Narratives Draw on Collective Memory to Construct Intangible Heritage: Group Identity Formation and Implications for Communication

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Abstract

Intangible heritage is an emerging area of study that would be strengthened by a communication perspective. Narrative serves as a foundational structure and method of creating both individual and group identity and has strong foundations in the field of communication. Theoretical linkages between the two constructs strengthen scholarship on group identity in the field of communication. However, the connection between intangible heritage and narrative is not direct. Instead, narratives draw on collective memory to create intangible heritage. This process is demonstrated both theoretically and practically. An oral history study with 18 self-identified American Jews shows that Jewish community members use oral narratives (storytelling) that draw on memories of traditional holiday celebrations to create Jewish heritage. Future research with additional populations could confirm this process.

Keywords: narrative, collective memory, intangible heritage, communication, group identity

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Intangible heritage is an emerging area of study traditionally researched by anthropologists. The aspects that make up intangible heritage can include oral traditions, such as storytelling, which are forms of narrative. Narrative serves as a foundational structure and method of creating both individual and group identity. While narrative is a well-established area of study in the field of communication, intangible heritage has yet to be studied by communication scholars, which is surprising given the linkages between intangible heritage and identity. Scholarly definitions of intangible heritage and narrative have parallel themes that emphasize individuals' or groups' active participation and commemoration processes and group identity formation. This paper addresses this issue by drawing intangible heritage into the field of communication through theoretical and practical linkages between the use of narrative and intangible heritage. An oral history study demonstrates that the process of narrative being used to create intangible heritage occurs empirically.

An important connection between the narrative and intangible heritage is commemoration, as evident in the literature, which manifests as collective memory. Therefore, I argue that when individuals use narrative to create intangible heritage they draw on collective memory to facilitate the process. The linkages and processes between these terms hold great theoretical implications for the field of communication as they provide the foundations for future communication-based research on how intangible heritage is constructed and what the implications of this are for group identity. These arguments are supported by a review of notable scholars and related literature and an oral history study that tests the practical application of the process in real world setting. The theoretical review provides definitions and discussions about

intangible heritage, narrative, and collective memory as their own fields of study, then links the three concepts successively to demonstrate how they draw on each other during the process. The oral history study focuses on Jewish practices and tests the practical application of the process of creating heritage using narrative and collective memory. The paper concludes with a discussion of study findings and the implications this research has for the field of communication.

Theoretical Explanations of Intangible Heritage, Narrative, and Collective Memory

Intangible Heritage

Intangible heritage was not defined as its own entity and area of study until the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage; therefore the definition and study of intangible heritage are new in the literature. Prior to 2003, *heritage* dealt almost entirely with tangible sites of memory, preservation of those sites and tourism. The 2003 definition stems from and is the culmination of a process that began with worldwide conservation acts and treaties, such as the International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites, commonly known as the Venice Charter 1964, and the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance, commonly known as the Burra Charter of 1979 (Ahmad, 2003) .

Intangible heritage is a process that links past, present, and future as people choose important parts of their history that are useful today and pass them to future generations (Ashworth, Graham, & Tunbridge, 2007; UNESCO World Heritage Center, 2008). The 2003 definition denotes heritage as “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills […] that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage” (UNESCO, 2003, p. 2). Intangible heritage is created through an ongoing process of communities combining reactions to the past with reactions to their present environment, thereby

creating group identity and facilitating the potential for those communities' legacies to continue (UNESCO, 2003).

Intangible heritage works in tandem with remembering as a performance that personifies memory (Smith, 2006). It is "a multilayered performance […] that embodies acts of remembrance and commemoration while negotiating and constructing a sense of place, belonging and understanding in the present" (Smith, 2006, p. 3). As I relate intangible heritage to narrative, it is important to note that narrative is a performance and that intangible heritage is a form of discourse, not only created by the words we use but how we use them to share heritage and to construct and reproduce knowledge (Smith, 2006). As I relate heritage to collective memory, it is important to note that heritage creates meaning through memory and simultaneously facilitates remembering (Smith, 2006).

Narrative and How It Facilitates Identity Formation

Narrative is a process grounded in the field of communication that permeates nearly all areas of the field and the study of both individual and group identity. Narrative is the first mode of communication children learn, and people continue to employ it throughout their lifetimes (Langellier, 1989; Singer, 2004). Langellier (1985) explains that narrative is a storytelling performance. As such, narrative presents the narrator's interpretation of his/her own past experiences in the order they occurred. This function accounts for the storyteller's experiences, but disregards the audience that hears the story and the context the story is told in; therefore the story is incomplete. However, narrative is more than the stories that people share; it is the structure of the words and the method used to share them (Bruner, 1991; Carr, 1986; Singer, 2004). Narrative facilitates individual identity formation by allowing individuals to make sense of their lives and the world around them through storytelling internally and with others (Singer,

2004). These stories are structured in a way that incorporates communal and familial history and links the individual to a greater society (Bruner & Feldman, 1996; Hammack, 2008, 2011). Thus, these stories build together to form the group identity of whichever community the individual belongs to while the individual draws on group history and identity to construct his/her individual identity (Bruner & Feldman, 1996).

Hammack (2011) uses the term *master narratives* to classify the aspects of communal and group identity that are so important that individual must include them in his/her personal narrative in order to feel like a member of that community. Family identity is a type of group identity, and the stories families share intergenerationally are "one of the first places where people get a sense of who they are" and facilitate family identity formation (Thompson et al, 2009, p. 107. These narratives are shared by multiple family members across generations; therefore, they are driven by both individual and group identities.

Interestingly, scholars (e.g., Bruner, 1991; Fisher, 1984; Langellier, 1989) note that narratives do not need to be empirically true for them to be significant and to help form identity. Langellier (1989, p. 244) clarifies that narrative is a "boundary phenomenon," meaning that it exists "between fact and fictions." Bruner (1991) explains that while narratives might appear to be true or false, they should not be judged against empirical reality, but against the current necessity in sharing the narrative. Indeed, narrative conveys what we know to be true of our own experience and often necessarily links us to something greater than ourselves, a shared group identity (Bruner & Feldman, 1996; Hammack, 2008, 2011).

We can begin to see the parallels between narrative and intangible heritage. Both concepts embody generational and communal linkages and group identity formation through shared storytelling. And, both concepts utilize a performance structure to create meaning and

identity. However, I argue that narrative and heritage do not connect on their own simply through similar definitions. Instead, when an individual uses narrative to create intangible heritage, he/she must draw on collective memory. Before arguing this point theoretically, I will explain collective memory.

Collective Memory

Halbwachs (1992) coined the term "collective memory" to explain how an individual helps his/her community to remember happenings that are important to the group. Collective memories are different than history in that the latter remains in the past, while the former, though imbued in the past, is an active part of our identities as they exist in the present and embody present events (Olick, 1999). However, collective memories cannot be entirely separated from history. In fact, collective memories draw on recollections of history that are molded with perceptions of present happenings; thus future memories are built on these reconstructions of a mixed past and present (Halbwachs, 1992).

Collective memories must be supported by a specific group identity that exists in a defined location and time period (Baussant, 2011; Halbwachs, 1992; Wertsch & Roediger, 2008). In turn, the collective memories help to define and reinforce those parameters so the group remains cohesive over time and so the group's (or even society's) self-preservation is supported (Blé, 2011; Gabel, 2013). Kucia, Duch-Dyngosz, and Magierowski (2013) refine the group-centric notion of collective memory by specifying that the group is a specific community-—whether a family, religion, ethnicity, race, organization, or nation—formed by shared recollections of past experiences.

Importantly, Halbwachs pointed out that often collective memory and individual memory are intertwined; individual memory "relies upon, relocates itself within, momentarily merges

with" collective memory to verify stories and fill gaps in individual memory (Halbwachs, 1992, pp. 50–51). Furthermore, Funkenstein (1989) explains that while collective memory is indeed experienced by individuals, such memory is a part of "human collectives" and therefore part of those groups' identities. Memory in any form cannot be separated from the social context in which it was conceived because those memories are entrenched in the language and symbols of that society.

Much like intangible heritage and narrative, collective memory is a process rather than a construct (Blé, 2001; Gabel, 2013; Nora, 1989; Wertsch, 2009; Wertsch & Roediger, 2008). Collective memory does not simply exist; it is perpetually constructed by individuals both on their own and as part of defined groups. "[I]individuals may influence and change the collective memory of the group, and the group can change the individual's understanding and consciousness of being a member of the group" (Wertsch & Roediger, 2008, p. 319). Collective memory is created by the group's social contexts and communication, while centering on "the group's perception of the present symbolic meanings of past events" (Kucia et al., 2013, p. 140). It evolves over time and works with time so that, while the memory is very much steeped in the past, it engages with and adapts to present circumstances so that the memory has current social relevance (Blé, 2011; Gabel, 2013; Hume, 2010; Smith, 2006). This influence of time is one of the many similarities evident between intangible heritage, narrative, and collective memory. All three are processes, link individuals to communities, and are crucial to group and individual identity formation.

Theoretical Linkages between Intangible Heritage, Narrative, and Collective Memory

There are many theoretical similarities between intangible heritage, narrative, and collective memory, including simultaneously influencing and embodying a group's identity.

Though the three terms can be seen as parallels of one another, I argue that they in fact influence one another to the degree that the use of narratives create intangible heritage by drawing on collective memory, a process that is supported in the literature.

Linking Narrative to Collective Memory

Collective memories (as well as individual memories) are primarily shared through narrative (Ricoeur, 2004). Memories remain authentic to both the span of time over which the memory is occurring and to the individual remembering because the process of creating collective memories preserves the relationship between the past and the present. In other words, collective memory is "fundamentally organized by" narrative (Wertsch, 2008, p. 122). Therefore, we cannot understand collective memories without analyzing the narrative structure. The structure of narrative highly influences the form the collective memory will take, as it can be the organizational structure of the memory (Wertsch, 2008; Wertsch & Roediger, 2008).

A memory drawn upon by an intangible narrative structure (i.e., not a tangible form, like a book, but an intangible form, like a conversation) is a memory of a shared group identity explained through select stories that embody the group and explain its history (Wertsch & Roediger, 2008). Those stories already exist within the group's shared recollection; it is up to the individual to draw on them when necessary. However, these narratives and memories do not belong to the individual alone; rather they link with the narratives and memories of other in-group members. Group identity is thus derived from the shared memories of in-group members and individuals who share collective memories have a salient group identity.

Linking Collective Memory to Intangible Heritage

Theoretical definitions of collective memory and intangible heritage demonstrate how the two concepts directly influence one another. For example, "collective memory is defined as

recollections of a shared past which are passed on through ongoing processes of commemoration, officially sanctioned rituals which remember a group through calling upon a common heritage, with a shared past as a central component" (Eyerman, 2004, p. 161). Memory takes on the characteristics of intangible heritage and intangible heritage acts as a setting of memory (Baussant, 2011). And, the purpose of intangible heritage is to create and express a common in-group identity through a collective memory that is developed when in-group members interact (Baussant, 2011). In fact, intangible heritage must specify and clarify this memory in order for the group's identity to survive (Baussant, 2011). Therefore, collective memory is a necessary building block in the construction of a group identity supported by intangible heritage.

Theoretical Conclusions on the Process: Linking Narrative and Intangible Heritage

Narratives, collective memory, and intangible heritage are linked together in a process that both develops and conveys group identity. Oral narratives, specifically storytelling, are "uniquely suited for the transmission of values of a religious and cultural heritage" (Schram, 1984, p. 43). Much like with collective memory, no matter what the setting, by hearing stories an individual internalizes a group's values and expectations and solidifies his/her identity within that group (Schram, 1984). Collective memories also are important in negotiating group identity to construct heritage (Smith, 2006).

The performance dimension of narratives is particularly important to linking the three concepts. According to Smith (2006), intangible heritage construction "involve[s] acts or performances of remembering, not just performances of remembering in terms of recounting oral histories, but also in embodying that remembering" (p. 47). Those performances and oral histories are narrative structures that draw on remembering (see Langellier, 1989).

In summation, the past is shared through storytelling narratives and cemented as master narratives, both foundational structures of group identity. As with collective memory, group membership is established and confirmed in this process. The narratives are then passed down through the generations via traditions, rituals, and performance (Eyerman, 2004). These narratives become "culturally institutionalized memories" that remain fixed throughout the life of the group (Hume, 2010, p. 190). Once such a memory-laden tradition, ritual, or performance is passed down from one generation to the next, it becomes, as many scholars pointed out, a part of that group's shared heritage.

Narrative, Collective Memory, and Intangible Heritage Creation in the Jewish Tradition

The intertwining of these three concepts is particularly evident in the Jewish community. The cohesion of Judaism as a religion and culture would not exist without collective memory because it facilitated the formation of Judaism as a minority group to help insulate Jews against outside political, cultural, and social threats (Valensi, 1986). In modern times, Jewish collective memory deals with themes of historical trauma, entrenched in the Holocaust and the obliteration of Jewish communities in North Africa and the Middle East (Valensi, 1986). These collective memory themes already are evident in narrative expressions, as older generations share their experiences of the events with younger generations.

Oral narrative, as "an integral part of Jewish religion and society," is an effective way of conveying Jewish heritage and thus Jewish values because such narratives are told intergenerationally (Schram, 1984, pp. 33, 44). Like many other groups, Jews define themselves against the actions and embodiments of other Jews, see themselves as part of a community, and use the narratives of their community to determine their own morals and values, but they do so by drawing on the collective memories of the Jewish community (Schram, 1984). Oral narratives

are therefore the manifestation of collective memory that form "the ethical guide, inspiration, [and] link to the cultural heritage and values of the Jewish People" (Schram, 1984, p. 44). The linkages between narrative, collective memory, and intangible heritage are thus evident within the context of the Jewish community. This example suggests that the linkages between the three terms are authentic.

To demonstrate that the process of narrative creating intangible heritage by drawing on collective memory is happening empirically, specifically within the Jewish community, I initiated an oral history study aiming to document how Jewish-identified individuals construct their intangible heritage. The study aims to address the following research questions:

RQ1. How (if at all) are the stories Jewish-identified Americans share about celebrating Jewish holidays as children similar to the stories of other Jewish-identified Americans?

RQ2. How unique to each family are the religious rituals, routines, or traditions used to practice Judaism on a daily basis or to celebrate the Sabbath or other Jewish holidays?

RQ3. What communication mechanisms or strategies do Jewish-identified Americans use to (a) recall how they celebrated holidays as children and (b) discover or create intangible heritage?

Research Methodology

Between September 2013 and March 2014, 18 oral history interviews were conducted with individuals who self-identified as Jewish, currently lived in the United States, and were over the age of 18. Participation was limited to self-identified adult Jewish Americans primarily because the prominence of discussions on the nature of American Jewish heritage and narrative

use (e.g., Friedman, Friedlander, & Blustein, 2005; Wenger, 2010) provides a significant theoretical foundation with which to synthesize results of this participant study. While both natural-born and converted Jews were invited to participate, only natural-born Jews participated. Participants ranged in age from 22 to 74, and all but one had or wanted to have children.

The study collected data using the oral history methodology, as explained by Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011). Oral histories are taken to study longer periods of time in a participant's life or to focus on a particular historical time frame. The researcher can narrow the scope of the topic so as not to cover the entire scope of a participant's life, but rather select instances and memories dealing with relevant themes. In this study the topic was narrowed from the breadth of Jewish identity to celebrating Jewish holidays and participating in Jewish rituals. An "in-depth story" of a part of a participant's life is thus created (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Another reason for employing the oral history method is because, "while oral history focuses on the individual and her narrative, it can be used to link micro- and macro phenomena (in other words, personal life experiences to broader historical circumstances)" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 134). Oral history was, therefore, especially pertinent to this study as I endeavored to link each participant's experience of celebrating holidays as a child to Jewish communal traditions and practices as a whole.

The protocol was used as an interview guide but not followed strictly, as is consistent with the unstructured nature of the oral history methodology. Interviews covered three time frames in each participant's life: childhood, present day, and the future. Questions about childhood focused on remembrances of the holidays participants celebrated with their families and the discussions they had with their parents about Jewish identity and reasoning behind Jewish affiliations and practices. Questions about present day focused on current relationships

with and within the Jewish community, religious affiliations, and conversations between parents and children about religious participation and identity. Questions about participants' present-day relationships with their children were reframed for those participants who are currently childless to reflect thoughts on what these participants might say to their future children, if they have any.

After transcribing the interviews, answers to questions that were most applicable to this study were extracted.[1] Answers were then coded and analyzed using thematic analysis and deductive methods, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis is a flexible method of data coding and analysis that is not tied to one specific research paradigm and thus "can be applied across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). The researcher discovers themes inductively or deductively to provide a rich description of observed phenomena. First, definitions of intangible heritage, narrative and collective memory, as described in this paper, were used to determine appropriate terms as codes. Then, the transcripts were deductively coded and analyzed based on those terms. During analysis, instances in each interview where the themes appeared were cross-compared with instances of those same themes in the other interviews to create a more complete picture of how participants as a group of Jewish Americans articulated their experiences celebrating holidays and experiences Jewish rituals, routines, and traditions.

Study Results

The results of the oral history study are presented by research question.

[1] Examples of such questions include: "Tell me a story about a particular Jewish holiday you really enjoyed celebrating when you were growing up. Do you still enjoy celebrating that holiday?" and "Did you have any religious rituals, routines, or traditions that you knew belonged only to your immediate family, such as parents, grandparents, and siblings?"

RQ1: How (if at all) are the stories Jewish-identified Americans share about celebrating Jewish holidays as children similar to the stories of other Jewish-identified Americans?

Participants shared stories of their favorite holidays and why they enjoyed them. Often these stories had similar themes about how participants would celebrate holidays in traditional ways and enjoy them for similar reasons. This was particularly evident with Purim and Hanukkah, which participants overwhelmingly said were their favorite holidays, especially growing up, because of the opportunity to dress up and receive presents, respectively. "Um well I mean when you're a kid Hanukkah is always your favorite. Or Purim, Purim was pretty fun." "Purim [was my favorite] because it was Halloween for Jews; it allowed us to have our own fun and get together and celebrate and dress up." A couple participants recalled that their mothers sewed their Purim costumes when they were children, which made that holiday extra special for them. One participant shared how she kept holiday traditions as a college student despite being away from home. She told the story of her time living in the dorms, celebrating with her Jewish roommate and how kind others in the dorm were to them in their celebrations: After coming back from dinner one night during Hanukkah, "hanging on our door were two of our knee highs [stockings] […] and in each knee high was eight gifts for the eight nights of Hanukkah that our friends had numbered for us. And, every night they [others in their dorm] made a big deal of our opening our Hanukkah gifts, so it was really nice." Passover also was a favorite among participants, particularly because it provided a change from regular life, where traditions made it clear that the holiday was special because different dishes were used and food was eaten. One participant shared: "Some people will switch the kitchens over weeks ahead of time, like give me a break. I would wake up and there's a new table cloth, you know, a different table cloth and our

special Passover dishes. It was like magic as a little kid. As an adult I know how much caffeine it takes to do it and it's not magic at all [laughs]. Um, still my favorite holiday, though."

Interestingly, a few participants shared that they counted Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, as one of their favorites. One participant explained that this is "because it's a day of solitude, and it's a day of meditation, it's a day of asking yourself the questions, the deep questions, and putting to peace some of the conflicts that you might have had during the year." Another explained that Yom Kippur was special for him because it meant he could go with his father and grandfather to synagogue. "I remember feeling like a real big boy because I got to go with my father, my grandfather to walk the [synagogue] at night for *Kol Nidre* [prayer on the first night]. I remember sitting with my father, my grandfather in synagogue and that was always very very special." Yet another participant who spent time in Israel as a child said that he particularly enjoyed Yom Kippur, despite its restrictions on eating, working and using everyday luxuries, like vehicles: "On Yom Kippur, the first night, I used to enjoy the fact that there were absolutely no vehicles on the streets, so you were able to walk anywhere and everywhere without having to worry about getting hit."

Participants shared that holidays were most often celebrated with family, and some participants really enjoyed the communal aspect of holidays. "I gravitate towards holidays where I'd see friends and I'd spend time with family," one participant shared. "Passover would be one of them; Rosh Hashanah would be the other." "I would say those are the holidays that were special, with family coming in from out of town and even people you don't see all the time or don't see as often during the year," said another participant of why he favored certain holidays, such as Passover. Another participant shared that her aunt was "the one that was really into, you know, having people over and fixing and all that, so she used to have all the holidays at her

house," and often that included 20–30 family members. Holidays provided a time to reach other to others, including those who had no family of their own to celebrate with. As one participant explained, "Frequently my parents would invite, I don't know, random lost souls for dinners or something. You know the single person or the person whose husband doesn't want to celebrate the holiday. That kind of person would show up at our *seder*." Holidays also offer time to remember loved ones who are no longer living. "As you get older the holidays are even more and more special now, especially if you look back because a lot of people who were at those holidays are no longer alive."

Interestingly, not a single participant said they celebrated Christmas in some way, even with parents accommodating a Hanukkah bush or exchanging presents. It is possible that this did not happen because most of the participants grew up in fairly religious and traditional homes. However, one participant explained that she did celebrate Halloween growing up. "We also did Halloween, which I know is very unusual," she said, as many Jews do not celebrate Halloween because Jewish law forbids participation in non-Jewish traditions.

These themes that participants created through their stories about celebrating holidays show a trend among self-identified Jews toward shared traditions. Nearly all participants enjoyed celebrating Hanukkah and Purim as children for much the same reasons: to receive presents and dress up in costume. Nearly all participants enjoyed spending time with family during the holidays, particularly for the Passover *seder*. But, only one participant recalled deviating from tradition to celebrate a non-Jewish holiday (Halloween). These shared experiences both draw on and create the collective memories of celebrating these holidays, which strengthens Jewish group identity and creates a shared intangible heritage.

RQ2: How unique to each family are the religious rituals, routines, or traditions used to practice Judaism on a daily basis or to celebrate the Sabbath or other Jewish holidays?

Most participants did not express any rituals, routines, and traditions they and their families used on a daily basis to practice Judaism that were especially unique to their families. For example, one participant replied "Not really, I mean any observant family would do as we did." Another said, "I can't think of anything that was unique to the family, [it was] all very very commonly New York Orthodox tradition." Yet another said, "No we were typically *Ashkenazi* [the ethnicity of Eastern European Jews]." And another: "I don't think it's [our way of practice is] that much different than other people."

Participants expressed similar traditional rituals that they and their families used to celebrate holidays and the Sabbath (*Shabbat*), including partaking in a Passover *seder*, fasting on Yom Kippur, and dressing up in costume for Purim. "We did Purim at synagogue, we did *Shabbat* at our house every week. Um, we would do *seders* and Rush Hashanah and break fasts [after fasting on Yom Kippur] and all that at our house." A participant shared that her family followed all the traditions to celebrate Passover: "Oh, the full *seder*, changed dishes and everything, sure." To celebrate the Sabbath, one participant and his family joined together in "lighting candles, saying blessings over wine and challah, having a meal together with family." Another participant recalled an early time in her long marriage when her in-laws would hold the *seders* for Passover, which set an example for her as good Jewish role models.

Food was a large part of traditions and rituals for participants. Many familial gatherings and celebrations revolve around the meal. For example, "Rosh Hashanah is dinner the night before, lunch the first day, lunch the second day." Passover was particularly a time to reflect on food. As one participant explained, "Passover's always made to be different. There were foods

that we ate on Passover that we never ate the rest of the year." Another participant illustrated the variety of foods that are tied to Jewish holiday traditions: "My mother made brisket on I guess Rosh Hashanah and probably on Passover. I have her brisket recipe. And latkes, potato latkes with sour cream on Hanukkah. My brother makes the latkes, but otherwise, oh and I have my mother's hamentashen recipe [the traditional pastry of Purim]. I make the hamentashen, my mother's hamentashen, recipe every year." As one participant summed up the significance of food and Jewish holidays, "I'm sure you have heard the line, the definition of all Jewish holidays: They tried to kill us, we won, let's eat. The let's eat is part is [an important] part of the holiday."

Only one participant shared recalled a tradition that was unique to his family, which involved food, though he acknowledged that it might have been a regional tradition rather than a familial tradition. He said:

> Growing up, and this is unique to my family […] the last thing we eat when we break the fast [after Yom Kippur] is hot grilled potatoes with sour cream. Well now you say why? Well figure it out. My grandfather who came from Ukraine or Russia or whatever, the staple food was potatoes. […] Since they were having a dairy meal [as is customary to break the fast], they would be able to put sour cream on the potatoes. So, I remember distinctly growing up that we get back from synagogue and my grandmother would light the stove, start boiling the potatoes while we ate the herring and the lox, and you know all the usual.

With only one strong deviation from traditional Jewish rituals and routines, the patterns of shared rituals, routines and traditions among the participants is clear. Therefore, the rituals, routines, and traditions embodied in the holiday practices of these Jewish individuals are not

unique to them. Instead, they draw on collective memories of what celebrating these holidays should be like for a typical Jewish family with a strong in-group identity.

RQ3: What communication mechanisms or strategies do Jewish-identified Americans use to (a) recall how they celebrated holidays as children and (b) discover or create intangible heritage?

Participants used a narrative structure to recall how they celebrated holidays and to create heritage. Each participant told stories of his/her childhood experiences celebrating those holidays that mirrored the stories of other participants. As I explained in the results for the first two research questions, participants drew on similar themes of Jewish tradition and practice to explain their experiences celebrating holidays and what was important to them in terms of their own Jewish identities while celebrating those holidays. These similar themes form the basis of collective memory, as they draw on a shared recollection of what celebrating holidays should be like for a typical Jewish family. In the discussion, below, I further elaborate how the processes of narrative expression, collective memory recall, and intangible heritage construction play out in this study.

Discussion of the Study Results

This study showed that Jewish-identified Americans celebrate holidays in similar ways, share similar memories of how to celebrate holidays, and use storytelling about these holidays to construct a shared group identity that manifests intangible heritage. In part, oral history, according to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011), focuses on an individual's narrative, and the interview process employed in this study facilitated participants' sharing of storytelling narratives about how they and their families celebrate holidays. Some participants had trouble recalling stories about holidays from their childhoods and tended to shift the conversation

towards more recent memories. Hendel (2005) says this process is normal. Often people have trouble recalling far back in their lives, and because collective memories are entanglements of past and present, people will draw on more recent memories to supplant the older memories they have trouble recalling (Hendel, 2005).

Questions and stories about how participants celebrate holidays and other religious traditions were particularly important to demonstrating the theoretical linkages established in this paper: that individuals use a narrative structure (storytelling) to draw on collective memories to create their intangible heritage. As Valensi (1986, p. 285) explains, "religious practice is a commemoration of the past. […] Religious practice then consists, though not exclusively, of the commemoration of these events during which the believers re-enact episodes of the past." By focusing on topics of religious practice, participants were able to use narrative to share aspects of their Jewish identities that are exceptionally collective because they draw on commemorations of religious experiences and traditions. Participants using a storytelling mechanism to share religious traditions common to all members of the group (in this case, the Jewish community) demonstrates the practical linkages between narrative and collective memory. Participants stating that, in sharing similar or the same holiday traditions as other American Jews, they were no different than other members of the Jewish community, shows that the narrative (stories) participants shared were truly communal and thus were comprised of collective, not individual, memories.

Intangible heritage was co-constructed in this study because participants communicated that passing down these same religious traditions and practices to their children—whether they had children yet or not—was very important. The construction of intangible heritage is dependent on the notion that traditions and rituals are being passed down from one generation to

the next, as explained theoretically by Thompson et al (2009), Tunbridge (2007), UNESCO (2003), and UNESCO World Heritage Center (2008), among others. Sharing about the religious rituals, practices, and traditions they partook in as children while celebrating holidays or on a daily basis establishes that participants drew from a collective memory of such Jewish celebrations and shared them through an oral narrative structure (storytelling). The intangible heritage these participants thus created was one steeped in a strong Jewish group identity and a desire to pass to their children the shared Jewish traditions and practices they grew up with or came to practice as an adult. Friedman et al. (2005) found similar results in their endeavor to develop a more concise description of Jewish group identity. They noted that "participants stressed the importance of passing down their religious and cultural heritage to the next generation, particularly to their own children," among other common important traits (p. 80). The similarities between Friedman et al.'s (2005) study and my oral history study show that heritage and the elements that make up heritage is an important part of group identity.

Concluding Remarks and Directions for Future Research

This paper explores the scholarly discussions about and linkages between intangible heritage, narrative, and collective memory. The oral history study demonstrates that these linkages happen empirically within the American Jewish community. While avenues for studying such linkages exist in the field of anthropology, the field of communication does not yet study intangible heritage creation. Studying intangible heritage from a communication perspective would provide scholars with a new perspective on intergroup and intragroup identity formation and on intergenerational communication. The field of communication has much to offer the studies of intangible heritage and collective memory, given that it is a broad and established field and provides many solid scholarly and theoretical discussions about narrative.

Linking intangible heritage studies to the more established study of narrative provides more solid support for intangible heritage studies and another avenue in which to study its creation.

Future scholars could focus on additional theoretical contributions to the linkages between the three main concepts that were excluded from this paper. Individual identity as a large part of both collective memory and narrative could be explored more in-depth. And, tradition provides another direction by which to examine the linkages between collective memory and intangible heritage. Future research on the linkages between narrative, collective memory, and intangible heritage should take into account the identity and tradition literature to broaden the theoretical discussion and support study findings. In addition, the oral history study only focused on American Jewry for practicality reasons. Further studies with varying populations, both Jewish and non-Jewish could verify that narratives do draw on collective memories to construct intangible heritage.

Although in this paper intangible heritage is emphasized as a new area of study that can be strengthened by the field of communication, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1995, p. 370) points out that "heritage is there prior to its identification, evaluation, conservation, and celebration." Therefore, intangible heritage, including Jewish heritage, exists independently of the individuals who have helped shape it. Indeed, the Jewish people actively have been engaged in creating intangible heritage since at least the late nineteenth century (Wenger, 2010). Therefore, those who create intangible heritage now, like my study participants, build on the intangible heritage creations of their ancestors, much like individuals draw on the collective memories embodied in group identities to form their own individual identities.

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