methods of study were ideally suited to the construction of the arguments raised concerning the importance of hard-to-measure phenomena such as trust, and the importance of an organisations' historical and cultural context. These arguments also appear to fit well with recent moves towards making our understanding of organisations more locally and processually sensitive (Hatch, 1993; Pettigrew, 1997; Wilkinson, 1997, 1998; Purcell, 1999).

4.6 A note on methods¹⁶

Although some idea of the methods used to research the thesis has been given above it is necessary to note that a full description, justification and critique of the methods employed in collecting and analysing the data could well fill up this volume. In terms of the data collection, it could be argued that the longitudinal interviews, the participant observation and the document searches allowed a 'triangulation' of the data which helped ensure its validity. However, such a presentation is at risk of placing form over substance and in the final assessment numerous re-readings, attention to detail and a lot of monotonous work provided, I believe, a better guarantor of quality and validity.

In the same manner, a re-telling of my coding strategies and theory-building stages would serve little purpose other than to bore the reader. However, with such an inductive and iterative grounded theory approach to case-study analysis, the strength of the analysis is crucial in ensuring the validity of the findings, therefore some re-telling is necessary. Initially, I decided to try a qualitative coding programme, Nud.ist, to ensure consistency and accessibility in coding. However, the difficulty with the programme is that once the codes (and their relationships) are entered, it is highly problematic to change them. Instead, a constant process of re-reading and coding took place between my first interview in September 1997 and February 2000. Between these dates, a period of experimental coding would be followed by attempts to draw up relationships and stories which could then be used to develop tentative theories. As more data was

¹⁶ At this point it needs to be said that the majority of qualitative research texts that deal with analysis are woefully inadequate in the *practical* advice they provide. I have not yet found a book that does not try to spur creativity and deductive ability through the terminology of 'coding paradigms', 'intervening conditions', 'conditional matrices' or 'horizontalisation'.

collected most of these failed at an early stage either because I found the theory riddled with inconsistency and internal contradiction, or I found that someone had done it before. However, it had become evident early on that trust, personal relationships, subjectivity and politics would necessarily be a part of any explanatory theory. As my reading widened the likelihood of creating or discovering the 'best fit' theory was increased, and it was through the combination of structuration theory and existentialism that I eventually believed myself to have constructed a theory which adequately explained what was happening in my cases and why.

4.7 Conclusions

If one's research emphasises the importance of understanding the longitudinal, complex and processual nature of a given subject, then it follows that one's understanding of the methodology used should not shy from facing the same challenge. The aim of this chapter was to present the methodology of the study, in the same manner in which the research will be analysed: as a complex, temporal and contextualised study. Whilst the methodological implications can be explored elsewhere (O'Mahoney, 1998), there are three strengths of the methodology worth stressing. The first is that primarily due to the process of grounded theory but also because of my own unfamiliarity with the areas of sociology, the thesis provided me with a relatively free hand in theory building. Whilst this meant a fairly tortuous period of inventing the wheel, only to find it had been done better elsewhere, it also allowed me to remain external to debates that had plagued the area (e.g. actor/structure, modernism/postmodernism, bouquets/brickbats), and thus view the evidence with a relatively unbiased perspective.

Second, through the methodology adopted, my own personal preferences and the friendliness of the workers I encountered, I was fortunate to get very close to those I was studying. Such proximity allowed me to tell the differences, for example, between workers who were enjoying their work and those who were 'acting out', or procedures that were being used properly and those that existed in name only. Although I didn't realise it at the time, these later proved to be invaluable in constructing my argument. Finally, by taking on three medium-sized, industrial case-studies which had all received new 'change agents'¹⁷, the methodology allowed a contribution to be made to knowledge that could be set apart from the theorising concerning subjectivity. As most studies in the TQM area are concerned with service companies or single case-studies or large companies, the thesis allows an insight into the workings of organisations that are rarely studied.

Concerning the presentation of the cases (and the resulting analysis) that follows to final points can be made. The first is that, following structuration theory, I hold trust (distrust and angst) to be phenomena that occur at the level of the actor and the individual. I, therefore follow Chikudate (1999) and Greenwood and Hinings 1996) in presenting a 'flexible' level of analysis which focuses on the processes between the actor, organisation, society and structure rather than any one in particular. Second, unlike several studies in this area the thesis attempts to make the distinction between middle management and senior management rather than lumping them together as a vague exploitative entity. The three cases are presented below.

¹⁷ i.e. two new MDs at Firmin and Whale, and one new Production director at ATP.

5. The cases

‘The past is never dead. It is not even past’
William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury*.

5.1 Introduction

The three cases presented below were selected in order to provide comparative case study evidence regarding the effects of change on workers. As commented upon earlier, the process of selection can be retraced as first all medium-sized, privately-owned manufacturing companies in the West Midlands, second evidence of the implementation of TQ, IiP and BPR and finally those which would allow detailed access to workers and documents. By design the case studies would allow an examination of the role of trust in relatively small owner-managed firms. By coincidence, the cases all had newly appointed directors leading the change programmes. Given the prevalence of cultural change literature which associates cultural change with new leaders, the cases could provide new evidence. Additionally, all three case studies were based in brown-field sites, allowing a study of cultural change when it is deeply entrenched. Finally, it should be pointed out that all of the cases were privately owned and, therefore, were allowed more leeway than the short-termist strictures of share-holders might have forced upon them.

5.2 Whale Tankers

5.2.1 History

The history and character of Whale Tankers is inextricably part and parcel of the history and character of its first managing director, Rob. The personality, eccentricity and tenacity of Rob has stamped Whale with a nature which causes both comfort and distress to its present managers. Whale was started by three men in 1971 to produce road tankers at a period when the market for the product was expanding rapidly. Their stated aim at the time was not primarily the pursuit of profit, but instead was to provide a *“pleasant place to work in”*. Rob recalls, *“we started from the parameter that if you were going to work nine hours a day somewhere, you may as well make it as pleasant as possible...we added profit afterwards”*. Lord Warton, one of the other directors agreed *“you can have companies which are financially successful but neglect their employees; I don't really call them successful”*. From this initial philosophy the company expanded through the seventies until the mid-eighties where their sales reached a plateau. At this point Whale was supplying most local councils and contractors with tankage machines and employed over 150 people. Under the close supervision of its managing director, Rob, Whale built up a strong reputation as a high quality manufacturer, and exported its products internationally. In the eighties Whale was a wealthy company. It had, in the words of Rob, *“made three people very rich”*. The pay for workers was similarly higher than the going rate in comparable industries and bonuses were legendary, though entirely based on the discretion of Rob. This affluence is evident throughout the factory settings and its history. The factory is settled in an enormous landscaped site, a small lake with an island and a commemorative castle for Rob's father (made by Whale) can be seen from the

factory. As well as being host to rare birds, the lake was also scene to celebrations and parties thrown by Rob for the workers and their families. From talking to the older workers it appears that any excuse for a party, outing or celebration would be taken up with as much energy by managers as by workers. The company's 20th anniversary witnessed Rob spending £10,000 on fireworks alone.

Based upon a more humanist philosophy than most firms, and under the paternal, but eccentric, leadership of Rob, Whale Tankers evolved curious cultures. Whilst being strongly respected and admired by his workforce, Rob proved a dictatorial manager. His "*regime*", variously described as "*autocratic*", "*table-bashing*", and "*single-minded*", paradoxically earned him the reputation of "*a star*" and "*a friendly dictator*" amongst the workforce. Rob's loathing of excessive regulation and government interventionism encouraged him to get involved with local politics and gained him a place on several governmental advisory boards where he advocated more *laissez faire* approaches to organisational regulation. The glossy magazine for workers and buyers contains as much haranguing of red tape as company-centred information and has even included an exclusively written article by Neil Hamilton defending the Conservative government's record on regulatory controls. Accordingly, Whale developed through Rob's own interventionist and personal style. "*Human Relations really gets me down*", he argued, "*it causes a breakdown of relations....it has destroyed family managership*". Rob's managers were not managers in any meaningful sense, in that they did not manage: they followed Rob's orders. Although Rob openly admitted this ("*We took on managers who were not going to be a threat to us*"), he did realise that his heavy interventionist style of leadership has played a part in minimising the autonomy of his workforce.

It is not surprising then, that those recruited by Rob followed his direct manner. This was especially so of his Production Director, Aidan: 'Bull-dog' to many on the shopfloor. Indeed, this top-down style of prescriptive management and the associated methods of work soon acquired the appellation of the 'Whale Way'. This doctrine espoused the necessity of conformity and tradition in the actions of the workforce: *"Everything had to be done the 'Whale Way' - you always did it the Whale Way, even if the other way was quicker"*. This is not to suggest, however, that the workers were either low skilled or could not think for themselves; providing Rob noticed people were busy, the workforce were given a degree of autonomy. For example, for much of its history, Whale did not have a design department and instead many of the plans for tankers were drawn up by those working on the shopfloor bays. Often each bay would build the same tank but in a different manner, using different coloured wires or a different order of assembly. This lack of uniformity, whilst slowing down warranty work, did not conflict with the fundamental philosophy of Rob and the other directors, and was thus allowed to continue.

In many ways, the distinctive and paternal manner of management was both the making and breaking of Whale. The company was the friendliest and most welcoming organisation I have encountered and many buyers and suppliers interviewed confirmed this view. The history of family social events and outings had created strong bonds between employees, managers and Directors. Despite Rob's tough treatment of those who opposed him, the company created a high standard of living (in the widest possible sense) for all those involved. Efficiency and competitiveness were incorporated with work only in so far as they were allowed by respect, friendship and honesty (though those failing in these respects were dealt with severely by Rob). By this same reasoning,

though, the hands-on approach of management meant that managers were not managers but automatons to the dictates of Rob or Aidan. This lack of autonomy and lack of investment in training meant that innovation was stifled and even the lowliest decisions were overly proceduralised and regulated. Following the traditions of the 'Whale Way' rules were only broken when Rob allowed it. Whale began to slip in its dominance of the tanker market. Its inventory was high, its deliveries often late. Whilst the laurels of Whale were being crushed, the competition were improving their efficiency and quality.

The lack of representative procedures for the workforce did little to aid the situation. Rob's scathing rejection of opposition, be it governmental or managerial, was similarly bestowed upon the idea of unionisation. "*Never have been, never will be*" was the standard response of the workforce when questioned on unionisation. The recompense for non-unionisation was the Health and Safety Committee, originally designed to provide an outlet for the concerns and grievances of the shopfloor. Few workers spoken to, however, used the committee for grievances. Many workers and managers preferred to keep quiet rather than being "*severely dealt with by Rob*". However, in all of my time at Whale, not one story was told which was intended to slight the old MD. Rob's philosophy was not based upon procedures but on personal ties, as his most memorable quote suggests: "*Fuck the view, fuck the plant, fuck everything; If you haven't got good people you're fucked.... They have to be trained, they have to be loved, talked to and known. You have to know and care about their family lives because that's part of it*". Rob himself was the most critical of his management style, although these moments of doubt were short-lived in the face of his extraordinary self-confidence. On being questioned about a claim for unfair dismissal some years previously Rob retorted angrily, "*HR is rubbish. It's arse about face and the ones who win are the shit-*

stirrers.... You are being doubted by people who shouldn't have the power to do it. You get some little shit in a firm like this that could wreck a reputation of a man in my position". Although the litigant lost his case of unfair dismissal, it is clear that industrial (or other forms of) democracy did not sit well with Rob.

In the mid-eighties, sales of Whale began to falter and the company was finding itself working harder to keep the same share of the market. The reasons for this were twofold. Firstly, the contracting-out of local government work, required by the Conservative government in the early eighties, led to contractors buying tankers from the local councils and running the vehicles themselves. The difference between the councils' and the contractors' operations was that the local council would own their own vehicles, run them when needed and would often have the finance to replace them more frequently. Contractors however, would run the machines more frequently, due to the demands of multiple jobs. The maintenance and warranty work was therefore, accordingly higher and contractors were less likely to buy new vehicles than the councils had been. The second reason for the restricted expansion was the increasing competition within the tanker market. During the recession of 1980-2, companies searching for alternative markets diversified into the tanker manufacturing, putting pressure upon Whale in terms of price. Although the quality (and reputation) of Whale initially outstripped that of its competitors, the accumulation of experience and profits in other companies was paying dividends in increasing the quality of their products. On both counts Whale was finding itself increasingly exposed to, but less able to deal with, the competitive pressures of the 1980s.

5.2.2 The sale of Whale

The increasing competitiveness in the market and the declining profitability of Whale forced the owners to consider their positions carefully. They were all aged in their fifties and had done very well out of the company. Rob's interest in politics was increasingly receiving more attention and the risks of running Whale in a more competitive environment did not appear worthy of the perceived financial reward. It appeared increasingly evident that Whale required "*a more professional style of management*" (Lord Warton), and the owners were either unwilling or, in the case of Rob, unable to provide it. Although the owners had agreed that they would like to sell Whale, they did not want to incur the redundancies that might have been associated with a sale to another company. By the late eighties, they let it be known in the company that "*anybody who had intentions of being a director had better let themselves be known*". This hopeful appeal to the employees fell mostly on deaf ears, arguably because there were no managers who had the necessary managerial skills.

Consequently, Rob looked outside the company. During one of his battles with the local council, Rob joined forces with Colin Morton, a director at a major car manufacturer. Rob retells with glee his account of how Colin's intellect and his own donkey work forced the council to reduce their business tax rates by 2%. In 1993 Rob approached Colin to see if he would be interested in the post of MD and buying up part of the company. Colin accepted and spent almost two years at Whale assessing the situation before he formally took over as MD. Whilst Colin's investment into the company was greatest, the production manager at Whale, Aidan Weber, and the sales director Edgar Hoey also bought in and were appointed to directorships. Aidan Weber

was in many senses the protégé of Rob Beran, originally being employed by Whale because of his family's closeness to Rob. Aidan was also almost universally disliked as a manager within Whale as possessing all of the negative and few of the positive mannerisms of Rob. He was criticised by management and the workforce alike for having had preferential treatment from Rob and for his ignorance concerning manufacturing or production. Len, on the other hand, was seen as a friendly, hard working and able salesman who had worked his way up through the company. Although the three old directors still hold shares in the company, they have officially retired from the day to day running of the company. 'Officially', because Rob lives on the site and can often be seen on the shopfloor and because Lord Warton is involved with designing vehicles on a more part time basis.

5.2.3 Colin Morton: professionalising Whale

5.2.3.1 Philosophy

In some respects Colin Morton and Rob Beran are very similar. Their ages are not too far apart and they are both very hard-working, humorous men with a strong industrial background. Their philosophical approaches to management, however, could not be further apart. Having been trained in modern manufacturing techniques at Rover, Colin's philosophy is very much of the TQM school of management and he argues the need to improve efficiency for the company to remain competitive. The impediments to applying this perspective were considerable. The 'Whale Way' was not simply a humorous pun, but represented an understanding or a set of assumptions concerning the nature of work, the relationship with management and the boundaries of the informal

contract. *“Keep your head down, follow orders and don’t think for yourself”*, one fitter mused, *“but at least you knew that they’d take care of you”*. The attempt to change this mindset involved changes to a number of procedures and processes which can be grouped loosely around three main areas: the implementation of involvement and participative systems of work and associated training, the redesign of the work processes, and the standardisation of the product.

5.2.3.2 Training and participative work

In his first speech to the workforce Colin made it known that he wanted to reverse the ‘Whale Way’, Rob’s management systems, and the autocratic style of management. Such a change however, not only involved the implementation of procedures and mechanisms for more participative working methods, it also relied upon the managers’ and workers’ ability and desire to contribute to such systems. As such, the training at Whale was aimed at both the techniques of TQM such as teamwork, problem solving and Quality Circles and also at ensuring workers and management understood the implications of such procedures. It rapidly became clear that the latter was to prove much more challenging than the former.

The trainers themselves came from two sources. The first was a company similar to Whale which manufactured ball-bearings and had recently undergone an overhaul of organisational culture and procedures. They had out-sourced two of their workers (one personnel and one shopfloor) to act as consultants to other companies. It was believed by Colin, and later confirmed to me by the workforce, that the hands-on practical nature of this training was much more welcomed and understood than training sessions by

“Oxbridge graduates who had never got their hands dirty” (as one sprayer put it). A similar justification was used for the second group of consultants who were owned by Sid Joynson, formerly of the television series, *‘Sid’s Heroes’*. It was the book of this series that Colin passed on to his production managers and then on to some of the shopfloor. The book received so much interest that Colin eventually brought in the consultants to train the workforce in Whale, with the emphasis on the supervisory groups who had little experience of, or training in, management. The consultants, broad-shouldered, northern men with years in manufacturing, appeared to inspire the trust and confidence of most of those who attended their sessions. Their techniques appeared common-sensical, and their philosophy of inverting the organisational pyramid, so workers were on the top and managers merely helping them, went down unsurprisingly well with the shopfloor. Both sets of training were undertaken between September 1997 and March 1999.

Although the training in TQM techniques and procedures was implemented, the attitudinal shift which Colin had hoped for did not materialise as fast as he had hoped. There were several reasons for this. One is that some workers felt unable or unwilling to make the change to a more responsible and participative style of working, even to the point of refusing to go on training days. Nick, one of 10-15¹⁸ recalcitrant workers argued that he did not want to think for himself since he was not paid to do so. *“The TQM course was crap”*, he complained, *“I want a leader”*. Through 1998 it was looking doubtful as to whether the continuing investment was worthwhile. The blame for this could not be placed entirely, or even significantly, upon the shoulders of the shopfloor;

¹⁸ Number reported by Colin Morton, June 1997.

the history of autocratic and high involvement leadership and the training through the 'Whale Way' left a heritage of weak managers and teamleaders with little inclination towards participative practices. Either out of inability or fear of deskilling, this group found it difficult to let go of the reigns of decision-making. The workforce, well aware of this, responded bitterly to the failure of management to respond to the threats and exhortations of Colin. The newly created suggestion scheme was inundated with suggestions which were ignored by its co-ordinator, Aidan Weber. Indeed, it is said (and conceivably true) that the most common suggestion was for his own dismissal. Ironically, it was this eventuality which later triggered a renaissance of the TQM movement in Whale.

5.2.3.3 Process redesign

The orthodox work process at Whale was to build the tanker, test it and drive it to the paintshop some five miles away. At the paintshop, the tanker would be stripped down, painted, returned to the main site and then tested again. In March 1998, midway through my research, the paintshop was moved to the main site. This move, undertaken for obvious time saving reasons, was co-ordinated by Aidan. Simultaneous to this move, Aidan's managerial example was sending a signal to workers which was at odds to that being espoused by Colin. Despite constant (often public) warnings about his failure to listen to the shopfloor, Aidan still remained the *bete noire* of those shopfloor workers trying to exert more responsibility for their own decision-making, and the rallying point of those team-leaders and managers still hostile about TQM. The movement of the paintshop to the new site was, however, badly managed, and this, many believed, gave Colin the opportunity to exert pressure on Aidan to leave. This

eventual departure, in November 1998, was inevitably acrimonious and both parties referred the matter to their solicitors. This incident, together with the associated dismissal of at least four other intractable workers, appeared to be a major catalyst for the transformation of minds at Whale.

Whilst the exit of Aidan sent a clear message to those who may have followed his example, it did not alleviate the general inability of supervisory staff at Whale. Partly in response to this problem and in some measure to encourage greater teamworking, Colin reduced the number of team leaders from fifteen to four. In doing so, he demoted those teamleaders he felt less able or inclined to act as co-ordinators rather than as instructors, and enabled a devolution of more decision-making to team members rather than leaders. Meanwhile, the Quality Circles began to implement many of the changes which were previously stalled, quashed or ignored by the former Production Director and the general intractability of the system. Parts were moved closer to the workforce to save walking time, more information regarding planning was given to the workforce, and daily meetings were conducted on the shopfloor to co-ordinate work scheduling. These moves towards a more responsible and autonomous workforce encouraged another project by which workers were made responsible for conducting the Pre-Delivery Inspection (PDI) of the work which they had constructed. The rationale behind this was that the inspection of their own work would encourage workers to be eliminate all faults before allowing the vehicle to be moved on.

5.2.3.4 Product changes

Colin's main priority within the factory is by his own admission, the product, and it is here that most changes have been implemented since his arrival. Market research in Colin's first year found that the drivers of the tankers, unlike the buyers, stressed that many of the features which Whale provided were superfluous to need. Consequent changes in design have been in two directions. The first accelerates a trend of moving the design and engineering know-how off the shopfloor and into a design department. Investment in 3D Computer Aided Design (CAD) technology in the last four years has been coupled with the use of consultants and engineering specialists from outside Whale. This has allowed experimentation with infra-red, remote control, hydraulics and electrical technology instead of relying solely upon the generally static skills and knowledge of the shopfloor. Secondly, there has been an associated move towards the standardisation of construction techniques on the shopfloor. This has allowed both the facilitation of multi-skilling (teams can interchange members) and a quickening of warranty work (any team member can safely repair another team's work). Lines which were not making a large enough profit have been stopped and for the first time Whale is competing on price with its American rivals.

Possibly because of their greater involvement in problem solving and training, none of those interviewed felt that they were being deskilled. On the contrary, several workers stressed the satisfaction involved with the system running more efficiently now the design department had *"got their arse in gear"*, stating that *"it was about time-management listened to us"*. The moves are generally seen as complementing the inverted pyramid view of Whale by stressing that the design department is there to

support the workforce, as opposed to maximise efficiency or profit. Although three workers mentioned moves to a more standardised 'production line' style of working, they did not think that it would be allowed to happen.

5.2.4 Cultural renewal?

1999 was a good year for Whale. Orders and exports increased, warranty work was down and delivery times improved remarkably. Through an investment of training, hardware and new procedures Whale turned itself into what many would argue to be a best-practice example of TQM. Even more surprisingly, this has been done without alienating the workforce, indeed, the vast (remaining) majority are supportive of the changes. Although some bemoan the loss of the old style Whale, the change is generally viewed as inescapable - one teamleader used a poignant metaphor: *"Yes, the character has gone now but that was inevitable..we were this roaring log fire in an inglenook fireplace, and now we are this red hot flame out of a stainless steel tube. Nothing lasts forever and you have got to change with it or bugger off..."*. Despite the dramatic improvement in performance indicators, it is the change in attitudes which is the most noticeable in Whale. As one fitter reported: *"Everybody is thinking all the time on the shopfloor - how can I do this better?"*.

From the suggestions, projects and actions of the shopfloor, it is clear that proactivity is rapidly becoming a norm. The assumption is that an efficient idea *should* be passed on and that responsibility for one's own quality is a matter of pride rather than duty. Increasingly, the Whale Way is being described in inauspicious terminology - dissenters are viewed as *"closeted"* or *"troublemakers"*, and the competent (if not the

moral) high-ground is claimed by those most evangelical in manner. It appears evident however, that this sea change could not have occurred without the mutual trust between the workforce and Colin. Whilst stressing the difference between Rob Beran and Colin, every worker questioned praised Colin for his loyalty, humanity and openness. Although these appear to be personal attributes of Colin, he does not delineate their impact upon the change process: *"You can't be selective and listen to Dave and not to Michael, even if he is a bloody nuisance - once you cut somebody off you won't get any more out of them. It is all very well having the attitude that managers should manage, but how do they know what is going on unless they speak to those on the shopfloor"*.

Despite the general acceptance that striving for greater efficiencies and speed is desirable, the change has brought negative as well as positive effects. When questioned about whom the changes have hit hardest, the usual response is the team leaders and the managers in production. These people have been faced with implicit (and often explicit) criticism of their style of management which five years previously was actively encouraged by Rob and Aidan. They have witnessed their numbers reduced, either through demotion or expulsion, and have had to learn new ways of devolving what was previously their own responsibility. Several more traditional workers were reported to have left because they preferred the old system. Another concern is one which has been voiced only recently, but may form part of an emergent trend - it is too early to tell. This is dissatisfaction with some of the new working practices; although most workers argue that they are not working harder (only smarter), the effects of some of the suggestion scheme and quality circle proposals appear to have intensified work somewhat. Having their parts closer to the team, for example, means that workers do not have to walk to the stock room, but some have commented that they miss that walk. Others have stated that

whilst initially they were carried away with enthusiasm regarding the new teams, they have now found their static roles more monotonous and tiring. It has also been noticed, that with fewer teamleaders and managers, there is less room for promotion within the company. Comments such as these were by no means common but may be on the increase as the initial enthusiasm wanes.

5.2.5 Summary

Initially, Whale appears to be one of those companies which gurus and consultants use as case examples of successful cultural change, and in some respects this is what has been achieved. Performance is improved in all respects and although causality can never be proven, it seems reasonable to believe that investment in the form of the new paintshop and CAD machines, training, new procedures and working practices have had much to do with this improvement. An examination of my notes reveals my reactions to my second trip to Whale: *"I am genuinely surprised at the success Colin has had in the last year. The procedures and systems which provoked only formal compliance now appear to have been lifted by a surge of genuine enthusiasm and commitment. What was previously achieving lip-service now appears much more real"*¹⁹.

However, Whale is not the same. People are thinking more professionally and their assumptions and reactions are more proactive. Whilst this sustains Whale into the next millennium, it provides little satisfaction to Aidan or to those who could not or would not conform to the new culture. Even those who remain miss the 'mucking-in'

¹⁹ 9/1/99

manner of Rob, and the social life which was notorious to suppliers, buyers and visitors alike. As the initial enthusiasm for the changes wanes, the sustainability of the programme and its adverse affects may become more visible. The size of Whale means that personalities can have more influence than they might in larger organisations. As Rob, by his own admittance, is getting old and is less inclined towards *“throwing myself in the lake”*, so his company has required a shift in character. The striving for professionalisation does, with some caveats, appear to have been successful not least by the criteria of economics. Whether the removal of the Whale Way and the subsequent change in attitudes has had a similarly positive influence is a question much harder to answer.

5.3.1 ATP: A case-study

5.3.1 History and culture

Auto Transmission Parts (ATP) is the original factory of ATRS, a non-unionised company with four sites specialising in the remanufacture of gear-boxes. ATP was founded in 1971 by two miners, James Smart and Brian Parker, to repair the gear-boxes of American cars at the local US air-base. Bolstered by the surge in car ownership and their relative monopoly in the market, James and Brian focused on the expansion of their new enterprise taking on friends and relatives to help with the demand for their product. In 1977, their successful bid for the remanufacture of General Motor gear-boxes meant that the company was required to become more professional - paperwork, quality assurances and financial procedures gave the company its first taste of things to come. Encouraged by new contracts from Jaguar and the favourable lending policies of banks,

James and Brian expanded their operations in the eighties, opening one factory committed to the manufacture of original equipment (as opposed to private one-offs) and another to develop electrical equipment for the newer gear-boxes.

Despite this expansion, the culture of the original ATP factory appears to have changed little from the late seventies to the early nineties. As at Whale, the owners maintained their tight grip upon decision-making even down to frequent hands-on appearances on the shopfloor. As in too many medium-sized British manufacturing companies, there was an ignorance of modern manufacturing techniques and personnel procedures. Training was primarily on-the-job, promotion was internal and 'through the ranks', and communication was a top-down affair. The preponderance of unemployed miners in the region meant that in times of expansion the company, according to the production director Len Farley, "*employed anyone that could walk - many of them couldn't even write*". Whether due to this recruitment practice or because of the owners' directive manner, ATP fostered a culture which was antithetical to participative working practices or to supervisory autonomy. Nor did the background in mining of the owners foster a climate of cleanliness; a report commissioned following a visit by the Health and Safety Inspectorate in 1989 was scathing of the procedures and environment of the factory. According to a quality engineer, the inspector pointed at a grime-encrusted worker balancing on an oily ladder and asked "*who's that idiot?*" - the reply came "*that's the owner*". Even after an improvement notice was placed on the factory, workers still told me of "*oil and dirt an inch thick all over the shopfloor*".

Employing almost 200 staff, ATP is a small town built up through the development of coal-mining in the area. It would not be transgressing the boundaries of

interpretative research to suggest that the area has a despondent air, and indeed such a conclusion would not be surprising considering the traumatic history of its primary employer, British Coal. When this atmosphere was mentioned separately to the Production Director and the personnel manager, both confirmed the suggestion, referring to the area as the “*Twilight Zone*” and the people as “*Children of the Corn*”²⁰. Whilst both comments obviously exaggerate the situation, they rightly suggest that neither high motivation nor friendliness are noticeable characteristics in some areas of ATP. After the period spent at Whale, my time living and working in Hendesford was quite unpleasant. /

The physical factory itself is, in many ways, representative of the internal bureaucratic structure - dysfunctional, fragmented and segregated. Both the physical structure and the bureaucratic chain of command are traceable primarily to the factory's piecemeal growth since 1971. The site has expanded on an uneven field and has therefore been built on two levels, separated (vertically) by about three feet. A small lift is required to move large objects from one side of the factory to the other. This haphazard utilisation of space is directly proportional to the number of contracts which the company has accepted. For example, the amount of space taken up by the Chrysler section means that it was accommodated where space was available - one team is forced to retrace their line of production three times for the process of work to be completed and tested.

Similarly (and arguably due to the reasons above), the internal structure of the company has developed an irregular appearance as sections have been added on to deal

²⁰ A reference to a B-movie horror about a community of disturbed children cut off from civilisation.

with new contracts. The situation is not improved by two further issues. Firstly, shopfloor workers (regardless of skill) who are working on more prestigious contracts (for example Chrysler, as opposed to repair or warranty work) are provided with preferential benefits and conditions (better pay, cleaner environment, more autonomy) when compared with their workmates. This has led to animosity on the shopfloor and accusations of theft (of tools) by parallel working groups. The second problem is that the two owners both prefer travelling abroad to market their services and seek new contracts to staying in Hednesford on the shopfloor. This has left the company with a Chairman (James) and a Vice-Chairman (Brian), but no Managing Director. The resulting conflict between departments will be explored shortly, but the disharmony which characterises the ATP factory has inevitably impacted upon attempts to change the processes of work.

5.3.2 Pressures for change

Despite expansion through the eighties, the early nineties saw the position of ATP increasingly under threat. The factory no longer held a monopoly of the market, and factories in both mainland Europe and at home began encroaching upon the previously secure market. Audits and assessments by prospective buyers made it clear that the lack of bench-marked systems and quality procedures would not bode well for the future. In the pursuit of more professional production standards ATP turned to BS 5750 (in 1992) and ISO 9000 (achieved in 1993). It was with some effort that these standards were met and many in management doubted whether they would be able to maintain even these standards. Regardless of future concerns, the investment paid an immediate dividend with the acquisition of a major contract from Chrysler in 1994. It was this that marked the point of no return for the modernisation of ATP. The Chrysler contract provided ATP

with its largest buyer and made the factory the biggest of its kind in Europe. Simultaneously, it placed such a burden on the manufacturing process that, in the words of Brian Parker, *“we were coming apart at the seams. We were working here seven days a week in a panic, and it couldn’t continue like that”*. Whilst ATP possessed an enviable reputation for quality, it is clear that this masked many internal problems that the company was facing. The rigid hierarchy, the lack of training and the general amateur nature of production and HR procedures meant that in some areas (where it could be measured) internal failure rates reached as high as 25%. The pressure to reduce costs to compete in an increasingly hostile market had come at the same time as quality came under growing scrutiny.

It was at this point that James Smart met with representatives from Michelin who argued that their consultancy team could solve many of the problems that ATP were facing and professionalise the processes and procedures that were feeling the strain of the Chrysler contract. An agreement was reached and Michelin sent in a team which included an accounting specialist, a personnel manager, a computing systems specialist and a production specialist, Len Farley. The Michelin consultants set about their task of professionalising the factory, setting departmental plans, implementing measurement systems, and structuring management training. The (communicated) plan was, as one manager put it, *“for Michelin to implement modern systems, train us [the managers] in how to use them and leave”*. Whilst it is clear that Michelin began to have a positive impact upon the company in terms of efficiency and the provision of information, their impact was not welcomed by many on a personal level. As well as the inevitable friction between powerful newcomers and employees who had been with the company some time, more practical issues surfaced quickly. The Michelin team cancelled all over-time

and week-end work. They made several people redundant only weeks after the owners had asked the workforce to work extra hours on the new Chrysler contract without paying a premium rate. Plans were drawn up to introduce appraisals, change accounting systems and implement more formal and systematic working and personnel procedures, with little consultation with existing managers. Several workers left of their own accord during this eight month period. However, it was not until this style of implementation clashed with the owners' own dictatorial manner that the consultancy team were asked to leave. Their withdrawal (complete with software and equipment) was completed in a day but not before their leader Len Farley had been approached by the owners to ask if he would stay as Production Director, with a view to becoming Managing Director. Len accepted.

5.3.3 Len's New Manufacturing Philosophy

Len is a no-nonsense Welshman who worked his way up through Michelin to become production manager. His dominating personality is evident on first encounter and it was this that later led to charges of arrogance and pig-headedness - mostly from other managers or directors. Concurrent to his arrival, Brian and James replaced the Michelin Personnel Manager with a new recruit, Hazel, who was accountable to Len, but responsible for implementing and maintaining personnel practices throughout the company.

Len's brief was, in his own words, *"to try and professionalise the manufacturing side of things because had it remained as it was, people like Chrysler would not have stayed with us. They were demanding higher standards"*. Len's self-professed *"vision"*

of the company was to implement what he termed the “*New Manufacturing Philosophy*” (NMP). To demonstrate this vision to managers he had divided an A4 page into two halves, with ‘The Received Tradition’ on the left side and ‘New Manufacturing Philosophy’ on the other. On the left were listed traditional assumptions such as ‘mistakes are inevitable and have to be inspected out’, ‘it costs money to make quality products’, or ‘machines are sprinters and pulled ham-strings are to be expected’. On the right were values more attuned to the TQM perspective such as ‘mistakes are treasures, the study of which leads to process improvement’, ‘quality is free’ or ‘machines are marathon runners, slow but steady and able to run’. The sheets were placed on all production managers’ walls.

In adopting systems such as BS 5750 and ISO 9000/1 Brian and James were recognising that there was a need to improve quality systems within their factory. When these systems failed to achieve the required standards, however, they turned to Michelin who they believed had a proven track record of creating such systems. In many respects Len was simply responding to a need that was made manifest (at least to the owners) in the early 1990’s. As his NMP sheet suggests, Len’s espoused vision related as much to changing attitudes and beliefs as it did to altering manufacturing practices and procedures: “*The driving force has got to be quality, but not quality of the product per se, it’s the quality of everything...we want everyone to feel as if they’re in this together, we want them to be part of the team and we want their input...The people who are examiners have very different attitudes and we’re trying to fight against that culture. We don’t want people to leave their hearts and minds at the door*”. The changes which Len, Hazel and Michelin attempted to implement to achieve this end can be grouped loosely

into three areas: training and HR procedures, participative working practices and statistical control systems.

5.3.3.1 Training and HR procedures

Len had an unusual relationship with HR systems. Whilst maintaining that people needed to understand and implement his New Manufacturing Philosophy he was reluctant, even discouraging, of Hazel's attempts to modernise HR at ATP. Len saw his New Manufacturing Philosophy as exactly that - it was a philosophy which people either chose to understand or chose not to. Managers who did not delegate responsibility, increase efficiency and quality or show initiative and motivation in planning were berated as being either incapable or disobedient. Although Len fully intended that people should change their attitudes about their relationship with the company and work, he believed that this could be achieved through persuasion, cajoling and threats. Whilst from the early 1990s managers were given more training in quality control and management techniques, the training had not been systematised or proceduralised - if a manager saw training advertised and could make a case of why he²¹ should go, then funds were found. Under Len (and Hazel), however, the systematisation of training did not improve much and it was not until 1999 that a training budget was formulated for the company. Although Hazel attempted to implement a training needs assessment for IiP assessment (the application failed in 1998) the resulting training matrices were ignored by managers who were either too busy or uninterested to participate. In 1998, only 7% of

²¹ All managers in production were male.

workers agreed with the statement 'Top management continuously demonstrate their commitment to train and develop me'²².

The weakness of the training package was, for many of the shopfloor workers, symbolic of a more significant fact of life at ATP - the disparity between management and the workforce. This is especially so as it was felt (even by some managers) that the pay at management level was excessive when taken against the abilities of some of the managers who had been promoted internally. 70% of respondents disagreed with the statement that 'I believe that the level of pay and benefits in ATRS are fair'. One manager argued that "*if they [other managers] were to go out into the real world I don't think half of them would be paid as they are here*". Similarly, the most frequent complaint from the shopfloor was that they were poorly paid compared with, what they perceived to be, their counterparts in the motor-trade. Part of the difficulty is that there are few comparators in the UK that perform similar tasks in rebuilding gearboxes. One internal issue, however, has been the resentment towards the bonus system which was implemented in 1996. This system not only related pay to outcomes which employees could not control (e.g. sales) but also incorporated a clause for negative equity whereby production output which fell under a certain level was penalised, and the resulting fines carried over into the next bonus. The overwhelming majority of those questioned felt that the system was unfair, confusing, demotivating, and above all produced insufficient moneys. Despite complaints, especially at the team-member level, the system had not been altered by the final visit in October 1999. Tensions had increased over the matter as one supervisor complained, "*Morale hasn't been lifted, no, but the bonus system doesn't*

²² Consultancy work carried out by author, June 1998: 60% response rate, n = 121.

help either. If they were really bothered about us they'd at least tell us why it hasn't been changed". The situation as regards pay was cited by five workers as the primary reason for people leaving the company.

Hazel did attempt to implement yearly appraisals but it was the manner in which they were carried out rather than the idea of appraisal itself which upset many on the shop-floor. Appraisals were seen by many as a tool wielded to restrict pay or intensify work. As one team member argued: *"I don't understand how someone who hasn't had a day off sick, always done overtime et cetera can only get a two for attendance. They can't give me a perfect one because they say you can't be perfect - what's the point?"*. Attempts at changing attitudes within the company were not helped by the weak communication systems. Although team meetings, suggestion schemes, notice boards and newsletters were evident in ATP, their impact was limited. Often workers did not turn up for team meetings as they were deemed unimportant, others did not trust the company not to *"do us out of a job if we came up with some good ideas"*, as one team member put it. Such weak communication did little to foster trust in management and did much to bolster an informal gossip system, the inaccuracies of which did not diminish its use. The formalisation of the company after the introduction of Michelin was seen as distancing the owners from the shopfloor. Indeed the lack of support received from the two owners was, according to Len, one of the major reasons for the limited impact of his changes. However, in a similar vein, Hazel complained that her attempts to reform the HR systems at ATP were scuppered by the lack of support from Len - who, she argued, *"does not understand that people can't change as a result of an order"*. Len was blamed for consistently blocking her access to the board and it was this lack of strategic involvement that prompted Hazel to resign in February 1999. When

Hazel left, she phoned me to report the move. She said that *“having one point on the business plan [LiP] is not enough responsibility. I was told that there was going to be a people culture but Len, Brian and James don’t want to listen to what I have to say. I think they see me as someone who will fix the drinks machine. I’m not sure whether it’s because I’m female”*.

5.3.3.2 Participative working practices

Whilst at Michelin, Len was involved in sustaining structures which facilitated team-working and enabled quality improvements. When Len moved to ATP he attempted to implement similar structures, which he believed would bring about the change in attitudes which were required to produce the highest quality gearboxes. Thus, upon receiving his position, he made it known to the workforce that they were to become responsible for their jobs, that the managers were there to support them not control them, and that improvements in working practices were to be their responsibility. The managers, now armed with training in statistical process control, were informed that failures to improve quality would not be tolerated and that a more open, supportive and less dictatorial style should be adopted.

Although some of the statistical control techniques allowed managers the ability to move away from immediate supervisory tasks, the attempts to change attitudes on the shopfloor appear to have made antagonism and distrust worse, rather than better. There appear to be two main reasons for this and both can be seen as a direct result of Len’s paraphrasing of Crosby (1979) *“Quality costs nothing”*. Firstly, although managers received training in computing, statistical process control, organising and time keeping,

few had any experience or training in delegation, autonomous working or managing teams. The result was that many of the managers had no idea how to encourage participation or improve quality in this way. The confusion was not helped by the fact that the two owners appeared to have little time for, or understanding of, Len's message. Len himself has also been charged with not listening to fellow managers as well as his workforce. When workers complained, he refused to change or negotiate the bonus systems or the ways in which jobs were measured. Indeed it was Len's inability to listen to people's opinions that inclined the owners against giving him the job as Managing Director. It was evident from talking to marketing and administration that their respective Directors disliked the autocratic way in which he managed his section. On leaving the company, one production manager commented to Brian that *"if you're going to appoint Len to MD I feel sorry for you"*. Second, and arguably a direct result of the owners' and Len's attitudes, the managers had it made clear to them that improvements in quality were not to be made at the expense of quantity. The following is taken from my notes following a meeting between Ian (a production supervisor) and his team: *"the poor guy chairing the meeting has no idea what is expected of him. His manager, Kevin, has made it clear to him that six units were needed each day from his team - and it is evident from his team that they can produce four at the most. Ian was throwing in choice phrases such as 'you're the experts' and 'what's your input John?' but at the same time ignoring their suggestions. One worker who argued that they were being slowed by the ticket system of operating was told that could not be changed 'because it is the system we have'. Ian appears confused as to what is expected of him."* (30/6/98). Similarly, the unpopularity of Kevin (production manager) was not helped by the report that in his team-meetings *"the procedure he followed was 1. Improve quality 2. Improve production 3. Bollocking 4. AOB"*.

The situation of managers and supervisors has not been improved by the systems and procedures which have been implemented around their work. In attempting to prove and measure their quality and output, the workload of these positions has increased dramatically. Two managers in production asked me to feed back to them what their men thought of them. Their primary concern was that they wanted to become the type of managers who they believed Len had worked with at Michelin, but were unsure how they were doing. Constant criticisms from Len made them doubt their abilities and their failures to improve either quality or production created only more stress. In one case a manager was forced to leave due to mental health problems. Len's belief that the failings of managers to implement his message were due to their own weaknesses in ability or co-operation did not help matters.

5.3.3.3 Statistical control systems

The initial focus for both the Michelin consultants and Len was to ensure that ATP could at least measure and prove their quality and quantity. Len saw SPC and associated systems as 'bricks' which would eventually build the trust and confidence required for continuous improvement. Thus managers were trained in statistical techniques which would allow them to assess their performance. A new software system was installed through which managers and supervisors could examine trends and patterns within production. A necessary consequence of such systems was that work sheets needed to be filled out for each task, by those doing the job, so that timing, testing and requirements could be measured and the work traced around the factory. Whilst the filling-out and analysis of these forms increased the workload of staff, it also made

supervisors feel that they could turn their hands to other tasks for the traceability in the system allowed the identification of poor performing workers. Understandably, many workers felt that such a system was designed to ease the apportioning of blame rather than to improve quality.

The information provided for such systems allowed managers to prioritise work and to identify systemic problems which previously they might have missed. It was the adoption of such mechanisms and associated improvements in production speed and quality which allowed ATP to gain the much coveted QS9000 certification and subsequently to win a contract from Ford in August 1999. Although such systems had little impact upon levels of autonomy, involvement or proactivity on the shopfloor, they allowed managers to identify workers that were weak in certain areas, to plan their needs for staffing and materials, and to track the work that was leaving or arriving at their work area. Quality measured by failure rates and warranty work improved in some areas of the factory by 25%, but the average improvement was much less significant. The main difference now was that that quality could be measured.

5.3.4 New Manufacturing Philosophy?

Unfortunately, Len was forced to leave ATP through ill-health in February 1999, and died later that year. At the time of his departure ATP was much more professional in its systems and procedures but had done little to incorporate worker subjectivity or emotion with their work. Part of the difficulty was that Len was not an owner and indeed never made it to his desired position of managing director. Thus, whilst he could change much within production he could not change the power-orientated behaviour that many

of the managers imitated from the owners James and Brian. Indeed it is doubtful whether Len's personal style of managing did anything to lessen such behaviour. When I asked for a pen on the shopfloor, he was told to go upstairs, get a requisition form and get it signed by Len. Although Len was more popular than Kevin (his second in command), very few of the stories which were recounted of him illustrated open-mindedness. At a directorial level, Len's ambitions were feared by those who found his manner abrasive and direct. Correspondingly, the control and leadership which could have been accorded by his position as Managing Director were denied to him. Whilst close ethnographic experiences suggest that Len genuinely intended to utilise the hearts and minds of workers in the manner which he had experienced at Michelin, his starting point was very different: modern payment, training and HR procedures were not in existence in ATP, and in their place a fragmented and power-orientated workplace had evolved under the quantity-inspired vision of its founders.

Although improvements in statistical control, minuting of work and buying systems allowed some process improvements, there is little evidence that the promise to view 'mistakes as treasures' was ever realised against the pressures of increasing production and top-down orders. The perceived injustice involved with procedures such as pay, time-sheets, overtime, training and bonuses, combined with minimal evidence of bottom-up communication, prevented workers from taking the message of empowerment seriously. With so many parties pointing the finger of incompetence at each other, the trust required for workers to put their hearts into their jobs was hardly forthcoming. Despite the improvements in quality and the prized new contract with Ford, many of the workforce preferred the less formal system of work which existed almost a decade ago. As with many discontented groups, these workers believed that their leaders (James and

Brian) were blameless and fault lay mostly with the managers and administrators who were making their working lives harder. Ironically, it seems clear that these managers suffered considerable work intensification in both statistical measurement and brow-beating from Len and Kevin in their demands for better quality. The discontentment of the workforce, the demands upon management and the resultant distrust between the parties ensured that even when workers were interested in improving processes, their comments were either not passed on or, if otherwise, fell upon deaf ears.

5.4 Firmin

5.4.1 History

In 1666, [?]eleven years after the Great Fire of London, the first mention of the House of Firmin can be found in the 'list of names of Merchants in London'. Thomas Firmin established the company in order to supply the forces of Charles II with brass buttons for their uniforms. Although now based in Birmingham, the privately-owned Firmin and Sons Ltd still possesses records of purchases of buttons, badges and other regalia by each successive monarch and their armed forces. Whilst the ensuing two hundred years and accompanying wars witnessed a number of subsidiary branches opening and closing in London, Birmingham and Portsmouth, the most important of these was the one established in 1940 in Birmingham. Nowadays, this factory is the sole survivor, after the London factory was closed in 1994, employing some 220 people.

The character and situation of the modern Firmin site can only be understood if the importance of tradition and history are analysed sufficiently. The market for the

Firmin product was traditionally stable. The prominence of the armed forces and the regularity of wars during the last 300 years ensured that the demand for high quality buttons, badges and ceremonial adornments was constant from the MoD. The British dedication to formalities meant that the police, fire and ambulance services required similar adornments for their uniforms and vestures. The importance attached to historic Firmin is hard to miss at the factory - the offices are adorned with breastplates, scabbards, and faded photos of Royal visits to the factory. In fact, the introverted nature of the Firmin company is evident on arrival at the factory. A small buzzer on the facade of some bad 1960s architecture allows the visitor entry to a small lobby, in which one waits whilst the relevant person is contacted - there is no reception. A phone call made to the factory enquiring the name of the managing director for a letter I was writing, was met with the response "*We don't give out that information*".

Although some of the work of Firmin is quite monotonous (pressing buttons, for example) most is of very high quality. The breastplates, for example, which are made for the Queen's Cavalry, can be made only by four people in the United Kingdom, three of whom work at Firmin. On some of the lines it can take up to ten years to learn sufficient skills, on others, a production line produces hand-painted work to customer requirements. The issue of quality is one which most of the Firmin employees believe distinguishes them from their overseas competitors. The managers rightly point out that bulk orders for plastic or printed objects can be done cheaper elsewhere, but, traditionally, Firmin has prided itself on dealing only with the quality end of the market. As a result, many of the batches they produce are for small orders for golfing momentos, university memorabilia or corporate gifts. Since this strategy has seen them through a three hundred year history, the factory is in some respects a museum as much as a

workplace. The stock rooms hold over 150,000 dies in buttons alone, and walking along the wooden shelves it is possible to see many dated from the 18th century.

The stable demand for high quality goods and the importance of tradition for the company has meant that most of the work in the shop has not been modernised either in equipment or in technology. Some of the presses which are being operated have been used in the company for over one hundred years and much of the factory still operates a piece-rate, time-motion attitude towards work. The traditional culture of the company can also be evidenced by the hierarchical and bureaucratic nature of the company, especially in production. “*We have a strict hierarchy here,*” one production manager pointed out, “*the offices and factory are separate and we have the production manager, superintendent, supervisors, charge hands and then the workers*”. This stratified and bureaucratic context did not lend itself to more modern and democratic work forms, and indeed with a constant demand for quality goods change was seen, not only as unnecessary, but counter to the principles of tradition and antiquity which embodied the spirit of Firmin. Several workers pointed out that the emphasis on tradition within the factory meant that new ideas were jumped upon and different approaches served simply to “*get people’s backs up*”. The levels of introversion and resistance to change were compounded by the training system in Firmin which was primarily an on-the-job affair. The demise of engineering skills in the labour market compounded with a vicious circle of learn-as-you-go training systems, served only to foster the laissez-faire culture which the company had developed in previous centuries.

In many respects Firmin fits the archetype associated with traditional medium-sized manufacturing firms in the U.K. Up until the 1980s the workforce was strongly

unionised in the MSF and the AEU through the operation of a closed shop system - at one point the factory was closed down for nine weeks concerning a redundancy dispute. Health and Safety was such a low priority in the factory that two improvement notices were placed on it by the HSE in the mid-eighties. Only about a third of the stampers who have been at Firmin for more than ten years still have ten fingers. However, the workers are generally very loyal to the company and turnover has traditionally been low. The international reputation for quality which Firmin possessed was one which many of the workers cited as the reason for their pride in the company. However, for most of the shopfloor, it is more the name of Firmin to which they are loyal rather than to any figure in the management structure, and a history of antagonism is reported on both sides. This antagonism supported by a strict hierarchical bureaucracy and Taylorist forms of working has served to produce a very weak communication system within Firmin. As union membership declined, the union faltered as one source of upward communication, but the historical evolution of the factory meant that any clear channels of command or response had been twisted and distorted through time. This might be one reason for the prominence of informal channels of communication in Firmin; as one worker maintained *"The grape vine here is amazing"*.

The lack of formal procedures and the longevity of some of the Firmin employees has, over the years, led to a great reliance upon the tacit knowledge of many of the workers, especially in the more specialised departments. The know-how to manufacture breastplates or cavalry helmets is not written anywhere within the company. The newly appointed personnel manager told me that without the presence of the works superintendent, who has been with Firmin for 36 years, the company could not continue. The informal knowledge of some in the workforce concerning essential issues such as

relationships with suppliers and buyers, the ability to predict delivery times or the location of some of the dies, has been relied upon throughout the years for the functioning of the factory. Even the old quality manager (appointed three years ago) pointed out that “if you stuck to the rule book, you’d never get anything done”.

5.4.2 The forces for change

After 1980 several factors combined to necessitate changes within Firmin. The cutting back of military expenditure meant that there were fewer orders for the buttons and badges which had been the staple product of the company, “*The military has been cut right back*”, said one of the administration managers, “*a lot are going over to plastics. The orders that we used to get here, before my time - a small order was 30,000 buttons. Now if we do 250, everybody’s going ‘oohh!’*”. The movement towards competitive tendering in the MoD meant that Firmin now had to compete with other companies within the U.K. and abroad. Although quality had always been a selling point of the Firmin product, overseas companies in India and China were increasingly catching up with Firmin quality but at a much lower price, and the demand for high quality was receding as the cutbacks in the police and the armed forces began to bite. The decline in orders has caused the workforce to fall by a third in the last thirty years.

Another problem was overheads. During the 1980s and 90s the turnover at Firmin remained a constant at around £2 million. However, overheads were increasing and consequently profits were diminishing. The machinery and procedures at Firmin were archaic by any standards and the lack of investment in the company over the previous decades only served to worsen the situation - quality was only being produced

at a high premium. The decision taken in 1993 by the MoD to deal only with firms who possessed ISO 9000 meant that a new manager who understood quality systems had to be brought in to create sufficient procedures. Attempts at improving productivity were attempted in the late 1980s through benchmarking and time-management systems, but these were left by the wayside though a combination of insufficient investment and managerial resistance. The archaic production systems within Firmin meant that work was often retracing the same steps and that as a consequence delivery times were rarely met. This state of affairs was known by management as 'the Firmin shuffle'. Parallel with these failed attempts to improve, or at least measure, working systems was an attempt to improve training within the factory. Although training was allocated an increased budget, there was no system to identify training needs, nor the effectiveness of training. Whilst the quality inspector received no training, people were allowed to train on computers who did not use them in the workplace. Permission to go on training courses were sought on the basis of which manager was in the best mood, and no follow-up courses were planned systematically.

The extent of the Firmin shuffle meant that the traditional bureaucratic separation between the administration and the production within the company slowly became more antagonistic. In the absence of systems which would allow accurate prediction of delivery times, administration (there was no marketing department) would create deadlines for production which production could rarely meet. The adherence to quality, of which production was so proud, meant that set up and turnaround times were very slow and quality control very stringent. As administration generally dealt with customer complaints, they increasingly became dissatisfied with the performance of production. The bad feeling was made worse by the differentiation between administration and

production on working times and pay. Production would start half an hour earlier than administration on Weekdays, but would leave at 1.30pm on Fridays, which appeared unfair to many of those working in administration, especially when customer complaints came in on a Friday and could not be responded to by production. Conversely, production disliked working on a piece-rate system when most of the administration department were being paid a salary. This was, they maintained, symbolic of the differential esteem bestowed upon offices, as opposed to the shopfloor.

5.4.3 Jimmi and the Changes

In the mid-eighties the Firmin family decided to cut their losses and sell the company. The company was purchased by the father of Jimmi Tsi in 1986 and gave the company to his son to improve in 1993. Jimmi is around thirty, and his background is primarily in marketing. The death of Archie Edwards, the managing director, in 1996 meant that his responsibilities effectively passed to Jimmi. Jimmi, is, by all accounts, the primary motor for change in the company. His tenacious determination combined with his tendency for impulsive and very business-focused decision making, has made him few friends within the factory, especially in production. At the same time, Jimmi's task of modernising Firmin to meet some of the challenges which have emerged in the last twenty years is no small one. He has had difficulties with the antagonistic mentalities within the firm, and appears to have had an uphill battle with workers and managers alike. The following section will concentrate on some of the changes which Jimmi has introduced and trace some of the responses to these changes.

5.4.3.1 Jimmi's philosophy

It is difficult to ascertain the extent to which the changes implemented at Firmin in the last three years have followed a strategic plan. In some areas such as marketing, a dearth of previous activity gave opportunity for Jimmi to work in his specialist field. This focus upon marketing similarly applied to the shopfloor with many changes believed to have been inspired by rendering the factory more pleasing to the eye for visiting dignitaries (including Jimmi's father). These physical changes are hard to distinguish from a redesign of the work processes which bordered upon what Jimmi termed 'process re-engineering'. In other areas, a combination of lack of expertise, bad decisions and insensitive handling ensured less effective results than in marketing. A nod in the direction of quality management systems was attempted through sporadic training, computerised communications, removing some middle management and giving more responsibility to team leaders. The half-hearted attempt at these changes has not been helped by two sets of consultants, the first of which were written off by management and workers alike as a 'disaster'.

5.4.3.2 HR systems and Quality Management

It is clear that the changes within Firmin gravitate towards the 'hard' end of the spectrum of HR or quality systems. Although Jimmi's programme of change involved improved communications, teamworking and more autonomy for the shopfloor, the focus is quite clearly on cost reduction and efficiency gains. Additionally, the manner in which changes have been implemented has been characterised by failing communication

systems, inadequate training and the demotion/dismissal of the wrong people (explained later).

Whilst it is clear that Jimmi aimed at a flatter, more autonomous and team-based system of working, several factors served to frustrate his efforts. First, the delayering through redundancies was badly handled, creating bad feeling and placing the wrong people in the wrong positions. Second the training of the shopfloor to cope with their increased responsibilities was inadequate in everything other than computing. Thirdly, and arguably as a consequence of the first two points, productivity increases appear to have come from increased responsibilities and work intensification rather than increased motivation or 'working smarter'. There was little evidence that commitment, motivation or trust had increased in the company and there were many examples where these had deteriorated to the point where co-operation was minimal. The initial attempts to improve communication within Firmin are described below, but the reliance upon computers as a possible panacea to this problem is a clear example of a misunderstanding of the human requirements of the change process.

Although quality improvement within the factory was the aim of the new regime, this was more based around systems and procedures than training or HRM. Several workers commented that many of the changes made in the factory have been done with blatant disregard for the employees' health and safety. It is both ironic and worrying that the quality and H&S manager was instructed by Jimmi to spend less time on H&S and more on quality. It is all the more concerning for workers, given Firmin's poor track record in this area.

5.4.3.3 Physical changes

In the absence of a strategic plan it is difficult to separate process redesign from more aesthetic changes or the introduction of new product line. Jimmi, by all accounts, is more comfortable with marketing than with manufacturing, and this has been the main focus of his activity since his arrival. One of his first actions when joining the company was to create a marketing department and recruit three new people. Even Jimmi's most ardent critics within the factory admire his ability to increase sales. Trade fair, promotional literature and complimentary trinkets have been promoted and new markets and product lines have begun to reverse the decline of Firmin sales. Insofar as this attitude has been extended to the shopfloor, it has been very much around the aesthetics of the shopfloor. In 1998, a more open-plan workplace was quickly followed up by an order to use newly installed lockers in order to keep the factory tidy. The shopfloor, whilst grudgingly accepting these changes, believe that the changes have been implemented for customers rather than for the benefit of the shopfloor. Indeed the manner in which the changes have been enforced has often led to more resistance from the workforce than may otherwise have been the case.

It is difficult to categorise the change process at Firmin under any one heading but one label that is used by Jimmi to describe some of the changes is 'business process re-engineering'. This is not to say that a coherent, systemic restructuring of the organisation is taking place (because this is rarely the case with most BPR examples), but instead that tradition and culture has been no impediment to large scale changes, implemented on a cost and profit rationale. When Jimmi took on the role of MD he called a meeting of all the employees and told them that changes were inevitable, and

that if they did not co-operate then the factory would be closed. As well as wanting to modernise and streamline the factory, Jimmi aimed for a new company philosophy which according to one of the workers is “*think smart, act smart*” clearly reminiscent of the old TQM adage ‘working smarter not harder’.

One of the biggest additions to the Firmin product range has been the inclusion of a series of ‘factored’ goods: buying in pens, sweaters, baseball caps and other goods which could be labelled, and then simply adding the Firmin name to them. The traditional association of the Firmin name with quality has made the labelling of goods by Firmin an economic viability. Thus, a cheap baseball cap could be imported and a company logo added to it, but because it was ‘manufactured’ in Firmin it could be sold on for a much higher profit margin. The immediate effect of this was to cause the traditional workforce to become worried about the security of their own jobs. As they were paid on a piece-rate system, any lessening of their output would mean a lower wage. Since the introduction of factored goods, several of the workers and managers on the more traditional lines have admitted that there has been increased resentment against those in administration due to the increased job insecurity of those on more traditional lines. At least three workers have felt that their skills are under threat through the introduction of factored goods and the demands for cheaper goods. By 1999, moreover, it was questionable whether this range of goods was making a large enough profit to justify its continuation.

5.4.3.4 Consultants I: 'Systems 21' and communication

In November 1997 Jimmi brought in a group of consultants called Systems 21 who would be charged with improving efficiency through the introduction of modern manufacturing and communication systems. One of the main changes the consultants introduced was a measurement system by which each shopfloor worker was to measure their work schedule and the time it took. Each job that was completed was to be written down, so that the newly appointed 'progress chaser' knew where it was, and the time it took was to be minuted so that productivity improvements could be quantified. The reactions to the system have not been welcoming. In the absence of explanations, promises about quadrupling turnover were met with scepticism by workers and managers alike. Comments such as: *"I can't see how we have changed in the last few months... it has increased rather than decreased the amount of paperwork"*, *"I can't see the point in me doing graphs"*, or *"It cost £80,000 to teach us how to do our jobs"*, indicate the level of resentment amongst both management and workforce towards the consultants. Throughout 1998 a new computer system was introduced, aimed at making the planning, ordering and accounting easier. However, measuring the performance of the workforce, if only by filling out sheets of paper, has increased the surveillance of the shopfloor, and many workers reported an increase in their workload. One of the production managers conducted some time and motion studies, to find that *"they were achieving about 57% performance, which is rubbish"*.

Systems 21's attempt to improve communications was received almost as badly. The traditional open supervisory meetings which were held every day at Firmin were replaced by what is termed a Daily Action Report Meeting (DARM) meeting. This

meeting is closed to workers although supervisors can invite themselves along. At these meetings a person is identified to be responsible for a certain problem in the factory - the actual problem is dealt with away from the meeting and then reported back the next day.

By mid-1999 it was clear that at all levels of Firmin that Systems 21 was not working as planned. There was no evidence that the system produced improvements in communication, especially from the shopfloor, and the forms and procedures were quickly abandoned for more familiar working methods. The survival of Firmin to this date had been heavily dependent upon the latent knowledge of older workers and informal methods of working. In the face of the new practices, workers and managers found it easier to by-pass the cumbersome systems and revert to the methods they knew best. Although the DARM meetings have been kept by Firmin, most of the other systems brought in by Systems 21 have been, or are in the process of being, abandoned. Communication is still cited by many as Firmin's greatest weakness. Changes to jobs and payment systems are made without consultation or notification and despite Jimmi's self-publicised open door policy, most workers argue that he is not approachable. Jimmi's impulsive character has compounded the problem at a management level - even the schedule planner comments that *"I find out what I should be doing by chance"*. Although a few people have commented that when Jimmi addresses the shopfloor he does it very well, the systematic and day to day communication that supports most enterprises seems woefully absent. Although the MSF and the AEU represent about half the workforce, the proportion has diminished primarily because, in the words of a press operator, *"they can't do much anyway these days"*. The inability of the unions to combat some of the more dictatorial elements of the change process caused the shop steward of the AEU to resign in 1998. Jimmi excluded the union representative from a meeting of

supervisors and charge-hands in which Jimmi threatened that there would be no funds for improvements if his proposal for changing shift patterns was not carried. It was in this meeting (with Jimmi present) that a vote was taken on the matter, and unsurprisingly the changes were implemented. The reaction from the rest of the workforce was one of shock. The personnel manager said *"They were so unhappy on Monday that the word 'strike' came up"*. Later that month, a vote was taken on whether Jimmi should have his way in making workers work on Good Friday. The vote, when it was counted, scored 14 people for the changes, 40 people against and 44 who said they didn't mind. Jimmi counted the 'don't minds' with the people for the change and concluded that the changes would be implemented. Many felt as if they *"didn't have anyone to stand up for [them] any more"*.

5.4.3.5 Redundancies

The worst period for the factory was a few weeks after my first visit in November. The general acceptance that Firmin was over-staffed and was not making profits, combined with worries about the amount of factored goods coming into the factory meant that some of the workforce sought assurances from Jimmi as to the security of their jobs. Jimmi told them (three times according to some) that everything was all right and that they should not worry. Two days later, following advice from Systems 21, Jimmi made fifteen workers redundant. One teamleader captured the resulting emotion best: *"It was very bad, actually. Morale was very, very low and it was a complete shock to everybody. The week before, we were told everything was fine and two days later fifteen people were gone. Obviously management knew, so why did they*

bother to say that - there's a lot of bad feeling...". The lack of communication not only served to make the shock bigger, but also made the transition period more difficult:

"None of the supervisors knew anything about it - how it was going to affect their department. It just happened...we had no say in it. Supervisors seem like they've had their heads cut off, they are just hoping that they hear something so that they can act on it".

"When redundancies happen we usually have a contingency plan. It was chaos, everybody got stuck"

"They'd get rid of someone and not discuss people who were doing that person's job. People were saying 'it's not my job'. So there's buttons being made wrong and being scrapped".

The bitter reaction from the workforce was much worse because there was a genuine belief that the wrong people had been made redundant - a belief that was well-founded. The company schedule planner was made redundant after 17 years service. When he left, however, the company realised that they could not do without him, and brought him back. One sacked driver had to be replaced by a supervisor from the line and Firmin lost an unfair dismissal claim by one of the employees. It was, in the words of one manager, *"a balls-up"*. Some of the survivors have said that they are now having difficulties coping with the work that is now left undone. There is a widespread belief at Firmin that the people who should have been made redundant were missed and the wrong ones chosen. One such person was one of the most productive workers in the

factory. This woman had had twenty-five years' service and was known throughout the factory as a hard worker and had broken overtime bans for the previous MD. Despite the fact that the company needed painters at the time, and their knowledge that the worker could paint, she was still not considered for the job.

5.4.3.6 Consultants II: Techpage

Following the failure of many Systems 21 procedures and their disastrous advice concerning redundancies, Jimmi brought in a new group (Techpage) in November 1998. This family-owned business was initially brought into introduce and improve the Firmin computing system (leaving Firmin in September 1999 with two systems at the centre of a power struggle between the new consultants and the old managers). This initial short-term contract appears to have become more permanent. Of the four production managers, one has been demoted, one is off sick with terminal cancer and one has been made redundant. The one remaining manager, Gareth Plumb, found a confidential report on his desk saying that he would shortly be forced to go. Despite employee fears that the new consultants are as uncoordinated as the last incumbents, Jimmi appears increasingly to be placing this family where the old production managers once were. Again, the focus upon computers as the foundation for communication and planning seems to have left the consultants culturally insensitive to the complex manner in which Firmin has evolved.

5.4.4 Summary

The change effort at Firmin has not been helped by failure of the company to modernise sufficiently, prior to the market changes in the 1980s. However, it is the

internal, not the external, which gives the most clues in understanding how the company has responded. The inherited weakness on the shopfloor, in terms of training, communication, health and safety, equipment, or the antagonism between shopfloor and administration have not been tackled adequately by the actions of Jimmi or the Systems 21 consultants. Indeed several workers have argued that these aspects of the company have worsened since Jimmi took over the helm.

This is not to argue that the changes that have been implemented were not needed, or that they have been unsuccessful. The marketing department, the factored goods range and the customer feedback have provided a much needed extension to the product base of the company. Results thus far for 1999 show a marked improvement in sales, productivity and turnaround. However, there appears little evidence that the changes have produced a more committed or motivated workforce. In fact, a marked deterioration has occurred in the relations between Jimmi and the whole production area, especially with the middle management group. The redundancies, threats of deskilling, lack of communication and poor decisions have produced little more than a recalcitrant and unhappy workforce. This mood is not, however, limited to the shopfloor. Resistance, according to some managers *“goes all the way up to director level”*. Whilst acknowledging the need for change, some managers are unhappy about their lack of involvement and their treatment. Some have argued that swearing, threats, and patronising comments from Jimmi have helped alienate a significant proportion of the managers he deals with. This in turn appears to have knock on effects on the vigour with which the mechanisms of change have been pursued by this level. This is especially so as many of them report to be looking for employment elsewhere. The net result of this hostility has meant that any new philosophy which Jimmi wanted to create is being

missed by those supposed to be most behind it. Even if the paperwork, measurement and form-filling which Systems 21 appears to be based upon *could* have worked, the manner in which it was implemented (i.e. without consultation and with little communication) appears to have sealed its fate. Whether or not the new systems brought in by Techpage will be more successful remains to be seen, but if so it seems it will be through work intensification and threats rather than commitment or ideological leadership. For most workers within Firmin, the efficiency of such systems is of secondary importance when compared to the manner in which they are treated. (

5.4 Conclusions

All of three of the cases outlined here are similar in many respects. They all employ between two and three hundred people, they are all privately owned, Midlands based and in the manufacturing sector. More importantly they are all traditional, hierarchical and 'low investment' companies that have faced increasing competition and demands for higher quality in the last twenty years. As a result, all three are attempting to modernise, not just by bringing in new leaders and new technology, but by adopting TQM, HRM and BPR work methods that they believe (to different extents) will bring a change of attitude in the workforce. The shift from a workforce that is used to tight controls, restricted autonomy and highly directed work to one which is proactive, committed to problem solving and work 'beyond contract' is, for all three companies, the most challenging and pressing issue.

The stories of how these companies succeed or fail in achieving their goals, therefore, could provide important insights into understanding how changes in

subjectivity can or can't occur. With perhaps less time and money than their blue-chip counterparts, these companies can provide a test of the success or failure of implementing TQM change under tough market conditions. In many ways, if TQM can succeed here, it can succeed elsewhere.

The following three chapters are intended to use the case studies of Whale, Firmin and ATP to explore the nature of trust, distrust and angst in changing (or not changing) subjectivity in the three cases. In doing so they argue that trust, more specifically, reciprocal personal trust is necessary to allow workers the confidence to risk their workplace identities and subjectivities by opening up to management. The next chapter shows how changes to subjectivity can be resisted through distrust, a process that is both cognitive in its creation and habitual in its continuance. Distrust, a knowledge-based and proactive phenomenon, enables workers to functionally perform their jobs to managerial requirements without risking their identities. Such a formulation allows a better understanding of subjective states within a distrusting environment and more importantly helps explain how failures to win 'hearts and minds' can occur despite significant TQ and HR investment.

The second chapter uses this foundation to argue that changes to subjectivity require both a calculative and a relational form of trust which, again, becomes habitual once it has been built up. This trust allows a process by which workers can put their hearts and minds (identity) into their job without fear of having it attacked by others in the organisation. Such a process, it is argued, requires a slow development of reciprocal respect for the workers' ideas, opinions and perspectives and as such is only demonstrable through managerial action. The third chapter develops the notion of trust to

argue that the process of changing an identity necessitates a disruption of established knowledge (in the form of trust or distrust). This disruption upsets the habitual recreation of meaning, habit and incorporation which enables workplace action, leading to anxiety, meaninglessness and what the existentialist school have termed 'angst'.

6. Dis-trust and behavioural conformity

*'Okie use' to mean you was from Oklahoma. Now it means you're a dirty son-of-a-bitch.
Okie means you're scum. Don't mean nothing itself, it's the way they say it'.
John Steinbeck, The Grapes of Wrath.*

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe and explain how changes in behaviour which are not accompanied by changes in trust relationships are unlikely to create identification with the work task. The chapter first examines examples of distrust and its development in each of the three case studies. It then goes on to examine more specifically the generalisations that can be made with regard to the condition of distrust within the workplaces presented. These findings can be grouped into three areas. First, the chapter focuses upon the way in which distrust is generated by workplace interactions. It examines the need that some workers feel to protect their own identities by distancing themselves from the jobs they are doing, showing how primarily cognitive calculations, but also personal relationships, play a part in this process. Secondly, it should be noted that due to the 'high-involvement' nature of their work, management found it harder to adopt a distanced, resigned attitude than those whose jobs were more functional. Third, it examines this concept of distrust in relation to other writers and examines what distrust constitutes in the workplace setting. In presenting the conditions of distrust, the cases of ATP and especially Firmin will be emphasised as the phenomenon was a more persistent feature of the workplace relations within these companies. As a phenomenological investigation, the presentation will attempt to focus on specific people and their relationships rather than merely telling the organisational story temporally. The chapter follows the presentation of distrust outlined earlier, that it

is similar, not opposite, to trust. It is creation of the cognitive assessment of evidence that one's identity may be damaged by another party. Distrust becomes habitual over time and, as with trust, allows people to act without having to continuously, consciously reflect upon their environment.

6.2 Distrust: the cases

6.2.1 ATP

The process of implementing Len's New Manufacturing Philosophy at ATP was, even before his premature departure, one of partial success. The primary reason for the changes falling short of what Len intended was that his focus upon short-term productivity targets and his own personal ambition to become MD meant that he failed to create the trust by which workers would be prepared to work 'beyond contract' in getting their jobs done. Instead, whilst some of the more co-operative managers used his proposals as a mechanism for promoting themselves, most workers viewed his request for them to "*put more of themselves into the job*" as inconsistent with their own poor treatment by Len and his followers. The power struggles and factions evident in ATP before the implementation of the NMP programme served only to foster resentment and suspicion towards new working practices in the organisation. Below we examine the complexities of the attitude which Len reported and how it was manifested in different layers of ATP and their relationships with each other.

6.2.1.1 Tim

On arriving at ATP, Len had two intentions, one personal: to be appointed managing director, the other professional: to modernise the shop-floor. Although the introduction of the Michelin consultancy reveals that the procedures and systems at ATP weren't up to date, the main problem, according to Len was one of inclination. *"Their attitude is all wrong. It's attitude - it's a belief on the shopfloor, and some supervisors, that we're not in this together... Tim over there makes engines for a hobby and some of them are brilliant, but when he comes to work it's all he can do to come back from lunch!"*. Whilst Len managed to motivate some workers into adopting the values of his New Manufacturing Philosophy, Tim was one of those who remained sceptical and uninvolved until Len's departure in 1999.

Tim was thirty-six in 1998 and as everybody on the shopfloor knew, he made exceedingly good steam-engines. According to Gareth, one of his many friends, he spent hours each day building, repairing, spraying and welding his engines ready for shows all around the country. Although Tim was universally liked on the shopfloor (he helped many of the workers with odd-jobs in their homes) he was less enthusiastic about his work than might be expected. Although his defect rate was not too high and his appraisal ratings were average, it is clear that he was not working to his potential. In June 1998 I was working with Tim in Engineering/Maintenance, where it was his job to repair machines, fix leaks and carry out general maintenance around the factory. Fixing one welding machine, Tim needed a nut to fit the screw that needed tightening, *"Go to the barrel"*, he ordered, *"and get me a screw to fit this"*. Five minutes later when I returned empty-handed (not being able to find the barrel). Tim took me outside and showed me

'the barrel', a red metal cabinet about seven foot by ten, with a six-inch square compartments holding rusting metal 'bits'. There was no order to the compartments and the bits of metal each box contained were a random assortment of anything from broken screw-drivers and copper wire to unworkable hinges and bolts. Thousands of them. Tim had no idea if the nut he wanted was in there, but judging by the contents, it was likely, and it eventually took about three to four minutes for Tim to come up with the screw. On the way back to the welding machine I asked Tim why he didn't organise the barrel. *"Can't be bothered"* came the reply. *"But it would save you time!"* I replied. *"Save me time to do what? I may as well be searching around in that thing than anywhere else in the building"*. When I met Tim the disregard he displayed for ATP's efficiency and goals was in stark contrast to what his workmates had reported of his efforts outside the workplace. Such behaviour, though, was commonplace in his section: leaving end-of-the-day work until the following day when it would take twice as long, making short-term repairs when long-term solutions would only take a bit more effort, allowing stock to run low so that essential repairs had to wait - all examples of not taking the job personally, refusing to align personal with corporate aims. How could this have come about?

From his friends' comments it seems that Tim had not always been this way. When he first arrived at the company, he used his talents proactively all around the shopfloor. The two owners would often be working side by side with Tim and his general know-how, enthusiasm and ability made him a valuable asset to the firm. The change is best described in his own words, *"Bit by bit more management came in and the place became more full of procedures. The owners became more removed from us [the shopfloor] and they weren't there to listen to ideas and suggestions. Now they*

[management] *don't want to listen because they make the decisions*". Naturally, such a change did not take place overnight. Tim's enthusiasm was blunted by a series of rejections and (what he perceives to be) betrayals. One example was the request by Brian and James to work extra shifts and overtime in order to make good with the Chrysler contract which, due to lack of available funds, would have to be undertaken at normal rates of pay. Whilst several volunteers didn't mind putting in the extra effort for the company's benefit, it was pointed out by many (including Tim) that the company had then refused to make any amendments to unpopular procedures such as the much-hated bonus system. It was felt by many that their willingness to "*do more than we had to*" was not repaid, even in personal terms, "*We didn't even get a thank you for that, you know*". Despite this, Tim still insisted in April 1998 that he would "*...probably still work unpaid overtime if it was needed, but it's not like ten years ago*". By October 1999 this attitude had again shifted: the "*last straw*" according to Tim, was the attitude of his line-manager Kevin, who consistently shouted at him and treated him with (Tim believed) disrespect.

What was even worse in his eyes was the failure of Len, the Production Director, to live up to his promises of giving the workforce more autonomy, involvement and responsibility. Kevin's actions were not only an insult to Tim's efforts but also were representative of ATP failing to keep its word. It was a hope among some of the workers, that Len's influence as director of manufacturing would help eliminate some of Kevin's more tyrannical tendencies, but despite his rhetoric, Len's actions left workers like Tim without much hope of being treated as the "*company's most valuable asset*" (MD Brian). It was not one specific incident, therefore, that such an attitude developed in Tim. A slow deterioration in the respect with which he was treated and the increasing rebuttals

of his advice offended Tim, and those who valued him on the shopfloor. As one of his friends offered, *“I know it’s a silly thing to say, but sometimes you think, like, it’s not fair. It’s a slap in the face when they [management] say one thing and do another”*.

What we are witnessing here then is how over a period of time (often unintentional), actions of management change how employees feel about their job and their company. In response to his *“unfair”* treatment, Tim found himself withdrawing from his job, thereby protecting himself from what he saw as abuse at the hands of management. Becoming instrumental rather than enthusiastic removed the chance for managers to mock, ignore or slight his good-will.

This is not to say however, that this withdrawal was necessarily conscious. Much of the time it appeared that Tim’s attitudes had become routine and habitual. When I asked him why he did things at a certain speed and not faster, he expressed surprise that I should ask, *“That’s just the way I do things”* came the answer. Often, he would reply to my questions *“I’d never really thought about it”*, or would even be surprised at his own answers. What appears to have been the pattern with Tim and others like him was a series of ‘unfair’ but formally permissible practices by management had, over the years, created a mentality of withdrawal and formal compliance. It appears that the process was not necessarily a conscious tit-for-tat response but one which occurred to prevent the degradation of their own sense of worth and identity. Moreover, the attitude of Tim was not adopted as a universal rule. I witnessed several degrees of co-operation, all appearing highly dependent on context and the person with whom he was co-operating. His friend, Richard, would usually elicit a response faster than anyone else, unless there was an emergency, or someone was in line for a *“bollocking”*. (While I was working with him, Tim brought in his own tools to help Richard with a difficult repair job during his lunch-

break). Although I was in no position to judge the quality of Tim's work, the 'extras' in the form of advice, chit-chat and general co-operation appeared to vary through a series of intricate, messy and possibly unmeasurable rules and priorities. The failure of the ATP systems in measuring these 'extras' also show how the presence of distrusting, rather than trusting, behaviour, is often not picked up by formal systems, a theme throughout this thesis. The failure of Len (or his managers) to elicit a *personal* contract with Tim, and to instead focus upon cajoling or brow-beating, meant that he felt no compulsion to place the needs of the organisation above the needs of those who respected him.

Despite the friction evident with some sections of management, there was rarely criticisms of Brian and James, the two chairman. Whether the respect was due to the entrepreneurial spirit or the associated myths and legends which grew up around them, the attitude is easier to understand if founded in a mentality of hope. That, there existed, as with the leaders of the 1381 Peasant Revolt, a belief in the true goodness of the leader, whose henchmen and administrators were believed to be deceiving the King whilst exploiting the peasantry. "*Do you think they know how bad it is?*", asked one ATP engineer, "*I think if they knew how bad it was they'd sack the lot of them [management]*". Many workers were not affronted when owners were over-zealous in the oppression of their independence or autonomy. In providing work and being successful in creating their companies Brian and James were rarely complained about and their judgement questioned only in their choice of managers. At ATP (as at Firmin) a similar situation can be discovered in the health and safety record of the plant. Although some workers found their working conditions needlessly hot, noisy and dirty, the criticism was aimed at everyone rather than at the two owners. Although management

were portrayed as not caring “*about us as long as there’s money coming in*”, most believed that “*Brian and James probably don’t know anything about it*”.

6.2.1.2 Middle management

These messy relationships also extended to middle management who, in ATP, had differing personal relationships with those they worked with. Indeed, the personal circumstance of many middle managers (both professionally and personally) often gained a degree of sympathy from the shopfloor. Managers who (like themselves) were on the end of a dictatorial line manager would often receive favours from the shopfloor that others would never receive. Unlike many on the shopfloor, middle management found it harder to withdraw from their jobs, or to distance themselves from any emotional involvement. Len (and indeed all the change agents) viewed their managers as poorly trained but still responsible for the poor output of their teams. While workers could always blame their managers for poor decisions or performance, the middle management could not blame the shopfloor. As one middle manager pointed out, “*We’re stuck in the middle and getting blamed on both sides...people on the [shop]floor could get another job easily if they were sacked but I couldn’t, not at my age*”. The emotional effects of this are examined in chapter eight, the contradictions between managerial tasks, emotions and autonomy often created an empathetic, rather than a hostile response from the shopfloor. One example is that of Ray, a manager who was constantly being threatened and cajoled by his manager Kevin. It may be that many of the workers agreed with Kevin, that Ray was not good at his job. However, many of those working under Ray co-operated more with him than with other managers because of the way which he was treated: “*We, well, a lot of us, try harder for Ray, because he gets more than his fair*

share of bollocking. It might be his fault, but Kevin is too hard sometimes". Thus, whilst Len's comment that *"Many of the managers we have here aren't managers, they're workers. They haven't been trained in management techniques and can't lift their heads up enough to see what's going on"*, may well have been true, the personal networks these managers maintained could often be more effective than the dictatorial style of Len.

This is not to say that the competency (of management) did not have any influence upon the responses of the workers, but rather that the willingness to admit weakness was a more important trait. Workers who felt that Kevin was wrong with a decision would not bother telling him any more because they feared *"a right rollicking"*, as one put it. Middle managers who were not prepared to listen to criticism and act upon worker advice developed a (re)creation of distrust that soon became habitual. With Kevin, one of the more dictatorial managers, most employees would not even bother giving their real opinions even (in the rare instance) when they were asked. Thus, Len's NMP, with its emphasis upon autonomy and proactive problem solving, was generally received on the shopfloor with scepticism and scorn. Most workers had seen several previous programmes (IiP for example) start and fail and their habitual response was to assume this one would do the same. The tendency for their line managers to focus upon work intensification rather than attitudinal changes meant that habits regarding values, relationships and perceptions were left unchallenged. The importance of habit can also be evidenced in the measurement systems and controls that middle management used. The focus upon behavioural rather than attitudinal or hard-to-measure controls by management necessitated a response by workers that did not challenge their 'distanced' approach to work. Often it appeared that exchanges between managers and workers had

become little more than set pieces in which targets would be narrowly (and, therefore, excusably) missed, and tired lectures meted out. When faced with Len's requirement to change attitudes whilst increasing production levels, managers and workers alike found the former safer and more familiar than the latter. Adherence to what is quantifiable is, for those facing discipline, preferable to qualitative extras.

6.2.1.3 Senior management

One example of the importance of context (and cognition) can be gleaned from the way in which (especially senior) managers reacted to Len's changes, not as improvements to the organisation but as manifestations of his attempts to become MD. ATP's manufacturing division, under the command of Len, gave workers job-sheets to fill out concerning the timing, progress and quality of their projects in hand. These were then fed into a computer by the team leader so that the 'progress-chaser' could keep track of orders completed - a requirement for the QS 9000 certification. Workers were told to come up with suggestions for process improvement and management were trained and instructed to listen and feed back on any suggestions in daily team meetings. An attitude survey was commissioned in 1998 and a suggestion scheme was created around the same time. Finally, appraisals were implemented towards the end of 1997. Such forms of communication were similar to those mentioned by best-practice prescriptive literature and were, managers and workers were told, typical of the modern manufacturing practices which ATP needed. The problem was, however, that the response to these practices was not what Len had hoped for. Whilst "*traceability*" (a term coined by a team-leader) and, therefore, accountability had been enhanced by the job-sheets required by QS 9000, the reaction by some of the workforce and indeed much of the management

had been negative. Many managers felt that Len was overly autocratic in his instructions. It was, one reported, *“simply part of his plan to become managing director”*. Resistance to Len’s New Manufacturing Philosophy for some managers became identified with resistance to Len becoming managing director. I was told that managers in other departments, for example, would take down the NMP notices that Len put up around the building. With the two owners, not really understanding the ‘quality’ message Len was espousing, the other directors being openly hostile to his bid for MD and his own managers often reacting to his despotic tendencies, the opportunity for workers to buy-in to the new philosophy appeared increasingly limited.

Despite Len being new to the organisation it became clear that his new appraisal system was saddled with the prejudices of workers’ previous relationships with the company. Workers felt that the appraisals were a standard management ruse to restrict their pay and intensify their work. *“This is typical for you, he can’t give me a perfect score for quality even though I haven’t had hardly any faults. Then I have to sign the bloody thing. Nobody listens to what you have to say”* (team-member) or *“It’s only there to make us feel bad about our work. I’m going to leave and join the police anyway so it doesn’t matter”*. The latter four words were said with an air of defensiveness, as a child might say ‘I don’t care’, the implication being that they cannot be hurt. For their part, many of the managers conducting the appraisals were under pressure from Len to cut costs, increase output and improve quality. The manager in charge of the suggestion scheme said *“I just don’t have time to get back to everyone and fill the forms out. As it is it’s taking up 60% of my time and people have stopped putting suggestions in”*. Far from encouraging workers to put more identity into the job, the distrust with which the new schemes were treated engendered increased distancing of the self from the work: *“In the*

end we just let them get on with it. People who care less get on more because in the end they will leave and don't get emotionally involved". It is important to stress, however, that the mutual suspicion of intention between workers, managers, directors and Len did not take place from comparable positions. Whilst workers were in a position to withdraw their more co-operative behaviour such as filling-out suggestion forms, the control enabled by the job-sheets ensured a fast pace of (accountable) work. Middle managers also, despite their relative positions of power, were being made to work harder in that the job-sheets made their production teams comparable in terms of efficiency, quality and turn-around times. Not only was their performance increasingly monitored, but Len also wanted them to work in a different way, listening to the workers, responding to their suggestions, encouraging team-working and empowering those 'below' them. The psychological effects of this pressure are explored in greater detail in chapter eight, but it is sufficient to say that their increased workload did little to encourage workers to learn from their mistakes or to give workers the discretion required for continuous improvement suggestions. The two other directors, the owners and Kevin (Len's second in command), whilst wary of Len's political manoeuvring and sceptical of the effort on the shopfloor, were in positions of relative security, being beyond the reach of Len's dictates or secure enough in their positions to ignore his calls for a more 'empowered' workplace.

6.2.2. Firmin

Firmin is the best example in the study of distrust preventing workers from adopting a more proactive attitude in their jobs. An early assessment of the workplace by Jimmi has interesting parallels with that of Len made earlier: *"I don't understand why*

they don't put more of themselves into the job. Some of them are brilliant workers in their own time... but as soon as that siren goes, they can't wait to get out the door. The floor is cleared in seconds". The attempts by Jimmi to change this attitude, if anything, made the situation worse. Indeed, most of the evidence outlined below relates either to Jimmi's personality or the decisions he made whilst MD. By the time my data collection had finished in 1999 the shopfloor employees were angry and resentful and most managers over-worked and exasperated. All employees were in fear for their jobs and the long term future of the company was still in jeopardy. As at ATP, distrust was the result of both a failure to change personal relationships in the company and the threat that the policies of Jimmi posed to the workforce.

Whilst historically Firmin shared the same dictatorial manner and owner-dominated environment as ATP and Whale, the conditions of distrust had always been more intense there than at the other companies. Long before Jimmi arrived at the company, the 'Firmin Shuffle' (a phrase used to describe the shopfloor, not management) described a condition of 'resigned behavioural compliance' more extreme than the 'Whale Way'. However, by his manner and his decisions Jimmi did little to foster an environment of mutual respect or trust. Whilst Jimmi's competence was questioned by several workers and managers because of his age (30), background (finance) and race (Taiwanese), it appears that it was his failure to change personal relationships that did his programme most damage. It was not the formal institutions or processes that most alienated the shopfloor but the manner in which they were carried out and communicated. The instances that were most commonly reported as mattering to the employees were stories where Jimmi had insulted their identities, for example by shouting at them in front of their colleagues or through patronising comments. Jimmi

was disliked not just because of his dictatorial nature but because he was held to have betrayed and hurt individual workers. In dealing with one recalcitrant worker Jimmi publicly humiliated him by leaving an insulting note on his workbench that everybody who arrived before him could read. In doing so, the worker reasoned he was using his power as manager to mistreat those he relied on most, *"It wasn't worth it, I can sit there and nod and smile at him while at the same time ripping wires out of machines. Not that I would though..."*.

It is noticeable how the decisions of Jimmi were not simply evaluated on their own merits but were bagged with historical and contextual undertones. The system of Daily Action Report Meetings (DARMs) which were brought in with the Systems 21 consultants was hailed as a chance for team-leaders to communicate their team issues to management. However, the initial reaction to the meetings was cynical, *"I can't see that anything that comes from that office can be of much use"*, said one team-leader, *"we're spending more and more time in meetings and that can only mean less time making stuff can't it?"*. 'That office' was clearly laden with associations and traces of memories which would bias anything emanating from it. The traditional division between office and shopfloor was reproduced in and by the decision Jimmi took to bring in the consultants. Consequently, the decision *not* to consult or communicate did little to lessen the traditional disrespect accorded to shopfloor by the upper echelons of management. The attitudes (as in ATP) were not helped by a lack of communication and training as to what the purpose of the changes was, and why they were happening now. It appeared that workers at Whale were less afraid of change because they were convinced that it *had* to happen and understood why. The communication, training and consultation denied to

workers at Firmin was not simply perceived as ends in themselves but as symbolic of managerial disrespect towards the shopfloor.

The DARM meetings were further weakened by Jimmi's refusal to place minutes of some meetings on the notice-boards. The immediate effect was to create doubt as to what was going on in the meetings and to feed this doubt rumours started about further job-cuts, wage-freezes or extra hours. Indeed, it was interesting to see that where there was insufficient information for workers to know the future, rumour often filled the gap that not-knowing created. Thus, in situations of distrust it was unsurprising to hear rumours of closure and job-cuts. Mary, a painter in Firmin, would always be telling me the latest bit of gossip concerning the redundancies, pay-cuts or unfair promotions that were taking place, many of which would turn out to be untrue. Mary would never tell me where she got her information, but it often turned out to be exaggeration, or more rarely, completely untrue. Conversely, in Whale, where the outlook was more optimistic, gossip would usually (unless Aidan's name came up) be playing up the size of the bonus or predicting massive leaps in profit. 'Trust,' Giddens wrote, 'involves absence (1990: 143), but it appears that absence of knowledge is filled quickly by expectations of or pretensions to knowledge, dependent on the workers' fears or hopes. As we will discuss in chapter eight, absence does not sit easy with most workers. More important to the reproduction of distrust is the way in which reaction to Jimmi were formed by his expected response. We can illustrate this point with reference to an incident at Firmin in 1998. Gareth, a manager at Firmin, had been with the company for over twenty years. Without Gareth, one manager told me, "*The company would fall to bits, he knows where everything is, how much it will cost and how long it will take. The computer predictions of these things come nowhere near his accuracy*". Jimmi approached Gareth two days

before I interviewed him to ask if he could help sort out the informality of Firmin by recording some of the tacit knowledge he held - where dies were held, what paint should be used on specific buttons, who should do repairs et cetera. Gareth refused, despite Jimmi *“going berserk and kicking the door off its hinges”*. *“I don’t trust him you see,”* Gareth told me, *“he doesn’t like me and he doesn’t seem to have a problem sacking people. At the moment I’m indispensable but if I wrote that thing, I’d be out...”*. The implication is obvious: the knowledge of Jimmi’s previous behaviour allowed Gareth to predict his future behaviour and anticipate it with preventative action. There is no evidence that the ‘prediction’ was conscious and more likely it had developed into a habitual response. A leak from someone in administration later on that month confirmed Gareth’s fear that he was next in line for redundancy. The cycle of distrust, again with little reference to hierarchical position, continued. As at ATP, it appears as if the middle management at Firmin found it harder merely to ‘act out’ their role than the shopfloor. Jimmi made it clear that he believed middle management to be incompetent, and over 50% had been made redundant and replaced by ‘consultants’ by 1999. Unlike the shopfloor who were (individually and collectively) removed from Jimmi’s presence, middle management appeared to be constantly blamed, berated and shouted out for their weaknesses as managers and their failure to improve productivity.

The reactions to Jimmi’s decisions, however, were not just concerned with his personal style. Many in the organisation believed that he could not be trusted simply because he took the wrong decisions. In an early meeting with me, Jimmi outlined his ‘vision’ of Firmin on paper which, he believed, showed that the processes of work could be streamlined and made more efficient by eliminating positions and combining responsibilities. Whilst on paper the process re-engineering project made sense in terms

of profitability, it did not take into account the people who were performing the fifteen 'redundant' jobs. *"He simply made the wrong people redundant, some of our best workers went and that created a lot of hostility"* said one worker whose wife was sacked. Another moaned, *"Let's just say that some of the employees that were made redundant pretty much devoted themselves to this company. One worked here for twenty-five years, one worked here for eleven years and they were just excellent employees"*. The ability of those who were sacked was quickly made evident - at least three had to be re-employed (at higher wages) because of their intrinsic knowledge proved necessary for the day-to-day running of the firm. Another worker (the wife mentioned above) took Firmin to an industrial tribunal for unfair dismissal and not only won damages but also (more unusually) got her old job back. The point here is not so much the distrust and fear that the redundancies caused on the shopfloor, but also the image of incompetence which the process inflicted upon Jimmi, the consultants and the change process. In direct contrast to the more charismatic leaders in organisational literature, the lack of belief in the leader and his project made changes to subjectivity and the harnessing of emotion an unlikely outcome. The situation can be used in contrast to other examples discussed in the next chapter in Whale, to some extent in ATP and later on (1999) in Firmin where improvements in sales and profits (often unrelated to the internal changes) created a greater faith in the abilities of the change agents.

In a similar manner to ATP, the change programme at Firmin focused upon highly measurable processes of improvement at the expense of relationships, trust and other hard-to-measure elements. Finding workers' recalcitrant attitudes manifested in slow production and poor quality work, Jimmi took what he believed to be quick solutions: statistical controls, targets, new technology and 'the stick' approach. This

approach at Firmin was merely an exaggeration of what came before - a system approaching that of Taylorism. The closure of some unprofitable product lines, investment in technology and measurement techniques, partial re-engineering of production processes and a spate of high-profile redundancies did allow the company some improvements in productivity by 1999. However, there is more to it than this if we go beyond examining what *was done* to examine what *wasn't done*. The refusal to devolve responsibility and decision-making to the shopfloor, to finish the practices of clocking in or out, to spend more money on health and safety or to listen and feed back to worker suggestions, allowed (some) managers to retain an identity firmly based on power and control. The refusal by management to listen, to clock in themselves or to feedback on an idea was perceived by many workers as a managerial belief in their own superiority. Responding to the perceived attacks on their jobs, their skills and their identities many workers withdrew the extra effort that Jimmi argued he was attempting to elicit. Thus several workers, especially in Firmin, questioned that idea that they *"should put anything more into the company when we're not getting anything back for it"* or that *"he [Jimmi] wants things off us all the time and we've got nothing left to give no more and he doesn't seem to want to give anything back"*.

Finally, it is worth noting that unlike Whale and ATP where there remained unusual loyalty to the owners, the loyalty at Firmin was, primarily, to the company name. Although Jimmi himself was disliked in the company, there was no living founder or knowable owner whom workers could look up to. Instead the image of the company and its association with things imperial was used by several workers to justify doing more than was strictly necessary: *"He'll [Jimmi] be gone soon enough, and when he is Firmin will still be here. That's why I'm staying"*. One manager pointed at a Royal Warrant

from King George III dated 1796 and stated, *“That’s why people come to work here. If it wasn’t for that kind of thing most of them wouldn’t turn up”*. And there is some truth in this, the pride with which workers told me about the scabbard, cuirass or medal they were making, the associated history with the specific army regiment and the great quality and expense which the item incurred was in direct contrast to the manner in which they described their working lives and conditions. Such pride, in their eyes, gave both hope for the future and provided some justification for present discomfort.

6.2.3 Whale

The story of distrust at Whale is somewhat shorter than the others as its change programme is better suited to the chapters on building trust. However, this said, distrust did play an important role in determining the speed and vitality of change at Whale, and there are several parallels with both Firmin and ATP. Unlike the early summaries of their companies by Len and Jimmi, Colin’s assessment was more positive, not focusing upon what was negative, but what should be created, *“We need people thinking about their jobs and listening to each other, and that goes for management as much as the workforce”*.

In some respects, the tradition of the ‘Whale Way’ was similar to the ‘Firmin Shuffle’ in that it denoted a distancing of self from the act of work - an acceptance of the control by the received tradition of one’s own initiative or innovative capacity. However, unlike some previous MDs at Firmin, Rob (the original MD at Whale) was usually reported to have a ‘firm but fair’ attitude to his workplace. Whilst he could not tolerate any opposition, I did not hear any reports of him humiliating or ridiculing workers at

Whale. Rob never distanced himself from the shopfloor (either physically or mentally) until being replaced by Colin, and sometimes not even then. Unlike Brian, James and Jimmi he often by-passed layers of management to work directly with those on the shopfloor. Although not always right in his dictates, workers were given no room to answer back and Rob's way of working soon became established as the 'Whale Way'. One newcomer commented, *"It was amazing when I came here because I had been taught to think round problems and they didn't do that. Like, I remember arguing with my team-leader on how best to fix a thread on the back of a tanker. He wanted to just move the bolt up a bit so that the thing would hold together but I said take the whole thing off and re-thread it, 'cos it'll be safer and won't come back at warranty. He wouldn't listen because it was me that was saying it, because he hadn't come up with the idea"*. This was, many believed, the biggest reason why Rob didn't like unions and maybe why he thought personnel management was *"arse about face"* - he knew best what his men needed and it was impertinent to suggest otherwise.

Thus, over time, the 'Whale Way' became habitual for all positions on the shopfloor as top-down communication prevailed. Although Rob's manner was abrasive and abrupt he was generous and charismatic, one team-leader said *"they [the shopfloor] would jump off a cliff if he asked them to"*. Moreover, the *personal* trust and predictability which was fostered by Rob was viewed as much more important than the apparent wrongness of some of his decisions. As one sprayer put it, *"well, you'd often think...he was wrong and sometimes it'd get irritating, but then if it wasn't for him, none of us would be there would we?"*. Workers knew industrial democracy was not being promised and did not, therefore, feel let down when they were not listened to. The disrespect, it was felt, came from Aidan, the Production Director, who *"had all of the*

manner of Rob but none of the ability". When being told what to do by Aidan, "*you just do it and shut-up. I guess you just become a bit thick-skinned*" said one team-member. This is exactly the disassociation which we are discussing; Why should a worker need to become 'thick-skinned' if their feelings are not violated? The phrase indicates a distancing of the 'self' from managerial abuse and as such can surely be taken as a euphemism for disassociation if not alienation²³.

It was more the presence of Aidan, then, than the heritage of Rob, that posed most of a problem for Colin. Aidan's presence as Production Director was a constant threat to Colin's attempts to foster a more trusting and motivated workforce. Aidan was perceived to be not only unfair ("*He constantly takes your ideas and passes them off as his own, gets all the credit and we get nothing*") but also unpredictable, ("*Ten minutes after telling you should come up with ideas, he'll be shouting at you for contradicting him*"). More importantly for Colin, Aidan's attitude and that of the managers who followed him (voluntarily or otherwise), was making his proposals for reforms appear hollow rhetoric. Colin's intentions were examined, by workers, in the light of Aidan's actions and the disparity served only to support the cynicism with which the changes were being implemented. One interesting point that is related to this discussion is how the attitude of Aidan diffused among the workforce. Whilst the managers working with Aidan expressed their dislike of his managerial methods, they were often accused of utilising them themselves by their subordinates. It seems likely that this was due to their fear of Aidan by-passing their authority and interfering directly with the shopfloor work

²³ The process of 'distancing' which is being described in this chapter resonates with Marx's notion of objectification. Under capitalist conditions (i.e. appropriation) this process becomes one in which the worker becomes alienated from the work as it becomes an end in itself rather than a creative activity.

but may also be what one worker described as “*brown-nosing...they think that’s the way they’ll get promoted*”. As we will discover in the next chapter, it is noticeable the rapidity with which these attitudes dispersed when Aidan was forced out. For Colin, it appears that part of the problem in controlling Aidan and others like him, was that many of his actions were ‘unobservable’ in the system²⁴. Whilst more obvious errors found in the planning schedule, for example, were controllable, his day-to-day attitude (which workers found most irksome) was not. Much of the dissatisfaction expressed by Colin concerning Aidan’s weaknesses came, therefore, from reports from the workforce.

Finally, it was noticeable at Whale that although many middle managers expressed their worries at their ability to adopt a different style of management, their response appeared less fearful than that at Firmin and ATP. There are several reasons for this. The first is that Colin provided excellent training programmes for the managers to understand how and why they had to change. All the managers I spoke to viewed the courses as an enlightenment rather than a threat as they provided practical steps on how to solve problems, communicate, listen and delegate. The provision of a model of what should have been happening provided the knowledge that many required to make the transition. Second, although Colin demoted some of the team-leaders and middle management, no-one other than Aidan was asked to leave. Unlike the processes at ATP and Whale, most middle managers felt secure in their employability if not their positions. Finally, and probably because of the previous points, there was a reported feeling that Colin was right in his philosophy. Recalcitrance, by definition would then have been

However, ‘alienation’ is not used in the thesis because of its association with essentialism and Marxist thought more generally.

²⁴ Does the invisibility of something this important to Colin perhaps question the assumptions made by Foucault regarding the relationship between power and knowledge at a local level?

wrong. In justifying his own acceptance of the changes a middle-manager commented, *“Well, the world is changing, and we either have to keep up or get out. There’s no use standing around. In some ways, if Colin...wasn’t making this change he’d be doing us no favours”*.

6.3 Analysis

6.3.1 The need for distrust

The distrust which was evident in all three of the cases appears to have been an attempt by the workforce to protect their identities from the ‘unfair’ practices of certain members of the management team. Such a statement clearly needs some unpacking, so perhaps we can focus first upon the ‘unfair’ practices of management. Looking at the reports of what was deemed *“unfair”* in the eyes of the workforce, it appears evident that although the customs and practices of the workplace provide some explanation for what was perceived to be fair (getting tea for others, lines of communication, open door policies), especially evident were the cultural norms of a male-dominated heavy manufacturing plant (for example, racist and sexist comments were tolerated more than one might expect in society generally). However, it is also noticeable the extent to which these notions have been informed by standards instilled outside of the workplace. The idea that managers and workers should not disrespect others, promise things which they cannot deliver or should listen to other’s opinions were common in all three cases, even one such as Firmin which had no history of these civilised notions. Tim’s sense of abuse because of his failure to be listened to is not, as the psychological contract literature illustrates, a bond made exclusively with management and formed internally to the

workplace. It is ironic that the very same social forces at work on the shopfloor also help to ensure the survival of the labour process. By helping out his friends in times of trouble, for personal, rather than economic reasons, Tim was implicitly contributing to work 'beyond contract'. Such a phenomenon was also noted by Delbridge (1995) who notes firstly that 'workers tend to empathise with, and be supportive of, those who are sympathetic to their own position' (1995:115), and secondly that by showing willingness to help each other out, workers are implicitly abetting their own work intensification. However, much of the work on 'fairness' or 'justice' is concerned with the concepts at a structural level (Deutsch, 1975; Tyler and Degoe, 1995) rather than the cultural or phenomenological generation of justice²⁵. Although consideration of extra-workplace structures is not new (Schein, 1996; Hofstede, 1980; Milkman, 1997; Fox, 1982) it illustrates how forces external to the organisation impinge on workplace attitudes.

Another divergence with the psychological contract literature is that, at least in these cases, the development (or continuance) of distrust is not necessarily a completely conscious phenomenon. Contrary to the 'contracting process' as portrayed by Herriot and Pemberton (1997) most workers and managers questioned could not articulate their expectations of others in the factories unless guided strongly. Again, at odds with much of the trust literature (see for example Burt and Knez, 1996:68), the continuance of distrust was more of a habit than a conscious calculation. Indeed, most employees appeared to express their relationships in terms of personal preferences or stereotypes ("*Avoid that twat [Aidan] Weber*" or "*He's a benevolent dictator*"), and many could not remember more than one or two instances of (even Jimmi) acting unfairly. It was these

²⁵ For an extended discussion see Sheppard and Tuchinsky, 1996.

stereotypes (perhaps related to Giddens' notion of memory traces) that informed employees' reactions rather than the specific action of what was happening. In attempting to explain the extent and character of a withdrawal of 'moral involvement' (Etzioni, 1961: 10) it is therefore demonstrable that such withdrawal is not effected after one incident but more after the development of a habit. There are several examples both in the case-studies, but also probably in our personal lives, where one negative incident, be it a betrayal, a lie or a slight is not cause for withdrawal from a relationship, but instead is put aside or forgiven but still remembered. This suggests then, that such an act is judged in the context of other actions - is the cause for concern part of a pattern or is it an exception to the rule? Such consideration necessitates a reflection on past events and an expectation of future action, though, again, the process may not necessarily be conscious.

The link between the perceived unfairness of the actions of Jimmi, Aidan or Len and the (at least partial) withdrawal of co-operation or motivation from the shopfloor appears to have its origins in the power dynamics of the workplace. The most commonly asserted feeling during periods of withdrawal was that of powerlessness. Faced with the refusal of Aidan to listen to requests or with public humiliation by Jimmi, a common response was "*Well, what can you do?*". There is an important point to be made here in that the indeterminacy of the work contract works both ways. Whilst managers find it hard to control the effort, motivation and attitude of the workforce, so too workers (and people generally in society) have little formal security against personal humiliation or insult. The intangibility of such actions do not make them likely targets for the institutions that usually protect the individual from the effects of distrust either locally (the disciplinary procedure) or nationally (the courts). The assertion, therefore, by

Thompson and McHugh (1995: 330) that ‘a shopfloor worker can construct an identity just as, or even more, secure as that of someone with more position power’ does not ring true in the light of this evidence. The impotency of the subordinate position appears to provide the impetus for withdrawal: the exercise of formal power is inconsistent with the development of personal trust. If one makes no suggestions for improvements, they cannot be ignored, as a worker at Firmin who mistook me for a new employee put it *“Keep you head down and your nose clean, and that way no-one bothers you”*. Although both Whale and Firmin found themselves at the receiving end of unfair dismissal legislation, it can be argued that the general lack of enforcement mechanisms for either management and workers prevent distrust in the workplace from disrupting the labour process and, more generally, the mechanisms of capitalism. Direct (as opposed to ideological) power, especially when it is perceived to have been exercised unfairly, can play a significant role in threatening identities and, therefore, destroying trust.

This functional view of power does not necessarily exclude the ideological use of power. Many workers were not affronted when the original owners were over-zealous in the oppression of their independence or autonomy. In providing work and being successful in creating their companies Rob, Brian and James were rarely complained about and their judgement questioned only in their choice of managers. By demonstrating loyalty to something greater than the manager who is doing the abusing employees could justify their own complicity and powerlessness in the process that was attacking their identities.

It is also worth pointing out that (whether they are right or not) many workers believed that many managers *“got off”* on making their subordinates feel inadequate. All

the managers in the case-studies were recruited and promoted by the managing directors/owners. Unlike larger companies where an HR department may recruit on lines of competence or where a manager may never work alongside the MD, smaller companies (like the case-studies) require managers not only to be competent but also to be able to get on with the owners. Rob, in describing his recruitment policy said to me, *"We took on managers who were not going to be a threat to us, who were not the most fired up managers. When the time came and they were asked to manage it without us, they couldn't"*. Given this structural and personal encouragement of autocratic behaviour, it seems fair to say that at least some of the managers maintained a 'romantic' view of their own abilities. In a memorable outburst from a manager at ATP: *"I wouldn't be in this position if I didn't know better than that lot [indicates shopfloor]. That's the point of being a manager isn't it? To manage other people...At the end of the day a lot of people on the shopfloor don't care enough about their work to do it properly, and that's why I'm here. If they cared enough, I wouldn't be needed"*. This is interesting because it completes the circle of distrust - workers withdraw their commitment because management disrespects their abilities and management disrespects their abilities because they believe workers are not committed. Even where new procedures and systems have been brought in, many managers managed according to the old values. In discussing the new appraisal systems, one manager at ATP commented *"We need the appraisal system because we can't trust them to identify their own problems. It's something to get them going. If it wasn't for this some of them would think that they could get away with shirking"*. Another at Firmin commented: *"I don't know why they're bothering with the suggestion scheme, most of the stuff that comes out of there is rubbish. That's our job really"*. This is not to argue that all managers simply imitated the behaviours of those above and around them, manifesting in ideas of grandeur and self-importance. Many

managers were as aware of the forces working on them as managers: *"It's difficult to keep a clear head - you forget sometimes that you are not always right... it's difficult when you have to accept what your boss says, not to pass it down as gospel truth"*. However, the temptation of management to bolster their own identities by the exercise of their formal or informal power, did little to gain the co-operation of those working 'below' them who were not in positions to reciprocate the 'unfair' practices.

6.3.2 Distrust

The argument to this point has been that the 'unfair' actions of certain managers spur a withdrawal of effort and a distancing of 'self' from the work task, humiliation, refusing to listen and behaviour *"that you wouldn't expect at home"* gave workers cause to restrict their personal involvement with their work. A gap between the rhetoric of their managers and the reality of their day-to-day experience caused workers to retreat further from responding to managerial promises. 'If the expectations are disappointed, they then lose 'faith' in the system' (Glover and Fitzgerald More, 1998: 55). Other social forces, however, such as worker friendships and loyalty to the company enable the labour process to keep functioning - direct managerial control is usurped by a method of control much more suited to Foucauldian ideas. The process of withdrawing 'self' under these conditions has been noted by several other writers. It is what Collinson terms 'resistance through distance', Delbridge (1998: 189) names 'a defensive siege mentality', Kunda calls 'role distancing' (1992: 163) and Ogbonna and Wilkinson (1988) define as 'resigned behavioural compliance'. However, if the concept of distrust is argued to be antithetical to development of subjectivity in the workplace, the concept needs further

examination. Although distrust is rarely a concept which is detailed in organisational analysis, its overlap with trust allows some investigation.

Most definitions of trust (including many implicit definitions, such as that of Fox, 1974) accept the centrality of time to the creation of trust.. Whether the wording is concerned with 'confidence in...desirable events taking place' (Golembiewski and McConkie, 1975: 133), 'an expectancy' of reliability (Rotter, 1967: 650) or 'the probability' of future action (Gambetta, 1988: 217), the purpose, creation and function of trust is 'to anticipate the future. It is to behave as if the future were certain. One might say that through trust time is superseded, or at least that differences in time are' (Luhmann, 1979: 10). The purpose of the section above, then, has been to show how the actions of management create an expectation by the workforce that co-operative work, 'moral involvement' or going 'beyond contract' will usually not be rewarded, reciprocated or congratulated by management, or indeed met by anything other than disdain or humiliation. Such an expectation of managerial action is, in our cases, *created* through reflection on past experiences formed by knowledge (or at least the belief of knowledge)²⁶. This is not of course to say that a conscious cognitive assessment takes place every time a worker considers whether or not to act in a certain way. What appears to inform employee attitudes is a residual, subconscious stance, that Giddens calls 'memory traces' (1984: 17) resulting in actions which follow and reproduce these traces, which Bordieu terms 'habitus', and what Pirsig terms 'static quality' (1992: 140). This, it appears is the cause of the 'objectivisation' noted by Berger and Luckman (1966). The

²⁶ In our cases, the 'actors' know each other, in other research (Deutsch, 1960; Shapiro, 1987, Zucker, 1986) actors are unfamiliar with each other. In these cases, as with laboratory experiments (e.g. the Prisoner's Dilemma), identity is never at stake because the actors do not know each other and (usually) have no real power over each other.

withdrawal of meaning from the workplace thus becomes a habitual response and one which requires little reflection when contemplating action.

Such 'memory traces' can be seen to add to what Fox terms a 'low discretion syndrome...the role occupant perceives superordinates as behaving as if they believe he cannot be trusted, of his own volition, to deliver a work performance which fully accords with the goals which they wish to see pursued or the values they wish to see observed' (1974: 26). Or to quote Gouldner 'the supervisor perceived the worker as unmotivated; he then carefully watched and directed him; this aroused the worker's ire and accentuated his apathy, and now the supervisor was back where he began' (1955:160). The existence of habitus, memory traces or subconscious attitudes to management allow a formation of action (and perception) that does not have to be based upon the cognition of the worker or the manager. With reference to our cases, Fox's assessment can be usefully critiqued on three fronts. The first is that he directly relates low-trust to low-discretionary tasks usually at the bottom of the organisational hierarchy instead of relating it to specific relationships or workplace experiences. More problematically, the relationship often depends on which manager is involved - workers at Whale would gladly go beyond the call of duty to help Rob, but would "*avoid that twat Aidan*", as one new Whale recruit was instructed. This point is not new (McGovern, 1995), but is valid nonetheless.

Secondly, Fox terms this lack of co-operation 'low-trust', which is clearly problematic if we accept the arguments of Giddens, Luhmann and many others that trust, is based upon the expectation of an (absent) outcome, *regardless of whether the outcomes are good or bad*. 'Low' implies nearing absence, but strong distrust can (as

with trust), can be a strong proactive motivator to a course of action and is (as with trust) created through reflection and experience and will, over time, become a habitual, subconscious response. Distrust, according to this view, fits the definition of trust. The withdrawal of identity from the workplace is, as has been argued above, due to the expectation that employees' identities will be abused through the disregard or disrespect of management. Such an expectation is clearly based upon past experiences over a period of time and is, therefore, an expectation of the future based upon experience. Thirdly, this perspective on distrust (as opposed to low-trust) is important because it takes subjectivity and identity as the focal point for the production and reproduction of trust rather than the static and fixed notion of hierarchical position or discretion. Correspondingly, the analysis allows for the notion of change within the trust relationship, something conspicuous by its absence in *Beyond Contract*. As we have seen above, Fox's analysis rightly comments upon the mechanisms by which low-trust and high-trust situations are reproduced in the workplace, but his postulation of low-discretion equals low-trust and *vice versa*, creates a closed-loop chicken-and-egg scenario which disregards the potential for change within each situation. Indeed, in arguing that trust relations are formed by (and form) discretionary freedom, Fox provides a precursor to those such as Beer et al. (1992) who have argued that changes in behaviour are the necessary prerequisite for attitudinal change. If, however, the argument hitherto proposed is followed, changes in behaviour will have little impact upon attitudes, identity or subjectivity if trust relationships do not also change. Therefore, the major stumbling block for the creation of changes in subjectivity and attitude is that distrustful relationships will not change unless the context and meaning associated with managerial action are altered. It is such consideration of context that requires examining before the relationship between distrust, action and subjectivity can be understood. By

linking distrust to subjectivity (and reflexivity) rather than behaviour we can show how changes in behaviour or new processes and procedures can often *fail* to produce the required attitudes in the workforce.

6.4 Conclusions

This chapter has argued that the examples of distrust (rather than low-trust) found in our cases are caused by the partial withdrawal of identity and subjectivity from the workplace rather than being intrinsically linked to hierarchical position or discretion as suggested by Fox (among others). This is not to argue that the concept is not linked with power, but rather that it is the perception of the *unfair* exercise of power which can cause the spiral into distrust. It is this externally-influenced notion of ‘fairness’ which allows workers a margin of resistance in defending their identities. The chapter also argues that as both a structural and subjective phenomenon, distrust is not simply a generalisable structure determined by managerial action. Within our case-studies we can show how the influence of line-management, the image of the company and the founders and the assessment of the ability of those introducing changes are often inter-related in forming an idea of the company. However, we can also evidence the influence of race, gender, profession and age on assessing the future actions of management, and more importantly, the influences of society on what is deemed fair or unfair in workplace relationships. In usurping the feminist slogan ‘the personal is the political’, it is possible to disentangle the way in which the ‘fairness’ of treatment can impact upon the extent of co-operative behaviour that can be expected of the workforce.

In specifying a relationship to subjectivity rather than position or job it is possible to show how new behaviours, procedures and systems within the workplace are often burdened by expectations and beliefs based upon memories of past behaviours and which have developed into habitual responses. In this respect, both management and the shopfloor are equally guilty. Such a perspective moves away from the school of thought that proposes behavioural changes as causal of attitudinal changes (or vice versa). It is the failure to realise this that encourages managers such as Len and Jimmi to focus upon the 'hard' aspects of quality - statistical control, work intensification and measurement systems. Indeed, these systems and actions which not only prevent changes in subjectivity from taking place but also encourage managers to find their identity in issues of control and power. In place of behavioural change, it is argued that what is important in achieving changes in subjectivity is not the ticked box, the named procedure or the specified action but the manner and context in which the action, procedure or behaviour is undertaken²⁷. The focus of the chapter is, therefore, upon the importance day-to-day details of behaviour out of which managers and shopfloor workers construct their relationships and infer each other's attitudes. Such a conclusion mirrors that achieved in workplace studies over two decades ago (Burawoy, 1979; Armstrong et al., 1981).

What we are witnessing then, is not simply management responding to the withdrawal of worker effort by reducing worker discretion (and *vice versa*). The picture sketched above is one of a complex, messy and highly contextualised set of relationships in which habit, reflexivity, societal norms and workplace cultures interact to (re)produce attitudes and behaviours. Without changing distrustful environments it appears unlikely

²⁷ As indicated earlier the distinction between an action and how it is performed is necessary linguistically and analytically even though the distinction is argued against in empirical terms.

that changes in subjectivity will take place and that anything other than minimal compliance to measured criteria will be made manifest. It is this transformation that needs to be examined if we are to explore the workings of trust in anything other than a static role.

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7. Trust and the development of subjectivity

‘Habit is a great deadener’.
Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*

7.1 Introduction

The last chapter showed how, as a result of a need to protect identity, the condition of distrust can lead to actions and attitudes which reduce workers’ identification with their jobs. The creation of ‘distancing’ or ‘formal compliance’ is based upon the employee’s interpretation of managerial intention and ability, and as such is a prediction of future managerial/line-manager behaviour aimed at minimising damage to worker identity. In other words, if it is perceived that line-managers are likely to be incompetent or if their intentions are suspect then an emotional distancing helps protect an employee’s identity whilst ensuring that they do not break the formal contract of work. Once created, the phenomenon of distrust need not always be seen as a conscious process, for the creation of habit eventually allows attitudes to be crystallised as it takes place at a personal (e.g. relationships), cognitive (i.e. predictive) and ‘structural’ (i.e. the formation of habitus) level. Once the habit of distrust is formed, the process takes place at a largely subconscious and habitual level. Following the theoretical framework outlined earlier, this chapter extends this argument by suggesting that a personal, intimate and reciprocal form of trust is required in order for workers to risk incorporating their identities into their working lives. Unlike distrust, which has tended to reproduce itself in our case studies, the examples that we have of trust are in the process of building. Thus, these processes are ones in which workers gradually allow their identities to be placed at risk as managerial behaviour either confirms or denies the validity of this trust. The focus for enabling changes in subjectivity must, then, not only incorporate an

understanding of the cognitive processes of employees, but also subsume the feelings, emotions and subjective relationships between management and the shopfloor. As we shall see, ATP and Firmin, which focused upon measurement, control and formal procedures at the expense of patience, trust and hope, were less likely to foster employee motivation and commitment than Whale. The critical findings are valuable as most case-studies (either LPT or Foucauldian) tend to deny trust building in organisations.

7.2 Building trust

7.2.1 Whale

Whale is the best example we have of a successful case in changing the hearts and minds of workers concerning their jobs and their relationships to them. The kernel of the problem facing Colin on his arrival was how to get shopfloor workers to contribute, think and to be proactive where previously they had been accustomed to reacting to and obeying orders unquestioningly - the 'Whale Way'. Contrary to the over-socialised versions of organisational change the processes by which this transformation was (partially) achieved do not adhere to any clean and crisp model. There was no one point when a subjective realisation was achieved by the workforce (either individually or collectively), no critical juncture at which Colin's message was realised, understood and believed. The process of changing minds at Whale was sporadic, gradual and reversible. It happened to a different degree and at a different time with each worker and manager, and was neither uniform nor necessarily predictable in its progress. However, even the most cynical of workers at Whale would agree that a change of heart had taken place in many employees by 1998. How did such an individualised phenomenon occur over this

period in so many people? How much of it was it related to the procedures and systems which were brought in by Colin, and how much due to the different relationship which Colin had with his workforce? We can examine these questions by looking at three inter-related areas which helped build the trust which enabled workers to change their minds concerning their work: formal procedures, personal relationships and cultural systems.

First, an examination of the processes and procedures which Colin Morton introduced into Whale shows that these helped support the change programme in several ways. In the minds of the workers the financial success achieved by 1998, which was seen to have been caused by several of the systems which Colin introduced, were evidence of his abilities as a leader. Breaking with the laws of precedence that had hamstrung the company over the years, Colin invested heavily in a new paintshop (1997-8), new computers (1997-9) and a streamlining of the production process (1996-8). Less profitable lines were withdrawn, and a standardisation of a more simple product was attempted after consultations with the drivers of the vehicles. Although there was initial suspicion of some of the changes that were taking place, the fact that Colin had come from Rover and had been a long standing friend of Rob helped foster the impression that he knew what he was doing. The changes also brought (almost) immediate dividends, there were less bottle-necks and by the end of 1998 the on-time delivery rate reached 100% for the first time in years. As with some of the negative incidents at Firmin, these improvements were, for many workers, inseparable from the general management approach: *"I have to say that if he didn't know what he was doing, we wouldn't be making such a profit would we?"*, commented one team-leader. At the shopfloor level at least, the effort necessary to analytically separate the benefits derived from process re-engineering from those elicited from training, pep-talks and 'quality' management was

not made. Therefore, the improvements in efficiency were regarded as justifying the whole approach implemented at Whale. This is not to argue that a causal relationship can be sketched in which efficiency gains equalled motivation, satisfaction or indeed increased trust - at ATP (albeit lesser) gains in efficiency and profitability did little to improve morale at the company. The difference between the two will be expanded upon later, but the manner in which the changes were implemented by Colin appears to have been much more conducive to worker co-operation than those dictated by Jimmi or Len. At Whale, the period between 1995 and 1999 evidenced a complex and reticulated social transformation in which formal systems were translated and amended by social and psychological processes. By 1999 one worker commented tongue-in-cheek that "*he [Colin] could bring in compulsory...bungee-jumping now, and they'd all think it was the best thing since sliced bread*". Whilst this comment can be seen as further evidence of the symbiotic relationship between attitudes and behaviours, it should be noted that it was made towards the end of the change process when both workers and managers (at least those that remained) could judge the project a success.

My notes from the shopfloor during this period show a marked change in attitudes: 'today I had an interesting chat with Dave who was really cynical last time I spoke with him. He's going for one of the new team leader jobs, which shows how things have changed. I think he's seen that he can get something out of this, not necessarily monetary, but something to boost his own opinion of himself'. In a later interview with Dave when I commented upon his attitude, he retorted, "*When you think people won't take you seriously you don't bother. I just think I realised Colin was serious*". Dave was one of the more enthusiastic converts to Colin's new style and (as with many converts) was one of the most vocal in criticising the old 'Whale Way'.

Examining the differences between other interviews undertaken in 1996/7 and those in 1999, it was possible to discern in many employees (at all companies) a later retrospective reconstruction of events more based upon wishful thinking than fact. One example of this is the number of Whale managers who in 1996 (during a low point of turnover) expressed strong doubts about the TQM process, only to assert in 1999 (when sales and productivity had picked up) that they had always been in favour of the project and that it was others who had needed convincing. As well as raising questions about studies that attempt retrospective analysis (through questionnaires or otherwise), the observation perhaps also indicates the dislike that many employees have of ambiguity. Aidan, a team-leader commented in 1999 that he “*knew he [Colin] was good when we found out he was from Rover*”, whilst his earlier interviews suggest that nothing was further from his mind. Knowing something, or at least predicting it, is a form of trust. As such, it is curious how needy such workers were of being proved correct - that their beliefs were not misplaced. Whilst improvements in productivity and sales were perceived in Whale to have been the result of ‘correct’ decisions by Colin, at ATP, as we saw in the previous chapter, improvements in efficiency or productivity did not necessitate improvements in task identification, motivation or trust. This is evident not just from our case-studies but also from the ample evidence from some of the privatised utilities, where the pursuit of efficiency and productivity resulted in job losses, tendering out and the erosion of worker rights (Hutton, 1992). In understanding the creation of motivation, trust and task identification we therefore need to look more closely at the personal relationships rather than the functional behaviour found in the workplace.

Central to the incorporation of worker subjectivity to the work process is the personal relationship of Colin with the shopfloor. It is in this relationship that we can witness the central role of trust, knowledge and time in enabling changes in subjectivity to occur. The first point to make is that *in creating trust, Colin himself had to trust*. This is one of the central points in the thesis and as such it must be understood for what it is. I do not mean by this that Colin had to gamble his money, time and reputation on his future success (although true). I mean, instead, that the reciprocal nature of trusting necessitated an approach by which Colin relinquished some of the controls at his disposal as managing director, thereby putting at risk his *own* identity, but allowing the employees more confidence in his sincerity. Formally, of course, no such release took place, Colin could still hire, fire, buy and sell within the context of the law - indeed this will be argued later as one reason why trust in organisations is never complete. But identity, subjectivity and emotion are not formal entities, they are personal and operate primarily at an individual level. What is meant, rather, is that Colin temporarily gave up some of the direct control, the measurement of efficiency and the associated disciplinary mechanisms that were used so frequently by Rob. This partial release and the communication of the TQM message meant that the workers could begin to test the boundaries of their environment without the limiting factor of fear. The following transcription details part of an interview between a production supervisor and myself in 1996:

Q: How is your relationship different with Colin than it was with Rob?

A: [laughter] Well, Rob Beran is completely autocratic, but you know where you stand with him. Most of the men are very loyal to him. Colin's very different because he

asks you what you think and it's hard to get used to. I read his book [Sid's Heroes] and I think I know what he's trying to do. But Whale is very different to most companies, people are used to working the 'Whale Way' and it's hard to get used to asking people, sometimes you feel a bit stupid saying "what do you think?" when they could be laughing at you. Colin is not helped by this other character [Aidan] who is causing a lot of bad feeling on the shopfloor. It's hard to believe in what Colin says when he [Aidan] does the opposite.

Note the, *"....it's hard to get used to..."*. Getting used to something implies the passing of time, the adoption of new knowledge or the learning of new habits. It indicates a shift of attitude reflected in a shift of behaviour (*"...saying 'what do you think?'"*), and the two are inextricably intertwined. The difficulty for Colin was that, although he could initiate this relationship with his managers, giving them room to make mistakes, think for themselves and not make decisions for them, he could not be there all the time for those on the shopfloor. In practice, Colin was not the ever-present supervisor, nor was his 'surveillance' effective enough to elicit the type of control envisaged by Sewell and Wilkinson (1992). This role, for efficiency's sake, had to be handed to middle management and team leaders. Despite the trainers' message that the organisational triangle had to be turned upside down and that management must now listen and act upon workers' suggestions, Aidan (the *'other character'* mentioned above) set an example by which Colin's message seemed like mere rhetoric when compared to the reality of Aidan's dictates. In 1996, one worker commented of Aidan, *"It hardly inspires trust when you hear Colin talking about listening and communicating, and then you come back to the floor and you get an earful off your manager"*. Colin had sent a message out and was in danger of losing the trust and respect of the shopfloor if he could

not match his words with the actions of his own managers. This brings us to our third point, the manner in which Colin's attitudes were instilled in management, team-leaders and finally the shopfloor.

Aidan was "*persuaded to leave*" towards the end of 1998. The parting was an acrimonious but important moment, in symbolic as well as practical terms. In practice, the departure meant that the system of management could be improved, two people were now put organising the planning which Aidan had done each Friday afternoon and managers promoted on their merit rather than wealth or contacts could tackle the running of the shopfloor. In symbolic terms, the effect was much greater. For the first time it was made evident that Colin's threats had not been mere rhetoric and that managing in the 'Whale Way' was no longer an option. "*I think*", as one worker put it, "*that was the turning point. Colin meant business and everyone knew it*". Again, it was achieving a degree of confidence that Colin was serious. With both Rob and Aidan gone, there were no despotic models left for budding managers to imitate. The new model manager became Colin. His managers were asked to risk as much as he had in developing trustful relationships with the shopfloor. Note in the supervisor's answer above the statement that sometimes he felt a "*bit stupid*" asking people to contribute ideas. This is exactly the personal risk that is necessary for that trust to be reciprocated. Several managers commented that this embarrassed awkwardness became lessened as the habit of TQM management was formed and the workers began to respond seriously to encouragement. To profess embarrassment, awkwardness or stupidity is not the confession of a cultural dupe. Managers and workers were well aware that the incentive for acting as imitators of Rob or Aidan was no longer present in Whale. However, had the transformation been as simple as 'acting out' then surely Aidan and those similar to him would have adopted the

new behaviours immediately – according to those who see trust (or behaviour) as a conscious decision, there should have been no problem with acting instrumentally. The emphasis that Colin placed upon convincing his workforce that his techniques would bring greater dividends and the subsequent satisfaction workers expressed indicate that neither the extremes of brainwashing or ‘acting out’ usefully describe their experience. The workers and managers at Whale used their judgement, intelligence and reflexivity to understand what was happening in the workplace and why.

For Whale employees the removal of Aidan was judged in the context of other actions by Colin. Had this taken place in the context of personal disaffection or a power struggle as at ATP or Firmin, the action would have been interpreted as such and had a negative impact upon the change process. In the context of promises, predictions and supportive actions, the removal of Aidan supported the TQM message. The transcription below was recorded in 1999 with the same supervisor who was interviewed in 1996 (above):

Q: ...and how are the shopfloor responding to the changes?

A: Well, I think. A few of them are still in the old ‘us and them’ mentality, but they’re getting less and less. It think it’s hard for them to get used to at first, but once they begin to trust the new way they prefer it. It’s much better for us [management] because we don’t always have to be telling them what to do. In some ways we [management] were the problem, it was harder for us to give the shopfloor the space to make mistakes because in the old days, it would have been our backsides that got booted.

It is interesting to note that in this exchange (and in the interview generally), his own adoption of the quality management approach was never in question. He had become used to the new system of working and had attempted to use it on the shopfloor. Spurred on by the fate of Aidan, the team-leaders and middle management on the shopfloor had begun to respond to Colin's message with renewed vigour. Later that year, a reduction in the number of team-leaders, ostensibly to facilitate new teams, meant that Colin could demote (or dismiss) those who were either unwilling or unable to respond to the new demands. Throughout this process, however, Colin's efforts were primarily focused on communicating directly with those on the shopfloor, and ensuring that his managers and team-leaders followed his example. In doing so, Colin was not imposing the direct authority that Rob, Aidan, Jimmi, Brian and James often exerted when assuming themselves on their respective shopfloors. Indeed, whilst on the shopfloor, it was conversation rather than orders or directions that appeared to take up most of his time. *"He's the only manager I know who has time to talk to you. It's never like, 'I'm too busy, I can't stop', he always has time"* commented one worker. Colin was cajoling workers into *becoming used* to thinking and innovating. In his wanderings round the shopfloor, I often witnessed conversations in which Colin would ask questions and wait for answers where Jimmi (at Firmin) would have instructed, directed and moved on. The lesson for the worker was that they gained respect and status by coming up with improvement ideas whilst the lesson for the manager was that Colin's example had to be followed in order to be a 'good' manager at Whale. *"It's funny"* one production manager pointed out, *"we, well I, have been doing this for years and it's only now that I can see what being a good manager really means"*. Although it was clear that Colin believed this approach to be the best for the business, he appeared to be neither strategic nor

callous in his approach, providing me (as the researcher) with the time, equipment and patience that he allowed many of his workers. Indeed, it may not have mattered in any case, as one team leader pointed out, *"I don't know whether he puts it on or not - but I can't blame him if he does, because it works!"*. Whilst Colin sometimes expressed frustration with the tardiness of the changes taking place, he believed (in direct contrast to Len) *"that it's better for them to make mistakes and learn from them than for me to start interfering and telling them what to do"*. The result of such an approach was to allow the workers to begin to trust that they would not be shouted at for criticising working practices or for coming up with ideas. The gradual build up of trust was one in which the actions of the workforce (suggestions, workplace improvements) would be congratulated or listened to by Colin (and increasingly his own managers) and in turn the workers, feeling that they could trust this response, would do this more habitually in the future. At one of the training sessions that I attended, it was reported that a hole in the wall of the women's toilets had remained unrepaired for some time despite frequent requests to fix it. Apparently, the authorisation for the job hadn't (ever) been passed back to the right people. Eventually it was fixed by one of the repair men taking fifteen minutes out to fill it. *"In the days of Rob", he commented, "we wouldn't have dared go off on something like that without permission, but I think...[with] Colin he trusts you to do the job...think for yourself"*.

The challenge at this point for Colin, and maybe more so for his managers, was that in allowing mistakes to go unpunished, in allowing avenues to be explored that may prove fruitless and by adopting a persuasive rather than a reproving manner, he took the risk that production would fall. Which it did. In the period 1996-7 production, orders and sales all took a severe downturn and at this point it may have been tempting to abandon

the quality approach, write off the money that had been spent on training and re-employ Rob's style of management. That this did not happen illustrates the nature of the confidence which Colin had in his approach. In the same way that workers in Firmin based their actions on the expectation of negative managerial responses, so too Colin based his actions on the expectation of future positive worker responses. In hearing Ben out about a process 'improvement' (that Colin knew would not be cost effective), he was gambling his time (and money) that in future, Ben would be more likely to come up with another improvement (that might work). In the TQ training, for example, workers were asked to work in teams to find process improvements. What mattered for Colin, however, appeared to be the development of the habit of innovation rather than the specific process improvements that were identified, some of which were proved unworkable. What Whale was experiencing, was a building of trust through the processes of attitudes reinforcing new behaviours and these slowly becoming habits. In other words the process fits quite nicely with the theory of structuration (actions (re)creating structures), and in accordance with the theory, the central role in this process is that of time. Contrary to the guru texts or the contingency theorists no single action, procedure or system enabled workers to suddenly 'realise' the TQ message and begin acting on it, it was a gradual process by which workers and managers came to trust the new systems and relationships. However, neither were these employees brain-washed though the false ideology as suggested by labour process theorists or totalising discourses of post-modernists. A change in subjectivity had taken place by 1999, and is was created through day-to-day behaviours which are often missed by bundles writers or gurus. These behaviours included stopping to talk and listen, experimenting with innovation, and learning a new style of behaviour. The new habits and attitudes which Colin had hoped would be formed could not have been created if the workers did not

trust management not to ignore their ideas, dictate their work and abuse their identities. This trust was built up slowly, first through the actions of Colin, and then by the actions of team-leaders and management. Each day another idea would have been listened to or acted upon and this was remembered and learned by the workers. Each action that confirmed the workers' hopes also mirrored, supported and created an attitude which the next day would inform the workers' actions. The daily process of actions developing attitudes and attitudes influencing actions gradually engendered a process of change enabled by the building of trust which was manifested in the creation of habitus.

7.2.2 ATP and Firmin

In the previous chapter it was shown how various factors compromised the attempts at Firmin (and to a lesser extent ATP) to affect worker mentalities. However, both companies contained examples, more the exception than the rule, of employees responding to the change agents' exhortations to adopt a TQ style of working. It should also be pointed out that examples were generally confined to the supervisory and managerial tiers of the organisations rather than those at the 'bottom' of the organisational hierarchy. For example, in ATP in early 1996, the engineering manager Dominic, and his assistant Mark were to be found taking the initiative in Len's New Manufacturing Philosophy. Their actions were not simply conforming to the measurable outputs that Len placed so much store on but were also to be found in the day-to-day details of conversing with the workforce, organising their work and taking on responsibilities when they did not have to. Whilst I was typing up my notes in the evenings, Mark was often the only person left in the company (other than the watchman), usually doing work that was useful but unnecessary to his contract, such as creating new

databases or testing new equipment. When asked why, Mark responded: *"Len's right in what he's saying. This place is desperately in need of an overhaul...if we don't get our systems better we may lose the Chrysler contract and without that, we're screwed"*. Whilst Mark, had, according to his colleagues, always been *"very motivated"*, it was not until Len's arrival that he began working hard towards the NMP vision.

In Firmin, I found only one keen enthusiast of Jimmi's reformation, a team leader called Mary. Towards the end of my study, in an interview, Mary stated, *"I can see what he's doing now, and I think it can work too. I want to make this place more efficient because otherwise we'll close"*. This is not to suggest that the situation was static. Before my 1996/7 interviews there were, apparently, instances in both companies where several workers became hopeful of changes in the short term, only to become dissatisfied with the speed of change. Eleanor was one of these workers: *"When he [Jimmi] arrived, a lot of us were excited about the new investment and the changes that were proposed...[but] nothing got done, and if anything, the situation got worse"*. Three things need to be noted here. The first is that these comments usually stressed the importance of necessity (losing the Chrysler contract or the closure of the factory). Like the motivation of a (wo)man being chased by a wild animal, fear can produce (at least short-term) changes in both attitudes and behaviours²⁸. Whether such motivation is sustainable or indeed (morally) desirable is a point which this analysis cannot answer. Secondly, the

²⁸ John Harvey-Jones (1988) for example, shows how statistics were manipulated at ICI to give an impression of crisis in order to create change. Some writers have argued that this response to a crisis is a new form of trust (Mishra, 1996) based upon people 'having' to trust. However, it should be pointed out that the situations where one **has** to trust are, contrary to Layder (1997) very rare. Even where one's life is in danger (e.g. facing surgery) one has a choice. In situations where one genuinely has no choice (e.g. being kidnapped) the phenomena is clearly not trust because one's actions have been forced and the risk is not one taken by choice. Trust in expert systems, such as money, the law and medicine, are usually based upon past experience of these systems and are therefore, to some extent, habitual. As will be argued later, where this habit is not present, angst, rather than trust, should be the expected outcome.

comments focus upon the importance of understanding - does the message make sense, will it work? In the last chapter we argued that for many in these companies the answer was 'no', however, clearly not all humans react the same way, and for Mary, Mark and Dominic, the answer, they believed, was 'yes'. Finally, and most importantly, it seems evident from talking with the colleagues of these workers was that even previous to the attempted changes, they were the most motivated and dedicated of workers. When asked about Mary, her supervisor commented, "*Yes, she's like that, Mary, and always has been. One of the hardest workers we have. She'll do well*". The point here is to avoid the blanket generalisations which plague case-study analyses. Clearly it is both unrealistic and unbelievable to argue that nobody in ATP or in Firmin was motivated or trusted the change agents. However, as these two examples demonstrate, humans are neither predictable nor, often understandable (see, for example, Pollner, 1987 for different responses to organisational conditions). It may be that these workers were motivated simply because they had always been so, and would have acquiesced to any *understandable* programme. An explanation of such exceptions can, however, rarely be made with certainty.

7.3 Enabling factors

So far we have shown that, similar to Mauss' concept of the gift, the building of trust between Colin and his workers necessitated that he himself had to take a risk before they would reciprocate his trust. It is important to note how the process of building trust was relational rather than cognitive. It was a gradual process in which trusting attitudes were reinforced and reciprocated by trusting behaviours. As these developed into 'cultural habits' (Fukuyama, 1995) we can evidence a process similar in manner to that

suggested by structuration theory: the instantiation and reproduction of (cultural) structures through actor attitudes and behaviours. Contrary to writers who assert either attitudes lead to behaviours (or *vice versa*) workers would 'read' managers' attitudes (e.g. the authenticity) through the details of their behaviours. While this presentation may provide a more theoretically informed description of changes in subjectivity it is primarily concerned with the relationships between structures and action rather than a description of the structures themselves. It does not explain, therefore, why employees found themselves reciprocating rather than obstructing Colin's attempts at building trust.

In the last chapter we saw how race, politics, age and capitalism influenced the attitudes of both parties at Firmin and ATP. At Whale it would be surprising if such forces were not equally present in affecting the change process. Accordingly, when rounded up, the usual suspects appear most prominent. One afternoon, for example, I attended a training programme which was aimed at communicating the TQM programme through a series of games, projects and discussions. Although my primary aim was to note the techniques being used and the workers' reaction to the message, I managed to note over two A4 pages of comments concerned with nationalism or gender. One of the main reasons, it was argued, that TQM should be introduced to the UK, was "*to stop more of our companies being taken over by foreigners*". In addition to such xenophobic comments the afternoon was also punctuated with innuendoes, jokes and minor insults aimed at the two females in the room. Whilst British manufacturing is not renowned for its sensitivity in dealing with equality issues, the founder of Whale, Rob, was also not known for his friendliness to overseas competitors as his ownership of a British WWII tank and a tanker painted in the colours of the Union Jack might indicate. These attitudes are still evident in both the company magazine (Tanker Talk) and the pictures and

slogans written on the company's walls. However, to attribute Colin's successes in the workplace to his white, male heritage would be both insulting and untrue. It must be said, however, that such characteristics did him no harm at all as the entire shopfloor were similarly white males and the threat of overseas competition was a useful device in justifying the changes being implemented at Whale. Nor, whilst on the subject of external factors, did Colin's apprenticeship at Rover do his reputation any harm with those on the shopfloor. In direct contrast to Jimmi's reputation as a young, inexperienced MBA graduate, Colin's 'expert' status both confirmed and created an expectation of competence in the eyes of the workers.

The previous point overlaps with the next somewhat - that is, the relationship between the shopfloor and that of capitalism more generally. It has been noted by several commentators on cultural change that fundamental changes to a society, group or organisation are often initiated from forces external to that system (Hatch 1993, Schein 1985, Fox 1982, Casey 1996). With Whale, the case-study outlined earlier makes clear the connections between the changes Colin was attempting to implement and the political structures of deregulation (and the associated process of contracting out), the global structures of trade intensification and the increasing demands from consumers. How then are these seemingly remote and intangible forces utilised in gaining the consent or co-operation of the minds of workers at Whale? The change process at Whale, unlike that at Firmin, placed great store in communicating the necessity of change for the survival of the company. Where Jimmi made threats to withdraw his father's funding, Colin and the trainers he employed made clear the threats and opportunities that lay in store for Whale in the next ten years. The nationalism expressed on the training days was not, therefore, simple jingoism, but instead enabled workers to align their feelings of

patriotism with the long-term future of their company. As one worker pointed out after the first session, “*It makes you want to work harder if you know that its a matter of the country as well as your job*”.

The necessity and inevitability of the TQM programme was underlined by the book, *Sid's Heroes*, which was passed from Colin to his managers and then to the shopfloor, which explained the importance of ‘harnessing the hearts and minds of employees to the collective cause’ (Joynson and Forrester, 1995: 157). Although the book was similar to most other practitioner/guru guides to QM, it was written in a manner easily accessible to those who may not have the patience for *In Search of Excellence*. The book, for those who read it, also provided external validation for the actions of Colin. More importantly, it demonstrated that Colin (in contrast to Jimmi) valued the workforce enough to let them know why changes were being forced upon them. When Colin decided to hire the Sid Joynson team to train the team-leaders and production managers, the urgency and validity of Colin’s TQM message to the workforce was only intensified. This use of consultants differed greatly from their use at ATP and Firmin. The Michelin and Systems 21 consultants at these companies were involved primarily with implementing measurement, tracking and re-engineering systems, not concerned directly with improving morale, motivation and trust, but arguably destroying trust with the measurement and enforcement systems. Even when Len attempted to tackle the ‘soft’ side of the change process with his exhortations to managers to listen and encourage workers he was hamstrung by the lack of support of the owners and his own use of direct power. The use of direct authority by the ATP and Firmin consultants served only to disempower and distance the workers and managers in their respective companies who generally felt more forced than persuaded as to the utility

of the changes. Thus, although the ATP consultants could argue that they had improved productivity, or at least accountability, most of the workforce felt threatened by their presence as previous encounters with consultants had resulted in redundancies or in failure. In circulating copies of *'Sid's Heroes'* (the heroes being the shopfloor workers Sid dealt with) Colin both flattered and prepared his workforce, whilst 'educating' them as to the need for such changes. These actions of Colin are important not just in their immediate effects but because, for many workers, his desire to involve and communicate where Rob would have ordered and imposed was indicative of his good-will and his trustworthiness.

One implication of the TQM project being communicated in terms of nationalism, pride and modernisation was the moral undertone which developed as the project progressed. Whereas previously the 'Whale Way' had primarily been a descriptive term, its association with inefficiency, command and control work methods and the Rob and Aidan era soon made it a term of derision. This phenomenon also took place to a lesser degree at ATP, where Len's New Manufacturing Philosophy was placed upon the right side of an A4 sheet and the 'received tradition' outlined on the left. *"I still hear some people talking to the managers and saying 'you're still on the left side'"*. As such, quality management was increasingly portrayed as 'good' management, and not just in terms of profitability. The association with empowerment, ability and modernisation brought home the message that the new ways of working should be embraced at all costs. The psychological implications for those who could not deal with such a transformation are dealt with more in the next chapter, but for now such emotive persuasion was an effective mechanism for gaining support of many at Whale and at ATP. As the change process proceeded and more people were won round to Colin's way

of thinking, those who refused or could not make the change were increasingly labelled “*incompetent*”, “*dinosaurs*” or “*stick in the mud*”. As with Aidan and Rob, those who could not change left, either voluntarily or otherwise, leaving those who remained with a self-referential belief in their own correctness. Those who were keen to listen, to take and devolve responsibility and to ask others what they thought were perceived as *good* managers, teamleaders or workers.

A final enabling factor in creating change at Whale was Colin’s position in his company as managing director. Unlike Len, who always had to play second fiddle to James and Brian, Colin had the ability to hire, fire, move and train at will. Whilst the lesson of Jimmi demonstrates that this in itself was not enough to create the culture which he wanted, it seems unlikely that Colin could have achieved the extent of the change that he did with out the powers that he possessed. This is especially so if he had been working under Rob. As a new leader he was not bound by his actions in the past or the resulting expectations that people might have of him. Moreover, the position of leader gave him a social standing that someone further down the chain of command may not have commanded.

7.4 Limiting Trust

The ability of Colin, Len and Jimmi to transform their workplaces was, in many respects, as much restricted as it was enabled by external forces. Regardless of internal limitations such as their own ability to make the right decisions, certain factors militated against achieving the degree of subjective co-operation that might be indicated in the

works of the over-socialised camps. These limiting factors can be separated into structural, psychological and social limitations. We shall deal with them in that order.

First, structural. We have seen, in this and the previous chapter, how the nature of 'structures' (race or age for example) can contribute towards the enablement or disablement of the change agent's attempts to win over the hearts and minds of their workforce. However, what is equally important is that even in the best of worlds (for the MD that is), these forces are never in complete congruence. Both legislation (e.g. the Working Time Directive) and economic circumstance (e.g. economic cycles), at this time, prevents the worker being subsumed within the workplace completely, and thus being completely at the mercy of capitalist ideology. The fluctuations in the product market would necessitate slumps in demand at some point for Whale (1996-7), Firmin (1987-1998) and ATP (1989-97) and, therefore, periods of at best doubt and worry and at worst redundancies for workers. Such instabilities were uniform across the case studies and were not conducive to the establishment of 'habit' that has been shown to be so important to the creation of trust and changes to subjectivity. Although none of the companies were accountable to their shareholders, and were therefore, saved the more extreme forms of short-termism it was noticeable in all three companies that their change programmes cost considerable sums of money. Whilst none of the change agents wanted to put a figure on the costs of implementing new systems, all were agreed that ("*for the bank manager's sake*") the level investment could not be continued without relatively short-term returns.

Despite the considerable inroads capitalist mechanisms have made into our social, cultural and even intellectual lives, the persuasiveness of capitalist power in

manipulating subjectivity is limited by the existence of other equally powerful social forces. Let us take, for example, Colin's attempts to incorporate worker subjectivity into the workplace. Despite what many personnel managers and guru writers might consider a success, few on the shopfloor would willingly stay behind at work often if they were not being paid for it. Most workers had other callings which they felt were of equal, if not greater, importance than the workplace. One example is that of the family. Many, in interviews, would speak affectionately of their families, their partners and their children. Although the need for resources was an enabling factor in terms of the power Colin possessed, it also meant for many of the workers a divided loyalty in terms of the time and effort that they were prepared to spend in the workplace. One of the most valued 'perks' which was reduced as the available money at Whale diminished was the Christmas party, as one worker recounted, *"When Rob was here they had the money to have a big Christmas party and they would invite all the wives. After all we wouldn't be able to work if it wasn't for them supporting us. Now we're sent off with £15 each in our teams and our wives aren't paid for"*. Even if these medium-sized companies possessed the finance of those multi-nationals who could pay for family healthcare, celebrations and holidays, the need to spend time away from the workplace is always going to be a drain on the potential leverage a managing director can muster. Many other conflicts of structure could be evidenced within the three workplaces that were studied. Flirting, affairs, smoking breaks, lunch breaks, sickies, holidays, the minimum wage are all examples of either social, biological or psychological systems impacting on the labour process²⁹. In attempting to align worker subjectivity to the best interests of capitalism the managing director is limited by these other forces and their pull on 'his' workforce.

²⁹ Descriptions of these have, for this thesis, been used only when they affect the development of trust or distrust. Much industrial sociology, for example, provides the details of how more static systems are

Indeed, the existence of these structures is one reason why the managing director can never trust the workforce completely, to do so would be to ignore the other social structures which are recreated in human action. One implication of this distrust is, as Fox pointed out, its reciprocation by the workforce. This is especially so as the workers interviewed at all sites appeared acutely aware of the precarious nature of their employment. The publicity attracted by other companies in the West Midlands (the best example being Rover and its pitiful 'jobs for life' scheme) did little to foster the trust of the workforce in the claims of charismatic consultants or change agents.

There are good reasons, also, for believing that the control of human subjectivity is more tricky than Sewell and Wilkinson (1992) or Peters and Waterman (1982) might suggest. First, as we have seen, in creating new behaviours and attitudes time is an essential enabler of habits. The 'traces of memory' that people build up enables them to trust enough to act. Thus, under Rob Beran, the workers knew that if they followed orders, avoided creativity and had fun Rob would generally neither sack nor shout at them. Similarly, after months or years of experience the worker would trust that their pay check would arrive, that the factory would be in the same place and their ability to handle dangerous machinery would be adequate. Whilst this trust can be destroyed fairly easily, the creation of new habits of behaviour and attitude is something that could not be achieved without lengthy effort. Thus, in getting people to reject the 'Whale Way' and the 'Received Tradition' Colin and Len could not simply give out a set of new orders and expect the workers to immediately trust in the new methods. Instead, Colin has had to invest three years of his own patience, trust and time in allowing his workers to build up

produced and reproduced through fiddles (see, for example, Fox, 1974).

new habits by which they could act without fearing damage to their identities. This is why it was easier for Colin as a new manager to implement his philosophy than it was for Rob to do the same. As Rob admitted, *“I have learned my tricks and I’m either too old, or too proud, to change my ways. I doubt if anybody would believe me anyway...we needed someone new who could introduce new ways to Whale”*. This quote also demonstrates both the centrality of time in fossilising habit (*“too old”*), but also the importance of these habits in determining attitudes and identities (*“too proud” to change*).

In her book *Witness for the Prosecution*, Agatha Christie pointed out ‘curious things, habits. People themselves never knew they had them’. It is perhaps this thought that has supported most of the over-socialised approaches to the study of humans and change. What separates the workers at Whale from Pavlov’s dog or Skinner’s baby is not simply the non-capitalist structures at play in their lives but also their ability to reflect upon the forces affecting them. Many of those shopfloor workers I questioned in all three case-studies possessed an acute awareness of the global forces that were at work in their company (for example, overseas competitors or economic conditions). Indeed, this thesis may not have been possible without the sensibilities and insights of those workers who gave up their time to discuss their thoughts with me. As traced in the previous chapter, it was only when workers were refused consultation, explanation or communication that their inquisitiveness became replaced by instrumentality. However, as others have pointed out, it is unreasonable and unrealistic to expect that all humans will possess the same degree of reflexivity. In studying the responses to survivors after ‘down-sizing’, Mishra and Spreitzer (1998) show how the differing responses of people often depend on their own levels of trust. Others, such as Casey (1995), Du Gay (1996), Thompson and

McHugh (1995: 334) and Pollner (1987) show how workers, even within the same company, will have differing responses that are often dependent on the ability of self-awareness.

Finally and consequently, if the concept of trust is linked to the possibilities for changes in task identification or subjectivity, the inconsistencies inherent within capitalism necessitate partial failure in achieving this goal. Trust, as a social, individual and personal phenomenon must always be set against the knowledge of the worker that regardless of personal ties, Colin (and any other MD) is, arguably, an agent of capital, who has power over them. Regardless of the friendly banter on the shopfloor and talk of mutual respect, the ability to implement new systems and to use direct, indirect or ideological controls must, in the last resort, be grounded in Colin's power over 'his' employees³⁰. Ostensibly, Colin's approach allowed workers to develop meaning from the work as the formal system of targets, orders and procedures was relaxed. The trust they began to develop was, at least partially, in response to the trust Colin placed in them by loosening the traditional measurement and control systems in Whale. *"The problem with that"*, a production manager informed me when production was hitting a low in 1996, *"is that there's only so long you can do that for. If this [poor sales and efficiency] keeps up he'll start kicking my ass, and I'll start kicking theirs"*. Even when the order books were full and productivity was soaring, one of the more cynical, older workers in the company pointed out, *"At the end of the day, he [his manager] is in charge.. All this friendly, friendly business is only done because he has to. If Colin hadn't come along he'd still be a taskmaster"*. For many, then, the informal and personal nature of the new

³⁰ Even ideological power presumes preferred access to the mechanisms that create this power.

systems of working was set against the formal rules and systems which ensured that the division of labour remained intact. Colin's power as managing director and his need to ensure the profitability of Whale placed constraints upon his actions that were over and above any passing programme of changes that might be implemented. Although the company survived the low period of 1996/7 by spreading work thinly and cutting back hours generally, a longer period may have resulted in more redundancies and perhaps the cessation of the TQM programme with its associated costs in training. Related to this was the realisation by some workers that this system of involvement and participation was paradoxical in its origin as strategic top-down decision based on expected benefits to profitability and performance. Correspondingly, by the time the research period was finishing in 1999, there were indications that some of the workforce had begun to feel betrayed by the system in which they were working. One worker pointed out, *"One of the suggestions that we put forward to improve efficiency was to bring some of the parts which we use closer to the workstation, so to provide a 'satellite store'. The idea was that this would save the walk up to the main stores every time we wanted something. To be honest, I miss that walk now. It was nice to get out and get some fresh air a couple of times a day"*. Another argued, *"I don't think a lot of the men realised that the ideas they were coming up with would mean they were working harder. They got so carried away with the TQM training, that they didn't see the bad side of it"*. Whilst few of these workers felt they were 'conned' into coming up with these suggestions, an underlying dissatisfaction with the processes that had resulted in them losing their 'walk' might do the encouragement of further suggestions no favours.

However, much as it would be tempting to leave the case with a work intensification message or to hint at dark forces of exploitation at work under the veneer

of TQM systems, the simplification would not do justice to the reality. Any argument of intensification or exploitation must, in the final analysis, incorporate an understanding of who is defining such value-laden terms and the extent to which they are dependent on workers' subjective experience. The message that management were there to support the workforce was, given the corroboration of action, beginning to be believed by some. In Whale, the workers' perceptions of their own worth, power and influence *were* slowly changing, and any definition of exploitation must take this into account³¹. Moreover, the perception of Colin was not one of a slave to profit, in that it was believed he had a choice of possible strategies open to him, from BPR and restructuring to doing nothing. His eventual decision to bring in TQM in the form he did was, for many, a reflection of his personality and thus another reason why he could be trusted more than say, Aidan. *"I have to say"* commented a teamleader, *"compared to what he **could** have done to this company, a lot of us feel we got off very lightly"*.

7.5 Conclusions

Following the theoretical framework in arguing that meaningful action is impossible without trust, this chapter has attempted to show that in practice the incorporation of worker subjectivity into these workplaces can only be attempted if trust is built simultaneously. The transformation we have traced has been one which was enabled first by the cognitive assessment of Colin's intentions and abilities, and second by his personal relationship with the shopfloor. Through the examination of this personal relationship, it has been shown that the development of trust is dependent on a reciprocal

³¹ For a related discussion see Wilmott (1993), Legge (1998) and the excellent book by Robert Pirsig, 'Lila' (1992).

and gradual system in which new experience leads to new habits of action and attitude. As such, this trusting relationship is one which connects with Giddens' notion of trust (especially facework trust). Contrary to many contingent and guru writers, the process of building trust is not dependent upon the introduction of new systems, procedures or policies. The central enabling factor in this process is the hard-to-measure, intangible facets of behaviour which both workers and managers use to infer the intentions of the other party. Again, echoing the studies of Batstone et al. (1978), Armstrong et al. (1981) and Burawoy (1979), it is these behaviours, taking the time to listen, acting on another's suggestion, communicating for the sake of respect rather than efficiency which best indicate (and reproduce) the attitudes which are central to the building of trust and trustworthiness. It is for this reason that in attempting to elicit these behaviours from his managers and shopfloor staff, Colin eased off the formal procedural controls in an attempt to encourage workers to develop new knowledge and new habits.

Although the development of such a relationship takes place on personal and often psychological terms, it is also tempered by both social and structural systems. Social, in that each employee both reflexively and subconsciously is affected by the attitudes, experiences and behaviours of those around him or her. Structural, because workers are also influenced by their sex, race, age and social habits as well as more immediate concerns such as product demand, economic cycles and short-termism. Thus, attempts to align subjectivity with the work effort are both hampered and enabled by social and structural influences. Contrary to the alarmists in the labour process camp or the pessimists in the postmodernist field, it would be wrong to argue that the socialisation that took place on the shopfloor at Whale was primarily of the insidious and subconscious form suggested by Orwell's *1984*, Huxley's *Brave New World*, or even

Pavlov's poor dog. Throughout the process of change, workers retained a reflexivity and an awareness of the internal and external structures affecting their actions and attitudes. However, we cannot veer too far the other way and argue that changes in behaviour were instrumental or merely 'acting out' - the existence of reflexivity and the tendency to form habits in both attitudes and behaviours allow a partial incorporation of both perspectives. The tendency for humans to build habit out of trust and to build identities out of habit is ultimately tempered and limited by the human trait of reflexivity.

Finally, we need to stress here that whilst parallels have been drawn between trust and distrust, the process we have been examining is not that of trust, but of the *building* of trust. As such the process implies change, the disruption of habit and the questioning of established assumptions and values. Although many writers have dealt with trust and distrust, fewer have dealt with the processes of building trust and the implications of change *itself* (as opposed to a TQ/HR/BPR change) on the subjectivity of the worker. It is to this that we now turn.

8. Angst

'Mad as it sounds, I felt an amount of security having cancer, I knew where I was'.
(John Diamond - 16th June, 1999. Inside Story, BBC1)

8.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters it has been argued that both trust and distrust are not, contrary to Fox and others, bi-polarities. On the contrary, they are actually rather similar: both are formed by experience and knowledge which, in turn, leads to an expectation of future action by others (in this case line-managers, management and the organisation). Trust and distrust are also analogous in that once they have developed (distrust primarily through cognitive processes and trust through relational processes) the attitudes are reproduced by actions, which can eventually form habits, which in turn provide individuals with 'ontological security'. In other words both trust and distrust, once established, eventually allow individuals to undertake every-day actions without reflexively considering the implications of those actions. For example, in the previous two chapters, the responses given by workers to questions concerning why things were done *that way*, were usually met with surprise that they could be done any other way. However, many studies of TQM which take a snapshot of organisational life, or are based upon statistical evidence, miss the fact that cultural change is a psychological and physical *process*. As such, cases of cultural change are either viewed as unproblematic (the over-socialised perspective) or as impossible (the under-socialised view). This chapter explores the empty space between these two perspectives, where neither trust nor distrust are evident. It argues that in cases where the organisation has required that habits, work-place identities, or cultural attitudes change, it is sometimes possible to

evidence a sense of loss, bewilderment and psychological stress in those who are at the centre of this process. Often this period is transitory as new habits, meanings and perspectives are learned and understood (trust) or where the new message is rejected, treated with suspicion or 'acted out' (distrust). However, in a few sad cases where loss of identity, status and routine is consistently encouraged by line managers, the stress has become bad enough to cause (from their own perspective) resignations, breakdowns, nervous disorders and depression, at least for the period of this study. This phenomenon, it is argued, is what Giddens means when he suggests that the opposite to trust is angst. This chapter first examines the three cases, eliciting evidence for the existence and nature of angst. Second, it attempts to construct a higher level understanding of what angst is and how it works, arguing that roles that are not suited to task disassociation most experience the condition. Finally, it examines how these experiences fit with other empirical work, not just in organisational studies but also in anthropology, psychology and biology. Finding congruence between these fields on the nature of this phenomenon, the chapter finally relates this evidence back to existentialist philosophy and finds that there are both considerable benefits but also some drawbacks to using the term 'angst' to describe the phenomenon.

Following the contextualisation of 'angst' outlined in the Theoretical Framework, this chapter uses existentialist literature to understand the experience of anxiety but does so in the context of Giddens' sociological connection between trust and angst. The chapter does not, therefore, present angst as a necessary part of the human condition and thus (hopefully) avoids the charge of essentialism that might be aimed at such an analysis. The previous chapters have already suggested that habit and ontological security are the usual states of 'being' that most employees experience in either trust or

distrust. This chapter, therefore, seeks to understand both the structural and personal phenomena of when trust or distrust are disrupted, and examines the organisational conditions which lead to the experience of the condition of angst. As we shall see, the overlap between existentialist philosophy and Giddensian theories both of trust and of structuration is considerable. More importantly there is also considerable corroboration with organisational theories concerning cultural change and psychological contracts, notions of 'acting out', and the attitude versus behaviour and labour process versus postmodernist debates.

8.2 The cases

In analysing the cases it would be difficult to attempt any quantification to prove which case created the most stress and anxiety for workers and managers. Indeed, even if such a measurement was possible, the causes and experiences are of such a idiosyncratic and personal nature that such measurements would prove incomparable anyway. In illustrating the causal links between environments and emotional states, however, the presentation of examples case by case will help illustrate the context of the studies. Such a presentation shows clearly that middle management are among those worst affected by changes, either because of their inability to withdraw their identities from their everyday tasks (allowing them to distrust) or because the inconsistencies within the change programme do not allow them to feel that their identities are secure (allowing them to trust). For many of the other hierarchical positions, experience of stress or anxiety was either a transitory phenomenon before trusting or distrusting or was cause enough to leave the organisation and get a similar job.

8.2.1 Firmin

As we have seen previously, the nature of the change process at Firmin was generally characterised by a tendency for workers to distrust the promises of Jimmi and to withdraw their co-operation through a process of 'resistance through distance' (Collinson, 1992). However, as concerns our present analysis, two exceptions should be highlighted. The first concerns the reaction to the redundancies which were announced by Jimmi in 1998 and the second is the difficulty many of those in (especially middle) management had in coping with the changes to their authority.

Even before Jimmi arrived at the factory, the workers at Firmin had considerable experience working in a power-orientated, bureaucratic, top-down system. In the previous twenty years the senior management, still remembered for their direct manner, had closed one of the sites they owned and made several people redundant. In other words, neither the management nor the workers in the plant has unrealistic expectations of Jimmi based upon the behaviour of the previous owners. When Jimmi arrived at Firmin he was treated as sceptically as the MD previous to him. However, although we have seen that such cynicism and distancing could do much to minimise damage to the workers' identities, it could do little to prevent any job losses or pay cuts that Jimmi might deem necessary. In the initial months of the new consultants coming into the company Jimmi was asked three times by workers to confirm that there would be no redundancies in the factory, and three times he promised that there would be none. Two days after the last announcement, however, fifteen people were made redundant. The shock waves that went through the factory were not so much caused by the redundancies themselves but by the failure of Jimmi to keep his word. *"It's difficult to put into words*

what it was like at the time", commented one worker, "*no-one could believe it. If you can't believe the word of the person you work for then what can you believe in?*". One manager also picked upon the atmosphere at the time, "*everyone was in a state of shock, and I can't blame them. It just happened, just like that. People were like, had they're heads cut off, they couldn't do anything*". Even Jimmi commented that for a while afterwards he allowed mistakes on the shopfloor to go unpunished.

An interesting parallel was made by Emma, a woman who recently had a crate of metal fittings fall from a stack and pin her to the floor - she was lucky to escape with her life: "*In some ways it was a bit like that accident. I was just very stunned. That day was very quiet, nobody said much really. It all seemed very unfair and undermined a lot of people here*". The shock however, was fairly short-lived: "*after that people were really...resentful, some of them got angry about it but I said, 'well there's nothing that we can do is there?'*". One of the workers whose wife was made redundant remarked, "*I thought that's it. Sod you if that's your attitude. Even under Bill [the old MD] you would pull your finger out sometimes, but I thought well, that's it*". The pattern was the same with many of the workers I spoke to - initial bewilderment, shock and denial, followed by anger. Eventually, for many employees, the resulting attitude was one confirming, or even strengthening, their original stance of distrust and uncooperative behaviour.

A example of similar behaviour involves one of the production managers, Gareth. Although there were many other instances of anxiety (especially in middle management) at Firmin, Gareth became best known to me because of his role as my 'gate-keeper' to Firmin. The three years over the period 1996-9 (during my period of study) evidenced a serious deterioration in Gareth's health, which most believed was due

to Jimmi's efforts at forcing him into resignation. Jimmi himself hinted during interviews that there was no love lost between himself and this manager. He believed, contrary to many workers, that Gareth was not up to the job of managing. However, as more consultants came to Firmin and computerisation took over many of the tasks which he was responsible for, Gareth was placed under increasing pressure by Jimmi. When I first entered Firmin, Gareth was the first employee to meet me. A friendly man, Gareth organised all of my interviews for me, gave me all the documents I asked for and allowed me considerable access to his 'insider' knowledge of Whale. Although he told me a few stories of Jimmi kicking his door open or shouting at him, he did not seem unduly bothered. Over the next year, however, Gareth's stories increasingly moved away from incidents of Jimmi losing his temper to examples in which either his status, job or pride were affected. Jimmi, for example, left a message in Gareth's untidy office saying 'sort this out or I'll sort you out'. The embarrassment for Gareth was that 'everybody saw it' and indeed the story was recounted to me by people other than Gareth as an example of Jimmi's management style³². Gareth was moved to a smaller office and had some of his duties stripped away from him. Consultants were increasingly taken to reorganising his systems without consulting him. It became evident both to Gareth, and more importantly (in terms of his pride and identity) to everybody else, that Jimmi aimed to force him to resign by increasing the pressure on him. Indeed, in 1999, a stray document found its way onto Gareth's desk in which his name was mentioned as a future redundancy on grounds of competence. Unlike the shopfloor workers, Gareth could not withdraw from his job because as a manager he had *"to make that extra effort. It has to mean something because everything I do is ...proactive"*. Resistance through distance

³² Friends from Taiwan have since commented that such public humiliation would not have been unusual in Jimmi's home country. Again, what was perceived as 'unfair' practice in Firmin is tempered by national

was not an option for Gareth, but at the same time, he could not trust in a future which he was increasingly certain would not exist in Firmin.

The situation deteriorated further when several of his co-managers in production were either replaced by consultants, made redundant or taken off sick. In total eight (half) of the middle management tier in production either eventually left or were replaced. The result was increased stress and anxiety. Gareth's physical appearance deteriorated and in our conversations and interviews he became increasingly prone to twitches, stuttering and sweating. One of his peers commented, "*he [Jimmi] gave him a new job description saying what he would be doing. Very hit and miss. I don't know for certain but I'm sure he [Gareth] was quite mad [insane]. They are unsure what is going to happen next*". Gareth was asked by Jimmi to put some of his informal knowledge into writing, presumably as a prelude to a redundancy notice. His refusal to co-operate only served to make Jimmi increasingly angry. Towards the end of my study period Gareth began to tell me about all the other job offers that he had received from other companies, how Firmin would fall apart without him and how Jimmi would probably leave before the end of the year. Whether these were hopes, fantasies or exaggerations is hard to tell, but sometimes the stories became so unbelievable that the interviews became awkward to conduct. One of the team-leaders who worked under Gareth commented, "*the chap is sitting there now not knowing what is going on..I'm not surprised the state he's in. The rest of us just think 'well - here by the grace of god'*". The public loss of status and (male?) identity as a manager was more than Gareth could stand. Had the assault not gone on for as long, or had it been more understandable, it is possible that the affects

culture.

may not have been so bad - it is hard to know. When I last phoned the company and asked to speak to him I was told that he was not with Firmin any more. Whether he resigned or was made redundant is really not important as the processes involved would be practically indistinguishable.

Such examples do not take place in a vacuum. The fear felt by one person can often be transmuted to others in the same group³³. Even after it was clear that some of the people made redundant would have to be re-employed for efficiency's sake, several managers and team leaders commented on the fearful atmosphere in the place, and the difficulties of not knowing *"that there isn't another list with your name on it"*. Compounding this was the clear disparity between what they were being told to be and what they could be, *"it's all very well saying that we should listen to those working here and making sure we feed back to them, but when Jimmi is shouting at you because this order hasn't even been started you, well, drop everything and start shouting at people"*. This is especially so as the example set by Jimmi was so different from the kind of manager he wanted, *"it's like, do what I say not what I do"*. The lack of training in any time-management or TQM skills for either the shopfloor or management did not serve to make their tasks any easier. The resulting confusion and mixed signals usually served to encourage managers and team-leaders to avoid any contact with Jimmi. Even those skilled shopfloor workers (who worked on specialist metal work) who should have been most secure in their jobs were worried about the 'unknown' aspects of the change programme, *"we're still in this 'we don't know position'...not everybody can handle that. Something's got to give"*. Another pointed out, *"I haven't got a clue what*

management are doing - we don't know what the hell is going on", whilst his friend interrupted, *"it's very disheartening, there's a lot of unmotivated people out there"*. A few months later, the same friend commented, *"there's quite a bit of despondency on the shopfloor, with supervisors there's a bit of 'oh shit, what's happening now?!'"*.

8.2.2 Whale

The change effort at Whale would probably be termed 'more successful' than the other companies' by most unitarist writers. Productivity, efficiency, sales and even arguably worker motivation all improved. However the transformation was not smooth, and in terms of the changes in subjectivity that took place, the process produced similar emotional descriptions to those found in Firmin. Again, two examples should serve to highlight the difficulties workers and managers faced in making the transition. The first is a general examination of the problems caused by asking workers and managers to change their approach to their jobs. The second is a more detailed examination of Aidan, the production director, and his responses to this challenge to his identity.

Whale differs from Firmin in that most of its employees eventually embraced the TQM programme and did not adopt a 'resistance through distance' approach to prevent damage to their identities. However, a longitudinal view of the organisation shows that this transition was somewhat easier for (many of) those on the shopfloor than it was for many of the middle management and team leaders. For those workers who had joined Whale under Rob Beran, the experience was likened to having 'your arms chopped off'.

³³ Interestingly, animal experiments at the University of Chicago (Stein et al., 1960) found a similar reaction in dogs, i.e. when one in a group shows signs of anxiety, others follow suit, even if their own

The resulting expectation of workers was that they would obey unquestioningly the orders of the line managers, who in turn would obey the orders of Rob (and Aidan). When Colin introduced TQM to the shopfloor, some workers did report confusion, *"It was a bit strange at first because we didn't know if we could trust him, you know, that he meant it [i.e. the TQM systems] because a lot of people had been saying that kind of thing for a while. A lot of people didn't really understand what he was talking about because they were not used to that kind of thinking. Some thought it was going to mean job cuts"*. Here, the implications of uncertainty in Whale are evident - if they don't know or understand what is happening workers often fear the worst. Over time, however, it became clear what the TQM programme would comprise. The TQM training programme both made it clear that Colin was serious, emphasised the reasons why Colin believed TQM was necessary in Whale and provided workers and managers with the problem-solving skills required. It helped that many of the workers felt the old system constrained them: *"Most people here"*, one welder commented, *"have wanted to have more say in the job for ages. When you see management doing something wrong it makes your hair stand on end - but you could never say nothing or else..."*. This is not to say, though, that the workers were unanimous in their gradual acceptance of the programme. Tim, one of the blasters, found the idea that he would be asked for his opinions quite upsetting, *"I want a leader you see. I'm too old, I suppose, to learn new ways. I've always had somebody telling me what to do and that's the way it should be. Managers should do the thinking and we should work. You can't make someone a manager by giving them training: it's genetic"*. Tim was fortunate, in that his work as a blaster meant that he was usually isolated and left to his own devices. Others on the shopfloor were not

situations are not precarious.

so lucky. *“There are a hard core of ten to fifteen workers”*, Colin pointed out in 1998, *“who are not interested in the programme at all and don’t want to go on the training: at the end of the day they either co-operate or we will make them go...”*. Indeed several of these workers did eventually leave the company. One spoke to me about four months before he left, *“I’m not paid to think and I don’t see why I should have to worry about this improvement or that improvement when I’m not paid for it. It just means more stress and I’d rather not bother”*. In general, however, these workers were the exception to the rule. After an initial period of doubt, fear and confusion most shopfloor workers settled into the new way of work, aided by the training and the increasingly receptive and encouraging team-leaders.

It was the team-leaders and the management team, however, who found the transition most difficult. The previous management style in Whale was very much geared around power, direct control and chains of command. *“To listen to a different viewpoint was tantamount to weakness unless that person was higher up than you”* remarked a training consultant whom Whale employed, *“most of them [management] found the idea that they should encourage participation a challenge at a most personal level”*. In other words, the identity of management was very much orientated around telling people what to do. This is why Rob Beran got so angry about *“a man in my position”* being taken to a Industrial Tribunal by a worker. For many managers the TQM project represented a contradiction in their working lives: whilst they could be convinced that a change was necessary to improve productivity and efficiency (which after all was seen as their responsibility as managers), the mechanisms for producing this change would reduce their authority and power. Yet, regardless of rhetoric, the change was being imposed from above - without the authority of Colin, no-one would have changed anything. These

fears were confirmed when the number of team-leaders was reduced and Aidan was persuaded to leave. The psychological effects on the middle-management and team leader tier were noticed by many workers. One of my notes shows, 'Phil [the team-leader in the paint-shop] appears almost paranoid about my presence in the factory. He almost seems over keen to prove what a good manager he is. This fits with what Dave was saying about him jumping to whatever tune Aidan called. I think he's convinced I'm checking him out for Colin'. This fear in the middle management structure was commented upon by other workers who believed that "*management were caught with their trousers down*", and that "*they are finding it hard to adjust to the changes*". Eventually, most managers who had expressed doubts, criticisms or stress as a result of the changes eventually settled into a pattern of co-operation and pro-activity as the new ways of conducting their jobs became more familiar. However the process was one that was exploratory and sometimes stressful. One of the production managers commented that "*it's almost like being a kid again, you have to learn new ways and at the beginning you're not sure if they will work or not. After a while though you get used to it, like your parents...coming home when you think they won't, and there's not that much to worry about*". Another commented that he'd "*never really thought about what I was doing before, I think it was habit more than anything. Stuff you pick up when you arrive. Now it's changing you have to think about what you are doing and why you are doing it. That's quite difficult...*".

Aidan was one of the managers who found it difficult if not impossible to adopt the mind-set of the TQM programme. Originally a close family friend of Rob, Aidan began working on the shopfloor at Whale during his holidays whilst doing his degree (in tree-surgery). The patronage of the MD allowed him to rise rapidly though the company

to the position of production director, a post which many felt he was unable to adequately fulfil. During his twenty year period in the company Aidan adopted many of the characteristics of Rob as a forceful, dictatorial and sometimes arrogant manager. The contradictions for Aidan though led many of his managers to comment that they actually felt quite sorry for him, *"I don't think he was up to the job and I think he knew it to be honest"*, commented one peer (once Aidan had left), *"he had no self-confidence"*. The fact that Colin had been made MD had, some commented, been hard for him to handle. In the interviews and chats I had with Aidan, however, a confusing picture emerged. The problem, he argued, was not with his style but with other people's perception of his manner, *"I have a frustration with one's perceived style. Twenty years' experience of being on the old structure and now that it's changed is very difficult...I have struggled with the perception of the self not changing I think I am behaving differently...I'm having trouble being believed that I have changed"*. However, in all of our conversations, his own reconstruction of himself was very different from the comments of others. He told me, for example, that *"I started sweeping the floor on weekends and holidays...I then started full-time building trucks for two years... [Whale] was a fun place. We were always busy, there was a lot of frustration, hassle, almost anger I suppose, banging on the table et cetera... it didn't actually suit my personality but it did allow me to grow under it. I came from there [indicates the shopfloor] and I want to be part of that. The only difference between me and them is that I might've worked harder...I think people want to have someone in charge, I think they want me to be direct, someone important, and I refuse to join in that way I suppose"*. These interviews also had a rather unpleasant tone about them which my notes at the time reveal, 'Very strange..I didn't like that interview at all. He [Aidan] was very edgy and almost challenging me to contradict him. I think he's quite insecure, either about his own

position or his ability, but he appeared very uncomfortable'. Aidan, who was having a hard enough time coming to terms with his own position in Whale, was made no less insecure by the TQM programme under the stewardship of Colin, whose power removed some of Aidan's own hope, if not identity.

It would be too neat a representation of Whale's workers to suggest that they followed a phenomenological version of Lewin's (1958) unfreeze, move, refreeze model of change (with refreeze dependent on trust or distrust). One reason for this is that Whale never entirely refroze. The internal dynamics of the Whale change programme represented one cause of unease for the workforce, but it became increasingly clear (towards the end of my period of study) that some workers realised that their condition was not stable. One worker commented that "*once the dust has settled, I think we are working harder*", some missed the informal and jovial nature of work under Rob or their daily walks to pick up spare parts. The problem of whom to blame for this more ephemeral malaise was difficult. Colin couldn't be blamed because he was ensuring the survival of Whale (and thus their jobs). Although the most common scape-goat was the foreigner ("*over there [China] they'll work for a bowl of rice. I wouldn't let their stuff into the country - it's all crap anyway*"). However, this was never said with much conviction, nor (when pressed) much belief. The future was, therefore, not something that could be trusted because it depended on forces outside the control of company. It seemed that whilst this could be bracketed away during stable years, the power and implications of this spectral dynamic could provide an underlying anxiety in periods of change. The oft-quoted statement of the union leader Ron Todd ("*3 million unemployed, 23 million scared to death*") appears an apt description of the underlying anxieties of such a position.

8.2.3 ATP

Although in interviews, Len, the production director at ATP, stressed the ‘total’ of the total quality management scheme he was implementing, the change programme was more geared towards management and team leader positions than it was to the shopfloor. Even by the time the research had been completed, the company still did not have a training budget for the shopfloor and most of the workforce that were interviewed had little knowledge of Len’s vision or its practical implications. Although I witnessed many workers being asked for solutions to problems or encouraged to contribute to the suggestion scheme, the lack of feedback from management meant that motivation was quickly lost. As one team-leader put it, “*people make suggestions and nothing’s done - they get disillusioned and they keep their mouths shut. This lot only suggest something so many times and then* [raises middle finger]”. The paltry bonus and their (perceived) lack of pay meant that the shopfloor became sceptical and distrustful of the TQM espoused by their line managers. After one manager asked an irritated worker how he ‘felt’ about the bonus, a sarcastic reply came, “*I feel they’re [management] all a bunch of tossers, how do you feel about that?*”. The implication being that the touchy feely side to TQM was simply a window dressing for a regime of cost-cutting. It did not help the transmission of the quality message that many of the line-managers at ATP (as at Firmin and Whale) were themselves confused as to what was expected of them.

For many of the managers at ATP the most obvious inconsistency in the message which they had been given was the contradiction between Len’s exhortations to listen, feedback, encourage and delegate and the constant pressure he exerted for higher

production and greater efficiency. Their attempts to elicit proactivity and co-operation from the shopfloor were not helped by Len's slashing of overtime and interventionist approach on the shopfloor. A good example of the results of these inconsistencies is Ray, one of the production managers under Kevin. Ray had it made very clear to him, by both Len and his own manager Kevin, that his department was lagging behind what was expected in terms of efficiency, turnaround and production targets. In addition to this, the TQM message of Len was beginning to become internalised in that Ray, in interviews, perceived involvement, upward communication, and team-based problem solving to be important in solving the quality problems of the department. That the two did not appear to be compatible was, for Ray, a problem of his own making. On asking if I could talk to the men in his department, he included in his answer an appeal for me to keep my eyes open on what the men thought of his approach to management, whether he could do it any better and why he had not been getting the results that Len wanted. Ray had been reading various TQM guru books and had been convinced by the message the writers were proposing that Len had adopted a similar creed served only to strengthen Ray's fervour for the ideal. He was, however, constantly frustrated by the failure of his efforts to improve much on the shopfloor. This failure was of course better known because of the improved measurement systems which Len had been putting in place. Ray followed a similar downward trajectory to that of Gareth in Firmin. His health had deteriorated considerably and the threats of Len made it clear that he would lose his job if things did not improve. Naturally, this did little to improve Ray's mental health - over the course of the year, according to those working around him, he became increasingly prone to clinical depression. His dismissal in September 1998 came as little shock to those around him, who pointed out that "*he would have left soon enough anyway*".

Other managers attempting to adopt Len's TQM philosophy did so with more success than Ray. However, their progress was not easy and a period of instability was felt by most managers who I spoke to (apart from Len). Many, before adopting the language, techniques and attitudes which loosely conformed to Len's New Manufacturing Philosophy confided that they felt at a loss or felt confusion. One manager commented that, *"in some ways it was a kick in the teeth for him to come here and tell us that we had been doing it wrong all this time. I can see what he was saying now, but it undermines your confidence to have somebody saying that you've done it all wrong"*. Another confirmed this view arguing that, *"a lot of them [team-leaders] were confused, either because they didn't have the right skills for the job or didn't have the confidence to believe that they could challenge management"*. Although this initial period of shock was, for many, not one that lasted long, some found the new systems very different from the old. Most managers found that they could not retreat into a state of formal compliance as many of those underneath them had appeared to do. Len's ever-watchful eye made clear distinctions between those managers who were *"still on the left"* and those who were good (i.e. on the right) managers. Those who fell short on either production measures or on their management skills were berated, cajoled and threatened, thus adding further to the stress they were experiencing. Several team-leaders left ATP during this period, citing either low pay or increased stress as their primary reason for doing so.

8.3 Analysis

The examples cited above paint a picture different in substance from many of the over-socialised or under-socialised texts. Instead of blaming work-intensification as the

primary cause of workplace stress, they illustrate how the relationship of trust and angst provides an explanation of how change can produce increased stress, anxiety and even ill-health. Any 'objective' measurement of work intensification will not necessarily match the phenomenological experience of stress. The cases show how those who are unable to retreat into a state of distrust or formal compliance during periods of change (especially managers), or indeed those who are beginning to accept and trust the TQM message, can experience feelings of *"loss"*, *"being undermined"*, *"having their heads cut off"*, *"shock"*, *"disbelief"*, *"confusion"*, *"bewilderment"*, *"fear"*, *"despondency"*, *"betrayal"*, *"stress"*, *"worry"* and *"insecurity"*. Usually, these feelings would be temporary, and would lessen gradually as either trust, new habits and familiarity would build, or, alternatively, distrust and scepticism would grow. Had the methodology been a snapshot (rather than longitudinal) or less sensitive to feelings (as opposed to behaviours) it may well have failed to uncover the extent and nature of their existence. Although it is no breakthrough to suggest that change can lead to stress, the positing of angst and trust as opposing processes allows an examination of how the subjective experiences of the workforce are related to the structural and organisational conditions which enable them. However, now that such feelings have been made evident in the cases, what sense can be made of them? What do they say about how humans fit into the changing work environment? This section will take some of the themes that have emerged and relate them to existing literature in this and other fields.

8.3.1 Anxiety, angst and the loss of meaning

The workers and managers described above have experienced a challenge to their own identities in the workplace. The challenge demands that their behaviours change,

requires that their attitudes alter and informs them that their previous habits were either misguided or mistaken. This message was, in all three factories, accompanied by an environment of possible job losses in ATP and Firmin, increased surveillance (or at least measurement) in all companies and increased workloads in all companies. Furthermore, the message of empowerment and listening, which many managers believed to be credible (helped by the preponderance of 'pop' guru books on the subject) was contradicted by the constant pressure on them to produce measurable results and (in ATP and Firmin) the methods by which the TQ programmes were imposed (similar to the contradictions described by Knights and MacCabe, 1997). Old habits were disrupted forcefully through fear, example and training, but new ones were not readily available to take their place.

It is important to consider how the disruption of these habits also disrupts the identity of employees. Gareth, in Firmin, was not overtly bothered by Jimmi's temper, but the public humiliation where "*everybody could see*" struck the core of his identity and fostered feelings of betrayal and distrust. In the same way, Sosteric (1996) quotes a waitress whose main complaint against her manager was the dressing down she received in the public arena, 'if it gets to Kaaren, then Kaaren immediately comes over and gives you shit. Right in front of everybody' (quoted in Sosteric, 1996: 313). Such a concern is, first and foremost, social, it is to do with status and power in the *public* arena: it is not, primarily, a subject which labour process theory can help with. Sitkin and Stickel (1996: 211) also find evidence in a TQM regime of 'a sense of hurt' when workers' autonomy was not respected or appreciated. Accompanying the loss of identity and status is the loss of meaning. Managers' measurement of themselves as good managers was against a benchmark of what they have learned (experience) and what they have become

accustomed to (habit). At Whale and ATP managers found that they were now having to question the validity of their past actions and their future expectations. In a similar manner, the whistle blowers of Jermier et al. (1994:20) expected 'constructive responses from the organisation, in part because they believed they were respected and valued employees. To their surprise they find, instead, that management attempts to repress them, often by challenging their competence and trying to have them fired'. One could assume that 'surprise' is an understatement and some of the reactions experienced would not be so dissimilar to those outlined above. Casey provides another example of this phenomenon in suggesting that 'the general effects of the new culture [of the Hephaestus Corporation] in its half-hearted form are ambivalence. The psychological effects of the new culture encourage repression, anxiety, stress and neurotic compulsions. What is normal and encouraged at work is not in normal life' (1995: 156). Casey is right when she calls the new culture 'half-hearted'. The carrot which is being offered to managers and workers is not a healthy one. It is unfamiliar, riddled with inconsistencies and unlikely to last long. Its taste is somewhat lessened when the stick is being applied simultaneously, as at ATP.

Another important point to consider is that the condition described above is, primarily, not that of fear. Whilst change, in our companies, created concerns regarding job losses or demotion, the state of anxiety was also to be found in those whose jobs were secure (the skilled craftsmen at Firmin, the team-leaders at Whale *after* the demotions). A similar phenomenon is noted by Mishra and Spreitzer (1998). The biggest factor which came out in the interviews was the issue of actually dealing with the changes in what was expected of the workforce and the implications it had for their identity. Similar studies have been undertaken of mental disorders in periods of personal

change (Rahe, 1972), economic change (Seyle, 1956), cultural change (Mead, 1960) and even shell-shock in the First World War (Goldstein, 1940). All have concerned themselves with describing the feeling of meaninglessness, being undermined, or being confused after periods of unfamiliarity or intensive changes, and, as such, are closer to psychiatric studies of anxiety rather than the fear of something knowable (Roth, 1988). The consequential point with many of these studies is that the deterioration in those being studied is not necessary linked to *negative* experiences. The emotion experienced is not fear because fear is usually *of something*, whereas anxiety is usually produced from a state of *not* knowing. Positive personal changes such as moving house, starting a new job or getting married can be equally as stressful as negative ones. Improvements in the economic condition of a country will produce similar increases in violence and mental disorders as a deterioration in the economy (Seyle, 1956). The root of the problem is, therefore, change itself, what some have termed culture shock: 'Anthropologists found that schizophrenia is strongest among those whose ties with the cultural traditions are weakest: drug users, intellectuals, immigrants...a study of Norwegian-born immigrants in Minnesota showed that over a period of four decades their rate of hospitalisation for mental disorders was much higher than those either for non-immigrant Americans or Norwegians in Norway...these psychoses which are an extreme form of culture shock emerge among these people because the cultural definition of values which underlies their sanity has been changed' (Pirsig, 1992: 387). Indeed much of the management of change literature bases itself on the series of reactions to death traced by Stein and Viddich back in 1960.

Moving from the psychological definition of anxiety to the existentialist term 'angst' is not a big step. So why bother? Primarily because the existentialist term is

contextualised within a framework of meaning which will prove useful to this enquiry. Angst, for Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Sartre, Camus and Merleau-Ponty, is exactly the reaction expected of humans when external structures and meanings (in our context trust or distrust) are removed or changed. Angst, they argue is an unpleasant experience because it strips away our identity as pre-determined and allows choice (reflexivity) to take centre-stage. Similarly, in the case-studies, it is possible to witness how workers described themselves as 'empty' or 'undermined' when describing either cultural changes or public assaults on their status. In *'The Myth of Sisyphus'* Camus points out that 'I was told that he had lost his daughter five years before and he had changed greatly since and that experience had 'undermined' him. A more exact word cannot be imagined. Beginning to think is beginning to be undermined' (1955:12). Recall again the words of the Whale manager in 1998, who had "*never really thought about what I was doing before, I think it was habit more than anything. Stuff you pick up when you arrive. Now it's changing you have to think about what you are doing and why you are doing it. That's quite difficult...*". There are similarities, also, with a psychological essay by Riezler, "this system [of habit] is the basis of our action. If we do not know the nature of a danger, we make an assumption. Without such an assumption, we cannot act. Without such a scheme, we cannot even make an assumption...man neither knows what he could nor what he should do" (1960: 152). What, in effect, all three passages are describing is the condition when the human can neither trust nor distrust, when habits have been disrupted and reflexivity is heightened. Given such descriptions it appears not at all unusual that so many people should choose to leave these organisations voluntarily (or due to stress), nor that sensitive researchers have found that many workers actually don't want to be empowered (Edwards et al. 1998). Given the (often unobservable) psychological turmoil that cultural changes can effect, studies which focus on crude

measurements of behaviours will be at a loss in explaining, or even detecting, such phenomena. 'Work intensification' is too often used as a late substitute for researchers' methodological insensitivity to subjective states.

If we examine the existentialist writers' understanding of angst, their terminology of despair, abandonment, loss and nausea show a remarkable parallel to the emotions expressed by those who were undergoing changes in their identities, subjectivity and power relationships. The workforce in our companies were not simply being asked to change their habits. The nature of TQM change meant that workers were being asked to identify with their tasks - to take their work personally, act proactively and contribute ideas. Managers were being asked to devolve responsibility, encourage upward communication and foster worker decision making. Such shifts necessarily involve trust because what is being placed at risk is not simply failure in terms of productivity targets and efficiency gains, but also their own identities, power relationships and status. Even if such a transition is made (and as we have seen this is often not the case), it is not an instant one. Most of the managers interviewed, whether they embraced the new systems or not, had a period of instability, doubt and anxiety as they were left both unable to continue their old habits but yet untrusting and unsure of the demands of the new. So far, so good - what is being described is essentially the state of disquiet produced by a shock or change to habit, culture or *dasein*³⁴ which leaves the individual acutely aware of the emptiness of their condition. However, as with the metaphor, an explanatory theory must be pushed to its extremes if it is to establish its equal to other explanations.

Given that previous chapters have related trust and distrust to the exercise of power (i.e. the direct or indirect influence of managerial power in establishing norms and values) it is worth pointing out a possible relationship between angst and resistance. The contention that angst is a central feature of change programmes which are aimed at worker subjectivity or attitudes, casts an unfamiliar light upon the nature of employee resistance in such attempted transformations. Resistance has traditionally been portrayed by labour process writers as a conscious reaction against work intensification (either collectively or individually) in terms of 'worker interests' or by postmodernists as a futile attempt to prevent the prevailing discourses of capitalism or patriarchy (du Gay, 1996; Hardy and Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998; Sewell and Wilkinson, 1997; Townley, 1997). If however, the existential framework is applied to *change*, it provides a three-fold conception of resistance which adds to existing understandings. The first is that change is resisted because it is unfamiliar and, therefore, appears as a black hole especially if management are not trusted. Second, the lack of 'trustworthy' knowledge in periods of angst means that (according to existentialist and Giddensian theory) action becomes difficult. In psychological terms, a parallel can be found whereby people that are exposed to constant change experience 'withdrawal...reductions in critical information processing...and constriction in behavioural responses' (Straw et al., 1981). Thirdly, as we have witnessed, in order to find something stable in periods of angst the person may adopt an 'inauthentic' persona which provides a poor imitation of what is required in the situation. Not acting out a managerially defined role but attempting, badly, to act it out. If such an understanding *is* to be called 'resistance', it must be understood as neither conscious, collective nor strategic.

³⁴ In drawing a distinction between times when objects which are taken for granted ('zuhanden') and times when those objects are reflected upon and brought into our consciousness, Heidegger acquiesces to this

8.3.2 Inauthenticity, reflexivity and time

With several of the managers interviewed it was noticeable that their conceptions of themselves were not only remarkably different from the perceptions of others within the company, but were often quite divergent from the ‘facts’ of the case. Aidan attempted to portray himself as someone who had worked his way up from the shopfloor and had been promoted purely on ability. He argued that although ‘his men’ wanted him to give them orders it was not really in his nature and that they would have to learn that. In similar way, Gareth constantly told me that he was being head-hunted by many different companies or that the company would fall apart without him as he was the lynch-pin of the operations. Whilst both comments may (feasibly) be true, the interesting point was that their reiteration increased as more and more of their power and status was reduced. Many managers and workers were interviewed, especially in ATP and Firmin, whose verbal presentation of themselves as a TQ style worker/manager differed considerably from their behaviour in meetings or on the shopfloor. Their failure to achieve results was usually placed on another party (often management for workers, workers for management). This construction of identities appeared, from my notes at the time, to be confusing but possibly an attempt to make the interviewees feel better about their perceived failings. In one meeting at ATP I recorded the following: ‘Peter appears to be very needy in presenting himself *to others* as a new manager. He keeps telling us, “*I’m like this*” or “*I’m like that*”, when it is pretty clear he isn’t. I’m not sure whether he’s trying to convince himself...’.

manner of disruption.

In the light of existentialist writing, this interpretation of inauthenticity has some validity. Heidegger argues that in order to avoid the feelings of despair and dread associated with accepting one's own responsibility for one's subjectivity, many people adopt a false personality which they can retreat into³⁵. This personality provides a safe identity, arguably similar to what Giddens terms 'ontological security'. It allows the self to be known and, therefore, predicted. In other words it allows the person to trust. Such a personality, Heidegger is keen to point out, is 'inauthentic', in that it is merely a comfort blanket to one's own insecurities. A commentary by the philosopher Bryan Magee argues that 'we can either flee anxiety in which case we go back into the kind of conformity which is required of everyone if they are to be intelligible. We do what one does and talk as one does but we use these norms to flee unsettledness. We become conformists. We can try desperately to shape up to the norms to pronounce things the right way, dress the right way et cetera. That's how one flees into inauthenticity' (1987: 267). A good example is provided by Sartre in his earliest novel, *Nausea*, 'let us consider this waiter in the café. His movement is quick and forward, a little too precise, a little too quick...his voice, his eyes express an interest a little too solicitous for the order of the customer... he gives himself the quickness and pitiless rapidity of things...the waiter in the café plays with his condition in order to realise it' (1965: 22). The important point to be noticed here is that this phenomenon is intricately bound with the individual's identity. From the existentialist (as well as the Giddensian) perspective, actions and attitudes cannot be treated as unrelated, 'when we choose, the choice of action is also a choice of

³⁵ What determines the choice of identity is problematic and some of the existentialist limitations in this area will be examined later, but the explanation that the workers most affected by anxiety during periods of cultural change, developed for themselves credible, alternative personas to lessen their lack of certainty, appears convincing.

self' (Collinson 1987: 159). The perspective is, therefore, qualitatively different from the notion of 'acting out' which implies that the individual projects an image which is simply a credible mask. Whilst quantitative analysis may have difficulty in telling the difference, an ethnographic methodology shows a marked difference between Ray *imitating* a devolved and participative atmosphere and actually achieving it. Similarly, that Sartre's waiter was noticed in his assumed persona means that it was distinguishable from what was expected of the original thing. The resulting implication is that attitudes and behaviours are not as easily disassociated as many would have us believe. The implications of these differences will be treated in the conclusion.

The only thing which *is* separate, however, from the process of action and emotion is reflexivity and consciousness - this is what is indicated by the existentialist creed that 'Existence precedes and commands essence' (Nausea 1965: 483). Indeed, the heightened awareness of themselves (consciousness) was something commented upon by many of the workers and managers who were interviewed - remember the comment from one manager, "*Now it's changing you have to think about what you are doing and why you are doing it. That's quite difficult...*", or "*I never really thought about what I was doing before, I think it was habit more than anything*" or Tim's comment that he was not paid to think. In Whale, several employees pointed out that now the TQM training allowed them to realise that their previous habits were often wrong or that they were thinking in a different way. Of course the judgement of 'wrong' (whether morally or incorrectly) is primarily ideological but the realisation of this is reflexive. This comment has parallels with a division made in recent literature between those workers who are more reflexive and those that appear less so. Chikudate (1999:72), for example, argues that 'it is not possible to regard all reflective members of organisations as knowledgeable

human agents who possess competence of moving from a state of enmeshment [*cultural myopia*] to a transcendent state where his/her vantage point is 'outside' the organisation....it is not easy for members in collective myopia to activate self-confrontation'. However, he does not inform us of the structural conditions that allow one worker to be myopic and another to be reflexive. Similarly, Casey (1995), Du Gay (1996), Thompson and McHugh (1995: 334) and Pollner (1987) differentiate between workers who appear to have unthinkingly swallowed their cultural norms ('capitulators' or 'mundane reasoners') and those who are able to reflect 'outside' their cultures to 'resist' such forces ('defensive'), without providing a developed account of why these differences occur. By linking such reactions to the subjective and (following structuration), therefore, structural habit of (dis)trust we can see how the context of organisational change and job content can contribute to (though not determine) this difference.

One seemingly incidental factor that needs highlighting in the context of this discussion is that of time. Earlier, in the theoretical framework and in the discussions of trust, we have seen how time (or the absence of knowledge) plays a central role in creating the need for trust in human activities. Trust or distrust can often be seen as mechanisms for overcoming the absence of information concerning the future, i.e. whether management will reciprocate and reward changes in worker subjectivity or will slight their identity by resorting to traditional power relations. As indicated earlier, it is noticeable that the stress suffered by staff as a result of organisational change was usually a temporary matter. It does not last, it appears, because the workers need only so long to allow their new actions ossify into habits. This interpretation fits with both the empirical evidence and the theory we are utilising. If Heidegger is right, and we are often

unconscious of things which have become familiar and commonplace, this state of habitus or 'dasein', allows the individual worker the security of trusting in his or her actions without having to think about their purpose, meaning or implications. The disruption of this, either through reflexivity or change (the two can amount to the same thing), is what most existentialists assume leads to the state of angst³⁶. Although with most of the examples in the case-studies, this state of uncomfortableness only exists for as long as it takes for an individual to build up new habits (which allow them to trust without having to be overly concerned with reflecting³⁷) it appeared that in Firmin, the least stable of the cases, the process was not completed by the time I left.

8.4 Conclusions

The use of the existentialist framework to understand the human experience of change allows anxiety to be related to the conditions of trust and distrust. According to such an interpretation, both trust and distrust provide patterns and habits in which humans find ontological security - their identity, as judged by past experience, is not under threat. In the case-studies presented it seems clear that the disruption to this cultural fabric can play havoc with the individual's sense of security, creating feelings of loneliness, anxiety and stress. It is only over time that new patterns are discovered and trusted. In Whale it appears that this period of anxiety was lessened somewhat by the

³⁶ Interestingly, studies upon mental patients show that they often have a different subjective experience of time (and space) to their 'sane' peer group: Ellenberger, for example, argued that the experience of time was the primary factor which makes life either meaningful or empty. "What we call the feeling of 'the meaning of life' cannot be understood independently of the subjective feeling of experienced time. Distortions of the feeling of time necessarily result in distortions of the meaning of life..wherever the future becomes empty, as with maniacs and certain psychopaths, life is a perpetual gamble" (Huxley, 1961: 20). This gamble is, of course, antithetical to either trust or distrust.

clear communication of the reasons for, and expectations of, the change programme, as well as the rapid building of trust discussed in chapter seven. In Firmin, and to a lesser extent in ATP, the opposite effect was achieved because little was done to inform the workers of either why the changes were taking place or, indeed, what was expected of the workforce in terms of day-to-day behaviours. Distrust, rather than trust, was the resultant state. In all three companies, it appears to have been middle management that experienced stress more than any of the other groups during the periods of change. There appear to be two (associated) reasons for this. The first is that managerial activity necessitates the (at least partial) incorporation of their identity into their jobs. The greater discretion and autonomy given to management as part of their work conditions means that it is more difficult to prescribe completely the duties of the manager, compared say, to a welder. The change, therefore, came as a greater threat to their identities than it did to many of the shopfloor workers who were operating in a manner of resigned compliance in the first place. Second, given the managerial position within the case-studies, the TQM programmes not only threatened their jobs (e.g. the delayering within Firmin), but also their status (the public humiliations by Jimmi and Len) and their power (the requirements to devolve, involve, listen and feedback). The contradictions within the TQM programmes between quantifiable goals such as output and efficiency and more intangible benefits gained through training and communication were perceived to be the problem of middle management and team-leaders. Those above were in a position to demand and criticise whilst those below possessed neither the responsibility nor (some believed) the ability to cope with such matters.

³⁷ Supporting this view is the (unusual) one expressed by Pirsig (1991) that the (medically unexplainable) success of electric shock therapy on psychiatric patients is primarily due to the disruption it causes to the

The implications of using trust, distrust and angst as an analytical framework will be treated in the final chapter. However, it may be appropriate here to clarify some 'grey areas' which existentialist philosophy produces in its application. The first concerns the perceived freedom of choice that is available to humans. At first glance such a creed is significantly at odds with Giddens' structuration theory as Giddens argues that structures constrain and enable action. However, the two perspectives concur on the centrality of consciousness (or reflexivity) in allowing these structures to be overcome. Existentialists would agree with Giddens that ^(if) a person exists in an unreflexive state of *dasein* or inauthenticity. Moreover, some of the second-wave existentialists such as Merleau-Ponty revised the creed to argue that man is never entirely free: we form stable meanings so that 'what we do becomes skills and habits. In our body we are not free to change instantly and arbitrarily' (Magee, 1987: 276). Such an interpretation gives resonance to Giddens' notion of 'memory traces' and with Kramer's (1993) argument that people who trust maintain mental histories of their experiences. The perceived disagreement is, then, more one of timing than inconsistency, for it is during periods of angst that humans are most aware³⁸. The second point concerns the moral undertones of some existentialist writers who argue that to be authentic or truly free one must embrace angst. Given the unpleasant experiences many of the workers suffered during these periods of change it would be both presumptuous and patronising to argue that their situation was a good one in which they actually achieved freedom. The judgement is one that can only be made by the individual concerned and not, I believe, by the researcher. Finally, for many of the existentialist writers, angst is (or should be) a permanent and all encompassing and universal experience. The account presented above, however, is not one in which

secure habits and mental state (what he terms static values) in which they have found comfort.

humans willingly embrace their conditions but one in which has been forced by changes to the workplace. Many employees (especially those on the shopfloor in a state of 'distrust') experienced no changes to their attitudes. It was usually middle management or those workers most trustworthy of their company that were hardest hit by the changes. Moreover, although employees frequently mentioned the effects that their stress or anxiety were on their family, it is important to note that the studies were primarily confined to the workplace and were not overly concerned with the family and employees extra-work social lives. In the light of extra-workplace influences such as race and gender, it would be reasonable to believe that these had an equally important effect upon the subjective states of employees.

The connection made between the subjective state of angst and the structural conditions which inform it provides an important step beyond the writings on insecurity which have been attempted by OB and psychoanalytic writers. In attempting to utilise a neo-Freudian understanding of identity in organisations, writers such as Carr (1997, 1998) and Hirschorn (1988, 1989) retain an ignorance of social structures in their presentation of individual coping strategies. Others such as Leonard (1984) and Kets de Vries and Miller (1984) maintain a neo-Marxist presentation of psychotic reactions being part of an alienated syndrome. Although in some respects the presentation of angst here does have parallels with the Marxist concept of alienation, it does not assume any real interests of the workforce, and, therefore, does not present the adoption of identity as obscuring the experience of subordination or 'interfering with the self-perceptions and judgements that *make us what we are*' (Thompson and McHugh, 1995: 334 - italics

³⁸ This interpretation also avoids the tricky subject of original choice, which by definition is an 'absurd' notion. For more on the absurd see Sartre's (1958) *Being and nothingness*..

added). Nor does it assume the continually conscious and reflexive worker constantly 'negotiating' their identity with the organisation. Workers are not, therefore, presented with 'the *choice* to submit or resist' (Thompson and McHugh, 1995: 345), but are limited by the psychological need for habit, and the structural opportunities afforded in their social and workplace lives. Such presentations of 'self', whilst as equally justifiable as the one presented in this thesis, do not lend themselves to change or to bridging the gap between subjectivity and structures. Nor is the condition described here equal to the *anomie* of Emile Durkheim. Angst is more a failure to fulfil a more fundamental requirement of action, habit. The habits that this thesis describes are not the externally imposed norms and regulations designed to limit the goals and desires of the individual human as described in *Suicide*, but instead the outcome of processes necessary for meaningful action.

The purpose of this chapter has been to argue that changes to subjectivity are not as simple as the over- and under-socialised models suggest. Cultural change is neither as impossible as the labour process theorists would have us believe nor as simple as the post-modernists or the gurus maintain. The reason for this is that in creating the trust necessary for such transformations, both reflexivity and anxiety play a pivotal and necessary role. Unlike the essentialist tendencies of Marxism or the determinist discourses of postmodernism, the existentialist and Giddensian descriptions of the human condition focus upon habit and trust in enabling action. When these are disrupted, anxiety is the resultant state. Fox was, therefore, wrong to argue that 'as trust shrinks, distrust takes over' (Fox, 1974: 67), for the transitory period of anxiety is one which is very real for many of the workers working in these companies. By adopting a more

sensitive methodology and a more realistic model of human nature it is possible to gain a better understanding of the impact of change upon human subjectivity.

9. Conclusions

‘what then are we left with, we fallible people ? To bend a Thatcher phrase, I think that there are no rules only relationships. Each one is complex and messy, consisting of the chemical reaction, over time, between two separate pathologies. In that sense, all liaisons are dangerous. Each one has to be discussed on its merits’

David Aaronovitch, The Independent, 8 September 1998

9.1 Introduction

This thesis has used a ethnographic, processual and a (relatively) comparative methodology to study change in three industrial companies implementing TQ initiatives. Through an inductive analysis of the data it has been possible to construct an explanatory theory by combining Giddensian theory of structuration (often criticised for being too ‘meta-level’) and connecting them (via trust and angst) to a quasi-existentialist and phenomenological understanding of subjectivity. The central tenet of the thesis is that trust, distrust and angst provide a framework which explains *changes* to subjectivity better than either LPT or postmodernist approaches. Trust, it has been argued, is necessary to allow workers and managers to incorporate their subjectivity into their work. As such, trust is a habit created through the expectation that workers’ identities will not suffer (or will even be rewarded) if this step is achieved. Primarily, trust is built up in a relational and personal process. The assumption made is that by trusting and having their trust confirmed workers gain a stronger identity than would otherwise have happened. Distrust, on the other hand, is the habitual result of the belief that those in positions of direct power cannot be trusted to respond positively to the workers’ faith. It results in the rejection of an identification with the job and the distancing of subjectivity from the workplace. As such the creation of distrust is primarily a cognitive process. Both trust and distrust involve the processing of information and, therefore, the belief

(conscious or unconscious) that another will act in a certain way. Conversely, angst is the result of instability during a period of change affecting subjectivity. When current habits and patterns are disrupted, meaning and identity are also affected, and the resultant state of not knowing is one which lends itself neither to trust nor distrust. Under such conditions employees can be seen to suffer from stress, psychological disorders or identity reconstruction. The condition of angst (it has been argued) is one which is usually temporary and accompanies the transition to (or rejection of) task identification.

The implications of this framework are simple enough in that they amend and develop the literature examining trust within the workplace, and this is, indeed, examined below in the section on cultural change. However, the most significant implications of the study come not from this framework but from the assumptions which inform it. The Giddensian concept of structuration, the focus on time, the existentialist view of the human and the notion of ‘traces of memory’ were not taken as *a priori* theories but induced from (or at least supported by) the data before the ‘trust - distrust - angst’ framework could be proposed. Without these foundations it would not been possible to conceptualise the framework, and accordingly they must be considered as equally important when considering the implications of the thesis. To tackle each of these in turn would be a complicated affair that would lend itself to repetition and needless verbosity. Instead, before examining the limitations and potential furtherance of the research, this section will examine three themes in the current critical literature and, with each, detail how this study contributes to the field. The three areas are attitudes and behaviours, methodological considerations and cultural change.

9.2 Attitudes and behaviours as mutual enactment

The precise relationship between attitudes and behaviours has been a moot point in organisation studies for decades. However, the theoretical distinction between the two has only rarely been called into question. The traditional psychological and sociological view of the attitude-behaviour relationship is that in which behaviours reflect attitudes (or 'orientations'), and, therefore, changes to attitudes will ultimately lead to changes in behaviours. Such a view still underpins many models of HRM (Guest, 1992) and many guru accounts of cultural change (Burnes, 1996; Kakabadse, 1987). The difficulty with such a perspective is that it leads to the 'paradoxical possibility that if attitudes are consistent and predictive because they reflect predispositions, then it will be very hard to change them' (Thompson and Warhurst, 1995: 243). Such arguments have given rise to the argument emerging in some quarters that cultural change is, perhaps, an impossibility (Ogbonna, 1992). Perhaps sensing that such contradictions may spell the demise of the N-step programmes to cultural change (and the end of lucrative consultancy contracts), some writers have argued that the relationship is actually the other way around, and that it is, in fact, behaviours that create attitudes (Beer et al. 1992). The new creed has been taken up by some critical researchers (Wilkinson et al., 1998: 14) in stressing the importance of HRM systems such as teamworking, devolved decision-making and participative practices in changing cultures. The difficulties with this approach are two-fold. First, is that in cases where significant changes are made to the behaviour of workers without being paralleled by attitudinal adjustment organisations have faced massive failure rates. In the post-mortems of BPR, for example, the most common cause of re-engineering failure is cited as being a failure of sensitivity to the 'human' aspects of change. The top-down and IT led nature of many of these change programmes meant the

'end-users' of the systems were rarely communicated to or consulted with during the changes (Galliers, 1997; Grint and Wilcocks, 1995). Second, is that by arguing that changing behaviours equals changing attitudes, the proponents fall into the same circular argument as their antipodes. What then, we can ask, creates the behaviours necessary for changed attitudes? The inconsistencies of both the attitude → behaviour and the behaviour → attitude arguments have left most managerially inspired accounts of TQM or HRM change open to easy pickings from the critical community, especially concerning the tricky subject of subjectivity. 'There are clearly two ways in which culture is treated in relation to change', writes Ogbonna (1995: 83), 'there are those who treat culture as behaviour and there are those who treat it as values and taken for granted assumptions. The consequence of this is that there is no conceptual model which demonstrates convincingly how change in deeper level values should be attempted. This is despite the fact that much of the literature accepts such a change as constituting cultural change. Instead, what we are presented with are haphazard treatments of cultural change which either equate it to behaviour change or simply to assume that behaviour change will, in the long term, lead to culture change. In terms of TQM, the quandary is also evident, 'it may be that rather than viewing TQM as a process for changing organisations, conversely organisations must change to accommodate TQM' (Wilkinson, 1994: 423).

Although Burawoy (1979) argued that ideology was a belief system at work that was created through the interaction of attitudes and behaviours, such sensitive analyses are rare in organisation studies. In general, most LPT texts are weak in their understandings of beliefs and ideology. By adopting an ethnographic and qualitative methodology, the thesis was able to study the processes by which behavioural change

and attitudinal change were manifested within the case-study organisations. It found that, during periods of change especially, attitudes and behaviours could not be separated from each other either longitudinally or theoretically. In building trusting relationships, workers, line managers and senior management experienced an iterative, symbiotic, dialectic in which new behaviours tested the boundaries of the new relationships, which in turn produced new attitudes, which in turn allowed behaviours to experiment further, testing the rhetoric of management with the reality of experience. The process was necessarily slow and cautious because of the risk of damage to their own identities. The factor which allows this perspective to distinguish itself from those examined earlier is that of time. In arguing that both trust and distrust are states of *habit* and that angst is the unpleasant experience when habit and knowledge are not present, the thesis indicates that time plays a central role in establishing habits which allow the worker or manager 'ontological security'. To argue that attitudes lead to behaviours or vice versa is to reduce the human condition to mere 'black box' mechanics. Machines do not need to trust (or distrust) in order to act, nor can they reflect upon possible damage to their non-existent identity. The 'traces of memory' workers possess allow them to remember the past actions of management, their reflexivity allows them to assess the match between managerial rhetoric and reality and time allows them to experiment with their behaviours in order to confirm or deny their trusting relationships. Time allows this process to become one of habit (trust or distrust) rather than one of anxiety. This is not to argue, however, that different behaviours require different attitudes, but that the way in which any behaviour is carried out will, over time, be reflective (and reproductive) of the attitudes which inform it.

The evidence presented in our cases shows that, contrary to traditional conceptions of change, the reported distinction between attitudes and behaviours is non-sensical. How does one separate the filling out of a suggestion from the inspiration that created the idea or the motivation of putting pen to paper? The distinction traditionally made between subject and object in OS does little to answer the question of how either (or both) change. Instead of tying itself in conceptual knots by separating the chicken and the egg, the thesis states that over time (as with chickens and eggs) attitudes and behaviours amount to the same thing. In doing so it helps understand the findings of other studies. The psychological studies of Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), for example, argue that attitudes correlate much more strongly with behaviour if the context of the process is examined and consideration is given to the time the process takes. Their argument, therefore, implies the necessity of a methodology more sensitive to qualitative and hard-to-measure variables. Analysing the role of resistance in their case-study of a school, Fineman and Gabriel (1996) comment that 'people may be rebelling even as they appear to be conforming. Pupils who wear the regulation uniform may be conforming to the rules, but by leaving the top button undone, they express their resistance to them...orders may be obeyed willingly or unwillingly; they may equally be obeyed grudgingly, inaccurately, ritualistically or sarcastically. In all of these cases, compliance and resistance can co-exist in the same form of behaviour' (1996: 87). Here Fineman and Gabriel are clearly following the presentation of the 'wink' in Goffman's (1971) introduction (that a wink can mean many things even though it remains a wink). What these writers are ignoring is the impact of context, time and details. Leaving 'the top button undone' may well be the 'same form of behaviour' but is clearly not the same behaviour as doing the button up. Observing the subjects' histories (pattern of winking/button undoing) over time and in context (people's reactions/justification) will

allow the behaviour to be understood within its context of attitudes and meanings³⁹. What such findings *do* point to is the inadequacies of managerial rules and discipline in circumscribing employee behaviour at a detailed level. Finneman and Gabriel are right, therefore, to argue that ‘at times like the present, when to use Thompson and Ackroyds’ paraphrase, ‘all is quiet at the workplace front’, employee dissent must be sought at the margins’ (p. 194). The ‘margins’ in our case are the hard-to-measure intangibles that separate quantitative measurement systems from qualitative understandings.

The argument also supports the use of structuration theory as an interpretative schema. As has been discussed in the methodology, the concept of structuration was not adopted as a first principle assumption but rather was deployed inductively from the evidence as the ‘best fit’ explanation for the evidence. As such, as with existentialism, structuration should be seen primarily as an explanatory tool for the thesis, rather than viewing the thesis as ‘proof’ of the theory. Even so, viewing structure and action as ‘instantiations’ of each other rather than as separate entities has much concordance with the conception of treating attitudes and behaviours as reflective manifestations of each other rather than attempting to demonstrate that each is causal in a linear manner. Reflexivity, as a human trait, allows both attitudes and behaviours to be adjusted in accordance to those other people (e.g. line managers’ reactions) and to their own expectations of the future. The overlap between this notion of structuration and the existentialist view of human nature allows us a better understanding of ‘acting out’. In labour process studies where structures and action are usually taken to be distinct, acting

³⁹ The attitude/behaviour argument could be continued by questioning the hard-to-measure ways in which we receive (and send) messages- either visually (e.g. facial expressions - to what extent are these controllable?) or verbally (a spoken sentence is after all a molecular phenomenon). And this is without touching upon the chemical workings of our neuro-transmitters in interpreting signals!

out is viewed as a method of resistance against total immersion or cultural brainwashing (Taylor, 1998). However, if attitudes and behaviours are presumed to be symbiotic *over time*, it follows that it will be difficult for any individual to act out a role for a longer period of time. Contrary to Goffman's (1971) presentation of 'actors' and 'roles', this analysis suggests that 'acting' which is not a result of the corresponding attitude/motivation should always be behaviourally distinguishable (over time) from the 'real thing'. Rather than 'acting out' which implies the distinction between attitudes and behaviours (acting being behavioural), 'inauthenticity'⁴⁰ is a better description as it can be equally applied to the behavioural and attitudinal condition. It is this phenomenon which could have been causing the stress found in managers such as Aidan and Gareth, who had constructed for themselves 'inauthentic' identities. The inconsistencies of these identities to themselves and to those who worked with them, appeared, over a period, to produce feelings of anxiety and stress. Furthermore, the discrepancies between the behaviour of those 'acting out' and those who were genuinely motivated by the TQ programmes were obvious, even to myself on the shopfloor. Those who were motivated and identified with the project would come up with ideas, would undertake tasks voluntarily, would use the TQ 'language' without appearing artificial and would respond to their subordinates' opinions. Those who had not internalised the message would use the appropriate language *when their manager was present*, would come up with new ideas *when they had to*, and would undertake teamwork in an acquired manner. Essentially, 'inauthenticity' was simply another method of formal compliance or work to rule, that would be enough to fool line managers (and researchers) only in the short-

⁴⁰ Note that inauthenticity does not imply an 'authentic' (i.e. essentialist) self, but rather that the self neither trusts or distrusts, and it therefore not a habitual response.

term⁴¹. However, it was noticeable in all three companies that in the long term, the numbers of employees (especially managers) who were either removed because their act was not convincing enough, or who left because the pressure was too much for them.

Contrary to Goffman (1971) the manipulation of one's own identity should not be viewed simply as an act which workers adopt or drop and which is separate from their own 'real' identity. Whilst clearly not a Marxist, Goffman's notion is fundamentally essentialist and one fitting with the under-socialised models in that it lacks a coherent understanding of the role of social structures. Although writers such as Sturdy (1987) and Hochschild (1983) rightly highlight the stresses involved with what they term 'acting out', they follow Goffman in explaining such anxieties in Marxist terms of alienation: the act is a *conscious* effort either to 'obscure the experience of subordination' (Thompson and McHugh, 1995) or as a strategy to defend their own identities. In the literature review, it was argued that such an analysis precludes any sense of 'real' task identification and is patronising to employees in arguing that they have been duped by a managerial conspiracy. Instead, this thesis argues that it is the lack of identity which produces much of the anxiety during periods of change. Whilst the term 'acting' is useful in describing the 'inauthentic' identities of Aidan and Gareth, who were not trusted and could not trust, it does not account for those Whale workers who were genuinely committed to the quality programme. Moreover, the difference between the two was evident in the amount of stress experienced, the observable behaviour, and the amount of time it could be kept up for. It is at this point that the distinction between 'front' and 'back' stage identities dissolves. Although those managers creating inauthentic identities

⁴¹ It should also be noted that even if line-managers are not fooled, the informal rules on the shopfloor allow a period of time before disciplinary action is taken against those deemed to be stone-walling. The

were very conscious of their act, the attitudes and behaviours of those who were genuinely committed quickly formed into habit. In the words of Willmott (1993: 537), 'the 'real' self is a construction of the enacted self; it does not exist independently of the moment of its constitution'. If all such behaviour in organisations was merely 'acting out', then the researchers' task would be an easy one. However, the distinction made between authentic and inauthentic behaviour is one which necessitates a methodology which can tell the two apart.

9.3 The centrality of intangibles: methodological implications

The argument above suggests that there is a discernible difference between the attitudes and behaviours of an employee who is motivated and identifies with the TQM programme and one who is 'acting out' or conforming to behavioural measurements. This section assesses the methodological implications of this argument for the field of OS. By contextualising the thesis in the processual or contextualist school it attempts three arguments. First, it suggests that in order to uncover the subtle differences in attitudes and behaviours which can either make or break TQM programmes, studies require a methodology which is both ethnographic and sensitive to time. Second, it shows how even those studies that have adopted this approach have been limited by their dualistic conceptions of change. Finally, it argues that whilst the proposed framework is especially applicable to soft TQM and it may also be applicable to 'harder' versions of TQM or Taylorist models of work.

formal disciplinary rules are not necessarily suited to coping with these intangibles.

In attempting to move beyond the one-size-fits-all approach of management gurus or the simplistic contingency models of organisational change, critical literature in the area has increasingly adopted ethnographic methodologies to understand the processes of change in TQM programmes. In doing so, the most strikingly consistent finding has been the importance of hard-to-measure factors to the change process. Studies looking at PRP (Wood, 1995), profit sharing (Bhargava, 1994), team working (Shaiken et al., 1999), employee involvement (Marchington et al. 1994), job cuts (Hopeful et al., 1992), job security (Cully et al., 1999: 170) and TQM generally (Snape et al., 1995) have found that the attitudes of management and the context in which the systems are implemented are more important than had previously been thought. Intangibles such as trust and managerial relationships have been argued to be central to the success of 'soft' TQM programmes (Coopey, 1995; Wilkinson, 1998; Hope and Hendry 1995; Purcell, 1999; Knights, 1997). It is important to note with such studies is that many of them have used ethnographic, processual or case-study research to capture these issues. Studies which take crude measurements (statistical or otherwise) of behaviours such as team working, employee involvement, communication schemes and quality circles, have obtained little or no feel for the relationships, trust, politics or emotions which this thesis has argued reproduce and make effective those TQ initiatives. When such studies reach differing conclusions about TQM programmes, the assumption is, therefore, that one of the studies is wrong (see for example, Knights 1998) rather than that they are talking about different things with the same name (Ogbonna, 1995). In studying organisational change, TQM or HRM researchers often fall into the same traps of short-termism and focusing on quantifiable results that managers are so often criticised for. Browse through any of the texts labelled earlier as from the 'bouquets' school (i.e. guru, N-step guides to change, practitioner HRM and HRD, BPR) and what

will usually be found is a list: a list of steps to take to effect successful change, a list of HR tools that will guarantee organisational effectiveness or a typology of companies, cultures, personality types and 'change programmes. The difficulty with such classifications, as many authors are pointing out, is that in the best case scenario they provide a generalisable representation of a given field whilst being insensitive to exceptions and differences, dynamic changes and processes, causal linkages and subjective experiences (Edwards, 1998; Edwards and Wright, *forthcoming*; O'Mahoney, 1997; Purcell, 1999; Pettigrew, 1997). Despite increasing calls for ethnographic, longitudinal and comparative approaches to the study of change (especially in the TQM field), even much of the critical literature still appears to be dominated by single case-studies, snap-shot methodologies or quantitative research methods. As discussed in the literature review, such approaches do have their strengths but are insensitive to change and also focus upon crude measurements of observable behaviour at the expense of attitudes, values or anxiety. The very phenomena which have been argued here to enable changes to identity and subjectivity.

Secondly, and consequently, there are implications even for those critical writers who utilise sensitive methodologies. Many of the ethnographic studies which *have* revealed the importance of intangible factors have understandably concluded that it is the implementation of TQM rather than TQM itself which is most important in creating successful change. The reality, they conclude, is more important than the rhetoric. The difficulty with this argument is that it separates the 'reality' from a platonic form of TQM which appears only to exist in the minds of researchers. Furthermore, from the cases that have been examined it can be seen that the 'rhetoric' plays an important part of the reality. The disparity between managerial promises or expectation and the

experiences of the workforce have had a real impact in terms of distrust and the behaviour which it produces. In other words, the implementation of TQM *is* TQM, there is no need for a distinction. This conclusion not only follows from the empirical evidence presented but also the theoretical framework developed to analyse the evidence by following the existentialist argument of Husserl that the subjective experience of reality is the only reality that is knowable; the rest, if it exists, can be bracketed off as irrelevant, or at least 'unknowable'. Drawing a distinction, therefore, between 'what you do and how you do it' is rendered redundant in light of increasing evidence that with TQM, 'the reality is more dependent on local circumstances and motive' (Wilkinson et al., 1997) or that 'TQM is different things to different people' (Tuckman, 1994:746). This perspective (supported by this thesis) places emphasis on the very issue that many studies distinguish themselves by ignoring, the intangible behaviours, relationships and attitudes of managers and workers at a local level. This point leads to a reiteration of the contextualist argument that the division between the 'bouquets' and 'brickbats' conclusions will, to some degree, be dependent on which empirical practice of TQM the researchers are studying. Rather than basing the critique on generalisations about TQM being concerned with work intensification or empowerment more can be gained from examining what subtleties of behaviour the methodologies utilised can uncover. If this thesis, for example, taken a snap-shot of the change process in 1997 or had it conducted two statistical surveys it is unlikely that angst would have featured in the study at all. The only generalisation possible should eventually be reducible to a better understanding of the human condition rather than the context within which that condition operates.

Such an understanding raises questions as to what can be defined as TQM and who does the defining. If Jimmi (at Firmin) was right to call his systems 'TQM', the case

adds to the many studies that have refuted the argument that TQM is *necessarily* a cultural phenomenon that workers internalise and are thus controlled by. At Firmin, TQM did not, in practice, positively change the minds or values of those involved. Conversely, the case of Whale is in accord with those that argue that some degree of internalisation can and does take place under certain conditions. Methodologically, it appears that the most potent approach to the study of TQM would be one which would be sensitive to either conclusion. This means allowing ethnographic methods that can tell the difference between having a suggestion scheme and actually using it, having teams and people turning up to them or having communication systems and their sensitive usage. By simply measuring the existence of TQM systems at one point in time, quantitative and aprocessual studies miss both the important subtleties which differentiate TQ in different case-studies and the dynamics of how these behaviours relate to employee attitudes.

Finally, it should be pointed out that a methodology which is sensitive to the subtleties of difference between behaviour which is 'acted' and behaviour which is genuinely motivated is possibly universally applicable. As discussed in the introduction and literature review, TQM (as least in its 'soft' variety) is ostensibly aimed at harnessing the identity and subjectivity of the workforce so that their individual goals and motivation match, as closely as possible, those of the organisation (Knights and MacCabe, 1997; Wilkinson, 1992; Wilkinson et al., 1997). Such an approach is, in theory, 'designed' to instil characteristics that may not be associated with direct control, prescribed tasks and limited discretion such as innovation, creativity, motivation and proactivity. Through such characteristics, it is argued, the organisation can achieve continuous improvement, zero-defects, total quality and reduced waste. As discussed

earlier, however, the justification for adopting a longitudinal, ethnographic methodology is not based on the argument that TQM necessarily produces such results, but rather that its espoused aim means that it *may* produce such results. The possibility, therefore, that TQ initiatives might succeed in the pursuit of enabling changes to individual subjectivity, necessitates tools that are sensitive to measurements of that phenomenon. In terms of attitudes and behaviours, it is relatively easy for the researcher to notice, for example, a worker who comes up with more ideas than he or she used to, who increasingly takes the initiative in quality circles or a manager that is more amenable to devolving responsibility. From an ethnographic perspective, these attitudes are easily observable through associated behaviours. This point underlines that made earlier in the thesis concerning the weaknesses of writers whose methodologies, frameworks or perspectives necessitate a judgement upon the manner of TQM before evidence has been collected.

Studies which make such *a priori* judgements do not allow for structural (or subjective) conditions for alternative outcomes to the ones that they have already prescribed, and, therefore, make it unnecessary for them to distinguish ‘acted out’ behaviour from the internalised variety. However, even those workers that were heavily directed and controlled at Firmin and ATP still managed to exert some degree of autonomy in their work. Lower quality work, obstructive behaviour and a greater inclination to argue out were all associated with ‘intangibles’ such as the respect that they were accorded. Over time, such behaviours may prove a good indicator of the degree of internalisation of the TQM message. Even my own experience has revealed a greater efficiency at stuffing envelopes for my own work than the paid variety. Another example comes from a study which investigated a company which exercises extreme

forms of control over its employees, McDonalds (Garson, 1989). In conversation with one of the McDonalds employees the following conversation is recounted:

“‘Now,’ says Jason, slowing down, ‘now you get to put on the pickles. Two if they’re regular, three if they’re small. That’s the creative part’....

‘Is there freedom anywhere in the process?’ I asked.

‘Lettuce. They’ll leave you alone as long as it’s neat.’

‘So lettuce is freedom; pickles is judgement?’

‘Yeah...’” (Garson 1989: 18-20)

There are, however, two caveats attached to the suggestion that the attitude/behaviour argument could hold universally. The first is that the differences of behaviour which distinguish ‘acting out’ from task identification would be more difficult to distinguish as the autonomy of those being studied was reduced. The scope for observing lack of motivation of a worker who was screwing toothpaste caps on is much less than that of one with the opportunity to have unauthorised fag breaks, shirk around the back of a truck or hide in the toilets. It was difficult for me, as a researcher, to observe whether those continuously stamping buttons at Firmin were motivated, whereas I could easily spot managers who were slacking by the coffee machines or playing Tetris on their PCs⁴². Second, it has been observed by several commentators (not least of all Alan Fox) that the degree of autonomy given to employees is usually a good indicator of the extent to which they are trusted. In respect to regimes of (almost) absolute control, Meyerson et al. (1996:176) point out that ‘a ruler of a slave society, for example, only has to trust that slaves are not going to commit mass suicide’. Following the argument of this thesis, one would not expect to find much evidence of changes in subjectivity in

organisations that adopted Taylorist working practices. Going back to the button stampers, hard-to-measure behaviours that revealed motivation might not be unobservable because they are hard-to-measure, but simply because they are not there. The point of having a methodology that can tell the difference is again emphasised.

9.4 Cultural change

As discussed in the literature review, much of the cultural change literature is hamstrung by concepts and models more geared towards static descriptions than dynamic explanations. Is a culture defined by behaviour or by values? Is a culture something an organisation has or something an organisation is? Is it possible or impossible to sustain cultural change? Rather than bringing the field closer to any synthesis, the divisions on these questions which many believe to be ‘mutually exclusive’ (Ogbonna, 1992: 75), have degenerated into a relativism by which the answer to the questions depends on what one’s definition of culture is. Whilst such a conclusion might be true, it does not bring any closer either a description or an explanation of how cultural change is *created*. The difficulty in achieving this end has, it is argued here, been due primarily to reluctance in tackling the tricky issue of the relationship between mankind and its environment. In arguing for an existentialist view of human nature and a structurationist ontology this thesis makes explicit a more sensitive basis for argument. Based on these foundations, this section will elaborate on the implications of the thesis for the area of cultural change. First it appraises the benefits of the existentialist and Giddensian notion of mankind in explaining cultural change. It then examines the framework of trust, distrust

⁴² Many uncharitable professors might argue Ph.D. students would be more than familiar with such avoidance tactics.

and angst in allowing a better understanding of how humans react to change in organisations. Finally, it will consider the potential of angst for understanding cultural transformation as both a necessary process and as a notion of resistance.

9.4.1 The model of (wo)man

The portrait of the human that has been assumed in (and supported by) this thesis has three facets. First, following structuration, what might be termed ‘structures’ are viewed primarily as embedded in and (re)created through the actions of humans. Any attempt to change either attitudes and behaviours will necessarily be a social manoeuvre. Second, humans are reflexive creatures. This is not to say, however, that consciousness is a constant, rather that it is lessened in static periods of familiarity or habit and heightened during periods of change or unfamiliarity⁴³. As reflexive beings, this view of cultural change is one in which humans exercise an element of choice. New forms of ideological power are often tempered, therefore, by the initial awareness of that power. Finally, and consequently, the recreation of structure and action is modified both by the human need to establish habit in securing ‘ontological security’ and by the ‘traces of memory’ which allow the past to be recalled (either consciously or otherwise) in creating future action. The ‘traces of memory’ allow an important overlap to be drawn between the human in work and the human in society. Whilst at work, the employee may be subject to the ideological power of management, but this power must contend with memories and values instilled by the employees’ sex, age, profession and race. As we

⁴³ The distinction between lessened and heightened consciousness is taken to avoid the arguments of Searle (1992) and others (among them Descartes) that there are no unconscious mental states.

have seen, societal concepts of fairness are central to a manager's ability to elicit motivation and co-operation from the worker.

This framework is, I believe, a more realistic portrayal of the human condition, at least under conditions of change. It is essentialist in terms of the processes of enabling human action (i.e. habit and reflexivity) but not in terms of the substance (e.g. interests, identity, needs). Such a sketch allows the thesis to place the individual, rather than the group or class, as the object of analysis. As has been pointed out by many other writers, the labour process (especially as concerns subjectivity) is necessarily tempered by other structures or discourses. However, by utilising the notions of reflexivity and time, individual employees are accorded more discretion in the determination of their own actions. Such a proposition accords an autonomy to the subject which is diminished under both the essentialist notions of 'false consciousness' and the totalising discourses of postmodernism. Moreover, despite the longevity of the postmodern/labour process rift on the subject and the frequency of calls for the debate to move beyond good and bad or over- and under-socialised dichotomies, the debate has rarely taken place on the level of their relative assumptions of human nature. By making explicit its assumptions at the outset, this thesis has made clear the basis for its arguments. Although such an analysis openly invites criticism, it does so with the purpose of moving the debate on from platitudes concerning the importance of trust, the dangers of rhetoric and the short-termism of managers. These arguments, whilst true, have too often been made without recourse to the question of 'why?'.

In itself, the existentialist proposition of the human condition does not add much that is new to our understandings of cultural change. However, in highlighting the

necessity of habit in enabling action and security, the thesis finds the beginnings of its central argument. If habits are based upon experience and (dis)trust, then new habits require that workers (dis)trust what is being offered to them. If past managerial action indicates that employee identity will be damaged by buying into new ways of doing things then distrust, an emotional distancing, will be a preferable alternative. Moreover, given what has been argued above concerning the noticeable difference between acted-out behaviour and motivated behaviour, the actions of management in demonstrating their promise need to be authentic. 'Inauthenticity' is, therefore, a term that applies equally to management. Workers know only too well if middle management don't trust senior management (Firmin) or if there are divisions within the managerial ranks (ATP). The important point here for management is in some ways, a repetition of what they are requiring from the worker, task identification. In the words of Hope and Hendry, 'the new managerial behaviour requires an investment of 'self' rather than dogged mimicry of behaviour or values set down in a corporate handbook. If the self is not engaged then the power is reduced, for the required behaviour is distanced from the person itself' (1995: 63). Such analyses help to go beyond the stylised debates that have traditionally taken place between the under- and over-socialised schools of thought, as they neither portray employees and managers as entirely constructed by, nor devoid of, cultural forces.

9.4.2 Trust and distrust

The attitude/behaviour argument proposed in Section 9.2 is not necessarily any more amenable to change than those which it criticises, because it does not contain the mechanism for its own reproduction under conditions of change. However, if trust is

seen to be the result of a reflective consideration of managerial behaviour and attitudes, then the building of trust as a precursor to task identification makes sense. The belief in Whale that Colin was committed was demonstrated for the workers by his actions. A leap of faith was undertaken by many in the workforce, not because they felt like it, or because they were brainwashed, but because they considered it likely that he trusted and believed in them. The promised benefits of identity and empowerment were seen to be likely enough to chance initial forays into breaking out of the Whale Way. In Firmin, by contrast, it was evident by the actions of Jimmi, that there was little chance of empowerment and reciprocal trust. The dangers of allowing one's subjectivity to be aligned to the work were demonstrated in the deteriorating condition of Gareth and others who did not have the choice of withdrawal that the shopfloor workers possessed. The citation of trust as an essential factor in all types of literature concerning TQM, HRM and change is not surprising. Trust is necessary for the creation of mankind's most fundamental requirement, psychological security. But the portrayal of trust has traditionally been as a useful but minor facet of changes to subjectivity, as a one way process (i.e. workers to management) and a process in which workers are easily duped (e.g. Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992). This thesis has argued that it is more likely the researchers that have been duped. First by assuming that statistical or snap-shot analyses can capture the difference between acting out and authentic behaviour, and second by assuming workers themselves cannot make that distinction when judging the behaviours of management.

Distrust has been shown in the case-studies to possess similar characteristics to trust. It is based upon workers' experiences of their workplace relationships and its creation is a reflective prediction in that their identities are *not* safe in the hands of

management. Unlike trust, distrust *prevents* the shift in subjectivity that management require for programmes such as TQM. This is not to say, though, that distrust is of no value in understanding organisational culture. On the contrary, the attitudes and behaviours exhibited by those who distrust management are expressive of a culture of suspicion, low motivation and emotional distancing. Such a culture can be strong (as at Firmin) or fragmented (as at ATP) in the manner in which any other culture can be labelled. Distrust, when manifest in our companies, enabled the status quo to be maintained as a Taylorist model of work. However, there is no reason to suggest that a high commitment culture which experienced extended periods of distrust should not regress to a state where the supervisory controls described in Fox (1974) would be necessary. Although it would seem obvious to argue that the process of moving from distrust to trust would be slower than the opposing motion, this is not necessarily the case if angst is considered. Whilst the cases presented in the thesis do not provide examples of trust moving to distrust one can take examples from 'real life'. The experience of finding that a friend has been untruthful or that a spouse has been unfaithful would have an immediate impact in creating a sense of loss, anxiety or despair (angst). Additionally, the slow process of recovery, of finding and building up new habits and new things to trust would be a difficult and slow process and one which would take place in a similar context of reflexivity, habit and time. Whilst trust and distrust have been argued to be similar in process and form, they are rarely identical in content. Thus, whilst both are habitual, knowledge based and predictive, they will have very different outcomes in both behaviours and attitudes. This said, it is important to reiterate the point made earlier that a simple separation of the trust and distrust rarely occurs. As evidenced by the cases, individuals are capable of trusting and distrusting to different degrees and with different people at different times.

9.4.3 Angst

It is not new to argue that changes (especially those concerned with identity or subjectivity) can lead to anxiety and stress. The concern is repeated in much of the literature in the field. From psychology and human resource management to labour process studies and guru guides, change is universally recognised as a major cause of stress. It has been argued, however, that few of these studies have successfully answered the question of ‘why?’, especially with regard to change for the good. Is it due to poor communication and misunderstandings as the bouquets school might have us believe, or is it because change in organisations is usually a bad thing leading to exploitation and work intensification, as many LPT writers might have us believe? The argument presented here is that it is neither of these: that if humans require habit to act then a disruption of habit may undermine the assumptions, beliefs and values which may have informed the individual’s action. As such, angst is presented as a necessary and ‘natural’ condition accompanying any attempts to manipulate culture or meaning. Such a presentation requires a reconditioning of those cultural writings which make no attempt to explain the ‘black box’ of cultural transformation and focus instead on the before and after descriptions, or worse, the immutability of cultures.

In attempting to conciliate the under- and over-socialised perspectives on change, it has been argued here that angst plays a necessary and crucial role in cultural transformations. One obvious implication of this argument is for the analyses of transformative organisational accounts. It would be too easy (and, therefore, of little benefit) to demonstrate this with reference to the ‘pop’ literature in the area, so instead

we can turn to an example of change theorising that can be found in many critical texts, that of psychological contracts (Sparrow, 1996; Herriot and Pemberton, 1997; Hendry and Jenkins, 1997). The contracts are usually presented as mutually negotiated and open to change or renegotiation on behalf of either management and the workforce. Now this thesis presents many challenges to the notion of a psychological contract: often the concept is developed with little reference to power or resistance (i.e. it is based on two parties negotiating on equal terms), it is usually presented as a process completely subsumed within the workplace (extra-workplace ideology is not discussed), rests upon a relatively unitarist view of the organisation (workers and managers have the organisation's interests at heart) and is often ahistorical in conception (negotiations and interests are not influenced by culture). However, in proposing an explicit transformation between, for example, traditional careers and the 'new deal' (Herriot and Pemberton, 1997) the transformation is held to be instantaneous. Similarly, when the contract is 'broken', for example in Turnley and Feldman (1999), it is presented as a direct and unproblematic step from contractual breakage to a behavioural state (exit, voice, exit or neglect). The limitations of such proposals, in the light of the evidence presented here are easily visible. Usually based upon atemporal studies the model proposed is one from state A to state B with little consideration of the most important element, the subjectivity of the employee.

Despite the phrase 'psychological contract' having been in circulation for forty years (first used by Argyris, 1960), it is only recently that the consideration of the *process* of change has been raised. In his analysis of the literature in this field, Sparrow (1996) stresses the absence of many factors which this thesis has itself emphasised:

‘we may be beginning to see a deeper type of change. We need to enter into a deeper analysis of the ‘new deal’ because studies of the psychological contract raise as many questions as they answer....this change may be temporary, whereby the presumed links between commitment, participation, satisfaction, motivation and performance become submerged as part of a culture shock process. The motivational power of traditional job design characteristics and work incentives is dulled. During the transitional period (i.e. until people adapt to the new realities and the traditional psychological links return) therefore much of the recommended HR toolkit (life-style directed time patterns such as annualised hours, sabbaticals, incentivising tools such as cafeteria benefits and PRP, and developmental tools such as potential identification workshops and mentoring) is found wanting.’ (1996:89).

The need for studies to remain sensitive to this transitional period is paralleled by an organisational need to focus on personal relationships rather than formal HR schemes, so that ‘line managers will need deep psychological insights into the minds and contracts of their employees’ (1996:90). The aprocessual perspective that many cultural studies use to understand transformation should not necessarily prove surprising. The theoretical basis for many writers analysing organisational culture has been provided by symbolic-interpretative or social action writers. Correspondingly, concepts such as ‘objectification’ and ‘reification’ are best suited to periods of stability. When Clifford Geertz argued that man ‘was an animal trapped in his own webs of significance’ (1973: 5), the metaphor is primarily static in that it does not provide the mechanism for changing the web. One of the biggest weaknesses of the OS and cultural literature is that it is, despite common assertions to the contrary, static. Writers underpin their studies with theories that are often best suited to explaining how systems are reproduced not

changed. The focus upon habit rather than structure allows this aprocessual perspective to be challenged for habit is, by definition, temporal.

9.5 The limitations and potential of this research

With an inductive, theory building thesis, some criticisms are more obvious than others. The more obvious can be tackled first. How can the reader be sure that the findings of the thesis are true, or even reliable? Given the emphasis placed upon hard-to-measure phenomena in understanding subjectivity and the consequent criticisms of surveys within these pages it would be inappropriate and inconsistent to call for statistical validation of the study. Any statistical confirmation or rebuttal of the thesis would find its antithesis within these pages. However, these are not the standards that are generally employed to test the 'quality' of a qualitative thesis. Whilst the internal consistency and presentation of evidence is better judged by the reader than the writer, the thesis will hopefully have provided some food for thought with regard to the stalemate that is currently limiting the study of subjectivity in organisations. Concerning the generalisability of the findings, it is hoped that the thesis has made clear the importance of context and local structures in understanding change and TQM. However, given the correspondence between the case studies, it is possible that these findings will help enlighten research concerned with similar medium-sized, traditional manufacturing organisations. It certainly appears that the nature of such firms is especially sensitive to the importance of interpersonal trust and relationships as often each worker would be known to the MD but name if not better. However, as such arguments could be applied to any interpersonal relations the generic discussions of good faith could be applied in any firms. This clearly requires further research, there is no substitute for empirical

evidence, and studies which adopted a similar methodology but focused on different sectors, sizes and geographical locations would be invaluable.

It should also be pointed out that the implications of the thesis stretch beyond the boundaries of organisation studies. Given the use of 'existential (wo)man', structuration and grounded theory, the discussion of trust, distrust and angst may be applicable to different areas of sociology, psychology and even philosophy. How complete and internally consistent is the framework? This is a difficult question to answer as the thesis has covered so many subject areas and I can profess to be an expert in none. There may well be inconsistencies between an existential view of (wo)man and structuration theory or Giddensian notions of trust and distrust. They were utilised because they appeared better suited to making sense of the change process in the case-studies presented. However, such inconsistencies must not be feared but embraced. If it is an adherence to 'discovery' that thesis is aimed at rather than simply (?) the achievement of a PhD, then such challenges serve only to improve existing frameworks of understanding.

A more interesting question to be asked is 'what implications have not been tackled within the thesis?'. Because of the limitations of time and space it has been possible to develop adequately only some of the implications of the framework presented. It is hoped that a fair balance has been achieved in discussing structure, action, culture, change, TQM and HRM from different theoretical and sociological perspectives. However, it is arguably the most important area which has purposely not been touched upon is that of morality. As far as is possible morality has been kept out of this discussion, primarily for the sake of brevity and simplicity. However, on reflection, this is the most urgent issue to be tackled as it is concerned with what one ought to do

and be. Is angst, as some existentialists argue, a desirable state? Or is it one which employers have a moral duty to steer their workforce away from through the use of communication and the manipulation of meaning? Is reflexivity acultural and amoral, and if so how? The identification of a moral imperative raises questions at a personal and an institutional level: Are 'ethical' managers more likely to generate trust in their workforce? To what extent can an organisation be considered 'good'? What are the limits of the power of capitalism in the creation of angst? In terms of exploitation, the question has been discussed incessantly over the last century. If angst, trust or distrust are equally structural and ontological in nature then their consideration also bears relevance to society as well as the workplace. Indeed, the trust explored here which most lends itself to the creation of changes to subjectivity bears great resemblance to that argued by Legge (1998) to approach Kantian definitions of 'good'. If another thesis could now be written, it would be the moral and social implications of the framework that would be most profitably explored.

Finally, one area which could be better tackled would be the extent to which more specific structures such as labour markets, product markets, trade unionisation or technological inputs might affect the relationships which have been outlined here. These were sidelined in the analysis because it was felt that in covering TQM, change, trust and subjectivity, the thesis already had more than enough to cope with. It would be interesting to examine the trust relationships and instabilities that workers, managers and MDs had with these important aspects of organisational life. The impact of a recession for example would provide an interesting backdrop to trust, not just in management, but also in the capitalist system generally. The example at Longbridge seems pertinent.

9.6 Close

For two hundred years the answers provided by the world to questions of human happiness have been dissected efficiently, rationally and objectively from meaning, emotion and feeling. Through the destruction of the environment, unprecedented casualties in war and famine and rising incidence of suicide and crime, the fallacy of this Western methodology has only recently been noticed (let alone acted upon) by the institutions of capitalism (governments included). The response, in the form of social partnerships, the Third Way, ethical foreign policies, care in the community, and (in business) cultural management through TQM or HRM programmes, have been argued by many to simply be placebos to a more politically aware consumer-driven society. Empty symbols for a people already blinded by Coke and Adidas advertisements, designed to obscure and further the extent of their own exploitation. To others, such movements are dangerous discourses, colonising people from within, preventing counter-ideology and achieving total control over identity, subjectivity and emotion. This thesis has attempted to argue that both arguments are based upon inadequate models of (wo)man. That the post-modern efforts to relieve us of the structural determinism have left us with analyses which are equally, if not more, determinist and totalising. In attempting a useful understanding of subjectivity in the (post/hyper)modern world critical analyses have left many in a quandary. The inadequacies of Marxist and Foucauldian descriptions of subjectivity on the brickbats' side have left a choice between embracing the bouquets version of events (e.g. the Blairite government) or navel gazing in the search for irony and paradox. To counter these tendencies the thesis has argued for an understanding of change which puts (wo)man back into the process. Not (wo)man as entirely constructed by prevailing discourses nor as necessarily alienated from their

essential self, but instead as a conscious, reflexive being, using the contradictions between and within structures and discourses to actively bestow trust or distrust upon their environment. For employers, the lesson that emerges from this and from other studies is simply that the exercise of direct power to achieve efficiency or quality improvements may only ever be a partial success. Ironically, if qualitative improvements through cultural change can be achieved only through the development of mutual respect, the justification for pursuing such improvements may eventually need re-evaluation.

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10. Appendices

10.1 Dramatis Personae

Firmin

- | | | |
|---------|---|--|
| Jimmi | - | The new managing director at Firmin. His father bought the company in the late Eighties. |
| Archie | - | The previous managing director. |
| Gareth | - | A production manager in Firmin who's health gradually deteriorated during Jimmi's stewardship. |
| Mary | - | A painter at Firmin |
| Emma | - | A shopfloor worker at Firmin. She was involved in a serious accident at work. |
| Eleanor | - | A shopfloor worker at Firmin. |

ATP

- | | | |
|-------|---|--|
| Brian | - | One of the co-owners and founders of ATP. Is now the vice-chairman. |
| James | - | The other co-owner and founder. He is the chairman. |
| Len | - | The newly appointed production director who was aiming to get the position of managing director. Unfortunately he died at the end of 1999. |
| Kevin | - | A production manager and Len's second in command |
| Hazel | - | The new personnel manager at ATP, left three months after she joined. |
| Ian | - | An ATP manager |
| Tim | - | An 'repair engineer' at ATP. I worked alongside him for some time. |
| Ray | - | A manager at ATP who was eventually dismissed for poor performance. He became increasingly ill over the course of the study. |

Whale

- Colin Morton - The newly appointed MD at Whale.
- Rob Beran - The previous MD and co-owner.
- Edgar Hoey - The director of marketing who bought into the company with Rod and Aidan.
- Lord Warton - One of the original founders and now a non-executive director.
- Aidan Weber - The production director was forced out of Whale.
- Dave - A shopfloor worker at Whale. Eventually became a team leader.
- Nick - The main blaster at Whale.

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