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Scrolling back: Remediation within and through digital memory work

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Abstract

This article explores how the concept of remediation is part of digital memory work performed by young women on Instagram. While remediation has been used to make sense of the ways sites of memory are represented across time and through different media, mnemonic media practices and forms are remediated in digital memory work. This article draws on interviews, observations of Instagram activities, and focus group data to analyse how other media practices and forms are integrated into digital memory work on Instagram and mobilised by young women to make sense of their mnemonic use of the platform. The analysis focuses on how practices of digital memory work use direct remediation of material objects and remediation of the functionality of mnemonic media practices. It addresses how the comparisons participants make to other mnemonic media practices reveal how digital memory work involves negotiation of personal and public, private and professional, and the authentic and staged. In addition, it grapples with the way that sharing happy experiences and moments to produce a 'highlight reel' or 'hall of fame' in postfeminist digital culture has valuable and potentially harmful implications.

Keywords: Digital memory work; mediated memory; remediation; social media; materiality; mnemonic metaphor

Introduction

By deploying mnemonic language and developing 'memory' features, social media platforms like Instagram assert for their users that they play a role in memory making. In 2019, Instagram followed in parent company Meta's footsteps to integrate the resurfacing of digital traces as On This Day 'memories' and several years later provided users with the ability to 'reminisce over their 2021 memories' through the Playback feature, which repurposed 'Year in Review' format. Beyond these specific features, the expectation that Instagram is used for mnemonic purposes is explicit within their announcement of Stories (released in 2017) as further enhancing the value platform, which 'has always been a place to share the moments you want to remember'. While such mobilisation of 'memories' by platforms has been examined, there has been a lack of empirical studies examining how users respond to invitations by Instagram to engage with the platform

mnemonically. In this article, I draw on a multi-method study on young women's digital memory work to explore how their practices refashion and reconfigure pre-digital mnemonic media practices and forms.

The risk of overstating the newness of digitally mediated practices and disconnecting it from the past has been raised in memory studies. Critiquing studies of digital photography and memory, Keightley and Pickering (2014) argue that only 'lip service' is paid to arguments against technological determinism, drawing attention to methodologies deployed in digital memory studies. They contend it is not enough to develop arguments solely from the analysis of technology. Reading (2016) proposes addressing how behaviour domesticates technologies and how social practice changes memory technologies to avoid reproducing technological determinist research. Her suggestion to bring in practices and experiences of people has been taken up by some, but the perspectives of individuals engaged in digital memory work are less frequently integrated into research design.

This article seeks to demonstrate the value of examining the perspectives and articulations of ordinary people engaged in digital memory work for understanding the entanglement of 'old' and 'new' as well as analogue and digital media. In Menke and Schwarzenegger's (2019) research on constructs of 'old' and 'new media', they carry out interviews with users from different media generations, lending empirical support and nuance to Natale's (2016) argument that the notion of 'old media' is negotiated and mobilised in descriptions and experiences of media change. This article similarly examines change and continuity and relationship(s) between old and new media through the perspectives and practices of young women, arguing comparisons and references to earlier forms and practices of mediated memory work are part of how people make sense of their digital memory work. Not only have young women 'grown up' alongside and on this social media platform, given that Instagram has existed for over a decade, but the focus on this group is sensitive towards the particularities in how gender shapes mnemonic use and intersects with postfeminist digital cultures.

This article draws on interviews with 16 young women (aged 18–21 years old, living in London), focus groups, and observations of their Instagram activities for 6 months in 2020. Based on this empirical data, the thematic analysis explores how young women engage with forms and practices of media within articulations of digital memory work, extending work in memory studies on metaphors of memory, mediation, and remediation. I begin by focusing on digital memory work that involves sharing digital reproductions of material memory objects, situating these practices in discussions of aesthetics and nostalgia. The next section addresses the metaphors and comparisons to media (postcards, autobiography, CV, highlight reel, and hall of fame) that participants offered in interviews to describe their practices. Approaching performances of digital memory work as reformed and refashioned mediated practices demonstrates how remediation is experienced by participants as part of sense-making processes. I then examine constructions of differences between memory work on Instagram and in diaries, to tease out how the cultural context and expectations of sharing shape performances online. The article concludes by echoing Erll and Rigney's (2009, 4) proposition that remediation is 'highly pertinent' to memory studies but reconfigures its application in the field. Based on my analysis, I argue there is a remediation of mnemonic media practices rather than constructions of the past, which is meaningful to understanding how and why young women perform digital memory work. Remediation is mobilised to make sense of the selectivity of their digital memory work, make claims of authenticity, and underscore the value of digital practices for mnemonic purposes.

Contending with 'newness' of media in digital memory studies

The capacity for narratives to be stored, accessed, and expressed through media technologies has long been intertwined with mnemonic processes. This is showcased through the development and use of media-based metaphors to understand what memory is and how it operates (Assmann 2011; Brockmeier 2015; Draaisma 2000; Neisser 2018), beginning with Plato's metaphor of the wax tablet that demonstrates how inscription in the mind emerges from the use of external memory (Draaisma 2000). It is also evident in practices of memory involving media. The processual and ongoing engagement with the past on, with, and through media has been theorised by media scholars. Rather than using memory work as a method for research, it is approached as practices embedded in everyday life. Lohmeier and Pentzold (2014, 779) refer to the range of bodily and materially grounded media practices that 'enact instantiations of personal or collective memories' as 'mediated memory work'. Smit (2020) challenges the assumption that memory work is a human practice, proposing memory work includes the way that users consciously construct the past and the platform's algorithmic selection of past objects based on certain criteria. Approaching agency as distributed between human and nonhuman actors hints at changes in the relationships between media and memory.

For Hoskins (2018), the nonhuman scale of entanglement of digital media and memory along with the precarity is core to his argument that media and memory are in transition. The question of how the digital reconfigures memory is taken up by digital memory studies. Digital technologies are presented as potentially disruptive and transformative in the conceptualisation of memory, the process of remembering and understanding what constitutes the past. This brings with it the risk of overattributing change to digital technologies. Reading (2016, 36) argues technology determinism creeps in when media is 'characterised as determining human behaviour', changing, shaping, and impacting what is remembered. To avoid assuming that technology determines behaviour, she suggests approaching memory technologies as embedded in social practises, which include the way people change and adapt technologies. This complements Keightley and Pickering's (2014) proposition that research must be analytically orientated towards addressing change against continuity and continuity against change.

Scholars have situated contemporary digital practices in a historical context by constructing parallels between social media platforms and diaries (Humphreys 2018; Rettberg 2016) and scrapbooking (Good 2013) as a way to make visible continuities and change. While these comparisons emerge through analysis of practices, Reading's (2016, 128) finding that mnemonic practices are temporally 'folded' into legacy practices of mobilising memories in those women who were 'born digital' also offers another perspective on relationships between different types of mediated practices. She compares legacy memory technologies with the gendering of the global memory field to illuminate how mobile and digital technologies present new opportunities for the travel of gendered memories. For some young women, their turn to legacy media for mnemonic purposes was a way to reject self-surveillance, for example. This article builds on such insight by using comparisons present in interviews and practices of young women as the starting point for analytically exploring overlaps in mediated practices.

Although research situating contemporary digital practices in longer histories of media use (Good 2013; Humphreys 2018; Reading 2016; Rettberg 2016) alludes to the concept of remediation, this is not engaged with. Yet, for Bolter and Grusin (1999), remediation is a defining feature of digital media. The term refers to the 'representation of one medium in another' (45) and how each medium builds upon the conventions and mechanisms of the predecessor to offer a 'more immediate or authentic experience', which draws attention to the new medium as a medium. This involves the intertwined logics of hypermediacy,

which refers to the visual style of the medium that makes the mediation explicit and reminds the viewer of the medium, and immediacy, which refers to the desire for 'a transparent interface' in which the mediated technology seemingly disappears to allow access to 'real' experience (24).

Instagram as a platform has been conceptualised in relation to remediation because its features and architecture reconfigure and combine multiple media. More specifically, the display of images and the development of filters remediate the aesthetic of polaroids at the level of the interface (Cherasia 2022; Leaver et al. 2020). Simultaneously, users remediate nostalgic or as Niemeyer (2014, 1) puts it 'bittersweet longing for former times and spaces' and retro aesthetics in their sharing. According to Chopra-Gant (2016, 130), digital natives seek to evoke an 'aura of "pastness"' on Instagram, which seems disconnected from 'genuine memories of childhood family snaps'. While the critique of young people's practices may rely on assumptions about what constitutes authentic sharing and remembering, it, nevertheless, points to the perceived value of past photography practices. This is picked up in Magaudda and Minniti's (2019, 94) exploration of what they term retromedia-in-practice and their argument that authenticity is attached to polaroid photography due to the 'unpredictability, imperfection and materiality of the analogue process'. The circulation of polaroid photos on platforms sought to preserve the objectness of polaroids in digital sharing, indicating how 'material status is socially (re)produced through circulation' (Minniti 2016, 40). Across this cluster of research in media studies, remediation is usefully deployed to explore how social media platforms as well as practices and aesthetics integrate and appropriate older technologies, demonstrating multiple interconnections of old and new media and in some instances, bringing in discussions of memory, which would benefit from sustained further theorisation.

Remediation is considered to be 'highly pertinent' to memory studies (Erll and Rigney 2009, 4). Erll (2009) proposes that remediation allows us to make sense of how events that are transformed into sites of memory (mediated constructions of narratives, myths, and images of events) are represented repeatedly through different media. As such, research on remediation addresses how sites of memory are constructed and remain relevant through their repeated representations over time and across media (Erll and Rigney 2009). For example, Wertheim (2009) examines the remediations of Ann Frank's diary into other media forms as a desire for immediacy. Accordingly, the application of remediation in memory studies has tended to focus on mediated constructions of specific events and aspects of the past, which could be extended to examine the way that remediation is also part of memory work at the level of practices, aesthetics, and technologies as the work in media studies demonstrates, and how it is experienced by people.

Methodological approach

To explore how digital memory work extends, reflects, and potentially remediates preexisting mnemonic media practices, I examine the narratives of young women. Van de Putte (2022) suggests in memory studies, there is a reliance on political, art, and media professionals, which has contributed to an over-representation of their (re)production of discourse over ordinary people. I conceptualise young women as memory agents who offer critical insight into the performance of digital memory work, drawing on the tradition in feminist research of studying women from the perspectives of their own experiences and lives (Harding 1987; Hesse-Biber 2013). This goes hand in hand with taking participants' interaction with memories as the starting point for enquiry rather than looking at how certain memories are interacted with by people. I argue this approach has the potential to illuminate processes of remediation and sense-making in how digital

memory work is approached and valued through lived experiences, demonstrating how digital memory work is situated in wider media ecology by ordinary people. The focus on perspectives and experiences seeks to avoid overemphasis on the agency of digital technologies and continue work in memory studies on connections between change and continuity in practices of digital memory work as well as media-based metaphors.

The article draws on a larger study on the digital memory work of 16 young women. A purposive sampling method and snowballing technique were used to identify eligible participants. Eligibility for participation was based on self-identification as belonging to the group of 'young women', age (18–21 years old), geographical location (London), and regular use of Facebook and Instagram. I conducted semi-structured interviews with participants on their perspectives and experiences of platforms particularly related to digital memory work and invited participants to narrate their digital traces on platforms using the scroll back method (Robards and Lincoln 2017). Their disclosures shaped my interpretation of digital traces during the 6-month observation period (carried out between December 2019 and November 2020) in which I created a dataset of 4643 digital traces. Regardless of the participants' privacy settings, I obtained informed consent to observe and create screenshots of their social media activities and the project received university ethics board approval. At the end of the fieldwork period, I conducted two 1-h online focus groups with interested participants ($n = 9$) in December 2020 and January 2021 to collectively discuss findings emerging from the analysis, in keeping with the feminist commitment to bring in perspectives of participants as multiple points. The multimodal approach endeavours to make performances of digital memory work visible, responding to the challenge of carrying out empirical research on mediated memory work given how they are embedded in daily life, occur on the go, and are related to other practices (Lohmeier and Pentzold 2014).

The transcribed interviews and focus groups, screenshots, and fieldnotes were analysed using narrative and thematic analysis. Both methods of analysis share a commitment to making sense of processes and meanings (McAllum et al. 2019), which was used to reveal instances in which participants articulated their practices of digital memory work by referring to other mnemonic media practices or digitally reproduced material mnemonic objects in their performances on Instagram. In this article, I focus on instances in which participants used mnemonic media practices to make sense of their digital practices and were embedded within their ordinary performances. Critically, these emerge from their discussion and performance of digital memory work rather than as a result of asking participants to engage in comparison.

Findings

(Re)circulating material memory work

Participants engaged in digital memory work by sharing digitally reproduced material mnemonic objects. Primarily, this was enacted by rephotographing images that had been captured through film, disposable, and polaroid cameras. In other words, there was a direct remediation of the materiality of the old(er) medium. An example of this comes from Bethany who shares Figure 1 on her Instagram Story as part of a series celebrating her friend's birthday.

In this Story, Bethany shows a page from a photo album featuring a print of the friend's fourth birthday party as indicated by the handwritten caption and adds the written text: 15 years later with a smiling emoji. The medium of photography is made visible in the reproduction. This act of remediation, I propose, contributes to the performance of girlfriendship within the birthday post. The childhood image visually gestures towards the

Figure 1. Instagram Story shared by Bethany on 25 June 2020.

longevity of friendship, which is also explicitly reinforced through the temporal reference.

Figure 1 is typical of digital memory work performed by participants to mark birthdays, Mother's and Father's Day, anniversaries, and funerals. While the use of photos captured during childhood or before participants were born necessitates remediation because these images do not exist in digital forms, the decision to source and capture photos from their material forms rather than using more recent images indicates their perceived value. Although participants make use of the affordances of Instagram to do so, they also resist the push from the platform to capture and share what is happening in the 'here' and 'now'. The prioritisation of the present and recent past is cued through Stories in which the default setting is the camera to capture a 'live' moment, the selection of an image from the camera roll (on Stories and posts) is displayed in reverse chronological order from newest to oldest, and the origin of the name *Instagram* as a combination of '*instant* photo' and 'telegram'. Bringing in traces of the past demonstrates how the past has been perceived as valuable in sharing in the here-and-now. Within annual rhythms of remembrance, participants frequently turned to material photos as resources to be recirculated digitally as constructions of the past. Such remediated digital memory work, which is part of connecting with friends and family, can be situated within tendencies for women to assume caring responsibilities in social networks. Thus, I propose seeing young women's practices on Instagram as contemporary manifestations of the 'gendered immaterial labour of remembering' in the domestic sphere as women invest time, energy, and effort in the curation of family memories (Reading 2019, 301).

Yasmin reflects on her decision to recently share 'old photos from childhood'. Her explanation for her performance of digital memory work reveals a conceptualisation of why these photos are worth sharing:

> It's so fun because it is a whole lifetime ago. It is weird all that has happened because you know we all used to live in the same place and now we are all kinda spread out, so it is nice to look back at them.

Yasmin suggests that remediation is being enacted for mnemonic purposes. When she views the 'old photos', she performs memory work and by recirculating these images she invites her followers to also 'look back'. This engagement with the past is assumed to be 'fun' and 'nice', eliciting positive emotions. In doing so, she alludes to temporal and spatial change between the 'then' and 'there' of childhood in which the depicted friends live geographically close together and the 'now' and 'here' of her current stage in life in which they are geographically dispersed. The gap between the spatiotemporal configurations is constructed as 'a whole lifetime ago', which potentially contributes to the value of the printed photos and her rationale for circulating them through Instagram sharing.

Another part of the sharing is how it was inspired by stumbling upon these photos in her room. Yasmin's sharing in-the-moment reflects and reproduces an offline experience that recently occurred. This illustrates the way that digital memory work performed online is intertwined with embodiment and doing of memory work. Similarly, other experiences of unfolding mediated memory work were captured and shared by participants. Across the observation period, this included videos showing themselves looking at images online and offline, editing photos and videos, using photobooths, diary-writing, and scrapbooking (as exemplified in Figure 2).

The grainy filter used in Ava's Story contributes to the construction of the past and the aesthetics of materiality. Whilst this evokes the 'aura of "pastness"' that Chopra-Gant (2016, 130) would expect of digital natives on Instagram, it functions differently in how aesthetics of filter and materiality of the scrapbook intersect with personal remembering.

Figure 2. Instagram Story shared by Ava on 19 May 2020.

There is an implied meaningfulness to the images assembled over the past 5 years, which becomes attached to the social through the circulation of scrapbook making as an activity on Instagram.

The visual display of Figure 2 can be contrasted with the quality of disposable photos, which Ava comments on during the scroll-back portion of the interview:

> This one is Tiree, and it was on a disposable camera, so the quality is horrendous. But I loved it, it was such a fun week me with my best friends from home, we all went to Tiree in Scotland. And I took a disposable and I got them developed and they are so cute. It was such a nice memory and even though the quality wasn't great I didn't care because I wanted them.

Ava's use of a disposable camera to capture experiences of the holiday with her friends is accompanied by the expectation that the images will be 'horrendous' in terms of quality. This is then reinforced by her assessment of the images after they are developed. While Magaudda and Minniti (2019) refer to visual imperfection as part of what attracts people to retromedia practices, Ava indicates how this is a by-product of the practice rather than being experienced as beneficial. In the excerpt, she suggests a desire for 'memories' of this trip, supersedes the need for digital traces to represent a moment in an aesthetically pleasing way, suggesting they differ in quality from other sharing (for example, Figure 2). In drawing attention to the visual representation in her narration, Ava alludes to how aesthetic value is negotiated alongside mnemonic and emotional value, which is intertwined with forms of mediation.

This dynamic also plays out with digital memory work using polaroids. A range of participants shared Instagram stories and posts in which the display of polaroids highlighted their hypermediacy. The materiality and aesthetics of polaroids are made visible by showing the white border (see Figures 3 and 4) and hands holding the object (see Figure 4) with the latter signally how digital memory work as embodied practice also extends to the representation of the body through mnemonic practices.

Across my dataset, polaroids were captured and shared during and for special events, such as weddings, holidays, Christmas, and moments with family. They were also repurposed to mark birthdays or farewells, suggesting how the value of the images extends beyond the original occasion. The occasions coupled with the materiality gesture towards the history of instant photography and processes of analogue photography, although the status of polaroids as 'old' media or connected to nostalgia is not explicitly addressed by participants. Historic continuity can also be seen in how the infrequency of polaroid photography is attributed to cost by Chloe:

> I took it to Paris because it was an event almost so I don't use it for like weekly or monthly I only use it for special occasions, it is just a different kind of photography because it is expensive.

The cost of instant photography necessitates a selectivity of use and in turn, reinforces pre-digital photography practices in which cultural conventions shape what types of occasions that are captured. Participants actively seek out the 'right' types of occasions and moments to capture, valuing the materiality of the polaroid and suggesting they hold mnemonic value as stated by Jada in Figure 3. As such, showing the material photo, I propose, reinforces the mnemonic value of the captured moment. That is, the moment was deemed worthy of being captured through a material form either through a polaroid or disposable camera or in the case of sourcing an image from a photo album, which involves time and labour. Mnemonic media technologies of the past are ascribed with aesthetic

Figure 3. Instagram Story on Jada's 'Summer' Highlight.

and mnemonic value, which contributes to their digital reproduction and circulation on Instagram, revealing an interplay of cultural values associated with analogue and digital. As such, the direct remediation of the materiality of 'old' media through reproducing images produced by film, disposable and polaroid cameras or material objects is valued for the remediation of the mnemonic conventions and associations with the media forms including rituals of how to mark worthwhile moments.

Figure 4. Indiana's Instagram post shared on 13 September 2020.

Drawing parallels and mobilising metaphors to make sense of digital memory work

Participants not only made visible mediated memory objects in their digital memory work on Instagram but also referred to mnemonic media practices and forms in describing how they use and approach sharing on Instagram. Here, the analytical focus shifts from remediation in digital memory work to remediation of functionality through articulations of digital memory work. First, participants suggest how sharing remediates older practices of personal forms of communication. For example, Jada refers to postcards while explaining why she shares while on holiday:

> They're just nice memories to look back on and it's like sending a postcard, I guess. Instead of a 'wish you were here' postcard, you can put a photo on Instagram.

By constructing a similarity between sharing on Instagram and sending a postcard, Jada suggests that posts function as personal forms of communication associated with travel, expressing to followers the 'wish you were here' sentiment. In doing so, she alludes to the conceptualisation of postcards as 'vehicles narrating past instances' (Papadaki 2006, 55). Through the image on the postcard, a 'mass-produced view of a given society' is presented, which may be transformed into personal mnemonic objects as well as a medium of transmission when sent to others. While Jade emphasises the connecting function, the construction of a tourist gaze and the way her images of holidays may also contribute to the collective imagination of place despite being individually rather than mass-produced images allow the simile to be effective in making sense of digital memory work. Given that images of travel are central within what I describe as the normative model of digital memory work based on a gendered classification of happy memories, Jada's reference to postcards situates sharing practices in historical continuity, repositioning, and potentially pre-empting critique of social media use as trivial and superficial.

While Jada uses the postcard in her description of a type of sharing, Ava situates her Instagram in the register of storytelling and narration:

> I also love looking back on old Stories because I am such a reminiscer. And I like love seeing what I was doing and seeing how much life is changed and that's what I like about Instagram. It is an autobiography of your life, you can see everything that you've done. If you post most days, it is just a big storybook.

Ava like Jada mobilises a comparison (in this instance, the autobiography and storybook) to construct Instagram as a space populated by selected records of the past that are expected to elicit positive memories. In doing so, Ava alludes to the affordances of the platform that facilitate scrolling through archived posts and Stories. By turning to the autobiography, Ava establishes how she attaches meanings to Instagram in enabling self-authorship which shapes her use of the platform. That is, she tells stories that represent her subjective, autobiographical experiences. There is an assumption that these digital traces collectively show change over time, conferring mnemonic value to the collection as well as the individual digital traces. Furthermore, the assertion that Instagram *is* an autobiography definitively presumes autobiographical memory operates on social media platforms. It is a site of cognitive processes, as demonstrated by work on autobiographical memory and social media (see Eliseev and Marsh 2021; Stone et al. 2022; Talarico 2022; Wang 2022).

The expectation for profiles to facilitate digital memory work over time is also shared by Robin who explains how she approaches what to share:

> It is a big moments, big achievements, I went on holiday. It's kinda like a memory of all the good things or big things or encouragements that I have had. In that, because they're quite sparse and they're quite gap-y between the posts, it's kinda like my journey. For example, if you look through it from my time of uni there isn't a lot of posts, but I know for myself when I look back at those, I can remember those times. So, I guess it's more of a 'Robin's life hall of fame'.

Robin shares posts that represent moments or achievements that are significant or positive, alluding to processes of ongoing assessment in terms of how experiences in life fit within these criteria and how digital traces reflect this. Her selective sharing is

intended to allow her profile to function as a 'hall of fame' populated by meaningful moments from across her 'journey'. According to Geiger (2008), the selection of role models commemorated for their accomplishments through statues and inscriptions within a 'hall of fame' can be traced back to the Forum of Augustus. She repurposes this concept to present her Instagram profile as a digital space of commemoration of worthy digital traces as her life unfolds. In doing so, she gestures towards how the values of visibility and attention-shaping platform cultures resonate, although at different scales and temporalities, with assessments of recognition and contribution for individuals within their chosen fields. Not only does the public status of this 'hall of fame' on Instagram and potential interactivity with what she shares not figure in this excerpt outside of this comparison and hypothetical scrolling of the interviewer, but it also exemplifies her consistent framing of Instagram throughout the interview as personal. Robin anticipates performing digital memory work through her 'hall of fame' to reflect on her life, which in turn shapes and constrains her sharing, revealing an interplay between approaching digital traces as personal and public resources for meaning-making. It hints at potential feelings of insecurity and uncertainty fostered by the postfeminist, neoliberal climate, in which young women value Instagram as a space to record the present in the 'right' way and return to mnemonic evidence of a happy, good life, perceiving the affordances of the platform in aiding this process.

Elsewhere in the interview Robin also refers to her profile as a highlight reel. The format of the 'highlight reel' emerges in the sporting context, referring to the repackaging of snippets of the best performances and the highlight became the dominant news frame in sports journalism (Gamache 2014). The format is remediated on platforms with the term referring to the depiction of the ideal self on Instagram (Greene 2021) taking on gendered connotations, as many participants including Robin do:

> Nothing's ever come up as a 'memory' that I've thought 'Wow that's sad'. But I guess that goes back to me using my feed as a nice highlight reel of my life rather than everyday occurrences.

Here, Robin expresses a belief shared by other participants that feelings experienced and represented in the image will endure over time to the extent that viewing her On This Day 'memories' will never be sad. Central to the logic is her use of Instagram as a 'highlight reel', which, unlike other participants, Robin attaches to her profile. A similar understanding of the 'highlight reel' as selective rather than representative of 'everyday occurrences' emerges in Ava's use of the metaphor:

> You can see someone Instagram and their life is like literally perfect and that is only the things that they want to show. They don't show the really hard days. So I think it is a highlights reel.

Ava suggests that sharing happy, positive moments is culturally decoded as a display of the 'literally perfect' life, which is labelled a highlights reel. In doing so, she reinforces McRobbie's (2015) assertion that the patterned representations of particular (happy) experiences in digital traces collectively form a profile that depicts an idealised version of the life. Yet, the constructed and staged nature of the highlight reel in which the user considers what they 'show' is recognised by Ava. There is an expectation that the user who has a 'literally perfect' life will also experience 'hard days'.

Elsewhere in the interview, Ava establishes that sharing about negative moments is outside of her horizon of possibilities:

> I would never post something to draw attention on myself in a hard situation. I would never be like 'Just had the most upsetting day of my life'. I would never post that because I think that is attention-seeking.

There is an interpretation that sharing sadness or difficulties is an attempt to elicit sympathy and such validation is not favourably received. Although platforms rely on visibility and operate within the attention economy, this points to gendered limits of sharing and the challenges facing young women as they navigate their sharing practices. In other words, feeling rules shape how participants approach the mnemonic use of Instagram, illustrating how enactments of affordances occur within cultural contexts shaped by social practices (Costa 2018). 'Feeling rules' require subjects to produce the 'right' feelings on the 'right' occasions (Hochschild 1979), which Kanai (2019) has demonstrated shapes how the self is produced by young women in online spaces. The experience and display of the 'right feelings' intersect with the performance of different forms of digital memory work, marking remembering as another cultural space in which the postfeminist expectation to be happy, positive, and confident is reproduced. Ava's perspective also speaks to how interpretations of practices have implications at the personal and social levels. By sharing exclusively happy experiences and moments to generate a 'highlight reel' or 'hall of fame', they pre-empt future happy remembering that is enacted privately through scrolling back over digital traces and at times, publicly through resharing on networks. However, this also fosters the postfeminist climate of 'the perfect' (McRobbie 2015) and potentially contributes to the gendered grand narrative of sharing as motivated by narcissism and vanity (Tiidenberg et al. 2017).

During a focus group, Ade offered a reflection on how her views on Instagram had changed since the first interview:

> I didn't realise how much it was a vehicle for remembering things, looking back on good times and all of those kinda memories. I kind of saw it as a highlight reel.

Within her first interview, Ade like Ava mobilised the highlight reel metaphor and was as she put it 'scathing' about the use of Instagram for sharing happy moments. Ade attributes the experience of lockdown along with involvement in the research project as contributing to a re-evaluation of Instagram use. She adopts Pickering and Keightley's (2015) phrase 'vehicle for remembering' to make sense of her practices, alluding to the overlap between how digital traces act as catalysts for happy remembering for the self and how these same happy 'memories' function as highlight reels for others.

While some participants bring together memory-making and the 'highlight reel' metaphor, the comparison to the CV is not reconciled to digital memory work. As a first-year student at the University College of Arts London studying design management, Jada approaches her Instagram as a 'second CV', although she does not use it to display or promote her creative work:

> Instagram is almost like a portable, snapshot, sort of CV of your life, though it doesn't have the jobs you've done, it's like- I think a lot of designers using it as sort of alternative to LinkedIn, at least younger like students are. So, I have used it a bit for that.

Due to the visual nature of the work in the design industry, Jada assumes that her curated posts and Stories will be interpreted as an expression of her style and identity as a (future) creative worker. While van Dijck (2013b) draws a parallel between the CV and LinkedIn in visual formatting but argues the performance of the professional and

personal self on the platform goes beyond the CV and Gershon (2022) outlines how both function as different genres of employment history for the neoliberal worker, Jada positions Instagram as similar to a CV or LinkedIn for representing the worker and assessing professional value. This move marks an entrenchment of performing the self as 'connected, sociable and skilled' to the 'CV of your life'. Jada's labour to share everyday moments and experiences from life involves an assessment of how these digital traces will function as a design portfolio. Abidin (2016) defines visibility labour as work that is enacted through the curation of self-presentation to be positively seen and noticed by audiences. In this instance, curation by participants is not motivated by branding purposes or to be noticed by employers, clients, fans, or followers as outlined by Duffy (2017). Instead, it is part of the management of self-presentation due to the potential for one of these audiences to view her profile. Neoliberal pressures bleed into sharing with friends and remembering experiences, as young women ensure the digital memory work performed on Instagram will be useful should they be subject to surveillance from potential employees.

The range of comparisons between Instagram and other forms of recording the past that has been addressed in the section, postcards, hall of fame, autobiography, highlight heel, and CV, speak to the multiple uses and functions of Instagram. Jada draws attention to how the mnemonic and aesthetic values of sharing generate competing and intersecting demands:

> The grey area for social media where it's the professional, personal. Is it just for sharing your memories?

There is an overlap between professional curation and personal sharing of memories, which is experienced by participants through comparisons that span the personal, public, and professional mnemonic media practices. The mobilisation of these comparisons and parallels situate digital memory work in historic continuity, suggesting how they see their contemporary practices as refashioning previous forms of memory work and demonstrating how the concept of remediation is relevant to sense-making processes. In part, this echoes claims made by the platform that features and affordances relate to pre-digital forms and practices. On Instagram, digital traces shared for less than 24 hours are 'Stories'; previously shared Stories are located in an 'Archive' or pinned to a profile through 'Highlights'; short videos are 'Reels' and long videos are 'IGTV'. Building on van Dijck's (2013a) insight that terms such as 'sharing', 'friending', and 'liking' function as powerful ideological concepts, which are ascribed with techno-economic meanings, I propose the concept of remediation is mobilised to position individuals as producers, making use of terms associated with storytelling and mass media. Thus, the use of media-based metaphors and comparisons by people are part of a media ecosystem in which contemporary practices are situated in longer histories of media use and are part of sense-making infrastructure. Some of these comparisons (Reels, Highlights, IGTV) critically position the user as a producer with skills and creative control rather than as an amateur or hobbyist. This potentially serves to legitimise and encourage their investment of time, effort and labour as worthwhile, which is ultimately beneficial to the platform's business model.

Contrasting digital memory work to diary writing

While the previous section focused on how similarities were constructed, within this part of the analysis I shift to looking at the assertions of difference between diaries and Instagram. This involves further exploration of remediation of functionality rather than

of materiality of the older medium. To begin with, Poppy considers whether she will suggest that Instagram is similar in form to a diary:

> It's kinda like a diary because all my, many positive memories are there. It was always a very public sharing and it was always very like I need to think about what I'm going to write because everyone is going to see it. Whereas in my diary I can write whatever I want because no one is going to see it. I know a lot of people treat it, Twitter and other sort of social media as a sort of diary.

Although she begins by approaching Instagram as a modified diary compiled of 'positive memories', she presents her diary as a space where she can write 'whatever'. This is attributed to the private nature of the diary compared with the visibility of posts on Instagram where 'memories' are seen by others. She does not 'need to think' and this sense of freedom is also addressed by Clara:

> I guess it represents kinda like a documentation of that kinda weird diary thing. But it's not a diary because it doesn't say everything – unmediated – because everything is mediated on there. So that's odd. But I guess it represents an aesthetic version of myself.

Clara also thinks through the possibility of Instagram functioning like a diary. Although both involve documentation, she concludes the diary is 'unmediated' and brings a sense of freedom whereas Instagram is 'mediated', or to borrow from Bolter and Grusin (1999) the logic of immediacy is central to her use of the diary compared with the hypermediacy of the platform. The use of the word 'mediated' allows Clara to explain how she experiences sharing as a performance, which contributes to the construction of an 'aesthetic version of myself'. A relationship between the visuality of Instagram and selective sharing is also picked up by Greta:

> It is kinda like a diary because all my many positive memories are there. Not all obviously. Some. And it's just really nice for me to scroll through and look at it, what I did, what I saw. And it reminds me a lot of good things. So, yeah, it is kinda like a diary. It's a nicer diary than I would if I would actually write it down because I'm too lazy to write a diary down, but I'm not too lazy to take a picture and save it.

Greta suggests the labour of diary-writing exceeds that of capturing images and sharing them on Instagram, which means it is easier for her to keep a record of 'what I did'. She constructs her Instagram as a 'nicer diary' further reinforcing the practice of sharing 'positive memories' on Instagram and how memory work is guided by the 'right feelings' (Kanai 2019). While Clara uses the diary to address Instagram as a space for documentation, Greta also demonstrates a cultural understanding of diaries as mnemonic media that are valued for returning to.

Through these comparisons, the diary as 'unmediated' and a space for 'everything' is positioned in opposition to the 'positive memories' of Instagram sharing that publicly circulate. In the following extract, Poppy elaborates further on how the experience of writing in her diary and sharing on platforms differ in how constrained she feels:

> I'll write about the heartbreaks and the happiness and the shit and the time that I was pissed off and the times I was hungry and the times that I just wanted to be left alone and the times I just did nothing all day and just watched TV. It's everything and it's completely me barefaced. Whereas I don't think I would ever put anything so

open on social media, despite trying to sort of look like I don't care. I wouldn't be as open. Mostly probably because it's boring. No one needs to know that.

Poppy's list of examples of what she shares in her diary spans a range of feelings and experiences beyond the narrow, gendered classification of moments considered shareable on Instagram. Her assumption that the diary is a space of 'barefaced' self-expression involves a construction of authenticity of memory. This has been briefly explored in relation to different media formats and technologies by Hand (2016). According to Hand (2016), participants turned to diaries to 'fix' and materialise their memories. As such, the diary was interpreted as 'authentic memory' in comparison to the ephemerality and malleability of digital traces. Poppy suggests the experience of authenticity is due to other platform affordances: networked interaction. She is conscious of how her sharing will be received and 'boring' her followers. It exemplifies how Goffman's (1959) work on performances of the self as spatially and temporally shaped, continuously oriented towards and responding to the audience, applies to the social media context as Poppy adapts her sharing to their anticipated response. Although diary-writing, like social media sharing, involves performances of the self or an imagined audience, it is experienced as more authentic and as such, shapes the nature of self-disclosure. The comparison, then, reanimates the tension raised in the previous section of how 'happy' meaning-making of the past through digital memory work performed on Instagram is experienced as valuable and potentially harmful in how it perpetuates 'the perfect'.

Poppy, Clara, and Greta consider their use of Instagram and diaries as different forms of mnemonic media, although as Poppy acknowledges 'a lot of people treat it … as a sort of diary'. Understanding diary-writing as a style of self-presentation emerges through one of the multiple accounts that Meredith has on Instagram:

> My wellness account is more like a diary so in terms of honesty I would be like 'My days been really bad today' or 'My day's been great today' or 'I want to run away from home today' that kinda honesty. Whereas I guess it's more muted in terms of emotive or it's just I don't really tend to attach any sort of emotive meaning to my posts or I don't tend to talk about my day. It's not diarised.

The shared understanding that diary-writing involves a multiplicity of emotional expressions as well as daily updates is used by Meredith to explain how sharing on her wellness account is more 'honest'. Again, the construct of authenticity is implicated, evoking the use of finstas. A finsta is a secondary Instagram account, which is often considered more personal because it is followed by a smaller group of users. Although the word finsta is a conflation of the words fake and Insta, fake does not refer to the nature of content but underscores how this account is not the main (real) account. Finstas are used by influencers who perform authenticity by displaying their 'backstage' identity (Abidin 2018) and telling stories depicting mundane aspects of everyday life in banal ways (Georgakopoulou 2022) on these private accounts. Meredith similarly mobilises ordinary narratives of daily life that include negative affect but her performance of the authenticity on her wellness account remains public and disconnected from commercial purposes. Enacting Instagram sharing that is 'authentic' due to the remediation of diary-writing is also evident in how Jada reflects on a specific form of sharing in lockdown. Jada creates a Highlight, which she labels 'Corona Diaries'. She explains this is 'a diary and log of what I've been doing' but also goes on to establish how this only involves recording the 'right feelings':

I've specifically done one for lockdown called corona diaries, which is very cringey. And sort of just saving the sort of highs and I don't know if there are any lows on there but sort of the key moments.

On the one hand, this echoes the understanding of Instagram as a highlight reel', which is a metaphor Jada mobilises in relation to her profile. 'Corona diaries' shows 'highs' and 'key moments', continuing mnemonic practices of happiness even during a time of uncertainty and instability. On the other hand, I propose her use of 'diaries' allows her to draw on different mnemonic media registers, which is further illustrated in her explanation of motivation:

I think it's such a bizarre, once-in-a-lifetime – hopefully – experience, that it seemed right to sort of keep some sort of history of what's been going on and how we've been using this time. Yeah, I'm not sure. It just seemed like the right sort of thing to do to look back on because I don't necessarily keep a written diary so it's sort of like a visual diary.

I want to suggest that Jada makes use of the diary comparison to express the rationale for recording experience as it unfolds, revealing a connection between diary-writing and recording daily life under conditions perceived to be historically significant. As I have explored in previous work (Annabell forthcoming), Jada takes on the responsibility to archive her experience of Covid-19, drawing on the duty to remember discourse and aligning her digital memory work with that of public memory initiatives (Adams and Kopelman 2022). Although Jada's digital memory work continues to be shaped by expression of happiness and positive experiences, it is also experienced differently due to the socio-temporal disruption brought about by Covid-19. The diary is not only used in the interview context but also in her performance on Instagram, framing lockdown Stories as distinct from other types of sharing.

Conclusion

Bolter and Grusin's (1999) concept of remediation is useful for understanding how young women perform digital memory work on Instagram and make sense of their practices. Looking at how young women articulate their rationale for sharing and construct performances on Instagram reveals how the past is integral not only in what is shared, which is shaped by culturally informed conceptualisations of moments and feelings that are worth remembering but also in processes of mediation. Participants shared in interviews the range of ways that Instagram is 'kinda like' other forms of media, demonstrating how remediation is experienced by young women within their practices of digital memory work. The analysis of forms and practices of mnemonic media presented in this article addressed how material memory objects are part of everyday sharing, which is underpinned by the cultural values of materiality, retro aesthetics and occasions in which they are mobilised. It also considered how metaphors of the highlight reel and hall of fame and comparisons to postcards, autobiography, CV and diary-writing reveal how the mediation of memory involves negotiation of personal and public, private and professional and authentic and staged.

Turning to other media forms illuminates both continuities and differences in digital memory work with pre-digital practices. On the one hand, by situating their practices in longer histories of mnemonic media, I propose, participants make claims that their digital memory work is meaningful within a cultural context in which it is subject to critique. In media and popular culture, the practices and self-presentation of young women on social media are often treated with panic or contempt (Abidin 2016; Dobson 2015; Tiidenberg

2018) with self-representation being framed as 'driven by insecurities and trivialities' (Dobson 2015, 2). The dismissal of social media practices of young women may only be amplified by the perception that everyday use of technologies for mnemonic purposes is 'inherently trivial' (Keightley and Pickering 2013, 98). By suggesting that digital memory work can be thought of as continuing cultural practices of sharing birthday cards, sending postcards, producing autobiographies, assembling CVs and for some, writing diaries, participants nuance these dominant narratives by claiming their digital memory work as a source of personal and social value.

On the other hand, the comparisons and metaphors deployed by young women demonstrate the distinctive way that Instagram requires young women to negotiate the expression of the 'right feelings' (Kanai 2019) within the networked context, bringing different expectations and pressures than previous forms of memory work. The repeated emphasis on how sharing is motivated by digital memory work is framed as inherently personal, which is compared with the 'highlight reel', sits in tension with how diaries provide space for authentic reflection encompassing a wider range of possibilities compared with digital memory work demonstrates the complex environment young women navigate and modes of interpretation. Extending the work on context collapse, which focuses on the multiplicity of audiences (Marwick and Boyd 2010), and time collapse, which addresses the blurring of the past and present (Brandtzaeg and Lüders 2018), there is a collapse between the interpretations of sharing. As Jada put it, social media generates a 'grey area' where digital traces can hold mnemonic, communicative, aesthetic and commercial purposes, which contributes to the range of mnemonic media practices that young women mobilise to make sense of their digital memory work.

The perspectives and experiences of young women showcase how Instagram remediates and reconfigures prior media forms and practices. This can be seen in how digital memory work is experienced and articulated by people and as Bolter and Grusin (1999) proposed is connected to accessing authentic experiences. This article demonstrates how authenticity is constructed through media predating social media with participants drawing on the materiality of media forms and cultural understandings of older practices to claim authenticity in digital memory work. In doing so, I demonstrate how digital memory work involves remediation of material objects and mnemonic media practices, which is evident not only in the practices of young women but in how they make sense of their use of Instagram.

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