

# **Legacies in Organizations**

By

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To my wife Anne, my daughters Elizabeth and Katelyn, and our little “Opuesto”

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## ABSTRACT

Within some organizations, certain individuals seem to “live on” after they are gone. We often refer to these individuals as having a legacy, or a representation that endures in the collective memory of the group after their departure. In this dissertation, I examine the role of legacies in organizations, providing a deeper understanding of the selection mechanisms that determine who gets remembered in an organization’s collective memory, the mnemonics or memory aids that contribute to their endurance, and the important role they play in the life of the organization. I accomplish this goal through a qualitative study of two organizations in the early stages of merging together. My findings suggest that the selection mechanisms governing who gets remembered reflect evolutionary pressures facing the organization as a for-profit entity and as a community of members. Thus legacies are greatly influenced by one’s impact on the trajectory of the organization as well as one’s impact on relationships within the organizational community. My findings also suggest that these legacies endure in three domains within organizations: 1) cognitive space, in the form of first and second-hand memories, 2) social space in the form of communicative acts, and 3) material space in the form of material artifacts. Individual memories supply the content of legacies, and material artifacts give the legacy physical form, but the legacy is granted social life through communicative acts. As communicative acts die off, so does the social life of the legacy. My findings also suggest that legacies influence social identity processes in organizations, giving clarity to the organizational identity, providing continuity to the organizational identity, enhancing the stability of the organizational identity, and enhancing the attractiveness of the organizational identity. Finally, my findings suggest that certain legacies become institutionalized as they come to embody the identity of the organization, infusing the legacy with moral power, and enabling the legacy to

have an enduring influence on the attitudes and behaviors of current members. As a whole, this study illuminates the importance of collective memory processes for organizational studies and opens new avenues for the study of organizational memory, identity and culture.

## CHAPTER 1

### *Legacies in Organizations: A Gap in Our Understanding*

We often reserve the verb “dying” for those that are quite elderly or those who have been diagnosed with a terminal illness and know their death is impending. However, the reality is, we are all dying. In fact, after reading the last two sentences, you are about 15 seconds closer to your death and there is nothing you can do to change that. Death is an inescapable reality of life.

What then becomes of an individual after they have died? This is one of the nagging questions of the human condition. And there are more answers to this question than there are nations of the earth. For example, there are over 500 entries on Wikipedia’s list of Religions and Spiritual Traditions. Some suggest that within each individual is a spirit or a soul that lives on in various forms after death. For example, the Qur’an teaches that “those who are blessed shall be in the Garden: They will dwell therein for all the time that the heavens and the earth endure” (Qur’an 11: 108 [Ali, 2009]). For others, there is the anticipation of rebirth in another physical form. For example, one of the basic tenants of some Indian religions is that after death, the soul begins a new life in various forms that may include the habitation of an animal body (Hall, 1999). Others hope for a scientific resurrection, placing faith in modern science to find a way to reverse the effects of aging and death indefinitely. For example, there is a growing industry revolving round the idea of cryogenics, or the freezing of a dead human body until modern science finds a way to bring it back to life (Woodruff, 2011). Yet for others, there is the belief that life ends at death; that no element survives or remains (Baggini, 2009).

The purpose of this dissertation is not to settle the debate between the world’s religions about whether mankind has a spirit or a soul, and whether this spirit or soul lives on after death. I will leave that debate to the theologians and philosophers. However, one of the central

assumptions of this dissertation is that organizations, as enduring social entities, offer the potential for a form of symbolic immortality (Becker, 1973; Lifton, 1973), a pathway whereby individuals can have a legacy that will endure even after they are gone. And in the pages that follow, I hope to be able to: 1) Provide a deeper understanding of the reasons why some individuals have legacies that endure in an organization's collective memory after they are gone; 2) illuminate how legacies are kept alive in an organization's collective memory after an individual has died or departed the organization; and 3) offer an account of why these legacies matter for life within organizations. However, before we begin this journey it is important to understand what legacies are, and why current research in organizational studies has not gone far enough in helping us to understand these important phenomena in organizations.

### **What is a Legacy?**

If you pay close attention to the media, you will often hear discussions about the legacies of various individuals. For example, in in 2005, the Bloomberg financial newswire decided to update its open-ended obituary of Apple CEO Steve Jobs and inadvertently published it, sparking a firestorm of discussion about what Jobs legacy really would be (Moore, 2008). A Google search today of the terms "Steve Jobs" and "legacy" returns over 6 million hits. In 2011, the approach of President Ronald Reagan's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday ignited significant discussions of his legacy over 20 years after his departure from office, and almost 7 years after his death (Bunch, 2011). Earlier this year, the approach of Michael Jordan's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday provoked discussions of his legacy in the NBA, and how it would ultimately stand in comparison to current NBA superstar LeBron James (Thompson, 2013). And just a few weeks ago, as Pope Benedict XVI announced his retirement and was succeeded by Pope Francis, there were numerous discussions of his legacy (Morton, 2013).



What are these legacies that we hear so much talk about? I review two different perspectives that address the concept of legacy in different ways. One is a micro perspective, which focuses on legacies as an individual's perception of how they will be remembered by future generations. The other is a more macro perspective, which focuses on legacies as collective representations of former members in the story of a collective across time.

### **Personal Legacy: A Micro Perspective.**

There are a small number of studies in the management literature, what I call the "personal legacy perspective", which examine the effect of cognitions about one's own personal legacy on the attitudes and behavior of individuals within organizations (Fox, Tost, & Wade-Benzoni, 2010; Grant & Wade-Benzoni, 2009; Wade-Benzoni, Sondak, & Galinsky, 2010; Wade-Benzoni, Tost, Hernandez, & Larrick, 2012). This perspective has roots in theories of personal identity development and identity work. The reflexive capacity of making sense of the self as an object gives rise to a cognitive meaning-structure that we often refer to as the self-concept. This self-concept is a theory of the self that represents "the concept the individual has of himself as a physical, social, and spiritual being" (Gecas, 1982: 3). And the self-concept is composed of a variety of subordinate identities that provide partial answers to the "Who am I?" question. These identities can arise from defining attributes or characteristics (e.g., smart, athletic, handsome), roles (e.g., father, PhD Student) or group memberships (e.g., University of Michigan, Academy of Management) and they give structure and content to the self-concept. They also become "the lens through which people perceive their worlds and organize their behavior"(Swann, Polzer, Seyle, & Ko, 2004: 12). A legacy from this point of view is a part of an individual's self-concept that captures their perceptions of how they will be remembered after they are gone (Schmitt & Leonard, 1986), "those personal aspects that still live when the person

does not” (Shneidman, 2008: 30). An individual’s perceived legacy is an important source of meaning and can provide assurance that one’s work and one’s identity will endure beyond death, (Fox et al., 2010).

Developmental psychologists suggest that concerns about one’s legacy are most prominent later in the human life cycle. According to Levinson (1978: 21), through their 20’s and 30’s, most individuals will reach the climax of their height and strength, sexual capacity, cardiac and respiratory capacity, general biological vigor, and intellect. And they will make basic choices that are important to establishing their adult identity, such as marriage, taking a first job, separating from family, etc. However, the “middle age” (somewhere between the ages of 40-60), has largely negative connotations. According to Levinson (1978: x), “One is no longer young and yet not quite old...the connotations of youth are vitality, growth, mastery, the heroic; whereas old age connotes vulnerability, withering, ending, the brink of nothingness.” This clash of the young/old polarity becomes exacerbated as individuals become increasingly aware of the decline of their own bodily and mental function and more frequently exposed to the illness, suffering and death of others. During this stage, individuals must begin coming to terms with the inevitability of their own death. It is at this stage that individuals become most concerned with achieving a lasting sense of continuity or immortality through symbolic means (Lifton, 1973).

It is in this stage of life that developmental psychologists suggest that the “imagery of the legacy tends to flourish” (Levinson, 1978: 218). According to Kotre (1984: 10) these desires for symbolic immortality motivate individuals to “invest one’s substance in forms of life and work that will outlive the self.” Thus, like identity work, which is motivated by gaps or discrepancies between one’s self views and feedback from the social environment (Ibarra, 1999; Pratt, 2000;

Snow & Anderson, 1987), scholars have suggested several types of “work” that individuals may engage in when the legacy is perceived as deficient, damaged, or lacking. These may include the bearing and rearing of children (Kotre, 1984; Lifton, 1973), the transmission of skills through mentoring or leadership (Erikson, 1959; Kotre, 1984; McAdams & De St Aubin, 1992), acts of creativity (Kotre, 1984; Lifton, 1973). For example, Alfred Nobel had spent most of his life amassing a fortune by creating dynamite and other types of explosives that were often used in weapons of death and destruction. When Alfred’s brother passed away, a local newspaper writer mistakenly believed that it was Alfred who had died. The obituary published in the newspaper said, “The merchant of death is dead . . . Dr. Alfred Nobel, who became rich by finding ways to kill more people faster than ever before, died yesterday.” As Nobel read this account of his life, he was disturbed by this assessment and had a desire to leave a better legacy. In his last will, he devoted most of his estate to the establishment of the now-famous Nobel Prizes, awarded for profound progress in the areas of physical science, chemistry, medicine, literature, and the perpetuation of peace (Fant, 2006). As a result, the “merchant of death” is perhaps best known for his contributions to world peace.

Within the management literature, researchers are trying to understand what happens to decision makers when they are primed to think about their own legacy. Kimberly Wade-Benzoni, and her colleagues are the primary pioneers of this work. Wade-Benzoni’s research is focused on understanding how individuals make decisions about resources that impact future generations and the benefits future generations will receive from those resources (e.g., the Social Security Fund; the natural environment, etc.). These situations are usually marked by the absence of opportunities for direct reciprocity (i.e., the current generation will not benefit from the sacrifices it makes for future generations), temporal distance between the decision and the

consequences of that decision, and uncertainty about potential outcomes (Wade-Benzoni & Tost, 2009). As a result, decision makers in the present often fail to make decisions that require self-sacrifice in the present in order to preserve a resource or prevent a burden for future generations (Wade-Benzoni, 2002). However, when individuals are encouraged to think of the impact their decisions will have on their personal legacy, individuals have demonstrated stronger affinity towards future generations, more ethical emotions during the decision making process, and a greater willingness to self-sacrifice in the present for the benefit of future generations (Wade-Benzoni et al., 2010; Wade-Benzoni et al., 2012).

In sum, the personal legacy perspective defines a legacy as an aspect of the self-concept that captures an individual's perceptions of how they will be remembered after they are gone. This part of the self-concept becomes most salient as individuals age, but individuals may be primed to think about their legacy at other life stages. And when individuals become concerned about their legacy, they are motivated to create connections to aspects of life that will endure beyond their physical presence, and that will enhance the way they will be remembered by future others. However, as I argue below, the fact that such motivations exist speaks to the fact that individuals are connected to a larger process that makes the idea of a legacy possible: collective memory.

### **Collective Memory: A Macro Perspective.**

There is a well-established literature in sociology, which is united by terms such as “collective memory”, “social memory”, and “cultural memory”, that draws our attention to the efforts of collectives to construct, preserve, revise, and invoke its shared past (Erll, Nünning, & Young, 2008; Olick & Robbins, 1998). This perspective has its roots in the work of Maurice Halbwachs (a student of esteemed sociologist Emile Durkheim), who was the first to offer a truly

social account of memory. Standing in stark contrast to Freud, who had put forth an influential theory of individual memory as the repository of all human experiences, Halbwachs argued that there was little sense in looking for the “location” of memory in the mind because “it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize and localize their memories” (Halbwachs, 1992: 38). In other words, key questions of memory such as how we remember, what we remember, and when we remember are not reserved for psychologists because they are really only answerable through a perspective that acknowledges the social nature of our individual existence.

While Halbwachs early work helped illuminate the inherently social nature of individual remembering, it was in his later works that he began to offer an even more collective view of collective memory, focusing on the importance of publicly available symbols and rituals that help to communicate the shared past of a particular group. For example in his work “The Legendary Topography of the Holy Land”, Halbwachs observed “when one looks at the physiognomy of the holy places in successive times, one finds the character of those groups inscribed” (1992: 235). In other words, the four groups occupying the Holy Land (Jews, Romans, Christians, and Muslims) had each created, shaped, and in some cases destroyed various aspects of their physical environment to create and preserve their distinct identities and cultures. For Halbwachs, this phenomenon was beyond the domain of history, which he viewed as a group’s past to which there was no active relationship. This active creation, communication, and commemoration of a group’s shared past, in Halbwachs view, was what constituted the phenomenon of “collective memory”.

Collectives are dynamic, temporal entities with a continued existence across time, and the capacity to “outlive” their individual members (Mannheim, 1952). As collectives progress

through their “life cycle”, they may change quite drastically, encounter novel situations, the priorities of leaders may change, they may become increasingly complex, and they may adopt new strategies, structures, and decision-making methods (Dodge, Fullerton, & Robbins, 1994; Jawahar & McLaughlin, 2001; Miller & Friesen, 1983, 1984; Smith, Mitchell, & Summer, 1985; Walsh & Dewar, 1987). In addition, new participants in the collective may emerge and former participants may disappear, meaning that most members will only participate in the collective for a small part of its history (Mannheim, 1952). However, we conceive of collectives as the same entity across time. For example, if I were to refer to the organization “General Motors” most would assume that I am talking about *the same entity* that was founded in 1908 despite the fact that the General Motors of today has changed the location of its headquarters, operates in many new areas, makes completely different automobiles, and has no members who were a part of the organization in 1908.

A collective memory, or a collective's representation of its shared past, acts as a uniting force, binding the organization as an entity across time and serving as the primary medium through which collective identity and culture are constituted and maintained (Olick & Robbins, 1998). These “constitutive narratives” (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985), what I sometimes refer to as “we stories”, communicate “who we were” and “how we came to be.” Thus, collectives are viewed as “communities of memory” (Bellah et al., 1985) or “mnemonic communities” (Zerubavel, 1996), with a set of shared memories that are critical to the constitution of their identity and culture. For example, Zerubavel (1996: 284) noted:

“There are particular memories commonly shared by all Guatemalans or art historians yet only by few Koreans or paleontologists, respectively. Similarly, there are many

memories commonly shared by nearly all Beatles fans, stamp collectors, or longtime readers of Mad Magazine, yet by no one else besides.”

This leads to the conclusion that “the history of the groups or communities to which we belong is an indispensable part of our social identity as anthropologists, Mormons, Native Americans, Miami Dolphins fans, or Marines” (Zerubavel, 1996: 290). Thus, the study of collective memory in sociology is inextricably linked to the study of collective identity and culture.

According to Bellah and colleagues, (1985: 153) an important part of any collective memory or constitutive narrative is “examples of the men and women who have embodied and exemplified the meaning of the community. These stories of collective history and exemplary individuals are an important part of the tradition that is so central to a community of memory.” These representations of former members in the collective memory of a group are what I refer to as legacies in this dissertation. This definition moves our focus beyond individual’s perceptions about how they will be remembered by future generations, to a focus on how former members are remembered by the current generation. This does not mean that individuals will not work to influence their own legacy while they are still around. For example, Fine (2001) shows how Henry Ford tried to manage his image in the media through writing autobiographies, restricting his access to the media, and having a spokesman for the company that would work very hard to make sure the quotes published in the media were in line with the image Ford was trying to maintain. However, the work of constructing, maintaining, and revising a legacy may continue long after an individual is gone, suggesting that the meaning of a particular legacy is mutable and emerges through reciprocal negotiation between the actors in a given social context (Blumer, 1969; Goffman, 1959).

In sum, the collective memory perspective suggests that legacies are representations of former members in the collective memory of a group. The collective memory perspective does not discount the capacity of individuals to engage in behaviors that might influence their future memory, but it draws our focus beyond the concerns of individual's with their own legacies to the collective efforts of constructing, maintaining, and revising a former member's legacy. And this process of constructing, maintaining, and revising the collective story of the organization, and the legacies therein plays a critical role in constituting, transmitting, and changing the identity and culture of the collective.

### **Legacies in Organizations: A Gap in Our Understanding**

Despite the significant attention that has been devoted to the study of collective memory in sociology, and somewhat to the study of legacies, this literature has largely ignored organizations and their members as a unit of analysis. However Anteby & Molnar (2012) argue, "the collective memory lens applies just as forcefully to organizations, notwithstanding the scant attention they have received to date." As a result, we know very little about what becomes of an individual after they are gone from an organization, the processes and behaviors in organizations that help sustain their legacies across time, nor the impact that these legacies actually have within organizations. This is not because organizational studies lacks the concepts of culture, identity, and memory that are so intertwined in the study of collective memory. However, as I argue below, this lack of attention on collective memory processes and legacies in organizations has largely been driven by the fact that these literatures have developed independently, with little interaction between the three.

### **The Organizational Culture Literature**



The study of organizational culture emerged before the study of organizational identity and organizational memory in the late 1970s and early 1980s. While the study of “culture” had deep roots in other disciplines (e.g., Geertz, 1973) and was hinted at in earlier studies of organizations, the 1980’s were dominated by a concentrated interest in the study of “organizational cultures”. As one team of scholars commented near the beginning of this cultural boom, “since 1979, no fewer than seven review articles have been published on aspects of this topic, and the outpouring of work shows no signs of abatement. Few readers would disagree that the study of organizational culture has become one of the major domain of organizational research...[perhaps] the single most active arena” (Ouchi & Wilkins, 1985: 458). This steady stream of studies brought with it a newfound appreciation for issues related to “organizational life in all its richness” (Alvesson, 1993: 2) and the “systems of shared meaning that facilitate organizational action” (Smircich & Stubbart, 1985: 724).

Over the last several decades, organizational scholars have argued at length about what culture is (Frost, Moore, Louis, Lundberg, & Martin, 1985), the extent to which culture is integrated or shared (Martin, 2002), and the methods that are most appropriate for studying culture (Denison, 1996). As a result, it should not be surprising that Alvesson observed, “culture has no fixed or broadly accepted meaning even in anthropology, but variation in its use is especially noticeable in the literature on organizational culture.” However, as noted by Frost et al. (1985), “Talking about organizational culture seems to mean talking about the importance for people of symbolism- of rituals, myths, stories, and legends- and about the interpretation of events, ideas, and experiences that are influenced and shaped by the groups within which they live.” Inherent in this statement is the notion that individuals, as members of organizations, are embedded in systems of meaning that shape their experiences within those organizations. And

these systems of meaning shape the way people think, feel, and behave as they enact their roles as members of a particular organization.

Smircich (1983) provided a helpful articulation of the different perspectives used to approach the study of organizational culture. In some cases, organizational cultures are viewed as a variable, something that organizations “have”. Perspectives that treat organizational culture as an “independent variable” look for systematic variations in the values or assumptions of different organizations, and examine how those systematic variations influence organizational action (e.g., Sackmann, 2010). Perspectives that treat organizational culture as a “dependent variable” focus on the various ways that leaders can shape or “manage” an organization’s culture (e.g., Deal & Kennedy, 2000). However, other studies adopt a view that cultures are something that organizations are. From this perspective, organizational culture is often defined in terms of “shared mental assumptions” that “guide interpretation and action” by “defining appropriate behavior for various situations” (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006: 437). And cultural theorists suggest that these values and assumptions are manifested in a variety of observable forms such as symbols, language, narratives, and practices (Trice & Beyer, 1993) that play an important role in the perpetuation and transmission of these assumptions and values.

The typical argument of culture creation in organizational studies was perhaps best typified by Schein (1983): 1) An individual has an idea for an enterprise; 2) a founding group is formed around the idea; 3) the founding group begins to create the organizations (obtaining funding, patents, etc.); 4) others are brought into the group and the group begins to function, developing assumptions and values that would guide the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of subsequent generations of organizational members. Within studies of organizational culture, the leadership of founders is viewed as the primary source of the assumptions that define an

organization's culture (Schein, 2010). According to Schein (2010), founders have the capacity to embed their own personal value and assumptions into the organization through a variety of mechanisms including their reactions to important events, what they measure and pay attention to, the design of the physical environment, informal stories, and formal statements of the organizations strategy. As noted by Martin, Sitkin, and Boehm (1985), this view of the culture creation process "offers a seductive promise to entrepreneurs: a founder's personal perspective can be transformed into a shared legacy that will survive death and departure from the institution."

However, despite claims of organizational cultural theorists that "cultures cannot be divorced from their histories" (Trice & Beyer, 1993: 6), and that "shared history" is the "critical, defining characteristic" of any group or organization (Schein, 2004: 11), the literature on organizational culture has never explored the importance of memory processes, which is seen as an "intrinsic part of culture" in the literature on collective memory in sociology (Schwartz, 2000: xi). Unlike the literature on organizational culture, which focuses on the various ways organizations preserve assumptions and values through various cultural forms, the collective memory perspective focuses on the preservation of the shared history of the group as one of the primary means through which cultures are constituted and maintained. Thus, cultural forms take on a slightly different role, becoming the vehicles for collective remembrance of those events and individuals from the organizations past that are so critical to the maintenance of a collective identity and culture. Thus, the literature on organizational culture could benefit by moving our focus beyond the enduring assumptions and values of organizational founders, to a focus on the enduring representations of individuals from an organization's history, and the role these representations play in organizational life.

## **The Organizational Identity Literature.**

Not long after the organizational culture literature began blossoming in organizational studies, Albert and Whetten (1985) published an influential article on organizational identity. Like the concept of culture, the study of identity was already emerging in other disciplines and had been hinted at in earlier studies of organizations, but this paper helped to establish the study of organizational identity as an independent area of study in the management literature, and their initial definition has been widely cited in subsequent studies. In their initial view an organizational identity was defined as those features of an organization that were claimed to be central to character, distinctive, and enduring. And since Albert and Whetten (1985) introduced the concept into organizational studies, two dominant paradigms have emerged about the nature of organizational identity (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). The first perspective (championed by Whetten himself) suggests that organizational identity resides in a set of institutional claims about the central, distinctive, and enduring characteristics of the organization (Whetten & Mackey, 2002). Advocates of this view argue that these institutional claims are available to organizational members to use as they construct a collective sense of self. An alternative perspective with roots in social constructivism suggests that organizational identity resides in members' shared beliefs about the central, distinctive, and enduring features of the organization (Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000). This perspective acknowledges that institutional claims or labels may be relatively stable, but also suggests that members have a great deal of agency to renegotiate shared understanding about what their organization is about and what the official identity claims really mean. For example, Gioia and colleagues (2000: 65) argued, "There is a reassuring continuity for members (and also for interested external constituents) in saying that

their mission or central values stay the same, but the representations and translations into action take different forms over time.”

Since Albert and Whetten’s (1985) foundational paper, there has been a significant amount of research devoted to understanding organizational identity, and most of the empirical work has centered on the formation of new identities (Clegg, Rhodes, & Kornberger, 2007) or events that disrupt established identities (Elsbach & Kramer, 1996). For example, Corley and Gioia (2004) used a corporate spin-off as an opportunity to observe how the organization created a new identity. And Dutton and Dukerich (1991) used the crisis of homelessness facing the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to better understand how the organization’s identity shaped members interpretations of this pressing issue, and the organization’s responses. However, as Anteby and Molnar (2012: 517) concluded, “Though a variety of identity management strategies have been documented, most are set in the present. Identities are rarely, however, only set in the present. They are part of ongoing historical constructions and collective memories. Thus, although our cumulative knowledge of identity work is considerable, its specific relationship to an organization’s history, particularly its collective memory, remains neglected.” Rowlinson, Booth, Clark, Delahaye, and Proctor (2010: 75) also suggested that “for the most part organizational memory studies make no connection with organizational identity, and the organizational identity literature does not deal with memory.”

This is perplexing because at the individual level, memory is viewed as necessary for a sense of personal identity. For example, Kandel (2006: 10), who won the Nobel Prize for his research related to human memory, has said:

“Without the binding force of memory, experience would be splintered into as many fragments as there are moments in life. Without the mental time travel provided by

memory, we would have no awareness of our personal history, no way of remembering the joys that serve as the luminous milestones of our life. *We are who we are because of what we learn and what we remember.*”

Similarly, collective memory scholars view memory as “a central, if not the central medium though which identities are constituted” (Olick & Robbins, 1998: 13). Thus, exploring collective memory processes in organizations, specifically the enduring representations of former members could add new insights to the literature on organizational identity.

### **The Organizational Memory Literature.**

The literature on organizational memory began developing after the literatures on organizational identity and organizational culture. The work of Walsh and Ungson (1991) is often credited with establishing the concept of “organizational memory” as an independent sub-field in organizational studies. However, Walsh and Ungson (1991) were certainly not the first to invoke the term “organizational memory”. In fact, the first reference I can find to the term organizational memory in an organizational journal was in a 1958 Administrative Science Quarterly article written by James Robinson: “Decision Making in the House Rules Committee” (Robinson, 1958). In his analysis of decision making in the U.S. House of Representatives Rules Committee, Robinson observes, “There is no ‘organizational memory’, no secretariat to summon old position papers, files, and reports. Hearings are not usually transcribed, and only the individual decision maker’s memory may recall previous experience.” Likewise, in their foundational work “Organizations”, March and Simon (1958) noted the importance of “memory” in organizations, which included “all sorts of partial and modified records of past experience and programs for responding to environmental stimuli.” And others in between such as Argyris and Schön (1978) and Hall (1984) would later argue for the importance of memory in theories of

organizational learning and policy-making. However, according to Walsh and Ungson (1991), up until the publication of their article “Organizational Memory”, ideas about and references to the memory of organizations were fragmented and not synthesized into a coherent theory.

These early conceptualizations of memory that Walsh and Ungson (1991) were drawing from in the management literature were based on the common assumption that organizations were information processing systems and the primary of purpose of an organization’s memory was to enable the retrieval of information from the past to aid in decision making situations. Walsh and Ungson (1991) cited Halbwachs to substantiate the claim that collectives have the capacity to stimulate the memories of individual members, but did not refer to his later work, which focused more on construction and maintenance of a shared past, which is so critical to a collective identity and culture. As a result, in Walsh and Ungson’s (1991) view, an organization’s memory was viewed much like a computer, with “information from an organization’s history” stored in various “storage bins” that could be brought to bear on present decisions” through various processes of retrieval to enhance decision making in the present. The five storage bins deemed critical to organizational memory were: *individuals* and their personal recollections of past experiences; *culture*, including norms, language, symbols and stories; *transformations* of raw materials into outputs and other organizational practices; *structures*, such as organizational roles and publicly available rules that help provide the organizational a formal structure; and the physical *ecology* of the organization, including the physical surroundings of the organization and its workplace layout. Their intuition suggested an important link between memory and culture, but culture was viewed as the static retention facility of information from an organization’s past. And the importance of memory for constituting a sense of shared identity was not even on their radar.

Since the publication of Walsh and Ungson's (1991) seminal article "Organizational Memory", much has been written about the way organizations store information from their past and bring it to bear on present decisions. In fact, according to data from the Web of Science database, over 600 scholarly articles have cited this article since its publication, leading one set of authors to call it "a citation classic" with an "impact that has extended well beyond management studies" (Anderson & Sun, 2010: 142). Outside of organizational studies, this work has been particularly important in the study of information technology systems that help sustain record keeping and decision making within organizations. Within organizational studies, this work on organizational memory has mostly been employed to better understand how organizational memory facilitates decision-making and organizational learning (Anand, Manz, & Glick, 1998; Argote, 2012; Casey, 2012; Flores, Zheng, Rau, & Thomas, 2012; Garud, Dunbar, & Bartel, 2011; Huber, 1991; Kyriakopoulos, 2011; Moorman & Miner, 1998). However, critics of this perspective argue that this foundational conceptualization of organizational memory as "stored information" that can be brought to bear on current decisions has "underestimated the historicity of memory" resulting in theories of organizational memory that are mechanistic and preoccupied with the notion that memory is "a functional aid for decision making in the present" (Rowlinson et al., 2010: 76). As a result, the literature on organizational memory has never really been concerned with organizational "memories" that did not influence decision-making and, as a result, organizational performance in some way. Thus by exploring what happens to individuals after they depart an organization, how the legacies of some individuals are preserved across time, and the role these legacies play in organizational life, I believe we can add a great deal to the literatures on culture, identity, and memory in organizational studies.

### **This Dissertation**



In sum, I have defined a legacy as the representation of an individual within an organization's collective memory after they have died or departed a group, and believe that current perspectives in organizational studies have fallen short in helping us to understand legacies in organizations and the important role they play in social life. As a result, the purpose of this dissertation is to help us better understand several important questions about legacies, their endurance, and the important role they play in organizational life. I summarize my research questions below, and provide an overview of the purpose and findings of each chapter that helps to answer these specific questions.

### **Chapter 3: Who has a legacy and why are these individuals memorable?**

Collective memories are inherently selective. And according to Martin et al. (1985: 99), founder-centered perspectives on the creation of organizational cultures “offer a seductive promise to entrepreneurs: a founder’s personal perspective can be transformed into a shared legacy that will survive death and departure from the institution- a form of organizational immortality.” This assumption, they explain, is a result of two cognitive biases: salience, which “causes leaders to figure prominently in people’s memories of events”, and attribution, which stems from people’s “minimal awareness of situational determinants of leader’s behavior” (Martin et al., 1985: 99-101). Similarly, practitioner works such as “A Leader’s Legacy” (Kouzes & Posner, 2008) and “Your Leadership Legacy” (Galford & Maruca, 2006) seem to suggest that leaders are in an especially privileged position to craft a personal legacy that will endure after they are gone.

Based on these founder-centric perspectives we might expect to find that an organization’s collective memory is filled with legacies of founders and leaders, and their heroic deeds. In this chapter, I explore the content of an organization’s collective memory to examine

“who” has a legacy in the organization’s collective memory, and “why” they are memorable. I find that founders and CEO’s do dominate the official published histories of the organization. However, my interviews with organizational informants reveal former members at all levels of the organizational hierarchy that have enduring legacies within the organization’s collective memory. I use these individuals to highlight the selection mechanisms that help to determine who has a legacy in organizations.

#### **Chapter 4: How are these legacies kept alive in an organization’s collective memory?**

In her book “Heroes: A History of Hero Worship”, Hughes-Hallett (2006: 15) writes: Dead heroes escape the degeneration that awaits the rest of us. They shall not grow old as we that are left grow old, and it seems to those who survive them that they can evade death.” In this chapter, I examine how legacies endure across time within an organization’s collective memory. Previous work on organizational memory draws on the metaphor of organizations as storage bins for information from the past that can be recalled in the present for future decisions. However, in this chapter, I suggest that the static, mechanistic language of “storing” and “recall” is great for helping us understand the workings of information systems in organizations, but does give us an adequate understanding of the dynamics of an organization’s collective memory. Instead, I show how legacies endure in various domains in an organizational collective memory, supported by various mnemonics or “memory aids” ranging from unconscious cognitive associations between former members and enduring aspects of the social and material environment to more purposeful actions that manufactured I call “legacy work”. While individual memories provide the content of legacies, and material artifacts give the legacy form, I argue that legacies are brought to “social life” as former members live on in the communicative acts of organizational members.

## **Chapter 5: How do legacies matter in organizational life?**

In this chapter, I argue that identification with a social group includes a fusion of a member's self with the ongoing history of the collective. As a result, I suggest that legacies can have an important influence on social identity processes in organizations. And my findings suggest that legacies influence social identity processes in four important ways: 1) they give meaning to identity claims by anchoring those claims in historical context; 2) they give continuity to the social identity by helping current members to connect the generations of the organization and conceptualize the organization as a continuous entity existing across time; 3) they give stability to the social identity by helping current members gain confidence in the capacity of the organization to survive into the future; and 4) they can give positivity to the social identity by helping current members feel pride in the achievements and accomplishments of former members of the organization.

## **Chapter 6: How do legacies matter in organizational life?**

In this chapter I also explore how legacies matter, but I focus my analysis on two legacies that represent the outcome of a process I call "institutionalization", whereby the legacy of a former member comes to embody the identity of the collective. When this occurs, the legacy of the former member becomes an institutional legacy, and serves as the representation of the group prototype, or the "moral framework" (Schwartz, 2000: 8) of organizations that offer "conceptions of what a good person is like and the virtues that define such character" (Bellah et al., 1985: 153). As such, institutional legacies become the standard for evaluating the behavior of other members, they motivate behavior that supports collective goals and pursuits, and they can endow organizational actions with legitimacy when those actions are deemed as consistent with the character of the former member.

## CHAPTER 2

### *The Research Context*

I had driven down this street dozens of times during my doctoral program, passing the various strip malls, stores, and buildings, yet I had never taken notice of the building on the west side of the street across from the dealership where I routinely took my car to be serviced. In many ways, it was invisible to me. However, as I pulled into the driveway leading to the Beck and Miller<sup>1</sup> parking lot, the building suddenly became quite visible to me. I was coming to visit with the CEO, Robert Beck, about the possibility of studying the organization's efforts to preserve its history and memories from the past. As I parked my car and walked into the building, I passed a plaque outside the front door that indicates to those who enter that this is a "Centennial Business", having operated continuously for over 100 years. I passed an old piece of printing equipment in the foyer and checked in with the secretary at the front desk. I noticed on the opposite wall the portraits of three individuals, but they were nameless faces to me at the time. I was escorted back to the CEO's administrative assistant who informed Robert that I had arrived. After a few brief moments, Robert Beck invited me into his office, and my life was forever changed.

Over the next 8 months, my life became absorbed with understanding the history of this organization, the key events that have defined it, the key players who have shaped it, and the various ways that this organization is influenced by its past. I've documented significant sights of memory in their manufacturing plants, I've attended their employee appreciation days, I've met with former members, I've learned about how books are made, I've interviewed current employees and handed them tissues as they've wept, and I've learned all about their current

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<sup>1</sup> In this dissertation I have replaced the names of the organizations I studied and the individuals mentioned by my informants with pseudo names.

struggles they face as they attempt to merge two separate companies together. It is safe to say that Beck and Miller is no longer invisible to me. The stories of this organization have become an important part of my life and my career. The people have generously given of their time and have given me insights for which I am deeply grateful. I now feel a connection to the organization that I never would have anticipated the many times I took my car for an oil change across the street.

### **Methods**

As was noted by Carlile and Christensen (2012: 2) “the process of theory building, which is iterative, can be divided into several stages. In the earliest stages of theory building, the best that researchers can do is to observe phenomena, and to carefully describe, measure, and record what they see.” At early stages of theoretical development in a particular domain, qualitative research can be especially helpful (Lee, 1999). Because there is so little existing theory about legacies in organizations, a case study methodology was well suited to help me examine the legacies in the collective memory of an organization, the various ways that these legacies were maintained, and the role that these legacies played in the life of the organization.

According to Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007: 25), “case studies are rich, empirical descriptions of particular instances of a phenomenon that are typically based on a variety of data sources.” They are best suited for inductive theory development (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007) whereby the researcher builds an emerging theory from data sources including personal observations of the case site, the views of those actively living in or working in the case site, and from the examination of artifacts, documents, and other tangible, physical objects. A case study methodology is particularly well suited for this dissertation because a case study combines the elements of a “history” (archival documents, physical artifacts), which is ideally suited to

examining the “dead past”, and other elements (observation and interviews), which are ideally suited to examining “contemporary events” (Yin, 2011: 11). Thus, a method that facilitates a deep understanding of the “dead past”, as well as the past that is actively circulated in the memory of the organization is ideal for this dissertation.

### **Case Selection**

To address my focal research questions, it was important to identify an organizational context where legacies would be “transparently observable” (Eisenhardt, 1989: 537). Thus, I wanted to study an organization where history mattered. In addition, because of my interest in the endurance of legacies, I wanted to identify a context that was old enough to have experienced multiple generations of leadership and membership in the organization. As a result, the most important criterion that guided the selection of a case was the age of the organization.

While I was in the process of searching for a case site, I was invited by an organizational consultant to help facilitate a workshop for the sales force of a local company that was merging with another local company. The larger company, Beck Inc., was founded in the late 1800s and was in its fourth generation of organizational leadership. The smaller company, Miller Inc., was founded in 1960 and was in its third generation of organizational leadership. These two organizations (now Beck and Miller Inc.) were ideal candidates to study legacies for several reasons. First, these organizations have existed for 120 years and 60 years respectively, and they have rich histories that are important to their identities. Second, because both of these organizations have survived for so long, they have “outlived” their founders and many of their individual members. As a result, I was able to observe the ways these organizations have preserved and perpetuated the memories of particular individuals across time. And third, these organizations merged in February of 2012, giving me a window into two separate organizations,

and how legacies might be influencing this organizational change. A member of my dissertation committee had previously served on the Board of Directors at Beck Inc. and was able to help facilitate a meeting for me with the CEO. After discussing the scope of my research proposal with the CEO, I was granted generous access to the organization, its ongoing events, and its people.

### **Organizational Histories**

Both Beck Inc. and Miller Inc. are situated in the book printing industry, an \$82 billion industry that focuses on the process by which various technologies are used to print words and images onto pages that are bound into different types of books (printing.org). The craft of book printing can be traced all the way back to Johannes Gutenberg, whose invention of the moveable type printing press in the 1400's is regarded as one of the most influential advances in modern history (Eisenstein, 1980). Today there are approximately 30,000 book printers in the United States, a number that has been steadily declining with the rise of various e-readers (Johnson, 2012). These two organizations specialize in "short-run" book manufacturing, or printing runs that range from one to 100,000 copies, though Beck's average run is around 25,000 copies (Swanson, 2007). Both organizations are located in the Midwestern United States in an area known as "the Short Run Book Capital of America" (Johnson, 2012). The two companies announced their merger on February 6, 2012, making Beck and Miller the sixth largest book-manufacturing firm in the United States, and one of the top 20 employers in their community (Shea, 2012). However, their histories were deeply intertwined long before this announcement.

**Beck Inc.** In 1893 William Beck was attending law school, when he found a unique way to make money: by mimeographing and selling professors' notes and lectures. His brother Richard soon joined him and they alternated years attending school while the other would work

on the business. The brothers hired transcribers to attend various law classes and then would use a mimeograph to copy these notes, selling them to other students for 3 cents a piece. However, once law school was over, the two brothers wanted to move east to practice law, and so the mimeograph business was offered to their oldest brother Alvin, a struggling carpenter. Alvin moved with his family to take over the business, and in his first year, doubled the sales of the company.

In 1920, with his health beginning to fail him, Alvin asked his son Edward to take a one-year leave of absence from his job as an athletic coach and his position on a community Board of Education to come assist with the family business. Edward would never return to his former life. The organization hired a sales force to help grow the business, and by the end of the decade, sales had grown to nearly \$300,000. It was at this point that Beck replaced their aging mimeographing equipment with small offset printing presses that enabled them to do short runs of educational books for various authors and professors. While sales were cut nearly in half during the Great Depression, the company was able to turn a profit every year because of these unique capabilities.

After the Great Depression, the onset of World War II brought unique challenges as the government rationed supplies such as paper that could benefit the war effort. Beck Inc. was able to navigate this challenge by petitioning the government for both paper and for printing jobs. One of the major jobs during this time was producing the Library of Congress Catalogue from over eight tons of catalogue cards. They also produced Japanese dictionaries, war manuals, specialized books for training programs, and materials confiscated in Nazi-occupied territories that were sent back to the United States for further analysis. By 1943, Beck Inc.'s sales topped \$750,000.



Boom times continued after the war, and the book printing industry remained highly lucrative. Edward Beck's son Daniel returned from serving as a pilot in the war, and it became clear to the more experienced employees that he would become the successor to Edward. It was at this point in 1948 that two long-term employees Gerald Prater and Dwight Miller left Beck to start their own printing company in the community, Prater-Miller. And over the next several decades, multiple employees would depart Beck to start their own printing companies. By 1979, there were seven companies in the local region competing in the book printing business, and all seven could trace their heritage back to Beck.

Today Beck Inc. is one of the leading book and journal manufacturers in North America. It has grown from two law students mimeographing professors' notes to an organization with nearly 750 employees in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom and annual sales approaching \$90 million at the time of the merger announcement. It is recognized continuously as one of the Best Workplaces in America by the Printing Industries of America association, and has been given this designation for 11 consecutive years. According to their website, "Since its founding, thousands of men and women have taken their place on the Beck team, including former President of the United States Gerald R. Ford." The average length of service of the current employees is just over ten years, with nearly 40% of their work force serving for 10 years or more.

**Miller Inc.** In 1948, Gerald Prater and Dwight Miller left Beck Inc. to found their own printing company called Prater-Miller. Gerald Prater bought out Dwight Miller's share of the company in 1952 and ran the company as the sole business owner. And by 1959, Dwight Miller was ready to venture out on his own. Dwight left Prater-Miller, and founded Miller Inc. in 1960 with his brother-in-law Anthony Kerby, who left a position at a local camera company. They

both invested much of their life savings to help found the organization, which focused on the manufacturing of books for customers in the surrounding areas. By year six, the company had achieved annual revenues of \$500,000.

In 1948, James Kollman began working at DP Products, an organization owned by James' father that specialized in manufacturing hydraulic valves. Johnson and Jackson, a thriving New England tool manufacturing company, ultimately purchased the business from James' father. James stayed on managing the now subsidiary business, and had several difficult experiences trying to work and negotiate with the plants unionized employees. As a result, James left Johnson and Jackson and began searching for another business to purchase, where he could create a less hostile relationship between the employees and management. Prater-Miller had done some printing for James and his father while they were at DP Products, and James knew Dwight Miller's brother from the local country club. James was able to learn about Dwight Miller's desire to sell the business, and ultimately purchased the company in 1966. Dwight Miller stayed for a time, helping James to learn the printing business, and Anthony Kerby stayed until 1982, continuing to play a role in sales and customer care.

Since 1966, the organization has continued on a strong growth trajectory. What started as a handful of people in a 6,000 square foot building has grown to a \$40 million enterprise, with over 200 employees working in an 180,000 square foot facility. Miller Inc. has established a tradition as an innovator in the book manufacturing industry, operating on what they call the "bleeding edge" of technology. They were the first book printer in the United States to install a Timson web press, which is now used by book printers around the world. They also helped create the RepKover method of lay-flat binding, were one of the first adopters of computer-to-plate for use in the manufacturing process, and have been at the forefront of the use of

information systems to organize and manage their customer order. The organization is also known for its extremely experienced workforce. For example, the company's customer service staff averages more than twenty-five years of service.

### **Data Collection**

Case studies are meant to develop intimate familiarity with a phenomenon in a particular setting, through the collection and analysis of multiple types of data (Eisenhardt, 1989). My data collection began in July 2012, five months after the merger of Beck and Miller was announced. At this point, the management structures of both organizations had changed (e.g., Miller CEO Glen Kollman assumed the role of VP of Operations), several sales and management positions had been dissolved, and all of the employees were aware of the merger. However, the organizations were largely continuing operations as usual, and in the minds of employees, they were still distinct entities. For example, quotes such as “I don’t care it could be Beck and Miller for forever, but I know I always worked for Miller.” (#2), and “I like to say Miller’s history not Beck and Miller’s. They have their own” (#12) illustrate just how distinct these two entities were cognitively in the minds of respondents. As a result, despite the fact that these were all employees of a single company, Beck and Miller, I felt confident treating Beck and Miller as distinct entities for the purposes of exploring their collective memories. This study drew upon several different sources of data described below.

**Interviews.** One important data source for this case study was interview transcripts created from interviews with informants from both Beck and Miller. 42 of these interviews were semi-structured, formally recorded interviews. As noted by Lee (1999: 62), semi-structured interviews have “an overarching topic, general themes, targeted issues, and specific questions, with a predetermined sequence for their occurrence.” However, semi-structured interviews also

allow the interview to probe and explore other themes that may emerge during the course of the interview. To select these respondents, I used a purposeful sampling method (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I interviewed 20 individuals who were from Beck and 22 individuals who were from Miller. I interviewed individuals in both the manufacturing process as well as the various support functions (e.g., accounting, HR, sales), and I also interviewed individuals across all levels of the organizational hierarchies of these two organizations. In addition, I was able to interview former Miller Inc. CEO James Kollman, and the first employee of Miller Inc., Raymond Ward.

**Table 2.1**

**Purposeful Sample Breakdown**

<b>Firm</b>			
Beck	20		
Miller	22		
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>		

<b>Gender</b>		<b>Beck</b>		<b>Miller</b>	
Men	31	14		17	
Women	11	6		5	
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>20</b>		<b>22</b>	

<b>Department</b>			
Manufacturing	28	12	16
Support Functions	14	8	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>22</b>

<b>Position</b>			
Executive	9	3	6
Supervisory	12	6	6
Hourly	21	11	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>22</b>

Each of these interviews took place in various conference rooms at Beck and Miller. To help informants become comfortable with the interview situation, I began by asking them to

share the story of how they came to work at Beck and Miller. Next, I had a picture of their company logo that I placed above a notepad with an arrow running from left to right with the left anchor point labeled “Time 0”. I asked participants to tell me the story of their organization starting at time 0, focusing on the defining moments in the organization’s history. I then followed up asking respondents if there were other individuals that had not emerged during our discussion of the organization’s story that were important to the story of the organization. I would then probe about each individual name, asking about who the person was, and what they were remembered for. We then discussed the various ways that the legacy of a particular individual was preserved within the organization, and other ways that they had seen the legacies of individuals preserved within the organization. We then discussed negative characters in the story of the organization, and how the organization handled the memories of these individuals. And we concluded by visiting about the merger, how the two organizations were coming together, and the challenges they had observed in this process. A copy of the interview protocol has been included at the end of this chapter (see Appendix 2.1). These interviews ranged in duration from 35 minutes to 120 minutes, with an average duration just under one hour. Each interview was recorded on a laptop using Garage Band software, and with a digital recorder as a backup. After completion, the audio files were exported into mp3 format, and then sent to a research assistant for transcription.

***Observation.*** Another important data source was observation and interaction with employees and customers. First, as noted above, my initial interaction with the organization was a meeting with the entire sales force of the merged organization where I helped a professional consultant facilitate a workshop. As part of the workshop, we placed members in small groups and asked them to share an experience about someone from their organization that had left a

legacy. This part of the workshop was designed to help employees coming from different organizations to develop some appreciation for the core stories of each organization, but it also gave me an initial glimpse into the collective memory of these two organizations.

Second, I was invited to participate in the annual employee appreciation day activities at Miller Inc. The employees were treated to a catered lunch served by the executive team, who dressed up in sombreros in keeping with the theme of the Tex-Mex lunch. Glen Kollman also gave remarks about growth of the organization and recognized several employees for achieving various tenure milestones. The event happened to be James Kollman's birthday, and I was able to observe the employees interact with James who had stopped by for this function.

Third, I was able to participate in the organization's "Book Manufacturing Seminar". The seminar is a two-day event that has been held since 1988 to provide publishing professionals an in-depth view of the book manufacturing process. The two-day seminar is a blend of classroom learning and hands-on experience to give participants a deeper understanding of how books are made. This gave me the opportunity to observe the book manufacturing process, and have interactions with additional employees and customers. For example, while on the book manufacturing tour, I was able to have an extended conversation with the individual from the IT department who had been charged with compiling the history of the two organizations on their newly combined website.

These observation opportunities provided additional insight into the experiences of organizational members, and sometimes raised questions for further inquiry. For example, while at the employee appreciation day, Glen Kollman announced their plans to plant a tree for an employee who had recently passed away. I was able to follow up in subsequent interviews to better understand the various ways that the organization responds to the death of employees, and

the origins of these practices. Each of these observation opportunities also led to several informal conversations that were not formally transcribed. For example, I was able to have several conversations with employees at the employee appreciation day including one woman who had been relocated from the customer service center at Beck to the customer service center at Miller, giving her a unique perspective on the two organizations. And while at the book manufacturing seminar, I was able to have an extended conversation with the individual in charge of bringing together the histories of both companies on the newly released website.

*Archival Materials.* In addition to interviews and observations, I was also able to examine several kinds of archival materials. First, the organizational website was an important source of information about each company and its history. The website was explored in its entirety to learn about each organization, its product offerings and the nature of their business. The website was also thoroughly examined for those events or people from the organization's past that were preserved. Both organizations also had archived newsletters that were also scoured for additional background information as well as events and people from the organization's past. Both organizations have also published commemorative yearbooks that were distributed to organizational members as part of their anniversary celebrations. These yearbooks had organizational histories, images, and other information that helped to shed additional light on the phenomenon of interest. Finally, I obtained a copy of the personal history of the Beck Family, supplied to me by a member of the Beck family. This history gave an enormous amount of background information about the various members of the Beck family and their role in the history of Beck.

*Physical Artifacts.* Finally, I was given permission to photograph physical artifacts that I observed at both locations, or that emerged from my interviews with organizational members.

These physical artifacts were distributed at various locations throughout each plant and included pictures, plaques, aspects of the actual buildings, and aspects of the grounds surrounding each plant.

### **Data Analysis**

Each chapter will present a more detailed description of the analytical strategy used to answer each research question. However, in general, I used grounded theory building methods (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) to build theory about legacies and their influence in organizations. My analysis of the data was a dynamic process that required frequent iterations between the data and my emerging findings. Figure 2.1 represents a map of the dissertation that will serve as a guide for this dissertation. In Chapter 3, I report the results of my analysis of both published histories and “native view” histories (Martin et al., 1985) obtained during semi-structured interviewing to better understand the selection mechanisms that shape “who” has a legacy in these organizations. In Chapter 4, I report the results of my analysis of physical artifacts as well as interview transcripts to better understand “how” legacies endure across time in organizations. In Chapters 5 I report the results of my analysis of interview transcripts to better understand “how” legacies influence social identity processes in organizations. And in Chapter 6, I report the results of my analysis of interview transcripts to better understand how institutional legacies influence the attitudes and behaviors of current organizational members.

### **Summary**

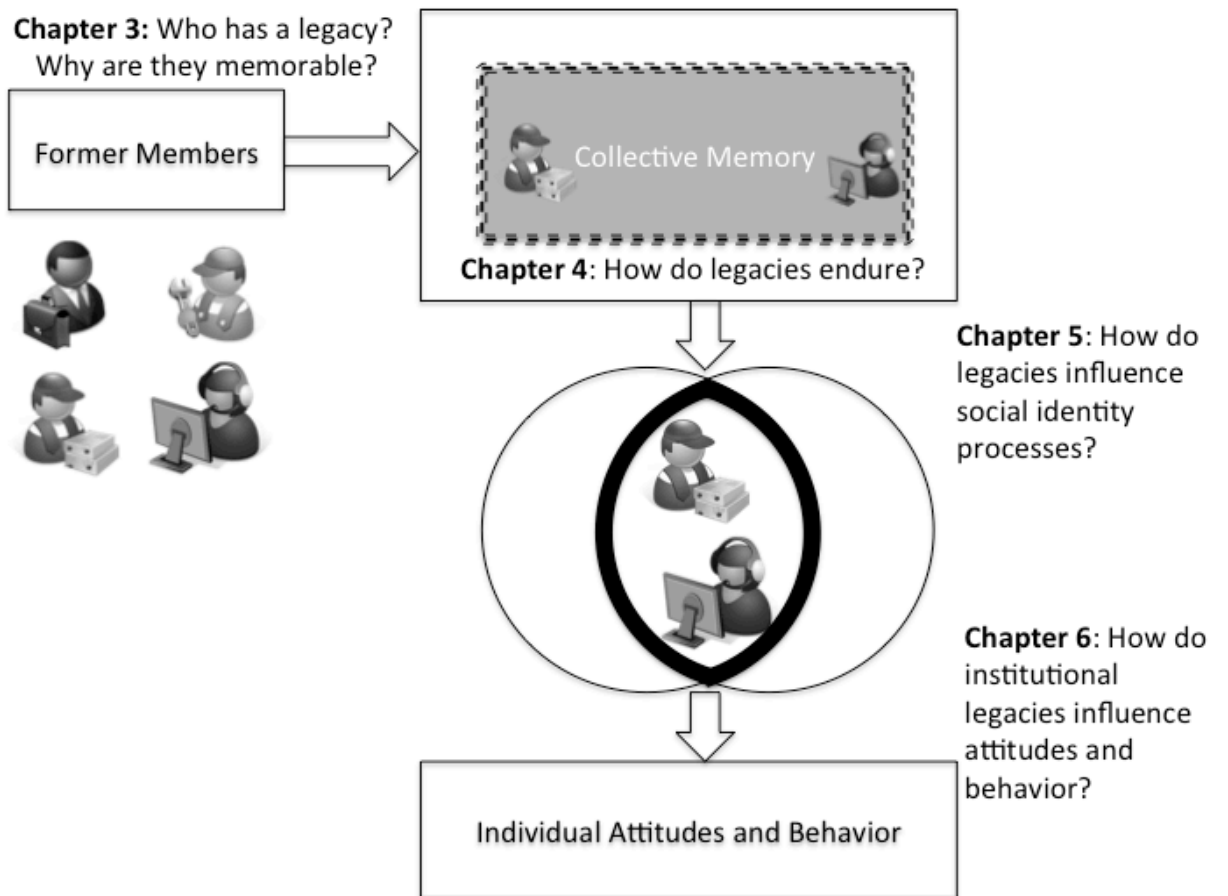
This dissertation used a case-study methodology, and ground theory building to better understand legacies and legacy work in organizations. Beck and Miller was selected as an ideal case because I was able to study two organizations that had outlived their founders and many of their members in a context where the history of these two companies was viewed as important.



Through semi-structured interviewing, observation, reviewing archival materials, and examining physical artifacts, I generated theory about who has legacies in organizations, how they endure, and how they matter in organizations.

**Figure 2.1**

**A Map of This Dissertation**



## APPENDIX 2.1

### Interview Protocol

Welcome participant and introduce yourself.

Explain the purpose of the research and discuss issues of confidentiality

#### **Section 1- Personal Career History**

Tell me about your career history. How did you end up working here at Beck and Miller?

How long have you been here?

What are some of the different roles you've played?

What are your responsibilities now?

#### **Section 2- Organizational History, Individual Legacies, and Legacywork**

I have a timeline here with the left side representing "Time 0" and the right side representing today. Tell me the story of your organization, focusing on its defining moments.

Who would you consider to be the key characters in the story of your organization? Who has a legacy?

How are the memories of these individuals preserved around here?

Why are these reminders of individuals from the past important?

What do they mean to you personally?

Let's focus on the people you've mentioned so far.

Help me understand why this person came to mind?

How would you describe this person's legacy?

When does this person come to mind?

When is this person talked about?

What are some of the ways your organization preserves the memory of this individual from the past?

Why do you think it is important to preserve the memories of this individual?

You've just mentioned some of the ways that this person is recognized and remembered in your organization. When you see [insert specific form of legacywork] how does this influence you?

What does this mean to you personally?

### **Section 3- Negative Legacies**

Sometimes organizations would rather forget a particular person from their history. Have you ever seen that happen here?

Why did this happen?

What are some of the ways the organization tried to make sure this person was not recognized or remembered?

### **Section 4- The Merger**

How do you think this merger is playing out?

How would you compare and contrast Miller Inc. and Beck Inc.?

How are you attempting to preserve the history of your organization as these companies merge?

## CHAPTER 3

### *The Selective Nature of Collective Memory*

At the individual level, it is easy to see that our memory represents a small portion of our actual existence. Some of our past experiences stand out with great prominence, while others fade into the background. Others are intentionally suppressed or hidden. For example, I can remember what I had for breakfast this morning, and I can remember what I had for breakfast on my wedding day almost 6 years ago, but I have no recollection of what I had for breakfast a year ago or 10 years ago. Likewise, I can remember with great detail certain aspects of September 11, 2001, but I cannot remember anything from September 11, 2000 or September 11, 2002. Memory at the individual level is a highly selective phenomenon.

The same can also be said of collective memory. For the vast majority of individuals, the words of Augustine (2000) capture the fate of their mortal identity:

“In a few generations most of our accomplishments will be totally forgotten, the memories of our lives reduced to a mere name etched on a tombstone or written on a genealogy chart...and no trace of us will remain.”

And sometimes this forgetting requires work. For example, in ancient Rome, “damnatio memoriae” (i.e., condemnation of memory) was a form of dishonor that involved erasing condemned elites or overthrown leaders from history by mutilating or defacing images or monuments devoted to their likeness (Varner, 2004). In ancient Greece, after Herostratus set fire to the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, he was not only put to death, but also forbid the mention of his name by penalty of death (Cave, 2012) And in the more recent past, a Cairo court ruled in April 2011 that the names and images of ousted Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak, and his wife, be removed from all “public squares, streets, libraries and other public institutions around

the country.” According to Bond (2011), “Posters and portraits of the Mubaraks are ubiquitous in Egypt. Squares, sports fields, libraries, streets and more than 500 schools bear their names.”

However, within some collectives, certain individuals seemingly “live on” after they are gone. They “escape the degeneration that awaits the rest of us. They shall not grow old as we that are left grow old, and it seems to those who survive them that they can evade death” (Hughes-Hallett, 2006: 15). We often refer to these individuals as having a “*legacy*,” or the representation of an individual in an organization’s collective memory that endures after they have died or departed a group. For example, while working on a finance team at Wal-Mart headquarters, I observed that the memory of Sam was very much alive at Wal-Mart almost 15 years following his death. Similarly, following the death of Apple CEO Steve Jobs in October 2011, Apple’s website displayed an obituary that said among other things, “Steve leaves behind a company that only he could have built, and his spirit will *forever* be the foundation of Apple.” This raises two important questions for organizational scholars: who gets remembered in an organization’s collective memory, and why are they memorable? Or in other words, what are the mechanisms of selection that winnow the variety of members that have been a part of the organization’s story to a select group of individuals that are viewed as critical to the story of the organization?

Current perspectives suggest that leaders, particularly founders, are in an especially privileged position to craft a personal legacy that will endure after they are gone (Schein, 2010). By virtue of their role in the organization, the founder or top executive has power to shape the organization’s culture, transforming the organization into a personal legacy that will survive their death or departure from the organization. Thus, theories of culture creation and management suggest that leaders and top executives are likely to be key figures in the collective memory of

the organization. In this chapter, I explore the content of an organization's collective memory to examine "who" has a legacy in the organization's collective memory, and "why" these individuals are so memorable. My data reveal former members at all levels of the organizational hierarchy that have enduring legacies within the organization's collective memory. I use these individuals to highlight potential pathways beyond founding an organization or climbing the organizational hierarchy that can lead to an enduring legacy in the collective memory of an organization.

### **Who Gets Remembered in an Organizations Collective Memory?**

The literature on organizational memory has largely evolved from the work of Walsh and Ungson (1991), who focused on the "information" contained in various "storage bins" within an organization that could be brought to bear on decisions in the present. Because, this literature has never really been concerned with organizational "memories" that did not influence decision-making this literature has never really considered the specific individuals in an organization's collective memory. Likewise, as noted by Rowlinson et al. (2010: 75), "for the most part organizational memory studies make no connection with organizational identity, and the organizational identity literature does not deal with memory." Thus, our current understanding of who gets remembered is found in the literature on organizational culture.

As was described in Chapter 1, the typical logic of culture creation in organizational studies is perhaps best typified by Schein (1983): 1) An individual has an idea for an enterprise; 2) a founding group is formed around the idea; 3) the founding group begins to create the organizations (obtaining funding, patents, etc.); 4) others are brought into the group and the group begins to function, developing assumptions and values that would guide the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of subsequent generations of organizational members. And the primary

source of these assumptions and values is the leadership of the organization's founder and subsequent leaders (Schein, 2010). According to Schein (2010), these assumptions and values can be embedded in the organization through a variety of mechanisms including their reactions to important events, what they measure and pay attention to, the design of the physical environment, informal stories, and formal statements of the organizations strategy. And subsequent leaders have the capacity to manage the inherited culture in ways that leave their mark on the organization. As noted by Martin et al. (1985: 99), this view of the culture creation process offer to founders and CEOs the possibility that their "personal perspective can be transformed into a shared legacy that will survive death and departure from the institution- a personal form of organizational immortality." The fact that founders and top executives have such a prominent place in the story of the organization is explained by two important factors: salience and attribution. The nature of their role makes them salient to large numbers of individuals, and we know from the "romance of leadership" perspective (Meindl, 1995) that leaders receive a disproportionate share of the credit for the successes of the organization. Thus, the literature on culture creation and management offers two possible pathways that can lead to a legacy in an organization: found your own organization, or climb to the top of the organizational hierarchy.

While founding an organization or climbing the organizational hierarchy might be valid pathways to a legacy in an organization, I believe that the focus of this perspective on the top of the organizational hierarchy precludes us from understanding pathways to a legacy at all levels of the organizational hierarchy. Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to expand our understanding of who gets remembered in an organization's collective memory, and why certain individuals might be more memorable than others by illuminating the selection mechanisms that help

winnnow the vast array of individuals from an organization's history into a set of individuals that are seen as critical ancestors in the story of the organization.

### **Analytical Strategy**

The data analyzed in this chapter come from two key sources. First, I obtained the published histories of both organizations that were included in commemorative yearbooks produced for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Miller and the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Beck. These histories were replicated almost word for word on their corporate websites, with minor updates extending those histories to the present. Second, I obtained "native views" of the organization's history through semi-structured interviews (Gregory, 1983; Martin et al., 1985). The notion of "native views" stems from the anthropology literature, where the term "native" is a term for the research subject, and the stated goal is to "grasp the natives point of view, his relation to life, to realize his vision of his world" (Malinowski, 1922: 25). To gather these native views of the organization's history, I asked each respondent to share the story of their organization, focusing on its defining moments. After collecting these native views of the organization's history, I asked if there were other important characters in the story that had left a positive or negative mark on the organization and then had a follow up discussion about each participant that was mentioned.

In step one of the analysis, I coded the published histories for the names of individuals included in the organization's story, as well as what they were remembered for. In step two of the analyses, I coded the "native views" of the organization's story for each individual mentioned, and then used the statements made by respondents to create a representation of each individual's legacy. And in step three of the analyses, I coded the various reasons why a particular person had a legacy in the organization. In total I found two overarching categories that capture why individuals have legacies in these two organizations, and also found evidence



that these legacies might be shaped by the events leading up to the departure of the individual. I present these findings below.

## Results

### **The Published History of Miller Inc.**

In their analysis of 83 published corporate histories, Delahaye, Booth, Clark, Procter, and Rowlinson (2009: 35) determined that corporate histories are nearly always chronological presentations of the organization's history as "an unproblematic chain of selected events marking [the firm's] growth and expansion", almost exclusively focused on the organization's successes, and rarely addressing controversy or failure. Based on these criteria, we can conclude that the history of Miller Inc. is a typical corporate history, chronicling the successes of the organization in chronological order. And in this presentation of the organization's history there are seven individuals mentioned: five individuals from Miller Inc. (two still employed), and two from outside the organization:

- **Dwight Miller** and **Gerald Prater** (*outsider*) who left Beck in 1948 to found a new printing company, Prater-Miller. Dwight Miller later founded Miller Inc. in 1960 with his brother-in-law, Anthony Kerby.
- **Anthony Kerby**, Dwight Miller's brother-in-law, who invested much of his life savings to buy the building and equipment necessary to start Miller Inc. in 1960.
- **James Kollman**, who bought Miller in 1966.
- **Glen Kollman** and **Stuart Kollman**, James' sons who have spent their careers at Miller and are still involved in the management of the organization today.
- And **Dr. Theodore McGill** (*outsider*), who worked with Miller employees in pioneering the new RepKover method of lay-flat binding.

Thus, the only former members who have a legacy in the published history of Miller Inc. are the two founding partners, and former CEO James Kollman, and they are remembered for founding (Dwight and Anthony) and subsequently purchasing (James) the organization. These published histories seem to suggest that legacies are reserved for those who control the organization from the top of the organizational hierarchy.

### **The Published History of Beck Inc.**

The published history of Beck is also a typical published history, describing the successes, accomplishments, and growth of the organization in chronological order. And in the history of Beck there are six individuals mentioned, all former members of Beck:

- ***Richard Beck*** and ***William Beck***, who began copying and selling their lecture notes in law school in 1893.
- ***Alvin Beck***, who took over the business in 1899 when Richard and William when into private law practice.
- ***Edward Beck***, the son of Alvin, who took over as the CEO of the company from his father when Alvin's health began deteriorating in the 1920's.
- ***Daniel Beck***, who took over as the CEO in 1950.
- ***Steven Beck***, who became the CEO in 1979.

Like the published history of Miller, the published history of Beck only includes the founders and former CEOs of the organization. These results seem to confirm the notion emerging from the culture creation literature, that founders and chief executives will be the most memorable individuals in the story of the organization, and that legacies are reserved for those who control the organization from the top of the organizational hierarchy. However, if we move to our

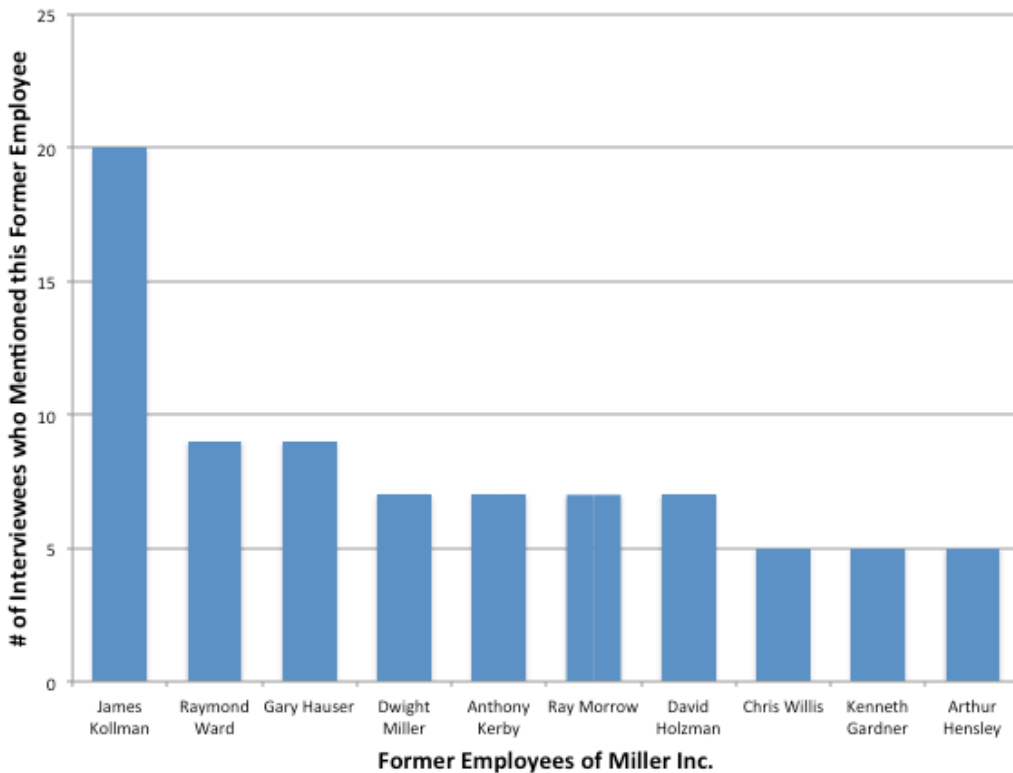
analysis to the native views or the organization's history, we find a variety of legacies in both of these organizations across the organization's hierarchy.

### **The Native View Histories of Miller Inc.**

Unlike the published organizational histories, native views of organizational history were not always chronological, not always focused on the organizations successes and achievements. As a result, there are a variety of legacies that emerge that are not included in the organization's published history. In total, there were 44 individuals mentioned as playing a role in a defining moment of Miller Inc., or having left a positive or negative mark on the organization. I present the legacy statements for the 10 most noted individuals from Miller Inc. because these individuals were cited by at least 25% of the respondents I interviewed, indicating that the legacy has a level of "sharedness" within the organization. The number of respondents who noted each individual (i.e., the number of sources) is noted. These ten individuals are plotted in the histogram below. Each bar represents a specific former member from Miller Inc. and the y-axis represents the number of respondents who mentioned this individual as an important part of the story of Miller Inc.

**Figure 3.1**

**The Legacies of Miller Inc.**



***The Legacy of James Kollman (N=20, 100%).*** James Kollman just turned 87 and has been retired from active involvement at Miller Inc. for over 15 years. However he still comes into the plant from time to time for visits. In fact, there is still an office reserved for James in the foyer of the building that he can use when he comes in. James has always had an entrepreneurial spirit, perhaps instilled in him by his father (who was affectionately referred to as “Uppy”). James’ father started or bought companies that specialized in real estate development, emergency road kits for cars and ultimately hydraulic valves. After serving in World War II, James joined his father’s hydraulic valve business (DP Products) and had a leadership role with the company. To James’ surprise, his father sold the company to Johnson and Jackson, and James was required to work for this new organization that had a hostile relationship with the unionized employees.

He had such a difficult experience working with the unionized employees, that he decided to buy a company where the employees were not unionized. After looking into several opportunities, he settled on Miller Inc. According to James, “I made it clear that I wanted the say here. I wasn’t going into another business that I couldn’t control.”

James’ operating philosophy centered on three main objectives. First, James “felt very strongly that it was important to do the best job you could to take care of customers.” And James exemplified this value in his interactions with customers. One employee related the following story about James:

“I know that years ago Miller worked with an educational publisher in Ohio. And there was a problem. James gets the press supervisor, the bindery supervisor, and they drive down to have a meeting with this customer face to face to try and resolve that. That’s how customer oriented James is. He would literally get in his car and drive several hours to meet up with a customer” (#14).

Second, James felt strongly about taking care of employees and creating “a harmonious productive workforce”. And James believed that if you could create a loyal customer base, and a harmonious, productive, workforce, that profitability would follow.

When current Miller Inc. employees talk about James, they often do so with great reverence and emotion. It was not uncommon for interviewees to weep as they talked about James and his influence. And there are three things that James is consistently remembered for. First, James is known for his participatory management style that usually solicited input from all affected parties before decisions were made. For example, James authorized small groups of individuals working in the manufacturing process to create projects that would lead to improvements in the process. These groups would include individuals who were in formal

leadership positions as well as workers operating the machines. In addition, when decisions were made about the purchase of new equipment, James would have the press operators do the research and make recommendations, rather than dictating to the press operators what equipment they would operate. This sometimes meant sending the press operators to Germany or to the UK so they could learn about and observe the equipment. According to one current employee:

“A lot of the decisions we made were considered, well organized, sometimes frustrating because they were so slow in coming, but he wanted to make sure that not only did we study and know what we were getting ourselves into before we made a decision, but that everyone felt like they participated in that decision” (#10).

Second, James is known for caring about each individual employee. One way this care was manifested was through knowing the names of each individual employee. For example, one employee noted that, “James knew my name the day after I started here” (#8). Another current employee suggested:

“I’m sure you’ve heard that 15 years ago, at one point we had 420 employees, so if you had an employee appreciation night, we didn’t do it back then. He can stand there and could name them all by name. And say hi to everyone by name. And chances are he knew spouses by names, and knew kids names” (#11).

Another employee shared the following:

“He knew everyone’s name. He knew my name when I first started and I was like wow, my name is not a common name, and he knows it. And he made sure to come over and acknowledge it and I was like wow that’s the owner, he’s actually “how you doing today? How’s it going?” hi [Shelly]!” to me that was the biggest one” (#20).

And one employee suggested:

“James is a very, very kind gentleman, and very considerate. And it shows. But he also really concentrates on relating to people and trying to show interest in their lives and in your home life, and he had a reputation for always knowing everyone’s first name in the plant, no matter what shift it is. That alone is a biggie. And he worked at that more than people would recognize. They would say that the impression he made was the he was really interested in them” (#10).

This simple act of knowing each person’s name embodied the care and sincere interest that the employees felt from James. This care was also manifested in James’ compassionate responses to the needs of individual employees. One employee had worked at Miller Inc. for a short time when he fell on hard times financially. He said:

“I was kind of struggling with money. And he didn’t even know me for a year and he lent me some money, which I paid him back. But for some reason he knew, he used to call me [Tom], he said, ‘[Tom] I knew you would pay me back.’ That struck me kind of heavy because I had only been here six months then so for him to do that. I really appreciated that. I think that shows some of his greatness or his kindness I should say for people. I think he is a great guy. I respect him to today. I always try to go out of my way to shake his hand” (#19).

A similar situation happened with an employee who had fallen into financial difficulties and was in danger of losing his home. James provided the employee with a loan that included a lenient pay back plan. One current employee described this as an “act of compassion” that embodied James’ feelings about his employees (#11). And one employee described an experience he had when he first began working for James:

“One of the first things was, well I was impressed. I mean, we had an old drinking

fountain that didn't cool the water well. And you almost had to suck the water out of it. Somebody complained about the drinking fountain in one of our little meetings, and in a couple of days, we had a drinking fountain out there. I mean, it just like wow. Little things mean a lot” (#9).

James’ willingness to listen and respond to employees’ concerns left an important mark on the organization, and reinforced the idea that James cared about his individual employees.

Third, James was known for sacrificing his own self-interest for the good of the organization. As one employee said, James has “been very self sacrificing, and all the money has gone back into the company” (#1). Another employee described this as “a form of self-denial” that included James taking a modest salary and exemplifying this sense of sacrifice in the office he worked in, and the cars that he drove (#4). Another employee noted that James usually drove an old Chevy or a minivan, but “he would drive it until the wheels fell off” (#10). And another employee, described James’ embarrassment taking him to lunch recently in a new Volvo:

Took him forever to get a new car. In fact, he acted a little bit embarrassed when we went to lunch. He drove, but he has a new Volvo. He doesn’t buy new cars. He didn't want to have that image of being above you or something” (#9).

Several respondents described James’ office space as “very austere, plain vanilla” and “nothing very fancy” (10). According to one employee, “If you ever walked into James’ office, he was never one to have a whole lot around. He was probably using the same desk that he had used for 30 or 40 years” (#18). During my personal interview with James, I noticed that the chair he used in his reserved office space had a large rip running the entire length of the seat cushion, and the chair creaked each time James would shift his body weight, yet the chair I was sitting in, which was reserved for others was a nice, new chair.



Several respondents also recalled with fondness their experiences at the annual Christmas party, where the employees would gather money to give to James as a Christmas gift so that he could buy himself a present. One employee described it in this way:

“Every year we would have a Christmas party and we would collect money and give it to James. And we’d ask him to buy something with it. Well, for a while we would buy him something and give it to him, and then they would start giving him money and tell him to buy something with it. But James never wanted that. He wanted the money to be used for the employees. So what we eventually started doing was, and Glen carried it on, but we would collect the money and then ask the employees what they wanted to do with James’ Christmas money, and they put windows in the bindery, they bought a new flagpole and a new flag. They put some of it towards, I can’t remember all the things now that they did, but improvements here at the building” (#1).

One employee perhaps summed up this aspect of James’ legacy best when he reiterated a saying that he had often heard James repeat: “This is a family business, but the family serves the business, the business doesn’t serve the family” (#4).

***The Legacy of Raymond Ward (N=9, 45%).*** In 1957, Raymond Ward responded to a help-wanted ad, placed in a local newspaper by Prater-Miller, looking for a folder operator. Raymond wasn’t sure what a folder was, but he interviewed for the job anyway and got it. He would later follow Dwight Miller to a new company, Miller Inc., becoming “Employee #1” in the new organization. Raymond worked for many years in the bindery before becoming bindery manager, and the subsequently he become the customer service manager. One employee noted that his customers revered him because “they knew that he cared so much about their work and making sure they were taken care of” (#10). Another employee commented that Raymond was

one of the “sweetest, most honest human beings”, and is someone that customers still ask about even though he retired ten years ago (#11).

Because Raymond was the first employee, he played an important role as a storyteller in the organization, especially telling stories about the founding and the “early days”. For example, he would talk about one of their early contracts with the U.S. Defense Department when they had to secure the product each day and ensure that the waste was carefully guarded (#18). He was one of the few people that could talk extensively about the founder, Dwight Miller, who sold the company to James Kollman in 1966 and then retired shortly thereafter. He was also a source of knowledge for the younger employees about the process by which books used to be made, many people noted Raymond’s role in the orientation session for new employees

“When new employees were hired, they’d have an orientation session, and part of the orientation session was a history of Miller and they would invite Raymond Ward and he would tell all these old stories, and people got a little bit of the indoctrination in what it means to work for this company” (#1).

According to another employee:

“He’d tell stories about the early days in the bindery and how they bound books before they had a perfect binding machine, and he would show how they used to put the glue on the spines of the books and put the cover on and then hammer them to make them square” (#10).

Raymond Ward is also known as a colorful character that added a great deal to the personality and culture of the organization. According to one employee, many of Raymond’s stories were quite amusing. For example, he would often tell the story of Dwight Miller threatening to cut his thumbs off because he was getting thumbprints on the camera film that was used in the book

manufacturing process (#4). Or he would often tell stories of the beat up van that they purchased to help deliver books, and the day he received a phone call saying that the company van had been burned up during an accident at the company Christmas party (#4).

***The Legacy of Gary Hauser (N=9, 45%).*** Gary Hauser recently passed away after a difficult battle with cancer. He left Miller Inc. about 15 years ago. Like Raymond Ward, Gary was one of the first employees hired by Dwight Miller soon after the company founding.

According to one current employee, Gary used to tell the following story of his hiring:

“The story he used to tell when he was hired in '63, where he was talking to Anthony, whose desk it right outside where the receptionist's desk is now. Anthony is talking to Gary, interviewing him to work in the pressroom. Anthony said, "would you like to see the place," and Gary said, "Sure, I'd love a tour." Instead of taking Gary on a tour, Anthony leaned over, pulled open the door, and said there it is. And that's what it was, one room...there wasn't much to tour” (#4).

Several people commented that Gary Hauser had a “can do” attitude that has been passed on to future generations. One current employee suggested:

“Gary, he was one of those guys, one of those employees that had a can do spirit. And just figured out ways to get stuff done. The people that have worked here for 30 years and in the business, remember that and kind of what it used to be like. All of the equipment, stuff breaking down. People here figuring out, okay how do you fix it? How do you make it work? They would do it. Gary was one of those guys...he's a person that I think of and will always think of as embodying that can do spirit“ (#11).

According to another employee, “he was straight forward with you”:

“He expects you to come work and do your job and if you did your job he’d let you know about it, and if not and if you're slacking he’d let you know that too. From what I hear, he told you what to expect. It’s as simple as that. If you can’t do the job then you’re not doing the job and you’re not going to get paid for it either. Matter of fact, you probably wouldn’t be working here if your not going to do the job. He’s old school, that’s what they said” (#12).

However, another hourly employee says that he has heard that not everyone appreciated his candid demeanor and approach. He said:

“The way that [Garry] managed was much different than how [Shawn] manages now and that is part of the reason why I have heard why he is not here anymore.... There were a lot of people that didn’t like the way that he disciplined people. So that is typically when his name would get brought up. He was way harder. If he didn’t like you he wasn’t afraid to tell you that. He would do everything that he could do to get you to not want to be here” (#21)

From what this employee has heard, Garry showed a lot of favoritism, and if you were on his good side, you enjoyed working here, but if not, he tried to make things miserable.

***The Legacy of Dwight Miller (N=7, 35%).*** Dwight Miller and Gerald Prater were working at Beck Inc. during the late 1940’s when Beck was overrun with business. Given the demand for book manufacturing at the time, Dwight and Gerald recognized that there was plenty of space for additional book manufacturers in the market. So they took what they had learned at Beck and broke away to form their own book manufacturing company, called Prater-Miller. This venture lasted about 10 years, when Dwight Miller sold his interest in the company, sat out

of the market for a year, and then started Miller Inc. in 1960 with his brother-in-law Anthony Kerby.

Most people in the organization don't know a great deal about Dwight Miller, other than the fact that he is one of the founders. He sold out of the business in 1966, though he continued on as Chairman of the Board for about five to six years, and made periodic visits to the plant until his death in 1994. One current employee perhaps summed up the memory most people had of Dwight Miller: "he was a real old guy that would come in" (#5).

However, according to one of the few employees that knew Dwight personally, he was small in stature, had a bad eye that was slightly crossed, and was a phenomenal golfer. The first six years of the business were incredibly challenging, and the organization lacked for funding, especially because Dwight did not believe in accruing debt in order to expand. One employee said:

"For the first couple of years, the company would give away some kind of gift at Christmas time. Well it took a couple of years before we started getting a turkey. The very first thing that we got was a ballpoint pen that said Miller on it. Of course, I thought they were pretty cheap. Of course, that was what we got. We didn't have any money. And then we started getting turkeys" (#9).

During these struggling years, Dwight's leadership style was described as very "blunt". As an illustration, he said:

"I didn't have any room. I mean we were putting camera solvents and stuff and films right in the bindery, taking up more room. And I would ask him for more room, and he said, "You got all the room you need." Period. So, his management style was a little blunt. And

then when I asked for a raise one time, you know, he just said, ‘what do you want, the business?’” (#9).

However, this same employee summarized Dwight’s legacy in this way: “he loved printing, he loved to print at work. And if it wasn't for him, we wouldn't be here. I mean, we really wouldn't” (#9).

***The Legacy of Anthony Kerby (N=7, 35%).*** Anthony Kerby was the brother-in-law of Dwight Miller and one of the founding partners of Miller Inc. According to the company website, Anthony, left a position at Argus Camera Company and invested much of his life savings to found the organization. Like Dwight Miller, there is not a great depth of knowledge about Anthony, other than his role as one of the founding partners. One humorous story involving Anthony that has been passed down relates to one of the original customers that Miller Inc. was able to secure business with. According to a current employee:

“The story goes that Jack Thornton, the president of Wellington, was driving down Jackson Drive and happened to see Miller, wondering what we did. They came in the door, and somebody came and told Anthony that we've got this publisher in the lobby and need to take them on a tour of the plant. The place was tiny. Anthony told everyone to go spread some workers around to make it look like we were busy” (#4).

Another humorous story relates to Anthony’s involvement with the company’s first delivery van. This van was really old and beat up, but was a source of pride for Anthony. Anthony hated leaving it at work but it was so big and ugly that the neighbors didn't like him driving it home. In the end, it was burned up in an accident at the company Christmas party.

Like Raymond Ward, Anthony played an important role in passing on stories about the evolution of the book manufacturing process. According to one employee:

“Anthony would talk about what the process was like. Here's this guy, talking to people in 2004 how things had been in 1960...Anthony would describe how hardcover books were bound by hand. The sections would be sewn together. His job would be to heat up some animal glue in a double boiler like oatmeal, stir it up to the right consistency, he would then paint the glue into the spines of these book blocks, and pass it on to someone else, and someone else would take the case, set it down, lean on them, and pull the spine up and get it tight, wrap it over, and bang 'em. It was how books were bound. People would be shocked by how primitive it seemed” (#4).

And like Raymond Ward, Anthony also left an important mark with his customers. As one current employee said:

“His legacy was his customers. They remember him. And he took really good of them. He established a model so to speak of taking care of customers. He wasn't the most cuddly individual, but a number of the customer service reps who never met Anthony and know very little about him, embody that spirit” (#11).

***The Legacy of Ray Morrow (N=7, 35%).*** Ray Morrow has a very interesting legacy at Miller Inc. Ray started in the pre-press area and eventually worked his way up in the company to become the plant manager. He was described by one employee as “extremely intelligent”, “very capable”, and “very self-confident” (#1). However others described his demeanor as “very rude”, “very abrasive”, and someone that “couldn't work with people.” As a result, his leadership style was sometimes at odds with James Kollman's style. One current employee told of an experience where Ray covered for another employee in another department, and when that person came back “everybody was up in arms” because of the way he had been treating them (#14). One former employee described his experience with Ray in this way:

“Ray had particular ideas about how things should be run. He was the type of person that liked to call the shots and you may have heard about him already, but he wasn’t as concerned about employee relations as James was. He was more concerned about efficiency and getting the work done, and he had a strong opinion about how things should be done, and several times he did things without consulting James which wasn’t James’ style. So there eventually came a parting of ways” (#1).

Another current employee had this to say about Ray:

“I wouldn't consider him a tyrant, really a person of excellent character, but from a leadership standpoint, he had people confused about what they were supposed to do. It just created chaos in the organization. Another real watershed moment. James let him go, along with some other people. Our profits had steadily been going down” (#4).

And a current manager remembered Ray in this way:

“He would come to a pressroom meeting and he would tell everybody if they didn’t like it there’s the door. So I still remember that, and thinking “Oh that was a little less than cordial.” It really ticked off every press person that was in that room because he was trying to make changes. His heart was in the right place to try and improve and make changes and things like that but he was a little bit fanatical and would come across pretty much as the whip-cracker-hard ass” (#5).

As a result, one employee said there is “not a lot of discussion about him. Its not that people can’t talk about him...Ray had gotten to the point where he didn’t have a lot of respect, and I think people would just rather not talk about him” (#1).

However, when meeting with one current employee, I learned a startling fact about Ray. Three out of four current employees cite the initial adoption of the Timson web press as one of



the most important events in the history of the company. In the early 1980s, there was only a single company in North America that was operating a Timson press. However, according to this current employee, the recommendation to buy the Timson press “was really all Ray...Ray was the one who heard about it, checked it out, and had the imagination to think that this is just what we need. There was no way we would have ever gotten a Timson without Ray” (#4).

Today, the Timson web presses are the industry standard for book manufacturing. But ironically, Ray is not remembered for his involvement in this industry and organization changing decision. He is remembered for his abrasive management style, and the declining profitability of the plant during his tenure.

***The Legacy of David Holzman (N=7, 35%).*** Like Raymond Ward, David Holzman was described as “fun”, “entertaining”, “bombastic”, “flamboyant”, and a “larger than life character” at Miller Inc. that added a great deal of personality and culture to the company. David grew up near Munich, Germany during World War II, and his father was a POW, finally released in the 1950s. David came to the United States to study opera with a highly respected voice instructor. To help support himself during his studies, David took a job at Miller Inc., and ultimately gave up opera and spent his entire career at Miller. He recently retired in 2011.

David wore many hats during his time in the organization, such as managing the Layout Department, and as a result, he acquired a deep expertise in the book manufacturing process. However, he also had a gift of being able to relate to other people. According to one employee, David had an encyclopedic knowledge of various subjects ranging from European history to sports (#4). One employee related the following experience about David:

“[James, David, and a customer] were talking about something and the person they were with said something about Persia, or the Mideast, and David just proceeded to go about

forty five minutes discussing these events which lead up to the present day situation. That blew James out of the water; he was just totally impressed with that. I guess it helped with the sale too, but James was just very impressed with David's knowledge. And that story has always stayed with me" (#8).

As a result, David ultimately found himself drawn towards sales. He began taking over accounts in the Midwest cities like Chicago and Columbus. However he ultimately ended up in New York helping to establish relationships with large publishers like McGraw-Hill. One employee remembers David saying of their relationship with McGraw Hill:

"We are going to do \$1 or \$2 mil of work. We'd never done more than \$400k with any publisher. I remember thinking, 'yeah right...David's kind of bigger than life.' Sure enough, that happened. And it was a big deal" (#11).

As a result of the growth in New York City, through the 80s and 90s, the company grew at a very rapid rate and was continually installing presses, binders and other equipment just to try to keep up. However, managing these large accounts required David to take a flight to New York City every Tuesday at 6 AM and live in New York during the week. As one employee described, "He loved that" (#4). One employee summed up David's legacy in this way: "He was a very good salespeople. Extremely loyal employee...David was one of those people that he would take a bullet for James and the company" (#11).

***The Legacy of Chris Willis (N=5, 25%).*** Chris Willis was the personnel manager for Miller Inc. and ultimately became the manufacturing manager prior to Ray Morrow. One employee implied that Chris came with James Kollman to Miller Inc. from DP Products. Chris retired from the organization around 1990, and just passed away last year. One current manager

said of Chris, “he was a respected man and a good business man” (#3), and another employee remarked that Chris “did a good job of running operations at the time” (#18).

***The Legacy of Kenneth Gardner (N=5, 25%).*** Kenneth Gardner was hired at Miller Inc. in the 1970’s after he completed a mathematics degree. He retired just a few years ago. He was described as “great”, “real smart”, “A+”, “real nice”, “very thoughtful”, and a “key person”. He specialized in computer science and was originally hired as a quality manager. He ran the organization’s data processing center and eventually became the director of the organization’s IT department. One employee described Kenneth as “very philosophically looking at how we run the business and how we can improve” (#5). He spent a great deal of time learning about and implementing the Demming philosophy of continuous improvement, and was the architect of the organization’s information systems, which according to one current manager “got us to where we are” (#3). In this process of “continuous improvement”, Kenneth was instrumental in working with supervisors, operators, and small teams to pick out specific areas of improvement, and would work collaboratively to improve the quality in that area. According to one employee, this process “had an influence culturally and philosophically in our approach to the organization” and was critical to establishing the culture of “participatory management” at Miller (#18). This process also helped to develop a “can-do attitude” within this organization. One employee commented that during tough times he thinks back to Kenneth Gardner and is reminded of the saying, “when the going gets tough, the tough get going” (#5). One current employee summed up Kenneth’s legacy when he said, “Everyday, the automation and the software we have is- I mean he was the designer of that-and a lot of the things that he fostered and helped lead I think is a standing memory of him” (#10).

*The Legacy of Arthur Hensley (N=5, 25%).* Arthur Hensley was in charge of the maintenance at Miller for nearly 40 years and has a mixed legacy. He was described as “very particular”, “a bully”, “a good guy”, “a nice guy”, “loyal”, “overly protective” and “very controlling”. As one current employee put it:

“The good thing about Arthur is that he treated the building like it was his building. The bad thing was that he treated it like it was his building. He was not very tolerant. He was very particular. Like the stereotypical housewife that goes around with the white glove treatment, and if you don’t take your shoes off in the house, that was Arthur. You had to do things his way or you were stupid” (#11).

He was known for controlling the thermostats, even going so far as putting a lock on the thermostats in offices of the executives. If you borrowed something from the company, you were expected to bring it back in the exact same condition. At one point he almost came to blows with a machine operator because Arthur wanted to personally allot rags to them rather than letting them keep bundles at their machines in case of spills. He was very protective of the building grounds, and would get after employees for picking bark pieces off the trees. He would even go so far as checking the security equipment to find out who did it. And he had all the keys to the different areas of the building as was very particular about allowing others to use those keys. One current manager probably summed up Arthur best when she said, “He kept an eye on everything and he treated it just like it was his” (#6).

### **Summary**

In contrast to the published history of Miller Inc., which focuses exclusively on the founders and subsequent CEOs, the native views of Miller’s history reveal a number of other individuals that are seen as having critical role in the story of the organization. Interestingly, the

founder, Dwight Miller, did not have the dominant legacy in this organization, having been superseded by his successor, James Kollman. And there were employees at all levels of the organizational hierarchy represented including former plant managers, salesmen, customer service representatives, and even a gruff maintenance man. This suggests that legacies are not just for founders and CEOs.

To better understand why these individuals had legacies in this organization, I coded each legacy statement for accounts of why an individual had a legacy in this organization. And there were two key themes that emerged: positive or negative contributions to the organization and positive or negative contributions to the community. Most of these legacies were a positive blend of both positive impact on the organization and positive impact on the community. However, other individuals were remembered for their negative impact on the organization and the community of members. This suggests that an organization's collective memory may have a bias towards preserving exemplars that have contributed to its flourishing, both as a for profit organization, and as a community of members. However, an organization's collective memory can also preserve exemplars of threats to the organization's survival and the community's way of life.

The legacy of Ray Morrow also provides an interesting view into the dynamics of collective memory. In the history of Miller Inc., the event identified by the greatest number of current employees as a "defining moment" in the organization's history was the adoption of the first Timson web printing press. Miller Inc. was just the second book manufacturer in North America to adopt this technology, and it has now become the industry standard for book manufacturing. You could go so far as to say that Ray was the key player in the most critical moment of the organization's history, yet his memory is dominated by his subsequent tenure as

the plant manager as the profits of the organization slid into the negative. This suggests that our legacies are open books, and a negative final chapter can cast a negative light on the whole story.

**TABLE 3.1**

**Why Do Individuals Have Legacies at Miller Inc.?**

<b>Why do individuals have legacy?</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Exemplary Quotation</b>
Contributions to the organization	Individuals are memorable because of their competence and their impact on the organization	Positive	“Everyday, the automation and the software we have is- I mean he was the designer of that-and a lot of the things that he fostered and helped lead I think is a standing memory of him” (#10).
		Negative	"He had people confused about what they were supposed to do. It just created chaos in the organization. Another real watershed moment. James let him go, along with some other people. Our profits had steadily been going down” (#4).
Contributions to the community	Individuals are memorable because of their interpersonal treatment and their impact on the community of members	Positive	“He was a very good salesperson, extremely loyal employee...David was one of those people that he would take a bullet for James and the company” (#11).
		Negative	“He was not very tolerant. He was very particular. Like the stereotypical housewife that goes around with the white glove treatment, and if you don’t take your shoes off in the house, that was Arthur. You had to do things his way or you were stupid” (#11).

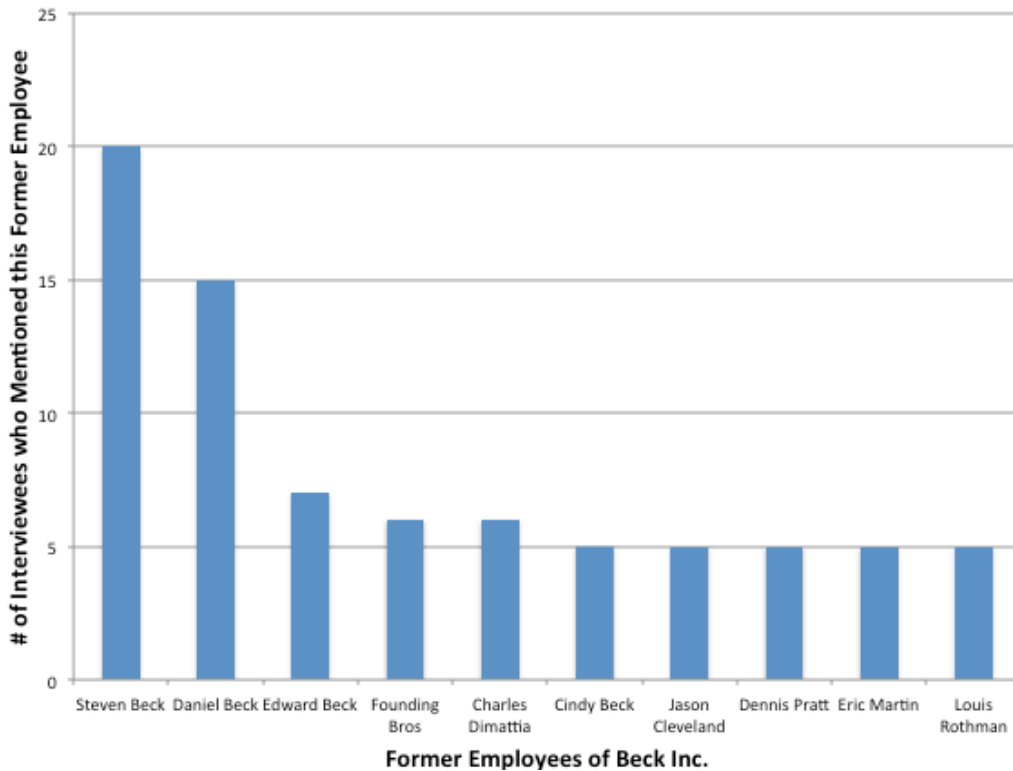
**The Native View Histories of Beck Inc.**

Like the native views of organizational history at Miller, the native views of organizational history at Beck are rarely chronological, and are not merely focused on the

organizations successes and achievements. As a result, there are a variety of legacies that emerge that are not included in the organization's published history. In total, there were 62 individuals mentioned as playing a role in the defining moments of the organization, or having left a positive or negative mark on the story of the organization. I present the legacy statements for the 12 most noted individuals from Beck (though I group the three founding Beck brothers together because they were always mentioned together as a group). These individuals were cited by at least 25% of the respondents I interviewed, indicating that the legacy has a level of "sharedness" within the organization. These individuals are plotted in the histogram below. Each bar represents a specific former member from Beck and the y-axis represents the number of respondents who mentioned this individual as an important part of the story of Beck.

**Figure 3.2**

**The Legacies of Beck Inc.**



***The Legacy of Steven Beck (N=20, 100%).*** Steven Beck joined Beck Inc. in 1954 after receiving his MBA. He was the president of Beck Inc. from 1979 until his retirement in 1997. He passed away in 2006. Speaking of Steven and his wife, one current employee said, “They’re remembered. I would say there probably isn’t a day when someone doesn’t mention their name. And it’s been maybe four or five years since they passed. They are still talked about quite a bit” (#32).

Some of the words and phrases used to describe Steven include “like a grandfather”, “very loving”, “very fair”, “a good man”, “conservative”, “family oriented”, “tough”, “a hot head”, “strong leader”, and “very focused”. Steven is often remembered for having a “personal touch”, which brought a family feel to Beck Inc. He had a red vest decorated with bells that he



would wear before the plant closed at Christmas time. According to one current hourly employee:

“I mean he knew your name right away, a lot of people working at this press. I’d remember him standing at the front door at Christmas time as you were leaving, shaking your hand, calling you by your name. So there was the personal touch” (#25).

Another employee remembered Steven spending time talking to employees on the weekends.

“When I first started...it wouldn’t be uncommon to see Steven in here on weekends. Which, that’s pretty weird for the owner of a company to walk in and say hi to everyone. They would talk to you, and not just act like they wanted to talk to you...To have an owner walk around on a Sunday, just to walk in. You’ve got nothing better to do on a Sunday than talk to your employees? That was pretty good” (#28)

And another current manager remembered having an opportunity to sit down with Steven not long after he was hired. He said:

“Back then they had a little interview thing where if a new hire came in, they let you work for a couple of weeks and then you go and sit down and have a little meeting with him and tell them your name and what you do and how you like it here and all that. He was very nice when I had that meeting with him and the companies that I worked for before were not that personable” (#27).

However, this personal touch also included a willingness to “bust your chops” if Steven felt like it would be for your good. One current manager described a situation where he came into the plant with a severe sunburn. Steven was being treated for skin cancer at the time, and he let this employee know what he thought of his lack of sunscreen:

“I can remember Steven Beck coming through when he was still here, and chewed my ass out for being sun burnt. ‘Cause he had skin cancer at the time. He came through and I was all sun burnt and man he just gave me the ride. Of course he has known me for a long time and known my dad for a long time. I don’t know if he would have just done that to anybody. Ya know... he was just showing me his [cancer], you know ‘you wanna end up like this?’...It just kind of how it was. I think he cared about people...He reminded me a lot of my dad. He was pretty hard-core” (#33).

However, he was also known for caring a great deal about “the bottom-line” and is known as a steady, meticulous, and analytical manager. According to one employee, he was not much of an innovator, but more of a “polish the apple”, “sharpen the saw”, “keep doing what we are doing” kind of manager” (#30). He went on to say, “Steven would never make a decision [based on a gut feeling], ever. Even if it slowed things down and he missed an opportunity, he wouldn’t do it that way. He was so disciplined. According to another employee, “he wanted people to put their nose to the grindstone and do an honest days work” (#24). He presided over the company during a time of increasing competition, and was not afraid to make some very difficult decisions such as scaling back healthcare benefits and pension promises. And he felt a strong sense of responsibility to make sure that they keep their expenses low. One employee said:

“Things would just tick him off that we are doing now. I mean spending \$40 on the painting right there or whatever it was. That would just tick him off, no reason to spend \$40 bucks. I remember he got mad once I took a business card and wrote something on the back to give to someone and he got mad, ‘don’t waste business cards.’ That kind of stuff. He was just frugal” (#30)

He was also known for having quite a temper. For example, one current employee related the following story about an exchange he observed between Steven and an employee during an annual HR review:

“Back in the old days, Steven would sit in on every employee’s review. Once a month, the supervisor or manager went into this large back conference room. Steven was there, HR was there and Steven had a book of every employee, their picture, and he’d write notes based on the review and he’d keep that up to speed...But he got mad at Brent once because the book was out of order because of this or that, I don’t know. And he picked up the book and threw it right at Brent and we’re talking about a binder that thick and the whole length of the table, and Brent sees it coming and he goes flying back! But that’s kind of the stuff he would do...he was high-tempered” (#36).

A current employee perhaps summed up Steven’s dual nature best when she said, “I think he had a good balance and although he was very employee-focused and everything, business was business” (#42).

***The Legacy of Daniel Beck (N=16, 80%).*** Daniel Beck was a pilot in WWII, and joined Beck Inc. full time after completing his degree in business administration. He was appointed President in 1950, as the Korean War was beginning to heat up, though he was spared from going because of a provision that exempted CEOs of companies from having to go to war. He led the organization until his brother Steven bought out his shares in 1979 and took over the management of the organization. After leaving Beck Inc., he continued an active role in the city government and in the community.

Like Steven, Daniel is known as someone with a personal touch, who would say hi and talk to everybody. As one current employee suggested, “he was a very easy person to be around.

You could talk to him. He made you feel at ease” (#26). He was known as a jokester that was very easy going and liked to have fun. This was exemplified in the following story told by one of the current employees:

“The guys one time were telling me that they were sitting out on the loading dock and it was after their shift and it was a real hot summer day and they had a 6-pack of beer and they were sitting on the loading docks and they were all drinking beer. And Daniel comes walking up and they were kind of freaked out, thinking ‘oh my God here’s the boss and here we’re drinking a beer’ so they started to get up and he goes, “‘h no, no, no sit back down’ and I don’t know how true this is, but this is just what I’ve heard. ‘No, no, no, sit back down and let me have one of those!’ So I guess he sat down and had a beer with them” (#27).

One of the important accomplishments of his father, Edward, was the initiation of a profit sharing program that would distribute a percentage of the company’s profits to individual employees. Daniel played an important role in perpetuating this practice. One employee said, “The pension plan started on his watch. Health benefits started at his watch, which we still do today. ...He cast a long shadow” (#41).

***The Legacy of Edward Beck (N=7, 35%).*** In 1920, as his father’s health was declining, Edward Beck stepped down from his position as an athletic director and returned home to help his father run Beck Inc. According to one employee, Edward felt “forced into running this” because “there’s nobody else you’ve got to do it” (#30). His father passed away in 1922, and Edward was the president of the organization until 1950. According to one employee, Edward had a bit of a temper and was “a wildcard” outside of work (#34).

According to another employee, Edward was the one that went on the road and really started selling the capabilities of Beck Inc., leading to impressive growth for the company during his tenure. As a result, he spent a lot of time on the road away from his family. In addition, Edward played an important role in taking the company through the Great Depression. At one point, when he reached a point of destitution, he almost sold his home so that he could keep the company afloat. He was also the one who embraced major opportunities to get into lithography and offset printing that enabled the company to expand into book manufacturing. As one of the current employees described, “that was a BIG deal!” As a result, Edward is known as “an innovator” who was willing to “adopt the newest technology” (#36).

***The Legacy of William, Richard, and Alvin Beck (N=6, 30%).*** William and Richard were law students looking to make money to support themselves during their schooling. They tried selling a law book that they created for farmers, but ultimately found little success in this endeavor. However, they found that they could mimeograph their lecture notes taken during their legal seminars, and then sell them to other students for a profit. So they began alternating years, with one brother attending school, and the other running their new business, until they had both graduated from law school. After graduation, according to one employee, both William and Richard decided, “I’m not going to be a dumb ass printer” (#30). So they sold the company to their brother Alvin in 1899 and went into private law practice. This employee went on to say, “Look at where we are, Beck Law firm doesn’t exist. That’s not a bite, but that’s just sort of a really cool story” (#30). One employee summed up his perception of the founders in this way: “We wouldn’t be here if it weren’t for the founders of the company” (#37). But as another employee described, “It is kind of just like, I mean we know about it [the founding], but it is not really, it is not everywhere in your face, talked about all the time” (#31).

***The Legacy of Charles Dimattia (N=6, 30%).*** Charles Dimattia was a manufacturing manager that was known as a “happy go-lucky” person. According to one current employee, he came into the company as a pressman, and worked his way up to become the plant manager. He was described as “always [smiling], always had a quick laugh, upbeat, related to everybody in the plant really well, and I think he kind of kept the whole thing together” (#36). According to one current employee:

“He helped get things going years ago in the manufacturing facility. They helped put all the pieces together as far as improving the flow of work from the press room and the folders, much like setting up a line like an automobile line, so that it made sense to get it from one end to the back, and batching work, determining how to take this size of book and make it run cost effectively through the plant, or no this product doesn’t fit it well. Can we run a color book through this plant, can we run this type of sheet” (#34).

As a result, he is known as someone that “forged the manufacturing area” (#23).

***The Legacy of Cindy Beck (N= 5, 25%).*** Cindy Beck was the wife of company president Steven Beck. She passed away about six months prior to her husband Steven. Cindy was not technically a member of the organization, but because she was the spouse of Steven Beck, she spent a lot of time at the organization. According to one current employee, “she was in here quite often, a couple of times a week” and “had the reputation of being someone who deeply cared about their employees” (#32). This employee described Cindy as a soft complement to Steven’s focused business mentality. When the company would have its annual Length of Service Banquet, Cindy (a music major in college) would arrange for a string quartet to play music. This employee described this event as “very classy” as a result of her touch (#32). She also spruced up the organization’s campus by planting peonies bushes that she liked to be “pretty

and pristine” (#40). She was also known for responding with compassion when something would happen to an employee. One employee told the story of an evening when the weather got to bad that the highway was closed and employees were encouraged not to go home for the evening: “Mrs. Beck was concerned about feeding people while they were here and they were trying to figure out how to get food into people. I mean there was concern. So that means something” (#43).

***The Legacy of Jason Cleveland (N=5, 25%).*** Jason Cleveland joined Beck Inc. in 1951, and ultimately became a supervisor in the Press Department. According to one current employee, “people still talk about him...and how he worked. Most of it had to do with his work ethic” (#24). Employees remember him as a person that rarely said no when asked to work an extra few hours or on a weekend. According to another manager, he was also “mechanically inclined” and “just a really good guy” (#27). One employee said:

“They don’t make people like that anymore...they are committed, they go to work everyday. They get a job somewhere. They stay there, and they make a career out of it. You don’t see that much anymore. You know, people come in today and they might work six out of the eight hours that they are here. It’s just... I guess it was a blessing to be able to come in and work with people with that. They gave you the right perspective on how things were done. You do things right. You don’t see much of that anymore. All them guys are gone now. In a sense we are in a new era at Beck Inc. A lot of the people that made Beck what it is today are gone” (#33).

***The Legacy of Dennis Pratt (N=5, 25%).*** Dennis Pratt worked for over 30 years in the maintenance department at Beck Inc. He passed away about five years ago after a battle with cancer. According to one current employee, “people in Maintenance talk about him still. They

talk about, he was an electrician, and he just could fix anything out there” (#30). Another employee also said, “people still talk about him and I was surprised at how many people he affected. Just being a good person and just helping out” (#40). This employee also noted his reputation for being able to fix things.

One day, while working on the electrical grid in the plant, Dennis had an accident and according to one employee, “blew himself up” (#40). The accident caused the power to go out in the entire plant. Luckily, Dennis survived the accident, but was burned quite badly and had to receive skin grafts on his arms because of the damage. As a result, there is a huge charred spot in the ceiling of the Manufacturing Department where the accident happened, and people will often share this story about Dennis.

***The Legacy of Eric Martin (N=5, 25%).*** Eric Martin was hired at Beck Inc. in 1985, and ultimately became a sales manager. Approximately five years ago, while Eric and his colleagues were attending a national Beck Inc. sales meeting, Eric suffered a massive heart attack in his hotel room and dropped dead in his hotel room. According to a current employee, he was getting ready to come to the lobby of the hotel room where they were staying when someone approached and informed them that Eric had fallen in his hotel room. He described the situation in this way:

“We’re like oh crap so we turn around and start to walk upstairs and then an ambulance came, the paramedics ran passed us and we’re like ‘oh this is bad!’ So we walked upstairs and the doors were open and we see Eric on the ground and they’re pumping his chest and we were like, ‘oh this is bad!’ and we went downstairs and everybody’s crying and I said ‘this one’s bad!’” (#30)

According to one employee, Eric embodied “commitment and character and he was a nice guy and everybody knew him and everybody really liked him.” When I attended a sales meeting after



the merger, the employees were asked to share a story about another employee who had a “legacy” in their organization, and almost every salesperson I observed spoke with great respect about Eric Martin, the type of person that he was, and the influence he had on their lives as a colleague and manager.

***The Legacy of Louis Rothman (N=5, 25%).*** Louis Rothman came to work at Beck Inc. in 1960 and ultimately became a supervisor in the Plate and Press Department. One of the current employees, recalled some of the lessons that he had learned from observing Louis Rothman: “Some of the biggest things I learned from him were that you’ve got to be at work everyday and when you get to work you work. That was just how he was. He never missed time unless he was deathly ill...so things like that. He was very loyal to Beck” (#33). One current manager suggested that he was incredibly knowledgeable about how to run the presses, but he was “tough to work for” (#24). A current employee who started after Louis’ time said he has heard stories of Louis firing people on the spot if they were not doing their jobs, and described Louis as “very old school” (#32). However, another employee said that despite his toughness, “you respected him because he knew what he was talking about and he stood up for the guys on the floor”(#25). Because of his expertise, he was instrumental in making recommendations about the various machines to purchase. According to one current manager, “He has been retired for several years, but he still affects the pressroom. A lot of the more experienced operators still work based on his standard” (#24).

### **Summary**

As we saw with Miller Inc., the native views of Beck’s history reveal a number of individuals that are not included in the “official” story of the organization, but who are seen by current members as having left their mark on the organization. These included individuals at all

levels of the organizational hierarchy including former plant managers, a salesmen, a beloved maintenance man, and even the wife of the former CEO. Like Miller Inc., we also see that, the founders did not have the dominant legacy in this organization, having been superseded by each of their successors. Taken together, these results imply that legacies are not just for founders and CEOs.

As with the legacies of Miller Inc., I coded each legacy statement for accounts of why an individual had a legacy in this organization. And just as I found with Miller Inc., there were two key themes that emerged: contributions to the organization and contributions to the community. However, unlike Miller Inc., the examples of negative contributions tended to be more distributed, and there was not a particular set of individuals that were commonly remembered by others as having a negative legacy in the organization. As one employee noted, “Since I have been employed here there have been different people that seem like they had a trail of negativity follow them, based on how they managed. Thankfully those are short-term memories” (#24). Thus, it seems that an organization’s collective memory may be biased towards the positive.

The legacies of Eric Martin and Dennis Pratt also stand out because both individuals passed away while still working for the organization. Neither Eric nor Dennis were known for their impact on the organization, but were known for their impact on others within the community. Their legacies have been embodied in various artifacts throughout the organization. For example, annual sales award given to the best salesperson has been renamed the Eric Martin Sales Award, and there is a tree planted on the grounds of the organization for Dennis Pratt. In contrast to Ray Morrow at Miller Inc., whose legacy was tarnished by the nature of his departure from Miller Inc., it seems as though the legacies of Eric and Dennis may have become more luminous because they departed the organization via death.

**TABLE 3.2**

**Why Do Individuals Have Legacies at Beck Inc.?**

<b>Why do individuals have legacy?</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Exemplary Quotation</b>
Contributions to the Organization	Individuals are memorable because of their competence and their impact on the organization	Positive	“He helped get things going years ago in the manufacturing facility. They helped put all the pieces together as far as improving the flow of work from the press room and the folders, much like setting up a line like an automobile line, so that it made sense to get it from one end to the back (#34).
		Negative	“He was so slow at making decisions. We used to call him “One-ball ” because he could only juggle one ball at a time” (#36).
Contributions to the Community	Individuals are memorable because of their interpersonal treatment and their impact on the community of members	Positive	“He was always [smiling], always had a quick laugh, upbeat, related to everybody in the plant really well, and I think he kind of kept the whole thing together” (#36).
		Negative	“She was a manager here for a while... She was tough. And she wasn’t very fair sometimes” (#23).

**Why Are These Individuals Memorable? Pathways to Legacies in Organizations**

Previous research on organizational culture has suggested that executives, particularly founders, would be the individuals with the greatest potential to leave a legacy. And my analysis of the published organizational histories of both Beck Inc. and Miller Inc. certainly suggest that CEOs have a prominent place in the collective memories of these organizations. This might not be surprising because published histories tend to focus on organizational accomplishments and

successes (Delahaye et al., 2009), and founders and CEO's benefit from the "romance of leadership", whereby their leadership is viewed as the explanatory cause of the performance of the organization (Meindl, 1995; Meindl, Ehrlich, & Dukerich, 1985). However, probing more deeply into native views of the organization's history, we see a wide variety of individuals who had legacies in these organizations that extended beyond the upper ranks of the organizational hierarchy. And their legacies are about much more than the organization's success and accomplishments. In the propositions below, I summarize the factors illuminated by these legacies at Miller Inc. and Beck Inc. that might affect the potential for a specific individual to have a legacy in the organization's collective memory.

*P1: Individuals whose actions are perceived to have a significant positive or negative influence on the organization's trajectory will have a higher likelihood of having a legacy.*

Memories of an individual's actions are the substance of legacies so it should come as no surprise that one of the most obvious pathways to having a legacy in the organization's collective memory would be to do something that shapes the trajectory of the organization. This includes founding (e.g., the original Beck Brothers, Dwight Miller, and Anthony Kerby), and leading (e.g., Chris Willis), but might also include creating the organization's IT infrastructure (e.g., Kenneth Gardner), structuring the flow of inputs and outputs in the organization (e.g., Charles Dimattia), or taking the organization into new markets (e.g., David Holzman). This also includes individuals who are viewed as having a negative influence on the organization's trajectory, such as the perception that Ray Marrow caused the organization to become unprofitable. However, legacies are not just about what you do to benefit the organization, they are also about how you treat other people.

*P2: Individuals whose actions are perceived to have a significant positive or negative influence on the other members of the organization will have a higher likelihood of having a legacy.*

While legacies are often about a person's impact on the organization and its trajectory, legacies also focus on the influence individuals have on the other members of the organization. For example, though respondents perceived James and Steven as being the leaders who had made their organizations what they are today, most of the stories that emerged that defined their legacies were focused on their personal touch, the fact that they knew each employee's name, and their attention to the personal lives of employees. And in some cases we find individuals who had very little impact on the overall trajectory of the organization, but who have a legacy because of the way they touched other members. For example, Eric Martin did not have the same impact on trajectory of Beck that David Holzman did at Miller through their respective roles as sales managers. In fact, one employee noted that Eric was "not the best salesman" in the organization's history. However, Eric Martin is remembered because of the way he treated those who worked for him. Similarly, as maintenance men, Dennis Pratt and Arthur Hensley are not remembered because they shaped the trajectory of the organization. One respondent said of Dennis, "I was surprised at how many people he affected, just being a good person and just helping out" (#40). And on the flipside, Arthur Hensley was known as a very competent maintenance man, but it was the negative way he went about his job that shapes the way he is remembered within the organization.

According to Fiske, Cuddy, and Glick (2007: 77), social judgments of other individuals reflect "evolutionary pressures" of survival, whereby "social animals must determine, immediately, where the 'other' is a friend or foe (i.e., intends good or ill) and, then, whether the

other has the ability to enact those intentions.” As such, Cuddy, Glick, and Beninger (2011: 73) suggest that “psychological research involving thousands of people from widely varied cultures has established that we use two trait dimensions, labeled as warmth and competence, to “sort” our social worlds, judging people as relatively high or low on each dimension.” The dimension of “warmth” sorts individuals on traits that signal a person’s intentions, such as friendliness, trustworthiness, morality, empathy, and kindness. The dimension of competence sorts individuals on traits that signal their ability, such as intelligence, power, efficacy, and skill. Judgments of warmth and competence interact to produce an overall judgment of an individual as a social being. Individuals who are perceived as both competent and warm prompt positive emotions and behavior, whereas individuals perceived as lacking competence prompt negative emotions and behavior. However, considerable research suggests that “warmth is judged before competence, and warmth judgments carry more weight in affective and behavioral reactions” (Fiske et al., 2007: 78). For example in Asch’s (1946) foundational work on social judgments, he found that varying information about a person’s warmth while holding information about a person’s competence constant changed the overall evaluation of the person.

If we extend these arguments to the macro-level, we can see how the selection mechanisms that shape an organization’s collective memory reflect the “evolutionary pressures” the organization faces. These include pressures for the organization’s survival as a profit-focused organization, as well as pressures for the organization’s survival as a community of members. Thus, legacies reflect both impact on an organization’s trajectory, as well as impact on the lives of individual members. And as the example of Ray Marrow illustrates, even when an individual has had a significant impact on the trajectory of the organization, perceptions about

a person's impact on the community of members may have a stronger influence on the way they are remembered.

*P3: An individual's later acts will have a greater influence on their legacy than previous actions.*

The legacy of Ray Morrow suggests that later actions may carry greater weight than previous actions in shaping the legacy of a particular individual. Ray was the key player in the most noted defining moment in the organization's history: the adoption of the Timson web printing press. Miller Inc. became just the second book manufacturer in North America to adopt this technology, and it has now become the industry standard. One would think that this would be the crowning achievement of Ray's legacy, yet few of the respondents who noted this defining moment mentioned Ray in conjunction with this event. Instead, those that mention Ray almost universally commented on his negative leadership style and his termination, which resulted from the declining profitability of the plant during his subsequent tenure as plant manager. His later actions appear to have overwhelmed his previous accomplishments. These findings might be explained by the "peak-end" bias, which suggests that general evaluations of an experience as pleasant or aversive are more affected by the peak and end of the experience than the duration (Kahneman, Fredrickson, Schreiber, & Redelmeier, 1993). Scholars have also shown that acts at the end of one's life have are weighted more heavily than previous acts when it is believed that those acts reveal information about one's true self (Newman, Lockhart, & Keil, 2010). Thus, last acts may be more critical in determining an individual's legacy than their previous acts.

However, from an organizational perspective, this bias may actual have a critical function, acting as an informal control mechanism that helps motivate individuals to maintain

their contributions to the organization and the community through the course of their tenure. While traditional motivations might begin to lose their steam as individuals wind down their time in a particular organization, the knowledge that one's legacy can be tarnished by one's later acts provides a powerful incentive for organizational actors to continue to contribute until the very end. For example, consider how frequently you hear references to a president's "legacy" as they approach the end of their first term, and more especially, during their second term as they are no longer accountable to the voting public. The knowledge that accomplishments of the first term might be overshadowed or perhaps redeemed by actions in the second term provides a powerful incentive for presidents when their accountability is quite low.

*P4: Departing the organization via death may enhance an individual's legacy.*

The legacies of Dennis Pratt and Eric Martin suggest that death may influence an individual's legacy. One current employee who said:

"I think the ones who live on are the ones who die unexpectedly, because you're expecting people to go through their career and retire and then they just sort of move on. When they do that, nobody thinks about them because it's natural. But there was a fellow named Dennis Pratt and there's a tree for him over there out in the front and he was in our maintenance department. He died in cancer and everybody knew him, he was a 30-year-plus guy and he was 5-10 years from retiring and people in the maintenance talk about him still" (#31)

Because death is a traumatic event it can leave an indelible mark on the memories of those associated with the individual. In addition, when death happens while an individual is still working at a particular organization, that organization may play a greater role in the process of mourning and commemoration. For example, both Beck Inc. and Miller Inc. has a set of



practices that have become a part of the process of honoring those who die while employed at the organization ranging from the creation of physical reminders, to moments of silence. These practices might serve to enhance the legacy of a particular individual. Scholars examining the influence of death on evaluations of others have documented a “death positivity bias”, where we tend to rate identical descriptions of dead individuals more positively than identical descriptions of living individuals (Allison, Eylon, Beggan, & Bachelder, 2009; Allison, Eylon, & Hope, 2005), and these evaluations are more resistant to change in the presence of new information about a dead individual compared to a living individual (Eylon & Allison, 2005). Just as the acts prior to the departure of an individual might carry more weight in shaping the way a particular person is remembered, a person’s death might also play an important role in cementing a person’s memory in an organization’s collective memory

*P5: Individuals who have greater exposure in the organization will have more widespread legacies*

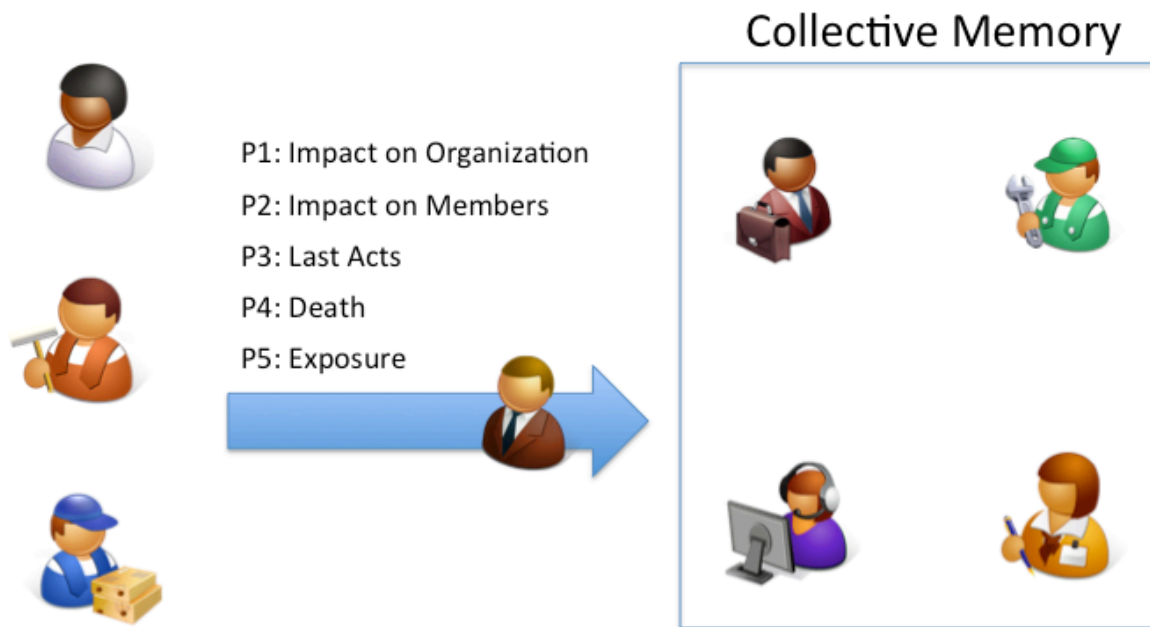
Finally, what can we infer from these data to help us understand why some legacies are more widespread or shared than others? For example, the legacy of James and Steven was an important part of each of the native views of the organization’s history, while Charles Dimattia and Chris Willis were included less frequently. I argue that certain individuals have greater exposure or contact with others in the organization, making it more likely that their legacy will be shared throughout the organization. And there are several ways that individuals might achieve greater exposure. First, individuals who work at an organizational for a longer period of time will naturally be exposed to more members of the organization across time. Employees with longer tenures might also have opportunities to work in multiple roles, generating contact with a broader array of individuals in the organization. For example, Raymond Ward worked in

the organization for many years, fulfilling a variety of roles, and was also used as a key informant in the organization's socialization practices, generating a great deal of exposure between himself and the current members of the organization.

Second, certain roles naturally generate greater exposure for individuals within a particular organization. CEO's and executives by virtue of their position in the hierarchy naturally have high exposure across multiple departments in the organization. However, a maintenance worker might also have high exposure given that their responsibilities necessitate working with maintenance concerns across all departments and with members at all levels of the hierarchy. For example, Both Arthur at Miller Inc. and Dennis at Beck Inc. worked in the maintenance department their entire careers, but nature of their work created exposure across departments, and across the levels of the organizational hierarchy. Thus, we might expect that individuals in roles that facilitate higher exposure across the organization will have a higher likelihood of having a legacy that is widespread in the organization. This advantage in direct exposure will likely translate into an advantage in indirect exposure after the individual has departed the organization.

**Figure 3.3**

**Factors that Influence the Likelihood of Having a Legacy**



**Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was to enhance our understanding of who is remembered in an organization’s collective memory, and why these individuals are memorable. Previous perspectives in the culture creation literature tend to draw attention to founders and top executives as the individuals in organizations that are likely to have a legacy (Schein, 2010). And consistent with these founder-centric theories that tend to “romance leadership” (Meindl, 1995; Meindl et al., 1985), founders and CEO’s were the only individuals mentioned in published organizational histories, which focused almost exclusively on the organization’s growth and success (Delahaye et al., 2009).

However, when we examine other aspects of the organization’s collective memory, in particular, native views of the organization’s history, we find a variety of individuals ranging from the top of the organizational hierarchy (e.g., James Kollman) to the bottom (e.g., Arthur

and Dennis the maintenance men, Cindy Beck), that continue to live on in the memory of this organization. This suggests that there is hope for individuals at all levels of the organizational hierarchy to have a legacy after they are gone. And I suggested five key factors that might affect the potential for an individual to have a legacy.

First, and perhaps unsurprising, I proposed that individuals whose actions are perceived as having an important influence on the trajectory of the organization will be more likely to have a legacy. This proposition reflects evolutionary pressures for survival facing the organization as an ongoing, for profit entity. And this proposition suggests that individuals who shape the organization and the nature of work within the organization have the potential to have a legacy after they are gone. However, my results also illuminate the evolutionary pressures for survival facing the organization as a community of members. This suggests that individuals who have an important influence on other members within the organization will also be likely to have a legacy that lives on after they are gone. This illuminates the importance of relationships in legacy construction, and suggests that legacies are not just about what you do, they are about how you affect others around you in the process. And as was noted in the example of Ray Morrow, having a negative impact on the community of members may overwhelm having a positive impact on the trajectory of the organization in the way an individual is represented in the collective memory after they are gone. These results call for more systematic evaluation of how we evaluate former members, and conditions that lead individuals to attach different weights to an individual's perceived success versus their interpersonal treatment or their morality in evaluating former members of the organization.

These results also suggest that what happens at the end of a person's tenure may play an especially critical role in the way individuals are remembered compared to previous actions.

Understanding the boundary conditions that influence this effect is an area that deserves further attention. For example, research suggests that individuals tend to rate “sins of commission” as more immoral than “sins of omission”, even when the harm caused by the action is the same (Spranca, Minsk, & Baron, 1991). Thus, we might expect that individuals guilty of omissions towards the end of their tenure might be given more leniency than individuals guilty of commissions when future others judge their legacy. Likewise, there are a host of questions worth asking about “legacy repair”, and the extent to which individuals might be able to recover their legacy after moral transgressions or performance failures. And exploring the capacity of legacies to motivate continued contributions to the organization would be another area for further investigation.

These results also suggest that death may play an important role in shaping the legacies of individuals. Previous research has examined the way death cues in an organization shape the motivations of remaining employees (Grant & Wade-Benzoni, 2009), but there are no studies that I know of that have examined organizational responses to employee deaths, and the resulting impact of those responses and practices on organizational healing and functioning. Understanding the role of legacy building in organizational responses to deaths might be another area worth further investigation.

Finally, these results suggest that an individual’s exposure to others within the organization might play an important role in determining how “widespread” an individual’s legacy might be within an organization. One possible extension of these findings might come from examining legacies within organizations at “lower” levels of analysis. For example, from my observations with individuals in the sales function at Beck Inc., it is quite obvious that Eric Martin has an important legacy in the sales function at Beck. However, outside of the sales

function, few people mentioned Eric as having left an important impact on the organization. This suggests that we might be able to learn even more about the dynamics of why some individuals are remembered in organizations by examining this phenomenon at the department level of analysis. Different functions or departments within an organization may have different “selection mechanisms” that lead to different patterns of legacy building within a particular department.

At a practical level, the key take away is not that you should die on the job if you hope to leave a legacy. However, these results do suggest that individuals should push to “go out on top”, as their actions towards the end of their tenure may be weighted with even greater importance than their previous actions. There are countless examples of individuals who continued with an organization past their peak, and were faced subsequently with a tarnished legacy. And we can see how a damning transgression discovered at the end of Joe Paterno’s career has recast his entire legacy. These results also provide a warning to those that may get caught up in the pursuit of achievement and impact on the organization while neglecting the impact their actions have on the community in which they are embedded. And finally, these results also suggest that organizations should thoroughly consider how they respond to the deaths of their members. As one employee exclaimed in our interview, “That is not something they teach you in business school!” However, the results of this chapter suggest that how organizations respond to the death of an individual might have important consequences for those that are left behind.

## CHAPTER 4

### *Legacy Endurance in Organizations*

In July 2007, representatives from a local gas company forced open the door to Sandra Drummond's apartment. To their shock, they found Sandra's corpse so decomposed that the medical examiners could not determine the cause of her death. Because Sandra had almost no interaction with the world outside her apartment, and all of her bills were set up for automatic payment, no one suspected that anything was wrong. They estimated that she had been dead in her apartment for nearly a full year. She left behind a bottle of Vaseline, a hot water bottle, a stuffed animal, a roll of tape, and a snow globe. They could not locate a living relative, and there were no mourners who attended her funeral. And Sandra's story is not unusual. In the UK, 200 funerals a month go unattended, and in cases where a living relative cannot be traced, the local authority will usually pay for a basic cremation and bury the ashes in an unmarked grave. Sometimes these are individuals with mental health challenges or the elderly, who become totally detached from the world. According to the author reporting this saddening story: "Sometimes there is no explanation: they have simply sunk without a trace" (Day, 2008). This seems like a saddening and awful end to a person's life. But for most of us, Sandra's fate is not too far removed from our own fate described by Augustine (2000): "in a few generations most of our accomplishments will be totally forgotten, the memories of our lives reduced to a mere name etched on a tombstone or written on a genealogy chart...and no trace of us will remain."

The principle is clear: once we are gone, we begin to face the fading force of memory. In the previous chapter, we explored the selection mechanisms that shape who becomes memorable in the organization's collective memory. Out of the hundreds and thousands of individuals who had worked at Miller Inc. and Beck Inc., only a small subset of former members continued to be

represented in the collective memory of the organization. Yet even of those former members identified, some will continue to maintain a prominent place in the collective memory, while others will likely fade into the background or disappear altogether. For example, if you look closely at the histogram presented in the previous chapter of the legacies at Beck Inc., you see an interesting pattern: the most prominent legacies at Beck in descending order are Steven, Daniel, Edward, and the founding Beck brothers. There would be a nearly perfect correlation between the time since a person left the organization and their prominence in the collective memory of the organization. Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to extend our understanding of how legacies endure within organizations, and the processes and actions that keep legacies “alive” in organizations.

### **Organizational Memory and Legacy Endurance**

One of the unique properties of organizations is their ability to survive the loss of individual members and continue their existence across time. As Katz and Kahn (1978: 37) observed, “As human inventions, social systems are imperfect. They can come apart at the seams overnight, but they can also outlast by centuries the biological organizations that originally created them...an organization can have a very high rate of turnover of personnel and still persist.” For example, Kongo Gumi Co., Ltd. (a Japanese construction company) was founded in 578 AD, and operated continuously until 2006 when it was bought by another organization (Hutcheson, 2007). And the University of Bologna was founded in 1088 AD, making it the longest continuously operating university in the world (Chafuen, 2013). These examples illustrate that organizations are dynamic, temporal entities with a continued existence across time, and the capacity to “outlive” their individual members. And the endurance of



organizations opens the potential for particular individuals to have legacies that endure or “live on” in organizations after they are gone.

This raises the question, how do the legacies of individuals live on in organizations after they are gone? We must first begin with the assumption that for legacies to endure or “live on” there must be a concept of “memory” whereby organizations can bring aspects of the past to bear on the present. However, our current notions of “organizational memory” are inadequate for helping us how legacies endure within organizations. The concept of “memory” in organizational studies is founded on the assumption that organizations are information processing systems, and “organizational memory” is seen as an important part of that system. Information flows into the organization from the environment, and is stored in various “retention facilities” or “storage bins” such as individuals, culture, transformations, and the physical environment (Walsh & Ungson, 1991). This information can then be retrieved for use in future decisions. Memory from this perspective is “a functional aid for decision-making in the present” (Rowlinson et al., 2010: 283). From this perspective, a legacy would be viewed as information about a former member of the organization, tucked away in storage somewhere in the organization to be retrieved if it were deemed relevant to a current decision. And I believe this static view of organizational memory gives us an incomplete understanding of how legacies “live on” in organizations.

### **Analytical Strategy**

The data for this chapter consist of my own autoethnographic observations from my experiences at Beck and Miller, insights gained from a review of corporate documents, and the responses of 40 current employees of Beck and Miller to various semi-structured interview questions. These interview responses were obtained using questions designed to elicit both

general observations about the preservation and endurance of legacies (e.g., “How are the memories of individuals preserved around here?”), as well as more specific observations about the preservation and endurance of particular legacies (e.g., “How is James’ memory preserved around here?”). The interview data was supplemented with archival analysis, including a review of the organization’s website, all archived newsletters for both organizations, and a review of commemorative yearbooks published by both organizations. I also toured the physical space of both organizations collecting pictures of material artifacts that were linked to particular individuals. Taken together, these secondary sources of data provided a rich context for understanding members’ responses and sometimes sparked new questions for interview protocols that could be addressed in subsequent interviews with informants. For example, partway through the interviewing process, I attended an Employee Appreciation Day at Miller Inc. where they announced that they would be planting a tree for a member that had just passed away. I was then able to ask several respondents about this practice, its origins, and how it was applied when a member of the organization passed away.

I analyzed the data in a highly iterative fashion, moving back and forth between the data and my emerging observations and arguments. In stage one of the data analysis, I read through each of my interview transcripts using open coding to generate provisional codes. Coding is a method of “meaning condensation” (Lee, 1999: 89) that facilitates the extraction of relevant themes in the data. A code is usually applied to data “chunks” that range in size from a single word to multiple paragraphs (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and multiple codes can be assigned to a single chunk. These were mostly descriptive codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994) that were usually snippets of respondents’ own words.

In the second phase of analysis, I returned to these codes looking for more abstract theoretical categories. For example, there were several codes about creating various physical artifacts such images, memorials, or texts that were aggregated into the more abstract categories of “etching” or “printing”. I then looked for theoretical relationships between these more abstract categories, attempting to illuminate higher order relationships between these categories. For example, several codes about creating physical artifacts were aggregated into the more theoretical category “Promoting Physical Endurance”. I present my findings below.

**TABLE 4.1**  
**How Do Legacies Endure in Organizations?**

<b>Type of Legacy Endurance</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Building Blocks of Legacy</b>	<b>Supporting Mnemonics (Forms of Legacy Work*)</b>
Cognitive Endurance	Representations of former members live on in the minds of individual members through individual memories	Individual Memories	Associative Learning
Social Endurance	Representations of former members live on in the social space of the organization through communicative acts	Communicative Acts	Invoking* Storytelling*
Material Endurance	Representations of former members live on in the physical space of the organization through material artifacts	Material Artifacts	Etching* Printing*

### Results

My findings suggest that legacies are not just bits of information stored in various storage bins, but are better conceived as representations that live on in various forms in three important

domains: individual minds, social space, and physical space. These various domains are interrelated aspects of an enduring organization, and the endurance of a legacy in each of these domains is supported by a distinct set of mnemonics, or memory aids, ranging from unconscious associative learning that support legacies in the domain of individual memory to more intentional acts such as storytelling and etching that support legacies in social and physical space. I refer to these more intentional mnemonics as forms of “legacy work” because of the more intentional way they help to create, maintain, or revise the legacy of a former member. Legacies are given material form by mnemonics that connect legacies to physical space (e.g., association, printing and etching), but are given social life by acts of legacy work that support their endurance in social space (e.g., invoking and storytelling). By social life, I mean that legacies become dynamic “organisms” “made visible by material that is temporary and constantly moving rather than enduring and fixed in place” (Sandelands, 2003: 9). Sandelands (2003: 9) suggests, “Just as a waterfall is visible with a continuous movement of water. It ceases to exist the moment its supply of water is cut off. Likewise, a social form is visible with continuous activity. Like the waterfall, it ceases to exist the moment its supply of activity is cut off.” Thus, communicative acts are the lifeblood of legacies. When people cease talking about an individual, individual memories may endure for a time, and a physical form may endure indefinitely, but the legacy has no social life in the organization.

### **Cognitive Endurance**

One of the domains where legacies live on is within the minds of surviving members in the form of individual memories. This was illustrated by the comment of one current Miller Inc. employee when he said: “As long as the current employees are alive, a little bit of James’ legacy will be alive because all of us carry part of James’ legacy inside of us because he’s passed it on

to us” (#1). I refer to this as cognitive endurance. The capacity to remember has been metaphorically described as a form of “mental time travel”, enabling individuals to “go back in time” and bring the past to bear on the present (Schacter, 1996: 17). The capacity to remember enables surviving members to remember direct events and experiences involving former members, as well as indirect events and experiences involving former members, some that occurred long before a surviving member joined the group. For example, during an interview with one employee, she shared with me the story of her first encounter with James:

“He knew everyone’s name. He knew my name when I first started and I was like wow, my name is not a common name, and he knows it. And he made sure to come over and acknowledge it and I was like wow that’s the owner, he’s actually saying “how you doing today? How’s it going?” hi [Nancy]!” (#20).

This represents an autobiographical experience with James that happened many years ago, but through the process of remembering, this memory can be constructed in the present enabling this experience with James to endure beyond his time in the organization. In contrast, a current employee at Miller Inc. related to me in great detail James career history and the path that led him to purchase Miller (#1). These memories were not autobiographical experiences because this individual was not present for these events. However, in both of these examples, aspects of James’ legacy live on in the minds of these current members.

Cognitive endurance is supported by the mnemonic of associative learning. Through associative learning, the human mind establishes associations between various objects in physical and social space, such that the presentation of a particular stimuli brings to mind another object, person, experience, etc. (Mackintosh, 1983). For example, if we think of Pavlov’s famous experiments, after several rounds of presenting food to his canine subjects after ringing a bell,

Pavlov was able to observe that ringing the bell stimulated the dogs salivary gland even when food was not subsequently presented (Pavlov, 1927). Individuals may also have strong mental and emotional reactions to reminders of a physical trauma that in some cases produce behavioral reactions as if the trauma were happening again (Beck & Sloan, 2012). And in like manner, over the course of an individual's life in an organization, certain objects, practices, roles or situations may become associated with a particular individual, such that even after they are gone, the object, practice, role or situation still brings to mind the memory of a particular individual.

*Associations between current members and former members.* Sometimes current members and their behavior serve as mnemonics that bring to mind memories of former members. For example, one employee at Miller Inc. said, "When you see Glen, you think of James" (#6). This quote suggests that the sight of Glen Kollman cues memories of James Kollman in the mind of this current employee. This association is likely because of their familial relationship (father/son), their physical resemblance, and their shared role (CEO of Miller). Another employee describing how Glen wears a Santa hat while distributing Christmas bonuses each year said, "I think Glen does that because James did that when he was in charge. So little things like that make you think of the 'big gun' James" (#13). Interestingly, both of these employees did not work in the organization while James was the CEO, illustrating how these associations can continue to be established even after an individual is no longer an active part of the day to day activities of the organization. Similarly, at Beck Inc., a current employee told me that an important aspect of Steven's legacy was his ability to connect with his employees. One of the practices that Steven would always engage in was walking around the plant, even on weekends, to say hello to the employees working on the presses. According to this employee, "I would always see Steven, you know, just about everyday, walking around the plant. And that is

something that Robert does too...I guess when I see Robert, I think of Steven, because he did that” (#31). In each of these cases, a current member serves as a cue, bringing to mind the memory of a former member because of an existing association.

*Associations between situations and former members.* Sometimes certain situations serve as mnemonics that bring to mind former members. For example, on one of the days I was interviewing at Miller, they were hosting their annual blood drive. One employee commented:

“Like today the blood drive is going on so I think about Doug. Cause he would have always been in that. He was always into stuff like that, any kind of charity donation thing, any blood drive, any giving thing. He was always first to give. So whenever I see any kind of a charity I think of Doug” (#19).

In this case, a particular type of situation, charity events, served as a cue for memories of Doug, who had always been involved in events like that. Similarly, an employee at Beck Inc. told me that, when the power goes out, employees often think of “the ghost of Dennis Pratt” (#40).

Several years ago Dennis was working on the electrical grid in the plant and nearly electrocuted himself. The accident caused the power to go out throughout the entire plant. These examples illustrate how recurring situations serve as cues for memories of former members.

*Associations between the material environment and former members.* Perhaps the most commonly mentioned form of association was between various aspects of the material environment and former members. At Miller Inc., there were multiple aspects of the material environment that brought memories of James to mind. For example, one employee told me, “One thing I think about that makes you think of James is his office” (#13). This has reference to the office in the foyer that is reserved for James for when he comes in to the plant to visit. Another employee told me, “When you go in the back and you see the volleyball net we used to

be out there playing volleyball with the tents and the appreciation dinners. When I think about those things I think of James” (#19). Miller Inc. has always held Employee Appreciation Days where employees were served lunch or dinner (depending on their shift), and as part of those days, they would set up a volleyball net for employees to play. As a result, the sight of the idle volleyball net brings to mind memories of James. Another employee said: “a lot of things [in the plant] James instigated getting, and we know that so sometimes if you look at some of the equipment or if you look at, decorating the tree outside, the Christmas tree, you think of James” (#6). For this employee, various aspects of the plant and the pine tree outside James’ office at the front of the building were cues that brought James’ memory to mind. On the back cover of the Miller Inc. published history is “James’ Story of the Miller Christmas Tree”. According to James, in the late 1960’s at one of their annual Christmas parties, they decorated a small potted spruce tree that was a couple of feet tall. The tree was later planted outside James’ office in front of the building and it grew along with the company serving as a reminder to James of how far the company had come. At Christmas time, the tree is decorated with Christmas lights, and serves as the company Christmas tree. And for this employee, it now serves as a reminder of James now that he is no longer involved in the day-to-day activities of Miller Inc. One of the reasons there were so many reminders of James in the material environment was because each Christmas, the employees would give James money to purchase a Christmas present, but James would use that money to purchase things for the employees such as windows in the bindery and new bathrooms. Thus, the investment of the James’ Christmas Money into various aspects of the material environment helped to facilitate lots of cognitive associations between those features of the material environment and James.



Similarly, at Miller Inc., Arthur the maintenance man was known for his obsessive controlling of the thermostats in the building, as well as his meticulous caring of the grounds outside. As a result, one employee told me:

“Every time I look at a thermostat, you know and I’m going to turn it up or turn it down I think if Arthur was here I wouldn’t be able to do that...or anytime I see something in the grounds outside...like there’s a little bark off the tree I’d think man, Arthur would be having a fit, he would be checking to see who did that, looking at the cameras to see if someone did it” (#6).

In this case, the thermostat or the bark on the trees serves as a cue for memories of Arthur even though Arthur retired many years ago.

And finally, at Beck Inc., Steven’s wife Cindy brought some peonies bushes from her father-in-law’s farm and planted them on the northeast side of the Beck plant on State Street. And these flowers have come to be known as “her flowers.” One current employee related a story of an individual in the Pre-Press department who saw somebody stop by to pick one. This employee went out and put a stop to this “because those are Mrs. Beck’s peonies, you don’t pick them!” Apparently this act brought the employee accolades from a relative in the Beck family who commented, “Mrs. Beck would be so impressed that you’re protecting her flowers.” This employee went on to say of the peonies bushes, “We know where those came from...that’s not just landscaping to us” (#42). These peonies bushes have come to represent Mrs. Beck, and they now serve as a cue for her memory.

**Summary.** In sum, cognitive endurance refers to the legacy of a particular individual enduring beyond their time in a particular organization in the minds of individual employees in the form of autobiographical memories, or second-hand memories that have been passed on from

others. And one of the mnemonics that helps to sustain these individual memories over time is associative learning, whereby the mind establishes cognitive connections between former members and certain people, behaviors, situations, or artifacts that then become cues that bring to mind the memory of the former member. As a result, these cognitive associations help to keep the legacies of former members alive in the minds of current members even after the former member is no longer there.

### **Social Endurance**

Another domain where legacies live on is in the social space of the organization in the form of verbal communicative acts. Consider this quote from a current employee at Beck Inc. who was speaking about a former pressroom manager: “Never met him that I know of. I think he worked here briefly when I did, but I was in a different area. He was in the pressroom. But people still talk about him and just what he did and how he worked. Most of it had to do with his work ethic” (#24). The fact that “people still talk about him” illustrates what I refer to as social endurance, or the endurance of an individual’s legacy in the organization’s pattern of interaction in the form of verbal communicative acts. And there are two types of legacy work that help support the endurance of legacies in social space.

***Storytelling.*** Storytelling is the communication of an event or short series of events from an organization’s history that involve a teller and a listener or audience (Boje, 1991; Boyce, 1996; Martin, Feldman, Hatch, & Sitkin, 1983; Wilkins, 1984). Most storytelling happens in conversation, and it is “the preferred sense-making currency of human relationships” (Boje, 1991: 106). And as noted by Schacter (2001: 31), “thinking and talking about experiences not only helps to make sense of the past, but changes the likelihood of subsequent remembering. Those incidents we discuss and rehearse are protected, at least partially, from transience.” Thus,

storytelling helps individuals to make sense of the legacy of a former member, and as one employee noted, it is through the telling of stories that “the people who are still working here keep [these former members] alive” (#27).

According to one current employee at Beck Inc., “the passing of stories happens all the time. There are things that I’ve been told that happened and there’s things that happened to me that I’ve told the other guys out here” (#26). These stories are passed in a variety of forums, from formal meetings to more informal episodes of shooting the breeze on the shop floor. For example, during a sales meeting involving the sales force of both organizations, I observed current CEO Robert Beck tell several stories of his grandfather Edward Beck and the sacrifices he made to help lead the organization through the Great Depression, and his uncle Daniel Beck who was a pilot in World War II. And another Beck Inc. employee said of Steven, “I am sure Steven was part of the old school; you know getting down on guys. But those are the stories that I have heard, that when he wasn’t happy, he would let you know about it” (#31). For example, one current employee recounted the following story about Steven:

“I’ll recall stories of Steven, and back in the old days, Steven would sit in on every employee’s review. Once a month, the supervisor or manager went into this large back conference room. Steven was there, HR was there and Steven had a book of every employee, their picture, and he’d write notes based on the review and he’d keep that up to speed and it was like, it’s a lot different today. But he got mad at Socks once because the book was out of order because of this or that, I don’t know. And he picked up the book and threw it right at Socks and we’re talking about a binder “that thick” and the whole length of the table, and Socks sees it coming and he goes flying back! But that’s kind of the stuff you do, he was high-tempered” (#36).

These acts of storytelling help to keep the legacies of these former members alive in the social space of the organization.

Similarly, at Miller Inc. there are many stories of James that circulate in the organization. During my conversation with a current employee at Miller, he said, “Recently someone said, ‘I remember James coming up to me and saying hi and knowing my name, and I turned to the guy next to me and said who the heck is that guy?’” (#3). Another employee recounted the following experience:

I remember, one time I was on the Christmas Party Committee and...James, Glen, and Stuart would take everybody on the committee out to lunch...I finally said, "James what made you get into this business." And then we started talking, and he started talking about unions and I have been to teamsters and UAW, don't like either one, but he started talking about what happened, what propelled him into. I think he was working for a hydraulic company or something. And some union guy just went off, just screaming at James on floor...And basically in James' own way, though I doubt the words ever crossed his own mind, James went "f-you." And he got out and started his own business, cause he never wanted to be a part of that again. And these things about James have always stuck with me” (#8).

This active circulation of stories about James in the social space of the organization keep James' legacy alive in the organization.

One particularly important time for storytelling at Miller Inc. was during the socialization process for new members. At Miller Inc., the organization's orientation session had a period of time devoted to sharing stories from the organization's past. According to one current executive, the presentation was originally done using overhead images to help the new employees better

understand their “roots”. The feedback they got from new employees was that they enjoyed the session, but had trouble staying awake. So the second time around, CEO Glen Kollman decided to interview several former employees like Raymond Ward, Gary Hauser, and David Holzman about their experiences in the early days. And while conducting their interviews, he had the idea to invite Raymond Ward, the first Miller Inc. employee, to come and participate. According to Glen Kollman, “Raymond came, and he was a great storyteller, giving the history of Miller. That got good ratings, so we did more of it!” As a result, the orientation session became an important forum for the sharing of stories about the organization’s past, and as a result, an important mechanism for keeping the legacies of former members alive in the social space of the organization.

Another important forum for storytelling in both organizations were commemorative events. The commemorative events included collective celebrations of organizational anniversaries, and celebrations of individual tenure milestones. For example, one employee from Miller Inc. described the annual 25 Year Luncheon held for employees who had worked at Miller for more than 25 years. They would rent a banquet room in a local hotel “and everybody would just sit around and reminisce their years coming up through” (#22). Another employee at Beck Inc. described their 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration, and said, “We opened up the plant to the public on our anniversary and actually had open houses for folks to bring in their families. And I will tell you that is probably how everybody knows the stories too—through the seminars, the stories told, the open houses” (#42). These forums help “to keep the lasting memories alive” (#22).

***Invoking.*** Invoking is a form of legacy work that occurs in social interactions where the memory of a former member is brought to bear on a current situation through a subtle reference

to that former member. Unlike storytelling, invoking does not explicitly convey a great deal of information about a former member's legacy, but is a highly efficient verbal act to communicate a great deal of meaning to those who already have memories of a former member. For example, Steven's memory seems to be invoked during decision-making situations at Beck Inc.

(associated with the role of the CEO). Current employees invoke the memory of Steven Beck after Robert Beck makes particular decisions through comments such as, "Steven never would have done that" (#32), "Gee, Steven would be rolling in his grave right now if he knew we were doing this" (#32), or "He would hate this. Your dad would have hated this. This would have made your dad crazy" (#41). These subtle references to Steven contain very little meaning unless you know about Steven, and his disciplined and careful approach to managing. However, these subtle references help to keep Steven's legacy alive in social space.

Similarly, Arthur Hensley's legacy at Miller Inc. and Dennis Pratt's legacy at Beck Inc. seem to be invoked during maintenance situations. For example, according to one employee, when the power goes out, employees will often say, "Where's Dennis?" (#40). When the power goes out, this verbal invocation goes a step beyond merely bringing Dennis' memory to mind, helping to keep Dennis' legacy alive in the social space of the organization. Similarly, when things in the plant break down, this employee told me that employees often say, "If Dennis were here, he could solve that in five minutes!" (#40). This subtle invocation of Dennis' legacy is an efficient way of communicating an important aspect of Dennis' legacy: "he just could fix anything out there" (#31). Similarly, at Miller Inc., a current employee says that when he sees the person currently in charge of maintenance, "I always joke around that Arthur would have done that differently" (#19). And another employee told me that when the temperature needs adjusting or there is something wrong in the plant, she says "If Arthur was here, you wouldn't

get that' and they would be like 'I know but he's not here now', or if you're going to borrow the tables or chairs, 'You better to careful because Arthur would expect them to come back in the very same shape it was in'" (#6). These subtle references communicate an important aspect of Arthur's legacy: "he was just probably overly protective of things" (#6). Invoking also keeps the legacy of Arthur alive in the social space of the organization.

**Summary.** In sum, social endurance refers to the legacy of a particular individual enduring beyond their time in the social space of the organization through communicative acts. And there are two types of legacy work that help to sustain these memories in social space over time. First, storytelling refers to the descriptions of an event or sequence of events from the organization's history. When these stories are focused on former members, they help current members to make sense of the legacy of a former member, and the circulation of these stories help to keep the legacy alive in social space. Second, invoking is a more efficient way of bringing the former member into social space through a subtle reference to the former member. These references communicate less explicit meaning, and thus rely on the existing memories of the participants in the interaction. However, they play an important role in keeping the legacy of a former member alive in social space.

### **Physical Endurance**

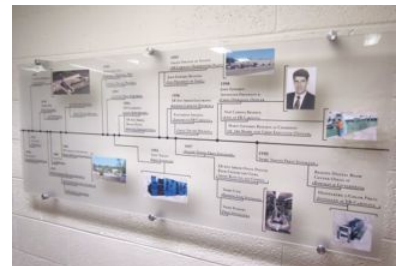
The final domain where legacies live on is in the physical space of the organization in the form of physical artifacts. Consider this quote from a current employee at Beck Inc.: "We have a 25-year plaque up in the front lobby...they are people who are no longer here anymore but their names are still up there. They made 25 years with the company and they're remembered. So that's an area where their names still live on even though they quit and moved on" (#32). This quote illustrates what I refer to as physical endurance, or the endurance of an individual's legacy

in the organization's physical space in the form of material artifacts. These material features include the organization's physical facilities, the landscape surrounding them, and the halls, walls, rooms, and numerous material objects inside of the organization. Text is another important aspect of the material world that can also survive the death and departure of individual members. Words on physical and web pages can be stored in various offices, bookshelves, or websites that can endure beyond an individual's time in an organization. And there are two types of legacy work that help to sustain legacies in physical space across time.

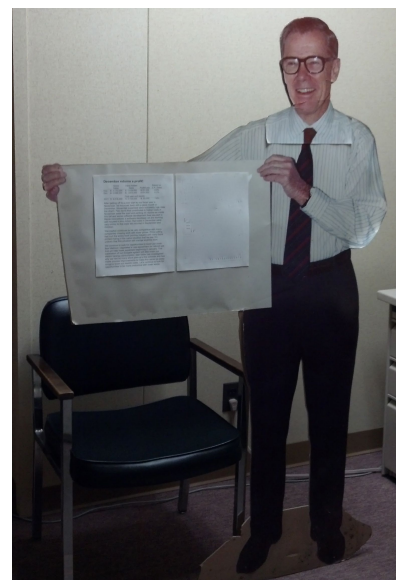
**Etching.** Etching is a form of legacy work that involves the intentional creation of a physical artifact that has an explicit connection to the identity of a former member. The most explicit form of etching is the creation and display of photographs, portraits, or other images of a former member. For example, when you first walk into the front door at Beck Inc., the secretary working the reception desk is to the right of your view, so your eyes are immediately drawn to the ambient glow of the lights illuminating three portraits on the opposite wall. These are portraits of former CEO's (from left to right) Edward Beck, Daniel Beck, and Steven Beck. And if you go through the door on the opposite wall and turn right towards the customer service area, the finance area, and the office of CEO Robert Beck, you soon run into a glass timeline on the wall which captures



**Image 4. 1- Portraits of Edward, Daniel, and Steven Beck**



**Image 4. 2- Beck Inc. Timeline**



**Image 4.3- A James Poster**



important dates in the history of the organization. The timeline begins with a picture of the two founding brothers (Richard and William) with their brother Alvin (who would later take over the company from his brothers). And the dates when Edward, Daniel, and Steven each assumed the role of CEO are marked with their pictures. There is another timeline just like this one in the hallway that you pass on the way to the plant. As a result, everyday, every person (employee or outsider) that



**Image 4. 4- A Collage at Miller Inc.**

visits the lobby, the plant, or the office spaces must pass by pictures of these former leaders of the organization. At Miller Inc., there are no portraits, but they have created a set of life-sized, cardboard cutouts of James' image, affectionately referred to as the James Posters, which they display throughout the plant. According to one current executive, the James Posters show James "holding a piece of paper out like this, and we'd put some financial results and a summary of things that are going on, things we need to be working on or improving" (#18), and the James Posters would be placed in high-traffic areas (e.g., near the time clock) when there was important news or announcements that need to be shared with the employees. And at both organizations, you find various picture collages that capture the images of many former members of the organization. These collages are found in high traffic

hallways and contain pictures that vary in their content from individuals working on the shop floor, to images of funny costumes worn by executives and managers at company Christmas parties. Through these various material artifacts, the images of former members are able to live on in the physical space of the organization.



**Image 4. 5- Tenure Plaques at Miller Inc.**

Other types of etching include the creation of material artifacts that do not include a specific image of the former member, but do include their name. One example of this type of etching is the engraving of individual's names onto various types of plaques at both Beck Inc. and Miller Inc. At Beck Inc., these plaques are located just to the right of the front door, and on each plaque plate is the name of an individual that worked in the organization for 25 years. At Miller Inc., there are plaques honoring individuals that have worked at Miller Inc. for 5, 10, 15, 20, and 25 years, as well as a plaque designated specifically for retirees. These plaques sit at a critical junction near the time clock where employees and visitors pass each day as they walk from the lobby into the plant areas.

At Beck Inc., there is also a plaque specifically dedicated to the memory of Eric Martin, the former manager in the sales department who died of a massive heart attack while in his hotel room at a national sales meeting. As part of their response to this tragic event, Robert Beck decided to name the annual sales award after Eric Martin: "There was no decision. It was, we had this award and I think Robert said, 'Lets have it be the Eric Martin award' and 'Of course!' (#31). Just outside the manufacturing facility, the "Eric Martin Sales Award" plaque contains the names of each salesperson that has won the award.

In addition, the grounds surrounding each plant are used for etching, usually when a member of the organization passes away. For example at Beck Inc., there are two trees on the organization's grounds that were planted to honor individuals that passed away. One tree is dedicated to Dennis Pratt, who worked in maintenance at Beck Inc. for over 30 years and passed



**Image 4. 6- Tree Dedicated to Steven and Cindy Beck**

away after a difficult battle with cancer. The other is dedicated to Steven and Cindy Beck. According to one current executive, the tree is “a flowering tree to represent the strength of a tree which was Steven, but the softness of the flower which was Cindy” (#32). This tree sits right outside the main entrance at Beck Inc., making it one of the first things you see as you approach the front door. These trees are clearly marked with memorial plaques signifying that these trees have been dedicated to the memory of these specific individuals.

At Miller Inc., the organization creates a set of stones for deceased employees that contain a small plaque with the former member’s name, birthday, and death date. During an interview with a current employee at Miller Inc., she explained, “the family could pick whatever spot [on the grounds] they wanted. But they are nice rocks with nice plaques on them for the people that...” At this point, her voice broke, tears welled up in her eyes, and she began to weep. After a few moments, I interjected, “I am sure that is really meaningful”, to which she replied with her voice still cracking, “Yeah, it is to us. It is like they can still be here” (#2).

**Printing.** A former member’s legacy might also live on in the physical space of the organization through printed images and text. The creation of literal or web pages of text or images is a form of legacy work that I call printing. And printed text and images tend to be found in three main locations at both Beck Inc.



**Image 4. 7- Screen Shot from Beck Inc. Website**

and Miller Inc.: websites, yearbooks, and newsletters. First, both organizations had independent “history” sections on their corporate websites that help display images and text about former members. For example, this screen shot from [beckandmiller.com/timeline](http://beckandmiller.com/timeline) illustrates how printed text and images help the legacy of Edward Beck live on in the physical space of the organization long after his departure.

Second, both organizations have traditionally produced company yearbooks for significant anniversaries in their organization's history. For example the picture to the right is the anniversary book Beck Inc. produced for their 90-year anniversary. These yearbooks typically contain the story of the organization, the pictures of almost every employee working at the organization at the time, and pictures of employees at company events such as Christmas Parties, softball games, and bowling leagues. These images and texts play an important role in keeping the legacies of former members alive in the physical space of the organization.



**Image 4. 8- Beck Inc. 90 Year Anniversary Book**

And finally, company newsletters published on an ongoing basis are distributed to employees and stored on the corporate website. Sometimes these newsletters highlight accomplishments of current employees, honor those who retire, or contain tributes of obituaries for those that pass away. For example, the picture to the right is an excerpt from a newsletter in 2011 where David Holzman was honored just after his retirement. These printed images and words help to ensure that the legacy of a former member endures in the physical space of the organization.

#### ARCHIVED NEWSLETTERS

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Winter/Spring 2011, Volume 21, Number 1

Robert Scheble retired from Malloy in February after working here for more than forty-seven years.

Malloy was fortunate in 1963 that a young music student from Germany spurned a career in opera to help build a book printing company in Ann Arbor. (If you ever had the privilege to hear him sing, you know that Robert would have done very well in the field of music.) It would be hard to exaggerate the significance of Robert's many contributions to Malloy. He played a major role in growing Malloy from a small operation with about twenty employees to a nationally known book manufacturer.

Many know Robert from his years representing Malloy in New York City—Robert made a weekly commute to New York for close to thirty years to serve our New York customers. Some may even remember when he called on accounts in the Midwest, and a few folks might remember the confident young German that managed our prepress department in the late 60's and early 70's. Robert's dedication and hard work over the years, along with the force of his personality, gave Malloy the opportunity to prove itself to potential customers. There are many people inside and outside of Malloy who feel fortunate to have spent time getting to know Robert and consider him a good friend.

All of us at Malloy wish Robert well, and most of all, we wish to thank him for singing our



**Image 4. 9- Excerpt from Archived Miller Inc. Newsletter**

**Summary.** In sum, physical endurance refers to the legacy of a former member enduring after they are gone in the physical space of the organization in the form of material artifacts. And there are two types of legacy work that help to sustain these memories in physical space over time. First, etching refers to the creation of physical artifacts that have a direct link to the identity of a former member. In some cases, these artifacts will have images of the actual

person, and in other cases they merely have a name. Second, printing refers to the creation of literal or web pages containing images and words about the former member. These pages are found in books or newsletters, and can be stored online. Thus, these two forms of legacy work (etching and printing) help to ensure the legacy of a former member lives on in the physical space of the organization.

### **The Interplay of Cognitive, Social, and Material Endurance**

If we return to our original launching point, we noted that legacies are characterized by a degree of impermanence or transience, facing the fading force of memory as soon as an individual is gone. My findings suggest that there are three different domains where legacies endure in organizations: the cognitive, social, and material. The endurance of legacies in these domains are supported a variety of mnemonics including associative learning, as well as more intentional acts of legacy work such as storytelling and etching. However, these different domains (the cognitive, social, and material) are not merely “storage bins” where various pieces of information about former members are stored for retrieval at a future date. Rather, these three different domains are interrelated aspects of an organization’s collective memory that all contribute to the life of a legacy in different ways.

Weick (2012) used the phrase “impermanent organization” to refer to “transient social order” built into streaming existence. These more organized portions have a slower rate of change and feel relatively stable, but these “recurrent patterns can loose their shape, they can become obsolete, and the pattern can shift each time it is done” (Weick, 2012: 4). To help us visualize “impermanent organization”, Weick (2012) draws on the metaphor borrowed from Atlan (1979) by Taylor and Van Every (2000), which draws a contrast between “smoke” and “crystal”. According to Taylor and Van Every (1999: 31):

“Crystal is a perfectly structured material, in its repeated symmetry of pattern, but because its structure is perfect, it never evolves: it is fixed for eternity. It is not life. But it is order. Smoke is just randomness, a chaos of interacting molecules that dissolves as fast as it is produced. It is not life. But it is dynamic. Life appears when some order emerges in the dynamic of chaos and finds a way to perpetuate itself.

Extending this metaphor to communication in organizations, they suggest in a later work that:

“Organization resides between smoke and crystal just as it resides between conversation and text. Organization is talked into existence when portions of smoke-like conversation are preserved in crystal-like texts that are then articulated by agents speaking on behalf of an emerging collectivity. Repetitive cycles of texts, conversations, and agents define and modify one another and jointly organize everyday life (Taylor & Van Every, 2000: 31).

Similarly, I argue that legacies have “social life” between smoke-like individual memories of former members and more crystal-like material artifacts. Individual memories provide content, and material artifacts provide form, but it is communicative acts that are the social lifeblood of legacies. When storytelling and invoking cease, individual memories may endure for a time and physical artifacts may endure indefinitely, but the legacy has no “social life” in the organization (Sandelands, 2003: 9). And over time, the legacies of former members are reduced to a mere name etched on a stone or a picture in a commemorative yearbook. Thus, it is through repetitive cycles of individual memories, brought to “social life” through communication, and preserved in material artifact that legacies are defined, structured, and able to endure in organizations.

## **Conclusion**

We began this chapter with the premise that when individuals depart organizations, they immediately face the fading forces of memory. This raises the question, “How do legacies endure in organizations?” And my findings suggest that the legacies of former members live on in three domains: individual minds, social space and physical space. The endurance of legacies in these various domains is supported by various mnemonics ranging from unconscious associative learning to more intentional forms of legacy work such as storytelling and etching. However, unlike previous conceptions of organizational memory, who view individuals, social space, and the material environment as independent “retention facilities” for information from the organization’s past, I assert that repetitive cycles of interaction between these various domains of organizational memory give legacies “social life” in organizations.

This chapter makes several important contributions to existing theory. First and foremost, this chapter extends our understanding of “organizational memory” by breaking down the conception of organizational “memories” as information stored in independent storage bins for subsequent retrieval to aid future decision-making. Instead, I offer a view of organizational memory that focuses on “memories” of the past that include people and events from the past brought to life in organizations by the interplay of individual memory, communication, and material creation. And I believe this view of organizational memory opens up an array of questions at the intersection of these various domains that have previously been obscured from view because of our current conceptions of organizational memory. Instead of seeking to understand the “acquisition” and “retrieval” of information in organizational memory, this chapter encourages future scholarship to focus on more organic processes of organizational memory such as creation, distortion, and endurance.

This chapter also begs for future research on the factors that contribute to the invoking and storytelling of specific individuals, which give social life to legacies. For example, previous research in sociology has shown how certain legacies are invoked depending on the needs and demands of the surrounding social system. For example, Schwartz (1996) shows how images of Abraham Lincoln became more prevalent during World War II as the United States readied for war. And in his study of the Sandinista National Liberation Front of Nicaragua, Jansen (2007) shows how the Sandinista's were able to "resurrect" the memory of forgotten guerilla leader Augusto Sandisto after public censorship after his death had resulted in a long period of relative obscurity. Being able to follow the course of specific legacies in organizations across time would illuminate important insights into the ebbs and flows of the social life of legacies.

This chapter also calls for future research on the material creation of artifacts and the process whereby they come about. At both Beck Inc. and Miller Inc., the creation of many of these artifacts happened from the "bottom up". For example, after Steven Beck died, one executive said, "the employees actually came to me and said [Name Removed] this is what we want to do.' So they put together a book of memories and they did all of it! Had the plaque created with a nice memory in scripted not just their names and dates, and then they went and purchased a flowering tree to represent- I thought this was really cool- the strength of a tree which was Steven, but the softness of the flower which was Cindy" (#32). However, you can certainly image a more top down situation, where individuals might create "monuments" to themselves, or top management might dictate the memorialization of certain members, and it seems plausible that the process whereby these artifacts are created might subsequently affect their meaning and social life within the organization.



## CHAPTER 5

### *The Binding Power of Legacies*

Imagine for a minute a world where individuals could not remember their past. This imaginative exercise is the foundation of the novel “One Hundred Years of Solitude” by Gabriel Garcia Marquez (2003), where the residents of the mystical village of Macondo are stricken with a plague of insomnia that leads to memory loss. According to a villager familiar with the plague, “when the sick person became used to his state of vigil, the recollection of his childhood began to be erased from his memory, then the name and notion of things, and finally the identity of people and even the awareness of his own being, until he sank into a kind of idiocy that had no past.” Sadly, this is not a fictional state for those that lose their actual ability to remember the past. Anyone who has observed a patient with Alzheimer’s or other forms of memory loss can certainly appreciate just how our sense of personal identity is influenced by our ability to remember the past (Kandel, 2006).

Now try another imaginative exercise. Imagine what it would be like if you lost the ability to remember the history of one of your social groups. What would it mean to work at Wal-Mart if you knew nothing of Sam Walton’s or David Glass? What would it mean to be a Michigan Wolverines fan if your memory of Glen Rice, Desmond Howard, or Bo Schembechler were gone? What would it mean to be an American if you lost your ability to recollect George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, or Rosa Parks? For members of these social groups, this would be an almost impossible thought exercise because these individuals shape the very meaning of membership in these particular groups. Surely this erasure of the past would cause a radical shift in our experience as members of a particular organization that would be akin to a kind of idiocy

with no past. And this simple thought exercise illuminates one of the core assertions of this chapter: legacies have an important influence on social identity processes.

However, to date, the management literature on various social identities (e.g., professional identity, organizational identity) has largely overlooked the influence of a collective's history more generally, and individuals from the collective's past more specifically, on social identity processes in organizations. This might be due to the fact that the identity question (who am I?) has almost always been framed in present tense (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Or it might be due to the fact that identity is often seen as emerging from the current social context (Goffman, 1959), rendering the past seemingly meaningless. But whatever the reason, it is an important gap in our understanding of what it means to be a member of a particular profession or organization.

### **Social Identity Theory**

Social Identity Theory (SIT) is a social psychological theory that explores the intersection of self-conception and group membership. SIT arose in the 1960's and 1970's through the foundational work of Henri Tajfel, a Polish Jew in Europe during the rise of the Nazi regime, who had a personal passion to fuel his academic interests in matters of prejudice, discrimination, and intergroup conflict (Hogg, 2006). SIT begins with the assumption that individuals have a self-concept, or "the concept the individual has of himself as a physical, social, and spiritual being" (Gecas, 1982: 3). The content of this self-concept is derived from a variety of various types of "identities" including personal attributes, roles, and group memberships. And social identity is focused on the meaning of group membership, and its influence on individual behavior. Thus, in SIT, a social identity is that part of the self-concept that is derived from membership in a social group (Spears, Doosje, & Ellemers, 1997).

Critical to this definition is the notion that a group is cognitive, existing psychologically “if three or more people construe and evaluate themselves in terms of shared attributes that distinguish them collectively from other people” (Hogg, 2006: 128). This implies a distinction between the static, binary classification of membership in a group (member or not) and the more dynamic psychological experience of belonging to a particular group. For example, I am a member of a frequent flyer program with various airlines, but those group memberships are not significant to my sense of self (though it could be for someone else). In contrast, my membership in the doctoral program at the University of Michigan’s Ross School of Business is very significant to my sense of self. In social identity theory, the key concept that describes this important difference is social identification. As Sluss and Ashforth (2008) put it, identification “is more than just considering oneself a member of an organization, it is the extent to which one includes the organization in his/her self-concept.” When an individual identifies more strongly with a social group, they feel a stronger sense of oneness or belongingness to a particular collective, and that group membership is more self-defining. As a result, the strength of identification an individual feels with a social group predicts a variety of behaviors ranging from conformity to deviance, prejudice to collaboration.

SIT and the concept of “identification” burst onto the scene in the management literature in Ashforth & Mael’s (1989) seminal article “Social Identity Theory and the Organization”. In this article, Ashforth and Mael (1989) introduced the management literature to social identity theory, and illustrate its potential usefulness in three domains of interest to management scholars: organizational socialization, role conflict, and intergroup relations. Google Scholar suggests that this article has been cited over 4,000 times in the last 24 years, and it has spawned an active literature on the importance of social identity processes in organizations (see Ashforth, Harrison,

& Corley, 2008 for a review of this literature). As a result, identification is seen as a “root construct” in the management literature (Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000).

A variety of different studies have offered various antecedents of organizational identification including: organizational prestige (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994), autonomy (Russo, 1998), need for identification (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004), need for affiliation (Wiesenfeld, Raghuram, & Garud, 2001), sentimentality (Mael & Ashforth, 1992), psychological ownership (Johnson, Morgeson, Ilgen, Meyer, & Lloyd, 2006), collectivism (Gundlach, Zivnuska, & Stoner, 2006), bio-data (Mael & Ashforth, 1995), organizational tenure (Riketta, 2005), and person–organization fit (Cable & DeRue, 2002). And scholars have offered a variety of different process models of organizational identification that seem to suggest that organizational identification results from a process of sensebreaking (where the need for identification is created by amplifying gaps in self-conception), sensegiving (wherein organizations attempt to guide the meaning construction process), and individual efforts of enacting various identities, interpreting feedback from the environment, and constructing a new sense of self (Ibarra, 1999; Pratt, 2000; Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006). However, none of these studies of the antecedents of organizational identification or the process models of how organizational identification occurs have considered how social identity processes might be influenced by an organization’s past, by its history.

One of the key insights, however, emerging out of the “collective memory” literature is that identities are not constructed in historical vacuums. Rather, from this perspective, collective memory (i.e., the organization’s story of itself) is “a central, if not the central, medium through which identities are constituted” (Olick & Robbins, 1998: 133). Zerubavel (1996) eloquently laid out this idea when he said:

“There are particular memories commonly shared by all Guatemalans or art historians yet only by few Koreans or paleontologists, respectively. Similarly, there are many memories commonly shared by nearly all Beatles fans, stamp collectors, or longtime readers of Mad Magazine, yet by no one else besides.”

This leads to the conclusion that “the history of the groups or communities to which we belong is *an indispensable part of our social identity* as anthropologists, Mormons, Native Americans, Miami Dolphins fans, or Marines” (Zerubavel 1996: 290, italics added). And former members of a group or community are an important part of these collective memories. This raises the possibility that “other ingroup members, even if they are long deceased” may also be an indispensable part of a social identity (Klein, Licata, & Pierucci, 2011: 563). Thus, the primary purpose of this chapter is to begin filling this important gap in our understanding by examining how the social identities of current members are influenced by the legacies of former members.

### **Analytic Strategy**

The data used in this chapter consist of my own autoethnographic observations from various corporate events and the responses of 40 current employees of Beck and Miller to various semi-structured interview questions about how they are influenced by legacies in their organizations. These interview responses were obtained using several different types of questions. First, there were specific questions in my interview protocol that were designed to provoke a general discussion of the impact these legacies were having. After individuals identified different ways whereby the legacies of particular individuals were maintained, I would ask the question, “What influence do these practices or artifacts have on you?” And individual responses to this question and follow-up probes were an important source of data. Second, after becoming more familiar with the context of both organizations, I became aware of two

centralized “sites of memory” where many artifacts were displayed representing former members of the organizations. I also obtained copies of various commemorative books published by both organizations. As a result, I began asking questions that encouraged respondents to envision a hypothetical situation wherein they were interacting with these various sites of memory: “Imagine you were walking down the hallway and stopped to consider the [organizational timeline/the commemorative plaques]” or “Imagine you were to take five minutes to read through this commemorative book and look at the pictures of previous members of the organizations”. I would then ask a similar question as describe above: “describe what thoughts and feelings you would experience.” In addition, during my simultaneous examination of corporate documents, I came across a form of legacy work in which the images and words of both preceding CEOs (Steven Beck and James Kollman) were used in the first newsletter distributed after the organization’s announcement of the merger. I would show this newsletter to the respondents and ask them to describe the meaning of this newsletter to them individually.

In stage one of the data analysis, I read through each interview looking for descriptions of how legacies were influencing organizational participants. At this stage I used open coding to generate provisional codes. Coding is a method of “meaning condensation” (Lee, 1999: 89) that facilitates the extraction of relevant themes in the data. A code is usually applied to data “chunks” that range in size from a single word to multiple paragraphs (Miles & Huberman, 1994), and multiple codes can be assigned to a single chunk. These were mostly descriptive codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994) that were usually snippets of respondents’ own words.

After this open coding process was completed, I returned to these open codes and began looking for more abstract theoretical categories emerging from these first order codes. For example, there were multiple instances of individuals talking about feelings of pride when they

interacted with various types of legacies. These statements were grouped together into a single category labeled “fostering pride”. I then looked for theoretical relationships between these more abstract categories, attempting to illuminate higher order relationships between these categories. For example, several of the categories illuminated various ways that legacies were impacting individuals’ social identity, or their sense of connection or identification with their organization. In total, I was able to deduce four different ways that legacies shape the social identities of organizational members. The findings I present below are summarized in Table 1.

**TABLE 5.1**

**The Binding Power of Legacies**

<b>How Legacies Influence Social Identity Processes</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Exemplary Quotation</b>
Anchors Social Identity Content	Legacies give meaning to the social identity by helping current members to anchor the content of the identity in the history the group.	"It's 100 and some odd years and they've made decisions, they've bought things, they've moved things, they changed this building from where Smith Hardware was I guess. I mean all of those things make up where we are today. And all of that history makes up some of the decisions we make, or why we made decisions and why we are where we are" (#40).
Promotes Identity Continuity	Legacies give continuity to the social identity by helping current members to connect the generations of the organization and conceptualize the organization as a continuous entity existing across time.	“You look at those pictures and you kind of look at them and you look at them again and you think it’s kind of just like what we’re doing, it’s just a different time that’s all. They had the same kind of struggles we had I’m sure. Those struggles are different than what we had, but sometimes the same” (#27).

Enhances Identity Stability	Legacies give stability to the social identity by helping current members gain confidence in the capacity of the organization to survive into the future.	"I think when I look at [the timeline] and some of the problems that we have today and how it must have been back then, and how they have survived, it must have been a pretty great family to get through all those tough times, especially earlier in the 1900s to still be around. I know we still got, through that history, we have a pretty strong ownership group and if they can get through that, I think anything that comes down the line they will be able to take care of. So it is a real sense of, a real sense of security to have that history" (#31).
Increases Identity Positivity	Legacies give positivity to the social identity by helping current members feel pride in the achievements and accomplishments of former generations.	"Based on what they talked about Daniel Beck was an extraordinary person. Just to be minutely attached to something like that, and say oh yeah I work for that company" (#24).

## Results

One day, I had the opportunity to tour the plant with a group of customers to observe the book manufacturing process. Partway through the tour, our group was joined by an employee who worked in the organization's IT department. I serendipitously struck up a conversation with him during the tour, and learned that he had been hired at Miller just before the announcement of the merger. When he learned who I was and why I was at the organization, he told me that he had been charged with putting together the website for the merged organization, which included the opportunity to create a section on the history of the organization. As part of this process, he had read the histories of both organizations, gathered pictures, and conducted interviews with key people. In essence, he was having an experience that mirrored mine! After learning this, I asked him a simple question: "How has this experience influenced you?" His reply was equally



simple, but quite important. He said, “I now see the ghosts in this organization. I definitely feel more connected.”

This example illustrates the capacity legacies have to influence the connection individuals feel with the organizations they belong to, that sense of oneness or belongingness that has been referred to as “organizational identification”. When organizational members identify with a particular group, that social identity becomes an important part of their self-concept, and there are social memories of events and individuals from the past that are an indispensable part of a member’s sense of social identity. And my respondents at Beck and Miller illuminated how legacies shape both the content of their organizational identity, the continuity of their social identity, and the evaluation of their social identity.

### **Anchoring Identity Content**

The content of a particular social identity is usually viewed as the answers to the question, “Who are we as an organization?” and by association, “Who am I as a member of this particular organization?” Some example “we are” statements that capture important elements of the organizational identities of employees at Beck Inc. and Miller Inc. included “we are a big family”; “we are innovative”; “we are efficient”; and “we are clean and organized”. However, according to one current employee working in the manufacturing process, legacies help you understand “where your roots come from” (#33). This metaphor of roots was often used to help illustrate the idea that legacies provide the foundation for making sense of a particular social identity in the present. For one manager in the manufacturing process, legacies, provide “a more in-depth look at the company”, “the decisions they have made”, “where their resolve and personality traits come from”, and “more insight into why” the organization is the way it is (#24). For another employee in the manufacturing process, legacies are important to a social

identity because they help you “understand where you’ve come from, what your roots are, what your history is, why the company acts the way it does...it’s a way to tell people in the future why we are the way we are” (#18). These quotes capture the ways legacies help organizational members make sense of the social identity by situating the social identity (the way we are) in the ongoing story of the group (where you’ve come from; your roots; your history). This link between the past and the present gives a new level of meaning and understanding to the social identity, enabling an understanding that moves beyond “the way we are” to a comprehension of “why we are the way we are”. For example, the identity claim “employees matter here” takes on new significance when you learn about James and his legacy. The stories of James knowing individuals by name and responding with compassion to the needs of employees give life and meaning to this foundational aspect of the social identity.

To illustrate the influence of legacies in making sense of the organizational identity, one current executive described her previous experiences with spinoffs, acquisitions, and mergers, and the struggles these disruptions caused to the process of making sense of organizational membership. In her estimation, acquisitions were the easiest because there was a dominant company with an existing identity that remaining members could either attach to or depart. However, spinoffs and mergers present the greatest challenges to identity creation because there was no organizational history to associate with. In her words, during these situations, “we are trying to come up with a new company and so *we’re losing our roots*. We’ve been severed. And it’s like, “who are we now? This is who we were and we liked that” (#32). This quote vividly illuminates the idea that a sense of identity is inextricably linked with being attached to ones roots. As a result, a disruption in the ongoing story of the organization (e.g., a merger) can sever the organization from its roots and send the organization into a state of identity confusion. While

this executive was speaking about her experiences in previous organizations, a current employee at Miller shared his feelings about the current merger at Beck and Miller: “To me, Miller doesn't exist anymore. It is gone. There is just this poof and that is it...it is not Miller. That doesn't exist. Miller as an entity, as I would think of it, is gone. It is dead, buried, and now it is a memory.”

This person was coming to work each day to perform the exact same job that he had performed for 20 years, on the same machines, with the same people. But to him, it was no longer “Miller”. Thus legacies act as roots to the social identity, illustrating and giving meaning to the content of the identity, and helping organizational members to situate the social identity in the ongoing story of the organization. Or as one employee in a support function described:

“It's 100 and some odd years and they've made decisions, they've bought things, they've moved things, they changed this building from where Smith Hardware was I guess. I mean *all of those things make up where we are today*. And *all of that history makes up some of the decisions we make, or why we made decisions and why we are where we are.*”

### **Providing Identity Continuity**

Within social psychology, scholars have identified several self-related motives that motivate behavior to achieve various states of being. One of those self-related motives is the motive for self-continuity, or “maintaining a sense of wholeness across time” (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008: 335). This can be challenging because our physical and social surroundings are constantly changing. Thus, one of the ways that individuals are able to achieve this sense of wholeness is by creating identity narratives, which help to link their changing self into a personal narrative that provides a sense of continuity or wholeness across time (Bruner, 1991; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; McAdams, 1985).

However, because social identities are based on membership in a particular social group, there is a slightly different challenge: situating the self in the ongoing story of the group. Thus, another important way that legacies influence social identity processes in organizations is by helping individual members to locate themselves in the ongoing history of the organization, providing a meaningful sense of connection to those that have gone before. For example, one respondent, who works in the manufacturing process, described to me the plaques that the organization has created to honor those individuals who have “sacrificed for this company” and “been here all their life”. I asked him what significance those plaques had for him and he said: “it comes in a sense that is exactly the same as veterans”, referring to the way nations typically honor those who have laid down their lives for a particular country (#19). Another individual wept during our interview as she considered the many coworkers who had passed away over her years working at the organization. For her, the various reminders of individuals from the past are incredibly important because “it is like they can still be here” (#2). This same sentiment was expressed by another informant, who said of those that had died or left the organization: “They may not still be here, but it keeps them on your mind so that you don’t forget them” (#14). And one executive, after noting the pictures of former members on the wall, said, “Without those people, the company wouldn’t be what it is” (#36).

This sense of connection to former members in the organization helps to facilitate a sense of continuity, a sense of being connected to the same organization that has existed across time despite changing times and circumstances:

“You look at those pictures and you kind of look at them and you look at them again and you think it’s kind of just like what we’re doing, it’s just a different time that’s all. They

had the same kind of struggles we had I'm sure. Those struggles are different than what we had, but sometimes the same" (#27).

In this quote looking at the pictures of former members creates a cognitive connection between the organization's past and the present, creating a feeling of sameness for the current member (just like what we're doing; same kind of struggles; sometimes the same). For another employee in a support function, legacies help you to ensure "you don't ever forget where you came from. It's exciting to look forward to the future too but if you didn't have that to get you there, you wouldn't be there" (#35). Notice in this quote how the employee links the importance of remembering the past (where you came from) to the present moment enabling the employee to look to the future. Thus, legacies help to provide organizational members with a sense of continuity, connecting their current membership to the membership of previous generations of the organization. It helps current members to recognize the shoulders they are standing on.

### **Enhancing Identity Stability**

According to previous research, feelings of common group fate enhance feelings of entitativity, or the perception of belonging to a social group, and are a precursor to identification (Campbell, 1958). In fact, lab experiments examining identification in manufactured groups have manipulated identification in social groups by enhancing the sense of "common group fate" (Kramer & Brewer, 1984; Simon et al., 1998). Thus, Ashforth & Mael (1989: 21) observed that identification includes a perception of being "psychologically intertwined with the fate of the group." Thus, it seems logical to conclude that the perceived fate of the group would exert an important influence on the willingness of members to identify or maintain a sense of identification with a particular social group.

This illuminates another way whereby legacies influence social identity processes: by engendering a sense of confidence in the viability of the social group to exist into the future. For example, early on in my research at Beck and Miller, I attended a sales meeting designed to bring together the sales teams from both sides of the merging organization. This is a time of great uncertainty for the book manufacturing industry, as the traditional book is losing significant ground to various e-readers and portable notebooks resulting in significant excess production capacity in the industry and declining margins for book manufacturers. And this sense of uncertainty at the industry level is coupled with heightened uncertainty for organizational members as a result of the merger. In this context, as he closed the meeting, Robert Beck spoke about his grandfather, Edward Beck, who was able to bring the organization through the Great Depression, and the company's ability to continually meet the pressing challenges it has faced. An informant later described the influence that these types of stories have on him as a member of the organization:

“I think when I look at that, and some of the problems that we have today and how it must have been back then, and how they have survived, and it must have been a pretty great family to get through all those tough times, especially earlier in the 1900s to still be around. I know we still got, through that history, we have a pretty strong ownership group and if they can get through that, I think anything that comes down the line they will be able to take care of. So it is a real sense of, a real sense of security to have that history. And the people that are still in place, and still have been through the same family and philosophies, and things have gone the line. So, I would say, it kind of makes me feel secure, that we are going to be around for a while” (#31)

He went on to suggest that these organizational progenitors like Edward Beck “are in the minds of their sons”, giving him confidence in their ability to lead the organization through challenging circumstances today. Another informant remarked that the pictures, the plaques, and the other reminders of individuals from the past provide a visual representation of where the company has come from that helps you “realize how you’ve positioned yourself and you’ve come along way and now you are in this position, you are on the right path” (#34). Another informant, after sharing a comment about the former leaders of the organization noted:

“Beck at this point it goes on and on and on. You can say that it is a corporation but it has been owned by the same people the same family for over a hundred years. If you are looking for a place to stay because whether you are starting your own family, you are young, or you just have to have another job, it seems to me more stable then if you go to work for somebody that hasn’t been in business for very long” (#24).

One informant sums up this connection nicely: legacies make you “feel like you’re in a nice solid company rather than something that is kind of on shaky ground” (#37). Thus legacies can influence social identity processes by fostering a sense of confidence in the viability of the organization, and its ability to survive into the future.

### **Enhancing Identity Positivity**

Finally, identity scholars have suggested that individuals are motivated to construct identities that enhance their sense of self-esteem (Dutton, Roberts, & Bednar, 2010). For example, Gecas (1982: 20) asserts, “the motivation to maintain and enhance a positive conception of oneself has been thought to be pervasive” and almost “every self theory posits some variant of this motive.” For example, Cialdini et al. (1976) found that individuals have tendencies “to publicize a connection with another person who has been successful” (Cialdini et

al., 1976: 366), even when the connection is incidental or seemingly meaningless. Examples include people's interest in relating to observers that they were born in the same city or state as a successful public figure, or that they were on the same airplane with a famous entertainer. Other image-management "connections" involve ethnic, religious, and physical similarities to successful others (Cialdini et al., 1976). Thus, we might expect that the deeds and accomplishments of former group members might influence the willingness of members to identify or maintain a sense of identification with a particular social group.

For example, during the 80's and 90's when Miller was growing rapidly, they would often hold orientation sessions for their new employees. An important part of those sessions was an articulation of the organization's history, and they would bring in the first employee of the organization to tell stories about how books used to be made, individuals from the past, and various accomplishments that they had been able to achieve. When I asked one executive the reasoning behind this practice, he said:

"I think having a good place to work and giving people pride in what they do, it's important to give them the feeling that they're a part of a worthwhile organization. If you had a choice of getting drafted by the Yankees or a brand new organization, what would you choose? Michigan football, Notre Dame, these storied programs--it just means a lot more. If you had been recruited by Brady Hoke at Michigan or at Rutgers, a team that has gained prominence only fairly recently, well then you know where I want to play. It's really instilling pride in the organization." (#4)

Notice his language of "giving" and "instilling" pride in the organization, and making them feel like "they are a part of a worthwhile organization." Similarly, while talking to an employee at Beck Inc., I asked her why their efforts to preserve the memories of individuals from their



history was important to the organization. She said, “I think that it feels like a family, which is a great thing. I think that there’s a lot more commitment, dedication, pride for the people in this type of environment” (#32). For this informant, a sense of connection to individuals from the past made the organization feel more like a connected community (a family), and enabled the members to develop a stronger connection to the organization.

During one of my interviews with another informant, she told me that the plant meeting where they commemorate the organization’s birthday is often an occasion where Robert Beck will talk about his organizational “forefathers”. She then related the following memory:

“Recently a year or two ago one of his uncles passed away, and then he talked about his history about being a pilot in World War II and all these things he did. That kind of stuff I had never heard about. It was common knowledge years ago, but that is the kind of things that is like wow that is pretty cool. Mostly he will talk about the Beck’s vision for the company and where they hope to go with it. He hopes he makes the good decisions as his ancestors did I guess” (#24).

I asked her what she meant when she said it was “pretty cool” to hear things like this, and she said it was cool “because based on what they talked about he was an extraordinary person. Just to be minutely attached to something like that, and say oh yeah I work for that company” (#24).

This exposure to the deeds and accomplishments of Daniel Beck increased the sense of pride she felt working for this organization and facilitated a stronger desire for attachment to the organization

Similarly, I asked one informant to imagine what he would think and feel walking down the hallway in the organization, considering the pictures and the plaques with the names of the former employees. He described his thoughts and feelings in this way:

“Pride. Pride would be number one. I am proud of what I did. Proud of where I come from. Proud of being allowed to be part of this organization. I mean, whenever we do tour groups I, not a lot, but occasionally, I will step in when they need me. Different groups of kids, students, customers, things like that. And I always made it a point to walk them by the progressive pictures. Because this place has gone from pretty small... the pictures the plaques... for a lot of years people on the nightshift we would aspire to see our name to move along the plaques. I’m aspiring for mine to move to the last one, the retirement plaque. The main thing that I can think of is the pride I have of being in the organization” (#22).

Thus legacies influence social identity processes by enhancing the pride individuals feel as members of a particular organization, facilitating a stronger desire to connect to the organization. As one executive summarized: “We’ve created this legacy, we’ve created this depth of character, of collaboration, both within here and within our community and within the business world and I’m so proud of it. I really am. Really proud of it. It would have been very easy for me to say, ‘I’ll just take the money and go.’ I can’t do that. *I think I am inextricably bound to this place.* I don’t know why all the time, but I am. I love it” (#30).

### **The Binding Power of Legacies**

Previous research on social identity processes has largely ignored the influence of an organization’s history and its former members on current members in organizations. However, I drawing on collective memory research, which suggests that identification with a particular group includes a fusion of one’s personal biography and the history of the organization (Zerubavel, 1996), I argued that an organization’s history more generally and the legacies of former members more specifically should have an important influence on social identity

processes. In the propositions below, I summarize the various ways that exposure to legacies in organizations influences social identity processes.

*P1: Exposure to legacies of former members enhances social identity clarity.*

Social identities are answers to self-reflective questions about what is central about an organization, such as “Who are we as an organization?” (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Ashforth & Mael, 1989). And identity ambiguity refers to a collective sense that there are “multiple possible interpretations of who the organization was, thus leading to a sense of unformulated or nebulous identity” (Corley & Gioia, 2004: 198). However, one of the ways that legacies influence social identity processes is by providing roots, or a foundation to the organizational identity, helping individuals to make sense of “who we are” and “why we are who we are”. Thus, I propose that exposure to legacies puts identity claims in historical context, providing a deeper understanding of the organization’s identity and enhancing a sense of clarity about what the organization is about. This makes identification with the collective easier when there is a clear sense of what the organization is about.

*P2: Exposure to legacies of former members enhances social identity continuity.*

In addition, scholars have argued that individuals desire to have a sense of self-continuity, or “a sense of wholeness across time” (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008: 335). Unlike personal self-continuity, which is facilitated by the creation of self-narratives that bind an individual across time (McAdams, 1985), continuity of a social identity is achieved through connecting one’s personal self-concept to the ongoing story of a social entity. Continuity then means that an individual feels connected to an organization’s past, and anticipates active participant in its anticipated future. Thus, I propose that legacies serve an important function by creating links to former generations of organizational members, enhancing the perceptions that

the organization is an enduring social entity across time, and enhancing the willingness of individuals to identify with the collective.

*P3: Exposure to legacies of former members influences the perceived stability of the social identity.*

Expectations about the perceived fate of an organization have been shown to influence the sense of identification that individuals feel with an organization (Kramer & Brewer, 1984; Simon et al., 1998). When there are concerns about the ability of a collective to survive into the foreseeable future, individuals are less willing to identify because the loss of the organization represents a loss of self, and this can be quite painful (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Because legacies represent generations of former members, legacies can provide a general sense of assurance that the organization has been around for a long time, bolstering confidence that it will persist into the future. In addition, certain legacies may be made salient during times of change to provide a sense of assurance that “we’ve been here before”. For example, Schwartz (1996) has shown how the legacy of Lincoln was used by then President Roosevelt during World War II to provide an orienting frame and a justification for their war preparations. Likewise, during times of change, the legacies of former leaders generally, and Edward Beck specifically instilled confidence that the organization had gone through tough times before and would emerge from their current challenges stronger and better as they always had before. Thus, I propose that exposure to legacies can enhance the perceived stability of the social identity, strengthening the willingness of members to identify with the collective when the organization has a history of stability. However, this proposition might have the opposite if an organization has had a highly unstable or troubled history. In this case, reminders of former members of the organization might make identification more difficult.

*P4: Exposure to legacies of former members can influence the perceived attractiveness of the social identity*

Finally, previous scholars have noted that the perceived attractiveness of the social identity has an important relationship organizational identification (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). When the perceived attractiveness of the social identity becomes threatened, an individual's sense of identification is likewise threatened. Thus it is entirely possible that exposure to former members that had a troubled past in the organization might influence the perceived attractiveness of the organization to current members. For example, in a study by Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, and Manstead (1998), they exposed a sample of Dutch people to three portrayals of the Dutch colonization of Indonesia and found that the Dutch participants in their study felt more collective guilt when presented with the unfavorable history than the favorable history. However, the opposite is also likely to be true: legacies can increase the positivity of a particular identity by fostering current members' pride in the deeds and accomplishments of former members of the organization.

### **Conclusion**

Taking together, the findings of this chapter suggest that legacies have an important "binding power" in organizations, shaping the connection current members feel to the organizations they belong to. These findings make an important contribution to the study of social identity processes in organizations. For example, (Pratt, 1998: 192) observed that of "all of the central questions of organizational identification, the one that has probably received the least attention by organizational scholars has been, 'How does organizational identification occur?'" Over the last fifteen years, scholars have begun filling this gap by creating conceptual models that explain how this process works. These models are typically focused on moments of

“sensebreaking”, where the sense of self is shattered, the subsequent “sensemaking” efforts of the individual to reconstruct the self, and the “sensegiving” efforts of the organization to guide individuals in this process. This chapter suggests that becoming more familiar with the organization’s history and the legacies of former members play a critical role in members’ efforts to make sense of a particular identity. As a result, large-scale changes in organizations result in “sensebreaking” or identity ambiguity (Corley & Gioia, 2004) (because the organization becomes severed from its history. Without a history, it is difficult for members to “make sense” of who they are as an organization. Thus, legacies can be a powerful medium for sensegiving, helping to anchor, stabilize, and provide continuity to the organizational identity, and enhancing its attractiveness to organizational members. This helps to explain why organizations draw on the organizational history and the legacies of former members during times of change to help renew a sense of collective self (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006)

While this chapter has adopted the argument that legacies influence social identity processes, the inverse is also likely: social identity processes play an important role in shaping legacies. This suggests that legacies and identities are mutually constituted. One of the findings of Chapter 3 was that collective memories might be biased towards the preservation of positive exemplars as opposed to individuals that have threatened the organization. The results of this chapter may explain why that is the case. Because individuals who have a negative influence on the organization might be viewed as threatening to the collective sense of self, the act of “forgetting” helps to preserve the stability and attractiveness of the social identity. As a result, social identity processes and legacies might be viewed as interacting in a cycle over time: legacies shape social identity processes, which likewise shape the legacies in organizations. A collective memory is both a reflection of the collective identity, but also an active force in

shaping it (Schwartz, 1996). However, this does draw attention to the need for more systematic exploration of the influence of negative legacies on social identity processes. Because I was not able to observe many negative legacies at Beck and Miller, I was not able to explore in detail how negative legacies influence social identity processes, and vice versa.

These findings also have important implications for practitioners. Specifically, finding ways to enhance the meaning and motivation of employees is a central concern for leaders in organizations, and these findings illuminate an underappreciated resource that can aid in this process: the past. Organizations sometimes present externally oriented corporate histories on their websites and may give new employees copies of these histories. However, these histories are usually presented as “an unproblematic chain of selected events marking [the firm’s] growth and expansion” (Delahaye et al., 2009: 35), highlighting few people from the organization’s history. The results of this chapter suggest that organizations can help foster greater identification among their employees by going much deeper. By helping members develop a stronger sense of the “ghosts of the organization”, they can foster a stronger sense of identification among their members. This can be accomplished by celebrating the firm’s history and individuals from the past, making history an important part of written and oral communications, and creating reminders of individuals from the organization’s past in the physical environment.

## CHAPTER 6

### *The Moral Power of Institutional Legacies*

I'm not sure how many members of the European Ryder Cup Team believe in God or some form of afterlife. But I'm fairly certain that all of them believe that Seve Ballesteros lives after death. Seve was a professional golfer from Spain who had a magnificent career, becoming one of the most acclaimed golfers to ever play on the PGA and European Tours. Seve's accomplishments include five major tournament victories, over 90 total tournament victories (including 9 PGA Tour tournaments and 50 European Tour tournaments), 61 weeks as the #1 golfer in the world, 6 European Tour money titles, 3 Player of the Year Awards, and a place in the World Golf Hall of Fame. However, Seve is perhaps best known for his role in the resurgence of European golf, participating in five Ryder cup victories as both a player and a captain. When Seve passed away in 2011 after a difficult battle with brain cancer, Lee Westwood, the #1 ranked golfer at that time tweeted of Ballesteros, "Seve made European golf what it is today."

Seve's longtime Ryder Cup partner Jose Maria Olazabal was selected as the captain of the 2012 Ryder Cup to be held at Medinah Country Club in Medinah, Illinois. During interviews leading up to the event, Olazabal made it known that "Seve is going to be there in our team in some way or form" (Casey, 2012). In tribute to Seve, his image was placed on the official golf bags used by each player, pictures were hung in the players' locker room, and Olazabal wept as he paid tribute to the former European captain in his speech at the opening ceremonies. However, after the first two days of competition, the European team found themselves down by a seemingly insurmountable margin of 10-6, requiring the European team to win 8 of 12 singles matches in order to secure the cup. One American sportswriter wrote, "It's over. Olazabal can



click off the walkie-talkie and take the IFB out of his ear. Time for the Europeans to fire up the private jets and head back home to Florida” (Wojciechowski, 2012).

On the last day of the tournament, facing a seemingly insurmountable lead, the European team came out in blue sweaters and white trousers, Seve’s traditional attire during the final round of a tournament. Playing inspired golf, the European team won the first five matches of the day, putting them up by a point with 7 matches to play. The two teams split the remaining points, and the European team won the Ryder Cup. This victory was labeled the “Medinah Miracle”, and Seve Ballesteros was hailed as “the 13<sup>th</sup> man” that spurred them on to victory. According to one European sportswriter, “Seve was there at Medinah yesterday. His silhouette was on the sleeves of Europe’s players and they wore navy jumpers and white shirts, as the Spanish genius always did when big tournaments were on the line. Seve’s spirit, his incomparable will to win, was there too” (Spencer, 2012). One of the team members, fellow Spaniard Sergio Garcia, suggested “I have no doubt in my mind that he was with me today all day because there’s no chance I would have won my match if he wasn’t there” (Clarey, 2012). And perhaps one of the most poignant images of the tournament was a picture of an emotional Olazabal looking up into the heavens after the victory, as if to acknowledge the presence of Seve. Olazabal commented after the match, “Seve will always be present with this team” (Murray, 2012).

This example illustrates a powerful phenomenon: the capacity of certain legacies to shape the attitudes and behavior of group members. However, previous accounts of social influence in organizations have largely overlooked the enduring influence of former members after they have died or departed a group. In this chapter, I extend and elaborate social identity theory’s assertions about influence in social groups by showing how legacies are able to influence collective

behavior in a variety of ways when they become “institutional legacies” or representations of the identity of a social group.

### **Social Identity Theory and Influence**

The idea that individuals’ attitudes and behaviors might be susceptible to the influence of others is a pervasive aspect of theories in psychology, sociology and organizational studies ranging from Festinger’s (1954) work on social comparison, to Weber’s (1946) work on the bases of authority, to various perspectives on leadership (DeRue, Nahrgang, Wellman, & Humphrey, 2011). However, social identity theory provides a powerful set of insights that enhance our understanding of how self-categorization processes shape the nature of social influence in social groups, such as organizations (Hogg, 2001; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). Social identity theory begins with the assumption that individuals define themselves in terms of both personal attributes (personal identities), and memberships in particular social groups (social identities). To conceive of oneself in terms of a group membership requires “depersonalization” or a shifting in the basis of cognition from “I” as an autonomous actor to “We” as members of a particular group. And the term “identification” is used to represent the strength of this shift: the more one identifies with a particular group, the stronger the shift from “I” to “We”, and the more self-defining the social identity becomes to the individual.

According to social identity theory, as individuals make this cognitive shift from “I” to “We”, group members cognitively represent their groups in terms of prototypes, or “fuzzy sets of attributes (perceptions, attitudes, feelings, behaviors) that in a particular context capture the essence of the ingroup and clearly differentiate the ingroup from relevant outgroups” (Van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003: 245). If we borrow the language of Durkheim (1961: ix), who was speaking to the societal level of analysis, these collective “ways of seeing and feeling” are “a

certain intellectual and moral framework distinctive of the entire group.” As a moral framework, prototypes help describe and prescribe that which good group members are and do, and that which good group members are not and do not. These prototypes are usually deduced from or represented by the behavior of core ingroup members, and may be represented cognitively in the form of representations of “ideal, often hypothetical, in-group members” (Hogg, 2006), or representations of “actual group members who embody the group most fully” (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995: 261). For individuals that identify strongly with a particular social group, when that social identity is made salient, 1) the prototype becomes the standard by which individuals judge the behavior of others; 2) individuals are motivated to bring their own behavior into alignment with the group prototype; and 3) individuals are more influenced by communicative acts from group members that are perceived as more prototypical (Hogg, 2006). And researchers have found that influence accrues to more prototypical members (Bingham, Oldroyd, Thompson, Bednar, & Bunderson, 2013). Thus, as individuals identify more strongly with a social group, social identity theory predicts that the group prototype will increasingly influence the attitudes and behaviors of group members.

While social identity theory offers significant insights about the way prototypes shape the attitudes and behaviors current group members, this theory has never explored the idea briefly alluded to by Van Knippenberg and Hogg (2003) that prototypes can also be drawn from a group’s memory and shared history. However, if we take seriously the idea that “the history of the groups or communities to which we belong is an indispensable part of our social identities” (Zerubavel, 1996: 290), it suggests that former members of an organization might have an enduring influence on the attitudes and behavior of group members. In this chapter, I show how the legacy of a former member can become an institutional legacy as it comes to represent the

identity of the organization. As a result, the institutional legacy acts like a group prototype, becoming the standard against which the behavior of other members is judged, motivating behavior that supports the collective, and endowing organizational actions with legitimacy.

### **Analytical Strategy**

The data for this chapter consist of my own autoethnographic observations from my experiences at Beck and Miller, insights gained from a review of corporate documents, and the responses of 40 current employees of Beck and Miller to various semi-structured interview questions. These interview responses were obtained using several different types of questions. I began each interview by asking the respondents to tell me the story of their organization. I had a timeline, anchored at “Time 0”, and respondents were asked to describe the defining moments in the organization’s history. Oftentimes, individuals would be mentioned in conjunction with these defining moments. After collecting these corporate histories, I would follow up by asking respondents if there were other individuals that had a positive or negative legacy in the organization. I would then probe more deeply about each name, seeking to identify what their specific legacy was, how it was preserved in the organization, and the influence it had on others in the organization. These data were supplemented with archival analysis, and unobtrusive observations. I attended several corporate events at each location making general observations about the functioning of each organization. I also gathered archival documents from various sources, including corporate histories, family histories, corporate newsletters, reviewing the corporate website, and other industry publications and press releases. Taken together, these secondary sources of data provided a richer context for understanding members’ responses and sometimes sparked new questions for subsequent interviews with informants. For example, partway through the interviewing process, I found a corporate newsletter that was distributed to

each employee following the announcement of the merger. This newsletter contained letters from James and Steven Beck, and I was able to ask respondents about their thoughts and reactions to this newsletter.

I analyzed the data in a highly iterative fashion, moving back and forth between the data and my emerging observations and arguments. In stage one of the data analysis, I read through each of my interview transcripts using open coding to generate provisional codes. Coding is a method of “meaning condensation” (Lee, 1999: 89) that facilitates the extraction of relevant themes in the data. A code is usually applied to data “chunks” that range in size from a single word to multiple paragraphs (Miles & Huberman, 1994), and multiple codes can be assigned to a single chunk. These were mostly descriptive codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994) that were usually snippets of respondents’ own words. Through this analysis, the findings from Chapter 5 emerged, suggesting that legacies have an important influence on social identity processes. However, it became clear during this stage of the analysis that the legacies of James Kollman and Steven Beck had a distinct influence in their respective organizations. As a result, I began seeking to understand the influence of these two legacies in the organization, and why they had such a profound impact. As a result, I went back and focused my coding exclusively on these two individuals.

In the second phase of analysis, I returned to these codes looking for more abstract theoretical categories. For example, there were several codes about “doing what James wants”, or thinking “what would James do?” that were combined into the category “motivated by James”. I then looked for theoretical relationships between these more abstract categories, attempting to illuminate higher order relationships between these categories. For example, several codes about the influence of legacies on employees motivation were aggregated into a

theoretical category I labeled “Motivating Behavior”. In total, I was able to deduce four different ways that these legacies shape the attitudes and behavior of group members. In the final phase of analysis, I returned to the data seeking to understand why these legacies were able to have such powerful influence. This analysis revealed the process of “institutionalization” which I summarize in Table 6.1. I present these findings below.

## **Results**

When I pulled into the parking lot at Beck Inc. for my first interview, it seemed like a rather ordinary building. I parked my car, walked towards the building and immediately noticed a tree with a plaque that was dedicated to the memory of Steven Beck. When I walked through the front door, my eyes were immediately drawn towards a set of portraits on the opposite wall. I would later learn that the picture on the far right was a portrait of Steven Beck. I was escorted into a conference room and my first interviewee entered the room. After learning about his career path, I asked him to tell me the story of the organization, focusing on the defining moments. He did not start with the founding in 1893, but instead spoke of the “buyout when Steven bought Daniel out.”

A few days later, I sat in an empty conference room at Miller waiting for my first interviewee to arrive. After discussing his career history, I asked him to tell me the story of his organization. He began by describing how Dwight Miller and his brother-in-law Anthony Kerby had founded the company in the late 60’s, and quickly moved to the part of the story of how James Kollman had purchased the company from Dwight and Anthony in 1966. I had read about James Kollman on the company website, so I knew this fact of the company story. But at that point, I could not have anticipated what the name James Kollman would mean to the members of the organization. Over the next hour, this respondent spoke James’ name 34 times. I learned

about the personal connections he made with each of his employees, the thoughtful way that he made participatory decisions in the organization, and the personal sacrifices he made to benefit the organization. And over the next several months, I would continue to learn about the unique legacies of Steven Beck and James Kollman, and their enduring influence in the organization.

### **The Institutionalization of Legacies**

In his landmark work “Leadership in Public Administration”, Selznick (1957) argued that some organizations are transformed into institutions through a process called “institutionalization”. In Selznick’s view, at the core of this process was an “infusion of value” that occurred as the organization came “to symbolize the community’s aspirations, its sense of identity” (Selznick, 1957: 19). According to Selznick (1957: 18-19), one of the “tests” of institutionalization is the expendability of the organization. Because of the “infusion of value” that occurs when organizations become institutions, there is a resistance to change and a sense of personal loss, a sense that the identity of the community has been violated when an institution is changed.

Drawing on the work of Selznick, Trice and Beyer (1993: 276) argued that some leaders, what they refer to as “institutional leaders”, are able to “advance, put into practice, and protect the prevailing ideologies of their group.” And like organizations that become institutions, such institutional leaders are reified and sometimes deified as they come to embody the ideologies of their organizations, becoming living representations of the organizations “most cherished principles and values” (1993: 277). Both of these arguments suggest that “institutionalization”, whether it be the transformation of organizations into institutions, or leaders into institutional leaders, occurs as an organization or individual comes to embody the identity of the community or organization in which they are embedded.

Similarly, I suggest that in some cases, the legacy of a former member is infused with value because it embodies the identity of a particular organization. This process of institutionalization might begin before an individual has departed, at death or departure from the organization, or even after an individual has departed. For example, Schwartz (1983: 21, 30) suggests that George Washington was virtually deified by his generation as a representation of “the values and tendencies of his society.” Since that time, George Washington has always had a prominent place in the collective memory of America. In contrast, Jansen (2007) showed how the Sandinista National Liberation Front of Nicaragua (i.e., the Sandinista’s) were able to “resurrect” the memory of forgotten guerilla leader Augusto Sandisto after public censorship after his death had resulted in a long period of relative obscurity. When a legacy becomes an “institutional legacy”, when it comes to embody the identity of the organization, I suggest that it has the ability to influence organizational behavior much like a more abstract prototype.

**TABLE 6.1**

**The Institutionalization of Legacies**

<b>The Source of Moral Power</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Exemplary Quotation</b>
Institutionalization	Legacies become the ideal representation of the organization's identity.	Whenever I see that word Miller painted on the wall that’s what I think about is James Kollman" (#22)  The company became what it is during his presidency. He really made Beck what it was...really he is Beck" (#40).

The complete “institutionalization” of a former member can best be seen in the way employees at Miller Inc. talk about James Kollman, and to some extent, Steven Beck. For



example, James was described by one executive as “the George Washington of Miller” who built up an “indescribable culture...that lives on” (#1). As an integral player in the quest for independence and as the first President of the United States, George Washington is a “founding father” of the United States, listed by Time Magazine last summer as the most influential American of all time (Time Staff, 2012). To say that James is the George Washington of Miller communicates the importance of James in the story of Miller Inc. Likewise, at Beck Inc., a current employee in one of the support functions tentatively said of Steven: ““I don’t know if he is like our... I don’t want to say it... like our Jesus, right? Like he’s the one that—because really the company became what it is during his presidency. He really made Beck what it was” (#40). To describe Steven as “our Jesus” might seem sacrilegious, perhaps explaining her hesitancy to make this comment. However, the surrounding text helps to communicate the meaning of this metaphor she is invoking: the company became what it is because of Steven. These quotes illustrate that not only were these two individuals most frequently identified as key players in the story of their organizations, but that these two individuals are viewed as THE key players in the story of their organizations. This was perhaps summarized best by an employee at Beck Inc. in the manufacturing process, who spoke of both James and Steven saying, “Steven, I mean, he had people before him, but I think these two companies really look to these two guys as forefathers, founders” (#31). This is interesting because these two are clearly not the official founders of their respective organizations. However, they are viewed as such.

Not only are these two figures viewed as the key figures in the story of their respective organizations, they have come to embody the identity of the organization itself. This is evident in the expression of one employee who said of Steven, “he is Beck” (#40). During another interview with an employee in the manufacturing process, we were discussing why a tree had

been planted for Steven outside the front doors of the organization after he passed away. He responded, “This was his company. He owned it, and he still owns it” (#23). This imagery of Steven as still owning the company despite his death is a powerful window into how Steven is viewed in the organization. Similarly, another Beck employee invoked the metaphor of a family, and remarked, “Steven is the head of the family.” I followed up asking, “Even though he’s gone?” She replied, “It doesn’t matter. He will be the head of the family until the people that are here don’t remember him anymore” (# 42).

Likewise, an employee at Miller Inc. told me that “[James] was the figurehead. Even though he was an active in the day to day of Miller. He would still be the person you think of when you thought of Miller to me was James” (#20). Just as Steven “is Beck”, James is who you think of when you think of Miller Inc. as an organization. During an interview with another employee in the manufacturing process at Miller Inc., I asked him to identify physical artifacts in the organization that served as a reminder of James. He said: "If you ever stand in the pressroom and look down through the pressroom down through the hallway down through the binary you'll see on the wall it says Miller. Somebody had that painted on the wall years ago. Whenever I see that word Miller painted on the wall that’s what I think about is James Kollman" (#22). What is so powerful about these quotes is that Miller is the last name of the founder Dwight Miller. It is akin to saying, “When I see the word Walt Disney, I think of Robert Iger.” It demonstrates just how strongly James has come to embody the identity of the organization.

### **The Moral Power of Institutional Legacies**

Institutionalization is a process whereby an aspect of the physical or social environment is “infused with value” as it comes to represent the identity of the collective in which it is embedded. For example, organizations may become institutionalized as they come to embody

the identity of the community in which they are embedded. And leaders or other organizational members may become institutionalized as they come to embody the identity of the organization in which they are embedded. Likewise, legacies may become institutionalized as they come to represent the identity of the organization in which they are embedded. And as I show below, these institutional legacies are able to influence organizational behavior like group prototypes influence organizational behavior: 1) they become the standard by which individuals judge the behavior of others; 2) they motivate individuals to behave in ways that are beneficial for the collective; and 3) they endow organizational actions with legitimacy when those actions are perceived as aligning with the former member’s vision.

**TABLE 6.2**

**The Moral Power of Institutional Legacies**

<b>How Legacies Influence Attitudes and Behavior</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Exemplary Quotation</b>
Evaluating Behavior	The legacy becomes the standard for determining what is appropriate behavior	“James knew my name the day after I started here. Robert Beck will never know my name. Maybe it seems insignificant, but it tells me a lot. Now, Robert Beck has more people that he has to deal with, but I don't care. James would have dealt with it” (#8)
Motivating Behavior	The legacy motivates behavior that supports organizational goals	“I try to make it in a way that it looks good because that is what James wants” (#10)
Fostering Accountability	The legacy fosters accountability for appropriate decisions.	"To me, his ghost is in the hallway...there's ghosts in the hallway all the time...I'm in the office my grandfather, uncle, and dad were in. I guess part of it is 'don't screw this up'. Don't be the one on watch when this goes down. That's a pretty powerful motivator"
Legitimizing Organizational Actions	The legacy legitimates organizational actions viewed as consistent with the former member’s vision	"We have their blessing. That's important for people to know. I think that's a great question. We have their blessing. They're adults in the room that said, 'this is okay.' Even though he's not there, he would like this” (#30).

***Evaluating Behavior.*** One way that institutional legacies shape attitudes and behavior is by defining the behavioral standard for other group members. As such, they are a representation of the organization's moral framework, prescribing the attitudes and behaviors that define good and bad members of the organization. For example as noted in Chapter 3, the hallmarks of James' legacy were individual connection, participatory management, and self-sacrifice. And these qualities have become the standard against which the behavior of other organizational members is measured. For example, there was a particular manager that was often cited as having a negative legacy in the organization named Ray Morrow. Ray had worked at the organization for many years and ultimately was promoted to be the manager of the entire manufacturing process. However, he ruled with a very authoritarian style, and under his management, the plant went from being quite profitable to being unprofitable. One employee described the situation in this way:

“He was the type of person that liked to call the shots and you may have heard about him already, but he wasn't as concerned about employee relations as James was. He was more concerned about efficiency and getting the work done, and he had a strong opinion about how things should be done, and several times he did things without consulting James, which wasn't James' style. So eventually came a parting of ways...that's not the way we do things around here” (#1).

Notice in this quote that James' style is the comparator for Ray's style, and Ray was violating “the way we do things around here”. The two key weaknesses identified by this employee in Ray's character- making decisions without input from others, and treating employees with care and concern- were both hallmarks of James Kollman character. Another executive had this to say about the situation: “Great guy, very talented but he couldn't work with people. And that is

important in this company...he didn't know how to treat people. And he wound up as manufacturing manager at one point. And again, that gets back to treating people well. Ray is not a bad person. It is just a weakness, but a serious one” (#7). In this quote, the treatment of others, a hallmark of James’ character, was viewed as the “serious weakness” in Ray’s character that led to his departure. And finally, an employee summed up the situation in this way: “He was very authoritarian, bossy, my way or the highway type of thing. That’s not the way we do things” (#3). In each of these accounts, given 20 years after the incident, Ray’s inability to successfully enact his role as a member of this organization is attributed to his failure to act in a James-like manner, particularly in his treatment of others and his willingness to exemplify participatory management. We can see that the virtues that are seen as central to James’ legacy are the standard being used to evaluate the behavior of this former leader.

It might not be surprising that James was the standard against which Ray was judged, because after all, James was the CEO at the time of this incident. However, we can see that James continues to be the standard against which others are judged in the way that members of Miller evaluate Robert Beck, who is now the CEO of the merged organization Beck and Miller. For example, one employee lamented: “Like I told somebody today, James knew my name the day after I started here. Robert Beck will never know my name. Maybe it seems insignificant, but it tells me a lot. Now, Robert Beck has more people that he has to deal with, but I don't care. James would have dealt with it” (#8). This quote comes in contrast to the numerous stories in the organization about how James knew their names as soon as they started in the organization. It illustrates how James’ ability to create personal connections with others is still the standard against which Robert is being judged.

Likewise, in an interview with another employee in the manufacturing process, he was describing the circumstances surrounding a significant pay cut that Miller Inc. employees were forced to take as a result of the merger to bring the pay scales of the two companies into congruence. This employee was quite upset that Robert was not at the meeting where this was announced. According to this employee, “Being the CEO of this company you should want to be there. Personally I would want to be there if I was going to tell hundreds of people about the pay cut and these important changes” (#12). According to this employee, Robert came to the next meeting and said something to the extent of, “‘Well guys I’m going to be straight with you, I’ve heard worse.’ How about saying I’m sorry that you guys feel like that ...I’m not going to sit here and say I don’t like the guy. I don’t know the guy. But I don’t like how he’s changing things. Real arrogance!” (#16). According to one Beck employee, the idea for Robert not to attend the meeting was proposed by Glen Kollman, because there was a feeling that the news might be digested better if it was coming from Glen. However, Robert’s absence coupled with a response in the subsequent meeting was perceived as lacking compassion. This example further illustrates that James’ legacy of care and compassion continues to be the standard against which Robert’s behavior is being measured.

And finally, several Miller Inc. employees described the decision making style they had observed since the merger with Beck Inc. James’ decision-making style was described in this way:

“[James] believed strongly in participatory management. So a lot of the decisions we made were considered, well organized, sometimes frustrating because they were so slow in coming, but he wanted to make sure that not only did we study and know what we were getting ourselves into before we made a decision, but that everyone felt like they

participated in that decision. And that's a legacy or a characteristic of his management style that is really important" (#10).

Another executive said this type of decision-making "characterizes our perspective" and enables employees to trust management's decisions "because they have my best interest at heart" (#11).

However, descriptions of the decision making process at Beck Inc. included phrases such as "shooting from the hip" (#14), "rule with an iron fist" (#13), and being "emasculated" "if you don't make a decision" (#11). One employee summed up the perceived difference in great detail:

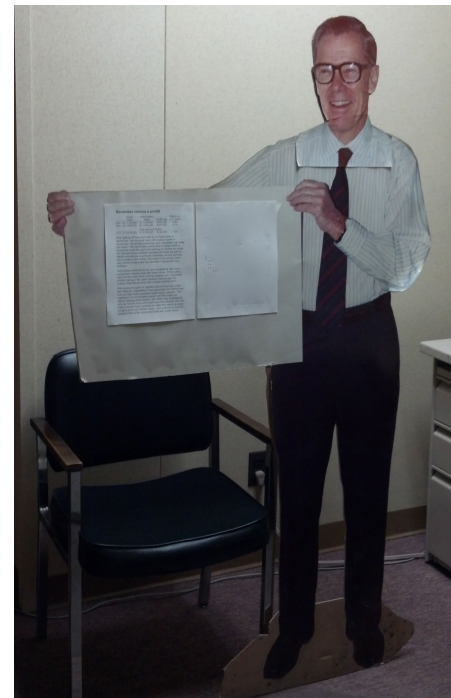
"They make decisions in a rash manner. One thing here, decisions took a long time to make, but they were solid decisions once they were made. Over there decision are made at the drop of the hat. Tomorrow it might be different but its not thought out. And I think that' s led to some poor decision-making. Here people's opinions were solicited before making a decision. And so you got viewpoints that you wouldn't think about. Issues and obstacles that you wouldn't even think about. Over there a decision is made, and an obstacle comes up, and they say I don't care, just get it done, just do it. So you have these haphazard processes that crop up because Robert said get it done and so we've got to get it done, and how are we going to do it, we are going to hire another person and they are going to manually enter stuff into this spreadsheet. And it works, but it's not very efficient. And it's prone to error, but that's the way it works. But just those snap decision without a lot of input. And you don't have ownership of the decisions. And you think that makes no sense. Who decided that? We certainly had a lot of faults, but we had developed a way of decision-making that was long term thinking and process oriented. And now what we are seeing is short term thinking and price tag oriented" (#1).

Each of these examples illustrates that James' legacy of personal connection and compassion, participatory decision-making, and self-sacrifice continue to be the standard against which members are judged. His legacy is the "moral framework" of the organization, defining what is appropriate behavior for good organizational members.

***Motivating Behavior.*** Not only are legacies the standards of evaluation that help to define appropriate behavior, the invocation of a particular legacy can help to motivate behavior that benefits the collective. This may range from motivating task behavior to motivating behavior outside the workplace that represents the company in favorable way. One powerful example of this at Miller Inc. was the "James Posters". The James Posters are life sized cutout posters of James Kollman that were placed in key locations in the plant. The posters showed James holding a piece of paper that contained financial

results and reminders of important goals the organization was working towards. In addition, the James Posters had interchangeable faces that signaled to employees the nature of the financial results. When results were good, James had a smiling face. When things were not going so well, he had a stern face. The influence of the James Posters is best exemplified in the words of one employee who works in the manufacturing process. We were discussing times when he was likely to think about James and he said, "when I'm working and we want to make that product because he

always said we have to produce a good-looking product. That always stuck with me, and I always try to do the best I can. So whenever I think about making the finished product, I try to



**Image 6. 1- A James Poster**



make it in a way that it looks good because that is what James wants” (#19). Almost 15 years after James stepped down as the formal leader of this organization, this employee still thinks about James as he works in the manufacturing process, and tries to make products in a way that “James wants”. The influence of James extends beyond the manufacturing process to the behavior of employees outside the organization. As one employee described, “Whatever I do I try to do the best that I can because I try to remember who I'm representing, and I try to keep myself...I don't want to think that I've put him on a pedestal. I think of him a lot like I would my father. I want him to be proud of what I do” (#22). And as another employee noted, “In my personal life, I think Glen and James have definitely influenced me in the way I behave outside the shop. There's now doubt about it, like what would Glen do or what would James do type of thing” (#3). In each of these quotations, employees suggest that James continues to motivate them to perform tasks and represent the company in ways that benefit the collective.

***Fostering Accountability.*** In addition to the role legacies can play in evaluating and motivating behavior, legacies can also play an important role in fostering a sense of accountability for the decisions that individuals make. This was especially evident at Beck Inc., where the legacy of Steven Beck is often invoked during decision-making situations. Steven was seen as very interested in people (though he is also know for losing his temper at times), but when it came to business, he was also concerned about the bottom line. One executive described his decision making style as “slow” and “disciplined”, “not a real innovator”, and the type of person that was content to “polish this apple and sharpen the saw and we're going to keep doing what we're doing” (#30). Another executive noted that he “he was very strict and he had a game plan and he stuck to it” (#32). And another executive described him as “very conservative” and “very control oriented” (#36). The style of current CEO Robert Beck is quite different from his

father Steven's style. One executive described Robert as more "forward-looking", less concerned with "getting bogged down in the details", and "more of an salesman, entrepreneur" (#36). Another executive described Robert as a "feeling-sensory" guy, who says, "it just feels right, let's just do the decision" (#30). And another executive described Robert as more "creative and innovative" and willing to experiment (#32).

Given these differences, Steven's legacy is often evoked when Robert is considering decisions, especially those that are quite risky or that would necessitate a great deal of change. Phrases like, "your Dad would kill you" (#30), "your Dad's spinning in his grave" (#30), "Steven would be rolling in his grave right now if he knew we were doing this" (#32), "Steven never would have done that" (#32), or "Steven never would have allowed this" (#40) arise when Robert decides to "go on the edge here a little bit and lets try this" or "when Robert is kind of hanging out there, taking that risk" (#32). According to one executive, "it's like we're a little nervous with Robert here, because we have had the majority of our career under Steven's reign and that different style, and having Robert even though Robert has been around for a while, still he is so different" (#40). One employee described the influence these reminders could potentially have on Robert when he said:

"If I'm Robert Beck and I'm looking at that timeline, and I'm seeing my face as the leader here, and I'm looking behind me, I'm looking at every one of those guys thinking I don't want to let you down. I'm sure my son or whoever is next is going to see me saying I don't want to let you guys down because they all did it and they took care of the employees and they had ups and downs I'm sure. I would imagine if I was running this place, I would look at this timeline as a reminder of my forefathers looking down at me, watching me" (#38).

And this is exactly how Robert responded when I asked him the significance of these moments when others invoke his Dad's legacy. He said, "To me, his ghost is in the hallway...there's ghosts in the hallway all the time...I'm in the office my grandfather, uncle, and dad were in. I guess part of it is 'don't screw this up'. Don't be the one on watch when this goes down. That's a pretty powerful motivator." These quotes illustrate how legacies can be reminders of the organization's "moral framework", fostering a sense of accountability in the present when considering the impact of a particular decision.

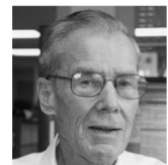
***Legitimizing Organizational Actions.*** Finally, I found that legacies play an important role in legitimizing the actions of the organization, especially during times of change. This was evident in actions taken at the beginning of the merger process. Robert Beck wanted to have a newsletter ready to give to employees as soon as the merger was announced to help them make sense of what was happening. The newsletter contained a picture of the new management team and information about both companies. However, the newsletter concluded with an image of both Steven Beck and James Kollman, excerpts from a recent interview with James Kollman, and a letter written by Steven in the 1980's.

The image of James was on top, and in bold letters was the phrase "I think it's the right move." This was followed by a description of James' operating style that is founded on the assumptions that profitability will take care of itself if you take care of customers and take care of employees. At the end of the section,

James is quoted as saying, "The merger will bring some change; people should try to pull together and make things work. They should not think of

***"I Think It's the Right Move"***

A quote from Herb Upton above sums up his thoughts on the merger between the two book printing companies. Herb helped grow then Malloy Lithographing Inc. from 500,000 dollars per year in revenue to over 35 million today. According to Upton, they accomplished this with a very "can do" workforce of resourceful people who made it work. He offers his golden rules for running a business.



**Image 6. 2- Excerpt from Newsletter Distributed After the Merger**

themselves as Miller people or Beck people, but as being all on one team now.” The image of Steven was on the bottom alongside a letter he had written in 1981 about his “philosophy of working together”. The letters suggests that “Winning customers, satisfying them, and earning more of their business” is “the name of the game”, and articulates the assumption that this game can best be won working together as a team. At the bottom of the page was a picture of Robert Beck and Glen Kollman, along with the caption, “Together the families open a new chapter in the book printing industry as Beck and Miller.”

The imagery of “coming together as a team” is obviously an intended message being communicated on this page of the newsletter. However what is curious about this newsletter is the fact that these two legacy figures are the “messengers”. Why might having it attached to two former CEO’s that are no longer an active part of the organization enhance the meaning of this message? Why might it matter that James thinks, “it’s the right thing to do”, given that he retired from Miller 15 years ago? The responses of employees were very consistent. One employee said, “I think that was huge, that was very necessary. That [James] supports this decision” (#32). Another employee in the manufacturing process said, “it is same reason why Americans look towards our founding fathers...these two companies really look to these two guys as forefathers, founders...As I was reading that, I was like, I just felt really good about it cause you know, these guys are still, even though maybe they are not in my mind everyday, they are in the minds of their sons” (#31). Another employee said, “I do believe that seeing his image makes us feel like “warm and fuzzy” inside, like everything’s going to be okay” (#40). And one employee summed it up this way, “We have their blessing. That’s important for people to know. I think that’s a great question. We have their blessing. They’re adults in the room that said, ‘This is okay.’ Even though he’s not there, he would like this” (#30). Thus, these words of James and Steven

endowed this organizational action with legitimacy because of the perceived approval or “blessing” of these two individuals.

### **Institutionalization and the Moral Power of Legacies**

While social identity theory offers significant insights about the way prototypes shape the attitudes and behaviors current group members, this theory has never explored the idea briefly alluded to by Van Knippenberg and Hogg (2003) that prototypes can also be drawn from a group’s memory and shared history. In this chapter, I have show how a particular legacy can become “infused with value” as it comes to represent the identity of the collective in which it is embedded. As a result, the institutional legacy is able to shape attitudes and behavior in organizations as summarized in the propositions below.

*P1: The more a former member embodies the identity of an organization, the more deviations from that former member’s standard of behavior will affect evaluations of other current members.*

Previous research on social identity processes suggests that a group prototype is an abstract representation of the group’s moral framework, describing and prescribing the attitudes and behaviors that define good members of a social group (Van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). For those that identify with a particular collective, when that social identity is made salient, the prototype becomes the standard by which the behavior of others is judged. Similarly, when legacies come to embody the identity of the group, they may become the standard by which the behavior of other members is judged. As a result, deviations from that behavioral standard may affect evaluations of other current members. Previous work on social judgments suggests that our evaluations of other individuals tend to focus on two core dimensions: competence and warmth (Cuddy, Glick, and Beninger, 2011). The dimension of “warmth” sorts individuals on

traits that signal a person's intentions, such as friendliness, trustworthiness, morality, empathy, and kindness. The dimension of competence sorts individuals on traits that signal their ability, such as intelligence, power, efficacy, and skill. Interestingly, the results presented above seemed to focus more on how deviations from James-like behavior influenced evaluations that would fall under the warmth dimension compared to the competence dimension. Robert Beck and Ray Morrow were not seen as incompetent or lacking in ability. However, they were seen as lacking trustworthiness, empathy and kindness. Thus, institutional legacies play an important role in prescribing the attitudes and behaviors of good members, and deviations from those attitudes and behaviors by current members appear to have a negative impact on how those current members are evaluated.

*P2: The more a former member embodies the identity of an organization, the more influence invoking the legacy of that former member will have on the behavior of group members.*

Previous research on social identity processes also suggests that when a social identity is made salient, individuals who identify with the social group will be motivated to conform their behavior in accordance with the group prototype (Hogg, 2006). Likewise, when a former member comes to embody the identity of an organization, invoking the identity of that former member appears to motivate behavior that supports the collective in two different ways. Invoking the legacy of James at Miller Inc. seemed to motivate individuals to behave in ways that supported the collective goals of the organization, ensuring quality work in the manufacturing process and encouraging appropriate representation of the organization outside of the workplace. Invoking the legacy of Steven at Beck seemed to foster a sense of accountability, acting as a check for Robert Beck in situations where he was doing something risky. Thus,

invoking institutional legacies appears to encourage behavior that supports the moral framework of the organization.

*P3: The more a former member embodies the identity of the group, the more organizational actions will be seen as legitimate when they are perceived as consistent with the character of the former member.*

Finally, previous research on social identity processes suggests that the communications of more prototypical group members are more persuasive than the communications of less prototypical members (van Knippenberg, 2000; van Knippenberg, Lossie, & Wilke, 1994). Likewise, institutional legacies have the capacity to influence current members perceptions of organizational actions. When actions are perceived as consistent with the character of the former member, they are endowed with legitimacy. For example, when announcing the merger of Beck and Miller, invoking the legacies of James and Steven gave this organizational action legitimacy in the eyes of employees.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this chapter extend the work of social identity scholars interested in the processes that shape attitudes and behavior of social groups. Previous research has suggested that group prototypes, abstract representations of the group's moral framework, have an important influence on the attitudes of organization members. However the findings presented in this chapter suggest that some legacies become infused with value as they come to represent the identity of the organization. When this happens legacies become institutional legacies, and they become an important representation of the group's moral framework. As a result, these legacies function much like the group prototype: they become the standard for evaluating the behavior of other group members, they can motivate behavior that supports the collective, and they can

endow organizational actions with legitimacy when they are seen as consistent with the character of the former member. As a result, institutional legacies have a great deal of moral power, shaping the attitudes and behavior of current group members.

Because both James and Steven are former CEO's of their respective organizations, one question raised by this chapter is whether institutional legacies are only available to chief executives. However, at both organizations, we can observe other legacies having a similar influence at more "local" levels of analysis. For example, Eric Martin was the beloved sales manager that died tragically at a sales meeting. Across my 20 interviews at Beck, 5 out of 20 respondents identified Eric Martin as having left a legacy at Beck, and these five individuals all had strong links to the sales department. However, when I helped facilitate a meeting that included the sales force of the whole organization, including the sales force that was joining from Miller Inc., we broke everyone into small groups and had them share a story of someone who had left a legacy in their organization. At every table that I observed during this exercise, the Beck employees all cited Eric Martin as the first person that came to mind. Several of the participants wept as they spoke about his death, and the influence of his example in their lives. After his death the organization named their annual sales award after Eric. The award is given to the individual each year that has the best performance in the sales function, and according to one sales manager, "If you were a sales rep that worked for Eric or knew Eric, you really want to win that award. It is pretty meaningful to the folks that had a relationship with him...I know the guys that worked for him or with him, and when they win it, it is a pretty good deal because you knew him, you worked for him you worked with him, you know what a good guy he is" (#39). Another employee in a support function said, "I know it really meant a lot to [Frank]—because [Frank] has won it twice and I think it means more to them because of who Eric was...because



they have other awards like the Thousand Mile Award, but what does that really mean? But the fact that you know they wanted to keep his memory alive and say, ‘you are representing what he would have wanted or what he believed in’ I think does mean something” (#40). Thus, it appears that Eric Martin has an institutional legacy in the sales department that has moral power in that domain. As one salesperson noted, “I think that within a department, I wouldn’t be able to share a lot of stories about old pressmen or old bindery operators because those aren’t the folks that you worked with on a day to day basis, so there aren’t, so you might tell the story that someone in the sales force would know, but someone out in the plant wouldn’t” (#39). This suggests that individual departments might have their own collective memory that includes a set of legacies that would be invisible to other departments in the organization. Thus, future research might seek to better understand these same dynamics at the department level in organizations.

A final insight arising from this chapter is the role that legacies may play in both enabling and hindering organizational change. On the one hand, the legacy of James helped to endow the merger of these two organizations with legitimacy through his simple proclamation, “I think this is the right move”. On the other hand, James’ legacy is making it difficult for employees at Miller Inc. to accept Robert Beck as a viable successor to James because his attitudes and behavior are not perceived as James-like. As a practical implication, this suggests that leaders must be sensitive to the legacies of their predecessors during transitional moments. And future research might explore how historical sensitivity influences the success or failure of change initiatives or succession events.

## CHAPTER 7

### *Theoretical Contributions and Directions for Future Research*

If we conclude by zooming out to consider these chapters as an integrated whole, this dissertation illuminates an important and ubiquitous process in organizations that has gone largely unnoticed by organizational scholars: the construction, maintenance and revision of a shared past. And an important aspect of this process is the construction, maintenance, and revision of legacies, or representations of former members from an organization's past. This process "is drastically selective. Certain memories live on; the rest are winnowed out, repressed, or simply discarded by a process of natural selection" (Yerushalmi, 1982: 95). And in Chapter 3, we learned that legacies are not just reserved for founders and CEOs. Rather, the selection mechanisms that determine "who" gets remembered in an organization's collective memory appear to reflect two important evolutionary pressures facing all organizations: 1) their survival as an enduring, for-profit entity and 2) their survival as a community of members. As a result, the content of legacies in organizations reflect both achievements and accomplishments that have contributed to the organization's construction and survival (or in some cases its demise), but also actions that have contributed to the community's construction and survival (or in some cases its demise).

These legacies "live on" in three different domains of an organization's collective memory: cognitive space, social space, and physical space. Cognitive endurance refers to a legacy living on in the minds of current members in the form of individual memories. Social endurance refers to a legacy living on in the conversations of current members interacting with each other. And physical endurance refers to a legacy living on in the material environment. Legacies are kept alive in each of these domains by different mnemonics ranging from

unconscious associative learning to more intentional acts that I call legacy work. For example, associations created between a former member and the physical or social context help keep legacies alive in the minds of current members, and creating images or representations of former members out of physical materials help to stoke the flames of legacy in the material environment. However, it is communicative acts in interactions between current members that give a legacy “social life”. To quote Sandelands (2003: 8-9), “A waterfall is visible with a continuous movement of water. It ceases to exist the moment its supply of water is cut off. Likewise, a social form is visible with continuous activity. Like the waterfall, it ceases to exist the moment its supply of activity is cut off.” Thus, when conversations about former members die off, so does the social life of a legacy. A former member may continue to live on for a time in individual memory, and it may live on indefinitely in material artifacts, but the social life of the legacy is gone.

These legacies that live on in the organization’s collective memory have an enduring influence on life in organizations. The findings reported in chapter 5 illuminate how legacies shape social identity processes in organizations in four important ways. First legacies anchor identity content, helping individuals to move beyond an understanding of “who we are” to an understanding of “why we are the way we are”. Second, legacies provide a sense of continuity by facilitating a sense of connection with previous generations of the organization. Third, legacies enhance the perceived stability of the identity, bolstering confidence in the capacity of the organization to survive into the foreseeable future. And finally, legacies enhance the perceived attractiveness or positivity of the identity by helping members feel pride through their connection to former members. Thus, legacies play an important role in shaping the sense of

connection that individual feel with the organization, and helping current members to maintain that connection with the organization.

Just as some organizations become institutionalized as they come to represent the identity of the community in which they are embedded (Selznick, 1957), some legacies become institutionalized as they come to represent the identity of the organization. And the findings from Chapter 6 suggest that this infusion of meaning enables the legacy to act as the group prototype, or the “moral framework” that describes and prescribes that which organizational members are and do and that which members are not and do not. For group members that identify strongly with the organization, the legacy of the former member becomes the standard for evaluating the behavior of other group members. In addition, invoking the legacy of that former member helps motivate behaviors that align with the moral framework of the group. And communications attached to the former member are deemed as more influential, endowing actions and communications with perceived legitimacy. Thus, institutional legacies continue to have an enduring influence on the attitudes and behaviors of group members.

### **Theoretical Contributions**

*The Personal Legacy Literature.* This dissertation makes several important contributions to the personal legacy literature. The study of legacies at the individual level in organizational studies has emerged out of developmental psychology (Erikson, 1959; Levinson, 1978) and the literature focuses on the “legacy motive”, or the way individuals are motivated by thinking about their own future legacy (Fox et al., 2010; Wade-Benzoni et al., 2010; Wade-Benzoni & Tost, 2009; Wade-Benzoni et al., 2012). However, this dissertation makes three important contributions to this literature. First, it provides an account of the social processes that give rise to the “legacy motive” in the first place. By offering an account of the way groups

construct, maintain, and revise the legacies of certain members, it helps us understand why the hope of a personal legacy exists, and why it can be a source of motivation for individuals in the first place.

Second, this dissertation illuminates a novel source of inspiration and motivation for employees: the past. Previous research on the personal legacy motive has begun to articulate the power of considering one's future personal legacy as a source of motivation and accountability for individual behavior. However, this dissertation suggests that the legacies of former members can likewise be a source of motivation and accountability for individual behavior. Leaders and group members may be able to raise others "to higher levels of motivation and morality" (Burns, 1978: 20) by invoking the legacies of certain former members of the organization.

Third, this dissertation offers a new way to think about "legacy work". Whereas the literature to date has focused on the way individuals are motivated to engage in actions that enhance the perceived positivity of their own future legacy (Wade-Benzoni et al., 2010), this dissertation suggests that individuals also engage in "legacy work" that is focused on the legacies of others. Sometimes, the decisions of top managers stimulate these episodes of legacy work, such as the decision of Robert Beck to name the annual sales award after Eric Martin. Other times, everyday employees stimulate these episodes of legacy work, such as the request of efforts of employees at Beck to plant a tree on behalf of Steven. And invoking and storytelling may continue on long after an individual is gone. Thus, individuals may play an active role in attempting to shape their personal legacies while they are still present, but the work of legacy construction and maintenance may continue long after an individual is gone.

***The Organizational Memory Literature.*** This dissertation also makes several important contributions to the literature on organizational memory. The concept of organizational memory

can largely be traced back to Walsh and Ungson (1991), who focused on the capacity of organizations to bring information from their history to the bear on decision-making in the present. However, this dissertation illuminates another important function of organization memory: sustaining a sense of collective identity. At the individual level, the link between memory and identity is a taken for granted assumption. Eric Kandel (2006: 10), who won the Nobel Prize for his research related to human memory, has said:

“Without the binding force of memory, experience would be splintered into as many fragments as there are moments in life. Without the mental time travel provided by memory, we would have no awareness of our personal history, no way of remembering the joys that serve as the luminous milestones of our life. *We are who we are because of what we learn and what we remember.*”

However, at the organizational level, Rowlinson et al. (2010: 75) have observed that “for the most part organizational memory studies make no connection with organizational identity, and the organizational identity literature does not deal with memory.” Albert and Whetten’s (1985) foundational article conceptualizing organizational identity came first, and their definition of identity included an emphasis on “enduring” aspects of organizations. However, their foundational work did not include a concept like “organizational memory” that enabled aspects of the organizational identity to “endure”. Walsh and Ungson’s (1991) seminal article on organizational memory came second, and there is no citation of Albert and Whetten (1985), nor does the concept of identity appear anywhere in the article. And the concept of “organizational culture”, which is a conceptual cousin to “organizational identity”, was viewed as a static “retention facility” for information from the organization’s past. Thus, the role of organizational memory in the creation and perpetuation of shared meaning was not on the original research

agenda for organizational memory research. And the conceptualization of organizational memory that emerged from this foundational article did not lend itself to studying matters of meaning in organizations. In addition, both literatures have cut themselves off from the burgeoning literature on ‘social memory studies’ in sociology (Olick & Robbins, 1998), which takes seriously the link between concepts of collective identity and collective memory (Erll et al., 2008). However, this dissertation helps to illuminate the importance of organizational memory for the study of organizational identity and culture. It suggests that understanding both what organizations remember and how they remember can be important windows into the essence of an organization.

This dissertation also breaks down the information-processing model of memory based on acquisition, retention, and retrieval and instead suggests that organizational memory is not so much a noun filled thing as much as it is a verb driven process. Instead of viewing organizational memories like data files, organizational memories are viewed more like living organisms that are granted various forms of life through the actions and communications of organizational members. This view of organizational memory changes the very nature of what it means for organizations to “remember” and “forget”.

***The Organizational Identity Literature.*** This dissertation also makes several important contributions to the organizational identity literature. Since Albert and Whetten (1985) introduced the concept into organizational studies two dominant paradigms have emerged about the nature of organizational identity (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). The first perspective, with roots in institutional theory, suggests that an organization’s identity is a set of “institutional claims” about the central, distinctive, and enduring characteristics of the organization (Whetten & Mackey, 2002). An alternative perspective with roots in social constructivism suggests that an

organization's identity is the shared beliefs of its members about what is central, distinctive, and enduring about the organization (Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000). However, these perspectives have failed to appreciate the nature of organizational identities "as part of ongoing historical constructions and collective memories" (Anteby & Molnar, 2012: 517). According to Schein (2004: 11) "shared history" is the "critical, defining characteristic" of any group or organization, and as noted by Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy (2011: 177), "groups are constituted by the stories they tell. Without shared stories about the past of the group, there would be no group identities." Thus, this dissertation illuminates the critical relationship between memory and identity at the organizational level, and shows how identity claims are given richness and substance when they are grounded in an organization's history.

This dissertation also adds to our understanding of one of the understudied dimensions of Albert and Whetten's (1985) conceptualization organizational identity: endurance. Since Albert & Whetten's (1985) foundational paper, there has been a significant amount of research devoted to understanding the formation of new identities (Clegg et al., 2007) or events that disrupt established identities (Elsbach & Kramer, 1996). For example, Corley and Gioia (2004) used a corporate spin-off as an opportunity to observe how the organization created a new identity. And Dutton and Dukerich (1991) used the crisis of homelessness facing the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to better understand how the organization's identity shaped members interpretations of this pressing issue, and the organization's responses. However, this dissertation takes seriously the claim from sociologists that memory is "a central, if not the central medium through which identities are constituted" (Olick & Robbins, 1998: 13). As a result, it draws our attention to the construction of a shared past as a critical process that facilitates the endurance of shared meaning in organizations.



This dissertation also makes important contributions to the study of social identity processes in organizations, which help explain the antecedents and consequences of identifying with a particular organization. And one of the important insights emerging from this dissertation is that identification does not happen in a historical vacuum. Instead, identification requires a fusion between the ongoing self-concept of the individual and the ongoing identity of the organization. As a result, an organization's past can have a significant influence on social identity processes in organizations, shaping an individual's willingness to identify with a particular collective.

This dissertation also offers new insights into social identity perspectives on influence in organizations. Previous perspectives on influence in social groups have demonstrated that when individuals identify with a particular social group, the group prototype becomes the standard by which other group members are judged, individuals conform their behavior in accordance with the group prototype, and individuals are more influenced by other group members deemed more prototypical. The findings of this dissertation suggest that institutionalized former members can act as the group prototype, enabling these former members to have an enduring influence in social groups. Thus, this dissertation expands our understanding of influence in social groups, helping us understand how current members might continue to be influenced by former members after they have departed a social group.

***The Organizational Culture Literature.*** Despite claims of organizational cultural theorists that “cultures cannot be divorced from their histories” (Trice & Beyer, 1993: 6), the actual study of organizational cultures has been criticized for being largely “ahistorical” (Rowlinson & Procter, 1999). I believe this perplexing paradox is largely the result of organizational studies lacking a concept of memory that can address matters of shared meaning.

However, if we view organizational memory less as the receptacle of information in an information processing system (culture being one receptacle), and more as the historical basis of the organization's system of meaning, the very practice of constructing, maintaining, and revising the shared past of the organization becomes one of the more powerful mediums through which culture is created, maintained, and revised. Culture is not a static retention facility where information from an organization's history is deposited. Rather, culture is in a constant dynamic interplay with an organization's past, shaping that which organizations remember, which likewise shapes the organization's culture. Thus, one of the more important contributions of this dissertation to the culture literature is illuminating the inextricable link between culture and memory. In fact, some scholars in sociology use the term "cultural memory" interchangeably with the term collective memory, denoting just how closely these two concepts might be related (Erll et al., 2008). Thus, this study expands our view of culture beyond questions of how assumptions and norms emerge and are transmitted in organizations, to questions of how the very history that brought about an organization's assumptions and norms is constructed and transmitted.

Another important contribution of this dissertation is that it expands our view of legacies in organizations beyond founders and the executive suite. Previous research on organizational culture has privileged organizational founders in explaining the origins of an organization's assumptions and norms (Schein, 2010). As a result, these theories offer a seductive promise to entrepreneurs, that they can create an organization in their image that will live on after they are gone (Martin et al., 1985). However in both of these organizations, the founders have largely faded into the background, and in the case of Miller Inc., the name of the company, which happens to be the name of the founder, has become an inextricable reminder of his successor,

James Kollman. Thus, legacies are not just for founders, or even for CEOs. Individuals at all levels of the organizational hierarchy can have legacies, for better or worse, in the organization's collective memory.

### **Future Research**

In addition to making significant contributions to our current understanding across a variety of literatures, this dissertation opens up new avenues for future research to explore. First, future research focused on legacies and legacy work at the individual level should continue to unpack the antecedents and consequences of legacy work on behalf of other individuals. For example, current research has shown that death primes motivate individuals to engage in actions that contribute to their perceptions of leaving a positive legacy. These actions may act as a buffer for the anxiety that is associated with thinking about one's own death, and contribute to the feeling that one has lived a meaningful life. However, why might a member of an organization be motivated to engage in legacy work on behalf of another individual? And what are the consequences of such behaviors? One possible explanation is that these types of legacy work serve to enhance the positivity of the organizational identity. By creating lasting connections to former members, legacy work ensures that individuals can bask in the reflected glory of these former members in perpetuity (Cialdini et al., 1976). Legacy work might also be an important form of coping with the tragic loss of a co-worker, helping organizations and their members to heal from a traumatic event. Future research can continue to explore these different antecedents and consequences of legacy work on behalf of others.

This research also raises a set of important questions for the study of organizational change (identity and culture), particularly moments of leadership succession. For example, what happens to leaders who follow an "institutional leader"? Traditional wisdom suggests that

successors in this situation are doomed to a fate of failure or ignominy. However incumbents may adopt a number of different strategies when dealing with the legacies of their predecessors. For example, in ancient Rome, some incoming leaders would engage in “damnatio memoriae” (i.e., condemnation of memory), erasing condemned elites or overthrown leaders from history by mutilating or defacing images or monuments devoted to their likeness (Varner, 2004). One can think of other cases where a leader might elevate the legacy of a former member, or ignore it altogether. Or in other cases, a leader might be oblivious to the legacy of his or her predecessor. Understanding these various strategies and their implications for leadership succession and an organization’s identity and culture would be an exciting area for future scholars to explore.

If identification with an organization represents a fusion of a person’s ongoing self-concept and an ongoing organization, it suggests that individuals from an organization’s past might play an important role in social identity processes, and that social identity processes might play an important role in what organizations remember. Understanding these dynamics is another area of research that deserves our attention. For example, understanding how new members might come to identify with organizations that have a checkered past, or how organizational members remember former members that have hurt, embarrassed or disgraced the organization would shed new light on research about how individuals grapple with occupying roles or memberships in collectives that have stigmatized meaning (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999).

Future research might also explore how different cultural profiles in organizations might shape both who gets remembered and what they are remembered for. For example, in both of these organizations that I studied, there was a strong emphasis on both interpersonal influence and achievement or success. However, one might think of another industry or profession where different weights might be attached to these various dimensions, possibly resulting in patterns of

remembering that are quite different. For example, in professional sports, where there is so much emphasis on wins and loses, future members may be more “forgiving” of the transgressions of former members to the extent that they were highly successful. In other domains, where there is less of an emphasis on achievement, one might find that transgressions towards the community of members might be met with greater scorn.

### **Conclusion**

What becomes of an individual after they are gone? Unfortunately, this dissertation has not settled this persistent question of life. However, this dissertation has brought us a long ways in understanding this important question of organizational life. As organizations endure across time, they provide a vehicle through which former members can have a form of symbolic immortality, to “[live] in the esteem of men yet unborn, for the works that [they] have contributed to their life and betterment” (Becker, 1973: 121). These legacies, or representations of former members that live on in the collective memory of an organization, are an important part of organizational life, shaping the connection we feel to the organizations to which we belong, and in some cases, shaping our very attitudes and behavior as group members. These legacies are the lifeblood of the “systems of shared meaning that facilitate organizational action” (Smircich & Stubbart, 1985: 724). Benjamin Franklin once said, “If you would not be forgotten as soon as you are dead and rotten, either write things worth reading or do things worth the writing” (Franklin, 2004: 59). My hope is that this dissertation is worth reading and the ideas herein will spur others worth writing.

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