Ecologies of Memories:

Memory Work Within and Between Organizations and Communities

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we review and synthesize the growing sociology-informed literature on organizational memory studies (OMS). Sociological approaches have recently emerged in management and organization studies focused on the study of collective memory as a social construction of the past. To organize this literature, we develop an ecological view of collective memory. This perspective sees organizations as constituted by a variety of mnemonic communities and, simultaneously, part of a broader ecology of mnemonic communities. We use this framework to guide our review of the various forms of memory work *within* and *between* mnemonic communities. Our review shows that much of the sociologically-informed research has focused on memory work *within* communities. We also identify an emerging interest in the study of memory work *between* communities. In conclusion, we discuss possible future directions and outline a three-point agenda for future research that calls for a better understanding of the relational dynamics of memory with a focus on how it is collectively organized, how it is influenced by ethical and institutional standards, and how it is used for political and commercial purposes.

“The past is not dead, it is not even past.”

William Faulkner

INTRODUCTION

Management and organization scholars have long studied the intersection between collective memory and organizations. Collective memory, broadly defined, is a “socially articulated and socially maintained ‘reality of the past’” (Irwin-Zarecka, 1994: 54). This definition clarifies that the past is not a given; an uncontested, objective fact devoid of ambiguity. Instead, it indicates that the past is provisional and only comes into existence through a process of social construction (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). In other words, the past as we know it is not fixed. Instead, the past is continuously (re)constructed through the efforts of various social actors engaged in several practices of memory that we term *memory work*. Organizational Memory Studies (OMS), a field at the intersection of memory studies and organization studies, explores the memory work of managers and organizations and their impact on, and interactions with, other mnemonic communities. *Mnemonic communities* refer to communities in which the past is constitutive of the ethos of the community such as families, organizations, and nation states. Understanding the processes through which the past is constructed, reconstructed, deconstructed, and destroyed through the memory work of managers and organizations is thus the primary goal of OMS.

The foundation of OMS can be found in the works of Simon (1997), March and Simon (1958), and Cyert and March (1963). Their research paved the way for the development of a long tradition of research on organizational memory (Levitt & March, 1988; Walsh & Ungson, 1991). Research in OMS has focused primarily on the study of collective memory in association with organizational learning (e.g., Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Anderson & Sun, 2010; Argote, 2011; Argote, Lee, & Park, 2021; Easterby-Smith, Crossan, & Nicolini, 2000; Huber, 1991; Levitt &

March, 1988; Mariano, Casey, & Oliveira, 2020; Mariano, Casey, & Olivera, 2020). From this perspective, organizational memory is primarily understood as residing in different 'storage bins' (Walsh & Ungson, 1991) that members can draw upon to remember.

Over the past decade, however, an alternative view of collective memory has taken hold within management and organization studies. Scholars have started to address the variety of ways that organizations and organizing processes shape, and are shaped by, mnemonic practices (Coraiola & Murcia, 2020; Foroughi, Coraiola, Rintamäki, Mena, & Foster, 2020). This sociologically-informed view of memory, inspired by developments in history, sociology, and social memory studies (Olick & Robbins, 1998), introduced a new direction in the study of collective memory in management and organizations (Feldman & Feldman, 2006; Rowlinson, Booth, Clark, Delahaye, & Procter, 2010; Suddaby, Foster, & Trank, 2010). Collective memory is now understood as an arena for social struggle where different groups of actors, both inside and outside organizations, interact and engage with each other to define and redefine the past (Coraiola & Derry, 2020; Foroughi et al., 2020; Mena, Rintamäki, Fleming, & Spicer, 2016).

The emergence of sociologically-informed approaches to collective memory brings variance to a largely homogeneous research field and poses at least four challenges for management and organization studies. First, OMS is now multidisciplinary and multiparadigmatic (Coraiola & Murcia, 2020; Foroughi et al., 2020). This means that key discussions pertaining to collective memory and organizations are widely dispersed across different disciplines such as management, history, sociology, and anthropology, and within cross-disciplinary areas such as social memory studies. Second, OMS scholarship has become more fragmented and lost theoretical specification. Management and organization scholars have not adequately mapped the field of organizational research on collective memory, distinguished the most relevant approaches and

integrated their findings. Third, new approaches to the study of collective memory in management and organization studies have led to imprecision in key constructs and important boundary conditions. For instance, there is little consensus about how to define collective memory and what are the differences between key constructs such as memory, history, and remembering. Fourth, researchers have focused on collective memory at different levels of analysis such as groups, organizations, and societies; however, we currently lack a framework that organizes these findings in a meaningful whole. The systematic assessment of this body of research is thus timely and necessary to integrate past discussions and provide a consistent direction for future research.

Our review is motivated by the absence of a comprehensive summary of the sociologically-informed research in OMS. To address this gap, we explore this 'lesser studied' (Shipp & Jansen, 2021) but rapidly emerging literature at the intersection of collective memory and organizations. Our review unfolds in four steps. First, we provide an overview of OMS that distinguishes between psychologically- and sociologically-informed approaches to collective memory and we describe the methodology used to collect and review the relevant literature. Second, we introduce the idea of ecologies of memories to capture the richness of research in OMS. We define *ecologies of memories* as constellations of organizations and other communities of memory (e.g., occupational communities, religious communities, racial communities) that intersect within and between an organization's boundaries. Third, we propose an integrative framework that summarizes the literature around forms of memory work *within* mnemonic communities – i.e., remembering, representing, and forgetting as detailed in Table 1 –, and *between* mnemonic communities – i.e., imposing, resisting, and negotiating as seen in Table 2. Our framework captures the dual nature of collective memory as the remembrance of things past, and the

remaking of the past in the present. We then conclude our paper with a research agenda focused on: (1) ecologies of memories, (2) embedded memory work, and (3) uses of memory. In all, our review and framework offer guidance for future OMS research by enhancing our understanding of how different communities of memory interact, compete, and collaborate in the construction of the past in and around organizations.

OVERVIEW OF ORGANIZATIONAL MEMORY STUDIES

There are two major research traditions in OMS: a psychologically-informed approach that can be traced to the work of Frederic Bartlett (1932) and a more recent, sociologically-informed approach that originates with the work of Maurice Halbwachs (1980, 1992). Although both approaches focus on collective memory, each approach has developed largely independently from one another in the field of management and organizations (Coraiola & Murcia, 2020; Rowlinson et al., 2010). The primary differences between the two approaches can be captured using Olick's (1999) distinction between collected and collective memory.

Psychologically-informed research typically takes a *collected* approach to memory. From this perspective the individual is the ultimate carrier of organizational memories. The collected aspect of memory is the aggregation of individual experiences into a system that is bigger than the sum of individual memories. Scholars in this tradition discuss organizational memories as content or "data"' that fills the organization's repositories or bins where individual memories are recorded, stored, and deployed at some future date (Ren & Argote, 2011; Walsh & Ungson, 1991).

Sociologically-informed research takes a *collective* approach to memory. Individuals remember the past as members of specific communities that provide them with particular frameworks of remembrance (Halbwachs, 1980). The past is understood as an ordered and

meaningful reality that precedes the existence of single individuals and extends far beyond an individual's lifetime. As such, mnemonic communities (e.g., the family, of the corporation, the nation) guide and inform how individual members engage with the past. This means that organizations construct and emphasize specific valued pasts that are considered worth remembering. Organizations also create and reinforce practices to remember the past and construct reasons why certain pasts should be remembered instead of others (Coraiola, Suddaby, & Foster, 2018; Foroughi, 2020; Rowlinson et al., 2010).

Psychologically-informed approaches to research in organizational memory studies have focused on the study of the storage and retrieval of organizational memory and have formed the basis for many early studies in management and organization studies (e.g., Levitt & March, 1988; Walsh & Ungson, 1991). More recently, however, there has been a rise in the use of sociologically-informed approaches to study the intersection of mnemonics and organizations (Coraiola & Murcia, 2020). Since psychological approaches have been extensively reviewed over the years (e.g., Argote, 2011; Argote et al., 2021), our review concentrates on the more recent but vibrant sociologically-informed research on OMS.

REVIEW METHODOLOGY

Although far from perfect, the concepts of 'organizational memory' and 'collective memory' can be used as simple proxies to illustrate the trajectories of psychologically- and sociologically-informed approaches to organizational memory studies, respectively (see Figure 1[1]). Psychologically-informed approaches, typically associated with the use of the term

[1] We searched the Scopus database with the keywords 'organizational memory' and 'collective memory' in the title, abstract, and keywords, and excluded papers that refer to both terms. The search retrieved 6,829 unique results for 'collective memory' with 3.65% of the papers (249 records) from the field of Business, Management and Accounting (BMA). When searching for 'organizational memory' we found 390 of 1,053 unique records within BMA.

‘organizational memory’, developed earlier and have been influential in the field for the past 30 years. Sociologically-informed approaches, as captured through the use of ‘collective memory’, were lesser studied by organization scholars until recently. Despite their newness, current discussions of ‘collective memory’ within the field have shown a marked increase. The Figure 1 offers a visual representation that OMS is changing. Once a field traditionally dominated by psychologically-informed approaches, OMS shows signs that it is becoming a plural, multi-vocal, multidisciplinary community.

Insert Figure 1 around here

The focus of our review is the sociologically-informed research on the intersection between organizations and collective memory. We reviewed articles and books published within the field of management and organizations. To be comprehensive, we also reviewed relevant literature from other disciplinary (e.g., sociology, history, and anthropology) and interdisciplinary fields such as social memory studies. To ensure that the search was systematic we drew upon expert knowledge and cross-references to define the corpus of works included in our analysis.

First, we searched Thomson Reuters’ Web of Science (Social Science Citation Index) for relevant works. Our search string included the keywords ‘memor*’, ‘remember*’, or ‘forget*’ plus the terms ‘organization*’ or ‘corporat*’, and excluded the expressions ‘working memory’ and ‘term memory’ associated with the psychological study of memory. Our search resulted in 8,787 items. We filtered the results for articles published since 2010. We used this date because it is the year two influential articles championing a sociologically-informed approach to OMS were published (Rowlinson et al 2010; Suddaby, Foster & Trank 2010). We filtered the results

for ‘Management’, ‘Business’, ‘History’, ‘Sociology’, ‘Anthropology’, ‘Political Science’, ‘Cultural Studies’, ‘Multidisciplinary Sciences’, ‘Humanities Multidisciplinary’, and ‘Social Sciences Interdisciplinary’ because these terms were the most relevant for our review. This resulted in 957 unique items. We then read the titles and abstracts and selected a final sample of articles to review. To be as inclusive as possible in our selection, we focused on all the research that pertained to our broad definition of collective memory as the constructed reality of the past. To keep our focus on sociologically-informed approaches only, we excluded articles that: (1) defined memory as cognition and/or used psychological approaches to collective memory; (2) did not refer to management, organizations, and/or organizing (e.g. individual memories with no relevance to organizations they are embedded in). Our final sample consisted of 253 articles to review.

Second, we used our expert knowledge to identify works not included in the first step. All authors are experts in organization studies and collective memory and have been conducting research at the intersection of both fields for several years. We drew from recent reviews of the literature such as Casey (2019), Coraiola and Murcia (2020), and Foroughi et al. (2020) to check if we were missing any important works from management and organization studies. We also consulted the references from the literature we reviewed to ensure that we had captured works from other fields relevant to OMS.

The papers were randomly and evenly allocated to all five authors, who inductively reviewed the articles. We met regularly to discuss the codes and categories we were using to make sense of the literature. We started by looking at explicit characteristics and asking key questions about the papers. Example questions included how memory was defined, what were the core constructs associated with memory, which levels of analysis were explored, and why the

author(s) used a specific theoretical approach. As we reviewed the papers, we realized that they were exploring different types of mnemonic communities. As such, we further coded for these communities, the mnemonic practices they engaged in, the motivation or reason behind these practices, and the outcomes they generated. We realized that there were substantial differences in the mnemonic practices developed within and between communities. Moreover, we found that much of the research had used single case studies and focused less on the relationship between communities. We then honed in on a framework of ecologies of memories and the collective grouping of those mnemonic practices into forms of memory work. Specifically, we directed our focus toward discussions of the interconnectedness of different mnemonic communities and the memory work 'within' and 'between' communities. In the following, we describe our framework and summarize the literature with a focus on the memory work within and between mnemonic communities.

ECOLOGIES OF MEMORIES

The constitution and survival of a community rests upon its mnemonic systems and the effectiveness of these mnemonic systems to support the community's institutions (Douglas, 1986: 74). Mnemonic communities are communities that are "constituted by their past" (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985: 153). The members of mnemonic communities are bound together by reference to a common past, a shared present, and an expected future. Members are also connected by the belief in a common, but not necessarily shared, past that the community is directly invested in jointly remembering (Zerubavel, 2003). For example, the national memory of the United States comprises the experiences of white settlers, Black slaves, Indigenous peoples, and foreign immigrants. Although all these groups partake of the common past that defines the nation as an imagined community, each of them also forms a distinct

mnemonic community because their interpretation of the national past differs. The efforts of a mnemonic community at preserving the past generates a feeling of communal experience and a sense of shared meaning and relevance of the past among community members (Irwin-Zarecka, 1994). Individual remembering, therefore, always takes place within the context of a mnemonic community. On the one hand, individuals are influenced by the frameworks of memory the community provides (Halbwachs, 1980). On the other, individuals actively engage in mnemonic practices that shape the overall memory of the community (Fentress & Wickham, 1992).

Despite of the centrality of the concept of mnemonic communities to sociologically-informed approaches of memory (e.g., Anderson, 1983; Irwin-Zarecka, 1994; Nora, 1996; Olick & Robbins, 1998; Zerubavel, 1997), we found few papers theorizing how different mnemonic communities operate, how they interact with other individuals and communities, and how these interactions impact the mnemonic practices they develop. Upon further review of the literature, we also realized that empirical research is typically conducted *within* a particular mnemonic community. This somewhat myopic view of mnemonic communities fails to recognize the multiplicity of communities and their interactions (Booth, 1999; Irwin-Zarecka, 1994; Tallentire, 2001; Walsh & High, 1999). Fentress and Wickham's (1992) provide some initial thoughts for an approach focused on mnemonic communities when they distinguish between peasants, working-class communities, national communities, and women. Their primary focus, however, was on the differences, rather than the connections and overlaps among and/or between the communities. Their work, although significant, echoes discussions within collective memory scholarship that take for granted the interaction, co-existence and embeddedness of mnemonic communities that share overlapping boundaries.

Similarly, management and organization scholars have not yet properly recognized that organizations are mnemonic communities that intersect with other mnemonic communities (Coraiola et al., 2018). In fact, we argue that this is one of the core reasons why social memory studies and OMS have remained largely disconnected (Rowlinson et al., 2010). Collective memory studies scholars have, for example, trained their focus on the nation state as the community par excellence (e.g., lieux de memoire, Nora, 1996). As such, these scholars have been largely unconcerned with the role of organizations and how they may affect the construction of the collective memory of broader mnemonic communities such as the nation-state (Rowlinson et al., 2010).

Management and organizations research, on the other hand, has been largely silent about the landscape of mnemonic communities in which organizations are embedded and the memory work that takes place between different communities. Management scholars have largely addressed the organization as a closed system of memories, a somewhat homogenous community of shared memories disconnected from the broader environment (Coraiola et al., 2018). This is likely a result of the dominance of functional approaches to collective memory and the preponderance of management research based on single case studies (e.g., Anteby & Molnár, 2012; Basque & Langley, 2018; Hatch & Schultz, 2017; Heller & Rowlinson, 2019; Maclean, Harvey, Sillince, & Golant, 2014; Schultz & Hernes, 2013). Regardless, we posit that there has been little recognition that organizations are constituted by numerous mnemonic communities and are themselves embedded in broader networks of mnemonic communities.

We depart from this realization to propose an open-systems view of collective memory that conceives of organizations as part of an ecology of mnemonic communities. Our ecological approach highlights the coexistence of mnemonic communities and their interplay in shaping

collective memories. The sociologically-informed literature on collective memory that we review centers on the mnemonic practices that construct and support the reality of the past (Feldman & Feldman, 2006; Rowlinson et al., 2010). Instead of the traditional definition of memory as a repository or "bin" (Walsh & Ungson, 1991), the sociologically-informed view assumes that memory is not a given but an ongoing (re)construction of the past. The past is produced through a variety of mnemonic practices which, taken together, can be grouped under the term *memory work* (Foster, Wiebe, Coraiola, Bastien, & Suddaby, 2021; Mills & Walker, 2008). We use this perspective to organize the existing literature and set the stage for a future research agenda for the field.

MEMORY WORK IN OMS

Our review of the literature shows that OMS scholars have taken two main approaches to study memory work. First, they have focused on mnemonic practices *within* mnemonic communities and the memory work that takes place within their boundaries. An example of this is the research on rhetorical history that highlights how companies use the past to strategically manage stakeholders (Foster, Coraiola, Suddaby, Kroezen, & Chandler, 2017; Suddaby et al., 2010; Suddaby, Israelsen, Bastien, Saylors, & Coraiola, In press). Empirical studies examining the rhetorical use of history tend to only analyze corporate and managerial efforts to manage the past (Aeon & Lamertz, 2021; Cailluet, Gorge, & Özçağlar-Toulouse, 2018). Missing from these discussions is the recognition that other mnemonic communities inside the organization may have different memories of the past. Moreover, these studies rarely engage with the ways stakeholders perceive corporate "rhetorical histories" and the possible interactions between different communities (Aeon & Lamertz, 2021; Cailluet et al., 2018; Foroughi, 2020). Second, a smaller number of studies have focused on forms of memory work *between* two or more

mnemonic communities (e.g., Bell, 2012; Coraiola & Derry, 2020; Foroughi, 2020; Illia & Zamparini, 2016; Mahalingam, Jagannathan, & Selvaraj, 2019). These mnemonic communities can take many forms such as sub-cultures inside a particular organization, two or more different organizations in the same industry or field or communities that straddle various organizations, such as professions. These studies have looked primarily on the relational aspects of memory construction and how the politics of memory unfold between different communities.

In the following sections we map the various forms of memory work previously studied. These categories are not exhaustive; instead, our goal is to offer a fresh understanding of how collective memories are shaped and reshaped in ecologies of memories through the work of a variety of actors.

Memory Work Within Communities

Our review identified three main forms of memory work that takes place *within* mnemonic communities: *remembering*, *forgetting*, and *representing* (Table 1). The point of departure of our analysis is that collective memory is always selective. "Forgetting is essential to action of any kind" (Nietzsche, 1997: 62) and only a few elements of the past will survive at a specific point of time. This means that remembering and representing the past take place through deliberate effort. Although forgetting can be facilitated by deliberate effort, it will happen regardless. In contrast to forgetting, remembering and representing are two sides of the same coin. Remembering captures the set of efforts to preserve the integrity of the past against oblivion while representing involves a set of practices aimed at reinserting the past into the present. Thus, it is important to identify the various practices through which the past is remembered, represented and forgotten.

Insert Table 1 around here

Remembering

Remembering includes the set of practices used to preserve the integrity of the past against the inexorable force of forgetting. Our review of the literature identified three practices of remembering engaged in by the members of different mnemonic communities: *storying*, *preserving*, and *commemorating*. We discuss each of these practices in turn.

Storying is the recounting of the past as a narrative. Storying provides order, logic and meaning to incidents and events from the past which connects them in a plot with particular poetic styles and literary genres (Foroughi, 2020; Gabriel, 2000). This research investigates memory as a 'narrative act' (Namer, 1987) performed by individuals and groups within a community (Boje, 2008; Rowlinson, Casey, Hansen, & Mills, 2014; Ybema, 2014). As Adorisio (2014: 467) argues, "narratives represent not only all of the stories that belong to a certain organization or community but also a certain way of telling them". Storying is a polyphonic practice where multiple voices contribute to weave organizational memories together(Foroughi, 2020). It is understood as the prime medium for collective remembering, where the past is reconstructed in the present by actors in relation to their interlocutors (Foroughi, 2020). For example, Linde (2009) theorizes about the importance of narratives for remembering. She explores how a major insurance company in the US engaged in re-telling for the construction of a cohesive organizational identity while undergoing a process of change. A large part of storying involves retelling and reminiscing about the past (Crawford, Coraiola, & Dacin, 2022; Dailey & Browning, 2014). Corporate narratives, life stories, anecdotes and instructions inspire collective remembering and shape a framework within which organizational members negotiate their organizational experience.

Preserving refers to practices of keeping and restoring the integrity of remnants from the past (Foster et al., 2021). For organizations to remember their past they need to have maintained some access to cues from the past. In their study of the LEGO group, Schultz and Hernes (2013) show how the preservation of various textual, visual, and material traces provided the company opportunities to reuse the past in the present. Mnemonic traces can be seen as "triggers or containers for stories" (Humphries & Smith, 2014: 478) that 'afford' a certain construction of the past and make others unlikely. For instance, Blagoev, Felten and Kahn (2018) argue that the way traces of the past are preserved (e.g., through the use of computer technology) has consequences for the future enactment of these material traces. This is a long topic of discussion among business archivists, who have aspired to become increasingly aligned with managerial and strategic demands of the corporation by making the past work (Foster et al., 2021; Jones & Cantelon, 1993; Smith, 1982). In contrast, Kallinikos, Aaltonen, & Marton (2013) highlight how digitization is changing the practices of canonization in memory organizations (e.g., libraries, archives, museums) and blurring the boundaries between the work of information professionals.

Commemorating refers to the practices of memorializing and celebrating the past. Collective memories are constructed through the ongoing embodiment of the past in public events and cultural displays (Schwartz, 1982). Three key components of commemoration are the creation of meaning through symbolism (enchantment), the fixed construction of places for certain activities (emplacement), and the use people make of space (enactment) (Dale & Burrel, 2008). In combination, these three elements infuse the object of commemoration with "extraordinary significance [and a] qualitatively distinct place in our conception of the past" (Schwartz, 1982: 377). Commemoration involves the production of symbols and artifacts (e.g., textual, material, spatial) to honor people and events from the past (Cutcher, Dale, & Tyler, 2019). For example,

Gough (2004) describes the efforts of Lloyds Bank to re-inscribe their 'monumental furniture' of memorials for the employees that fought in World War I through commemorative efforts over time to prevent them from being forgotten and ruined. Similarly, Alonso González (2016) shows how in post-revolution Cuba the governing, Socialist party transformed a pre-revolutionary national monument into a site of enactment of socialist ideals. Moreover, commemorating significant historical events is an opportunity to express the collective purpose of organizations, to secure employee commitments and to strengthen organizational culture. Barnes and Newton (2018b) describe how the Bank of England commemorated World War I to emphasize its commitment to public duty across the organization.

The three sets of remembering practices discussed above describe how different mnemonic communities attempt to keep the past alive despite the eroding effects of forgetting on memory. Storying consists in the production of narrative accounts of the past. Preserving captures the efforts towards maintaining the integrity of the material composition of the past. Commemorating involves the creation of symbols and rites that embody what about the past must not be forgotten. Of note is that the memory work of remembering is always provisional and unfinished. For example, Allen and Brown (2016) demonstrate in their study of the Hyde Park 7/7 memorial that the meaning and significance of events from the past are not directly encoded into the physical design of a memorial, but rather emerge through 'meshwork', i.e. the ongoing assemblage of new and old activities and materials, stories, remnants and ceremonies. The meshwork, memory work surrounding the memorial, allows the past to be remembered and specific meanings to be attached to it in the present. The past, however, is made present not only through efforts to slow, retard and minimize forgetting as previously discussed. The past is also

made present through active attempts at reviving and redefining that make it present once again. We discuss what we term *representing* in the section below.

Representing

If remembering can be understood as memory work that prevents the erasure of the past, representing involves memory work that resurfaces the past in the present. Representing the past can take two forms. On the one hand, *representing* consists in presenting a rendition or interpretation of the past that aims to make certain absent elements present again. On the other hand, *representing* comprises bringing the past back or 'presentifying' it so as to make the past tangible again (cf. Cooren, 2006). Our review shows that narratives are strategically used as instruments for representing the past. In fact, previous research has focused on narratives about the past, present, and future to achieve specific organizational ends, as captured by the extensive work on rhetorical history (e.g., Lubinski, 2018; Poor, Novicevic, Humphreys, & Popoola, 2016; Suddaby et al., 2010; Suddaby et al., In press). Further, scholars are beginning to recognize the material-discursive constitution of memory and develop research uncovering the role of materiality in memory work (e.g., Blagoev et al., 2018; Crawford et al., 2022; Eisenman & Frenkel, 2021; Wadhwani, Suddaby, Mordhorst, & Popp, 2018). Our review outlines three main practices used for representing the past. We group them under the labels of *historicizing*, *curating*, and *re-enacting*.

Historicizing involves practices aimed at the selective, strategic, and instrumental construction of historical narratives (Rüsen, 2005). *Historicizing* is closely related but distinct from *storying*. While *storying* is an account that aims to preserve the past in a narrative form, *historicizing* is a narrative whose purpose is to reinsert the past in the present. In contrast to *storying*'s emphasis on the dialogical and communicative dimensions of memory, *historicizing*

focuses on the rhetorical recrafting of the past as a written and authoritative account (Assmann, 2011). This approach is clearly illustrated by the literature on rhetorical history (Suddaby et al., In press) and its emphasis on the crafting of persuasive versions of the past and the instrumentality of historical narratives for pursuing present organizational agendas. As Suddaby and colleagues (2010: 157) note, rhetorical history is the "the strategic use of the past as a persuasive strategy to manage key stakeholders of the firm". Historicizing is grounded in the mnemonic capabilities of an organization or community (Coraiola, Suddaby, & Foster, 2017), and is influenced by the formal ownership and degree of control a community has over its history and archives (Hamilton & D'Ippolito, 2020). For example, Basque and Langley (2018) demonstrate that emphasizing the accomplishments of an organization's founder has particular utility as a way of maintaining an organizational identity. The founder, their values, and their image can be readily evoked in organizational identity work. Similarly, Foster and colleagues (2011) show how Tim Horton's, a Canadian Quick Serve Restaurant, attempted to use its founder's association with hockey to strengthen its connection to the nostalgic presentation of Canadian hockey and bolster its brand identity. Ultimately, historicizing is used to strategically to advance the goals of the organization in the present by providing an authoritative version of the past (cf. Hatch & Schultz, 2017). There are various uses of historicizing including, but not limited to, constructing collective identity (Lamertz, Foster, Coraiola, & Kroezen, 2016; Schultz & Hernes, 2013), emphasizing continuity and change with the past (Maclean et al., 2014; Sasaki, Kotlar, Ravasi, & Vaara, 2020; Ybema, 2014), crafting image and authenticity (Hatch & Schultz, 2017; Poor et al., 2016), and building identification (Aeon & Lamertz, 2021; Foroughi, 2020).

However, we need to recognize that the past, although malleable, is not a blank slate. All narrative reconstruction occurs against a background of pre-existing texts that form webs of

intertextuality (Maclean, Harvey, Sillince, & Golant, 2018). In addition, some past events and narratives may be hidden. These dormant pasts have the potential to resurface during a community's engagement in historicizing (Hatch & Schultz, 2017). Contradictions may also emerge during this process which could require the community to deal with inconsistencies in their historicization of the past. For example, Booth and associates (2007) discuss an example of the emergence of a historicized contradiction in their examination of the activities conducted by Bertelsmann during World War II. The official, company narrative was that it had opposed the Nazi regime thus implying that Bertelsmann had an impeccable record of conduct during the war. However, upon further investigation, Bertelsmann's narrative turned out to have been fabricated to hide its past. The discovery of new, historical evidence, such as the company having published anti-Semitic literature, undermined the myth of non-collaboration and opposition. The result was that the company was forced to amend its historical narrative to reconcile its dark past.

Curating is the practice of organizing collections of past-evoking artifacts into trajectories and experiences with the goal of channeling attention and attributing meaning to specific parts of the past. Mnemonic communities curate the past by collecting, arranging, and displaying artifacts that organize past events and experiences. The display of artifacts and totems throughout organizations is often cited as an important vehicle for organizational sensemaking, culture and identity (Rafaeli & Pratt, 2006). In their research examining corporate museums, Ravasi, Rindova and Stigliani (2019) show how the curation of material artifacts in four corporate museums supports different engagements with the past and the construction of different aspects of corporate identity. Similarly, Barnes and Newton (2018a), through their research on the

corporate portraiture of Lloyds Bank, demonstrate how organizations curate artifacts from the past to display the values they associate (and want associated) with the business.

For some memory organizations, curation is an intrinsic part of their mission. National museums, for instance, are organizations whose mandate is to preserve the collective memory of the nation (Gillis, 1994). As formal organizations, museums have their own past and possess symbols, rites, stories, and traditions that constitute their memory. As a site of memory (Nora, 1996), however, museums keep a curated version of the past assembled with the deliberate purpose of conserving certain aspects of the past. For example, Zhang, Xiao, Morgan and Ly (2018) describe how museum managers use heritage tourism to construct the national memory of Hong Kong and Macau while also simultaneously demonstrating alignment with China and highlighting the distinctiveness of national identities. Many cultural heritage and urban tourism organizations also exist specifically to curate the past. Heritage tourism focuses on putting the past to use by curating experiential trajectories of tangible and intangible remnants of the past with the goal of constructing memorable experiences (Timothy & Boyd, 2006). For instance, Crawford et al (2022) describe the work of Grand Canyon Dory guides in curating an experience of place associated with painful memories of environmental destruction to cultivate a community of citizen activists to protect the Grand Canyon.

Re-enacting refers to the practice of restaging events from the past. Rituals, ceremonies, and historical re-enactments fall into this category. Re-enacting, as a form of representing the past, has received limited attention in OMS. Exceptions exist, such as the work of Dacin, Munir and Tracey (2010) and their discussion of the tradition of formal dining at Cambridge. They show how Cambridge students and staff continue to wear the same historical vestments and engage in the same traditional rituals as their predecessors. In so doing, students and staff at Cambridge

contribute to the reproduction of the British class system. The practices and activities they describe are similar to habit memory (Connerton, 1989) in that the memory of the organization is inscribed in the bodily practices and rituals performed within the organization. Such re-enactments are tied to continuous reinforcement and maintenance of institutions. There are exemplary studies in disciplines outside of organizational studies that discuss how the past is re-enacted and the implications of these stagings for a variety of outcomes (e.g., Daugbjerg, 2014; de Groot, 2016). The growing interest in the study of re-enactments is attached to an "affective turn" (Agnew, 2007) in the study of the past. In particular, scholars have been interested in understanding the role of mass media re-enactments in the production of the past (Landsberg, 2004, 2015). As such, research on these representations of the past, whether in video games, living history museums or television and film productions, probe the connections between history as a way of both studying and eliciting affect.

Taken together, the aforementioned practices capture how organizations attempt to represent the past to pursue their strategic objectives. Representing the past consists of purposeful efforts to make specific versions the past relevant and central to the way communities define themselves and their present reality. Existing research highlights the utility of the work of historicizing, curating and re-enacting the past to build organizational identity, construct authenticity, and legitimate change (Foster et al., 2016). Both *representing* and *remembering* are meaningful attempts to restate the importance and continuity of the past in the present. As such, they stand in contrast to the implacable effects of time and the effects of social oblivion.

Forgetting

Forgetting is commonly understood as the erasure of traces, stories, and behaviours from the past (Fine, 2012; Mena et al., 2016). Forgetting, however, rarely means the complete obliteration of

the past (Connerton, 2008; Eco, 1988; Nietzsche, 1997). We use forgetting to describe when previously significant versions of the past do not influence social action (Weber, 1978) anymore, having lost traction or no longer circulating in the public consciousness. Forgetting is inevitable, unlike remembering which always requires effort. Forgetting is thus the norm. It occurs because of the lack of remembering and the eroding effects of time (Connerton, 1989). However, scholars also recognize other, more active forms of deliberate forgetting (Mena et al., 2016). Interestingly though, whenever actors engage in strategic forgetting, remembering emerges as a supporting practice (Coraiola & Derry, 2020). We identified three practices through which mnemonic communities engage in strategic forgetting: *discarding*, *suppressing* and *dissociating*.

Discarding refers to the systematic and selective disposal of past remnants considered useless, irrelevant, redundant, contradictory and potentially damaging for the present and the future of a mnemonic community (Foster et al., 2021). Organizations often discard past knowledge deemed unimportant (de Holan & Phillips, 2004) and when it lacks relevance for a particular mnemonic community (Fine, 2012). As Decker (2013: 12) argues, discarding involves "decisions about what to deposit by business, as well as what kind of information organizations deem important to collect in the first place". Every mnemonic community has its own hierarchy of relevance that determines what, from the past, is worth preserving and what can be discarded. In formal organizations, for example, the hierarchy of the archives tends to follow from the hierarchy of authority. Thus, the records of top managers and their strategic decisions are routinely preserved while the pasts of minor departments and marginal members tend to be discarded (Fellman & Popp, 2013). Moreover, other researchers noticed that organizational change could render previously significant collective memories, such as paradigmatic founding stories, irrelevant and prone to discarding (Ciuk & Kostera, 2010; Linde, 2009).

Suppressing is the practice of concealing and obscuring unwanted aspects from the past of a mnemonic community. For example, Anteby and Molnar's (2012) study of a French aeronautics firm demonstrate that the organization's top managers made a deliberate and systematic effort to edit out the technological collaborations with German and US scientists from the company's documents. This was done to protect the French nationalist component of the company's identity that was threatened by the heavy involvement of foreign partners in the development and production process. Similarly, Hills, Voronov, & Hinings, (2013: 122) describe the efforts of Ontario wineries to obscure their illegitimate history of winemaking as an effort to eradicate the "collective memories of poor quality wine production in Canada prior to the 1980s". Sørensen (2014) similarly describes how collective instruction leads to the creation of kitsch representations of the past that exclude unpleasant and abject elements from the past and privileges what is acceptable for mainstream memory. Suppressing memories usually leaves traces, such as in the Bertelsmann case of complicity with the Nazi regime (Booth et al, 2007) and the case of Big US Tobacco (Coraiola & Derry, 2020). The exploration of these traces through noticeable silences of the voices of marginalized memories (e.g., Barros, Carneiro, & Wanderley, 2019; Decker, 2013) is one way to capture the effects of suppressing.

Dissociating refers to the practice of severing ties with the past and disconnecting the present of the organization from specific previously accepted versions of a mnemonic community's past. For example, Cailluet, Gorge, & Özçağlar-Toulouse's (2018) argue that organizations may seek to distance themselves from historical assets no longer considered valuable, rare, or inimitable. In addition, various authors have described how dissociating plays a role in processes of organizational change and may lead to the invention of transitions (Ybema, 2014). Foroughi and Al-Amoudi's (2020) study of a charity organization shows how the mismatch between stories

from the past and the current experience of organizational members can lead to dissociating cherished organizational memories, rendering them 'unusable' and 'uprooted'. Similarly, Munro's (1998) research on the Worldbest, Strangleman's work on British Rail (1999), and MacDonald, Waring and Harrison's (2006) discussion of the NHS, all describe how managers use 'rubbishing' to produce antagonisms between the past and the future of an organization. They disregard the past as inefficient with the goal of weakening traditions and customs and motivate the need for change. Relatedly, Hamilton and D'Ippolito (2020, p. 9) use the notion of disowning to characterize a "mode of interpretation in which [managers] actively reject past events and actions as belonging to the present-day firm". Although the primary purpose of dissociating is not necessarily to forget the past, the process of establishing a cleavage between the memory that matters for the organization in the present and the memory of a forgone past creates the conditions of possibility for the gradual erosion and discarding of memory.

Our description of the literature on practices of forgetting clarifies that the work of forgetting is rarely finished. Mnemonic communities seldom manage to erase the past completely. Instead, it is usually the case that forgetting happens gradually in the absence of a concerted effort to remember the past. Nonetheless, we identified three practices that can catalyse and expediate forgetting of the past: *discarding*, *suppressing*, and *dissociating*. Despite their differences, these practices are commonly used with the purpose of obliterating obsolete, irrelevant, and undesirable aspects of the past. Yet, the past may re-emerge despite the erosion of time and concerted efforts to efface memory.

Summary

In this section we have discussed the different forms of memory work that take place *within* a mnemonic community. Our review demonstrates that OMS research has concentrated on the way the past is remembered, represented, and forgotten within different communities. These practices are not mutually exclusive because mnemonic communities simultaneously engage in remembering, representing, and forgetting the past as they define and redefine their identities and sense of purpose. Given the focus of our review, it may sound unsurprising that single organizations have been the mnemonic community of choice. However, it is meaningful that much of the OMS literature has concentrated on the memory work of managers and that organizations have been largely treated as monolithic entities where the memory of the community tends to be equated with managerial attempts to historicize the past.

In contrast is a small, but significant, number of papers that examine the memory work that takes place *between* mnemonic communities. This group of papers, which we review in the following section, examines the interactions of smaller communities within a mnemonic community (e.g., managers, workers), two or more mnemonic communities (e.g., partner organizations), and mnemonic communities that span organizational boundaries (e.g., unions). These studies constitute an early effort to conduct research using an ecological approach to OMS. This approach is characterized by the recognition that collective memory emerges as a result of the interactions *between* several mnemonic communities and the memory work they develop in relation to one another *imposing*, *resisting*, and *negotiating* the reality of the past.

Memory Work Between Communities

Our ecological approach assumes that collective memory is both dynamic and influenced by a variety of actors embedded in mnemonic communities. Different actors within a given mnemonic community may disagree about which past events to remember and forget as well as

how the past should be represented. Disagreements about the past, however, are not limited to the boundaries of a mnemonic community. These debates and discussions also exist *between* different mnemonic communities. Often these disagreement are more intense and heated because they are not bound and limited by clear membership to a larger community. In these cases, instead of focusing on collective memory in the singular, it is often more appropriate to think about the construction of the past through a process of mnemonic struggles of varying intensity between different mnemonic communities (Zerubavel, 1996). This means that instead of looking at an organization as a homogeneous mnemonic community, we may choose to look inside and focus instead on the relationship between various mnemonic communities that constitute an organization (e.g., Foroughi & Al-Amoudi, 2020). Alternatively, we may look at an organization as a member of a broader mnemonic community, such as an organizational field (e.g. Coraiola et al., 2018), and explore the relationship it has with other mnemonic communities that belong to the same field or are situated outside of it. From our review of the literature, we identified three forms of memory work between mnemonic communities: *imposing, resisting,* and *negotiating.* All three forms of memory work concern memory struggles between communities and typically involve power relations and elements of resource dependence. In fact, we found that the uses of power informed a significant amount of the mnemonic work between communities. Specifically, power imbalances characterize situations in which organizations and other mnemonic communities aimed at *imposing* specific versions of the past over other communities. Some communities avoid the mnemonic battlefield and acquiesce when faced with powerful, imposed memories. However, the literature also indicates that communities sometimes fight against the imposition of hegemonic versions of the past by *resisting* and protecting their own memories.

Moreover, when power is equally balanced between mnemonic communities, *negotiating* tends to prevail to ensure the continued coexistence and reconciliation of both versions of the past.

Insert Table 2 around here

Imposing

Imposing is a political form of memory that privileges one community's view of the past over another's because it is considered more truthful and appropriate. Social actors who belong to different mnemonic communities may disagree with one another about the "correct" version of the past, the relevance of specific events, and the way the past should be kept in the present. Different communities may also have asymmetrical access to sources of power and privilege. Therefore, powerful actors may impose on others their favored versions of the past. Two main forms of power are available for them (Fleming & Spicer, 2014). One is the episodic use of power, which refers to the direct use of power by a particular social actor that is manifest in identifiable acts. Another is systemic power, which refers to uses of power embedded in, and stemming from, broader institutional structures, such as systemic racism (Bastien, Coraiola, & Foster, Forthcoming) or gender discrimination (Taylor Phillips, Jun, & Shakeri, 2022). *Inhibiting* uses power episodically to prevent others from constructing alternative version of the past, while *hegemonizing* involves the systemic use of power to naturalize a specific version of the past and enforce consensus.

Inhibiting involves practices where a mnemonic community actively prevents other communities from developing their own interpretations of the past. In these situations, the elites of a community control specific understandings of the past and secure their version(s) of the past

by preventing other actors from developing alternative readings. An example is found at Alessi, whose leaders strategically used specific narratives related to the past to "construct a collective memory of change" (Dalpiaz & Di Stefano, 2018: 666) so as to foster transformative change in the organization. Perkiss (2014) provides another interesting example of a neighborhood community organization in Philadelphia that sets out to retrace its community's past through an oral history project. The author highlights that the organization used oral history as a tool to reinforce its own, "sanctioned and sanitized" (p. 81) understanding of the community's past, in order to control the future direction of change in the community.

Inhibiting can also be applied through more repressive actions. Powerful communities may attempt to actively suppress other, competing versions of the past and silence actors propagating competing versions. For example, corporations may attempt to stifle other versions of the past through litigation and other legal mechanisms (Proctor & Schiebinger, 2008). Other actions can target mnemonic traces through appropriation, concealment and destruction of documents relevant to a past event under contestation (Mena et al., 2016). Sela's (2018) research on state control of colonial archives provides an appropriate example. In her research on the Palestinian struggle to develop memory institutions, she explained how "the ruling state plunders/loots the colonized' archives and treasures and controls them in its colonial archives - erasing them from the public sphere by repressive means, censors and restricts their exposure and use, alters their original identity, regulates their contents and subjugates them to colonizer's laws, rules and terminology" (p. 201). Powerful communities, and the actors within them, repress the efforts of subaltern communities to effectively use existing mnemonic traces. In so doing, dominant groups and communities control interpretations of the past that inhibit the ability of marginalized, less

powerful communities from developing counter-memories that contradict their imposed version of the past.

Hegemonizing is the practice of naturalizing a version of the past and reinforcing its taken-for-granted status on the grounds that it is beneficial for a particular community. As opposed to inhibiting, which relies on active work and brute force to prevent the emergence of alternative versions of the past, hegemonizing is more subtle. This form of memory work relies on existing frameworks of power and inequality to prevent alternative pasts from emerging or being conceived. Powerful mnemonic communities craft a dominant view of the past that leaves little room for the emergence of alternative views of the past. For example, for decades the US tobacco industry collectively misrepresented research and concealed evidence of its past research findings. The goal was to maintain a narrative that tobacco corporations did not know about their product's harmfulness to human health – a connection which they had discovered in the 1950s (Coraiola & Derry, 2020). Another example is the disenfranchisement of women (e.g., stewardesses) at British Airways. Deal and colleagues (2018) show that the company, in its documents related to World War I, promoted a dominant masculine view of the company, its culture, and the industry, while women were relegated – if mentioned – to discreet, supportive roles. Cutcher and colleagues (2019) similarly highlight the reproduction of hierarchy and power relations through portrayal of former leaders in the hallways of Keele University. This "commemorative exclusion" was exemplified by the repeated presentation of images of the 'great man' on large oil-painted portraits which were displayed in elevated and highly visible positions. Meanwhile, pictures of women and minorities were small and put on display in peripheral areas of the building. This juxtaposition reinforced who was most likely to be found in a position of power: a "white, middle or upper class, middle-aged, able-bodied" man (Cutcher et

al., 2019: 280). These portraits, thus, repressed and excluded the broader, more diverse membership of the university, by displaying representations of the idealized ways of being within the university.

Resisting

There is no guarantee that hegemonic versions of the past will always be accepted. Less powerful mnemonic communities can engage in acts of defiance and resistance over more dominant communities and the imposition of hegemonic memories. Resisting practices are thus employed to construct memories of opposition. That is, these practices are used to dismiss and disarm the memories that are imposed on less powerful mnemonic communities by those that are more powerful (Fentress & Wickham, 1992). Marginalized communities can resist in two primary ways: *disputing* imposed memories and *protecting* their own memories of the past.

Disputing refers to confrontational practices aimed at interrogating a given version of the past. One particular form of disputing occurs when less powerful mnemonic communities appeal to themes or interpretations that might be more resonant than those offered by a dominant community. Lubinski (2018) offers an example where Indians, in the late 19th and early 20th century, resisted colonial British rule because, in particular, they were labeled as inferior and primitive in comparison to colonial Britons. Simultaneously, German companies sought to consolidate their position in the Indian market by inventing a mutual Aryan heritage between Germans and the local population. These claims were largely accepted in India, because they evoked ancient Hindu writings chronicling a glorious ancient past that provided a way to dispute the 'civilizing mission' of the British. Aryanism formed a category of belonging which was in stark contrast to the distinction between white vs. non-white people maintained by the British. In

this way, the Germans and the Indians together disputed the dominant narratives of the past upheld by the British.

Disputing can take many forms and can have varying levels of success. For example, Fleming (2012) presents an interesting example of different forms of disputing in her comparison of two French organizations. Each organization took a different approach to disputing the past to combat the historical stigma of slavery. One confronted their country's government and its approach to its colonial legacy. The other attempted to destigmatize people of color by more broadly stigmatizing white Europeans. Similarly, Messer, Shriver and Adams (2015) demonstrate how the collective memories of two heavily polluted US communities helped them make sense of environmental threats which then guided their mobilization strategies. One community engaged in disputing the polluting company's persistent history of environmental contamination and actively opposed the company's presence. The other community supported the company despite its historical record of polluting the community – in part because the company engaged in the clean-up of previous instances of polluting. Both communities engaged in disputing, but through different means and with various forms of success.

Protecting is the practice of preserving counter-memories in less powerful mnemonic communities without challenging dominant memories. Foroughi (2020) provides an example in his discussion of a charity focused on protecting children. The organization was undergoing a profound process of professionalization which led to the creation of two distinct mnemonic communities within the organization, the old and the new guard. As the organization continued to implement professional management practices, the increasingly entrenched old guard shared their phantasmatic founding story among themselves as a way of keeping their less powerful mnemonic community alive. This was a founding story that the new guard did not share and

wanted to change in light of the changes in the organization. Mahalingam, Jagannathan and Selvaraj (2019) provide another example. They discuss how marginalized groups such as the Dalits in the Indian caste system – whose work and contribution to society has been ignored by official narratives –, produced a series of counter-memories to restore their dignity. Specifically, Mahalingam et al demonstrated how marginalized communities can resist the psychological suffering caused by dominant narratives by constructing and protecting powerful counter-narratives.

Negotiating

Negotiating tends to occur when there is a balance of power between mnemonic communities struggling over versions of the past. As such, these communities may be open to listening \to each other's competing views or they may feel compelled to take competing interpretations into account. These interactions then resemble a process of negotiation rather than conflict over the past. This is especially true when the communities have similar standing and the claims of the mnemonic community challenging the accepted pasts have high legitimacy (Schrempf-Stirling, Palazzo, & Phillips, 2016). We outline two variations of negotiation practices: *compromising* and *co-constructing*.

Compromising takes place in situations where, despite stark disagreement over the nature of a shared past, actors feel compelled to come to agreement. Actors may engage in compromising when shared past events are broadly condemned, but the roles of different actors in these events are unclear. This was the case in Germany of the 1990s, when the debate around corporate complicity in human rights violations during the Nazi regime was reignited following the fall of the Berlin wall. In many instances, actors confronted corporations about their past complicity in Nazi cruelty. When these actors had claims with significant legitimacy, some corporations ended

up negotiating over interpretations of the past, even if they might have disagreed with the initial accusation. For example, Volkswagen's complicity in Nazi cruelties initially received only scant attention and, as such, the company refuted the accusations. With time, however, as the accusations became more prevalent, Volkswagen commissioned a professional historian to fully investigate the extent of its Nazi association. The company also established an archive for academics and created a compensation fund for former forced laborers. The company's compromising efforts eventually led to the general acceptance of a revised narrative about its complicity with the Nazi regime (Schrempf-Stirling et al., 2016).

Co-constructing occurs when mnemonic communities eventually agree to a collective meaning of shared pasts. There are many situations in and around organizations where different mnemonic communities may have differing interpretations of the past or past events. However, not all disagreements about the past are between groups that intend to impose their version of the past on others. In some circumstances there is also an interest in true and honest representations of the past (Mena & Rintamäki, 2020). This is the idea that motivates truth commissions and processes of transitional justice, whose mandate involves balancing continuity and discontinuity with the past (Teitel, 2002). These situations invite actors to co-construct collective memories despite differences in perspective and past social positions. Such situations routinely arise in mnemonic communities broadly dispersed across organizations. Fine and Hallett (2014) provide an example of co-constructing in their discussion of the US National Weather Service. They found that collective memories of past weather events are an important resource for predicting the weather and that different offices in the US National Weather Service have distinct cultures with different collective memories of shared events. Yet, at the same time, they have the shared goal of interpreting weather signals in a way that enables the most accurate weather predictions

possible. Thus, members of different offices end up co-constructing the meanings of shared past events when initial disagreements may exist. Similarly, Reid & Beilin (2014) show the potential for fire management agencies to work with local communities to co-construct collective memories of bushfires to help develop a shared view of risk that incorporates local knowledge which informs national Fire Danger Ratings. Both papers demonstrate that superordinate goals can inform and impact the willingness of mnemonic communities to co-construct an acceptable version of the past.

Summary

In this section, we discussed the small, but growing literature that explores mnemonic practices *between* different mnemonic communities. We reviewed the literature that pertains to *imposing, resisting,* and *negotiating.* Imposing refers to the practices used by more powerful mnemonic communities to force a preferred version of the past onto other, weaker mnemonic communities. This occurs either episodically, by actively and forcefully *inhibiting* alternative memories, or systemically, by *hegemonizing* the understanding of the past for various communities by relying on existing unequal institutional structures, such as gender norms. Further, we also show that communities may withstand these mnemonic uses of power. Less powerful mnemonic communities can resist by *disputing* imposed versions of the past or covertly *safeguarding* their own dissenting version of the past without publicly challenging the hegemonic past. Finally, we identified circumstances when relatively equal, mnemonic communities *negotiate* versions of the past. We have shown that equally powerful mnemonic communities either engage in non-confrontational behaviors and *compromise* with each other or collaboratively *co-construct* a version of the past. We now move to examine what current

research on collective memory has been more silent about and examine fruitful avenues for future research based on our review.

MOVING BEYOND EXISTING RESEARCH

Our review shows that, over the past decade, research on collective memory has emphasized investigations concerning memory work occurring *within* organizations as opposed to studies exploring the dynamics of memory work that occurs *between* mnemonic communities. One of the reasons for this imbalance, we argue, is that prior research has typically treated organizations as mnemonic closed systems. That is, scholars have focused on mnemonic practices *within* as if mnemonic practices were largely unaffected by the broader environment in which they are embedded. While they recognize that memory can change along changes in the environment (e.g., Poor et al., 2016) and that it can be used to manage stakeholders (e.g., Smith & Simeone, 2017), the emphasis has been on the distinctive *contents* of the past of an organization and the unbridled *control* managers have in shaping meanings and stories about the past.

The irony is that over the last fifty years of management and organizations research has shown that a closed systems approach is not appropriate to the study of organizations in general (Scott & Davis, 2007). Specifically, with reference to our discussions of collective memory, a closed systems approach does not explain how organizational mnemonic practices seem to mimic the work of other institutions such as the state (e.g., Barnes & Newton, 2018b) or resemble other organizations from the same industry and field (Coraiola et al., 2018).

We argue, in contrast, that future research on collective memory should embrace an *open-systems approach* to the study of mnemonic communities. Such an approach will allow us to theorize the construction of memory as a truly collective endeavor instead of an assemblage of individual memories. The ecological approach to collective memory we advance in this paper

looks beyond the memory work *within* individual communities toward the mnemonic practices *between* communities and the mutual influence they exert on one another. Looking at communities as part of an ecology provides the foundation for the development of a theory of memory grounded in a relational ontology (Emirbayer, 1997). Memory is not simply information from the past stored for the future. Instead, memory is an evolving reality constructed through chains of mnemonic practices. The investigation of entanglements of practice, as they occur over time and through the relationship between different mnemonic communities, is necessary for the development of a robust, ecological approach to collective memory.

An ecological approach should be grounded on some main tenets. First, memory work needs to be approached as a relational and collective process of organizing the past. Memory does not occur in a vacuum. There are many actors involved in making sense, reconstructing, and regenerating the past through several networks of memory work and at different points in time. Second, memory work takes place in specific contexts of practice and are thus influenced by existing sociohistorical frameworks such as moral codes and institutions. At the same time, memory work recursively (re)constitutes the contexts of practice and situated institutions. Mnemonic communities are, therefore, embedded in an ecology of other communities with whom they maintain a past and a relationship. Third, memory mediates the way we experience the world. Collective memory introduces people to an ordered reality that precedes their existence and provides intelligibility, consistence, and meaning to human action. Yet, people also define their past, present, and future realities through the uses they make of memory as a cultural toolkit (Swidler, 1986). Memory use is thus both a political and functional tool which has significant implications for discussions about identity, both individual and organizational, and the production and consumption of experiences of the past. In sum, an ecological approach to

collective memory should regard memory as a set of interrelated practices situated in specific sociohistorical contexts that produce distinct temporal realities and, in so doing, (re)produces its own context of action.

In the remainder of this paper, we explore three major avenues for future research as informed by an ecological approach to memory in management and organization studies. First, we call for more research on the collective constitution and organization of collective memory. In particular, we push for a better understanding of the relational structure of mnemonic communities and their interfaces with other communities. The research on memory work as a tool for organizing is nascent; however, we feel it is essential for additional attention to be paid to the practices that organize collective memory. Second, we argue that more research is needed on the institutional and ethical dimensions of memory work. Mnemonic communities are embedded in broader sociohistorical contexts that define what is ethical and legitimate about the past. Currently, there is a dearth of research explaining how social judgements regarding memory are constructed, maintained and questioned. Third, we call for additional research that investigates the interplay between memory, identity and politics, how the experience of the past is produced and how it is consumed by different social actors in the present. Attention to the way in which the past is made present and absent is still scant and we argue that more attention should be given to the ways memory is imbricated in the temporal texture of social life.

Ecologies of Memories: Communities and Organizing

We call for more research on mnemonic communities and the way memory is organized within and between different communities. We contend that a focus on ecologies of memory is valuable for its integrative potential. Mnemonic communities can provide a bridging level of analysis to integrate insights from the psychologically- and sociologically-informed approaches

to OMS. Similarly, the recognition that organizations are mnemonic communities among an ecosystem of other communities provides a path to establish a dialogue between social memory studies and organizational memory studies. Such an approach emphasizes the interconnectedness of memories and communities and allows scholars to look beyond the uses of memory for managerial purposes to focus on how actor and communities collectively organize the past.

Ecology of communities. As evidenced in our review, a large part of OMS research has focused on formal organizations as the primary mnemonic community of interest. This applies to both psychologically-informed and sociologically-informed research alike. The psychologically-informed approach has been concerned with memory at the organizational level as embodied in the concept of organizational memory (Walsh & Ungson, 1991) and the level of the group as captured by the construct of transactive memory systems (Ren & Argote, 2011). In contrast, the sociologically-informed approach has commonly relied on single case studies and privileged the organization as the core level of analysis and the memory work of managers as representative of the organization as a whole (e.g., Foster et al., 2011; Rowlinson & Hassard, 1993). One direction for future research thus involves studying organizations in context with a focus on memory in a plurality of ecologies of mnemonic communities.

OMS scholars can explore how organizations are constituted by and overlap with other mnemonic communities that exist within and between organizational boundaries. The literature on communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) offers a valuable approach to bridge between the micro dynamics of communication and reification that emerge from the interactions between groups and individuals as explored by transactive memory systems scholars, and the more enduring and long-lasting features that characterize mnemonic communities as examined in sociologically-informed studies. This is the approach Orr (1990, 1996) takes in his famous study

of photocopier repair technicians at Xerox. His analysis looks at technical work as a process of bricolage that connects the present of problem diagnostics, the past of individual experiences, and the memory of an occupational community of technicians as they interact with a community of customers. Essential to the work they do are ‘war stories’, or the narratives technicians tell and retell about problems they have solved. Their primary reason for sharing stories is not utilitarian or functional. Instead, these stories signify their active participation in the community and the identity and reputation they derive from it. Memory work is thus an integral feature of the work technicians do as members of a community which has a direct impact on the creation and regeneration of the community. Nevertheless, we lack further scholarship on occupational communities and other mnemonic communities within and across organizations. For instance, we do not know how those communities emerge, change, and disappear over time. How are they distributed (e.g., hierarchically, geographically, temporally) within the organization? How do they connect and interact with other communities inside and outside of a focal organization? How do they collaborate, compete, and co-mingle in various mnemonic practices?

A focus on mnemonic communities also creates an opportunity to connect OMS with the broader scholarship on memory studies (e.g. Olick & Robbins, 1998; Roediger & Wertsch, 2008). Looking at organizations in constant interaction and intersection with other mnemonic communities such as activist communities, racial communities, and gendered communities can foster a better understanding of the embedded memory work of organizations to help clarify how they contribute to the construction of memory of other mnemonic communities such as of the nation-state. In particular, OMS may help mitigate some of the difficulties identified by social memory scholars and offer novel paths to the study of mnemonic communities. For instance, Walsh and High (1999) complain that historical research has used a ‘common sense’ notion of

community that beleaguers clarity. They suggest, instead, that we understand community simultaneously as an imagined reality, a social interaction, and a process. However, they provide little guidance on how to study communities empirically. Fortunately, there are a wealth of studies in management and organizations that have dealt with the problem of organizational boundaries and the relationship between organizations and other social actors (e.g., Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve, & Tsai, 2004; Faraj, Jarvenpaa, & Majchrzak, 2011; Santos & Eisenhardt, 2005). Our use of an ecological metaphor to the study of mnemonic communities makes it amenable to the application of open-systems theories such as resource dependence (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003), evolutionary (Aldrich, 1979), institutional (Scott, 2013), and social network (Kilduff & Tsai, 2003) approaches. For example, resource dependence theory can be helpful to analyze the networks of interdependencies between communities and the dynamics of constraint and control among them (Hillman, Withers, & Collins, 2009). Similarly, social network approaches can provide a more fine-grained analysis of the constitution of different mnemonic communities and the forms of exchange that take place among them (Wellman, 1979, 1999; Worcman & Garde-Hansen, 2016). Moreover, the analysis of how organizations and other mnemonic communities compete, cooperate, and co-construct memories about the past can be informed by evolutionary approaches (Astley & Fombrun, 1987). Lastly, institutional and field theory approaches (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012; Greenwood, Oliver, Lawrence, & Meyer, 2017) offer a promising path to the analysis of organizations as members of broader mnemonic communities such as a city, network, and organizational field.

An ecological view of memory highlights, on the one hand, the collective nature of the past as a reality lived within a specific community which itself constitutes a network and, on the other, the interconnectedness of memories and communities as nodes within broader networks of

memory. In this sense, collective memory is not a static property of a group but is, instead, an ongoing, relational process of organizing the past that happens at the intersection of various mnemonic communities. To better understand existing ecologies of memories we can begin by asking some basic questions such as: Which organization theories are more appropriate to the study of mnemonic communities? How do we draw the boundaries between mnemonic communities? How do mnemonic communities form, evolve and disappear over time? How do mnemonic communities interact with one another? How do mnemonic communities manage boundaries and intersections with other communities? How does the history of interaction between communities shape the way they engage in memory work?

Organizing memories. To date, most management research has studied memory either as a tool for organizational learning (Ren & Argote, 2011) or a resource to achieve competitive advantage (Suddaby, Coraiola, Harvey, & Foster, 2020). Some work has been done on memory as a tool for organizing to the extent that memory work may include inscribing, preserving, retrieving, and narrating the past to accomplish particular organizational tasks (Foster et al., 2021). However, we are now in the position to recognize that managers and organizations not only use memory for organizing but are also active at organizing collective memory. Thus, a promising direction for future research is to study the processes of organizing the past both within and between mnemonic communities.

There is a vast literature outside of management and organization studies that has focused on the study of archives, libraries, and museums; sometimes also called "memory institutions". Although the term is a misnomer and excludes other important organizations (Robinson, 2012), organizations whose mission is built around memory have been poorly surveyed by management scholars and much of the work memory organizations develop has not yet been properly

theorized. In addition, although we have a sense of how organizations manage functional information from the past, we still lack a deeper understanding of how organizing constructs the reality of the past. One example is the work of archives and corporate archives. In *Archive Fever*, Derrida (1995) argues that the archive emerges from a death drive, from the danger of loss and destruction. However, archiving efforts work against itself; they create the past at the same time they destroy it. In other words, “the archivization produces as much as it records the event” (p. 17). Drawing from some of these insights, Blouin and Rosenberg (2007) introduce a collection of works that explore the important role archives play in the construction of social memory. Although they recognize that “all archival records are not only themselves the product of social, cultural, and especially political processes; they very much affect the workings of these processes as well, and hence they influence the kinds of realities that archival collections reflect” (p. 2), the role of organizing is at best tangential to their efforts to understand how archives work. And yet, national archives and other memory organizations are bureaucracies whose core purpose is to organize and give credence to the reality of the past.

In addition, we argue that managers and organizations are important actors who shape the collective reality of the past (Rowlinson et al., 2010). Mnemonic communities tend to gravitate toward organizations and organizing processes dedicated to preserving the past of the community. Examples include social movement organizations (e.g., Lyle, Walsh, & Coraiola, In press), parish churches (e.g., Gordon, 2018), unions (e.g., Santana & Pimenta, 2009), and family foundations (e.g., Ravasi et al., 2019). For instance, social memory scholars have looked at the involvement of corporations in the politics of memory such as Dow Chemical’s sponsorship of the London Olympics in 2012 (Shields, Laurendeau, & Adams, 2017). Relatedly, research on social movements has shown how activists use commemoration to promote the

institutionalization of memories (Armstrong & Crage, 2006; Preuss, Vazquez-Brust, Yakovleva, Foroughi, & Mutti, 2022). Except for a few notable examples however, the literature on social memory studies has largely taken for granted the role of managers and organizations in shaping collective memory (Rowlinson et al., 2010). As a result, the managerial, bureaucratic, and professional dynamics that support the memory work of different mnemonic communities has often been overlooked. Future research should thus focus on the relational organizing of memory. Potential questions include how different mnemonic communities (dis)organize the past? How do memory organizations contribute to shape the reality of the past? How do mnemonic communities design and develop cultures and architectures of memory? How does governance affects the organizing of the past?

Embedded Communities: Institutions and Ethics

Future research should also examine how organizations and other mnemonic communities are embedded within broader communities, with a particular focus on the way rules, norms, beliefs and other institutions shape the relationships between communities and the mnemonic practices developed within and between them. In addition, communities are situated in time and space and the sociohistorical context in which they exist has important implications for our understanding of the broader frameworks that orient their practices. Moreover, because there is a growing awareness of the ethical (e.g., Mena & Rintamäki, 2020; Stutz & Schrempf-Stirling, 2020) and institutional dynamics (e.g., Ocasio, Mauskapf, & Steele, 2016; Preuss et al., 2022) associated with the development of collective memory, particular attention should be given to the dual relationship between ethics, institutions and memory work.

Institutional embeddedness. All institutions have a past. They are “historical accretions of past practices and understandings that […] gradually acquire the moral and ontological status of

taken-for-granted facts" (Barley & Tolbert, 1997: 99). Institutional processes are grounded in collective memory and, at the same time, help define the forms of memory work that are permissible, acceptable, and expected in a given mnemonic community (Coraiola et al., 2018). Each community of memory has its own rules, norms, and processes created to ensure the re-production of the memory of the group (Halbwachs, 1992). But these communities are embedded in broader institutional environments that, in turn, establish what is required and expected of them. Institutionalized myths (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), like basic formulae and lay theories, sustain the collective arrangement by obscuring the underlying structural foundations of collective action (Douglas, 1986). For example, Wertsch (2004) argues that when specific organizational narratives emerge, they do so in alignment with broader schematic social narratives. Similarly, Ocasio and colleagues (2016) argue that societal logics shape memory work in organizations and Coraiola et al (2018) highlight the importance of organizational fields in defining moral and normative determinations for organizational memory work. However, the reproduction and transformation of those myths over time is still poorly understood. Specifically, the mechanisms that lead to the 'pragmatic effectiveness' (Douglas, 1986) of collective memory and provide for its continuous endurance and relevance toward community resilience are still largely unknown. Moreover, the processes through which broader institutional structures such as norms, myths, and logics affect memory work is still scant and need to be more deeply investigated.

Researchers have also begun to focus more attention onto the active role of actors mobilizing collective memory to promote institutional work (Suddaby et al., In press). Although this is still a nascent direction of research, there are some key discussions that explore memory work as a form of socio-symbolic work used for institutional change and maintenance (Lawrence &

Phillips, 2019). The past has been shown to be a powerful source of rhetorical arguments for institutional entrepreneurship (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005) and an arena of conflict between institutional challengers and custodians (McGaughey, 2013). In this sense, although institutional research has frequently attached memory and tradition to the maintenance and reproduction of institutions (Dacin et al., 2010), there is an opportunity for more research on the role of memory work in institutional creation as well as on how memory supports the disruption of existing institutional structures. For example, Gandhi's revival of the traditional hand-spinning of khadi and its use as a tool against colonization illustrates how the memory of a community can be mobilized to change institutionalized practices (Bean, 1989). A more recent example is offered by Preuss and colleagues (2022), who describe how collective memories used to build and maintain informal institutions in the Argentinian province of Patagonia helped the community overcome institutional voids around regulating harmful effects of mining operations. The strategic mobilization of collective memory for institutional change is thus another interesting avenue for future studies.

The duality between institutions and memory work also needs to be better conceptualized. We still have scant knowledge of how memory supports institutional maintenance and change, how institutional logics and legacies subsist over time, how they are forgotten, and how they may be brought back and reinstated. Similarly, there is a dearth of research on institutions of memory, how the collective past is inscribed by sociohistorical structures, and how new memories emerge and diffuse across different institutional contexts. In addition, memory work can be considered yet another tool in the toolbox of social-symbolic work. Further research is needed to understand how memory work and other forms of social-symbolic work interact, support, conflict, and reinforce one another. We need more studies to clarify which aspects of work are required to

create, maintain and disrupt different realities of the past. We also need a better understanding of how collective memory contributes to the development of social-symbolic work towards individual selves, mnemonic communities, and institutions.

Ethical embeddedness. The ethics of the sociohistorical context in which organizations are embedded is another important aspect to consider. Although there is much to be done to study the ethical processes within collective memory, some initial research has started to emerge in the field of corporate social responsibility (i.e., Janssen, 2012; Mena et al., 2016; Schrempf-Stirling et al., 2016; Van Lent & Smith, 2020). For instance, Coraiola & Derry (2020) argue that misbehaving organizations may establish some form of 'honour among thieves' and promote social forgetting when accused of corporate irresponsibility. However, their findings suggest that collusive social forgetting may backfire, thus creating a legacy of corporate irresponsibility. Indeed, collective memory shapes how the past is morally evaluated within a community. This impacts how community members conduct themselves in the present. Schrempf-Stirling and associates (2016) craft their argument around this assumption when they explain how corporations are challenged in the present for acts committed in the past. The authors emphasize how the 'hermeneutical situation' at each given moment determines what is acceptable. Their argument is that even acts that were considered legitimate in the past may be challenged in the present if they are no longer considered legitimate. The reckoning around past organizational links to slave trade is a good example of such shift. In the aftermath of George Floyd's murder in 2020, several organizations such as financial institutions (e.g., Citigroup, Lloyds) and universities (e.g., University of Oxford, Cass Business School) have been criticized for not recognizing their profiteering from the enslavement of African people. Further research on how these hermeneutical shifts occur and the memory work involved is needed. In addition, scholars

argue that actors need to be reflexive about the ethical and moral considerations when engaging in memory work and navigating mnemonic struggles (Mena & Rintamäki, 2020). Moreover, a focus on memory begs the question of how moral and ethical principles evolve over time, in contradistinction with the research in business ethics promoting universal norms (e.g., Donaldson & Dunfee, 1994).

Beyond shifts in ethical frameworks, future research also needs to examine how collective memory shapes current ethical and moral principles. For instance, de Waal & Ibreck (2013) explain how the new African Union's HQ in Addis Ababa, built on a former prison, shapes how human rights principles will be dealt with by the African Union going forward. That is, they demonstrate how the memory of the prison is a stark reminder of past abuses and how these need to be avoided in the future. Here again, the role of various forms of memory work in establishing current moral views and ethical frameworks needs further investigation. To provide a more comprehensive picture, a recursive view of how collective memory shapes ethics and how ethics shape our perceptions of the past, both within and between mnemonic communities, is also needed.

Lastly, it would be helpful to understand the frameworks of memory that guide ethical decisions in organizations. Research could emulate recent efforts by Mena and Rintamäki (2020) who identify 'mnemonic sensitivity' and 'mnemonic integrity' as two pillars underlying the ethical, corporate engagement with collective memory. This leads to questions about how the mnemonic stance of an organization and its stakeholders might impact current organizational decisions. Haidt (2001) argues that moral decision making is not a rational process but one that occurs post-hoc. This suggest that the impact of the mnemonic community and the influence of mnemonic communities both within and between could have greater influence over ethical

decisions than originally thought. As such, future research could address the moral and ethical considerations organizational actors engage in when conducting memory work and how these decisions are constructed in light of their interactions with different mnemonic communities. However, in addition to the context in which memory work takes place, scholars need to focus on the uses memory is put to and the outcomes of memory work. In sum, future research should be more attentive to notions of ethics in memory work as well as the importance of institutions of memory in shaping ethical and moral frameworks about the past.

Uses of Memory: Identity and Experience

Our identities and social positions help define the way we see the past as members of a specific mnemonic community. At the same time, the communities to which we belong and how we remember the past in light of our community membership define who we are and how we experience the world (Halbwachs, 1992). In other words, the construction of both individual and collective identities is attached to the politics of recognition and belonging and these politics define and sanction who has the authority and legitimacy to experience and talk about the past in specific ways (Fukuyama, 2018).

In addition, our experience of the past is mediated by who we perceive ourselves to be as authentic individuals within communities to which we belong and the ways in which we get acquainted with and experience the past. That is, a variety of mnemonic communities and different media afford individuals differential access to the past. The research on the intersection of memory and identity has been one of the most well-explored directions in the literature to date (Casey, 2019; Foroughi et al., 2020). Notwithstanding, much OMS research has concentrated on the managerial uses of memory for identity construction and did not account for the politics involved in these processes.

Politics of Recognition. Missing from OMS research is the realization that memory work in modern societies takes place within a background of politics of recognition and belonging. The idea of politics of recognition refers to the mutually implied notions of identity and dignity, authenticity and legitimacy (Taylor, 1994). The dignity of a person or a group is, therefore, attached to their distinctive identity and its recognition as such by other groups. A primary point of consideration regards what it means to have an identity. From this perspective it is not enough to be authentic and true to oneself as an individual or group; identity depends on the dialogical negotiation of that identity with others and their acceptance of it as a legitimate identity. The implication is that the constitution of any mnemonic community is not an independent, solitary feat accomplished through memory work that occurs within the community. The constitution and recognition of a mnemonic community depends on other communities with whom it interacts. The interactions that occur between communities, therefore, define whether a mnemonic community is seen as legitimate and whether the community is regarded as equal. Whenever that is not the case, 'hierarchies of recognition' (Cutcher et al., 2019) remain the norm which are accompanied by the reproduction of inequalities and injustices.

Management scholars should explicitly devote more time and space to the discussion of how the politics of recognition intersect with memory work. The sociologically-informed research on OMS has been particularly interested in analyzing how collective memory contributes to the construction of identity, legitimacy, and authenticity (i.e., Casey, 2019; Foster et al., 2021). For example, Schultz and Hernes (2013) describe how the discovery of an artifact brought back memories that were used to change the organizational identity of LEGO. Lyle and colleagues (In press) show how remembering and forgetting can be used to maintain ambiguous identities, and Ravasi et al (2019) map how four Italian manufacturers of consumer goods use corporate

museums to engage into identity stewardship, identity evangelizing, and heritage mining. There has also been some research on collective memory, legitimacy and authenticity in the wine industry (e.g., Beverland, 2005; Hills et al., 2013). In these studies, the desire to align with legitimate categories to signal legitimacy and authenticity compelled organizations to engage in memory work. Similarly, discussions also have occurred in the hospitality industry where organizations draw from the collective memories of a community to craft legitimate narratives of authenticity (e.g., Cappelen & Pedersen, 2020; Illia & Zamparini, 2016). In spite of these efforts, the connection between identity, legitimacy, and authenticity has rarely been explored and the encompassing notion of the politics of recognition has yet to find expressions in management scholarship.

One of the reasons for that absence is that the literature has been driven by single case studies and biased towards the producer side of memory. Scholars have privileged the practices developed by a single community or organization, rarely acknowledging how they are connected with other mnemonic communities. In addition, only a handful of studies have investigated the influence of some communities over others and how communities resist and produce alternative memories of the past. Moreover, scholars have generally avoided discussing broader ethical and political implications of memory work. For example, legitimating the Ontario wine industry required uprooting native varieties of grapes because they did not conform to the European tradition of winemaking and erasing a past of local production to emphasize ties with European history – a story with notes of neocolonialism (Hills et al., 2013). Similarly, Anteby and Molnar (2012) describe how editing SNECMA's corporate history, as an attempt to avoid contradictions in the identity of the company, structurally omitted the work of foreign engineers – which could be read as marginalizing their memories.

These descriptions of marginalization are particularly acute when we consider the memories of racialized and stigmatized actors. For instance, Cutcher et al's (2019) research on commemorative portraiture shows that memory work not only celebrates the past but also naturalizes and reproduces patterns of marginalization and exclusion. This can be seen in the gendered nature of memory work. Reading's (2019) research on memory activists in Australia criticizes the appropriation of memory work of women from Parramatta Female Factory Precinct, the longest site of containment for women in Australia, against colonial violence for commercial purposes. Ruel, Dyer, and Mills' (2020), on the other hand, look at the silenced participation and gendered representation of women involved in the Canadian Cold War satellite missions. Relatedly, Pelak (2015) and Goggins (2019) discuss the construction of counter-memories as part of a struggle for racial equality. These studies support our contention that memory work operates beyond distributive issues associated with economic gains and involves moral judgements of value and worth attached to processes of negation, marginalization, repression, and intersectionality that need to be better acknowledged by OMS scholars.

As can be inferred from the cited research, many OMS scholars have taken an apolitical and non-critical view of memory work and have mainly focused on the strategic attempts of individual organizations to leverage the past for strategic purposes. There has been decidedly less concern with the consequences of mnemonic practices on other communities of memory internal and external to particular organizations. An important direction for future research is to focus on the political uses of memory work and how it can be used as a form of boundary work (Lamont & Molnár, 2002) to produce otherness and belonging, inclusion and exclusion.

Closely linked with politics of recognition are politics of belonging. The politics of belonging examine the practices associated with how communities limit and maintain their boundaries and

how social groups define membership and identification (Yuval-Davis, 2006). We know that to remember is always to re-member (Suddaby et al., 2010). Yet, few studies have looked into the politics of re-membering and the role of memory work in building identification and belongingness (Foroughi, 2020; Foster et al., 2021; Munro, 1998). A recent exception is Alkhaled and Sasaki's (In press) research on Syrian refugees and how they used memory work to maintain a sense of self while in a situation of indeterminate liminality. An important direction for future research that could help rectify the lack of studies in this area involves mapping the politics and intersectionalities of memory and their connections to dignity and belonging. Organization scholars could start asking questions such as: Why do some memories diffuse and endure more than others? Why are some groups better positioned than others to engage in memory work? How do social positions and intersectionality affect the construction of the past? How do memory struggles unfold? And, ultimately, who benefits when some versions of the past become dominant?

Experience of the Past. Another promising direction for future research is the study of how communities and individuals experience the past. As we noted previously, the past is an arena for struggles about recognition. To remember the past is, in itself, a political act and collective memory is intrinsically linked to politics. The past as we experience it is the result of previous struggles for the past that continue in the present and project themselves into the future. However, research on the presence of the past, and the connected dynamic of the absence of the past, is still underdeveloped. We argue that scholars should spend more time problematizing the presence and absence of the past and the channels and processes through which the past is made available and known. This should help us better understand how the past intersects with the present, why we experience the past the way we do, how organizations orchestrate experiences

of the past, how collective memories are commodified, and how we engage with and consume the past in our everyday lives.

The question of how the past is made present is still scarcely understood in OMS. Constructs such as mnemonic traces, devices, remnants, records, flotsam and jetsam, and ruins all suggest that something from the past remains in the present. Yet, we still know little about how actors experience these traces and remnants of the past through collective memory. Much of the research to date has focused on aspects of the past that linger and connect us to a bygone era. These discussions have largely treated these interactions with the past as unproblematic. Artifacts, routines, and records, or what Schultz and Hernes (2013) have called textual, material, and oral forms of memory, have been described as carriers of information from the past. However, more recent research suggests that the past is not a piece of information attached to a medium but, instead, a discursive reality that is reinterpreted and renegotiated in the present. Kaplan & Orlikowski (2013), for example, have shown how actors redefine what is past, present and future to fit with their work needs. Blagoev et al. (2018) shows that the presence of the past also depends on the interaction between the materiality of artifacts inherited from the past and the purposes of actors in the present. Similarly, Lamertz et al (2016) and Kroezen and Heugens (2019) show that the revival of logics and identities associated with traditional craft depends on new creative combinations of narratives, networks, and artifacts from the past and the present. Lastly, Eisenman and Frenkel (2021) theorize the relationship between memory and materiality and argue that mnemonic devices not only carry information but also encourage people to congregate in mnemonic communities and bound them together through relational communication.

In contrast to experiences mediated by past residues and the past that conspicuously remains in the present, collective memory also encompasses the experience of an absent past that will not return. The past exists only as a fiction, a figment, a shadow. The past is experienced by gaps in memory, by stories that cannot be told, artifacts that cannot be shown, rituals that will not be practiced, ruins that can never be recovered. Decker (2013) has shown how in many cases the memory of colonization in Africa exists in the form of silences in the archives. Similarly, Ng and Höpfl (2011) describe the nostalgic function of *aides memoire* for exiles deprived from connections with their homeland because of colonization. And Bernardi (2019) explains how a local NGO, when faced with recovering the human remains of loved ones who were victims of the Argentinian Dictatorship, created a community-based mural project as a tool for healing and meditation. In all these cases the past is captured through its silence and nonexistence. These are pasts that were left behind and cannot be celebrated; pasts whose fickle presence endures only through the haunting experience of longing and nostalgia. Memories of loss and pain are commonly associated with trauma and emotionally loaded. Yet, the literature on painful, traumatic, and absent memories is still scant in OMS (Crawford et al., 2022; Cruz, 2014). We need more research around repressed memories, how communities organize around silent pasts, how they struggle to rebuild memories for the future, and how non-experienced pasts affect the continuity of a community.

Ultimately, to understand how the past is experienced in the present we need to look at presences and absences as an active outcome of memory work, which also involves a process of cultural construction. Our experience of the past is not just mediated by the people that preceded us in the mnemonic communities to which we belong and the artifacts and ruins that survived or disappeared thereof. Our experience of the past and our collective memories are, more than ever,

shaped by several cultural organizations such as the media. As Landsberg's (2004) work shows, mass media such as cinema and television reconstruct the collective memory of the past to a point in which people's experience of the past 'suture' them into a larger history by providing them with prosthetic memories. Similarly, other cultural actors in industries such as tourism and the arts also play an important role in creating new memories and providing new experiences of the past (Sørensen, 2014). An example is Crawford et al (2022) description of how Grand Canyon Dories' guides use multimodal remembering to construct an experience of the Grand Canyon as a site of destruction to garner support for the preservation of the place. More fundamentally though, to understand our experience of the past we need to understand the mediatization of memory (Hjarvard, 2013).

The rise of digital technologies and increasing connectivity has substantially altered our experience of the past (Hoskins, 2017). OMS research has not yet accounted for the importance of mediatization. Advancements in computer and digital imaging now make it possible to be immersed in the experiences of the past in ways that could not have been imagined even a few years ago. They are particularly relevant in presentifying the past and comingling our experience of the present with the past. Moreover, these products are becoming increasingly relevant in establishing and disrupting the boundaries of mnemonic communities. For example, until recently we could conceive that popular memory overlapped with geographic boundaries. Yet, with the introduction of global streaming services (e.g., Disney+, Netflix) and global mega-events (e.g., World Cup, Olympics) the creation of new mnemonic communities unbounded by political, geographic, and affective ties became big business. One need to look no further than the international success of the Korean TV show "Squid Game". To this day it is the most streamed show on Netflix and there are numerous on-line communities dedicated to its fans that

extend beyond national and cultural boundaries. Management and organizational scholars should thus start to pay more attention to the role of technology in the production of reconstructions and re-enactments of the past as well as to the media ecologies (Hoskins, 2014) through which the past is made available and is experienced over time.

Future research should thus explore how the past is made present and absent, and the various forms in which the experience of the past is mediated. A starting point for such an endeavour could be found in the sociology of presences and emergences (Santos, 2002). This approach is particularly interesting because it understands the formation of absences as an active production of non-existences. In addition, it also looks at the way new alternative realities are produced through processes of emergence. The end point of this approach is to understand the connection between past experiences and future expectations and analyze how the work of translation between these two dimensions may lead to social change and emancipation. Some additional questions for future research include the following. How the rules and beliefs of mnemonic communities affect the way we experience the past? How do our interactions with prior generations of members of a community affect our experience of the past? How does the survival and loss of records and artifacts from the past affect how the past is consumed? How do people make sense of the multiple pasts they experience through their participation in organizations embedded in religious, ethnic, and sport communities? How do media organizations reinsert the past into our experience of the present? How does social media afford the eternalization of present experiences?

Looking beyond the existing OMS scholarship on collective memory we see that this is still a field in its infancy. Considerable effort has been done to understand the memory work developed *within* organizations and other communities of memory, less so on the mnemonic practices

between communities. We have argued that an ecological perspective may provide a better approach to the study of collective memory. Such an approach sees memory not as a property of individuals and organizations, but as a relational and emergent social construction. Memory does not exist apart from the entanglements of practice and relationships within and between different mnemonic communities. This calls for a better understanding of three core dynamics. First, the relational dynamics of memory work and the production of the past. In particular, we suggest future research to focus on how memory is collectively organized. Second, the conditions in which memory work is developed. We ask for more research on the influence of an interaction between memory, institutions, and ethics. Third, the outcomes of memory work. We call for more research on how the past is experienced as a presence and an absence, and how our experience of the past is mediated and mediatized.

Conclusion

In this paper we reviewed the more recent and lesser studied literature informed by sociological approaches to the study of collective memory. From this review we introduced the idea of ecologies of memories, which focuses on how mnemonic communities are constituted by their interactions within their own community and between other mnemonic communities. In particular, we explored how previous studies have emphasized either the mnemonic practices developed *within* single communities (remembering, forgetting, representing) or the work *between* various communities (imposing, resisting, negotiating). We also uncovered that while some research has been developed within mnemonic communities, studies focused on the dynamics between communities are still scarce. As such, we proposed three core themes for future research based on an ecological approach to collective memory. First, we ask for more attention to the organizing of collective memory. Second, we argue that more research is needed

on the embeddedness of mnemonic communities and the importance of ethics and institutions of memory. Third, we call for more studies on the uses of memory, which comprises the intersection of memory work with politics of recognition and the creation of memorable experiences. These three areas for further research are, in our view, the most fruitful avenues for the development of OMS research and the continued erosions of the bins of OMS.

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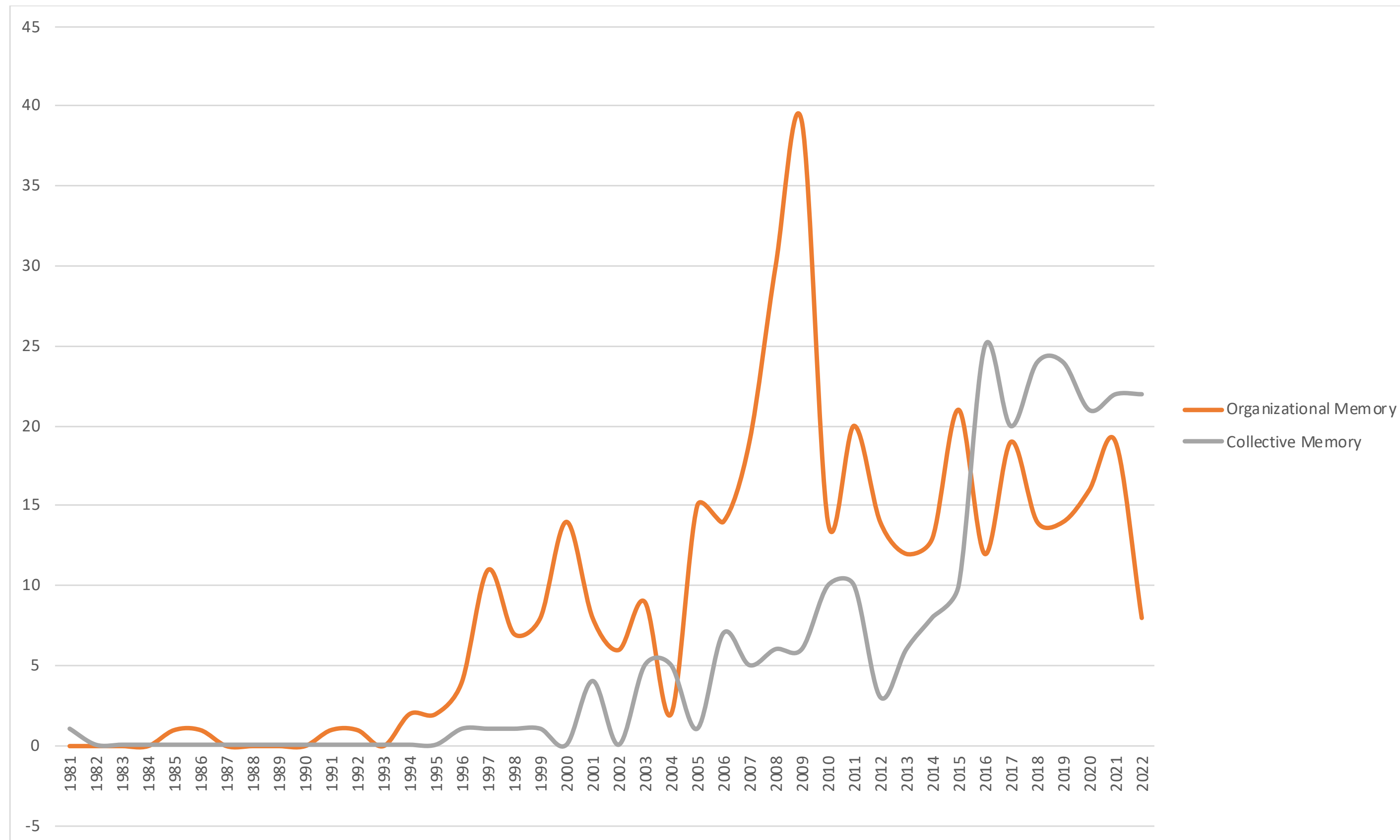
Figure 1
MOS Research on Collective and Organizational Memory



Source: Scopus

Table 1
Memory Work Within Communities

Memory Work	Mnemonic Practices	Illustrative Studies
Remembering	Storying	Adorisio, 2014; Foroughi, 2020; Garcia -Lorenzo, 2020; Linde, 2009; Maclean et al., 2014; Rowlinson et al, 2014; Wolff, 2020
	Preserving	Blagoev et al., 2018; Castillo Gomez, 2016; Kallinikos et al., 2013; MacDonald et al., 2015; Rogers et al., 2016
	Commemorating	Allen & Brown, 2016; Alonso González, 2016; Barnes & Newton, 2018; Cutcher et al., 2019; Cossu, 2011; Gamson, 2018;
Representing	Historicizing	Basque & Langley, 2018; Booth et al., 2007; Hatch & Schultz, 2017; Perkiss; 2014; Sasaki et al., 2020; Schultz & Hernes, 2013; Ybema, 2014
	Curating	Crawford et al., 2022; Ravasi et al., 2019; Sanfuentes & Acuna, 2014
	Reenacting	Dacin et al., 2010; Kroezen & Heugens, 2019; Howard-Grenville et al., 2013; Miller et al., 2019; Watanabe, 2013
Forgetting	Discarding	de Holan & Phillips, 2004; Decker, 2013; Foroughi & Al-Amoudi, 2020; Stark, 2019; Ciuk and Kostera, 2010
	Suppressing	Anteby & Molnar, 2012; Hills, Voronov, & Hinings, 2013, Sørensen, 2014
	Dissociating	Cailluet, Gorge, & Özçağlar-Toulouse, 2018; Hamilton & D'Ippolito, 2020; Munro, 1998

Table 2
Memory Work Between Communities

Memory Work	Mnemonic Practices	Illustrative Studies
Imposing	Inhibiting	Dalpiaz & DiStefano, 2018; Nissley & Casey, 2002; Perkiss, 2014; Sela, 2018
	Hegemonizing	Aeon & Lamertz, 2021; Coraiola & Derry, 2020; Deal et al., 2018
Resisting	Disputing	Lubinski, 2018; Fleming, 2012; Messer et al, 2015; Fridman, 2015
	Protecting	Foroughi, 2020; Mahalingam et al., 2019; Vijay et al, 2021
Negotiating	Compromising	Schrempf-Stirling et al., 2016; Smith & Simeone, 2017; Baird, & Billon, 2012
	Co-constructing	Bell & Taylor, 2016; Fine & Hallett, 2014; Reid & Beilin, 2014