Legacies:
transforming memories into memorials

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Leroy's work related memorabilia. His mother made the doll's clothing
out of his fire department uniforms; the toy fire trucks are models
of the rigs he used to work on.

Introduction

This paper is a synopsis of a thesis submitted to the Social Science and Anthropology departments at San Jose State University. The thesis investigated the significant memories, personal memorials, and legacies of ordinary people who were undergoing very special circumstances. All of the participants have faced—either personally or as a familial caregiver—a life threatening event that challenged them to clarify their important memories, sort symbolic memorabilia, and consider whether descendants will appreciate the value of personally saved artifacts. Legacies looked at these aspects of American culture in the south San Francisco Bay Area at the beginning of the 21st century.

The disciplinary perspective for the thesis was primarily anthropological and incorporated psychological concepts. The research methodology was ethnographic in design. Because individuals who have faced a life threatening event are often involved in reviewing their lives and assessing legacy issues, they were chosen to be the windows of investigation. Specifically, eighteen individuals who have faced or are facing a life threatening event were interviewed, their home sites toured, and their personal memorials observed and photographed. The primary investigative questions were: Do participants mark significant memories, relationships, or personal values with tangible objects? If so, why? Do informants state or imply that they hope survivors will consider those objects a viable part of their earthly legacy?

This paper gives a brief discussion of the primary domains (memories, memorials, legacies), discusses the methodology, and reviews the findings and implications. The entire thesis (comprehensive literature review, academic and clinical significance, detailed accounts of the findings) can be found in the library at San Jose State University.

Discussion of primary domains:
memories, memorials, legacies

Memories

In this paper, memories refer to autobiographical reminiscences. These memories are narratives about specific times, places, persons, and events laden with affective meaning.

The anthropological tool used to capture and then analyze the autobiographical memories was that of an informal life review. The term is used here to mean: The voluntary action of an individual to recall and retell the significant events of one's life to an interested audience. For this project, reminiscing about the significant events of one's life was considered a form of a life review. This type of life review was solicited through the use of ethnographic, in-depth, open-ended interviews. This particular approach is exploratory and flexible, allowing the speaker to direct the conversation toward the areas they consider significant. For Legacies, the significance of using life review tactics lies in its ability to uncover informant's memories, its inherent emotional value, and its accessibility to laypeople.

Memorials

In this paper, memorials represent those items chosen by an individual to symbolically represent an autobiographical memory. The individual has assigned meaning to an item that may or may not be obvious without explanation. Memorials included reminiscentia—that which is left behind (Casey 1987:11), symbolic mementos—objects arbitrarily assigned meaning (Casey 1987:95-96), and places—memory sites (Casey 1987:195-201).

Private or personal memorials were sought through a variety of data gathering techniques. Ethnographic tools (interviewing, observing, on-site tours) were used to uncover items that had been assigned meaning by the informants, symbolized autobiographical memories, and initiated reminiscing. Those private memorials, or memory inducers, gave the informants' memories a thicker consistency so that the past remained in a more concrete manner to the informant.

The primary theory used to catalogue and analyze these memorials was that of symbolic interactionism. The main task of the symbolic interactionist is to capture the process for interpreting or attaching meaning to various symbols. Symbolic interactionism was significant to this research for a number of reasons. First, it addresses a concern in a specific locality. Second, it reinforces the qualitative, ethnographic method by attempting to capture the individual's point of view and then enabling them to speak for themselves. Third, it seeks to understand how and why individual's have assigned meaning to objects. Finally, it investigates how individuals and their respective groups communicate the meanings of objects. This perspective views individuals as unique beings as well as intergenerational bearers of ongoing culture.

Studies have shown that people assign meaning to objects for personal efficacy (Tobin 1995; Olick, Robbins 1998; Casey 1987:206; Sherman 1991), in the hopes that it will be a part of one's legacy to the next generation (Tobin 1995), and, some are inherited from a former generation and the current host or hostess is merely considered the temporary guardian (Tobin 1995; Rosenzweig, Thelen 1998:16-18; Keating 1996).

Sheldon Tobin (1995) found in his study of elderly people, that as individuals age, their lives and environments change but the objects they assign meaning to do not. He proposed that the objects individuals choose to keep are a type of legacy that they bequeath to themselves. He noted that individuals chose to save photos, religious artifacts, jewelry, art, and recreational objects as they moved to smaller settings or institutions. He concluded that these things were connections to their historical past and served the purpose of maintaining a sense of self. When individuals were forced to leave their reminiscentia and symbolic memorabilia behind, a "de-selfing" process ensued, social connections were severed, and a loss of coherence to life's narrative was felt. Tobin found photos to be the most cherished possessions of elderly people. He said that senior citizens "bore" visitors with tattered albums and graying pictures as a means of conveying a sense of the self to those who did not know them then.

One other important note in the subject of objects and their assigned meaning comes from the research team of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton (1981). They wrote, "For an adult, objects serve the purpose of maintaining the continuity of the self as it expands through time" (1981:100). Cherished objects preserve identities, represent ties to special people, and evoke meaningful memories. Yet, they note, the value of these objects may not appear obvious to uninformed observers.

The findings of Rosenzweig and Thelen (1998) confirm the personal efficacy of saved artifacts and that the assigned meaning of the object must be passed with the object in order for it to retain its influence. They found that a form of communication regarding the meaning of the item, or the narrative behind the article, needed to be shared in order for the symbolic representation to be preserved by the next generation. In this way, they argue, private memorials have the ability to not only fashion the identities of individuals but of families. The authors also found that some collectors were not aware that they had assigned meaning to an item until they had gone through several moves and noticed that the items mysteriously remained in their possession.

Legacies

In its narrowest sense, the concept of legacy refers to tangible wealth or property that one can bequeath to named individuals. In its broadest sense—and, as it is used in this paper—legacy

goes beyond those boundaries to include intangible assets individuals wish to impart before they leave—assets with no apparent monetary value but of abiding importance to the legator. In its expanded definition, the concept provides individuals with a mechanism for transmitting or reproducing their cultural values, wisdom, and knowledge in the hopes that something they value will continue after they are gone. In this way, legacy is a part of cultural generativity—the awareness of being bound to those who have gone before and those who will come after (Kane 1996a; Wyatt-Brown 1996) and a psychosocial end-of-life task that some say is at the heart of what it means to be human (Kane 1996b).

In the last ten years, legacy research has increased in popularity. However, the majority of the research has been conducted in the area of tangible legacies (Keating 1996; Rubenstein 1996; Weinberg 1996). Although clinicians are beginning to discuss intangible legacy issues—wisdom, oral history, cultural values—scientific investigations lag in these areas.

One recent study involving legacy issues was conducted by Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen (2000). The authors of Presence of the Past conducted a telephone survey with 1,453 informants regarding people's interest in "history making" and "historical identity." The anecdotes that they cite support the idea that reminiscing makes Americans feel connected to the past and that some hope their descendants will value their artifacts. However, the study's interview protocol left some social scientists troubled with its ambiguity (Blake 1999; Kammen 2000). For example, in the introductory chapter, Rosenzweig and Thelen stated that their plan was to investigate if ordinary Americans feel connected to academic historians by asking informants if they participated in "popular historymaking" (2000:1-3). As the interviewers began testing the interview protocol, they found that the informants seemed confused by the "popular historymaking" phrase. At first, "history" was dropped in favor of "traditions" and "heritage;" eventually the question became, "Do you participate in the past? (2000:234). When participants responded in the affirmative and cited examples of reminiscing about their personal lives, the interviewers allowed participants to talk about information that was not in their operational definition or original research design (Kammen 2000). Of special significance to this project was the fact that the interviews were conducted on the telephone not in the informant's natural setting. And, the informants were taken at their word, no evidence was sought to see if the participants actually acted as they said.

For those who hope to transfer legacies intergenerationally, their first task is to take stock of their accomplishments and disappointments, inventory their possessions, and reflect on the people, places, and events that have given their lives meaning—or, to conduct a life review (Kane 1996a; Kane 1996b; Wyatt-Brown 1996; Weinberg 1996; Kotre 1995). Then, they must find a contemporary descendant who is willing to receive the gifts they choose to leave, both material and cultural (Keating 1996; Kotre 1995). The legacies addressed in this project require both a giver and a receiver, a legator and an heir, or a teller and a listener.

While seeking to uncover legacy issues in this research, John Kotre's (1995) theory of cultural generativity served as a pivotal premise. Briefly, cultural generativity means, "a desire to invest one's substance in forms of life and work that will outlive the self." It is a conscious concern or commitment to act in behalf of others and also a mode of living on in other people, institutions, groups, or through valued possessions. The theory of cultural generativity has implications for all three domains investigated in this research. To practice cultural generativity, an individual reviews significant memories, creates narratives that will display and communicate values, and finds a

willing listener. Cultural generativity affirms individual life and connects one to their social world. It is a communal event, not a solitary endeavor.

Transferring legacies can be a valuable function for both dying individuals and their survivors. In order for the legator to gain maximum benefit from the gifts they wish to give, an audience or recipient or listener is required. According to the literature, there appears to be a shortage of listeners; this may not be an indication that people do not care enough to listen but that they do not know how to listen. The challenge of this research was to explore how people build and use their legacies, both as people in need and as recipients.

Approach

Disciplinary approach

The last fifty years have seen the glaring gaps between anthropology and psychology close in such a way that psychological anthropology is now considered a sub-discipline of anthropology that initiates the cross-cultural study of the self. It "analyzes the manners in which human identity is variously disintegrated and reintegrated, conceptualized and realized, in diverse cultural and temporal settings" (Lindholm 2001:10). Bridging the gap between anthropology and psychology is not an easy task but one that has implications for the study of cultures as well as individual agency. The insights gained through psychological anthropology can be a viable way of understanding identity and the complex relationship between culture and the individual.

In this research project, the psychological perspective focused on the significant memories of individuals, how they choose to mark those memories with personal memorials, and the end-of-life desire to share those memories and memorials with an interested listener. The anthropological perspective provided a window for investigating how culture is transferred at the end-of-life through the disbursement of both tangible and intangible legacies. It also provided qualitative research tools that could be used to address a concern in a specific community.

Theoretical approach

All social research is framed by a theoretical perspective. Researchers choose their framework based on the domains being addressed, the questions they wish to ask, the communities being studied, or how the results will be used. Within the discipline of anthropology there are a number of recognized theoretical approaches to the study of culture. In Legacies, the interpretive perspective was used.

In the interpretive perspective, researchers look for the social reality of a specific group. Unlike positivists or critical theorists, interpretivists are interested in local meanings and tend to present accounts as polyvocal texts. Because meaning can only be discovered through interactions with participants, qualitative ethnography is a suitable research tool. The interpretive perspective also gives the research malleability—the project's design can shift and reshift as symbols are exposed, patterns are recognized, and latent functions are documented. Another important factor is that although it is not necessarily change oriented, it does produce a "deep sense of shared understanding of a particular social problem as well as a set of shared norms that leads to specific directions for action" (LeCompte, Schensul 1999:50). In this perspective, the individuals are the

bearers of culture and the researcher looks for the meanings actors attach to things through their communication, actions, and interactions. According to Clifford Geertz the way to do that is to "descend into detail… to grasp firmly not only the various cultures but the various sorts of individuals within each culture" (1973:53).

Ethnographic approach

The idea of culture, as developed and refined by anthropologists, is a fundamental concept of twentieth century thought. The idea is used by all of the social sciences and has spread to many of the applied academic disciplines as well. Margaret LeCompte and Jean Schensul cite this definition, "Culture is the beliefs, behaviors, norms, attitudes, social arrangements, and forms of expression that form a describable pattern in the lives of member of a community or institution" (1999:21). Anthropologists search for the invisible guidelines of a given culture by looking for patterns, symbols, implicit/explicit expressions, and manifest/latent functions. One of the research tools used to uncover those guidelines and build theories of cultures that are located in local time and space is ethnography.

Ethnography literally means, "writing about groups of people" (LeCompte, Schensul 1999:21) and is rooted in the concept of culture. Because it assumes that we must first determine what people actually do and the reasons they give for doing it, ethnography is often the tool of choice when the research problem is not yet clearly identified. It is a tool of discovery. Applied ethnographic research focuses on problems that are important to both the researcher and people in the setting where the research is going to take place. As such, its results are usually most useful to members of that particular group or community; however, the theories that are generated by ethnographic narratives can then be used as the basis for hypotheses, patterns, or interpretations explored in other settings and in other times (LeCompte, Schensul 1999:8).

An ethnographer begins by observing people in their natural setting and searching for patterns in their lives. What are people doing? What do they say they are doing? Why do they say they are doing it? In ethnographic research, any data gathering technique that will illuminate the research questions can be used. It will always include qualitative research but can utilize quantitative methods as well. Qualitative research seeks answers to questions by examining a setting and the actors in that setting. This type of research focuses on how humans make sense of their surroundings through symbols, rituals, social structures, or social roles.

Once data has accumulated, the ethnographer will use inductive and deductive processes to explain the behavior and beliefs of the group being investigated. First, inductive reasoning is used to create some general suppositions about the culture, physical phenomena, and the reasons why they might be happening as they are. These concepts are elaborated and investigated further until enough data has been gathered to confirm a pattern. The patterns form a theoretical model. This can be referred to as a recursive process because of the cyclical nature of the analysis, moving back and forth between inductive and deductive analysis. An ethnographer engages in "bottom-up inductive thinking"—generalizing from concrete data to more abstract principles. Simultaneously, they engage in "top down deductive thinking"—application of general theories to data they have already collected. (LeCompte, Schensul 1999:15-16).

The product of an ethnographic narrative is an interpretation of a group or community's culture in a specific time and in a specific setting. It allows the ethnographer to create a model of

that culture that is based on a synthesis of the people studied and the perspective of the researcher. According to Geertz, the result of an ethnographic investigations should be, "a thick description," a rich, comprehensive, and detailed account which positions cultural behavior in a wider context (1973:6).

In the ethnographic method, the researcher is the primary tool of data collection and is expected to have a high degree of empathy with her subjects. The relationship between the field worker and the people being studied is central to anthropological research. Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942), who pioneered the ethnographic technique of participant observation, felt that investigators should maintain the role of observer so that they will not lose objectivity (Lindholm 2001:88). However, the role of observer does not automatically imply objectivity. Since we all live in culturally constructed worlds, we cannot help but view other cultures through the lenses of our own viewpoint unless we are acutely aware of our own assumptions, presuppositions, a prejudices. Learning about other cultures is one way to expose the values we hold in our own.

Ethnography can be considered both a product of research as well as a research process. As a process, ethnography involves personal interaction with the informants in the research community using a variety of data collection tools. Ethnographers generally do not begin with a clear hypothesis but instead with an area of concern, a desire to understand, and the willingness to investigate. As a product, ethnography becomes an interpretive story or narrative about a group of people or a community. An ethnography can include attitudes, emotions, behaviors, and the technology and manufacture of materials and artifacts.

Due to the sensitive nature of the Legacies domains and the investigative nature of the research questions, quantitative research was considered inappropriate. Instead, a qualitative, ethnographic research protocol was designed to give participants a chance to reflect in a culture that leaves little time for such reflection. The multifaceted ethnographic tools provided the greatest potential for systematic exploration in an arena where anecdotal stories and assumptions have existed thus far.

Methodology

Sampling

Informants were sought through hospice networking, referrals, and acquaintenances. The informant parameters used to create a community included individuals who have faced or are facing a life threatening event as either a familial caregiver or a patient:

> *Caregiver.* An individual authorized in the eyes of a patient, the law, and the medical community to make physical, spiritual, emotional, and legal decisions for the person that they were caring for. By caring for a terminal patient, they vicariously faced a life threatening event.

> *Patient.* A patient is an individual who has faced or is facing a life threatening event. Those life threatening events could include: terminal illness, acute health crises, accidents, or a debilitating chronic illness that dramatically alters one's former lifestyle.

Informants were actively recruited in the hopes that the sampling pool would snowball. No one declined the request to be interviewed. Initially, some agreed as a personal favor; however, during and after the interviews, each of those participants expressed appreciation for being invited and

said they were surprised at how much they enjoyed the experience. In the first six months of 2001, eighteen participants were interviewed and additional data was collected on the patients of caregivers. Of the eighteen, eight were referrals and ten were either acquaintances or were friends of a friend.

Community demographics

Demographics
Eighteen interviews

Gender
Male: 6
Female: 12

Ages
41-50 = 5
51-60 = 7
61-70 = 1
71-80 = 4
81-90 = 1

Work
Self employed = 2
Administrative Assistants =   4
Fire Service personnel = 6
Education = 2
Food Service = 1
Health Care Industry = 2
Retail = 1

Informant parameters
caregivers: 9
patients: 5
both: 4

Education:
High school = 11
College graduate = 2
Vocational training = 5

Work status
Retired = 5
Unemployed = 5
Employed = 8

Family status
Married = 17
Children = 14

Total hours of interviews: 41
Pages of transcription: 464

Technique

Participants were asked to participate in an interview, in their home, and at their convenience. Some of the interviews were completed in one sitting, some required two appointments. Interview strategies were directed toward uncovering memories that might have been marked by an object and to investigate the reasons the owner cited for assigning meaning to those objects.

Memorialization techniques were explored by allowing informants to reminisce using an in-depth, open-ended interview. Based on the assumption that informants might forget about memorials during the course of an interview, a tour of their home—or minimally, their favorite room—was included at the end of the interview to provide more opportunity for data collection. For various logistical reasons, three of the informants were not able to host the interview in their homes; adjustments in the on-site protocol were made so that they could be included in the study.

The interview began by covering the informed consent, overview of the interview schedule, and purpose of the project. Then, a prepared and memorized statement was given regarding the

formation of memorials to see if the informants was aware of their memorializing activities before the interview began.

After the initial "memorial" assessment, informants were invited to give a mini-life review. They were encouraged to discuss demographics, beliefs, identity, major turning points, moments of fulfillment, regrets, and influential people. This was done to help them relax, move into the storytelling or narrative mode, and provide data on significant memories. Verbal and silent probing techniques were used to encourage reflection and dialogue.

During the second section of the interview, participants were asked if they had marked or memorialized any of the special places, important events, or influential people they had mentioned in the first section of the interview.

In the third portion of the interview, informants were told of activities others have used to mark memories and asked if they participate in any of those activities as well.

The interview concluded with a tour of the informant's home or favorite room, viewing artifacts discussed during the interview, and photographing memorials.

For interviews hosted by a primary caregiver, a second interview was conducted vicariously in behalf of the person they cared for. Once again, due to the time constraints of some of the participants, two interviews were not always possible and attempts were made to gather the information on both individuals in one sitting. This data was gathered as part of the investigative process, but did not carry the same weight as the data collected from the informants. It was secondary information and may or may not be what the person would have answered.

When the interviews were first transcribed, they were assigned codes according to whether they were patients or caregivers or hospice patients (i.e. PAT01, CARE01, HOS01). Once the analysis process began, it was difficult to keep the numbers and the interviews straight without constantly referring to the charts for identification so aliases were assigned to the participants and used for charts, diagrams, analysis, and papers.

From their countenance, comments, and openness in sharing personal information, it appeared that the participants enjoyed being listened to. Some seemed nervous in the beginning, but by the conclusion of the interviews, each participant expressed pleasure in the experience. Two of the participants were mothers who had cared for their terminally ill sons (both sons were in their twenties when they died). Both said that it felt good to talk about their sons. One said she enjoyed telling her son's story to "someone who had never heard it before."

When the interviews were being transcribed, pauses, laughter, and tears were documented. There were many pauses, some of them quite lengthy. When the participant paused, the interviewer remained silent and waited for them to continue or to indicate that they did not have an answer. The participants laughed often when telling their stories. There were also many tears. The tears did not seem to bother the informants; some stopped to cry, others continued to talk through them.
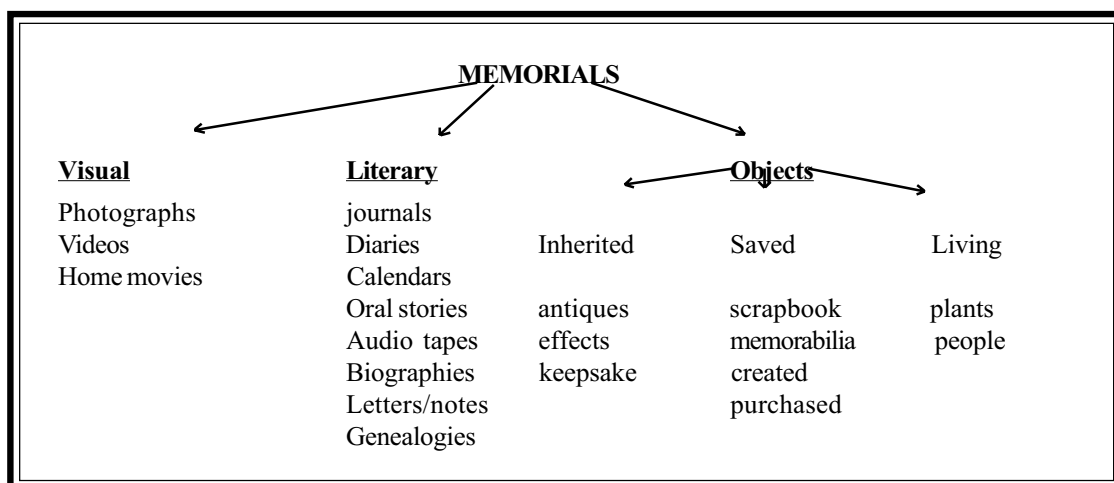
Analysis

The tapes were marked with the code name assigned to the informant and kept in a locked drawer. All field notes, descriptions, and pertinent notes were typed up within a few days of the interview and kept in a secure file cabinet. The photographs taken during the interviews were developed, coded, and stored appropriately.

As the data collection progressed, the transcripts were searched for patterns. The first primitive layers of coding were: significant memories, memorials, and reasons for memorialization. As the data continued to accumulate, patterns were noted in the narratives of the informants and the coding process became more detailed. Life themes—that were a part of their significant memories, reflected in memorials, or reasons for memorialization—were coded. Commonly held categories of significant memories were coded: work, beliefs, major turning points, influential people, and identity. Memorials were initially coded by Casey's three categories:: reminiscentia, symbolic memorabilia, and places; as patterns in the data began to emerge, memorials were also coded as: visual, literary, or objects. Reasons for memorialization were coded if they were: associated with the informant's heritage, collected for personal pleasure, or preserved for the purpose of cultural generativity. In addition, clues were sought that showed value: Was the item on display? Was it stored in a manner that preserves its integrity? Besides the informant, who knows its assigned value?

Memories	**Memorials**	**Reasons**
Work	Reminiscentia	Heritage
Beliefs	Memorabilia	Personal pleasure
Major turning points	Places	Generative
Influential people		
Identity	Visual	
	Literary	
	Objects	

The three memorial categories were further divided. Visual artifacts included photographs, videos, home movies. Literary items included journals, diaries, calendars, oral stories, audio tapes, biographies, letters/notes, genealogies. The objects category was the most complex and required two more layers of division. First they were divided into: inherited, saved, or living.

MEMORIALS

Visual	**Literary**		**Objects**	
Photographs	journals			
Videos	Diaries	Inherited	Saved	Living
Home movies	Calendars			
	Oral stories	antiques	scrapbook	plants
	Audio tapes	effects	memorabilia	people
	Biographies	keepsake	created	
	Letters/notes		purchased	
	Genealogies			

Then, those three categories were divided. The inherited items include: antiques, personal effects, keepsakes. The saved items were further delineated into: scrapbook—paper type, symbolic memorabilia—non-paper, things that were made, or things that were bought. Living objects were either plants or people.

It was also apparent that the reasons for memorialization needed to be refined. The heritage reasons were broken into three categories: heirlooms, residual effects of a loved one, and keepsakes (things they chose to keep from an influential person). Personal pleasure included items that they said they kept just for themselves with no intention of passing it to another. Generative items included anything that they implied or stated that they hoped descendants would treasure. Some of the categories blurred because the reasoning was multi-faceted. (Participants who were the guardians of familial heirlooms also hoped their children would value and preserve the items.) In those cases, the items were coded in both categories.

REASONS		
Heritage (Heirlooms) (Personal effects) (Keepsake from an influential person)	**Personal Pleasure**	**Generative**
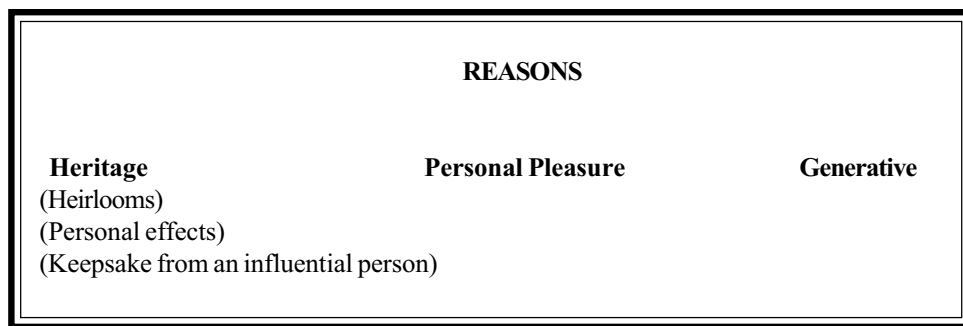
A computer program was not used to organize the data so this segment of the project proved to be very labor intensive. The coding was done on the transcripts in the right hand margin. The coded sections were pulled manually into computer files that sorted the data into topics and themes. In some cases, tables and charts were created so that the data could be seen at a glance.

In retrospect, the frustrating amount of time it took to organize the data may have actually proved advantageous. The time lapse between the final interview and the organization of materials provided a distance between the emotionally charged interviews and the analysis. Narratives could then be developed based on the content of the interviews and the artifacts displayed in the interview setting.

Findings

Memories.

The individuals in the informant pool gave evidence that they enjoyed being heard. Inspired by an interested audience, they shared both rehearsed and unrehearsed narratives. They provided well rounded portraits of ordinary lives by vocalizing disappointments, accomplishments, passions, regrets, sorrows, and joys thus affirming that even "negative" events have the potential to provide the rememberer with constructive benefits. Their stories transported them mentally and emotionally to different times and different places and gave them a chance to reflect in a culture that leaves little time for such reflection. The theories surrounding the efficacy of life reviews were evidenced in

this project: Reminiscing in the form of a life review has the potential to enhance an individual's sense of well-being.

The life review process gave informants a chance to bring their past, ageless self into the present (Olick, Robbins 1998; Casey 1987:290). All of the fragmented memories of their lives— the things they did, the places they went, the people they loved—showcased the facets of their cumulative identity. When asked to share their memories, informants accepted an opportunity to disclose their identity to another person. Due to the ethnographic methodology, they seemed relieved that the invitation came from one who was not there to judge or intervene but only to listen and understand.

The number of informants who chose to conduct the interview in their favorite room suggests how important it is to allow narrators to choose the setting. Scattered around the perimeter of their favorite rooms were their favorite things in the form of reminiscentia and symbolic memorabilia. In correlating the setting they chose with the level of intimacy offered in their interviews, it appeared that they invited the researcher to join them in their special, almost sacred, place as they spoke openly and revealed themselves to another.

It was also apparent in that people do not always volunteer information (even when it is positive). This contradicts the assumption that families know all of their elder's important narratives due to repetitive recitations at holiday dinners or family reunions. The importance of coaching, probing, or guiding a teller to share stories from all time sequences in their lives can not be trivialized.

The interview protocol was also a clear indication that life reviews can expose life themes and remove observer's assumptions. As Kotre points out, the first task of cultural generativity, or reproducing values in the next generation, is to share important autobiographical episodes that reveal one's values. Individuals in the community had the opportunity to recite their stories in their voice and in their own way—and, they took it. The commonly extolled values of our cultural system seemed to dissipate as informants talked about the things that mattered to *them*. No one listed assets or titles or power or appearance as their greatest treasures—their greatest treasures were the people they loved and the humble memorials they created to honor significant memories. The things, events, people, and places that they valued rose to the surface of their identity through the interview process. Without those personal revelations, it would not be an easy task to determine intangible legacies—especially if the "other" is no longer alive.

Memorials.

Informants did appropriate artifacts from their lives in a selective way, assigned meaning to them, and used them to memorialize their significant memories. According to the mnemonic masters, the best way to remember things was to choose memory inducers that were similar in appearance or had a connection to what one wished to remember. Unaware of that ancient technique, informants used it. By salvaging items from significant events, special places, or from the personal effects of someone they cared about, informants used reminiscentia as direct links to the memory. The use of photographs to preserve memories and relationships was another clear example of choosing inducers that are not only *similar* in appearance but *exact* one dimensional replications of them. These memorials did not have intrinsic meaning but were symbolically assigned meaning by those who used them as memory aids.

Regardless of the informant's reasons for choosing specific objects as memorials, there were connections between the object, the rememberer, and the moment they chose to remember. These artifacts were symbolically rich but silent external markers. In some respects, the memorials were altars of remembrance stored in a sacred place with the symbolic interpretation locked in the informant's heart.

As Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) point out, the value of some of the cherished objects was not always obvious. Sometimes informants were not even aware of their memorials until they were asked to explain the articles in their surroundings—then they began to connect their memorials to significant memories. The objects had been saved or created to give their memories a thicker consistency—so that past events remained in their present lives in a more concrete manner.

Just as their shared reminiscences revealed the ageless and cumulative aspect of their identities, their memorials served as external cues to their identities. Once the memorials were verbally interpreted for an interested audience, they revealed the informants' life themes and values. These memorials are the unique identity fingerprints that the informants will leave behind for the world to read and remember.

The study exposed some dramatic assumptions regarding the transfers of assigned meaning for memorials. This indicates that the oral transmission of memories has an intimacy beyond that of writing. When pressed, informants named one, sometimes two, people who had been told about the important cultural information that attended artifacts. The participants assumed that the legatee heard, understood, and would remember. This could be an example of the laissez faire way culture is learned (J. A. English-Lueck, personal communication, 5-30-02). People do not usually have direct and specific instructions about things. They want others to understand, to notice without being told, "This matters and this is how it matters."

Considering the importance of some of the information, it seems noteworthy that informants transferred it orally and with loosely formed social contracts. Informants easily articulated the meaning they had assigned to objects but were cautious when saying that family members had agreed to the significance or meaning. If the legatees had been interviewed, perhaps they would have eased the cautionary note and confirmed that the assigned meaning was mutually agreed upon information. It could be that the participants' hesitancy stemmed from the absence of reciprocity or communion. Individuals assumed the role of agency by assigning meaning to items and preserving their integrity; however, without communion—an empathetic and willing listener—they were not confident that the information had been transferred. Or, without reciprocity, they have no assurance that the information was transferred correctly. Not willing to relegate this kind of information to pen and paper, the information is casually offered in the hopes that someone will understand the importance, if not in the present, at some point in the future.

Legacies

In varying degrees, the informants had all reviewed, evaluated, and synthesized their lives in order to find purpose and meaning. And each, in their own way, looked for ways to invest themselves in the next generation. Some through tangible items, some through time spent with others, and some through the transference of cultural values.

As individuals shared their memories and memorials, they shared their hopes for their artifacts and clearly stated which ones they expected descendants to value and which ones they were convinced no one would want. They expected descendants to value familial heirlooms; they hoped the next generation would accept and preserve their values; and, they were convinced no one would want their personal memorials—their identity collections.

Informants expected, sometimes ambivalently, that descendants would value and preserve familial heirlooms. This was one of the many indicators that "family matters" to the individuals in the community. It also seems to be a reasonable expectation. If preserved long enough, the heirlooms will not only be a value to the family's historical roots, they will eventually become monetary assets. However, even in this arena, informants were not clear *who* in the next generation would become the guardian of familial history once they are forced to forfeit the role. They were confident that the items would be preserved; however, without knowing who would be the next historical custodian, they were not as confident that the assigned meaning and narratives will be sustained. In spite of this hesitancy, only a few informants took the time to detail in written format the narratives and history that attended the heirlooms. A reasonable conjecture for this is that *interest* is the key to who would succeed the current guardian of familial archives. Perhaps this role is not designated until interest is displayed and the oral transfer consummated. And, based on the successful enterprise of antique stores and collectible shops, one can surmise that often the transfer is not made and the artifacts are sold for their financial worth instead of saved for their familial value.

There were a variety of intangible concepts or values that informants hoped to transfer or reproduce in the next generation. The example that most clearly shows how difficult that task can be is in the area of religious beliefs. Of the five informants who said that they found strength, solace, and hope in their spirituality, three of them specifically stated that they hoped to reproduce those virtues in the lives of children and grandchildren. The informants know what they believe and why, have accrued artifacts that support their convictions, and have shared openly with family members about their faith. However, the speakers were acutely aware that they did not have a resource to *make* someone else value what they value. They could request that someone save their amplified Bible or their rosary or their prayer shawl. The heirs could respect those wishes, save the items, and acknowledge the legator's assigned meaning without accepting the assigned value for their own life. Items can easily be transferred; values can not. Even if the assigned meaning to an artifacts is maintained, the value may not be reproduced in the next generation.

The memorials that informants were certain no one would want were their identity collections (photo albums, scrapbooks, collections, souvenirs, symbolic mementos). Most informants clearly stated that "no one would want these things" and some of them were acting on those beliefs by getting rid of their artifacts through garage sales, donating them to Goodwill, or just throwing them away. They said that these collections were for their own pleasure and they could not think of a reason anyone else would be interested in them. Since these are the collections that represent their memories—their identity—the next several paragraphs will explore those expectations from several perspectives.

The assumption that "no one would want their identity collections" was repeatedly encountered. Based on the findings of this research, it is probable that family members and close friends will ask for keepsakes from the informant's personal effects when they die; and, most

likely, some of those keepsakes will include items from their identity collections. Unless the heir asks for the item while the individual is alive, it is difficult to predict what they will ask for or choose to keep as a symbolic reminder of the relationship. It is also challenging to predict what meaning the new owner will assign to the keepsake. For example: Angelica plans to dispense angels from her collection before she dies; will the legatees treasure the angels because they belonged to a friend or because they believe guardian angels are watching over them (Angelica's assigned meaning)?

In addition, this assertion could be linked to the cultural value of modesty. In some social circles, it is considered presumptuous to talk about oneself or to indicate self-value. Instead, it is the option of observers to make complimentary comments on achievements, good deeds, virtues, or values. In projecting this cultural dialogue to the script with terminally ill patients, the individual might say, "No one will want my identity collection" while hoping that the listener will argue the point. Unfortunately, if the legacy value of an identity collection is not discussed, the script cannot be played out and the person does not get to hear the affirmation. Those affirmations—of accumulated achievements and virtues—are left unsaid while the person lives and instead are often the topic of eulogies at memorial services.

Alternatively, individuals may find it difficult to communicate their distinct identities and values to others. While people are healthy and actively engaged in life, they naturally gravitate towards like minded individuals where communicating shared principles is simple. The primary draw is not blood lines or relationship but shared interest. At this point, there is no need to explain what something means or why it is important, the passions are confirmed almost silently by those who enjoy doing and dialoguing about the same things. Things change when mortality issues enter. At this stage of life, close relationships and blood lines do matter. Passions and memories marked by memorials must be explained to those who may not be like minded. Individuals struggle to explain abstract concepts as they try to transfer their values to the people they care about. How do you compel someone to be interested in you and the external markers of your values? Communication is no longer simple and cannot be silent.

The assumptions, cultural scripts, and insecurities addressed above are amplified by the lack of permanent documentation. If neither communion (person to person exchange) nor reciprocity (dialogue about information to confirm that it is understood correctly) take place—the patient dies thinking that their narratives, values, and identity are lost. Transferring intangible legacies, or cultural generativity, can not be a solitary endeavor if it is to be an affirmation to the patient. Several participants possessed gold leafed journals and fill-in-the blank books on family trees and genealogies. Except for one informant, these professionally prepared texts were all sitting on coffee tables gathering dust—the pages completely empty. Participants expected the transfer of cultural values to be oral, to be acts of communion and reciprocity. A book, no matter how beautifully published, does not fill this need.

Based on this set of informants, it appears that the gap in our culture does not lie in a shortage of generous people. The gap appears to be in the dearth of willing listeners.

Implications

Therapeutic implications

By revealing the symbolic connections between memories, memorials, identities, values, and legacies, this research indicates that one way to enhance the current cultural model is through communion and reciprocity, or by simply learning to listen actively. Solitary reminiscing can provide personal pleasure and be an internal legacy to oneself; however, when memories are silent, they can not provide the rememberer with social affirmation or a generative outlet. When personal memories are expressed through narratives, they present the rememberer with a chance to become an active participant in their social world.

In order to show how the domains work together, a visual prototype was created: Memories inspire memorials and memorials induce memories. Memorials and memories reveal identity or the ageless self. Identity creates narratives based on memories; those narratives reflect values. Values become one's legacy to the next generation. When a legacy is received, identity is affirmed.
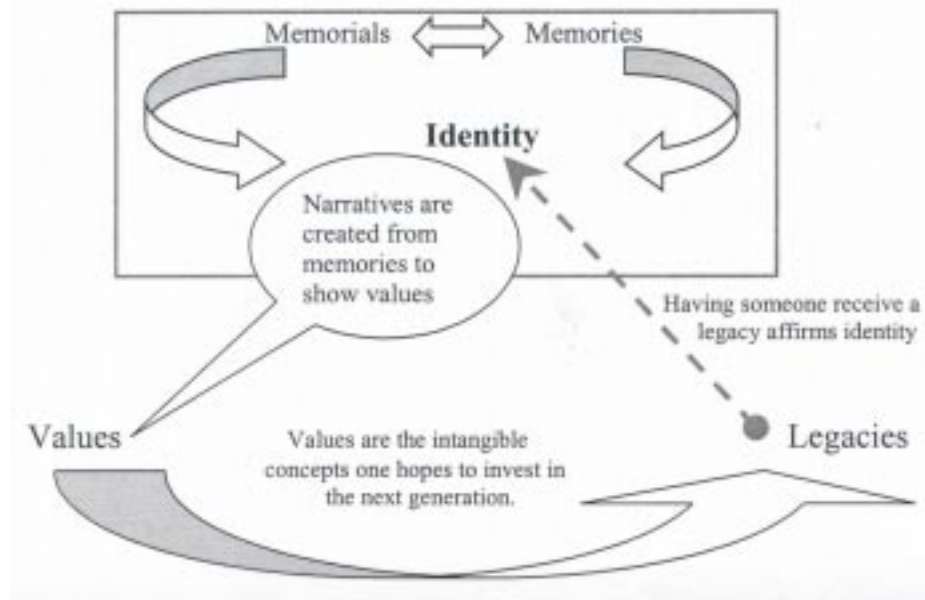
However, if the environment for this prototype does not honor social reminiscing, the individual loses a generative outlet for their legacies as well as opportunities to have their identity and values affirmed.

One of the goals in designing and conducting this research was to see if current practices could be enhanced by therapeutic activities. It appears that active and reciprocal listening can be recontextualized into a patient-caregiver setting. This study suggests that the ethnographic posture (with its emphasis on active listening) and the life review protocol (as well as connected questions about memorials) are effective but simple strategies that both affirmed and enhanced the lives of participants. This implies that ethnographic tools could be recycled as therapeutic tools.

This study indicates that it is possible to affirm the life themes and cultural values of those faced with a life threatening event by listening to them reminisce. Moved by compassion, ordinary

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people could use the tools of active and reciprocal listening skills in behalf of patients. An individual's first choice for an "audience" would no doubt be a family member or close friend; however, if the efficacy in life reviews is inherent in the process, it should produce results no matter who is using it.

One effective way to encourage social reminiscing is through an informal life review. An informal life review offers the speaker a new role with a new script. Once assigned the social position of designated storyteller, marginalized patients realize that they have something to give, their lives matter, they still belong. Lay people, who wish to participate, join the dialogue as interactive members of the audience. It is not the skill level or special training that qualifies lay people to assist in this way, rather it is their posture—the stance of one who comes to listen and understand in order to affirm the identity of the patient (communion). And, the attitude of one who expects to be a better person for having listened to the wisdom found in the narratives of another's life (reciprocity).

Individuals can be invited to discuss objects in their surroundings as another means of bringing their past self into the present. Looking through photo albums, scrapbooks, or sorting through collections can provide patients with an occasion to display the external markers of their cumulative self to someone who will survive them. In this way, individuals have the potential to continue their existence by living on in other people, institutions, or through their valued possessions.

The ethnographic posture prepares one to listen and understand the speaker's point of view. Guiding questions, silent probes, and reciprocity encourage the speaker to move into the storytelling mode and confirm that they are being heard. Ethnographic tools then record and document in such a way as to memorialize the speaker's narratives.

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