REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST: HOW EMPLOYEES PERCEIVE THEIR COMPANY'S HISTORY

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ABSTRACT

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST: HOW EMPLOYEES PERCEIVE THEIR COMPANY'S HISTORY

Brad Aeon

Over the past few decades, organizations have been increasingly showcasing and narrating their history (Keulen, 2013). A testament to this trend are the growing number of corporate museums and the increasing popularity of corporate archivists such as *The History Factory* (Delahaye, Booth, Clark, Procter, & Rowlinson, 2009; Fogerty, 1997; Nissley & Casey, 2002). The phenomenon hasn't gone unnoticed in academia, as many scholars have looked into the concept of rhetorical history—the practice of narrating organizational history in a self-serving way—and put forward several hypotheses relating to the effects of rhetorical history on strategic change and organizational culture (Gioia, Corley, & Fabbri, 2002; Ooi, 2002; Suddaby, Foster, & Trank, 2010). I contend that engaging in rhetorical history can be understood as an act of impression management, that is, rhetorical history is the process of managing the historical image of an organization to appeal to relevant audiences (e.g., customers, employees). But for corporate history to be effective, the audience must value and give credence to that history; in order to know whether this is the case, I conducted an exploratory study on how 29 employees from two medium-sized organizations experience corporate history in their daily lives. As well, I inquired into related issues such as how corporate history is assembled and how it circulates within the organization. The results offer, among other things, a detailed description of the attitudes employees hold toward their organization's history. I conclude with an overview of this study's theoretical and practical implications.

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So far I have spent 1,066.87 hours on this thesis, excluding data collection. I have learned tremendously along the way. For this I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Kai Lamertz for his time and insightful feedback. Above all else, I would like to thank Dr. Lamertz for trusting my judgment and believing in my ability to carry out this project. In the same vein, I would like to thank Dr. Denise Fortier for her unwavering support and trust–without her, I sincerely doubt that I would be where I am today.

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To Carl Sagan (1934-1996)

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."
- Hamlet (1.5.167-8), William Shakespeare

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RESEARCH QUESTION

In the 2009 movie *The Invention of Lying*, Mark Bellison lives in an alternate world very similar to ours, except for one big difference: its inhabitants have not developed the ability to lie, or, in their words, "say what isn't." One particularly quaint aspect of this fiction-less world is that its movie industry consists entirely of history lectures (as well as depressingly blunt commercials). The assumption in this movie, of course, is that history is a factual and objective account of the past; but this assumption is unlikely to be true. Indeed, history is almost invariably an interpretation, or reinterpretation, of the past (Carr, 1961/1987; Kieser, 1994). Well aware of this fact, organizations routinely engage in rhetorical history—the practice of narrating corporate history in a self-serving way (Ooi, 2002; Suddaby, Foster, & Trank, 2010). Wells Fargo, Cadbury, Wrigley, and MolsonCoors are all examples of organizations that have successfully harnessed their historical heritage to inspire employees and seduce customers (Keulen, 2013; Rowlinson & Hassard, 1993). Rhetorical history is versatile; it bolsters organizational identification, lubricates strategic change, and acts as the backbone of organizational culture (Dellheim, 1986; Ooi, 2002; Rowlinson & Hassard, 1993; Suddaby et al., 2010). Understandably, then, organizations small and large invest substantial amounts of money in preserving and exhibiting their historical heritage, either through their internal communications department or with the help of corporate archivists such as *The History Factory*. The problem, however, is that we have a very limited knowledge of how the organization's audience perceives rhetorical history. The question of how audiences react to rhetorical history is far from trifling, as the effectiveness (and return on investment) of corporate history hinges on whether it is accepted, trusted, and valued by the audience. To address this "audience gap," I propose to investigate how certain members of the internal audience, the employees, experience rhetorical history in their daily lives. Do employees believe in their organization's history? Why? How do employees feel about their organization's history? Do they think history has an influence on them? What are the channels through which employees learn about corporate history? In this study, I tackle these and other questions to address the literature's "audience gap" and demonstrate that engaging in rhetorical history is not a fruitless endeavor.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Management researchers usually view history as linear and immutable (Ericson, 2006). The concept of path dependence, for instance, posits that the starting conditions of an organization (e.g., size, financial assets) will greatly restrict the range of future decisions (Holbrook, Cohen, Hounshell, & Klepper, 2000; Sydow, Schreyögg, & Koch, 2009). After each decision it makes, the organization becomes increasingly locked in a certain strategic direction, which sometimes limits opportunities for change and innovation (Beckman & Burton, 2008; Tripsas & Gavetti, 2000). This deterministic view of history pervades, but does not monopolize strategic management research. Indeed, several scholars have been increasingly interested in a more flexible notion of history. More specifically, the proponents of this view — called rhetorical history — examine how organizations revisit and reinterpret their past to persuade their audiences (Ooi, 2002; Suddaby et al., 2010). This academic interest in the malleability of history reflects practitioners' longstanding and ever-growing interest in rhetorical history. Delahaye et al.'s (2009) study on corporate histories testifies to rhetorical history's popularity, as the authors found that virtually all companies narrate their history in some way. Supporting this fact is the growing number of organizations that build corporate museums and outsource the management of their archives to corporate history consultants, such as *The History Factory* (Delahaye et al., 2009; Fogerty, 1997; Nissley & Casey, 2002).

The appeal of rhetorical history, as Suddaby et al. (2010:163) noted, is that it holds "a symbolic gravitas and legitimacy that other forms of persuasion simply cannot attain." It is no wonder, then, that organizations can proudly exhibit their historical might and heritage (e.g., "established 1867") to earn their customers' trust and kindle their employees' pride (Carroll, 2002; Urde, Greyser, & Balmer, 2007; Wiedmann, Hennigs, Schmidt, & Wuestefeld, 2011). Yet the historical potential of most companies remains untapped and there are still many unknowns about the concept of rhetorical history (Smith & Steadman, 1981; Suddaby et al., 2010). In the following section I will define rhetorical history in more detail and briefly list the advantages that it grants to organizations; I will then expound on my argument that rhetorical history can be viewed as an instance of impression management.

Defining Rhetorical History

Rhetoric is the language used to please and persuade a target audience (Burke, 1969). Rhetorical history, by extension, is the practice of narrating the organizational past to please and persuade target stakeholders (Ooi, 2002; Suddaby et al., 2010). More precisely, Suddaby et al. (2010:157) defines rhetorical history as "the strategic use of the past as a persuasive strategy to manage key stakeholders of the firm." Similarly, Ooi (2002:607) describes rhetorical historical narratives as "selectively constructed and […] not primarily aimed at presenting 'facts' but at using [them] to persuade and convince audiences." Clearly, then, rhetorical history is less concerned with factuality and accuracy than it is with embellishment and persuasion (Smith & Steadman, 1981). To reiterate, rhetorical history is the process by which organizations produce and exhibit an appealing—but not necessarily truthful—account of their past to enhance their image, legitimacy, and authenticity among the targeted audiences (Carroll, 2002; Kroeze & Keulen, 2012).

The construct of rhetorical history draws from notions of sensemaking (Weick, 1995), storytelling (Boje, 1991), rhetoric (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005), organizational memory (Walsh & Ungson, 1991), and organizational identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985). One of the defining features of rhetorical history is that it allows for human agency, that is, it is flexible enough for organizations to alter their past and adapt it to their current needs (Gioia et al., 2002; Schultz & Hernes, 2013). This flexibility of the past stems from the idea that history is always an interpretation, or reinterpretation, of past events (Kieser, 1994; Lowenthal, 1985; Norman, 1991). As the historian E.H. Carr (1961/1987:11) pointed out in his book *What is History?*:

It used to be said that facts speak for themselves. This is, of course, untrue. The facts speak only when the historian calls on them: it is he who decides to which facts to give the floor, and in what order or context. It was, I think, one of Pirandello's characters who said that a fact is like a sack – it won't stand up till you've put something in it.

Of course, Carr did not mean that all historical accounts are equally valid[1]; organizations can and do fabricate historical accounts of themselves by deliberately distorting past events to their advantage (e.g., Hamilton, 2002; Holt, 2006), but contemplations of candor and accuracy in corporate-funded history are beyond the scope of this paper. My point is that organizations do strategically use their history — actual or invented — to persuade their audiences.

We now know that from the organization's perspective, rhetorical history is possible because the past is but interpretation; an organization can always justify that such-and-such events (e.g., the successes of the founders) can be interpreted as having more significance than other events (e.g., past misdeeds). But on the other side, from the audience's perspective, why would rhetorical history be convincing? Why would employees, for instance, believe the historical narratives of their organization? To this question, Ooi (2002) answers that people can only know about the past from their own experiences or, most frequently, from what they've been told. In other words, people can't easily challenge history if they don't know what actually happened firsthand. Rowlinson and Hassard (1993) illustrate this point by using the example of Cadbury, a British confectionery. They show that "for Cadbury, the religious affiliation of its 'founders' could be invoked with convenient significance only once secularity had ensured that few people would have had any idea about the history of the [Quakers] and what it stood for" (Rowlinson & Hassard, 1993:321). In other words, it is only after most people forgot what being a Quaker[2] meant that Cadbury's founders could play up this fact and glorify their past. In sum, rhetorical history works because people's memories can easily be doctored, especially if they have never experienced the past firsthand.

As I mentioned earlier, the main objective of rhetorical history is to establish legitimacy and authenticity (Suchman, 1995). Suddaby et al. (2010) add that rhetorical history can also help managers facilitate periods of transitions. Times of strategic change can be particularly trying, and coping effectively with strategic transitions is crucial to organizational survival (D'Aveni, 1994; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Organizational change can alienate employees if it creates a stark

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[1] Carr (1961/1987:26-27) remarked later in his book that the impossibility of producing a fully objective account of the past does not mean that "anything goes" when it comes to history:

It does not follow that because a mountain appears to take different shapes from different angles of vision, it has objectively either no shape at all or an infinity of shapes. It does not follow that because interpretation plays a necessary part in establishing the facts of history, and because no existing interpretation is wholly objective, one interpretation is as good as another

[2] A member of a religious movement in 17th century England

difference between old ways of doing things and newer ones (Ericson, 2006; Parker, 2002). Rhetorical history can alleviate the turmoil that usually accompanies periods of strategic change by creating a sense of unity between the past and the present (Rowlinson & Hassard, 1993). In other words, rhetorical history can help organizations "change without changing" (Parker, 2002:598) by making the past and the present appear as continuous, thus ensuring that employees "remain unaware that the past has been changed" (Lowenthal, 1985:263).

In addition to facilitating change, rhetorical history can also be used to build and sustain organizational identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Foster, Suddaby, Minkus, & Wiebe, 2011; Suddaby et al., 2010). Carroll (2002), for instance, contends that organizational identity can be thought of as a story that is unique and hard to imitate, effectively making rhetorical history a source of competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Suddaby et al., 2010). Kroeze and Keulen (2012) similarly argue that corporate history can be used to create organizational cultures and strengthen organizational identity. As a result, rhetorical history has been suggested to induce employee motivation and commitment (Dellheim, 1986; Ooi, 2002). Yet most studies have focused on the identity-enhancing effect of rhetorical history at the organizational level, overlooking the effects that rhetorical history might produce at the individual level. Foster et al. (2011), for example, show how the Canadian fast-food chain Tim Hortons has built its identity by appropriating larger historical narratives that Canadians are familiar with. Similarly, Anteby and Molnár (2012) show how voluntary omissions of embarrassing past events can sustain the identity of an organization. More specifically, they show how in the wake of World War II a French firm repeatedly omitted to mention its reliance on German engineers' acumen to build its expertise. However, the French firm conveniently emphasized positive past events such as foreign engineers acquired French citizenship. This example also shows that both the use and non-use (i.e., failing to disclose embarrassing events) of history can be used strategically (Brunninge, 2009).

In sum, the literature indicates that rhetorical history is a narrative tool that serves many purposes, such as reinforcing organizational identity and facilitating strategic change. Yet there is a surprising dearth of empirical research on how rhetorical history is construed by the organization's internal audiences (see Desai, Kalra, and Murthi (2008) and Wiedmann et al. (2011) for marketing research on the reception of rhetorical history by external audiences). Consequently, I propose in this thesis to examine the question of how a key internal audience—the employees—interpret and react to their organization's rhetorical history. But first, I will draw on the literature

to set up a model of how rhetorical history works as a communication tool. More precisely, I will show how rhetorical history can be understood as an image that organizations project to appeal to their audiences. This will be the subject of the following section.

An Impression Management Model of Rhetorical History

Weick (1995) contrasted the notion of sensemaking with that of interpretation, arguing that sensemaking is the *process* of making sense of things while interpretation is the final product of the sensemaking process. Following this logic, I propose that rhetorical history is a process, not a product. Rhetorical history would be, therefore, the process of making sense of an organization's history and showcasing it. To illustrate this more concretely, one can imagine corporate historians wading through the company's archives, attempting to make sense of past events by arranging them in a coherent narrative. Past achievements and successes are then emphasized and glorified while awkward and delicate incidents are silenced. The final product of this rhetorical historical process is an idealized, praiseful narrative that I will refer to as corporate history or organizational history (Gatti, 2011; Ooi, 2002). To recapitulate my argument, rhetorical history is the *process* that generates and communicates corporate history, the latter being the end product.

The nascent literature on rhetorical history has not definitively established how rhetorical history works. McGaughey (2013), for instance, contends that rhetorical history can be a tool for institutional entrepreneurship, a process by which actors shape institutions to serve their own interests (Hardy & Maguire, 2008). Holt (2006) and Foster et al. (2011) contend that organizations produce appealing histories by linking their own history to those of broader cultural institutions, such as Canadian hockey and gunfighters of the Wild West. Other scholars hold that organizations produce rhetorical histories by inventing traditions and symbols to foster cohesiveness and a sense of identity (Foster & Hyatt, 2008; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983; Smith & Steadman, 1981). Kroeze and Keulen (2012), for example, recount how the chairman of AkzoNobel used a new logo and established New Year's speeches as organizational traditions to facilitate strategic change.

Beside the inner workings of rhetorical history, there are numerous aspects that remain to be explored (Suddaby et al., 2010). For this reason, this section clarifies what is already known

about the process of rhetorical history by combining models of rhetorical communication (McCroskey, 1978) and impression management (Bolino, Kacmar, Turnley, & Gilstrap, 2008; Ginzel, Kramer, & Sutton, 1993; Mohamed, Gardner, & Paolillo, 1999; Tyler, Connaughton, Desrayaud, & Fedesco, 2012). Across the literature, rhetorical history has been consistently defined as a process whose main purpose is to persuade audiences and establish legitimacy (McGaughey, 2013; Suddaby et al., 2010). Similarly, traditional models of rhetorical communication are concerned with how to best persuade an audience. These models assess how persuasive a message is by analyzing various factors such as the source of the rhetorical message, the content of the message, and the target audience (Asante & Atwater, 1986; Shelby, 1986). For instance, the trustworthiness of a person (who is source of the message) plays a significant role in whether we believe that person's message or not (McCroskey & Young, 1981). Likewise, models of impression management are concerned with how people and organizations influence their audiences. Organizational impression management has been formally defined as "any action purposefully designed and carried out to influence an audience's perceptions of an organization" (Elsbach, Sutton, & Principe, 1998:68). In other words, impression management involves what its name suggests: managing the impression (i.e., image) people have of an organization. Impression management is closely related to rhetoric, as both perspectives involve creating specific meanings in the audience's mind. This is what rhetorical history is all about: managing how an organization's history is perceived by an audience. For this reason, I view rhetorical history as a particular instance of organizational impression management (Mohamed et al., 1999). Consequently, existing models of impression management (Ginzel et al., 1993) and rhetoric (McCroskey, 1978) can show how certain components of rhetorical history work and how they interrelate. To be sure, these models may not help us understand how rhetorical history actually works, but they might provide us with a general understanding of the elements involved in the process.

Drawing on Ginzel et al. (1993) and McCroskey (1978), the model of rhetorical history I propose features 4 components: the impetus, the source, the message, and the audience. Simply put, this model describes how a precipitating event (impetus) impels the organization (the source) to craft a corporate history (the message) to persuade its stakeholders (the audience). Taken together, the following subsections show how prior research suggests that rhetorical history has indeed all the hallmarks of an impression management tactic (Mohamed et al., 1999).

The Impetus

According to Ginzel et al. (1993), certain events motivate organizations to engage in impression management. Some events can be identity-enhancing and "provide opportunities for the organization to enhance its image" while other events can be identity-threatening and "create predicaments that … undermine the organization's preferred image" (Ginzel et al., 1993:230). In other words, events that trigger organizational impression management can be classified as either threats or opportunities. Identity-threatening events can therefore prompt organizations to engage in rhetorical history as a form of remedial impression management. Epitomizing this point is the previously mentioned example of the French company denying its hiring of German engineers to protect its identity and pride (Anteby & Molnár, 2012). Certain events can therefore prod organizations into using a revisionist approach to history in order to bury and forget inconvenient episodes. By contrast, organizations can use identity-enhancing events as an opportunity to develop self-laudatory corporate histories. A shift in the broader social context, for instance, provides organizations with opportunities to link their history to larger cultural and historical myths (Foster et al., 2011; Holt, 2006; Rowlinson & Hassard, 1993). It is easy to see why an organization that had traditionally hired women and minorities can conquer its customers' hearts when social norms shift toward a greater acceptance of these groups in the workplace, especially if the organization highlights that fact in its corporate history. Similarly, the celebration of a centennial is expedient enough an occasion for organizations to publish books about their history and hand them out to customers and employees (Delahaye et al., 2009; Rowlinson & Hassard, 1993). To summarize, organizations engage in rhetorical history when they face threats to their identity or opportunities to enhance their image. As social contexts change and legitimacy takes on new meanings, history is reviewed and revised accordingly (Gioia et al., 2002).

The Source(s)

Rhetorical communication and impression management models both involve a person or organization (a source) sending a message that will enhance their image in the eyes of the audience (Bolino et al., 2008; McCroskey, 1978). Rhetorical history, as an impression management tactic, is essentially the process of narrating the past in an appealing way (Brunninge, 2009; Ooi, 2002).

Remember that corporate history constitutes the message that is being sent to the audience. In this segment, I discuss the sources (i.e., creators and propagators) of such corporate histories. Ginzel et al. (1993) identify senior executives and public relations managers as the sources of impression management. Similarly, Martin (1981) argues that the public relations department is usually in charge of publicizing and diffusing the organization's corporate history to the external audience (e.g., customers). When it comes to internal impression management (i.e., persuading employees and shareholders), it is usually the senior executives who recount a glorious past to foster cohesiveness and boost employees' motivation (Gioia et al., 2002). So far we have identified the *senders* of corporate history, but we still have to determine who actually produces these narratives. In other words, we know who delivers the speech, but we still have to figure out who wrote it. In his essay, Martin (1981) contemplates the roles and functions of an increasingly common occupation: corporate historian. The function of such historians, Martin (1981) argues, is to make sense of the organization's daunting amount of archives. Dellheim (1986) is more specific and lists the different steps taken by the corporate historian to put together a corporate history. The historian starts by analyzing the physical surroundings of the organization, such as the architecture, to look for palpable historical cues. He or she then proceeds to conducting interviews with a wide range of employees to analyze employee perceptions of the company over time. Finally, the corporate historian analyzes company records to compare and contrast with the history as the employees perceive it (Dellheim, 1986). Since organizations commission historians to build histories that persuade, the corporate historian is unlikely to produce an impartial, unadulterated history of the organization (Rowlinson & Hassard, 1993). When a coherent historical account begins to emerge, corporate historians share their insights with the public relations department, which will subsequently add a rhetorical spin to a history that will "impress the customers, warm the hearts of important investors and their counsellors, melt the icy stares of editors of newspaper business pages, and give a boost to the morale of everybody in the organization from the chairman to the newest club salesperson" (Martin 1981:17). Moreover, corporate historians share their findings with senior executives, who will subsequently use them as a tool to facilitate strategic change and decision-making (Dellheim, 1986; Suddaby et al., 2010). In short, it seems that corporate historians craft rhetorical histories that PR managers and senior executives subsequently use to persuade their respective audiences.

The Message

Another key component of rhetorical communication is the form and content of the message (McCroskey, 1978). Similarly, corporate histories can be seen as rhetorical messages that vary widely in their form and content. For instance, Delahaye et al. (2009) found that organizations diffuse their histories through corporate websites, annual reports, promotional pamphlets, and coffee-table books. Besides published books and pamphlets, organizational history can be conveyed through corporate museums (Nissley & Casey, 2002) and corporate heritage sites such as M&M's World, Cadbury World, and Legoland (Rowlinson, 2002). Corporate museums and heritage sites are facilities aimed at displaying artifacts (e.g., photographs, prototypes, archives) that illustrate a company's history and achievements (Stigliani & Ravasi, 2007). It seems, then, that organizations enjoy a wide variety of message forms at their disposal to persuade their audiences (Schultz & Hernes, 2013). Regarding the content of these messages, Delahaye et al. (2009) uncovered several recurrent themes in their study of corporate histories and suggested that these themes make up a genre of corporate history. Chief among these themes are a focus on the organization's success and its founders, a reduction of the role played by competitors, and a general lack of academic rigor (Delahaye et al., 2009; Gatti, 2011). Rowlinson and Hassard (1993:308) similarly note that corporate histories conveniently omit "any accounts that [are] less than deferential in tone." Another common feature of corporate history is ambiguity (Foster et al., 2011; Gioia et al., 2002). This is hardly surprising, since equivocal messages are more likely to leave the door open to interpretation. Ambiguity also enables rhetorical messages to reach a wider audience, because people are less likely to disagree with vague statements (Price, Gioia, & Corley, 2008). Corporate history, in sum, is usually ambiguous enough to leave enough "wiggle room' for individuals to find their own place in the story" (Gioia et al., 2002:632).

The Audience

Organizations craft rhetorical messages to create a specific meaning in the mind of the audience (Fisher, 1970; McCroskey, 1978). In the same way, the function of rhetorical history is to instill persuasive historical narratives in the mind of target audiences (Suddaby et al., 2010). More specifically, Ooi (2002:618) identifies rhetorical history's purpose as "increasing the morale

of workers, attracting more shareholders and creating good relations with the general public." As mentioned above, organizations reach their audiences through different channels, such as published corporate histories and corporate museums. But the process of rhetorical history does not end when the message is sent, as the audience does not gullibly take the narratives at face value. In their model of organizational impression management, Ginzel et al. (1993) draw attention to the process of negotiation that goes on between the source and its audience. This process of negotiation occurs when the audience challenges the claims made by the organization. In other words, impression management can be successful only if the audience "buys it." The same is true for rhetorical history; customers and employees must lend enough credence to the company's historical narratives if such narratives are to be effective. Ooi (2002), for instance, stresses the importance of plausibility and coherence in corporate history. Gioia et al. (2002) similarly note that rhetorical history must be especially credible to the internal audience (e.g., employees, shareholders). They give us the example of Douglas Ivester, the CEO of Coca Cola who had replaced Roberto Goizueta. The newly appointed CEO had attempted to rewrite Coca Cola's history by taking credit for the company's technical and logistical improvements. But Coca Cola's board of directors took offense at this overly self-serving historical spin; the board's members knew that it was Goizueta, not Ivester, who had taken the helm of Coca Cola's restructuring. The perception that Ivester's story was bogus and fraudulent was one of the reasons Ivester was subsequently ousted from the board. As Gioia et al. (2002:631) noted:

> Sometimes history simply will not spin. To succeed at this game, there needs to be enough ambiguity in the historical events to support plausible alternative interpretations. Tampering with cherished and institutionalized corporate stories is a recipe for failure… Cynicism arises from the too-frequent use of [rhetorical history], because then the importance and role of history is progressively diminished, thus losing its potential as a catalyst for concerted thought and action.

From these observations we can conclude that, like impression management, rhetorical history entails a process of negotiation between the source and the audience (Ginzel et al., 1993). This process of negotiation applies selective pressures to corporate history over time; altering it until an agreed-upon version of the company's history becomes established. Discussing this very process, Martin, Sitkin, and Boehm (1985:103) note:

As organizational members strive at mutually acceptable interpretations of events, distortions and omissions multiply. By the time accounts have ossified in the form of organizational stories, legends and sagas, a new reality has been socially constructed.

In summary, the existing literature seems to warrant the framing of rhetorical history as an instance of impression management (see Figure 1 below). This perspective affords an overall view of the elements involved in rhetorical history and how these elements interact. To recapitulate, there are certain events, such as an upcoming corporate anniversary, that impel organizations to engage in rhetorical history. To this end, corporate historians collaborate with PR managers to create and disseminate historical narratives. In turn, these narratives can be conveyed through different channels: corporate museums, anniversary celebrations, traditions, and so on. Finally, the audience consumes the corporate-made history and voices its discontent if the narrative seems dubious. Seeing rhetorical history as an impression management tactic allows us to appreciate the pivotal role of the audience in rhetorical history's effectiveness: a highly contested, implausible, or simply uninspiring history makes for an ineffective history. But the role of the audience has, to date, seemed to escape the notice of rhetorical history scholars. Beyond studying whether the audience perceives its organization's narratives as truthful, I studied how the audience perceives its organization's narratives in general. This includes the audience's thoughts, attitudes, emotions, and feelings toward corporate history. Further, I also investigated how the corporate histories of the organizations in this sample were assembled and why, that is, I identified the *sources* of the historical narratives, the *impetus* that drove the sources to engage in rhetorical history, and how the organization's history was put together. Finally, I explored the different channels (e.g., corporate museum, traditions) through which employees learn about their company's history. Taken together, these research questions attempt to explore the elements (i.e., the impetus, the source, the message, and the audience) of the rhetorical history model I outlined above. To tackle these questions I needed to use an appropriate methodology, a methodology that would enable me to explore how corporate history is experienced at both the individual and the collective level. This will be the topic of the next section.

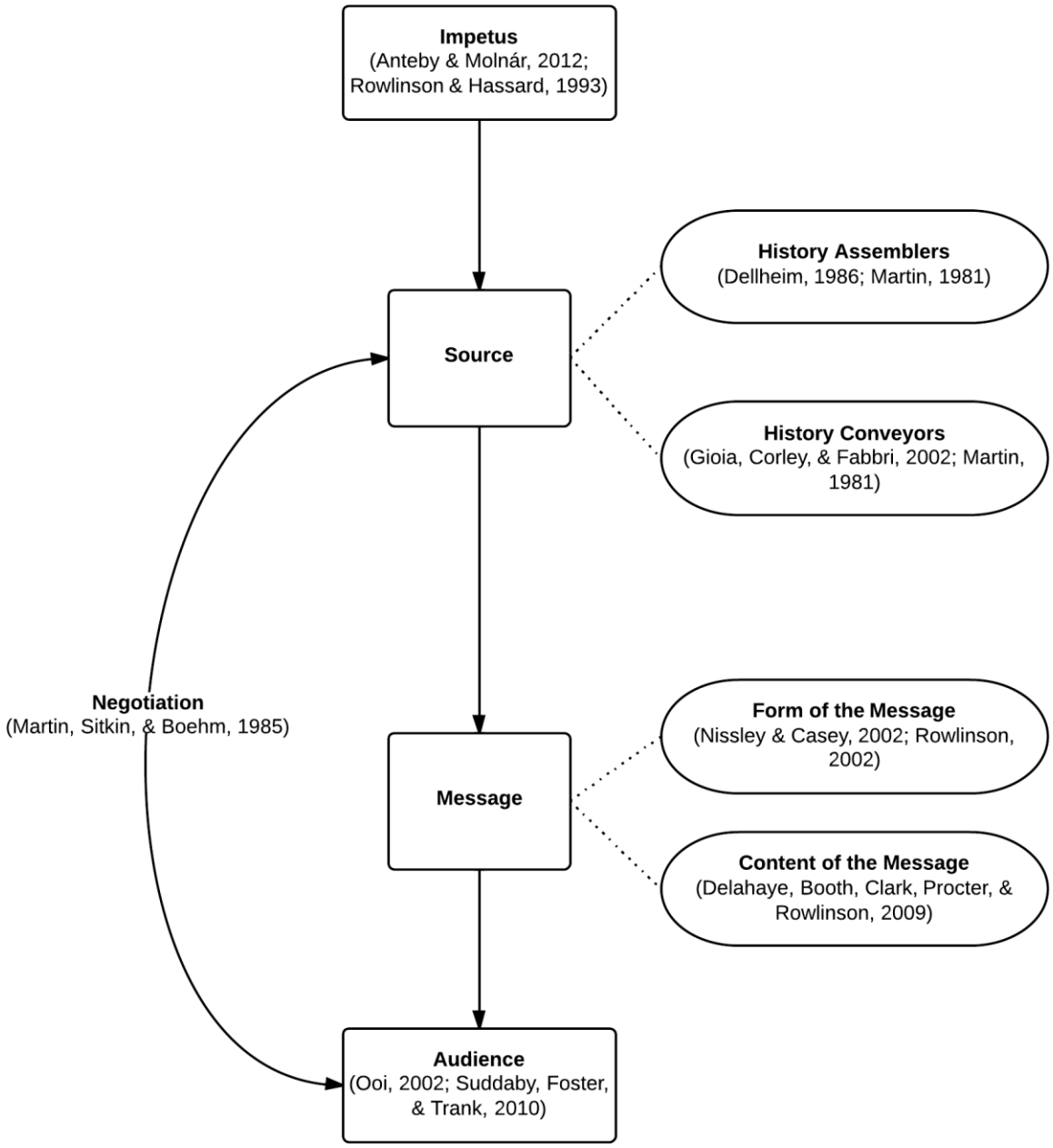


Figure 1: An impression management view of rhetorical history

METHODOLOGY

The realm of qualitative research offers a smorgasbord of different methodologies to choose from (Creswell, 2007). Fortunately, the subject of my research made it easier to pick out a suitable method. I wanted to know how employees experience corporate history, and a research method called descriptive phenomenology happened to be concerned with exactly that: the description of lived experiences. Descriptive phenomenology basically seeks to reveal the essence, or core components, of an experience. In this case, descriptive phenomenology can assist in identifying the core components, say loyalty or motivation, of the corporate history experience. (The way employees feel and think about their company's history, along with the attitudes and behaviors accompanying those thoughts and feelings, will hereafter be referred to as the corporate history experience.) Using these core components as a basis, descriptive phenomenology can then build up the *structure*, or *composite description,* of the corporate history experience. The composite description, simply put, draws a portrait of what corporate history means to employees and how they experience it, which I believe adequately addresses my research question. Having laid out the crux of this methodology, I will now describe it in more detail before proceeding to more practical matters, including sample selection, interview procedures, and data analysis.

Research Approach

Before even selecting descriptive phenomenology as a research method, I had first to decide on a research approach, that is, I had to choose between quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research. I opted for a qualitative mode of inquiry for two reasons. First, qualitative inquiry lends itself very well to exploring the meanings that people ascribe to their reality (Creswell, 2003). In this case, I wanted to shed light on the (subjective) meanings employees ascribe to their organization's history, and so a qualitative methodology was well-suited to this endeavor. Second, qualitative research is suited to probe, understand, and extrapolate a particular phenomenon to similar situations (Hoepfl, 1997). In other words, qualitative research is useful when dealing with under-explored phenomena. As the literature review indicates, we have at best a hypothetical understanding of how employees experience corporate history; an exploratory approach is therefore needed to further our knowledge on this topic.

Qualitative research itself encompasses a myriad of different methods, such as grounded theory and ethnography. I opted for phenomenology. Derived from its philosophical namesake[3], scientific phenomenology[4] seeks to describe "the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon" (Creswell, 2007:57) and requires the collection of "thick description and close analysis of lived experience to understand how meaning is created through embodied perception" (Starks & Trinidad, 2007:1373). In other words, phenomenology focuses on how people perceive and ascribe meanings to phenomena such as theme parks, jealousy, midlife crisis, or, in this case, corporate history; the individual perspective is the vantage point from which phenomenology operates (Aspers, 2009; Giorgi, 1997; Holstein & Gubrium, 1994; Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 1987). Central to phenomenology is the notion of essences (Husserl, 1982). Such essences are, broadly defined, the invariant attributes, or the gist, of experiences (Creswell, 2007). If one or more of the essences of an experience were to be removed, the whole experience would collapse and become unrecognizable, hence the term essence. Consider, for example, the experience of romantic love. One could argue that the existence of a loved one is essential to the experience of romantic love because, narcissistic self-love notwithstanding, love requires one to direct feelings toward someone else. Furthermore, love presumably entails emotional attachment and attraction. One could, therefore, argue that the experience of romantic love has at least three essences in its core: the existence of a loved one, emotional attachment, and attraction toward the beloved; without these essences, the experience of love wouldn't be the same. The concrete goal in phenomenology, then, is to identify the essences of an experience and see how these essences interact with each other and form a whole. Applied to corporate history, this method will enable me to uncover the essential emotions, feelings, attitudes, and thoughts that employees experience with regard to their organization's history. In addition, phenomenological analysis usually relies on multiple perspectives (in this case, multiple employees) and can therefore reveal how corporate history is *collectively* experienced (Creswell, 2007; Weick & Daft, 1984). In other words, the phenomenologically-minded researcher finds the essences of an experience by probing several participants and identifying common themes (i.e., essences) across interviews with the participants. In turn, the essences commonly found across various participants will be used to

[3] See the works of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Edmund Husserl

[4] Scientific phenomenology is an umbrella term that encompasses all the various types of phenomenology used for research purposes, such as descriptive phenomenology and interpretive phenomenology.

build a *composite description*, which is a textual account of how the phenomenon (here, corporate history) is collectively experienced. This, in a nutshell, is what phenomenology is all about. There are different methods of conducting phenomenological research, and it is best to stick to one method to preserve consistency in data analysis (Giorgi, 2008). Consequently, I based this study's methodology on Giorgi's (2009) Descriptive Phenomenological Method, which I will explain in more detail in the procedures section.

Sample Selection

To build up a heterogeneous sample, I needed to conduct this study on different individuals from different organizations. To this end, I used a maximum variation sampling strategy at both the individual and the organizational level. The idea behind this strategy is to first select some relevant criteria to differentiate individuals (e.g., seniority) and organizations (e.g., type of ownership) and then gather a sample of organizations and participants that differ significantly on those criteria (Creswell, 2007). In other words, this strategy aims to secure a widely heterogeneous sample, which in turn enables me to explore not only how people concur, but also where they differ. Remember that the objective in phenomenology is to find essences that are shared across several individuals; appositely, having a heterogeneous sample makes it easier to spot commonalities. More importantly, finding a recurring essence across a disparate sample would further strengthen the validity of the findings; if the same thing is found across very different people, that very thing might be essential. In the two following sections, I will elaborate on this sampling strategy, starting with the organizational level.

Choice of Organizations

Before using the maximum variation sampling technique, I first had put together a list of requirements that organizations should meet in order to be eligible. The first criterion was that organizations had to be relatively long-established, with a minimum age of 20 years (that is, founded in or before 1994). I had reasoned that long-established companies would be more mindful of the value of history than their younger counterparts, and would therefore be more likely to utilize history as a tool of influence. A second condition was that organizations had to have an

"Our History" section on their website, or at least a brief overview of their history. A company that takes the time to chronicle its past and devote it a section on its website is presumably interested in the rhetorical power of history. The last prerequisite — that organizations have recently celebrated an anniversary — was not so much a mandatory criterion as a preference. I presumed that freshly celebrated anniversaries would form or reinforce attitudes toward corporate history and would therefore be worth studying. Finally, and as I will discuss later, a basic reason why I included more than one organization in my sample was to enhance the generalizability of my findings, or, more realistically, reduce their idiosyncrasy.

Apropos of the maximum variation sampling strategy, the organizations in this sample differed substantially along four dimensions: international presence, type of ownership, anniversary celebration, and longevity. I deemed these dimensions relevant because they might affect employees' attitudes toward corporate history. Regarding the dimensions of international presence and type of ownership, for instance, one can presume that a corporation at the helm of a global network of subsidiaries might not enjoy the same levels of historical authenticity as a local, family-owned business that only recently has reached province-wide popularity. Similarly, the fact that only one of the two companies had recently celebrated an anniversary might reveal differences in how employees perceive their company's history depending on whether they were "historically stimulated." Finally, I had reasoned that the older the company, the more intense the employees' attitudes toward it; some studies have indeed shown the important role of longevity in how external audiences perceive an organization (Desai et al., 2008; Urde et al., 2007).

With these considerations in mind, I set out searching for organizations in Eastern Canada that fit the aforementioned criteria. I found the first company thanks to the director of the Entrepreneurship Center at a local university who knew of a dairy products company where history was valued. Located in city A, Milky Way (fictitious name) was founded in the early 1940s and was acquired in the mid-1970s by the family who now operates it. Today, Milky Way specializes in the production of ice cream, cheese, and frozen treats. For decades Milky Way had been a local business, but over the past few years the company has gradually expanded its facilities and catapulted its brand to province-wide fame. Nonetheless, Milky Way remains a very regional company with a little over 100 employees. It should also be noted that Milky Way has long been a cultural mainstay of city A; most if not all of the city's residents are familiar with the company. Finally, Milky Way had weathered some financial perturbations in the past but has been prosperous

and constantly growing ever since.

I found the second company, Massive Dynamics (also a fictitious name), on a list of the region's biggest employers. Though Massive Dynamics was by far not high on the list (175 employees), its longevity and the fact that the company had recently celebrated its anniversary made it an ideal candidate. Massive Dynamics was established at the turn of last century in city B and specializes in manufacturing components for pulp and paper machinery. Since its foundation, Massive Dynamics has changed hands and names multiple times, and the latest acquisition was made in 2006 by a privately-held Asian multinational group. Headquartered in Eastern Canada, Massive Dynamics has sister plants in Europe and Asia. Finally, Massive Dynamics had been financially prosperous historically but is today scourged by lackluster financial performance.

	Milky Way	**Massive Dynamics**
Foundation	Early 1940s	Early 1900s
Ownership	Owned and operated by the same family since the mid-1970s	Recently acquired by a Northeast Asian group
Name of the company	Milky Way since its foundation in the early 1940s	Changed names four times since its inception
International presence	Regional, but recently gained province-wide popularity	Has sister plants in Europe and Asia; owned by a multinational group.
Anniversary celebration	75th anniversary planned for next year (but none celebrated recently)	Anniversary celebration took place about 6 months prior to the study
Industry	Ice cream and cheese production	Pulp and paper machinery
Financial history	Went from poor to flourishing business	Was financially prosperous but now suffers financial woes
Number of employees	110	175

Table 1: Characteristics of Milky Way and Massive Dynamics

Choice of Participants

Phenomenological research does not require a large number of interviews to determine the essence of an experience. As Starks and Trinidad (2007:1374) noted, "given that an individual person can generate hundreds or thousands of concepts, large samples are not necessarily needed to generate rich data sets." Consequently, I conducted interviews with 29 employees working at two different organizations. (My initial plan was to gather a sample of 30 employees—15 participants from each organization—but due to an electronic mishap the sample was whittled down to 29 employees. See section on interview procedures.) Concerning the maximum variation sampling strategy, the participants differed mainly along dimensions of seniority and managerial rank. Remember that the main purpose of this sampling strategy is not necessarily to lay the groundwork for statistical comparison, the goal is to gather a highly disparate group of individuals in order to detect "invariant" attitudes toward corporate history. Each of the paragraphs below will lay out my rationale for choosing the sampling criteria:

Seniority. I chose this criterion with the possibility in mind that attitudes toward corporate history might differ substantially depending on how many years an individual had worked within an organization. Ybema (2004), for instance, argues that senior employees tend to glorify the past and use it as a way to criticize the present, distance themselves from newcomers, and resist change. Based on these observations, I reasoned that a sample varying in years of seniority would not only reveal whether old-timers perceive corporate history differently than recent hires, but also pinpoint similarities in how corporate history is experienced irrespective of seniority.

Managerial Rank. The literature indicates that within a company, the management is usually the purveyor of corporate history, narrating it to an audience of subordinate employees (Martin, 1981). Consequently, I reasoned that if managers and lower-level employees assumed their respective roles (i.e., source and audience), their attitudes toward corporate history should be different. For this reason, I decided to interview both managers and their subordinates about their views on corporate history.

	Milky Way	Massive Dynamics	Total
Total number of participants	14	15	29
Seniority			
Recent Hires (up to one year of service)	2	1	3
Established employees (between 2 years and five years of service)	5	6	11
Moderately senior employees (between 6 years and 15 years of service)	6	1	7
Old-timers (16 years to 40 years of service)	1	7	8
Rank			
Management	2	5	7
Non-Management	12	10	22

Table 2: Distribution of the sample according to seniority and managerial rank

Procedures

Having summarized the characteristics of the sample, I will now turn to the procedures used in this study to recruit participants, conduct interviews, and analyze the data.

Recruitment

The recruitment process started immediately after I had gathered a sample of suitable organizations. The first step was to contact organizations by sending recruitment emails directly to the HR directors of each company. After this first contact, I called the HR directors on the phone to give them more information about the purpose of the study, allay potential concerns about confidentiality, and name the requirements of the study, such as the time it would take for each interview and the number of participants needed. I then asked each director to provide me with a list of about 15 employees with the following characteristics:

- 8 recent or moderately recent employees from different departments and ranks, with preferably an equal split between males and females,
- and 7 employees with higher seniority, possibly including the CEO, human resources director, and public relations manager. Here again I demanded that employees be from different departments and ranks, with an equal split between males and females if possible.

After I had received and assessed a list of potential participants from the two companies, I asked the HR directors to send an introductory letter to the prospective participants (see Appendix A). As a side note, although I didn't mention any ties to or endorsement by the upper management in my recruitment letter, the fact that the letter was sent to the employees via the management could have affected their attitudes toward me. I have, however, no reason to think that this was the case. Furthermore, I was very clear about the strict measures of confidentiality of this study. Finally, once the participants had agreed to take part in this study, the HR directors sent me an interview schedule with 30-minute time slots for each participant. I was then ready for data collection.

Data Collection

In phenomenological inquiry, raw data consist of thick descriptions of lived-through experiences from the participants (Giorgi, 2009). Simply put, the raw data in this case are the employees' firsthand accounts of how they experience corporate history in their daily life. Note that a "daily life" perspective is necessary in phenomenological analysis because, as (Giorgi, 2009) points out, the meaning of what is given to consciousness is influenced by how it is given; context is therefore crucial (Creswell, 2007; Giorgi, 2009). On a more practical note, insisting that participants provide an account of their experience from a daily life perspective would make more sense in terms of validity; what we want to know is how they feel about corporate history in general, not just during the interview. It is through language that one communicates to others his or her experience of a phenomenon, and interviews are therefore a suitable way to obtain firsthand descriptions of such experiences (Giorgi, 1997, 2009; Husserl, 1975). In particular, Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) recommend semi-structured interviews to conduct phenomenological research. Accordingly, I included in my interview protocol open-ended questions taking into account Giorgi's (2009) recommendations, namely, that one should ask participants about their experiences of a certain phenomenon within a daily life situation. My central (i.e., phenomenological) question to the participants was:

Can you please describe with as much detail and precision as possible situations in which you thought about [Company Name]'s history? What were your thoughts specifically? What were your emotions and feelings while thinking about it? A situation could be a specific moment or your day-to-day life in general.

This question was central to this study as it was purposed to capture a rich description of the corporate history experience. It was based on Giorgi's (2009:124) sample question "Please describe for me a situation in which you experienced learning." However, I had to rephrase the sample question in order to exclude the verb "experience" as I had doubts on whether employees would think of their company's history as an experience. Indeed, unlike jealousy or midlife crisis, corporate history can be so abstract a concept that *experience* might not be the right term to use when asking employees for a description.

I asked participants several other questions that were not couched in phenomenological terms. Rather, the additional questions were more general and investigated how employees first came into contact with corporate history, whether they discussed it with people from the outside, whether they considered their organization's history to be authentic, and so on. The purpose of these additional questions was to gather information related to my impression management model of rhetorical history (i.e., the roles of the source and the audience, the form and content of the message, etc.). I had, furthermore, put together a separate interview protocol for the managers, which included additional questions concerning the motives behind corporate history and how managers believe their employees react to historical narratives. The full interview protocols listing all the questions posed to the participants can be found in appendix B.

Beside the interviews, I regularly kept a research diary or what could be considered an audit trail of sorts. In that diary, I would regularly log my thoughts about the procedures I used and the concepts emerging from the interviews. If anything, the research diary helped me keep track of developments and clarify my thoughts about the data collection, procedures, and findings.

Interview Procedure

The interviewing process took about 21 days, in accordance with the schedule set up by the HR directors. I conducted face-to-face interviews at Massive Dynamics but had to conduct phone interviews with Milky Way as the company was located in a remote area. Unfortunately for Milky Way's employees, this also meant that they couldn't enjoy the donuts I offered Massive Dynamics' employees as a thank you for their participation. All participants were assured of the confidentiality of the study and were required to sign a consent form or express their oral

agreement in the case of telephone interviews. (I also informed Milky Way's employees that they were being recorded and that I could turn the recorder off if they wished.) For enhanced confidentiality, I requested of the HR directors that the interviews be conducted in separate, private rooms. (This was one of the measures I agreed to commit to with the ethics committee. To see my ethical research approval, please refer to Appendix J.) Concerning the equipment, I used the program Skype to call Milky Way's employees and two add-on programs to record the conversations; I recorded the face-to-face conversations at Massive Dynamics with a digital tape recorder as well as a smartphone with a voice-recording application. At the beginning of each interview, I would start by presenting myself and would proceed to explain the purpose of my research. I would then address the participants in a way that I trusted gave them the feeling that they had something to teach me about themselves and their company's history. Of course, the participants were unaware of the phenomenological method used in this study and were merely required to speak freely about their thoughts and attitudes toward corporate history (Giorgi, 2009). In other words, what mattered at that point was that participants give me a rich description of their thoughts and feelings; the sifting and filtering of the raw data would come at a later point. I made sure the participants were at ease, sometimes by insisting that there are no right or wrong answers, just their own perspective on the subject. Importantly, I took special care not to "lead" the participants, that is, I did not try to influence or guide the participants into saying what I wanted to hear (Giorgi, 2009). However, I did veer the conversation back on track when the participants seemed to drift away from the subject. (Giorgi (2009) refers to this as the nuance between leading and directing the participant.) When participants talked about their feelings or attitudes prematurely (i.e., before we arrived at the phenomenological question), I would ask them to tell me more about it right away instead of mechanically sticking to the interview protocol and waiting for the right question to arrive before asking for further details. I ended the interviews with a debriefing in which I restated the purpose of the research and gave the participants my contact information.

At the end of the interviewing process, I realized that a glitch in the recording program had clipped the interviews of two participants from Milky Way. Unfortunately, the glitch occurred minutes after the beginning of the interviews, leaving only the part of the conversation where I ask a few background questions. To remedy that situation, I asked Milky Way's HR director to grant me two additional interviews to make up for the lost ones. I ended up with 29 recorded interviews,

most of them lasting between 15 and 30 minutes. After that, I transcribed the interviews using the program *Listen'N'Write*. The recorded interviews, their transcriptions, as well as all the data pertaining to this study were stored on an encrypted cloud storage system (*TresorIt*) and on an encrypted hard drive I keep at home.

Data Analysis

After I had finished transcribing the interviews, I imported them into *NVivo*, a qualitative data analysis software package. I linked each interview transcript to the name of its corresponding participant, and I treated each participant as a case with attributes such as age, gender, seniority, managerial rank, company affiliation and so on (see Bazeley and Jackson (2013) for an overview of *NVivo*). These were, in a nutshell, the preliminaries that laid the groundwork for Giorgi's (2009) phenomenological procedure. For a visual summary of the data analysis procedures, please refer to Figure 2.

Broadly speaking, the goal of Giorgi's (2009) descriptive phenomenological analysis is to clarify the meaning of the interviews by translating the participants' idiosyncratic accounts into more general concepts, such as anger or jealousy. These concepts, in turn, form the basis of the composite description, which summarizes how the phenomenon at issue is experienced. But to arrive at the composite description, the researcher must scan, appreciate, dissect, refine, clarify, sort, and synthesize the data through a series of steps described in Giorgi (2009).

The very first step was to read all the interviews to get a sense of the whole; to have a general overview of the participants' attitudes toward corporate history. The goal of this step is to become familiar with the big picture before making any judgments on the individual parts. At this stage, however, the researcher must refrain from analyzing or coding the data. This does not mean that the research must engage in passive and indiscriminate reading. Rather, the objective here is to read for a sense of the whole but with a focus on what is sought (here, attitudes toward corporate history).

The second step consisted in delineating the meaning units. A meaning unit can be conceived of as a unit of data; a word, phrase, or even paragraph that is relevant to the research question. In this case, the meaning units should be words and phrases denoting attitudes, thoughts,

feelings, and emotions toward corporate history. It should be noted, by the way, that the meaning unit constitutes the unit of analysis in phenomenological research. What I did to delineate the meaning units, concretely, was read the interviews over again and put a "/" mark every time I sensed a shift in attitudes or feelings, as recommended by Giorgi (2009). The indicators I used to detect shifts in attitudes were based solely on the participants' accounts, as long as the attitudes were relevant to corporate history. In practice, the criterion I used to start and end a meaning unit was to first find a corporate history-relevant term or phrase and keep including all the following text until I find a different history-relevant term or phrase—words or phrases that denoted a new history-related attitude were the signal that the preceding meaning unit had to stop (see Figure 2, step 2). Furthermore, because a meaning unit stops only when a new attitude has been found, there can be a certain amount of irrelevant material between the beginning and the end of a meaning unit (e.g., digressions).This means that a meaning unit contains both relevant and irrelevant material which will need to be sorted out in the subsequent steps. For a concrete example of how meaning units get demarcated, consider this made-up but illustrative excerpt:

"… and Tom is the new director. / But he doesn't know how much better things were back then, / he just doesn't. He's new around here, he carries no history./ But I guess we just have to deal with it now, because I must say we don't feel like we're part of a family anymore. Since the takeover, I feel like I don't belong here,/ but I know this company will live on, you know, / heck, it has been around for 110 years, that's a big deal!"

In this segment, I put a "/" mark every time I detected a change in the attitudes and feelings expressed by the participant. (In this case, one could argue that the participant successively expressed nostalgia, condescension toward newcomers, faded belongingness, optimism about the future, and importance toward the company's longevity.) It should be noted, though, that at that point I didn't need to label or code the meaning units; all I had to do was delineate the meaning units relevant to the research question for each participant. Furthermore, I did not count as a meaning unit statements that I considered beside the point or merely tangential to organizational history (e.g., when employees expressed their feelings but only in reference their own personal achievements in the very recent past). In addition, the process of determining meaning units has admittedly a certain degree of subjectivity to it; two researchers will likely not place marks at the exact same place. However, as Giorgi (2009) notes, what matters is not that two researchers agree

on meaning units, what really matters is how much they agree on the end result, that is, the composite structure. (What this means, in other words, is that researchers can disagree on where a meaning unit starts and ends as long as it doesn't dramatically change the composite description.) At the end of this step, I ended up with 29 transcribed interviews broken down into 170 meaning units. There were on average 5.8 meaning units per participant (standard deviation = 2.4) and each meaning unit covered, on average, 15.8% of the interview transcripts (standard deviation = 7.79%)

The third step, most crucial to the descriptive phenomenological method, consisted first in a within-case analysis aimed at making each meaning unit more explicit. Remember that a meaning unit is simply a phrase extracted as is from the interviews and that is relevant to attitudes toward corporate history. Because the meaning unit is extracted as is, it needs to be clarified, stripped of its idiosyncratic elements, and distilled to a higher level of abstraction before moving on to the next steps of the phenomenological method. What this means, concretely, is that I had to transform each raw meaning unit into a statement couched in more general and abstract terms. To do so, I had to take each meaning unit through a series of successive transformations (see Figure 2, step 3). At each transformation, the meaning unit gradually becomes purer, containing only attitudes and feelings I deemed relevant to corporate history. The actual procedure I used in *NVivo* is as follows. Preliminarily, I removed all the irrelevant material in the meaning unit in question (see Figure 2, step 3 A). Remember that in the previous section, I mentioned that a meaning unit contains text related to an attitude toward corporate history and, potentially, some irrelevant digressions. For this reason, I had to clip each meaning unit to keep only its most history-relevant content. After that, I moved to the first transformation of the meaning unit (see Figure 2, step 3 B). Concretely, I selected each meaning unit and created an annotation. (In *NVivo*, an annotation highlights the selected text in blue and opens a box at the bottom of the screen where the user can type notes or comments relating to the highlighted text.) Next, I wrote the first transformation of the meaning unit in the annotation box; the first transformation merely consisted in restating the meaning unit in the third person (e.g., "Sally said that she misses what the company used to be in the past and that she resents what the company has become today"). In the next transformations, I would select the attitude or feeling relating to corporate history and find an abstract term or phrase that would capture the essence of that attitude or feeling. Remember that at that point I was still conducting a within-case analysis—I didn't know what such abstract terms would be. For that

reason, I had to derive the abstract terms from the participant's own words (see Figure 2, step 3 C). For example, in the meaning unit "I don't feel like I *belong* here, we don't feel like we're *part of a family* anymore," I assumed that "belongingness" was the abstract term that captured the essence of the participant's feeling. In some cases, however, the participant's terms were not directly explicit about the participant's attitude. Some participants, for instance, merely mentioned that they missed the good old times and loathed the present. In these cases, the participants did not mention the type of feeling they were experiencing, but it is very apparent that they were expressing some form of nostalgia. It was only in these cases that I had to engage in interpretive work to make sense of what the participants meant instead of relying literally on their accounts. So far, I had a meaning unit written in the third person and containing one abstract term or phrase that replaced the participant's own words. In all the subsequent transformations of the meaning unit, I filtered out superfluous terms (e.g., "anymore," "really") in order to highlight the essence of the meaning unit (see Figure 2, step 3 D). Because the conversations I had with the participants were relatively straightforward, I usually stopped at the second or third transformation. The final transformation is called the invariant meaning, because it is supposed to crystallize the essential features of the meaning unit (e.g., "When thinking about her company's history, Sally expresses nostalgia and resentment toward the present"). It should be noted, furthermore, that Giorgi's (2009) phenomenological method is a descriptive one, meaning that no speculation or complex interpretation should be used when transforming meaning units. Obviously, textual transformation *always* requires some kind of interpretation, but Giorgi's (2009) method is descriptive in the sense that it doesn't go far beyond what is given, it doesn't add anything that is not already present in the meaning unit. To a certain extent, the final transformation is not so much an interpretation as a sort of second-order description. One of the reasons why this step is important is because it translates the meaning units into more general statements, which in turn makes it easier to integrate the final transformations across several participants. To illustrate, imagine a police officer who has been tasked to put together a report on the different types of crimes in her district. She has at her disposal 250 police reports filed by the district's residents, and each report describes in great detail how the crime happened. Of course, each crime is unique, but our police officer must reduce each police report to a few meaningful statements (e.g., burglary, 2 suspects, no physical assault) so that she can easily compare them to one another. This, in turn, will ease her task of finding recurring patterns (e.g., most crimes fall under the categories of burglary and pickpocketing) across all of

the 250 police reports. The role of the third step in the phenomenological method is similar to the police officer's technique in that it facilitates the comparison of meaning units across participants by transforming meaning units into more comparable statements.

To return to the procedures I used in *NVivo*, I want to add that whenever I arrived at a final transformation of a meaning unit, I would create a coding unit and assign it the same title as the abstract term found in the previous steps (see Figure 2, step 3 E). For instance, if the final transformation was "Garry expresses feelings of rejection when thinking about his company's history," I would create a coding category title "Rejection." I would then code the meaning unit in question under the newly created coding category. (On a practical note, I also coded every meaning unit under the coding category "Meaning Unit" simply to keep track of the total number of meaning units.) So far, I was still conducting this within-case analysis using an open coding strategy. This means that I did not code the meaning units according to a predefined list of attitudes; instead, every time I encountered a new attitude or feeling I would assign it to a new coding category. As a result, I ended up with a host of very specific coding categories at the end of this step. To remedy this problem of having too many coding categories, I performed a cross-case analysis in which I reviewed the interview transcripts to see if discrete attitudes (and their corresponding coding categories) could be clustered around certain themes (see Figure 2, step 3 F). Every time two or more coding categories were found to fall under the same category, I would merge them together in *NVivo* in order to form a more encompassing category. Having fewer but more inclusive coding categories, in turn, made the task of comparing them much easier (see fourth step below). Finally, after I was done transforming and coding all the meaning units, I copied all the final transformations into a text document so that I could get an overview of the different attitudes and feelings expressed by the participants (see Appendix C1 for a list of the different categories used during the coding process).

The fourth and final step of the descriptive phenomenological method consisted in synthesizing the structure of the experience into a composite description (see Figure 2, step 4). The composite description is not a definition of corporate history, but more of a description of how employees report experiencing corporate history. As the adjective "composite" suggests, the composite description is based on the views of several participants, meaning that it describes how corporate history is *collectively* experienced. As Giorgi (2009) notes, the composite description

can be thought of as the qualitative equivalent of the central tendency in statistics. This is an important point to remember, because the composite description does not equally apply to each and every employee; some parts of it apply to some employees, while other parts apply to others. Regarding the actual procedure I used to carry out the final step, I started by reading the text document containing all the final transformations (see third step) to get an overview of the different attitudes and feelings reported by the participants. After that, I used *NVivo*'s "tree map" feature to get a visual representation of the most common attitudes and feelings (see appendix D and Figure 2, step 4 A). The tree map, basically, creates an array of colored boxes, and each box represents an attitude or feeling (e.g., pride, indifference). The larger the box, the more people mentioned the corresponding attitude. Importantly, I changed the tree map settings so that the size of the box be commensurate with the *number of people* who expressed the attitude, not the *number of times* the attitudes has been expressed. This is an important point because, for example, if an employee mentioned pride four times, that doesn't *necessarily* mean that pride is more important to her than to the employees who mentioned it once or twice[5]. In other words, the *number of times* one talks about this or that feeling does not necessarily bear on the perceived importance of that feeling. On the other hand, the *number of people* who mentioned this or that feeling *at least once* is more germane to our purposes, because what we want is the *collective experience* of corporate history. Consequently, the more common an attitude is across participants, the more likely it is to be collectively experienced. For this reason, I believe the settings I used to create a tree map were warranted. With the help of the tree map, I picked out the most commonly experienced feelings and attitudes and used them as a basis to build up a composite description. Concretely, I would first select the most widespread attitude, read its corresponding final transformations from the memo, and write up a description of how that attitude was experienced (see Figure 2, steps 4 B through 4 D). To add more details and precision to the attitude's description, I would also read the relevant interview segments over again. (Reading the relevant interview passages another time also enabled me to select quotes from the participants to illustrate each attitude in the results section.) I would then carry out the same procedure on the other attitudes, from the most to the

[5] To illustrate further, consider the instance where a participant fleetingly mentioned her feelings of pride and then talks about her feelings of nostalgia. In that case I asked the participant to tell me more about her feelings of pride and nostalgia. In total, the participants would have mentioned pride and nostalgia 4 times; 2 by herself and 2 because I prodded her into being more specific. In other words, the number of times a participant talks about such-and-such attitudes may or may not reflect the perceived importance of that feeling. To be safe, I decided to stick with a dichotomous approach: either the participant talked about a specific subject or she didn't.

least common. Furthermore, because my focus is on the collective experience, I dismissed the attitudes that were less frequently reported (i.e., by one or two participants at best). Importantly, it was clear from the outset that several attitudes and feelings were connected. Many employees, for instance, expressed pride but only in conjunction with feelings of contribution to history. To clarify the connections between the attitudes, I created a model of the corporate history experience for each participant in *NVivo*. In these models, various shapes would represent a feeling or attitude experienced by the participant in question, and arrows would represent the connections between these attitudes (see appendix E). Taken as a whole, the 29 individual models enabled me to grasp how the various attitudes and feelings were interrelated at the collective level (see Figure 2, step 4 E). In order to get more details on the nature and context of these connections between attitudes, I examined the relevant interview segments one more time. With all this information, I could finally compile a description for each attitude and synthetize these descriptions into a composite description of the corporate history experience (see Figure 2, step 4 F).

Beside Giorgi's (2009) phenomenological analysis, I also compared how prevalent the attitudes toward corporate history were according to seniority, managerial rank, and company affiliation using *NVivo*'s "Matrix Coding Query" feature (see appendix F). Here again, I did not compare the *number of times* that, say, managers expressed pride with the number of times non-managers did. Rather, I compared the *number of managers* expressing pride with the corresponding number of non-managers. Of course, because the sample did not contain an equal number of managers and non-managers, I compared the *proportion* of managers who expressed pride with that of non-managers. Needless to say, this study's small sample makes all these comparisons tentative at best; they are only meant to explore potential patterns. Finally, I coded the rest of the interviews (i.e., the non-phenomenological questions) to identify how corporate history is created, what managers think about it, the reasons why corporate history is perceived as authentic, and other peripheral issues (see appendix C2 for a summary).

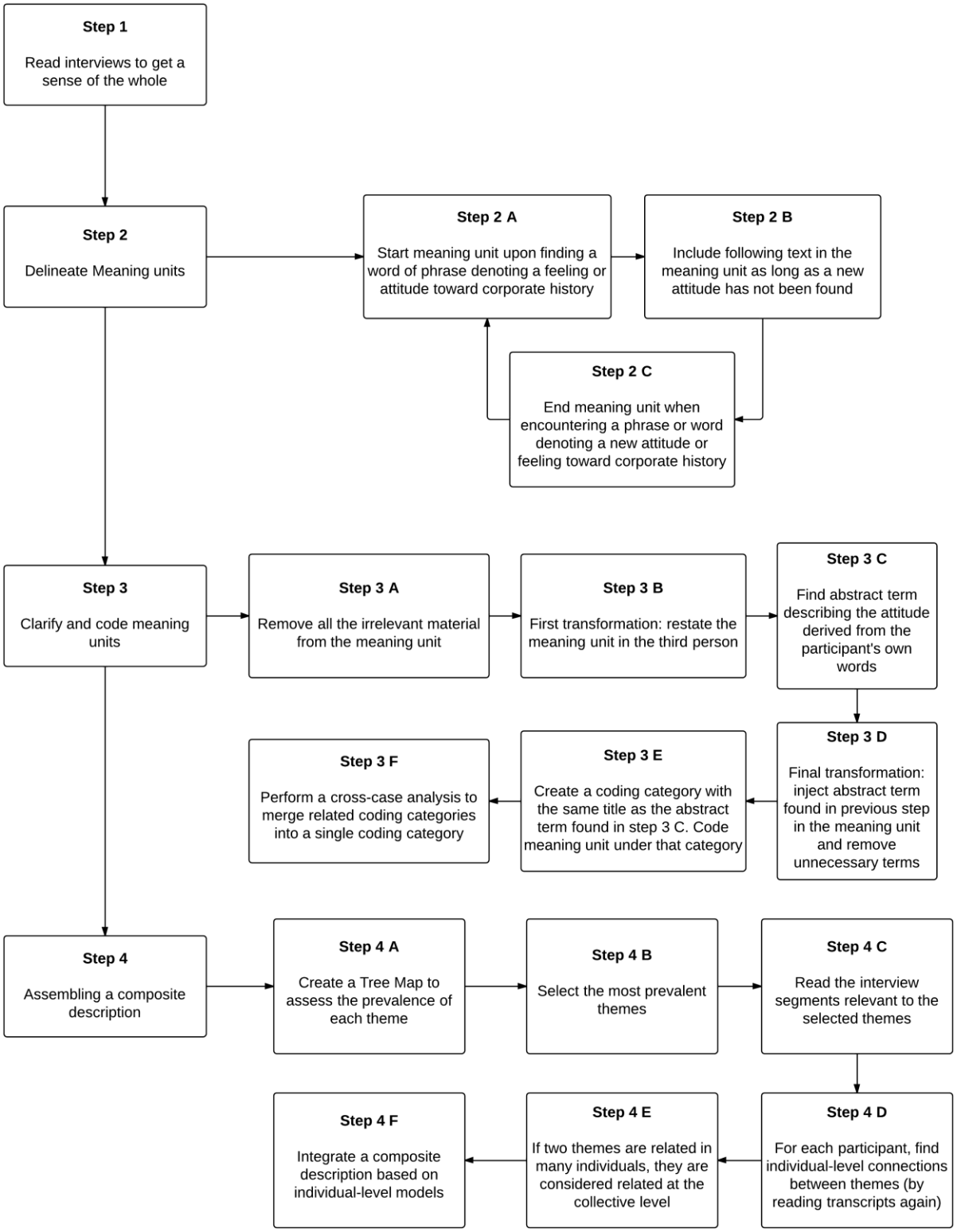


Figure 2: An adaptation of the descriptive phenomenological method

RESULTS

Though the main focus of this study is to describe how employees feel about their organization's history, I would first like to discuss the related issue of corporate history dynamics within the organization. In particular, the next section reviews the different channels through which the employees were exposed to organizational history, the reasons why corporate history is deemed authentic, and the managers' perspective on corporate history. Findings on attitudes toward corporate history and their discussion will immediately follow.

The Dynamics of Corporate History

Channels of Exposure

One of the preliminary questions I asked the participants was how they first came into contact with their company's history. From the perspective of my impression management model of rhetorical history, this question was purposed to reveal the *form and content* of the rhetorical message and the *source* of these messages. The participants' answers to this and other questions made one thing clear: The channels through which employees learn about corporate history are surprisingly diverse. The most common source of historical narratives was, unsurprisingly, the management. A large majority of employees have indeed reported that managers and supervisors sometimes recount historical events and anecdotes during informal conversations. Hiring managers, on their end, expose new hires to corporate history by presenting them with an overview of the company's history during the hiring process. This, however, applies more to recent employees, as the practice of narrating corporate history during the job interview was a relatively recent one. In the case of Milky Way, furthermore, the management also touches upon corporate history during annual traditions such as Christmas dinners. During these occasions, the CEO would first give an overview of the company's history and then recap the company's current performance in order to compare it with past achievements. A large number of participants also mentioned that their first contact with history was through discussions with senior employees, who are often seen as the purveyors of an unbroken chain of oral history; a people's history of the organization so to speak. I used the phrase "unbroken chain" to refer to this oral history because senior employees often mention that upon joining the organization, they themselves obtained many historical facts

and anecdotes from those who were then senior employees (and are retired now). As a result, current senior employees view their own career and the anecdotal legacy obtained from their former colleagues as their very own source of organizational history. Several employees also reported that their family and friends were their first contact with their company's history, because both companies in this sample were locally well-known and employees' relatives were therefore knowledgeable about their historical development. In addition to the management, senior colleagues, and relatives, employees frequently learn about their organization's history through more formal channels, such as anniversary celebrations in the case of Massive Dynamics and corporate museums in the case of Milky Way. Massive Dynamics' 110th anniversary took place a few months prior to the study and consisted in a day-long celebration involving the exhibition of old photographs and videos as well as speeches made by retired employees; Milky Way's corporate museum was designed mainly for the customers as it was located near the company's milk bar and displayed old photographs as well as a historical overview. Moreover, employees also get exposed to history in their job via historical artifacts, such as obsolete machinery and old technical drawing books. More recent employees have also reported learning about corporate history through the company's website. Finally, rather than being a passive audience I found that employees actively discuss their organization's history with friends, family, colleagues, and customers.

Perception of Authenticity

I concluded the interviews with a final question on whether employees considered their organization's history to be authentic. As I had expected, virtually all participants said yes[6]. Because I had anticipated this answer, I also asked the participants about the reasons why they considered their company's history authentic. Here again, because some senior employees have been working at the same company for multiple decades, they enjoy the privilege of saying that their corporate history is authentic because it coincides with their remembrance of things past. In the same way, younger employees also claim their organization's history to be authentic because it matches with their senior colleagues' accounts (or in some cases with their friends' or relatives' accounts). In the case of Milky Way, several participants viewed family ownership as a source of

[6] The only exception was a participant who said he simply never considered the question

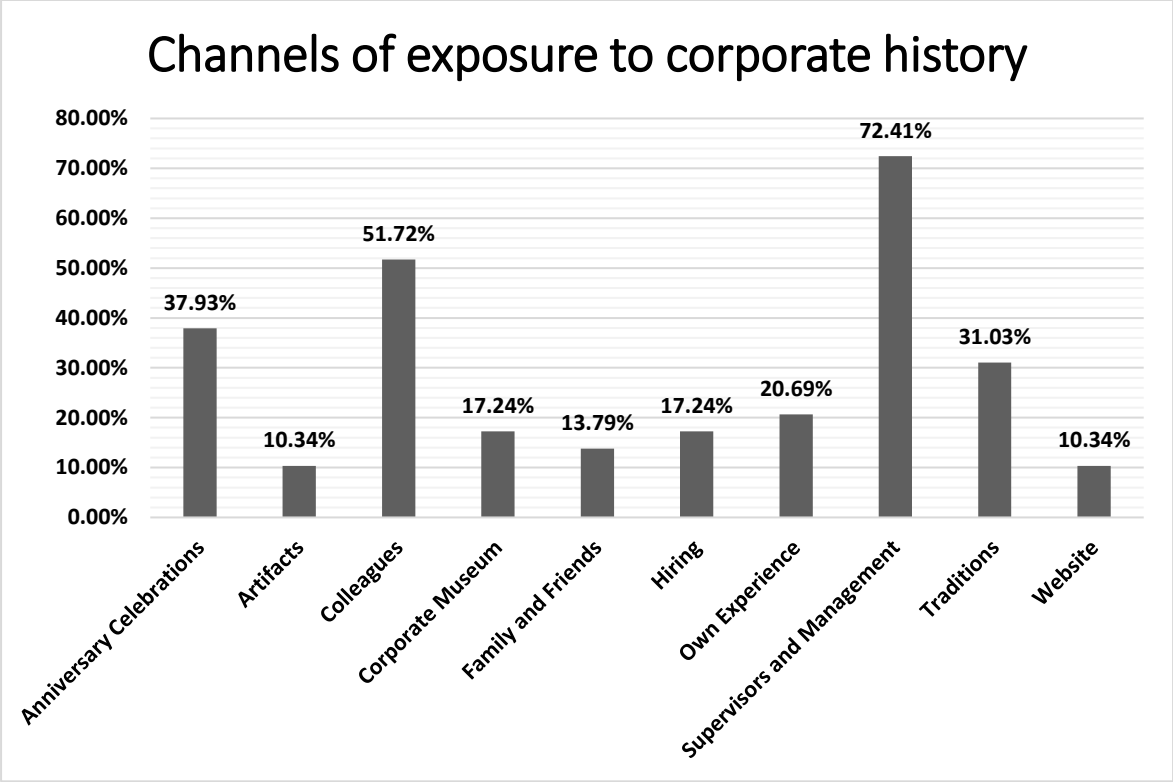


Figure 3: Channels through which employees learn about their organization's history[7][8]

historical authenticity, particularly the fact that the current managers were the scions of the family that took the company over in the 1970s. According to some participants, the presence of managers bearing the name of historical figures adds a tangible dimension to corporate history. In addition, one the most common reasons given for historical authenticity had to do with more "objective" reasons, such as the consistency between corporate history and historical newspaper articles, photographs, and artifacts. Finally, some participants have justified their corporate history's authenticity by reasoning that there would be no point in lying about history or that their organization's history seems plausible.

[7] This chart shows values for the sample as a whole. Please refer to appendix G for adjustments according to company affiliation, seniority, and managerial rank

[8] Note that the chart indicates that 37.93% of the participants learned about their company's history through an anniversary celebration, but that number increases to 73% if we take into account only Massive Dynamics, the only company that celebrated its anniversary. For the same reason, if we take only Milky Way into account, 35% of the participants have reported being exposed to corporate history via the corporate museum.

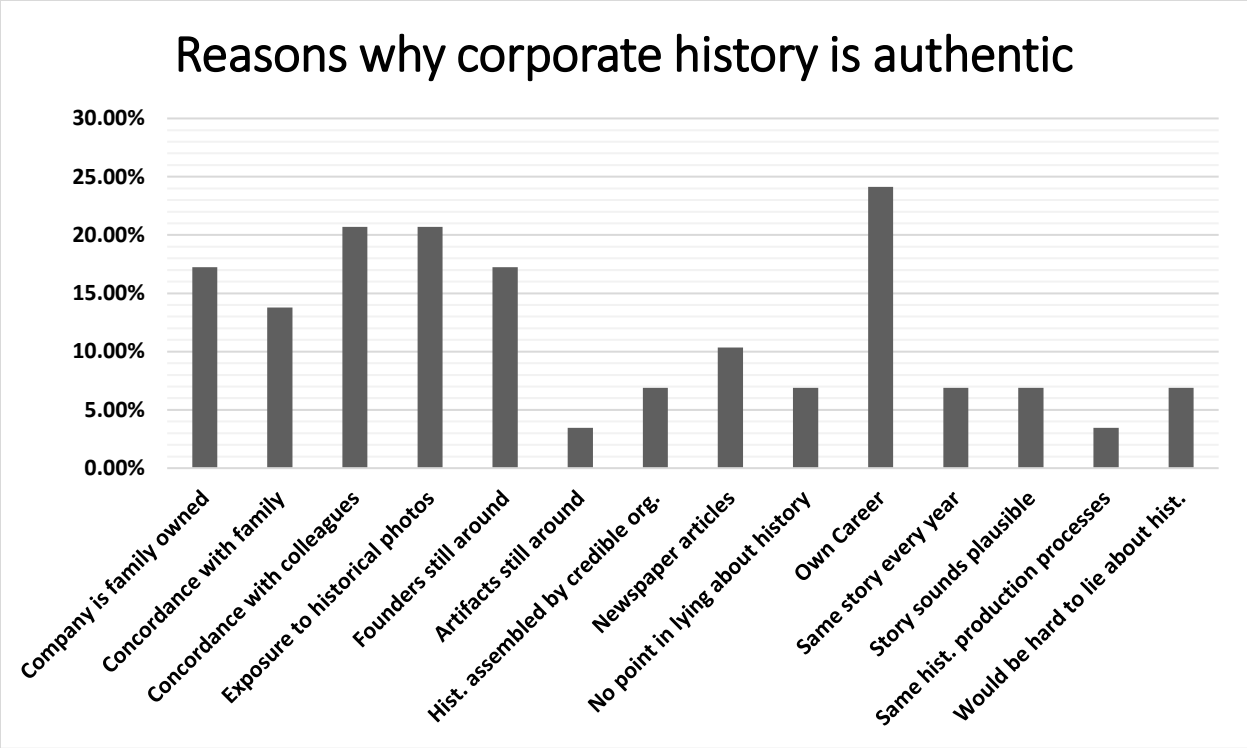


Figure 4: Reasons for the perceived authenticity of corporate history, according to employees[9]

To make sense of the reasons employees used to justify their organization's authenticity, I decided to look into the relevant literature. Authenticity, broadly defined, is the perception that something is true, genuine, and real (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). In order to judge whether an organization is authentic, individuals use certain points of reference, or cues, to assess whether the organization's image is consistent with the organization's "true" image (Edwards, 2010; McShane & Cunningham, 2011). Grayson and Martinec (2004) argued that such cues can be classified as either indexical or iconic. Indexical cues are usually factual, they are verifiable links to a trusted point of reference (e.g., I perceive this coin to be authentic because it has been certified by the National Numismatic Association). Iconic cues, on the other hand, fit with the individual's prior expectations—no matter how vague or inaccurate—for authenticity (e.g., "this coin *looks* and *feels* authentic"). Similarly, the participants in this study almost invariably referred to an external[10] point of reference when justifying their organization's historical authenticity (see Figure 4). Most

[9] This chart shows values for the sample as a whole. Please refer to appendix H for adjustments according to company affiliation, seniority, and managerial rank

[10] The only case where the reference point was internal was when the employees used their own memories as an anchor point to assess the authenticity of corporate history.

of these points of reference, furthermore, could be classified as either indexical or iconic cues:

Indexical cues	**Iconic cues**
Concordance with colleagues' and relatives' accounts of the organization's history	The history narrated is the same every year
Exposure to historical photographs	Historical narratives sound plausible
Founders or founders' family are still alive	It would be hard to "fake" history
Exposure to historical artifacts	There is no point in lying about history
History assembled by credible organization	
Newspaper articles	
Production processes haven't changed	

Table 3: Authenticity cues

Interestingly, the number of participants who relied on indexical cues was three times as high as the number of participants who relied on iconic cues (see Figure 5 on the next page). This suggests that, when reflecting on the authenticity of corporate history, employees tend to rely more on verifiable cues (e.g., newspaper articles) than on hunches. Furthermore, new employees were much more likely to rely on iconic cues than senior employees (see Figure 6 on the next page). This makes intuitive sense, as recent hires presumably did not enjoy the same levels of familiarity with the organization as their more senior counterparts. To make up for this deficiency of information, new employees rely on heuristic, less verifiable cues (see Table 3, iconic cues). The most senior employees on the other hand, relied exclusively on indexical cues, most likely because they enjoy the privilege of having a long career to look back on as well as conversations with long-departed colleagues to assess the validity of corporate history's claims. This suggests that, as an impression management tactic, rhetorical history may be effective only when accompanied with convincing, tangible evidence to support the narratives. Of course, the supporting material need not be "objectively" factual, it only needs to be perceived as being reliable. To summarize, the findings suggest that, overall, employees tend to rely more on factual and verifiable cues to assess the authenticity of their organization's history and that this reliance on factual cues tends to be more pronounced in older workers.

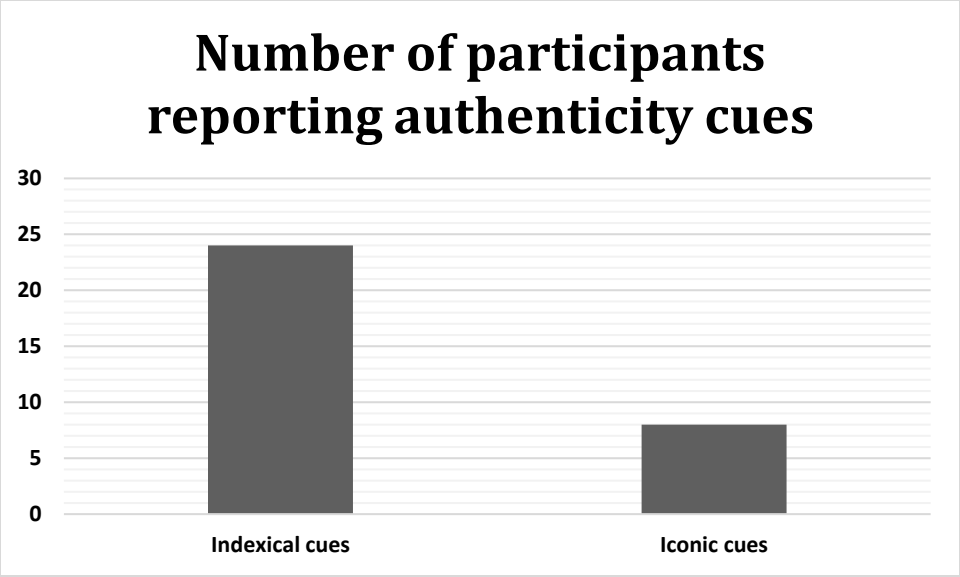


Figure 5: Prevalence of authenticity cues

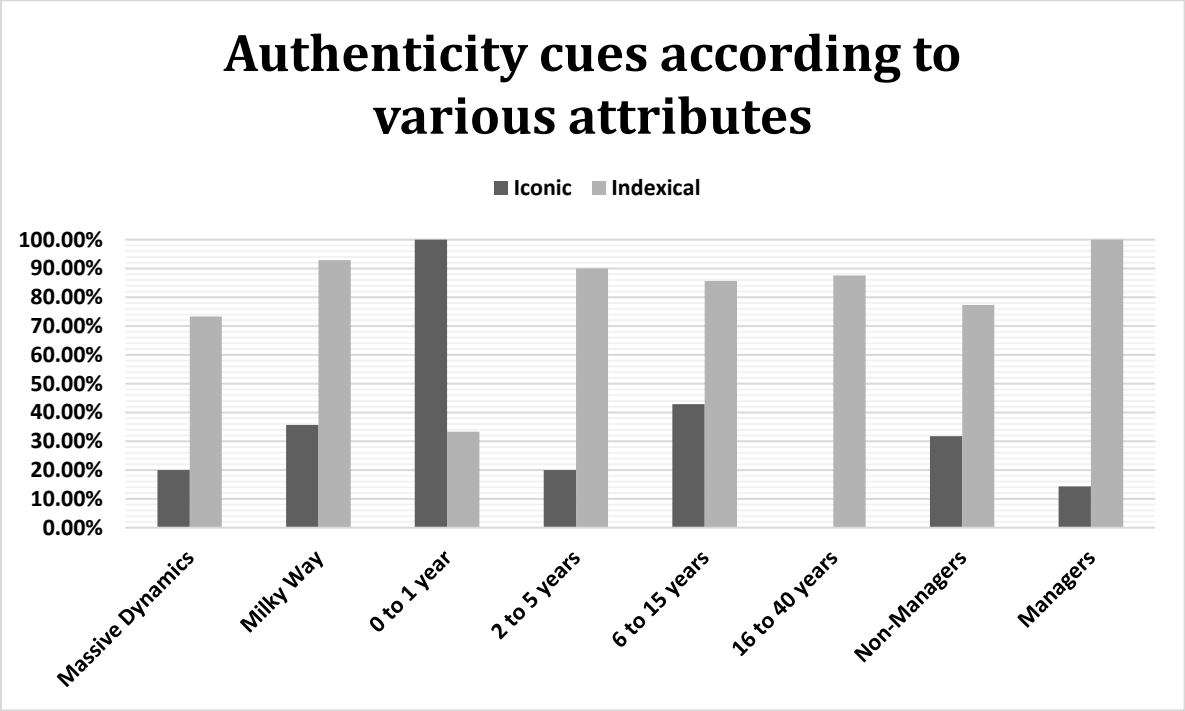


Figure 6: Authenticity cues according to various attributes

Managerial Perspective

In the section on data collection, I mentioned that I had two sets of interview protocols; one for lower-level employees and the other for managers. The managers' interview protocols featured additional questions probing, for instance, the motives behind the managers' decision to put together a corporate history. (I included this question to reveal what kind of impetus drove each organization to engage in rhetorical history; see the impetus section in the literature review.) To this question, one manager at Massive Dynamics answered that initially the company's history was put together when the centennial was commissioned at the behest of the then executive directors. In other words, Massive Dynamics' main reason for assembling a historical overview was, according to the manager, to celebrate the company's 100th anniversary. But when I insisted on whether there were any other underlying motives, she answered that the aim of the celebration was also to foster a sense of pride and belongingness among employees. At Milky Way, on the other hand, the need to engage in corporate history was more externally driven. According to one Milky Way manager, the company's museum was established mainly to address an increasingly frequent questioning from the public about Milky Way's history. But the customers' pull was not the only motive for assembling a corporate history, as the manager added that with the company's expansion came a great deal of new hires who needed to be acquainted with Milky Way's history. The manager, who is a member of the Milky Way family, also noted that the management is very proud of the company's history and believes it is important that the employees be aware of the company's success story.

I also asked managers of both organizations about how corporate history was put together. Massive Dynamics commissioned the History Society of city B to explore the archives and assemble an official historical account of the company which was later used as a basis for the anniversary celebrations. Milky Way, on the other hand, proceeded in a more informal way. According to one manager, one of the senior executives (also a member of the Milky Way family) had been collecting archives from the company and from the press for several years before putting together Milky Way's history and its corporate museum.

Finally, when I asked the managers how they thought their employees reacted to corporate history, their answers by and large coincided with the attitudes reported by the (non-manager) employees. The managers at Massive Dynamics said that corporate history typically induces feelings of pride and belongingness among the employees. The managers also added that the more

senior employees can at times be nostalgic and resentful while new hires might be less acquainted with corporate history and therefore less influenced by it. The managers at Milky Way similarly mentioned that their company's history elicits feelings of belongingness and pride among their employees.

The Experience of Corporate History

When I finished analyzing the data, I ended up with 170 meaning units[11] from 29 interviews. Most of these meaning units (and their corresponding final transformations[12]) could be clustered around 5 broad themes: pride, history as indicator of robustness, commitment, appreciation of evolution narratives, and nostalgia. These broad themes constitute the building blocks—the essences—of the corporate history experience, which I summed up in the composite description. But before we proceed to the composite description, I will first explain each theme in detail, illustrate them with quotes from the participants, and show how these themes interrelate with one another.

Pride

Reported by almost 70% of the participants, pride was the most predominant feeling. These results coincide with Urde et al.'s (2007) suggestion that corporate brands with a heritage can bolster pride by making employees feel like they are part of something bigger than themselves. Similarly, Danilov (1992) listed employee pride as one of the objectives that corporate museums should fulfill while Dellheim (1986) suggested that an awareness of corporate history should stimulate feelings of pride in employees. In the most and least senior employees, however, pride was relatively less prevalent (see Figure 7 below). Part of the reason is that pride has been overshadowed by nostalgia[13] in some of the more senior employees whereas recent hires didn't have enough time to familiarize themselves with their company's history.

What emerged from the interviews is that pride springs from many sources, and one major source of pride lies in one's perception of contributing to history. Specifically, some participants have expressed great pride in playing a part in their organization's historical development *and* in having the opportunity to further contribute to it, to leave their mark on history. When participants talk about their actual or potential contribution to history, they refer to the possibility of making a difference. In most cases, however, participants admit that their contribution will likely be a small

[11] A meaning unit is a unit of analysis in phenomenology
[12] See step 3 in data analysis section
[13] Especially negative nostalgia (see section on nostalgia).

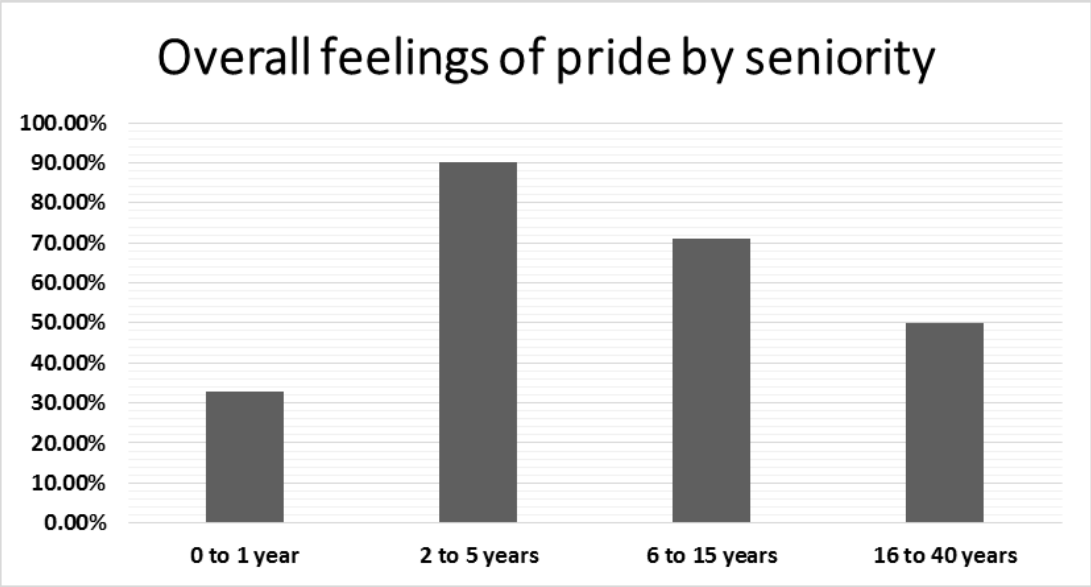


Figure 7: Overall feelings of history-related pride by seniority

one, that what really matters is the act of contributing, of doing one's share to improve the company and keep it alive.

Presumably, it takes time to reach the point where one earns the privilege to claim to have contributed to history. This would explain why feelings of contribution to history rise dramatically with seniority (see seniority chart in Table 4). Furthermore, employees at Massive Dynamics were slightly more likely to report contribution to history than Milky Way's employees, perhaps due to Massive Dynamics' emphasis on history and longevity in its narratives. (Milky Way, although mentioning longevity in its narratives, focuses more on dimensions of family ownership and authenticity.) A perhaps complementary explanation would be that the average seniority at Massive Dynamics was much higher than at Milky Way, and if feelings of contribution to history inherently require a certain level of seniority, it follows that feelings of contribution would be more prevalent in the company with more senior employees—Massive Dynamics. In addition, managers were almost thrice as likely as non-managers to report this contribution to history. When I compared the accounts of managers with those of non-managers regarding their views on contribution to history, I could not find any obvious reason why managers would be more likely to talk about their contribution to history than non-managers. However, in comparing the accounts

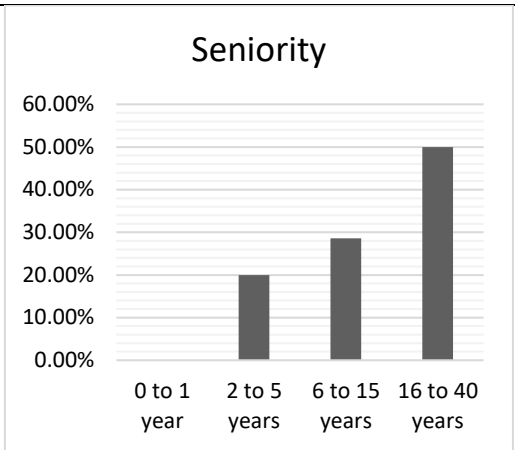
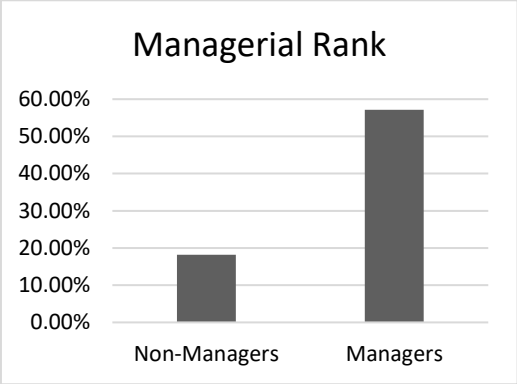
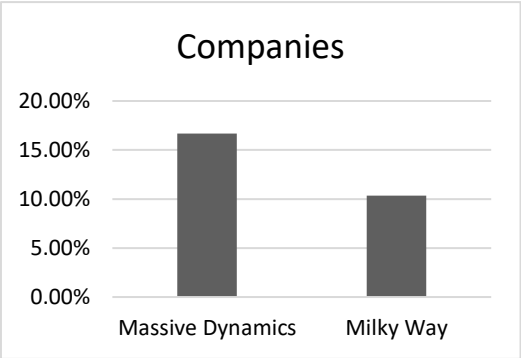
Theme description(s)	Quotes	Participant attributes
Pride in having played a part in the company's historical evolution	"It's the pride of being in it and having achieved something throughout the years, of having played our part in sustaining this company" – MD2 "[A pride in saying that] I was able to make a difference in the evolution of Milky Way … to improve working conditions, work methods, the techniques … over the years" – MW10	
Pride in the potential of leaving one's mark on corporate history	"Pride, I would say […] it's the link between history and my current position I would say […]. I feel like I'm contributing to it and that if I stay here long enough I will leave my mark on history […] to add something to that history, that's the kind of feeling that I would experience in my daily life" – MD13	  Total number of participants who explicitly reported a connection between their contribution to history and pride: 8

Table 4: Contribution to history as a determinant of pride

I discerned a pronounced difference in their accounts: virtually all non-managers feel proud because of their contribution *only* whereas virtually all managers feel proud because their contribution to history makes them feel like they are *a part of that history*.

This brings us to another major source of pride: belongingness to history. Accounts of belongingness to history always co-occur with accounts of contribution to history; after all, one couldn't claim being a part of organizational history without doing his or her share of work. Consequently, and given the observations I made above, it shouldn't be surprising that managers were much more likely to report belongingness than non-managers. Also, participants talked about belongingness in equal proportions across the two companies (see Table 5 on the next page). All of this doesn't help solve the problem of why managers are more likely to report contribution or belongingness to history as a source of their pride. However, when considering the findings described in the following sections as well as findings from prior research, a pattern begins to emerge and the discrepancies between managers and non-managers start to make sense. I will deal with this manager-subordinate disconnect more thoroughly in the section on commitment.

To summarize the findings I reviewed so far, it seems that while contribution to history *alone* seems to elicit pride in non-managers, it is the feeling of belongingness *derived* from that contribution that makes managers proud:

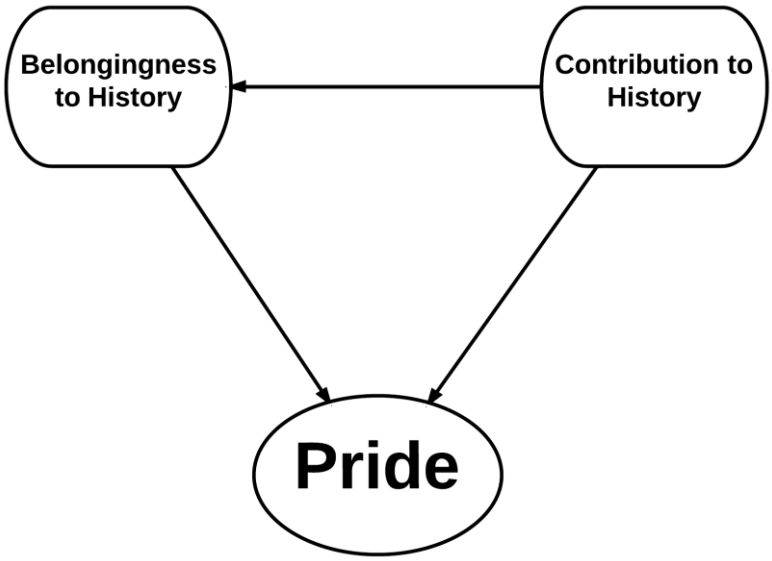


Figure 8: Contribution and belongingness to history as determinants of pride

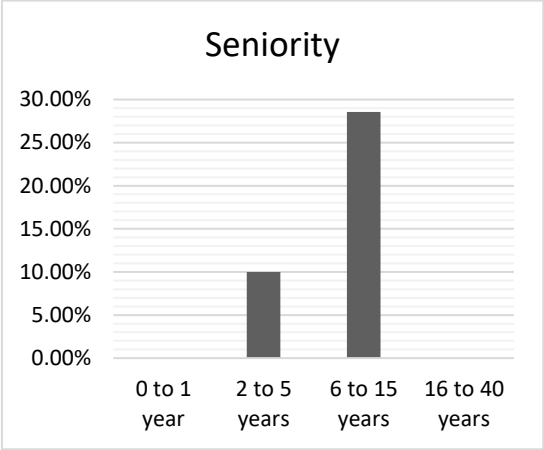
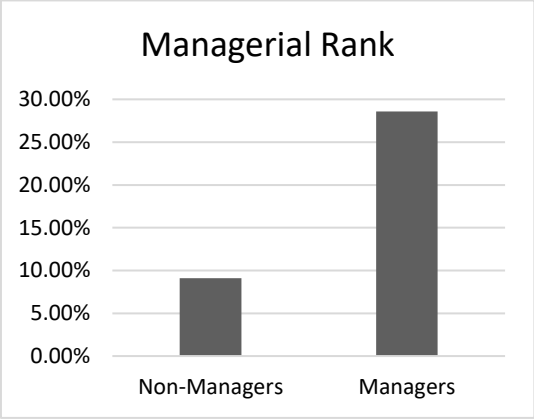
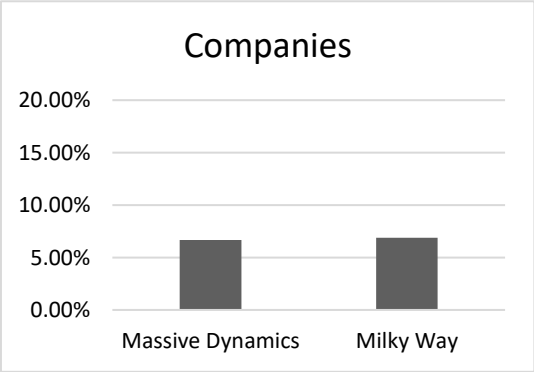
Theme description(s)	Quotes	Participant attributes
Belongingness to History	"Well I had some pride in saying that I was among the people who contributed to the evolution of that company. So in a certain sense, it gives me the feeling of being part of the history of that company" – MD9	
Belongingness to the *people* who make history, to a "family"	"I would say some pride. I'm proud to be part of the Milky Way family and to see it evolve over the years" – MW10 "I express my feelings of pride by saying […] that I do my share of work in the company to push it forward and improve it. It's, actually, it's like a big family." – MD15	  Total number of participants who explicitly reported a connection between their belongingness to history and pride: 7

Table 5: Belongingness to history as a determinant of pride

Another determinant of pride was the perception that corporate history is intimately tied to the history and culture of the local area, in the same way that Wrigley and Ben&Jerry's are often viewed as part and parcel of the histories of Chicago and Burlington (see Table 6 on the next page). Most participants were native to their respective cities and identified with their hometown. As a result, some participants took pride in working for a company whose history is part of their city's historical heritage. In this sense, employees might be more inclined to derive their pride from a "homegrown" corporate history than from a more foreign one. Unsurprisingly, this appreciation of a local corporate history was more prevalent at Milky Way, whose history is tightly interwoven with that of City A's. In fact, Milky Way's real brand name is the namesake of its hometown.

Relatedly, some participants mentioned that their pride derives from working for a local company that has ascended to national success and popularity. Specifically, some employees noted that their organizations' rags-to-riches approach to success is something to be particularly proud of. Here again, this was disproportionately reported by employees at Milky Way (see Table 7). One reason might be that Milky Way's rise to success has been relatively recent and therefore still freshly imprinted on the organization's collective memory. This would also explain why accounts of success were more prevalent in employees with 6 to 15 years of seniority, that is, those who were working at Milky Way during the company's booming period. Massive Dynamics, on the other hand, had already been on the road to success as early as the mid-1930s; too long ago for anyone in the organization to remember. Finally, the difference between the proportion of managers and non-managers who mentioned the success aspect of history is relatively small (28% vs. 36%) and, given the small sample I used, this might not reflect an actual, significant difference.

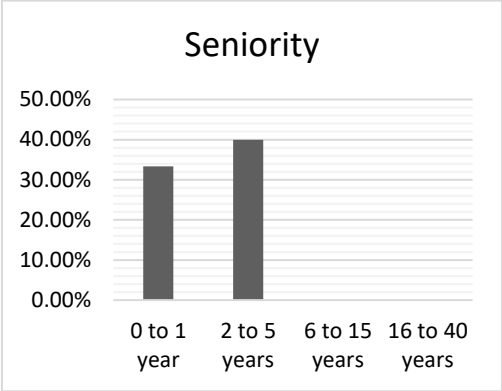
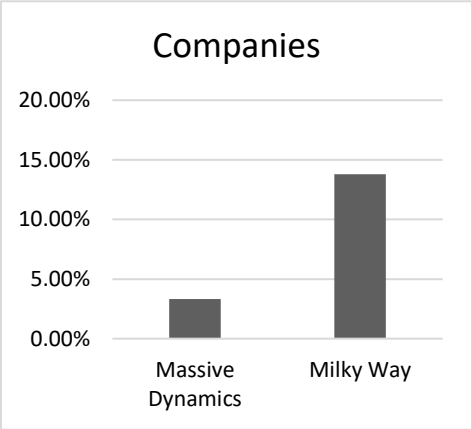
Theme description(s)	Quotes	Participant attributes
Pride derived from the inherence of the company's history to its local area	"… there is a certain pride, because I'm from city A, to know that Milky Way is a local company that started out with nothing and … there really is a certain sense of pride here for our region, that's pretty much how I feel about it" – MW1 "A feeling of pride, of being here […] To me [Massive Dynamics's history] is something that's impressive and really really important and part of the local culture. Often people would ask me 'where do you work?' and I say 'Massive Dynamics,' and usually they say they've never heard of it so then I say 'Metal Gear Inc.,' because that's how it was called back then, [and then people say] 'Oh yes, yes I know that place they're in city B.' So you know there is a lot of people who know about it" – MD1	   Total number of participants who explicitly reported a connection between their pride and the fact that their company's history was connected to the local area's: 4

Table 6: Embeddedness of corporate history within local area's history elicits pride

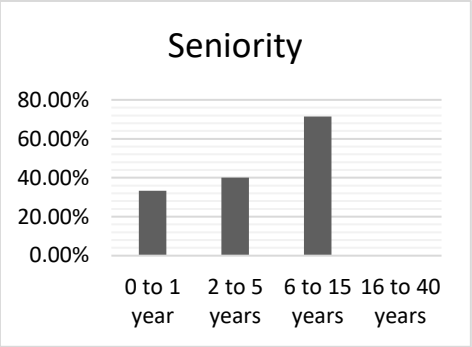
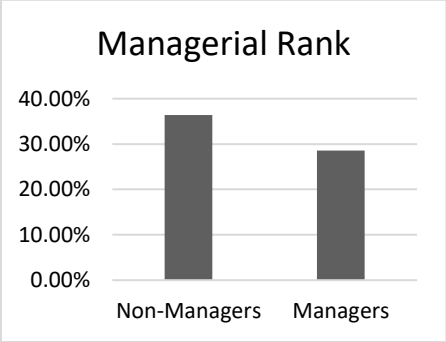
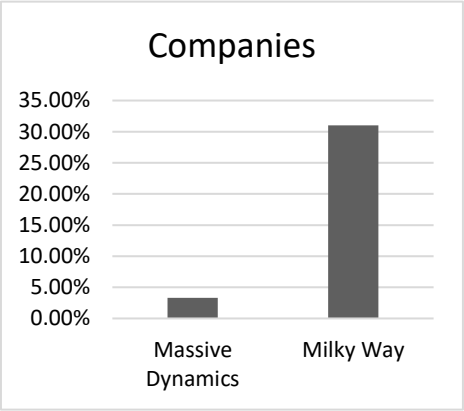
Theme Description(s)	Quotes	Participant attributes
Pride derived from the fact that a company that started small and enjoyed increasing success over the years	"We're proud because we've come a long way, especially these past ten years […] we're a small dairy producer with an excellent product, and throughout the years we knew how to play our cards right and compete against big players like Nestlé and Breyers to reach and even surpass them in sales in [this province]" – MW14 "There's a certain pride… [this company] is from around here, you know, we live in this area. It's been here forever, and now we're expanding across borders…" — MW3 "If there's any feeling [I would have toward this company's history], it would really come down to being proud of this local and family-owned company that succeeded in playing its cards right and showing the whole province what it's worth" — MW5	   Total number of participants who explicitly reported a connection between their pride and the fact that their company enjoyed a success story: 4

Table 7: "Success story" aspect of corporate history as a determinant of pride

Combining tables 3, 4, 5, and 6, we see that pride has to this point four main sources: contribution to history, belongingness to history, success story elements in corporate history, and embeddedness of corporate history within the local area's culture and history:

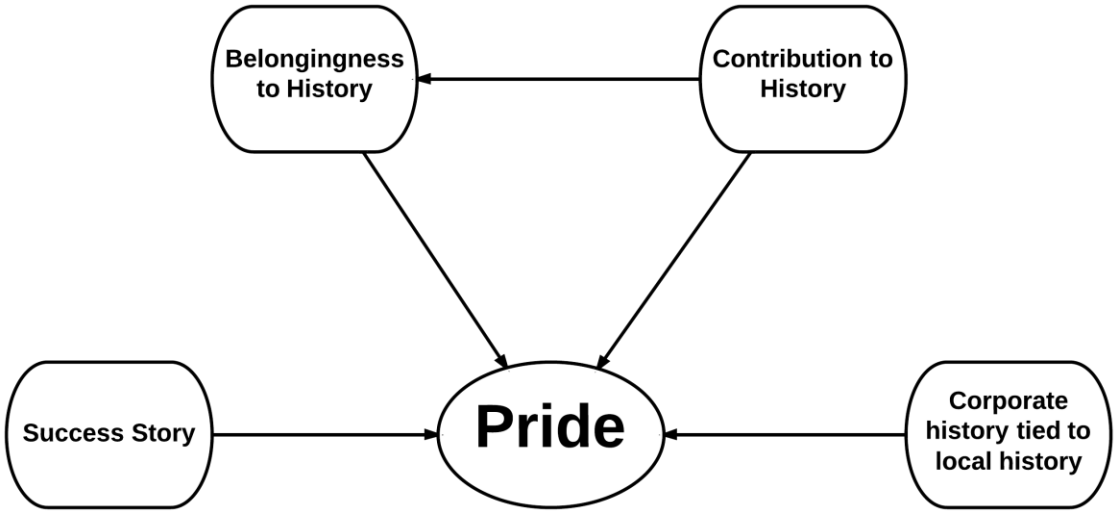


Figure 9: Pride arises when corporate history is local and features elements of success

To yet other employees, what arouses feelings of pride is the (perceived) everlastingness of their organization, especially at Massive Dynamics. This finding was to be expected, as longevity has been suggested to be a key element of heritage brands (Urde et al., 2007; Wiedmann et al., 2011). Organizations, on their end, are aware of the persuasive power of longevity, as Carroll (2002:557) put it: "[f]or older organizations, 'Est.' (as in, 'established 1950') has become as important as 'Inc.'; indeed, longevity is deemed so important these days that some institutions have engaged in mergers and taken on the founding date of the older organization while dropping everything else about its history." Longevity might therefore constitute a potent element of persuasion in corporate historical narratives. Longevity alone, however, is not a direct source of pride. As I will discuss more thoroughly in the next section, the longevity of an organization is often construed as a hallmark of robustness and expertise, and it is this perceived "historical robustness" that sparks feelings of pride in employees.

To summarize, pride was the paramount feeling toward corporate history in this sample. Pride surfaces when employees feel they have (or had) the opportunity to contribute to and feel part of their organization's history, when the organization has a local and successful history, and when the organization's history is seen as longstanding.

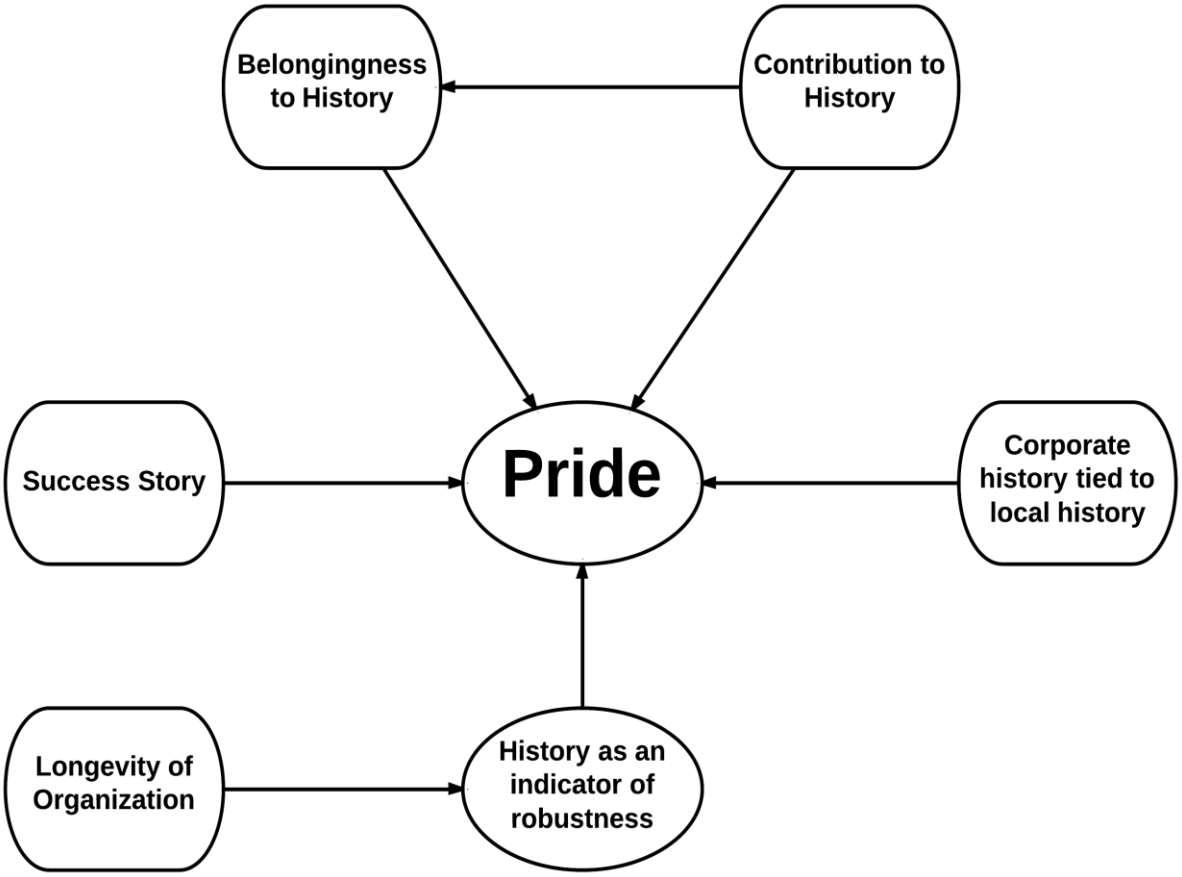


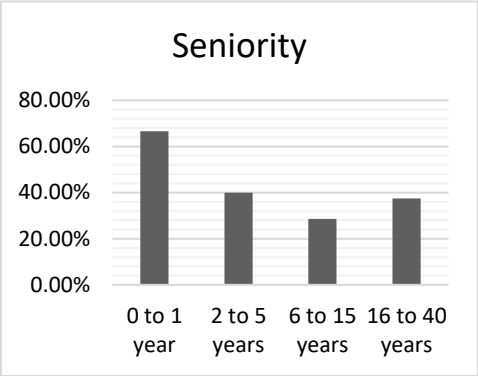
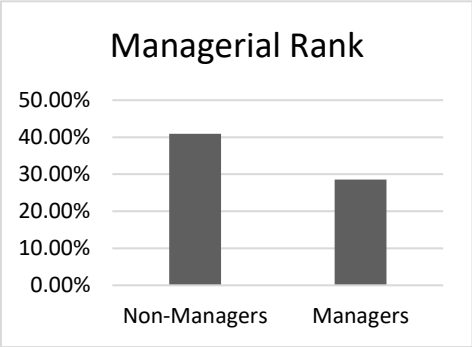
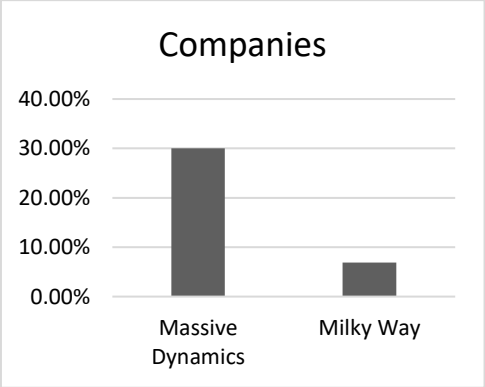
Figure 10: Longevity as an indirect determinant of pride

History as an Indicator of Robustness

One theme that I touched upon in the above section was the perceived longevity of the organization. Stemming from this perceived longevity is the notion that a long-established organization is one that is robust, expert, and resilient. Indeed, employees often reasoned that an organization with a long-established history is an organization that has survived for a long time and must therefore have solid foundations as well as a superior trade secret or some other kind of competitive edge. Alternatively, other participants saw organizations with a long-established history as having had ample time to build up and hone their expertise. In other words, the former group of participants views history as indicative of survivorship while the latter views history as accumulated expertise[14]. In both cases, a long-running history evokes notions of reliability and robustness. In addition, some employees have explicitly referred to longevity as a way to assert their organization's endurance, competence, and superiority over younger companies whose future is far from certain.

Perceptions of "historical robustness" were more common among Massive Dynamics' employees (see Table 8 below). As I mentioned earlier, Massive Dynamics's historical narratives emphasize longevity and expertise while Milky Way centered its narratives on authenticity and family ownership. The salience of longevity in Massive Dynamics' narratives might therefore explain why this theme was more frequently reported in this organization. Another possible explanation could be that, unlike Milky Way, Massive Dynamics is more than a century old and has celebrated its anniversary recently. The higher longevity of Massive Dynamics and the freshness of the anniversary in the employees' mind might therefore constitute potential causes for this discrepancy. There were no significant differences across seniority categories, except for new hires (0 to 1 year of seniority) who, for reasons I will describe shortly, see "historical robustness" as a guaranty of stability for the future. Finally, due to the small sample of this study I don't believe any valid conclusions can be drawn from the slight difference between the proportion of managers and non-managers (28% vs. 40%) who talked about this theme.

[14] To further clarify, the "survivorship" group thinks that if an organization has weathered severe difficulties in the past, it means that the organization is strong and reliable. The "accumulated expertise" group, on the other hand, says that the organization is strong and reliable because it carries with it an old and ever-improving tradition of know-how and product quality.

Theme description(s)	Quotes	Participant attributes
History as a guaranty of solid foundations	"… when I think about the fact that this company has been around for 110 years, I tell myself that it's not an ephemeral company, you know, it's a company that is well established, and in some way it evokes a sense of security." — MD14 "It influences me in the sense that... it gives a certain stability I would say [... history] is a proof of longevity, of stability maybe." – MD13	   Total number of participants who reported considering history as a sign of robustness: 12
History as a benchmark to compare the competence and robustness of one's company	"[talking about similar companies in the area that have now shut down]… and they used to manufacture a type of machinery with our parts. They all closed down. They were bought out, they got closed down, they moved out, but we're still the only survivor in the region. So that's also a source of pride. It means that in some way there's a good recipe, a successful recipe that we must preserve" — MD15 "It's not a company that, for example, has been here for 2 years, and that's when you think 'my God this company really succeeded in going through the years and survive' because not that many companies make it to 110" – MD 11	

History as a sign of expertise or quality	"… it's more in relation to something that endured through time in the area, a sign of durability or quality in some way […] If you last for a certain amount of time it means you must be doing something right […] that's where my feelings of pride come from, we've been making quality products for a very long time." — MW5	

Table 8: History as an indicator of quality, robustness, and resilience

Theme description(s)	Quotes	Participant attributes
Pride in working for a company that has accumulated expertise through its history	"The reason why I'm proud to work here is because of the product. The quality of the product. I've probably never thought about it consciously but [this product quality is due to the fact that] we're a very old company, and there's a whole lot of experience behind it, because of all these years [of experience]." – MD5 "If you last for a certain amount of time it means you must be doing something right […] that's where my feelings of pride come from, we've been making quality products for a very long time." — MW5	*Participant attributes regarding "historical robustness" are displayed in table 7 above. Total number of participants who explicitly reported "historical robustness" as a reason for their pride: 7
Pride derived from the idea that one's organization is better because it survived and thrived while others did not	"What I was saying to the management committee is that we have to tell ourselves, proudly, that we're the oldest manufacturing company still alive in city B. So, it's a big deal because today factories close down; it's rare to celebrate factories that have been anchored around here for 110 years." — MD8 "[talking about similar companies in the area that have now shut down]… and they used to manufacture a type of machinery with our parts. They all closed down. They were bought out, they got closed down, they moved out, but we're still the only survivor in the region. So that's also a source of pride." — MD15	

Table 9: Perception of "historical robustness" as determinant of pride

Remember that in the section on pride, I mentioned that employees derive their feelings of pride not from the mere longevity of their organization but from what that longevity implies, i.e., a proof of expertise and robustness. In Table 9 above, I classify the two types of pride that longevity inspires. In the first one, employees report that their pride derives from working for an organization whose competence derives from decades of accumulated knowhow. In the second type, employees feel proud because they work in a company that has withstood the test of time whereas other companies didn't (or won't) enjoy the same fate. In this latter type of pride, there is an explicit element of comparison as employees assert the (historical) superiority of their organization over defunct and/or younger organizations. To reiterate, the notion of "historical robustness" elicits pride because, from the perspective of an employee, it implies working for a competent organization that has historically succeeded where others have failed.

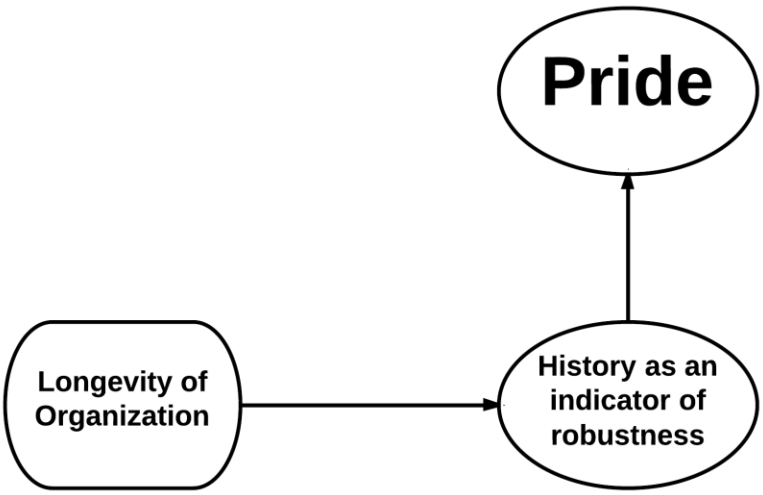


Figure 11: Longevity as an indirect determinant of pride

Interestingly, employees also mentioned that an organization with a history is one with a solid foundation, strong enough to overcome current and, importantly, *future* challenges. This perceived resilience, in turn, makes employees optimistic about the future of their organization:

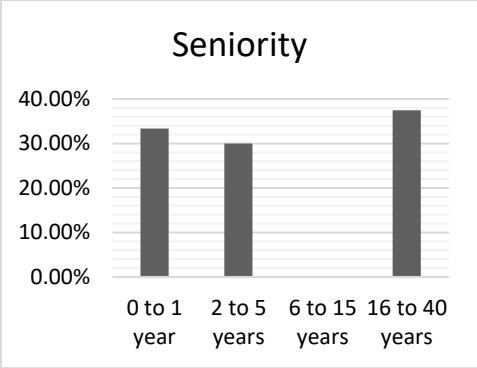
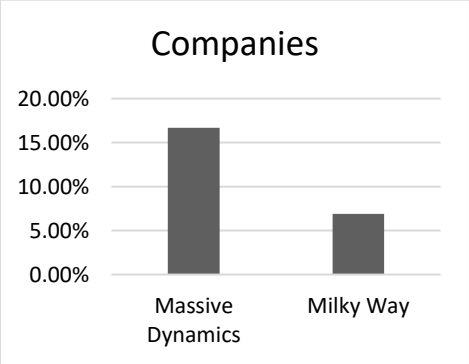
Theme description(s)	Quotes	Participant attributes
Historical resilience as a guaranty of future resilience	"It must be said that today not all companies make it to 110. Some of them have been around for 5 years but we don't know if they're going to last for long; with 110 years you know you've got a company with solid foundations […] that has been through a lot and knows how to roll up its sleeves in hard times […] it gives us a feeling of trust and we feel good" — MD1 "It's a factory that has been through several storms, and I'm really proud to work here because of this. I tell myself there's another storm coming up and it's going to be the same thing every 3 years…" — MD12	   Total number of participants who explicitly reported that "historical robustness" bodes well for the organization's future: 4
History as an indicator of solid foundations	"I think it's encouraging for the future [...] I think it's reassuring to know that there's a good [historical] background; a good and solid foundation." – MD10	

Table 10: Historical robustness as a determinant of optimism about the future

Here again, Massive Dynamics's employees were more likely to report being hopeful for the future than employees at Milky Way, most certainly for the same reasons I mentioned previously (i.e., recent anniversary celebration and emphasis on longevity in corporate narratives). Furthermore, this optimism for the future was reported exclusively by non-managers and by the most and least senior employees. For both senior and recent employees, this hope for the future also meant that they wouldn't have to worry about having to find a job in the future. They reasoned that if their organization has withstood recessions and other difficult times, their job security wouldn't be under threat as the organization will undoubtedly survive future challenges. One of the consequences of this perceived resilience and strength, as Urde et al. (2007) suggested, is that from the organization's perspective corporate history may be an asset in recruiting and retaining executives and employees. They were right:

"So, I tell myself that when you're hired here, you know you're going to have a job for a long time. You get a steady job and it's certain that [this company] will not close down tomorrow morning, because it's been more than 100 years now, and with all the economic crises and everything. […] it makes me somewhat more confident about working here." — MD4 (new hire)

The management, on its end, seemed to be well aware of this fact:

"… but it really sells to say that we've been anchored in city B for 110 years. When we hire people we talk about it proudly and we explain that this is the original building and that we were here in 1905 and that the company has expanded and then we show them [old] photographs like this and we explain … so for sure it's, [history] really sells." — MD8

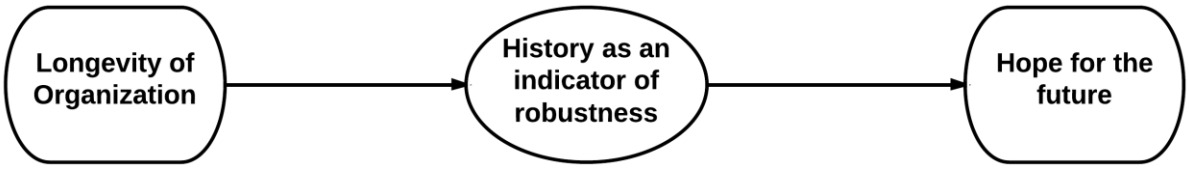


Figure 12: Perceived organizational resilience induces hope about the organization's future

Moreover, there were 6 participants from whom longevity *alone* (i.e., knowing that the company has been established a very long time ago) seemed to evoke curiosity and interest; sometimes even a sense of amazement. I will deal with accounts of amazement and interest in more detail in the section on appreciation of evolution.

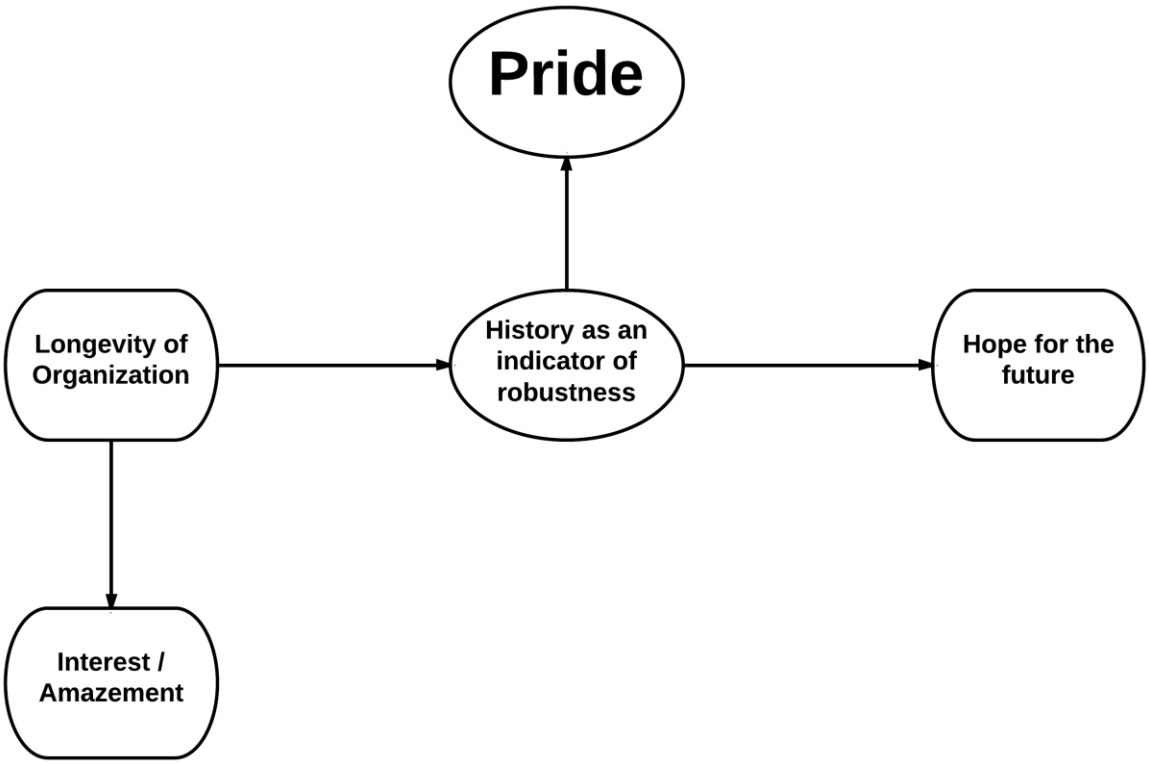


Figure 13: Longevity as a determinant of interest and amazement

Finally, reports of "historical robustness" were sometimes linked to a perceived duty to keep the organization alive and preserve its heritage. This will be the topic of the next section.

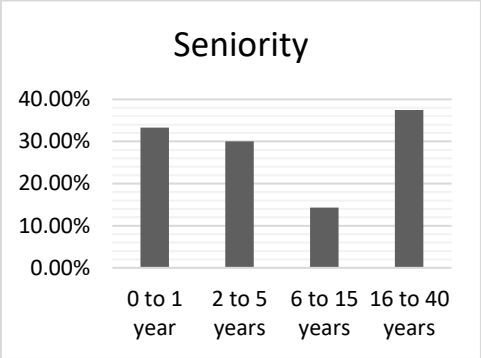
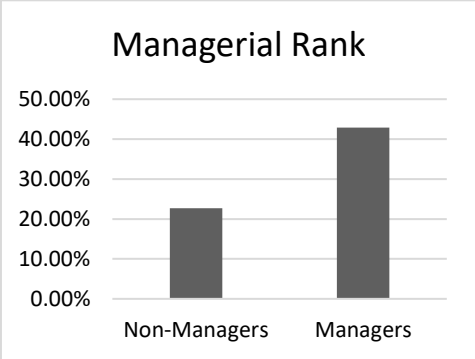
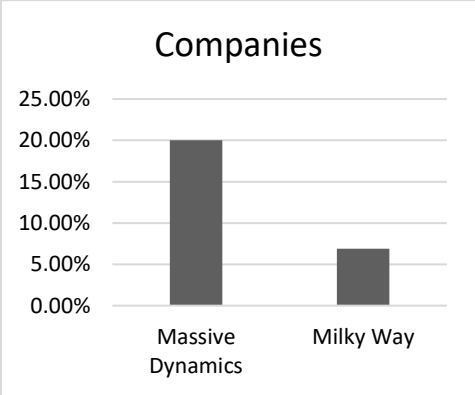
Commitment (and lack of behavioral influence)

Among others, Dellheim (1986) suggested that an appreciation of corporate history could lead to employee commitment. Concordant with Dellheim's (1986) assertion, several employees (about 27%) reported that their organization's history acts as a sort of pressure, a perceived duty to protect and sustain the organization's legacy. Specifically, one group of employees reasoned that their organization's past and future successes hinge on the organization's ability to produce high-quality output. Consequently, the group argued, it is important to maintain and even improve historical standards of quality to perpetuate the organization's heritage.

Relatedly, another group of employees similarly stressed the importance of keeping the organization alive through being committed to one's job. Their reasons, however, are different. They believe that through job commitment one can preserve the historical *heritage* of the organization. In other words, what must be preserved here are not necessarily the historical standards of quality but, rather, the organization itself. In looser terms, the idea is that it would be too bad to close down a company that has been operating for decades, and therefore one must work toward the conservation of that company.

This theme was found in relatively equal proportions across all levels of seniority except in employees with 6 to 15 years of service (see Table 11 below). In addition, reports of commitment were more prevalent at Massive Dynamics than at Milky Way, most likely due to the stronger salience of longevity in Massive Dynamics' narratives and/or the company's recent anniversary celebration. Combined with findings from the previous sections, it seems that longevity does indeed play a key role in persuading audiences. Interestingly, another difference was that managers were almost twice as likely to report this history-oriented commitment as non-managers. As I will discuss in the next paragraph, managers' and non-managers' perspectives on corporate history might be fundamentally different.

Contrasting with this history-oriented commitment was an equally prevalent (31% of participants) feeling that corporate history has little to no influence on one's actual behavior. The word behavior was highlighted because participants reported this lack of influence specifically in relation to their behavior on the job, not with regard to their feelings, emotions, and attitudes toward corporate history. In other words, some participants could very well feel proud to work in a long-established company yet feel no urge to act or work in a certain way because of that history.

Theme description(s)	Quotes	Participant attributes
Duty to live up to historical traditions of quality and expertise	"… well it's more about the fact that this company is several decades old, even more than a century old. I think it's important to keep the company alive and to make sure that our product is the best, even if I'm not directly in the production department. But we strive to buy the best raw materials in order to have the best end product" — MD5 "I would say that there's a certain standard to keep, constantly. And a brand image and a name to preserve, so yes I would say that it influences conscientiousness and attention to detail [...] to keep this lineage of quality ..." – MW5	 
Duty to preserve and perpetuate corporate heritage, to keep the organization alive	"… you want to work to sustain it, you know, you don't want it to end. You tell yourself 'my God, it's been around for so long, we will do whatever it takes to keep it going' because it's possible. It has been through recessions, it has been through all kinds of things, so you tell yourself 'it's not going to change today,' so you do your job with this mindset…" — MD11 "When we negotiate collective agreements with the employees and the going gets more or less rough, we always think 'it must go well' and everything. It's been around for 110	 Total number of participants who explicitly reported that their company's longevity and heritage of expertise compels them to work toward the preservation of that heritage: 7

	years, you know, I show up in this history and I want it to keep going forward, I don't want it to stop […] so in a sense [history] exerts some kind of pressure … a challenge. " — MD13	

Table 11: Preserving history through job commitment

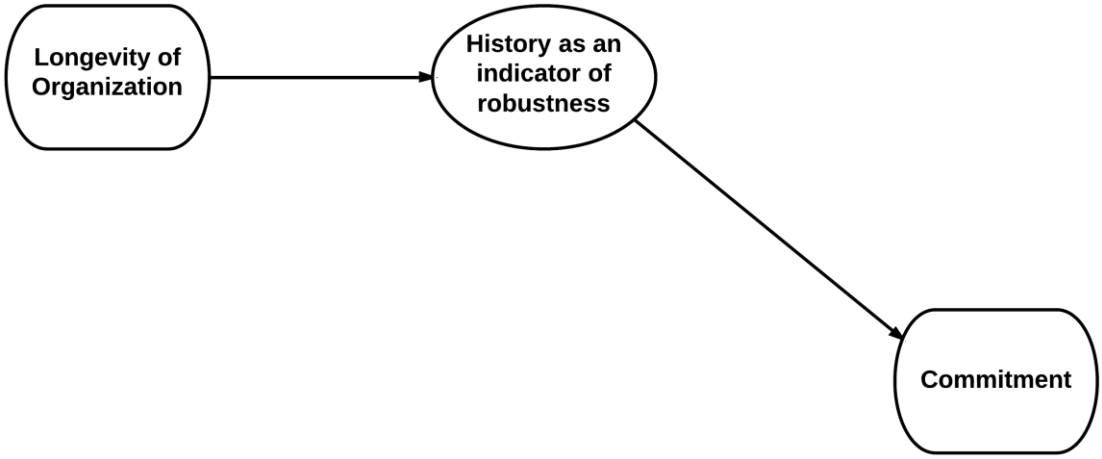


Figure 14: "Historical robustness" as a determinant of job commitment

This reported lack of behavioral influence was found in relatively equal proportions across both organizations (see Figure 15 below). This casts doubt, in this case at least, on whether longevity and anniversary celebrations cam influence employees' behavior. New hires reported this attitude most frequently, followed closely by employees with 6 to 15 years of service and those with more than 16 years of seniority. However, none of the employees with 2 to 5 years of service reported this lack of behavioral influence. The fact that two thirds of the new hires reported that history had no bearing on their behavior makes sense as recent hires might not have had sufficient time to be steeped in their organization's history. The fact that a substantial percentage of the senior employees made similar claims of "non-influence" was, however, unexpected. In fact, commitment should *increase* with seniority, at least in theory (Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972). Of course, the senior employees of this study might very well be committed to their job for other reasons than the company's historical heritage, but their *un*commitment to history deserves further

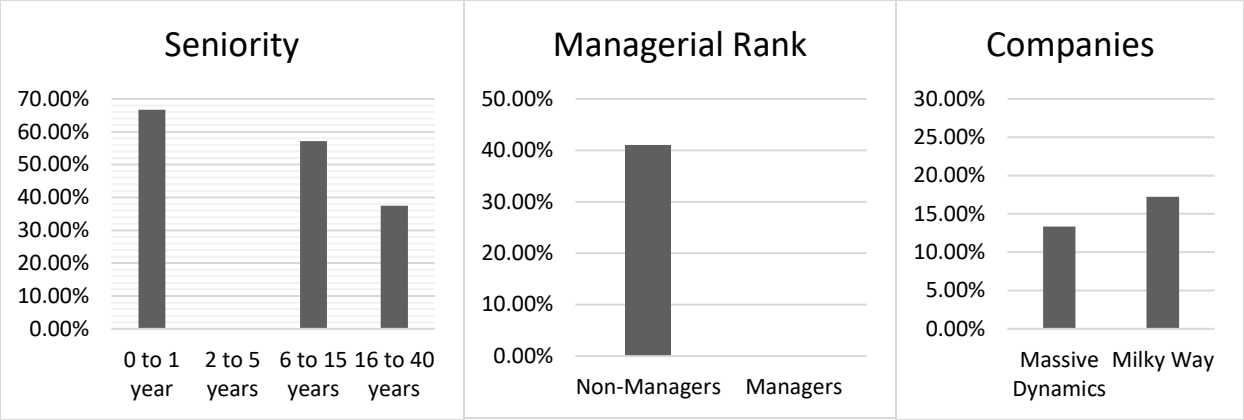


Figure 15: Attributes of behaviorally uninfluenced participants

clarification. Upon closer inspection of the data, an interesting pattern emerges: *All* of the employees that had between 6 and 40 years of service and *denied* that history had an influence on their behavior were *non-managers*. On the other hand, *half* of the employees within the same seniority range who *did* claim that history had an influence on their behavior were *managers*. This means that the actual differences in commitment (and lack of commitment) lie in the employees' position, not seniority. Indeed, 40% of non-managers reported being (behaviorally) uninfluenced by corporate history, but no manager made similar claims (compare Figure 15 with Table 11 above). Combined with the above findings on commitment, this means that managers are about twice as likely as non-managers to claim being committed to their job because of their organization's history and unlikely to claim being uninfluenced by corporate history, which is consistent. Assuming managers were candid in their accounts, this might mean that managers are inherently more involved in corporate history than non-managers. This is further corroborated by the findings mentioned in the section on pride, namely that managers are far more likely than non-managers to report feelings of belongingness and contribution to their organization's history. Relevantly, managers were also more likely to report finding that corporate history is important (28% vs. 4% of non-managers). Lower-level employees, on the other hand, attach more importance to the "homegrown" and "success story" aspects of organizational history, are more likely to see history as suggestive of robustness and resilience, more likely to express optimism toward the future, and much more likely to report being uninfluenced by corporate history (see Appendix I).

So far I have argued that the seniority differences in attitudes are in reality hierarchical differences. But this doesn't solve the problem of why managers and non-managers have different

attitudes toward corporate history. In and of itself, the content of the interviews doesn't allow for much elucidation of the disparity between managers and non-managers. When taking into account prior research, however, this hierarchical disconnect starts to make more sense. All the employees in this sample were either blue-collar factory workers or white-collar managers and supervisors. Early studies on job preferences show that white collar employees prefer a job that is interesting, satisfying, enables self-expression, and provides enough authority. Blue collar workers, on the other hand, prefer a job that pays well, offers reliable job security, and good relationships with co-workers (Centers & Bugental, 1966; Hackman & Oldham, 1980). The fact that blue collar workers prioritize good wages and job security might explain why almost a third of blue collar employees in this study viewed history as indicative of resilience and as a source of hope for the future. (Managers, however, made no such claims of optimism toward the future.) Non-managers were indeed explicit in their accounts that a longstanding history means a more reliable future, and therefore more reliable job security. In other words, blue collar workers' preference for job stability might explain why they were much more likely than managers to view history as indicative of solid foundations and guaranty for the future.

Regarding the attitudes toward contribution and belongingness to history (see section on pride), the blue collar – white collar distinction might also be helpful. By virtue of their position in the organization's pecking order, managers might enjoy higher job autonomy, that is, more freedom and discretion in how they can carry out their duties (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). Some researchers have indeed suggested that, in general, higher-level positions afford more autonomy and authority (Beehr & Drexler, 1986; MacEachron, 1977). This means that while managers presumably enjoy a certain level of authority and discretion in their job, there are only so many ways low-level workers can ferment cheese or weld a piece of metal in an assembly line. Therefore, the authority and autonomy that come with higher-level positions might give managers the perception of making (or having the potential to make) a difference in organizational history. Conversely, the less influential blue collar workers might feel like just another brick in the wall; they merely "pitch in" without enjoying a sense of belongingness to history. As one (non-manager) interviewee remarked:

"We don't have the same history as the one we would if we were the boss or the president, a production employee is less concerned with that than a company owner. […] it's not the same history." — MW9

Furthermore, a more recent study found job autonomy and hierarchical level to be correlated with organizational commitment (Sisodia & Das, 2013). This might potentially explain why managers reported more history-related commitment than non-managers. But then again it might not; as a theoretical construct, history-related commitment might differ significantly from what researchers commonly call commitment. A more sensible explanation could lie, once again, in perceptions of autonomy and authority. Because they enjoy a higher hierarchical position and therefore more authority, managers might see contribution to history as within their reach. In turn, the mere *possibility* of being able to contribute to history *allows* history-related commitment to be possible (but does not necessarily trigger it). In logical terms, being committed to preserving and sustaining corporate heritage *requires* that one have enough power and authority to do so in the first place. The corollary is that one cannot be behaviorally committed to what is beyond one's power. This means that if lower-level workers do not enjoy sufficient autonomy and power because of their position, it would be much harder for them to be committed to something they perceive to be beyond their reach. To be sure, my argument does not explain *why* managers report more history-related commitment; it merely explains why managers have the *possibility* to do so by virtue of their position. By contrast, non-managers hold positions that do not provide sufficient authority and discretion, which rules out or at least restricts the possibility of commitment. This, I believe, partly explains the differences in commitment (and lack thereof) between managers and lower-level workers. In sum, taking into account differences in job preferences and levels of authority seems to elucidate, at least in part, the discrepancies between managers and non-managers regarding future-oriented optimism, perceptions of historical robustness, commitment, and contribution and belongingness to history.

Appreciation of Evolution Narratives

Another recurring theme was that employees seemed to appreciate narratives about the evolution and metamorphosis of their company throughout the years. Specifically, oral narratives, celebrations, and historical artifacts highlighting a contrast between the past and the present appeared to pique the participants' curiosity and interest (see tables 11 and 12). Although tangentially related, studies on tourism have shown that visitors frequently report reflecting on such contrasts between the past and the present when visiting cultural heritage sites (McIntosh &

Prentice, 1999).

Beyond mere interest and curiosity, another group of participants expressed amazement, fascination, and even admiration toward the historical development of their organization. Interestingly, appreciation and fascination are often directed at aspects of the company's history that are more directly relevant to the participant's occupation (see quotes in Table 12 and Table 13). A machinist, for instance, might be more responsive to the evolution of the machinery used through the decades and therefore express greater interest in an obsolete lathe than in less germane historical artifacts.

To yet another handful of participants, what captivated interest was the causality of history; the notion that past managerial decisions and the dedication of former workers affect the present situation of the organization, often in a positive way. It seems, then, that in addition to the role of the founders, an element of persuasion in historical narratives could be a well-crafted overview of the organization's historical developments, with explicit causal links to the present and elements (e.g., anecdotes, photographs) of direct relevance to the audience.

Overall, senior employees seemed to have a more pronounced appreciation of their organization's evolution than newcomers. Conversely, recent employees expressed more interest, curiosity, and astonishment than their senior counterparts (compare Table 12 and Table 13). At all levels of seniority, workers tended to be interested in the evolution of tools, machinery, production techniques, and the contrast between the grueling working conditions of former workers and today's safer standards of workplace hazards.

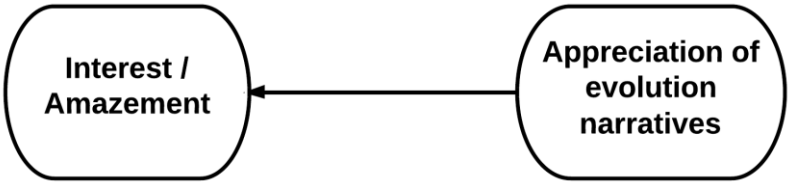


Figure 16: Appreciation of evolution narratives triggers interest and astonishment

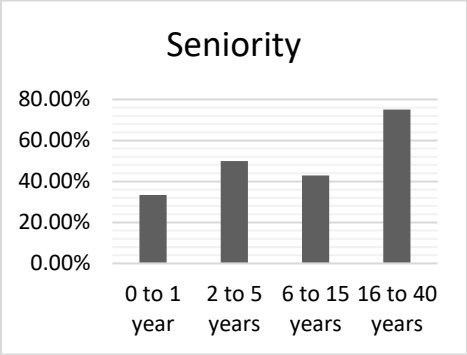
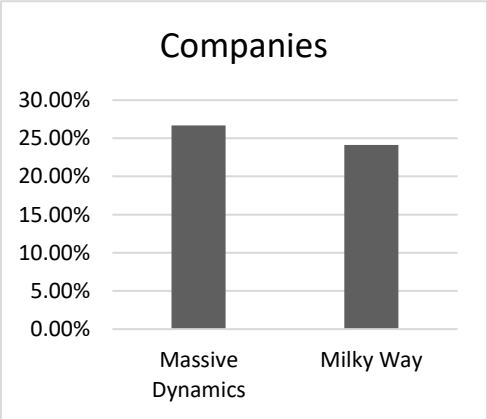
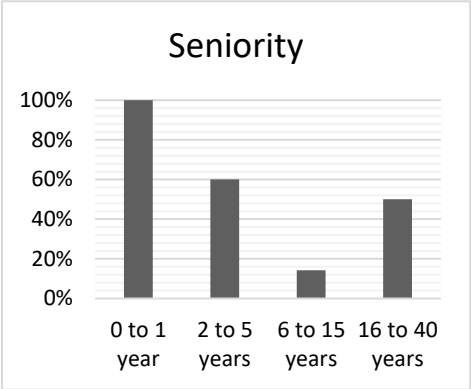
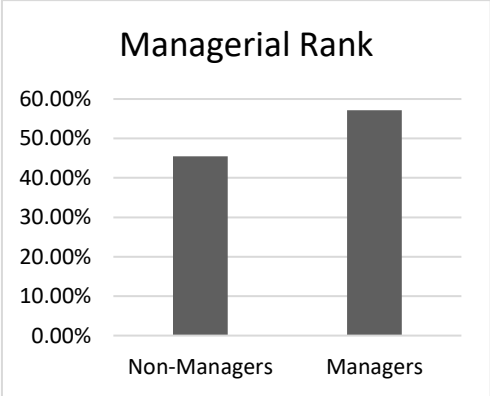
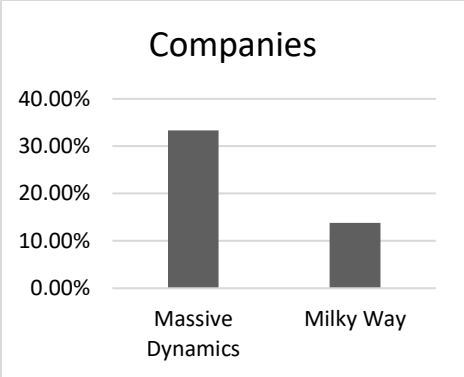
Theme description(s)	Quotes	Participant attributes
Appreciation of a contrast between the past and the present	"... even the machine we're using. There's [a machine] here that's so old that when you see it you think we're not using it that much anymore, or as often as [the early employees] did. But they only had [this machine] to do their job. But us, we're all going digital, so you have digital machines and this old machine side by side... it's kind of special" – MD4 “Yeah, I find that back then they used to work really hard for almost nothing [laughs]. Things have evolved, you know, we moved from the milk churn to the vat, [enumerates several temporal contrasts of tools and methods]. You know there's been a substantial evolution...” – MW2	   Total number of participants who reported an appreciation of evolution narratives: 15
Appreciation of historical causality	“In general, the history of Massive Dynamics is responsible for... I mean it is them who provide for my family, it's them who put food on our table, they are supporting our livelihood. It's thanks to this company, to that gentleman who started it all in 1800 something. If it weren't for those people, for those pioneers I should say, we wouldn't be here today” – MD2 "... but also admiration toward those who succeeded in … who brought us this today. [...] there was someone behind all this who thought, who had the idea of entering this market, so it's, it's really interesting" – MD13	

Table 12: Appreciation of evolution narratives

Theme description(s)	Quotes	Participant attributes
Feelings of amazement arise when contrasting the past and the present	"Sometimes, because I do [technical] drawing quite often, I have to see some very old drawings, drawn on very old paper formats. So that's how sometimes I notice they used to do it by hand, and I'm amazed, like wow, it's really impressive to see all these handmade details, unlike today where we're all using computers that are extremely fast and easy to use" — MD1 "…and when I see these old pictures from 1903, 1905, 1906, that was really something! They were a handful of workers doing their job almost with their bare hands […] with very rudimentary tools. Today it's all the innovation and the engineers who joined the company that pushed the company forward." — MD15 "Well, that's it, I think it's astounding [...] Back then they used to produce the same amount of production in a year that we do now in less than a day. So I think some good investment choices have been made" – MW3	   Total number of participants who explicitly mentioned a connection between their appreciation of corporate evolution and their feelings of interest or amazement: 7

Evolution narratives trigger interest / curiosity	"So, that's also a part of history... and it's really fun to see ... and sometimes I ask more questions to [the senior colleagues] who saw this because many of them are still around" – MD1 "It's interesting to see, even after 110 years, that there was a beginning to such a big company, and it's really fun to understand ... where we come from, it helps us understand why we're in this particular situation today" – MD9	

Table 13: Amazement, curiosity, and interest in evolution narratives

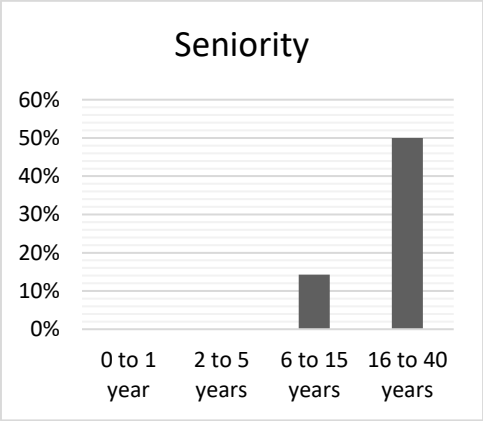
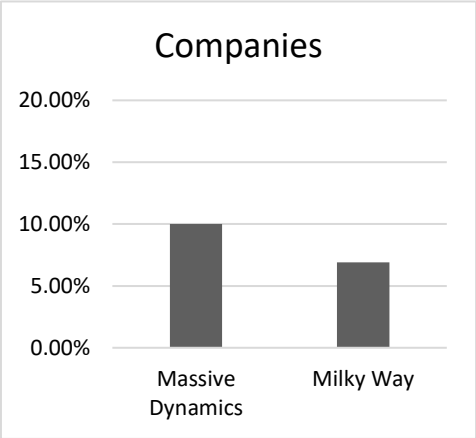
There were, furthermore, no significant differences between managers and non-managers regarding attitudes of appreciation, interest, and amazement. Employees at Massive Dynamics, however, reported amazement, curiosity, and interest more frequently than Milky Way's employees (see Table 13). When I compared the relevant interview segments side by side, it became immediately clear that something was present in Massive Dynamics' interviews but conspicuously missing from Milky Way's: references to anniversary celebration and historical artifacts. It seems indeed that the interest and astonishment of Massive Dynamics' employees were derived from the material exhibited at the company's 110th anniversary and from the contemplation of various disused items that the employees encounter in their daily lives. Milky Way, on the other hand, had no anniversary celebration and most of its employees' astonishment stems from the management's narratives about the evolution of the company's size and production output over the recent decades. In other words, Massive Dynamics' employees had much more material to be amazed at than Milky Way's employees.

Nostalgia

In line with Ybema's (2004) observations, several senior employees reported feelings of nostalgia with, in some cases, attendant feelings of bitterness, faded belongingness, condescension toward newcomers, and mistrust toward the present. This sort of negative nostalgia was reported by senior workers who missed a past that was better, a past when the company's financial health was stronger and when the names and owners of the company weren't frequently changing. Relatedly, the fact that Massive Dynamics had indeed changed hands and names several times undermined the employees' sense of belongingness (see Table 14 below). All these negative attitudes are no doubt symptomatic of an improperly managed acquisition. Using Social Identity Theory, Ullrich and van Dick (2007) reviewed the various group-based reactions that employees experience after mergers and acquisitions, not the least of which are employee resistance and a loss of belongingness. The same pattern was found in this study. The participants' accounts supported the idea that negative nostalgia stemmed from a certain hostility toward the organization's acquisition(s). (Further corroborating this idea is that negative nostalgia occurred only at Massive Dynamics, the only organization that went through multiple changes of owners.) In Table 14, for instance, some employees explicitly mentioned their stronger identification with Massive Dynamics before it was taken over. Some of them reported a longing for a time when their input was taken more seriously and when their organization's financial standing was more remunerative. In other words, most of what makes up this "negative nostalgia" is rooted in the employees' reactions to Massive Dynamics' takeover.

Contrasting with these negative attitudes, several senior workers reported a more positive nostalgia. Employees expressed pride at having had the chance of contributing to their company's history and having seen it grow. Even the more resentful employees mentioned in the paragraph above said their bitterness was exclusively directed at the present, as they also expressed optimism and hope toward the future. In fact, one of the senior employees claimed that he would strive to keep the company alive by giving his best until he retires (while simultaneously reporting negative nostalgia).

Interestingly, in both organizations senior employees were nostalgic of a time when camaraderie was stronger, when the relationships between colleagues were more family-like. This observation might explain, at least in part, why feelings of nostalgia were reported exclusively by non-managers (see Table 14 below). Remember that the white collar – blue collar distinction I

Theme description(s)	Quotes	Participant attributes
Positive nostalgia (nostalgia without the bitterness)	"A little bit of nostalgia … I've seen how it was when it was still small […] the bonds were tighter than they are today. Today the company is bigger, the family is bigger and things have changed, the mentality has changed a bit. […] it was better when we were a small company … we had fewer problems you know … [...] I'm nostalgic but I'm glad about how things have turned out. I tell to myself that I have played a small part in [history] and it makes me happy to know I have contributed and am still contributing to this … because it's a company that … I believe in it." — MW11 "I would say, the difference with back then is that even though some things were less accepted, the atmosphere was more family-like. [But it's much less the case today] because the person at the helm of the company was more like a father figure, you know. But today, at some point there were some transitions. There was a person who became the director, and he was a [former] accountant, he was more organized, so to him what mattered was the results, so it was more of a production-oriented atmosphere and ... we had to give our best all the time. [...] To me it's a good company and I feel good here, you know. If someone were to ask me if I was looking forward to retire, [I would say] I don't even think about it because I love my job and it suits me. [...] The fact that we've been bought out at some point, bought out by a Japanese family, is interesting because the Japanese have a	   Total number of participants who reported feelings of nostalgia: 5

	reputation of being very family-oriented so we don't really have the feeling that we've lost something really. It's, somewhere, a continuation of ... and it's reassuring too." – MD14	
Negative nostalgia	"The factory has been around for 110 years, 115 years, maybe 118, but the people working here in the offices, these people don't have a history. They're new here. They have 8 years, 10 years of service." — MD6 "[this company] has changed owners so many times that now […] it's not what it used to be. At all, at all." — MD7	
Faded belongingness	"... and all of this and the belongingness, we had, we old-timers had more feelings of belongingness toward Metal Gear Inc. [company's former name] than toward Massive Dynamics in a sense. Because we had been [working at Metal Gear Inc.] for a long time [...]. You know it's always been Metal Gear Inc., until [it was bought out]. After that it's ... the feelings of belongingness diminished a great deal." – MD6 "You know, the feeling of belongingness here is not what it used to be, you know." – MD7	

Table 14: Nostalgia

made in the section on commitment was based on the job preferences of employees according to their hierarchical position. In particular, recall that unlike white collar workers, blue collar workers had a stronger preference for quality relationships with colleagues and high wages. (This is not to say that white collar workers don't care about money or having good relationships with their peers; they do, but to a lesser extent than blue collar workers.) The blue collar workers' penchant for comradeship and generous pay might therefore explain why they expressed nostalgia while white

collar workers did not. In most interviews with senior employees, the focus of nostalgia was either on the bygone camaraderie or the stronger financial standing that their company once had. Both elements—warm relationships with peers and generous compensation—coincide with the job preferences of blue collar workers (but less so with those of white collar workers). Admittedly, this is only a partial explanation: The managers in this study could have been nostalgic about something relevant to their position, but since none of them expressed nostalgia I have no way to find out.

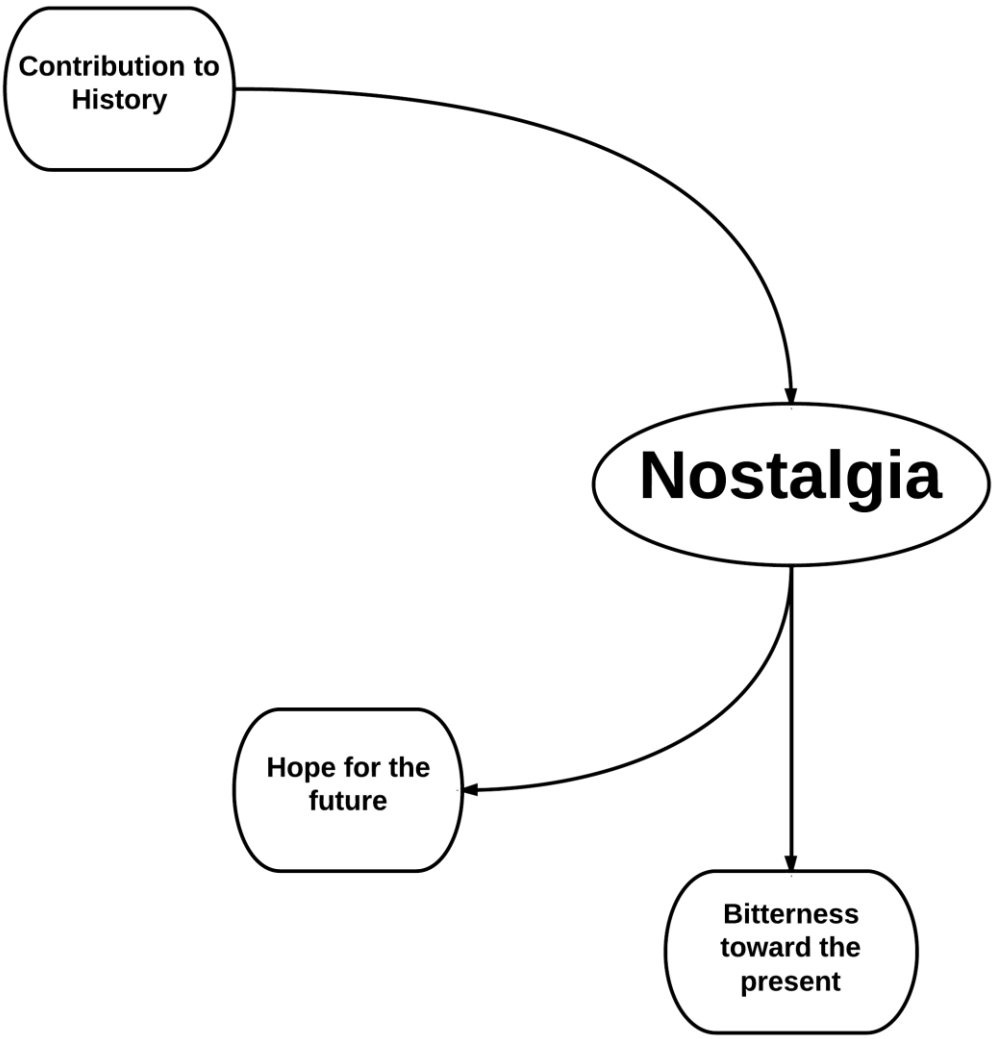


Figure 17: Different facets of nostalgia

Composite Description

Employees learn about their company's history through various channels: corporate museums, historical narratives by the management, anniversary celebrations, informal conversations with senior employees, exposure to historical artifacts (e.g., obsolete machinery, old photographs), and one's own memories.

Feelings of pride constitute the gist of the experience. This history-related pride derives from several sources. Contributing to the organization's history, for instance, gives the feeling of being a part of that history. In turn, these feelings of belongingness to organizational history elicit pride in employees, as they can proudly say they have played a part in their company's history. In addition, pride emerges when the organization's history is framed as a success story, especially if that success has been experienced firsthand by the employees. Pride also comes from the perception that the organization's history is embedded within the local city's culture and history. Finally, pride arises when employees perceive they are working for an organization that is long-established. Employees reason that, unlike younger organizations, a time-honored organization must have accumulated expertise in order to survive and must therefore be competent and better than its younger counterparts. This historically-acquired expertise and the perceived superiority over younger organizations are the reasons why longevity elicits pride in employees.

Relatedly, another essence of the corporate history experience is the notion that history is indicative of robustness, expertise, quality, and resilience. Here again, the reasoning is that an organization that is long-established is an organization that has survived, and in order to survive the organization must have some kind of competitive edge. Similarly, employees see long-established organizations as organizations that have had ample time to develop expertise over the years. In both cases, a longstanding organizational history is perceived as demonstrative of competence, expertise, and robustness. Stemming from this "historical robustness" is the perceived resilience of the organization. Employees project their organization's solid foundations and expertise into the future to contend that their organization will likely endure for a long time. This forecast stability, in turn, calls forth feelings of trust and hope toward the future.

Also related to "historical robustness" is the idea that the future of one's organization depends on the organization's ability to maintain its historical standards of quality. From the employees' perspective, there is a duty to keep the organization alive by being committed to one's job. This job commitment, in turn, is perceived to help keep the organization alive by maintaining

its historical standards of quality. This essence is, however, significantly more pronounced in higher-level employees.

Moreover, employees appreciate narratives revolving around the evolution of their organization. Specifically, any narrative (e.g., photographs, historical artifacts, conversation) reflecting a contrast between the past and the present arouses curiosity, interest, and even amazement in employees, especially if this contrast is related to the employee's occupation. Similarly, employees express interest and amazement at the causality of history, that is, the idea that the actions of past organizational actors have repercussions on the present state of the organization.

Finally, older employees often experience feelings of nostalgia, negatively and positively. On the one hand, embittered senior employees are sometimes resentful of the organization's current state and miss what they perceive as the good old days. This negative nostalgia is often accompanied by a decrease in feelings of belongingness and sometimes condescension toward newcomers. On the other hand, the more optimistic senior employees miss their good old days but are satisfied with their organization's current situation. In both cases, however, employees remain optimistic and hopeful about the future.

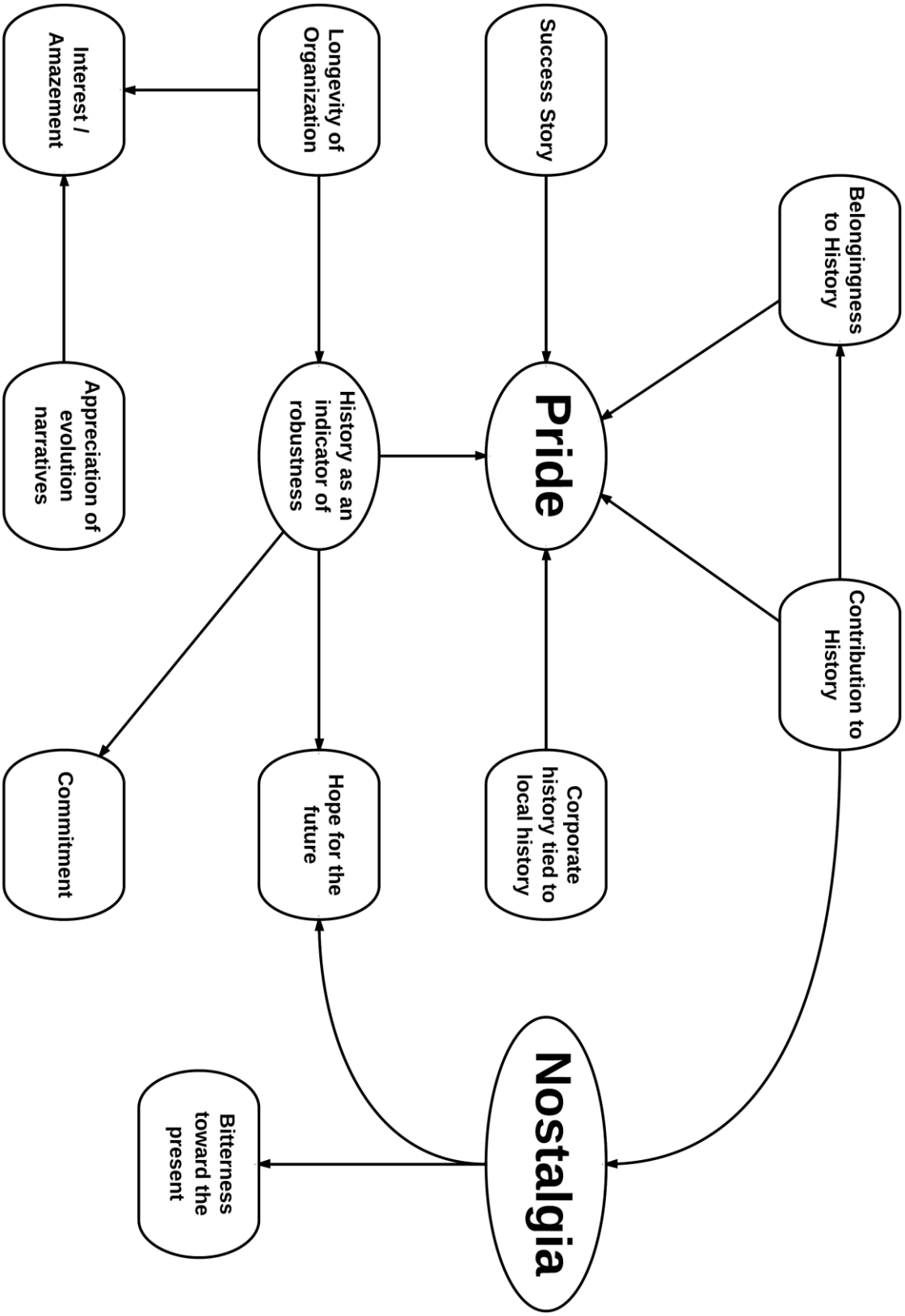


Figure 18: The experience of corporate history

DISCUSSION

One doesn't have to leaf through a Yellow Pages directory for very long before realizing how ubiquitous rhetorical history is; slogans and taglines such as "Established 1867," "Proudly serving the community for over 55 years," "Authentic since 1948," and "75 years of excellence" can be found on almost every page. But these slogans are mainly directed at an external audience —the customers. This thesis, on the other hand, aimed to investigate how corporate history is received and interpreted by an internal audience—the employees. In this thesis I contend that rhetorical history is a form of organizational communication. Specifically, I showed how the relevant literature warrants the framing of rhetorical history as an instance of organizational impression management. After all, what is rhetorical history if not a deliberate attempt at managing the (historical) image of the organization? Building on this idea, I proposed a model of rhetorical history that integrates prior research on impression management and rhetorical history. I consider this model to be one of the main theoretical contributions of this thesis. Indeed, the model I propose provides an overview of why corporate history is created (the impetus), by whom (the source), how it is conveyed (the message), and how it is received (the audience). Furthermore, this model affords a dynamic view of how rhetorical history circulates within the organization and how the audience negotiates historical narratives with the organization. In integrating the disparate research on rhetorical history, it is my conviction that this model will serve as a valuable framework to put into perspective the existing literature and guide future research. The other main theoretical contribution of this study is an investigation of the hitherto underexplored perceptions of rhetorical history by the internal audience. I have already argued that rhetorical history's effectiveness depends on whether the audience accepts its organization's historical narratives. But more crucially, this study reveals that beyond perceptions of authenticity, rhetorical history can elicit a variety of attitudes and feelings in employees that could be advantageous to organizations. Notably, this study has confirmed and expanded on the effects (e.g., pride) of rhetorical history that were suggested—but untested—by prior research. In sum, I believe this study will complement our understanding of the dynamics of rhetorical history and highlight the remarkable power that rhetorical history affords in managing internal stakeholders

Although this study focused mainly on the audience component of the model, I would now like to review the main findings using all the components of the model, starting with the impetus and the source.

The Impetus and the Source

The impetus is the event that motivates an organization to engage in rhetorical history. Congruent with my model, there were specific events that motivated organizations to engage in rhetorical history. At Massive Dynamics, the executives decided to assemble the organization's history when the organization's 100th anniversary was drawing near. At Milky Way, the decision to engage in rhetorical history came as a response to the growing amount of questions from customers about the company's history and the increasing number of new hires who needed to be informed about their organization's history. In both cases, the impetus was a positive one as it was an opportunity for organizations to enhance their self-image rather than a threat that needed remedial through corporate history (e.g., Anteby & Molnár, 2012).

Regarding the sources of rhetorical history, Massive Dynamics had commissioned the city's Historical Society to scan the archives and assemble the company's history—but it was the company's committee for the corporate anniversary that organized the historical celebration. At Milky Way, corporate history was assembled and disseminated by the same top executive, aided by the marketing department. In other words, the sources of rhetorical history at Massive Dynamics could be classified as external "history assemblers" and internal "history conveyors." Milky Way's history, on the other hand, was compiled and disseminated internally.

The managers mentioned that they engaged in rhetorical history because it is important that employees know about their organization's history. Managers also explicitly pointed out that one of the motives behind corporate history was to foster a sense of pride and belongingness among employees. This corroborates Suddaby et al.'s (2010) view that rhetorical history is strategic and deliberate rather than organic and uncalculated—the organizations in this study did strategically deploy historical narratives and symbols purposely to enhance their legitimacy in the eyes of the employees (Suchman, 1995).

The Message

In the rhetorical history model, the message component refers to the form and content of the historical narratives conveyed by the organization. This study supports prior research showing that historical messages vary widely in form (Delahaye et al., 2009; Nissley & Casey, 2002; Rowlinson, 2002). For instance, most employees learned about their organization's history

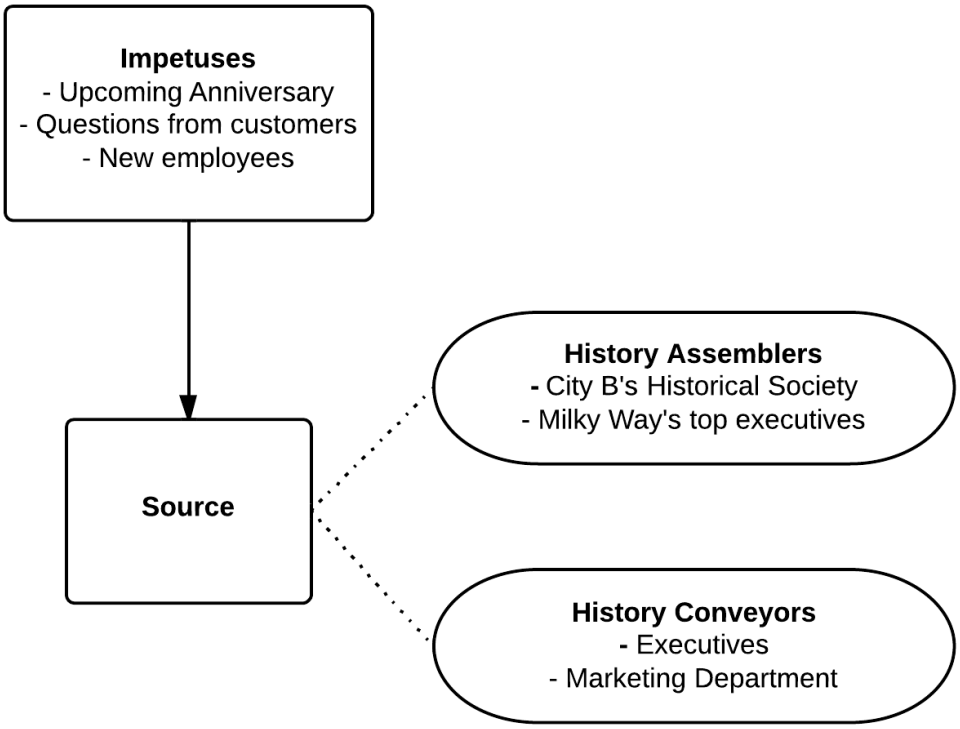


Figure 19: Impetuses and sources of rhetorical history

through conversations—mostly anecdotal—with their supervisors, managers, and senior colleagues. Furthermore, employees were exposed to their organization's past through historical artifacts (e.g., old machinery and books), which reinforced the employees' perception of corporate longevity. On other occasions, the content of historical messages were more rhetorical. For instance, the management exposed its employees to corporate history through speeches during year-end celebrations as well as during the hiring process of new employees. Even more rhetorical were the corporate museum and the anniversary celebration that were designed to be symbolic tools to stimulate pride and belongingness in employees. In sum, it seems clear that the organizations in this study enjoyed a vast array of channels through which they could expose their employees to rhetorical history.

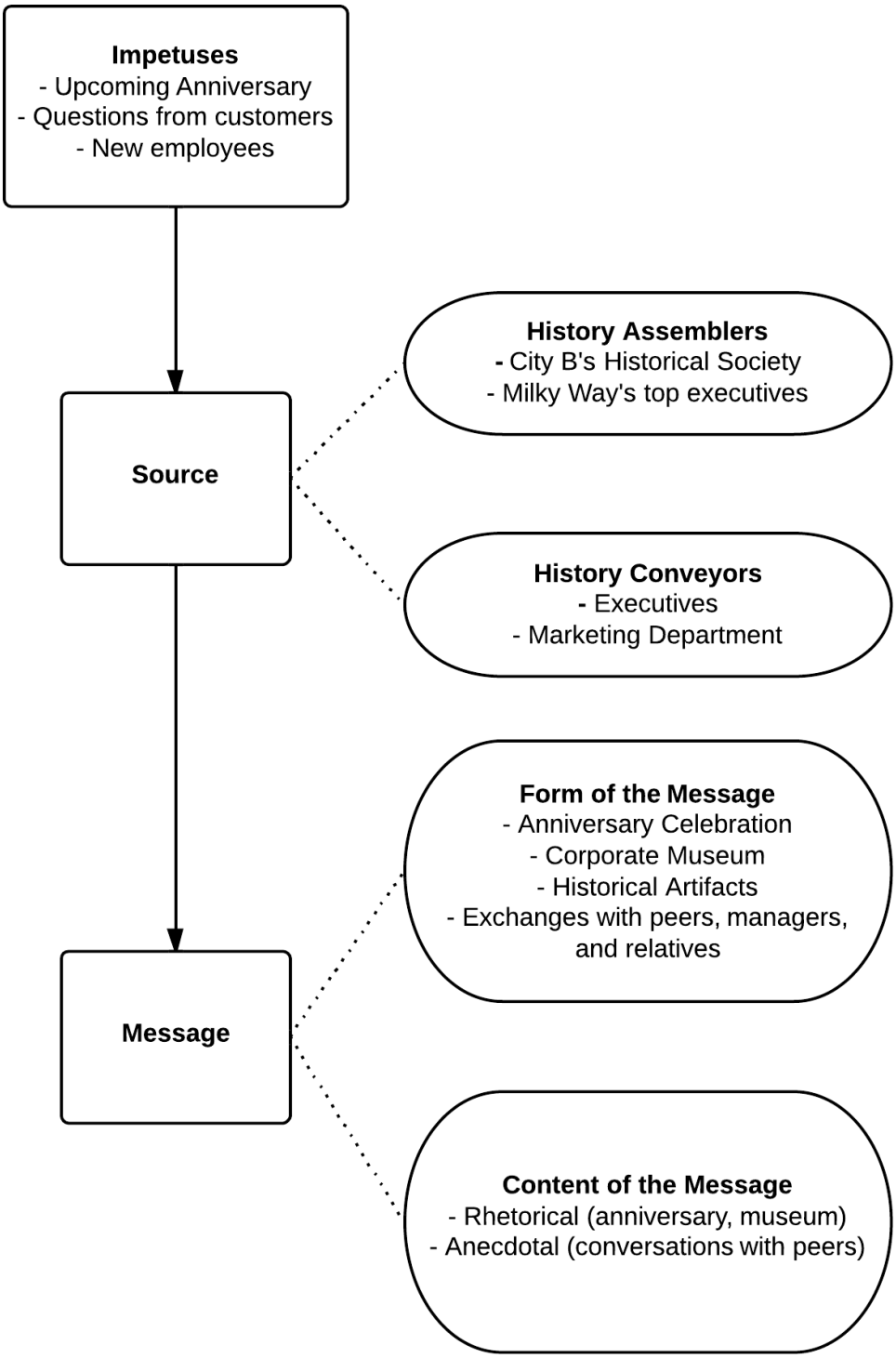


Figure 20: The messages of rhetorical history

The Audience

The role of the audience is critical in organizational impression management; any attempt at shaping the audience's perception of an organization can only be successful if the audience approves of it. In fact, the audience can challenge the legitimacy of historical narratives if they find them to be fraudulent or unacceptable (Gioia et al., 2002). Although the interviews didn't reveal any sign of negotiation between the audience and the source, this study did look into the reasons why employees perceive their organization's history to be authentic (see perceptions of authenticity in results section). But the way people make sense of an organization's image makes up the core of what organizational impression management is about, and so this study had to stretch its scope beyond the simple question of authenticity and investigate how employees construe their organization's history in their daily lives. This, as I mentioned earlier, is the main theoretical contribution of this study. Indeed, most of the literature on rhetorical history deals with the *probable* behavioral and attitudinal outcomes derived from employees' exposure to rhetorical history, but with little empirical data to support the suggestions. Still, the behaviors and attitudes revealed in this study do concur with prior theory (see Table 15 below). Although further quantitative research is needed, the concordance of this study's results with prior theory adds to the credibility of the results. Each of the next subsections will discuss the theoretical significance of the main behaviors and attitudes discussed earlier.

Theme	**Concordance with prior theory/empirical findings**
History-related pride	(Danilov, 1992; Dellheim, 1986; Urde et al., 2007)
History as indicator of robustness	(Desai et al., 2008; Urde et al., 2007)
History-related commitment	(Dellheim, 1986; Suddaby et al., 2010)
Appreciation of evolution narratives	(McIntosh & Prentice, 1999)
Nostalgia	(Brown & Humphreys, 2002; Gabriel, 1993; Ybema, 2004)

Table 15: Concordance of results with prior theory

i) Pride

Pride was by far the most prevalent attitude reported by employees. In order to avoid confusing the reader, I had previously referred to pride as a feeling, but pride in this case really is an attitude. Indeed, in the interviews I conducted with the participants it seemed clear that participants were, *overall*, proud to work in a history-rich company. In other words, the employees' pride was not specific to a particular event or accomplishment; it was linked to the company's history in general. Unlike emotional pride (which is usually derived from specific accomplishments), attitudinal pride is a stable condition where employees are proud to work for their organization because they have a favorable attitude toward it (Gouthier & Rhein, 2011). Consequently, it would be more rigorous to refer to the main theme of this study as organizational attitudinal pride. This finding alone is important because pride can indirectly lead to a variety of attitudes and behaviors that are advantageous to the organization (Gouthier & Rhein, 2011), thus reinforcing the idea of rhetorical history as a powerful strategic tool (Suddaby et al., 2010).

Far from being unitary, pride was experienced for a variety of reasons. First, feelings of contributing and belonging to history were potent sources of pride, although these sources of pride were experienced mainly by employees in higher-level positions. I explained this hierarchical difference by arguing that employees occupying higher-level positions enjoy more job discretion and autonomy in their job, which enables them to see contribution and belongingness to history as within their reach (Centers & Bugental, 1966; Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Lower-level employees, on the other hand, might have concluded that their job does not grant them sufficient power to make a difference in organizational history. In other words, rhetorical history's influence depends at least in part on the hierarchical position of the employees. This suggests that, far from being a one-size-fits-all narrative, rhetorical history should be tailored to its different audiences.

Pride also emerged when the employees perceived their organization's history to be one filled with success. This was especially true for Milky Way, where the company's ascent to success was recent enough for employees to remember. This fits with the notion that organizational pride occurs when employees have a favorable attitude toward the perceived successes and achievements of their organization (Gouthier & Rhein, 2011). Here again, the employees were proud of their company's *overall* success, which means that the pride they derived from their company's achievements was attitudinal and not emotional.

Also prevalent at Milky Way was the pride derived from working for a company with a

"homegrown" corporate history. In other words, employees experienced pride when they perceived their organization's history to be nested within the local city's history. This might be viewed as an instance of linkage legitimacy, whereby one organizational actor "rides coattails" on the legitimacy of a more reputable or legitimate actor (Bitektine, 2011). This observation further substantiates the idea that, far from being a "closed system," rhetorical history can be linked to broader cultural institutions such as the Wild West and Canadian hockey (Foster et al., 2011; Holt, 2006).

Finally, pride also stemmed from the perception that one's organization is long-established. Employees viewed their long-lived company as superior to new businesses whose future was deemed to be uncertain at best. Longevity, in other words, was as a way for employees to assert the higher *status* of their organization over younger organizations (Bitektine, 2011; Deephouse & Suchman, 2008). This perceived superiority, in turn, was a source of attitudinal pride. Rhetorical history might therefore serve as way for employees to make uniqueness claims about their organization's identity and distance themselves from younger organizations. Moreover, employees also took pride in working for a history-rich company, arguing that a long-established company is one that is expert, resilient, and robust. This will be the topic of the next subsection.

i) History as Indicator of Robustness

In marketing studies, business longevity has been found to act as a cue about the quality, expertise, and survivorship of the organization (Desai et al., 2008). In terms of shopping behavior, for instance, consumers prefer to buy products from companies with higher longevity. This preference is due to the consumers' perceived risk of choosing among different products. When no other information is available, consumers choose the product made by the oldest company because longevity can sometimes be a reflection of the company's track record (Urde et al., 2007). Specifically, Desai et al. (2008) suggest that business longevity may act as a marker of experience and, by extension, of efficiency and product quality. The reason is that a long-established company has presumably had ample time to improve its processes, products, and customer service. Similarly, the authors argue that longevity may also signal survivorship, as consumers may reason that companies that have survived for a long time are likely to endure in the future. Longevity and survivorship cues, therefore, can affect the behavior of an organization's external audience—the customers. Consistent with findings in marketing studies, I found business longevity to affect the

attitudes and behavior of the organization's internal audience—the employees.

First, participants viewed their organization's longevity as indicative of quality and expertise. The reasons for this were surprisingly similar to those advanced by Desai et al. (2008), that is, employees reasoned that an organization with a history is an organization that had ample time to hone its expertise and learn how to make quality products—in the participants' words, if a company has survived for so long that means it must be doing something right. As mentioned earlier, one outcome of this perception is that employees feel proud to work in an organization that has historically made and continues to make quality products. Here again, this sense of pride was not particular to any specific achievement and constitutes therefore an attitudinal form of pride (Gouthier & Rhein, 2011). This observation refines our understanding of how exactly rhetorical can convince the internal audience—by signaling the organization's worth, expertise, and timelessness in a persuasive and relatively taken-for-granted way.

Second, and also consistent with Desai et al. (2008), employees viewed longevity as indicative of robustness, survivorship, and resilience. Specifically, employees reasoned that an organization with a history is an organization that has survived, and in order to survive an organization must have solid foundations. This perception elicited a sense of security and stability in employees, although this was more the case for blue collar workers, perhaps because of their predilection for job security (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). More specifically, several participants reasoned that an organization that has survived for a long time is likely to endure in the future. It is this perceived resilience that makes employees optimistic about the future of their organization (and job security). Even recent hires made similar claims of future stability and, relatedly, the management also mentioned that history was a powerful asset in attracting new employees. These claims fit with Urde et al.'s (2007) suggestion that rhetorical history can be used to attract and retain employees and executives.

In sum, it seems that perceptions of longevity held by the external audience are not substantially different from those held by the internal audience. Furthermore, longevity appears to be a powerful, perhaps even central, element of persuasion in rhetorical history. The way employees make sense of what longevity entails may have profound ramifications for employees' attitudes toward the organization and their work. The sense of security and stability that longevity affords could, for instance, be used to handle organizational crises, foster organizational trust, and attract committed employees.

ii) Commitment

Dellheim (1986) and Suddaby et al. (2010) suggested that exposing employees to rhetorical historical narratives should increase employee commitment. This study partly confirmed these claims. First, employees often referred to a duty to live up to their organization's historical standards of quality as well a duty to keep the organization alive. There was indeed a widespread feeling that it would be regrettable to close down a time-honor organization. More formally, one could argue that employees were subject to an "internalized normative pressure" impelling them to work toward the prosperity of their organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991:67). The literature refers to this as an instance of normative commitment, whereby the employee acts in a way conducive to the organization's goals and interest because of a perceived moral obligation to do so (Meyer & Allen, 1991). In terms of theoretical contribution, this finding sheds light on the specific form of commitment rhetorical history might induce. However, although my impression was that the employees were also experiencing a form of *affective* commitment, they did not mention it explicitly in the interviews and I can therefore make no claims about other forms of commitment that rhetorical history may elicit. There is, furthermore, a caveat I would like to discuss regarding the effects of rhetorical history on employee commitment. History-related commitment was reported almost exclusively by supervisors and managers. As I previously suggested, this might be due to the autonomy and discretion that higher-level positions afford compared to lower-level positions. One potential implication is that, when it comes to commitment, rhetorical history might be more effective on audiences with higher levels of perceived job autonomy and discretion. In addition, the employees' accounts of history-related commitment may or may not be reflective of an actual behavioral commitment. For this reason, this study's findings on commitment should be considered provisional.

iii) Appreciation of Evolution Narratives

The interest, curiosity, and even amazement that rhetorical seemed to elicit was usually derived from the employees' appreciation of evolution narratives. Together with narratives built around longevity, narratives centering on the organization's historical development can be viewed as part of rhetorical history's repertoire of persuasion tactics. Specifically, employees seemed to be receptive to narratives highlighting a contrast between the past and the present. Interestingly,

the employees appeared to be particularly inspired and amazed by evolution narratives of direct relevance to their occupation. Relatedly, employees also expressed deep interest in the way the organization's past affects its present. This suggests that, beyond leaving enough room for employees to find their place in corporate history (Gioia et al., 2002), rhetorical history's power also lies in its ability to be *relevant*—relevant to the present and relevant to the audience's immediate experience and interests. This observation fits with corporate archivist *The History Factory*'s oft-repeated advice to focus on relevance (Inglin, 2014).

iv) Nostalgia

Nostalgia is one of the more common emotions found in organizations (Gabriel, 1993). In this study, nostalgia was found to come in two flavors: positive and negative. Employees who expressed positive nostalgia were reminiscing a time when bonds between employees were more family-like. This is consistent with Gabriel's (1993) claim that viewing the organization as a (long-gone) family makes up the core of the nostalgic feeling. The positive side of this nostalgia is that employees were not discontent with their organization's current situation—they were satisfied with the present and optimistic about the future. By contrast, employees who expressed negative nostalgia resented the fact that their organization changed names and owners multiple times. As a result, they were explicit about their extinct feelings of belongingness toward their organization. Furthermore, and consistent with Ybema (2004), there was a condescension toward newer employees who were perceived as history-less individuals. This might be senior employees' way of making "uniqueness claims" based on their seniority to distinguish themselves from newcomers (Brown & Humphreys, 2002:143). Because nostalgia is almost always tied to identity, it might be a way for senior employees to preserve their identity and self-worth amidst the dire reality of corporate takeovers (Gabriel, 1993). The fact that some senior employees still identified with the organization's former self and were resentful toward the current organization points to a rupture in organizational identity at some point during the past. This suggests that, unless properly managed to create a sense of continuity with the past (Parker, 2002), rhetorical history can backfire by further reminding senior employees of the contrast between the good old days and the grim present—rhetorical history can be a double-edged sword when the organization has been through several identity changes.

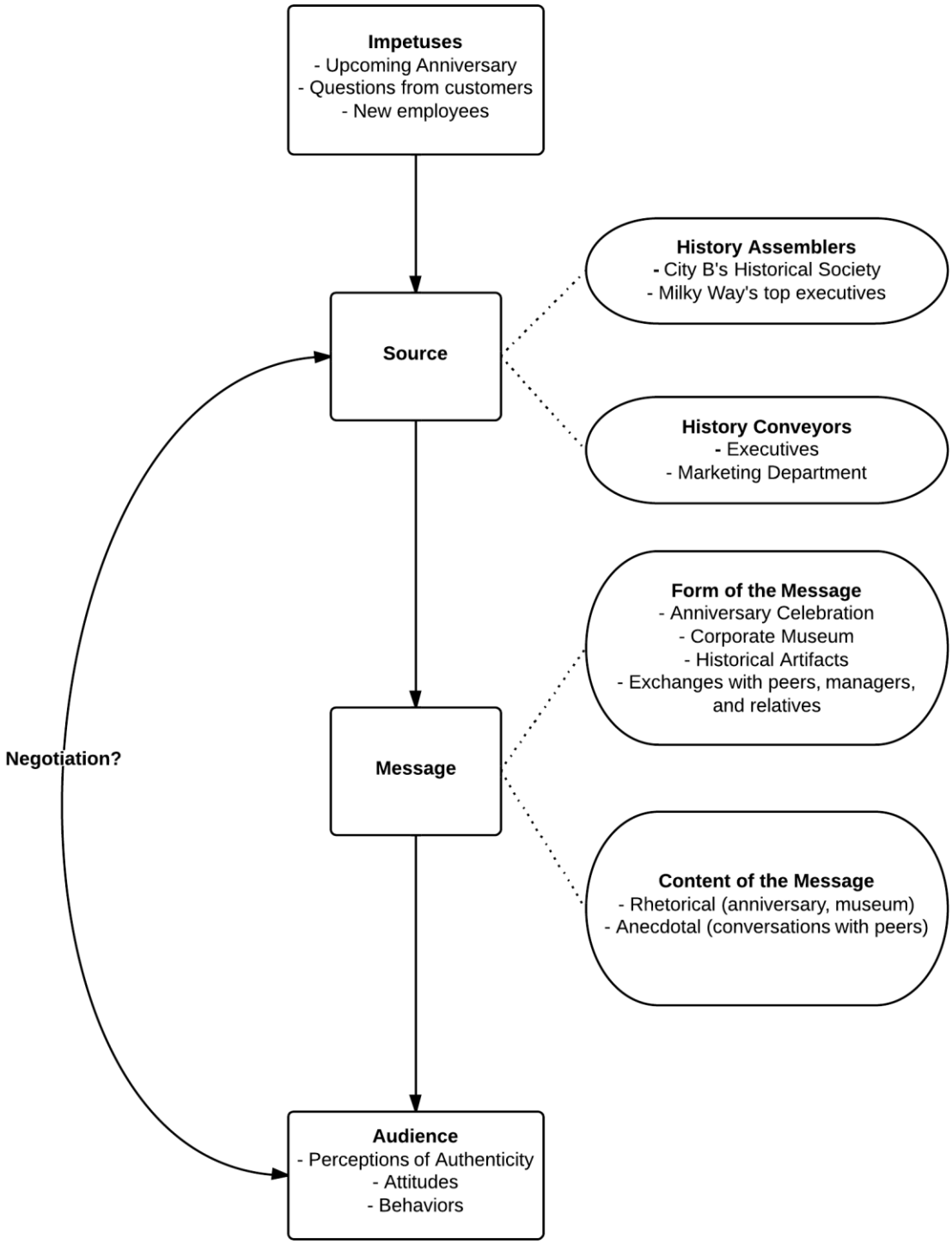


Figure 21: An impression management view of the findings

Limitations

In this section I discuss the strengths and weaknesses of this study, based mostly on the guidelines offered by Miles and Huberman (1994) in their handbook on qualitative data analysis. In particular, I review the extent to which the findings of this study are generalizable, reliable, and valid in each of the following subsections.

Generalizability

In the realm of qualitative research, generalizability does not refer to whether findings are universally applicable but to what extent they apply to relatively similar contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). I have taken several steps to enhance the generalizability (or at least reduce the idiosyncrasy) of this study. First, I conducted this study on multiple sites, that is, in two different organizations located in different cities. Consequently, findings emerging from *both* organizations can be considered more robust and generalizable than findings derived from one organization in particular (Schofield, 2002). To be sure, a sample of two organizations remains a small sample compared to qualitative studies conducted on dozens of different sites and therefore the findings of this research should be taken with a grain of salt. Second, the organizations studied were not extreme or particular cases, and their relative typicality makes them somewhat more generalizable to a broad range of medium-sized organizations. It should be noted, however, that Milky Way's history is closely tied to the history of the city where it is located. In this regard, I believe the findings extracted from the interviews at Milky Way might be less generalizable as not all organizations enjoy such an intimate connection with their place of birth. Third, I used a maximum variation sampling strategy to gather a heterogeneous sample of organizations and participants (Creswell, 2007). Specifically, organizations varied in global outreach, longevity, type of ownership, and anniversary celebration while participants differed in age, gender, seniority, and hierarchical position. As Schofield (2002) noted, findings obtained from heterogeneous organizations are usually stronger and more generalizable than findings obtained from relatively similar organizations. Both companies, however, were in the manufacturing sector and most (but not all) participants had at best a high school degree. As a result, this study's findings might not be applicable to, say, better-educated employees working in the service industry. In sum, I assume that the attitudes toward corporate history revealed in this study may apply only to North American

blue-collar workers working in long-established, medium-sized manufacturing organizations that actively engage in preserving and exhibiting their history.

Reliability

Reliability is admittedly one of the weaker points of this study. First, I coded the interviews single-handedly and have therefore no inter-rater reliability measure to support my findings. In other words, the way I coded the interviews for, say, pride or commitment, was subject to my own judgment and was not double-checked by an independent coder. On the other hand, the content of the interviews was straightforward in that it didn't call for disambiguation or elaborate interpretation; I don't think that a second coder would have come up with a drastically different set of results. I don't believe, for example, that I'm going out on a limb in coding the phrase "[A feeling] of pride, of being here, 110 years is no small matter" as "feelings of pride" and "importance of longevity." (Of course, one could detect more concepts in this phrase, but my point is that no sensible researcher would disagree with the fact that the interviewee was indeed expressing pride and attaching importance to his company's longevity.) Furthermore, I regularly kept an audit trail to log my research procedures, related activities, and personal reflections. Due to its length, I cannot include the audit trail in the appendices but would gladly share it with anyone interested in verifying the procedures used in this study. Finally, I selected the building blocks (e.g., pride and nostalgia) of the corporate history experience based on their prevalence[15], not on my personal overall impression. I did so explicitly to reduce the possibility of personal biases, especially the elite bias whereby the researcher selects findings from the participants that are most articulate, intelligent, and cooperative.

Validity

One common definition of validity is the extent to which the findings correspond accurately to the real world. In other words, the question here is whether my findings faithfully reflect what employees feel about their organization's history. My main concern is whether participants were speaking their minds or simply attempting to appear socially competent by producing coherent but

[15] C.f. tree map, see Appendix D

deceptive accounts. From my perspective, I did not sense any attempt at deceit or pretense from the participants during the interviews. In addition, for every attitude mentioned by the participants, a substantial portion of other participants made opposite or conflicting claims. For example, while many of the participants claimed to be proud to work for a historical company, others have expressed indifference and cynicism toward corporate history. Similarly, while 27% of participants said their organization's history made them more committed to their job, 31% asserted that history had no behavioral influence on them. Of course, these observation do not preclude the possibility that those who expressed negative opinions were being candid while those who expressed positive opinions were being deceitful. Assuming that participants were upfront in their descriptions, there is still the issue of data quality. As Miles and Huberman (1994) noted, all data are not created equal; some data are better and more valid than others. In our case, what this means is that some descriptions are better than others by virtue of, say, their relevance to the research question. One participant, for example, expressed feelings of pride in relation to what he achieved during the past 2 or 3 years. I did not include his statements on pride in my data simply because they were about his own personal achievements in the very recent past and had therefore little to do with organizational history. I used the same approach to filter out all the participants' statements that were tangential or beside the point. While this does not necessarily strengthen the validity of my findings, it does provide some kind of protection against invalid or low-quality data. One of the best pieces of evidence I have in favor of the validity of this study comes from the match between how managers think employees react to corporate history and the actual attitudes reported by the employees. More specifically, the HR director at Massive Dynamics mentioned that, as far as corporate history is concerned, feelings of pride and belongingness are indeed widespread among employees but that the more senior employees can sometimes be nostalgic and bitter toward the present. She also added that the company's longevity can be a tremendous asset in attracting employees and that new hires might be less influenced by corporate history because they haven't been familiarized with it. (Note that her account neither corroborates nor contradicts the findings on commitment and appreciation of evolution, which are the only two components of the corporate history experience she didn't touch upon.) Similarly, the HR director at Milky Way said that her employees experience feelings of belongingness and are aware of their contribution to the organization's history. Milky Way's marketing manager, on her end, believes her employees experience feelings of belongingness and pride toward the company's history.

Despite my attempts at curbing threats to validity, there remains numerous caveats I would like to discuss. First and foremost, all the statistical comparisons shown in the results section should be taken with a large grain of salt. With a sample of only 29 participants, any observation drawn from statistical comparisons would be tentative at best. This is especially true for comparisons involving new hires, as there were only 3 of them. To illustrate, if one single new hire had expressed pride, this would mean that 33% of new hires expressed pride! (The other seniority categories, however, were a bit more numerous.) Second, despite my attempts at building rapport with the participants, the means of gathering data (i.e., the interview) consisted in one-time interactions with the participants over a relatively short period of time. Consequently, the data extracted from these one-off interactions are much weaker than if they were extracted over multiple interactions spanning weeks or months (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Third, the fact that I presented myself as a researcher might have biased the participants in the sense that they might have been tempted to project an image of competence instead of speaking frankly. Concerning the setting of the interviews at Massive Dynamics, I am hesitant as to whether it helped or worsened the validity of the findings. On the one hand, conducting one-on-one interviews in a separate room might have created a sense of privacy (from peers and supervisors) that helped the participants speak more freely. On the other hand, the formal setting of a meeting room might have curbed the participants' enthusiasm. Concerning Milky Way, I don't think that conducting interviews on the phone has necessarily detracted from the validity of the findings. Fourth, and finally, the participants' accounts are just that: accounts. In other words, there is no telling whether corporate history affects participants' actual behavior because this study was based exclusively on self-reports. In fact, and as mentioned earlier, there is no telling even whether corporate history really evokes feelings of pride, as self-reports can be deceitful. For all these reasons, the results of this study should be considered provisional.

Practical Implications

It appears that rhetorical does influence employees in ways that could be highly advantageous to organizations. For instance, organizational leaders can strategically deploy narratives to cultivate feelings of pride, which in turn can lead to beneficial outcomes such as lower turnover intention (Gouthier & Rhein, 2011). More specifically, this study suggests that there are certain themes in rhetorical history narratives that are particularly conducive to employee pride. First, longevity appears to be a powerful element of persuasion in historical narratives. For example, longevity alone can say a lot about an organization's competence—a historically-acquired competence that makes employee proud to work for their organization. Longevity can also signal past survivorship which employees often interpret as an ability to overcome current and future challenges. This perceived resilience, in turn, fosters trust toward the organization and confidence about the future—a tremendous asset in hiring and retaining employees. In the same vein, narratives of longevity can lead to higher commitment, granted that employees perceive they have the ability to contribute to and become part of their organization's history. Furthermore, leaders can capitalize on rhetorical history by linking the organization's history to broader (and more legitimate) cultural institutions, such as the company's local city. In addition, a focus on relevance is crucial, as employees' interest in history can only be captivated if it is relevant to the employee and the organization's present. Finally, organizations can supplement their narrative's credibility by providing the audience with tangible, credible support material such as photographs, historical artifacts, and newspaper clippings.

CONCLUSION

Do employees lend credence to their organization's history? It seems so. Can rhetorical history be viewed as an impression management tactic? The literature supports that position. Can employees' attitudes toward their organization be influenced by corporate history? Most likely, yes. Would it be advantageous for organizations to engage in rhetorical history? Without a doubt.

More crucially, how does this study contribute to the broader literature on rhetorical history? This study offers two main theoretical contributions. First, I propose a model that integrates the relevant literature on rhetorical history. This model clearly identifies rhetorical history for what it is—a strategic tool for managing the organization's image in the eyes of key stakeholders—and connects the hitherto disconnected research, which I trust will stimulate further research on this topic. Second, I offer a clearer picture of what has been until now an understudied aspect of rhetorical history—the audience's perspective. Beyond merely confirming what prior theory suggested, this study reveals how and under what circumstances certain attitudes and behaviors occur as a result of being exposed to corporate history.

So what? We now know that rhetorical history does not fall upon deaf ears. Employees seem to care about their organization's history. In fact, we now have some evidence that rhetorical history can produce certain attitudes and behaviors in employees—attitudes and behaviors that could undoubtedly benefit organizations. From the organization's perspective, engaging in rhetorical history is no fruitless endeavor.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Recruitment letter

"Hi, I am a researcher at XX University and I believe you have the potential to teach me something about the history of your company. Specifically, I would like you to help me understand what kind of emotions or feelings you experience when you think about your company's history. If you agree, I would like to discuss this subject in greater detail in an interview. I can't thank you enough for your participation."

Appendix B: Interview Protocols

Participant background

Sex: M/F

Are you a Canadian Citizen? If not, what is your nationality?

How old are you?

May I have your contact info (phone or email)?

How long have you been working at *[Company Name]*? _____ years _____ months

How did you first know about *[Company Name]*? _____

What is your position at *[Company Name] (rank and department)*?

_____

What is your highest degree? _____

What was your major (if applicable)? _____

Knowledge of Corporate History

Do you consider yourself to be knowledgeable about *[Company Name]*'s history?

Have you ever talked to anyone about *[Company Name]*'s history?

How did you learn about your *[Company Name]*'s history?

How frequently do your supervisors tell you about the *[Company Name]*'s history? What do they tell you?

Experience of Corporate History

Can you please describe with as much detail and precision as possible situations in which you thought about [Company Name]'s history? What were your thoughts specifically? What were your emotions and feelings while thinking about it? A situation could be a specific moment or your day-to-day life in general.

In what way does *[Company Name]*'s history affect or influence you?

What events, things, or people have affected how you feel and think about *[Company Name]*'s history?

Do you believe in *[Company Name]*'s history? Do you think it's authentic? Why?

Crafting the History[16]

Who commissioned the work on *[Company Name]*'s history

[16] This section was designed for interviews with managers

When did *[Company Name]* start the work on its history?

How was that work carried out (i.e., how did you actually put together *[Company Name]*'s history)?

Why did [person who started the history work] initiate the work on *[Company Name]*'s history? What was the rationale behind this work?

When did you officially start an "Our History" section on your website?

How frequently do you tell your employees about *[Company Name]*'s history?

- What do you tell them?
- Why?
- Are there any traditions at *[Company Name]*? Who founded these traditions?

How do you think your employees react to your accounts of *[Company Name]*'s history?

Post-interview Debriefing:

I would like to thank you again for your participation. I will keep this recorded interview in a secure location and will transcribe it so I can conduct my research more conveniently. In the following months I will be using this and your colleagues' interviews to try to understand how employees think about their company's history. I might contact you again to ask you to check the results and see if they make sense to you. The final result will take the form of a thesis that I will gladly send you. When my thesis is done, I will keep this interview on an encrypted hard drive and will not disclose it under any circumstances. Please let me know if you have any questions. If you want to reach me here is my phone number and e-mail address; do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any concerns regarding this project.

Duration of the Interview:

Comments / Observations:

Appendix C1: Coding Categories (Attitudes)

	# of Sources	# of Coding References	# of Words Coded	# of Paragraphs Coded
Node	Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Attitudinal nodes			
Description:	Regroups nodes describing an attitude, emotion, or feeling			
	0	**0**		
Node	Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Attitudinal nodes\Amazement and Interest			
Description:	Codes for when participants report being impressed, amazed, or astonished when they think about their company's history			
	14	**24**	**1,177**	**40**
Node	Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Attitudinal nodes\Amazement and Interest\Curiosity			
Description:	Codes for when corporate history piques the curiosity or the interest of the employee. Also codes for when history is seen as "fun" or a source of "fun facts"			
	7	**12**	**616**	**22**
Node	Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Attitudinal nodes\Appreciation of Evolution			
Description:	Codes for when the employees realize how the company went from point A to point B and that the evolution is considered worthy of admiration or respect. Most likely, this node will code for when the employees			
	15	**25**	**1,844**	**43**
Node :	Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Attitudinal nodes\Appreciation of Evolution\Acknowledgment of historical causality			
Description:	Codes for when participants report that events in the past influence the present situation			
	4	**4**	**238**	**4**
Node :	Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Attitudinal nodes\Behaviorally uninfluenced			
Description:	Codes for when employees say they don't feel that corporate history has an influence on them as such, but could otherwise elicit feelings and emotions			
	9	**9**	**126**	**13**

Node : Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Attitudinal nodes\Belongingness

Description: Codes for when employees report feelings part of the company, part of a bigger family

4	**7**	**143**	**9**

	# of Sources	# of Coding References	# of Words Coded	# of Paragraphs Coded

Node : Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Attitudinal nodes\Commitment

Description: Codes for instances where employees report wanting to work hard to keep the company alive

8	**9**	**670**	**21**

Node : Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Attitudinal nodes\Feelings of NOT belonging

Description: Codes for when the employees think the sense of belonging has diminished or is inexistent

2	**3**	**168**	**13**

Node : Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Attitudinal nodes\Hope for the future

Description: Codes for when thinking about the company's history provides confidence, trust, and hope in the company's future

7	**9**	**581**	**19**

Node : Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Attitudinal nodes\Identification

Description: Codes for when the employee identifies with his or her company's history

1	**1**	**55**	**5**

Node : Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Attitudinal nodes\Importance

Description: Codes for when history is seen as very important

3	**3**	**89**	**3**

Node : Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Attitudinal nodes\Indifference

Description: Codes for when employees do not particularly care about the company's history

2	**3**	**107**	**3**

Node : Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Attitudinal nodes\Joy

Description: Codes for when employees report that thinking about their history makes them feel good, happy, or warms their heart

3	**5**	**93**	**9**

Node : Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Attitudinal nodes\Liking

Description: Codes for when the participants report liking their company when thinking about its history

3	**3**	**63**	**3**

	# of Sources	# of Coding References	# of Words Coded	# of Paragraphs Coded

Node : Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Attitudinal nodes\Loyalty

Description: Codes for when employees report feeling attached or loyal to their company

1	**1**	**68**	**9**

Node : Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Attitudinal nodes\No emotions or feelings

Description: Codes for when the employees report that corporate history does not affect them emotionally (as opposed to behaviorally)

1	**1**	**49**	**5**

Node : Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Attitudinal nodes\Nostalgia

Description: Codes for when employees explicitly report nostalgia or talk about how past times were good times

5	**9**	**1,097**	**25**

Node : Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Attitudinal nodes\Pride

Description: Codes for when employees report feelings of pride when they think about their company's history

20	**45**	**1,475**	**63**

Node : Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Descriptive nodes

Description: Regroups nodes that are not emotional (e.g., contribution to history, embeddedness within local culture)

0	**0**

Node : Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Descriptive nodes\Authenticity

Description: Codes for when corporate history serves as a reminder that things (e.g., products) have remained authentic throughout the years

1	**1**	**123**	**1**

Node : Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Descriptive nodes\Contribution to History

Description: Codes for when employees report they feel like they're contributing to the company's history by doing their work

8	**12**	**573**	**18**

Node : Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Descriptive nodes\Part of local culture

Description: Codes for when the company's history is seen as part of the local culture and history

5	**8**	**527**	**16**

	# of Sources	# of Coding References	# of Words Coded	# of Paragraphs Coded

Node : Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Descriptive nodes\Family Ownership

Description: Codes for when employees report that family-owned aspect of their company's history

4	**9**	**491**	**13**

Node : Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Descriptive nodes\Feelings of NOT contributing

Description: Codes for when employees think they're not contributing to the company's history

1	**1**	**11**	**1**

Node : Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Descriptive nodes\History as forecast of future

Description: Codes for when employees say that history is useful to know where the present if going

2	**3**	**192**	**3**

Node : Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Descriptive nodes\History as a sign of quality

Description: Codes for when participants specifically mention that if the company has an established history it means that it makes quality products

5	**6**	**404**	**10**

Node : Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Descriptive nodes\History as a source of values

Description: Codes for when corporate history is seen as a source of values

2	**6**	**412**	**6**

Node : Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Descriptive nodes\History as explanation of today's situation

Description: Codes for when employees think history serves as a tool to understand why things are the way they are today

2	**4**	**315**	**4**

Node : Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Descriptive nodes\History as Identity

Description: Codes for when the participant says that despite name changes and acquisitions, things remain the same

1	**1**	**41**	**1**

Node : Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Descriptive nodes\History as sign of robustness

Description: Codes for when employees see their company's history as indicative of solidity, endurance, resilience, and stability

12	**15**	**908**	**31**

	# of Sources	# of Coding References	# of Words Coded	# of Paragraphs Coded

Node : Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Descriptive nodes\Relationship with founders

Description: Codes for when employees report that knowing the founder in person is an important (and sometimes emotional) aspect of corporate history

1	**1**	**53**	**11**

Node : Thoughts and Attitudes Toward Corporate History\Descriptive nodes\Success Story

Description: Codes for when employees perceive that their company's history includes a "success story" component (e.g., rising from a small local company to a popular household brand)

10	**13**	**771**	**27**

Appendix C2: Coding Categories (Corporate History Dynamics)

	# of Sources	# of Coding References	# of Words Coded	# of Paragraphs
Node : Channels of exposure to Historical Narratives (Parent Node)				
Description: Codes for the different types of channels through which employees have been exposed to their company's history				
	0	**0**		
Node : Channels of exposure to Historical Narratives\Anniversary Celebrations				
Description: Codes for when the source of historical narratives is in part anniversary celebrations				
	11	**15**	**658**	**31**
Node : Channels of exposure to Historical Narratives\Artifacts				
Description: Codes for when employees report having been exposed to historical artifacts such as obsolete machinery and old instruction manuals				
	3	**4**	**269**	**4**
Node : Channels of exposure to Historical Narratives\Colleagues				
Description: Codes for when employees report having heard of corporate history via their colleagues (mostly with more seniority than themselves).				
	15	**31**	**2,212**	**54**
Node : Channels of exposure to Historical Narratives\Corporate Museum				
Description: Codes for when employees report having been exposed to museums or historical artefacts such as photos and old company-related documents				
	5	**7**	**388**	**7**
Node : Channels of exposure to Historical Narratives\Family and Friends				
Description: Codes for when employees have been exposed to corporate history via their family and friends (who don't necessarily work there)				
	4	**6**	**409**	**13**

Node : Channels of exposure to Historical Narratives\Hiring

Description: Codes for when employees (or hiring managers) report that they have been exposed (or expose the new hires) to corporate history during the hiring process

# of Sources	# of Coding References	# of Words Coded	# of Paragraphs
5	**7**	**392**	**25**

Node : Channels of exposure to Historical Narratives\Own Experience

Description: Codes for when employees perceive they have enough years of experience to consider their career as a "remembered corporate history"

# of Sources	# of Coding References	# of Words Coded	# of Paragraphs
6	**6**	**266**	**8**

Node : Channels of exposure to Historical Narratives\Supervisors and Management

Description: Codes for when employees say they've been told things about their company's history by their supervisors or the management

# of Sources	# of Coding References	# of Words Coded	# of Paragraphs
21	**32**	**1,799**	**97**

Node : Channels of exposure to Historical Narratives\Traditions

Description: Codes for when employees report having been exposed to their company's history via traditions such as annual celebrations, Christmas dinners, etc.

# of Sources	# of Coding References	# of Words Coded	# of Paragraphs
9	**11**	**849**	**25**

Node : Channels of exposure to Historical Narratives\Website

Description: Codes for when employees report having learned something about their company's history via the company's website

# of Sources	# of Coding References	# of Words Coded	# of Paragraphs
3	**3**	**163**	**11**

Node : Content of Historical Narratives (Parent Node)

Description: This node codes for the content of historical narratives

# of Sources	# of Coding References	# of Words Coded	# of Paragraphs
0	**0**		

Node : Content of Historical Narratives\Anecdotes

Description: Codes for when employees have been exposed to anecdotal history

# of Sources	# of Coding References	# of Words Coded	# of Paragraphs
15	**26**	**1,956**	**44**

Node : Content of Historical Narratives\Rhetorical Historical Account

Description: Codes for when the employees have been exposed to the official (rhetorical) history of their company's history

24	**42**	**2,901**	**120**

Node : Content of Historical Narratives\Technical Aspects

Description: Codes for when the content of historical narratives is technical (e.g., production volume, evolution of methods of production, etc.)

15	**18**	**1,045**	**28**

	# of Sources	# of Coding References	# of Words Coded	# of Paragraphs

Node : Managers' Perspective (Parent Node)

Description: Gathers all nodes coding for how managers see corporate history

0	**0**		

Node : Managers' Perspective\Crafting of Corporate History

Description: Codes for how managers say the company's history has been put together

2	**3**	**380**	**27**

Node : Managers' Perspective\Impetus

Description: Codes for the reason(s) why the company decided to engage in diffusing rhetorical historical narratives

3	**7**	**777**	**29**

Node : Managers' Perspective\Managers' perception of employees' reaction to corporate history

Description: Codes for how managers imagine their employees' reactions to rhetorical historical narratives

3	**3**	**613**	**37**

Node : People with whom employees discuss corporate history (Parent)

Description: Codes for the type of individuals with whom employees discuss or mention their company's history

0	**0**		

Node : People with whom employees discuss corporate history\Colleagues

Description:

7	**7**	**378**	**13**

Node : People with whom employees discuss corporate history\Customers

Description: Codes for when employees report discussing their company's history with their customers

5	**7**	**306**	**13**

Node : People with whom employees discuss corporate history\Family

Description:

9	**9**	**401**	**23**

	# of Sources	# of Coding References	# of Words Coded	# of Paragraphs

Node : People with whom employees discuss corporate history\Friends

Description:

6	**6**	**234**	**16**

Node : People with whom employees discuss corporate history\The Press

Description: Codes for when employees (often Marketing Directors) discuss their company's history with journalists

1	**1**	**23**	**1**

Node : Perception of Authenticity (Parent Node)

Description: Codes for whether and why employees perceive their company's history as authentic

0	**0**

Node : Perception of Authenticity\History perceived as authentic

Description: Codes for when the company's history is perceived as authentic

28	**28**	**1,363**	**76**

Node : Perception of Authenticity\Never thought about it

Description: Codes for when the employees report that they never really considered they question of whether their company's history is authentic and therefore cannot say whether or not they think it is authentic

1	**1**	**105**	**3**

Node : Perception of Authenticity\Perceived reasons for historical authenticity (Parent Node)

Description: Codes for the reasons why employees think their company's history is true and authentic

0	**0**

Node : Perception of Authenticity\Perceived reasons for historical authenticity\Company is family owned

Description: Codes for when employees report that their company's history is authentic because they work for a small, local family owned company

5	**5**	**304**	**9**

Node : Perception of Authenticity\Perceived reasons for historical authenticity\Concordance with family

Description: Codes for when employees report that their company's history is authentic because it coincides with what their family (parents, grandparents) told them

4	**4**	**754**	**18**

	# of Sources	# of Coding References	# of Words Coded	# of Paragraphs

Node : Perception of Authenticity\Perceived reasons for historical authenticity\Concordance with senior

Description: Codes for when employees believe in the official historical account of the company because it coincides with the old-timers' version of history

6	**6**	**1,046**	**26**

Node : Perception of Authenticity\Perceived reasons for historical authenticity\Exposure to historical

Description: Codes for when employees perceives historical photographs as proof of authenticity of the company's rhetorical history

6	**6**	**355**	**6**

Node : Perception of Authenticity\Perceived reasons for historical authenticity\Founders are still around

Description: Codes for when employees perceive the company's history as authentic because the founders or their descendants are still at the helm of the company

5	**6**	**527**	**18**

Node : Perception of Authenticity\Perceived reasons for historical authenticity\Historical artifacts still around

Description: Codes for when employees report that they their company's history is authentic because historical artifacts are still present

1	**1**	**23**	**1**

Node : Perception of Authenticity\Perceived reasons for historical authenticity\History compiled by credible organization

Description: Codes for when employees report that they find their company's history authentic because it has been crafted by a credible historical association

2	**2**	**345**	**12**

Node : Perception of Authenticity\Perceived reasons for historical authenticity\Newspaper articles

Description: Codes for when employees report that their company's history is authentic because they've read about it in the press

3	**3**	**200**	**15**

Node : Perception of Authenticity\Perceived reasons for historical authenticity\No point in lying about

Description: Codes for when employees say they perceive their company's history as authentic because there would be no point for the management in fabricating it

2	**2**	**100**	**2**

Node : Perception of Authenticity\Perceived reasons for historical authenticity\Own Career

Description: Codes for when employees say that their company's history is authentic because they've been there long enough to see that the facts match their memories

7	**7**	**382**	**13**

	# of Sources	# of Coding References	# of Words Coded	# of Paragraphs

Node : Perception of Authenticity\Perceived reasons for historical authenticity\Same story every year

Description: Codes for when employees report they find their company's history authentic because the narrative has never changed over the years

2	**2**	**234**	**14**

Node : Perception of Authenticity\Perceived reasons for historical authenticity\Story sounds plausible

Description: Codes for when employees say that they find their company's history authentic because it sounds plausible

2	**2**	**209**	**7**

Node : Perception of Authenticity\Perceived reasons for historical authenticity\We still use the same

Description: Codes for when employees report that their company's history is authentic because it is still using the same production process as back then

1	**1**	**140**	**5**

Node : Perception of Authenticity\Perceived reasons for historical authenticity\Would be hard to lie about

Description: Codes for when employees say that their corporate history is authentic because it would be hard, or too daring, to fabricate a company's history

2	**2**	**111**	**2**

Appendix D: NVivo's Tree Map

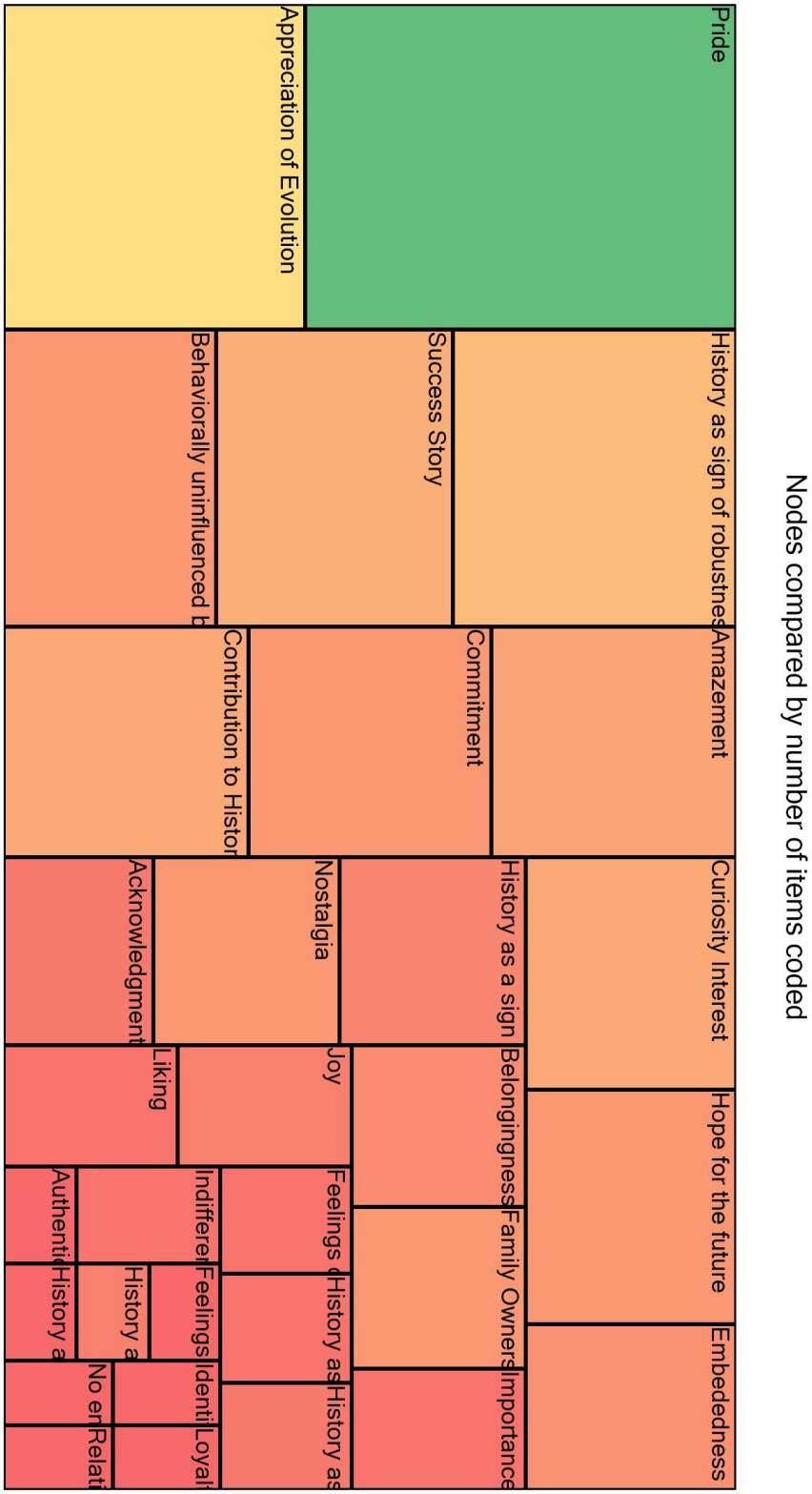


Figure 22: Visual Tree Map

Coding Categories	Number of coding references	Number of participants[17]
Attitudinal nodes\Amazement and Interest	12	9
Attitudinal nodes\Amazement and Interest\Curiosity Interest	12	7
Attitudinal nodes\Appreciation of Evolution	21	14
Attitudinal nodes\Appreciation of Evolution\Acknowledgment of historical causality	4	4
Attitudinal nodes\Behaviorally uninfluenced by Corporate History	9	9
Attitudinal nodes\Belongingness	7	4
Attitudinal nodes\Commitment	9	8
Attitudinal nodes\Feelings of NOT belonging	3	2
Attitudinal nodes\Hope for the future	9	7
Attitudinal nodes\Identification	1	1
Attitudinal nodes\Importance	3	3
Attitudinal nodes\Indifference	3	2
Attitudinal nodes\Joy	5	3
Attitudinal nodes\Liking	3	3
Attitudinal nodes\Loyalty	1	1
Attitudinal nodes\No emotions or feelings	1	1
Attitudinal nodes\Nostalgia	9	5
Attitudinal nodes\Pride	45	20
Descriptive nodes\Authenticity	1	1
Descriptive nodes\Contribution to History	12	8
Descriptive nodes\History is part of local culture	8	5
Descriptive nodes\Family Ownership	9	4
Descriptive nodes\Feelings of NOT contributing to History	1	1
Descriptive nodes\History as a forecast of the future	3	2
Descriptive nodes\History as a sign of product quality	6	5
Descriptive nodes\History as a source of values	6	2
Descriptive nodes\History as explanation of today	4	2
Descriptive nodes\History as Identity	1	1
Descriptive nodes\History as sign of robustness	15	12
Descriptive nodes\Relationship with founders	1	1
Descriptive nodes\Success Story	13	10

Table 16: Tree Map data

[17] The tree map was based on these numbers

Appendix E: Individual models of the corporate history experience (two examples)

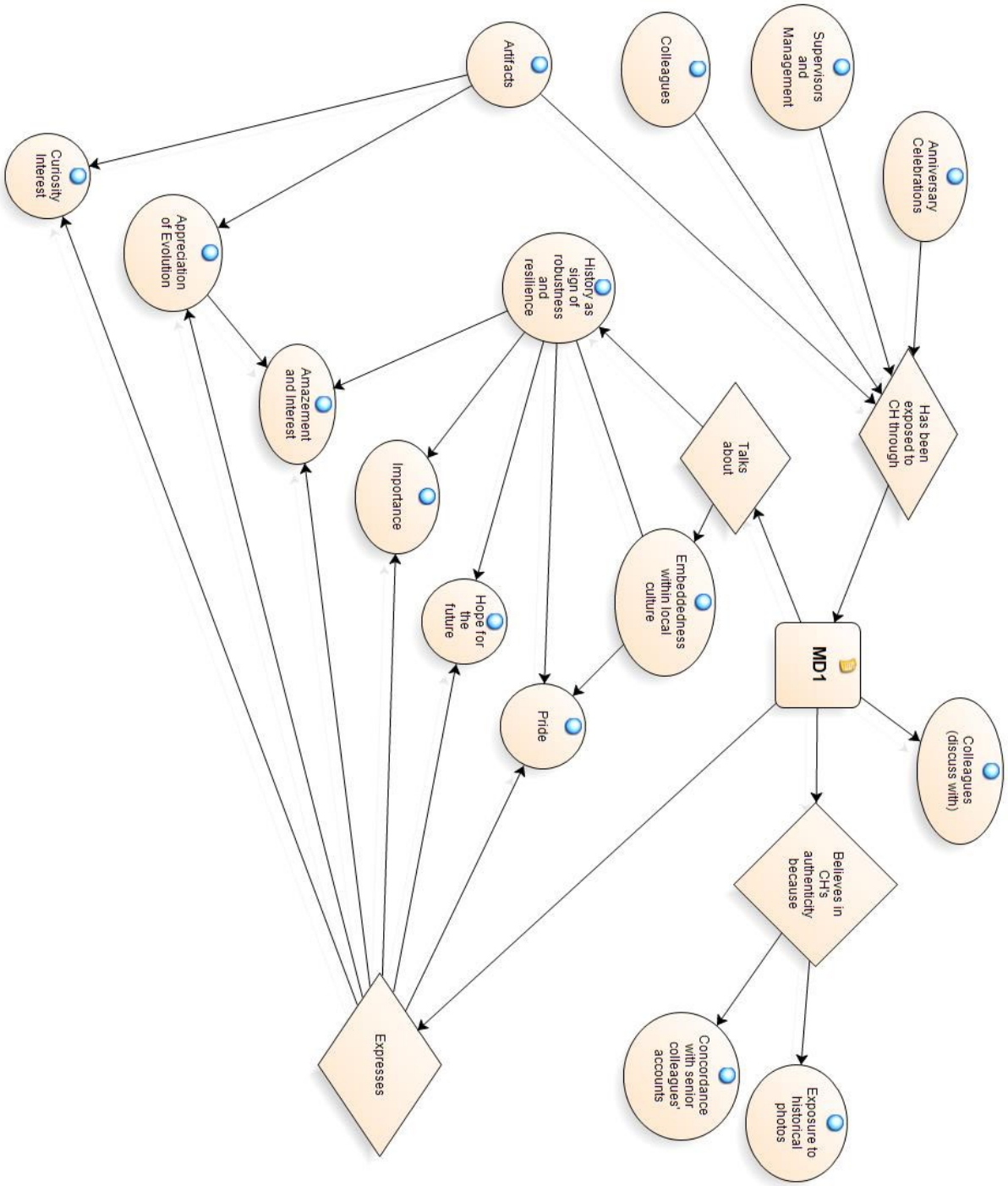


Figure 23: Individual corporate history experience of participant MD1

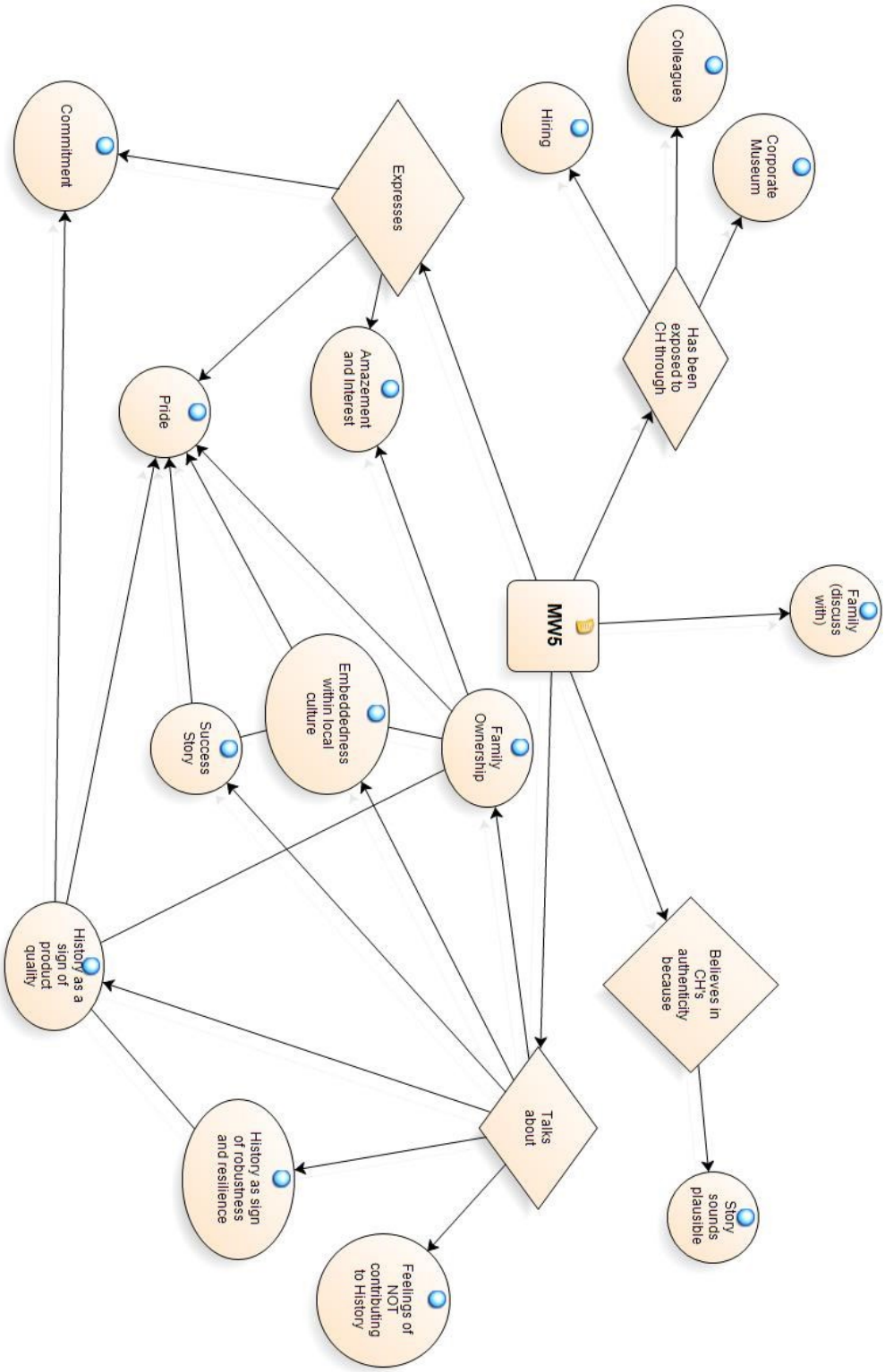


Figure 24: Individual corporate history experience of participant MW5

Appendix F: Attitudes according to managerial rank, seniority, and company affiliation

	Non-Management	Management
Amazement and Interest	45.45%	57.14%
Appreciation of Evolution	54.55%	42.86%
Belongingness	9.09%	28.57%
Commitment	22.73%	42.86%
Contribution to History	18.18%	57.14%
Embeddedness within local culture	22.73%	0.00%
History as a forecast of the future	4.55%	14.29%
History as a sign of product quality	18.18%	14.29%
History as explanation of today's situation	4.55%	14.29%
History as sign of robustness and resilience	40.91%	28.57%
Hope for the future	31.82%	0.00%
Nostalgia	22.73%	0.00%
Pride	63.64%	85.71%
Success Story	36.36%	28.57%
Behaviorally Uninfluenced	40.91%	0.00%
	n = 22	n = 7

Table 17: Main attitudes according to managerial rank

	0 to 1 year	2 to 5 years	6 to 15 years	16 to 40 years
Amazement and Interest	100%	60.00%	14.28%	50.00%
Appreciation of Evolution	33.33%	50.00%	42.86%	75%
Belongingness	0.00%	10.00%	28.57%	0.00%
Commitment	33.33%	30.00%	14.29%	37.50%
Contribution to History	0.00%	20.00%	28.57%	50.00%
Embeddedness within local culture	33.33%	40.00%	0.00%	0.00%
History as a forecast of the future	0.00%	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%
History as a sign of product quality	66.67%	10.00%	14.29%	12.50%
History as explanation of today's situation	0.00%	10.00%	14.29%	0.00%
History as sign of robustness and resilience	66.67%	40.00%	28.57%	37.50%
Hope for the future	33.33%	30.00%	0.00%	37.50%
Nostalgia	0.00%	0.00%	14.29%	50.00%
Pride	33.33%	90.00%	71.43%	50.00%
Success Story	33.33%	40.00%	71.43%	0.00%
Behaviorally Uninfluenced	66.67%	0.00%	57.14%	37.50%
	n=3	n= 10	n=7	n=8[18]

Table 18: Main attitudes according to seniority

[18] In the seniority table the total number of participants does not add up to 29. The reason for this is that one of the participants from Milky Way had been officially working for Milky Way for a year. However, being a relative of the Milky Way family, she had been unofficially working for the company for much longer. Because of this ambiguity, I did not assign her to a seniority category.

	Massive Dynamics	Milky Way
Amazement and Interest	66.67%	28.57%
Appreciation of Evolution	53.33%	50.00%
Belongingness	13.33%	14.29%
Commitment	40.00%	14.29%
Contribution to History	33.33%	21.43%
Embeddedness within local culture	6.67%	28.57%
History as a sign of product quality	26.67%	7.14%
History as sign of robustness and resilience	60.00%	14.29%
Hope for the future	33.33%	14.29%
Nostalgia	20.00%	14.29%
Pride	66.67%	71.43%
Success Story	6.67%	64.29%
Behaviorally Uninfluenced	26.67%	35.71%
	n = 15	n = 14

Table 19: Main attitudes according to company affiliation

Appendix G: Channels of exposure to corporate history according to various attributes

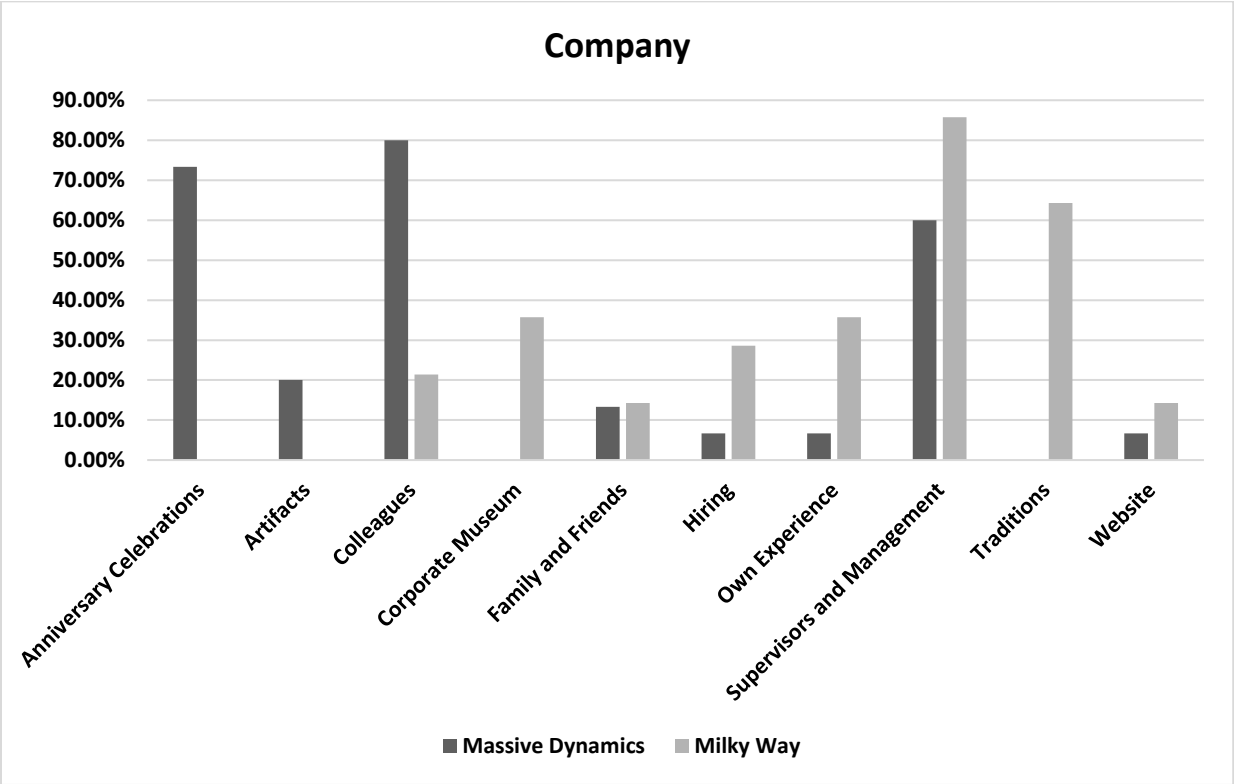


Figure 25: Channels of exposure to corporate history according to company affiliation

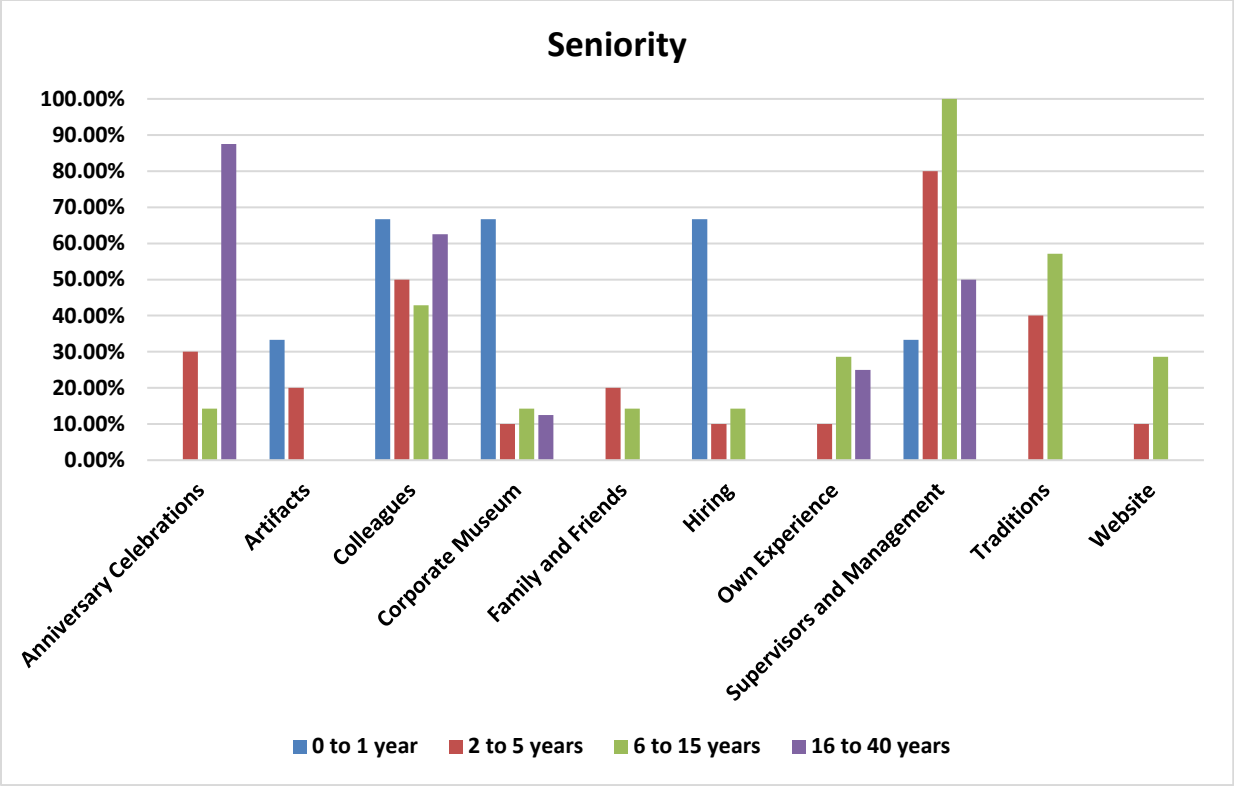


Figure 26: Channels of exposure to corporate history according to seniority

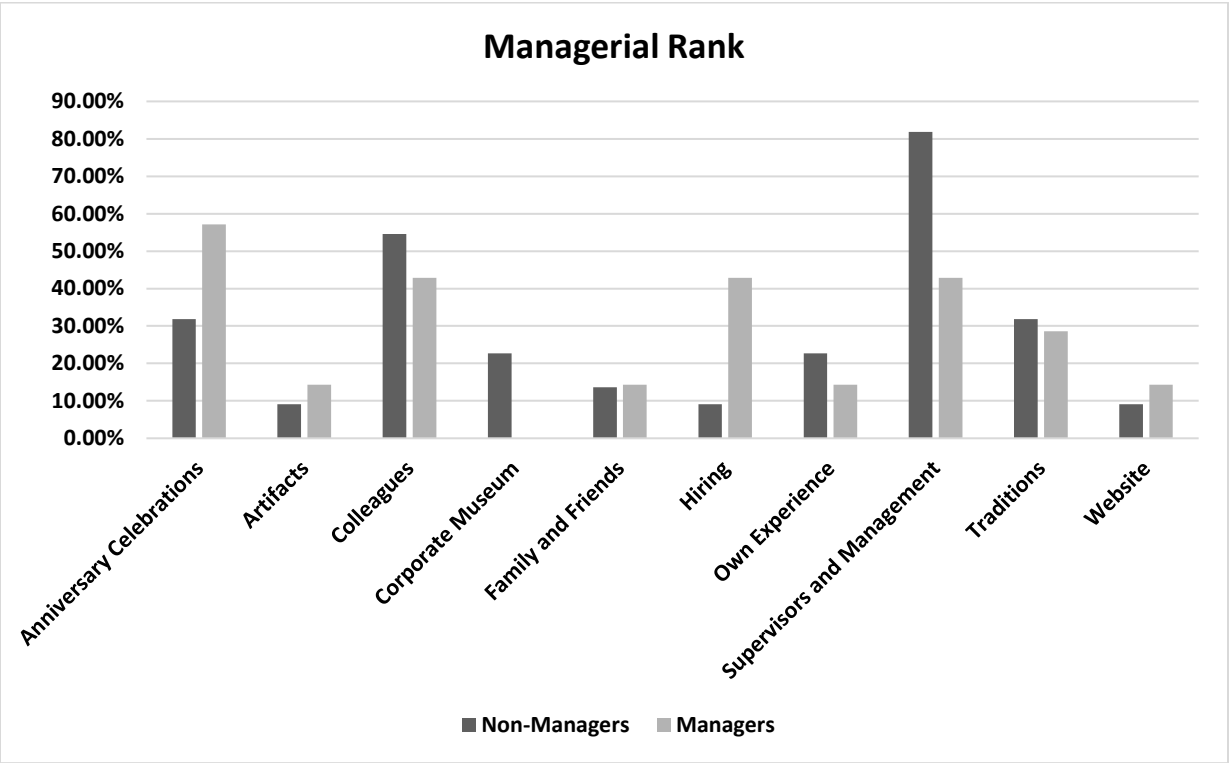


Figure 27: Channels of exposure to corporate history according to managerial rank

Appendix H: Perceived reasons for historical authenticity according to various attributes

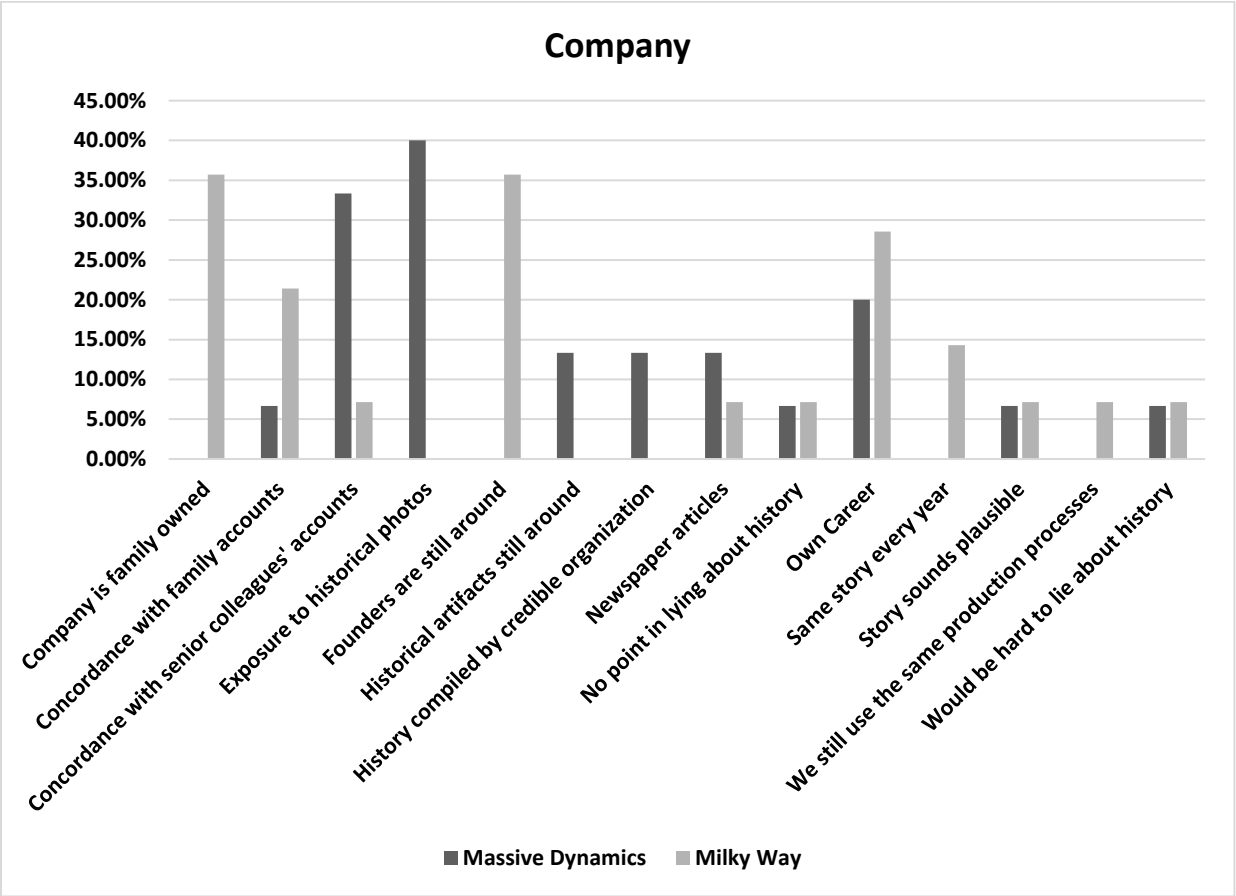


Figure 28: Perceived reasons for historical authenticity according to company affiliation

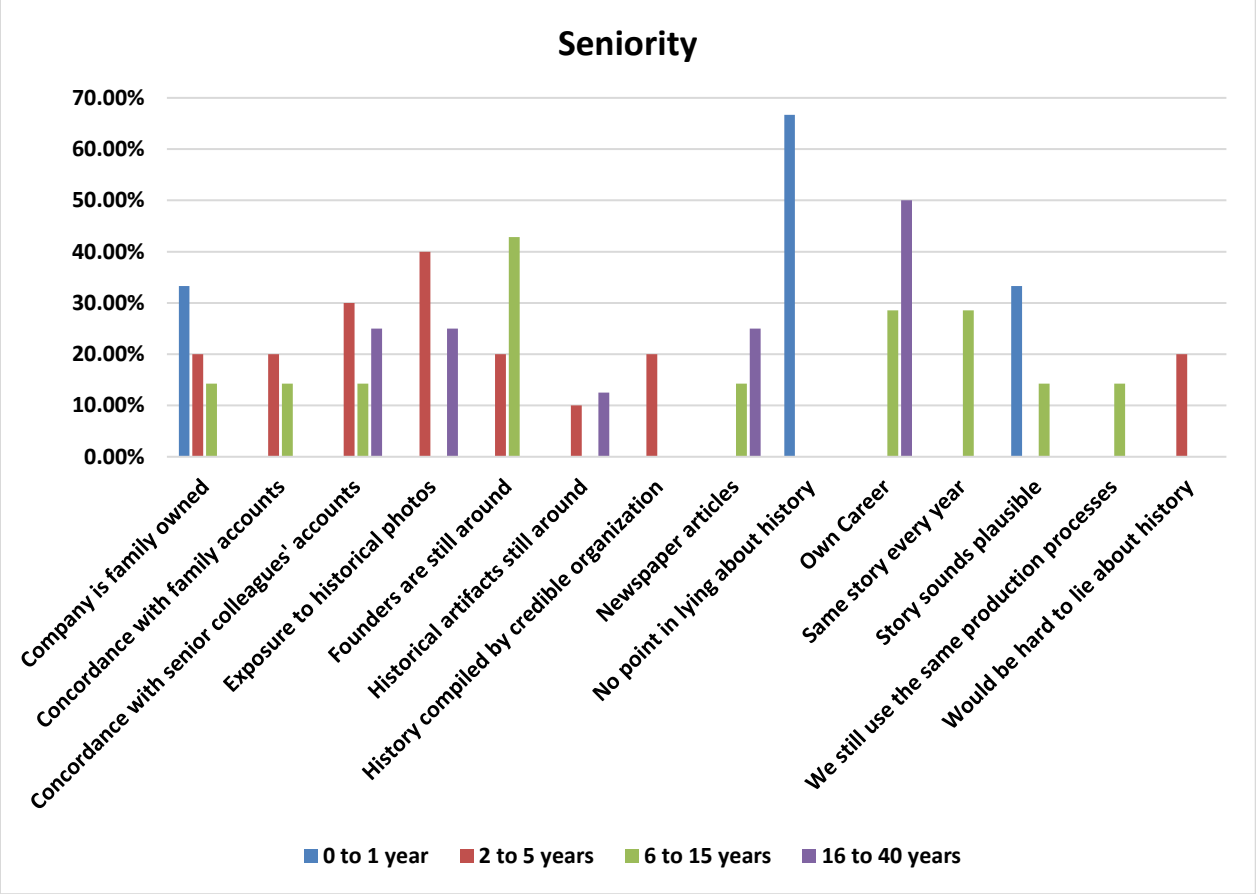


Figure 29: Perceived reasons for historical authenticity according to seniority

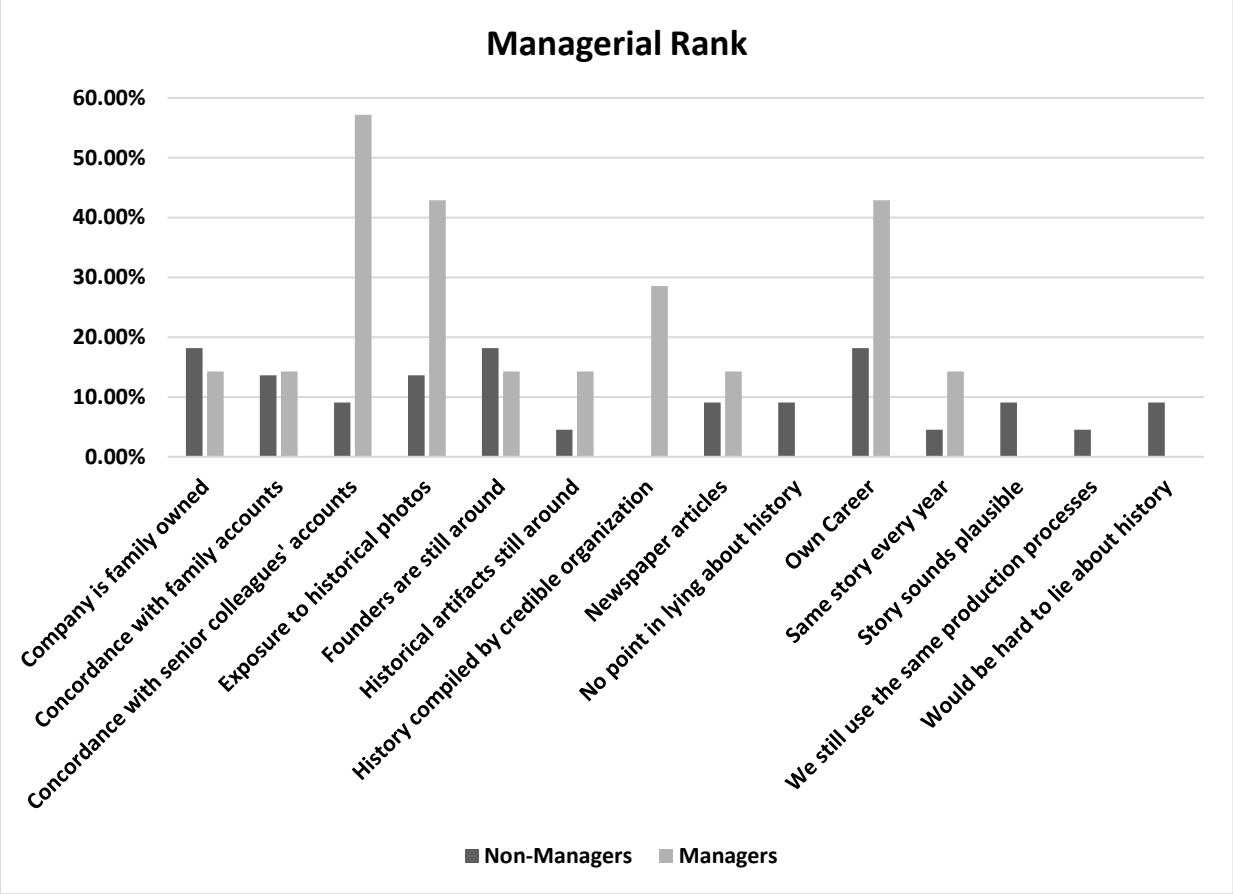


Figure 30: Perceived reasons for historical authenticity according to managerial rank

Appendix I: Managerial rank and attitudes toward corporate history (graph)

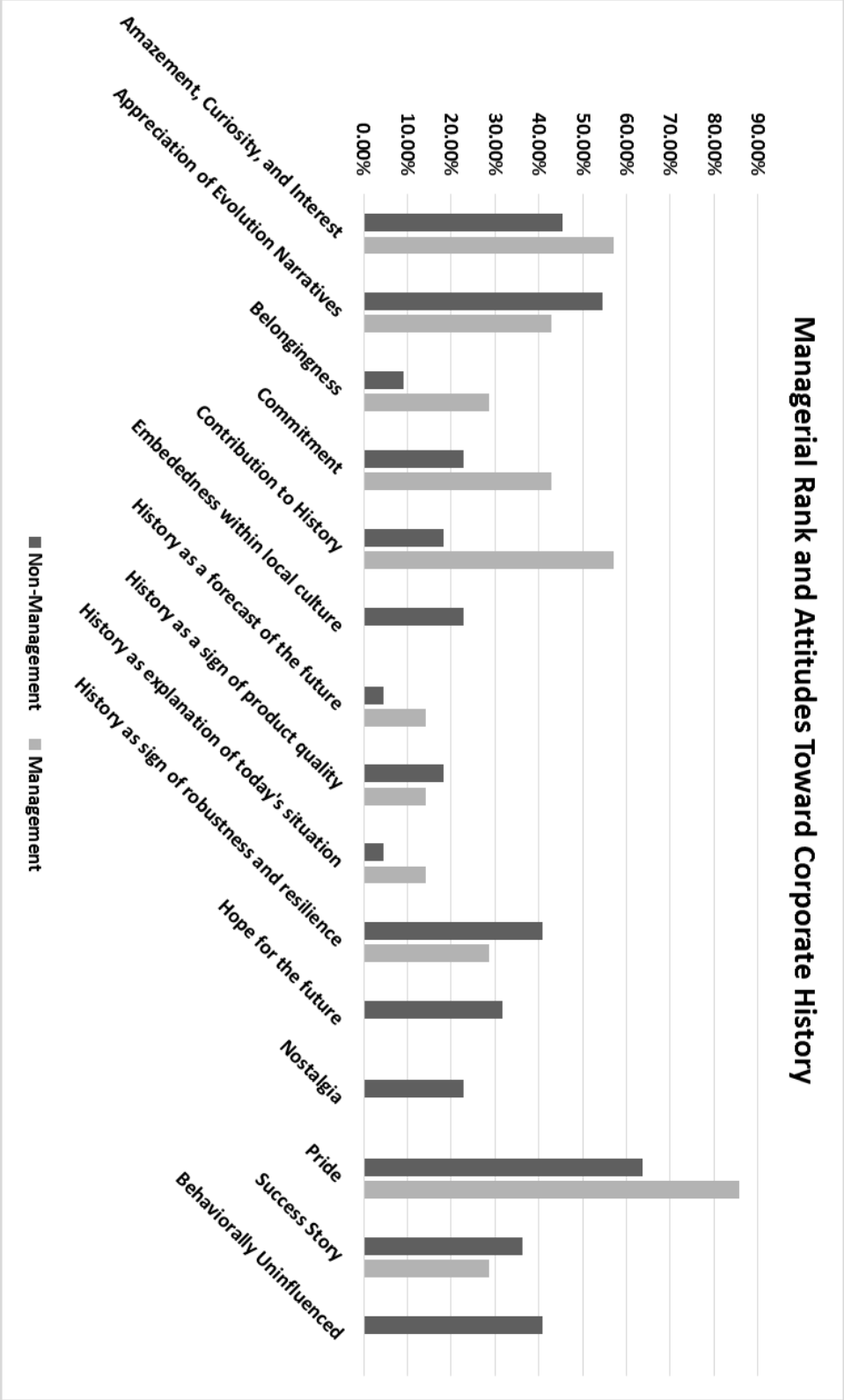
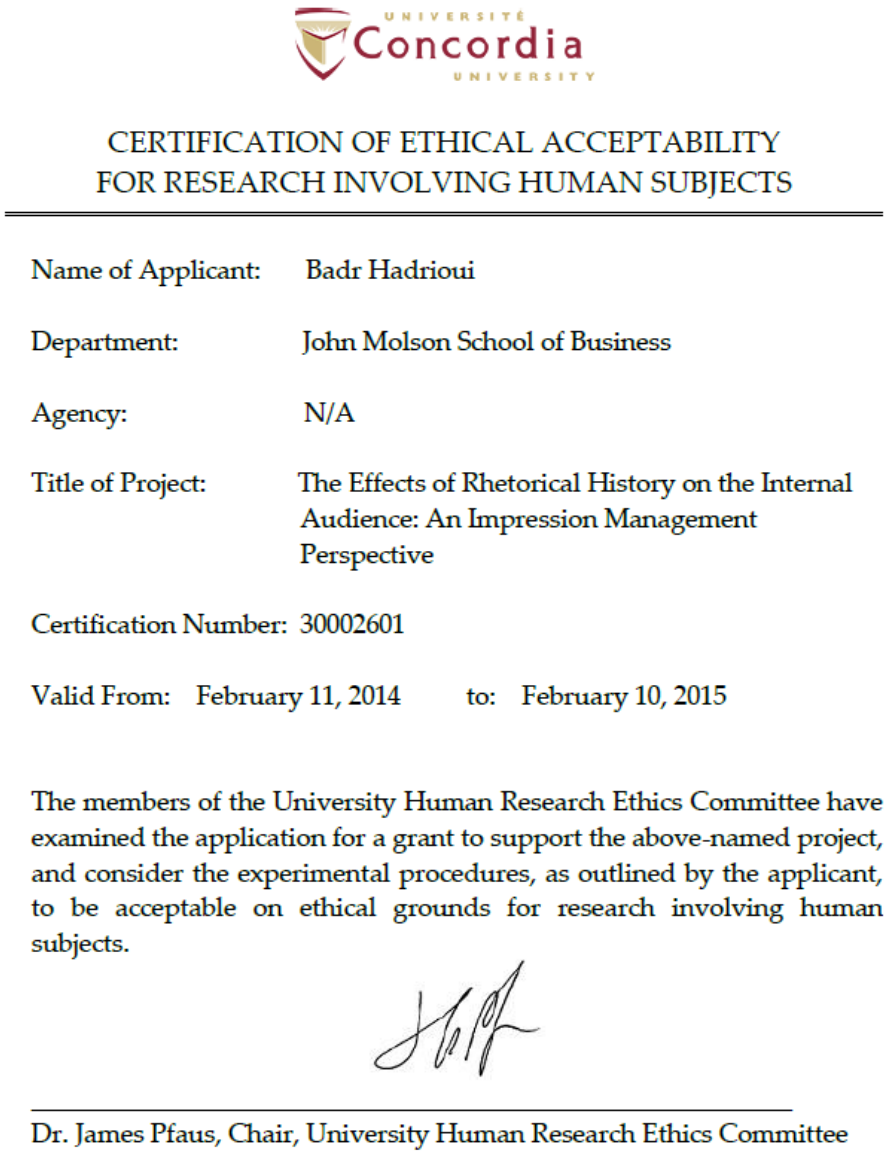


Figure 31: Managerial rank and attitudes toward corporate history

Appendix J: Ethics approval certificate



CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY
FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Name of Applicant: Badr Hadrioui

Department: John Molson School of Business

Agency: N/A

Title of Project: The Effects of Rhetorical History on the Internal Audience: An Impression Management Perspective

Certification Number: 30002601

Valid From: February 11, 2014 to: February 10, 2015

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Dr. James Pfaus, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee

Figure 32: Certificate of Ethics Board's approval