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Sharing 'memories' on Instagram A narrative approach to the performance of remembered experience by young women online

Taylor Annabell

This article examines the performance of remembered experience within sharing in-the-moment carried out by young women on Instagram. I propose that the small stories analytical framework provides a way to examine at a micro level sharing of 'memories' online by addressing practices of selecting the past, showing and telling the past and interacting with the past in digital traces. For digital memory studies, this moves beyond a focus on affordances and infrastructure transformed memory and the examination of how people engage with memories that have been predefined. The analysis demonstrates how the performance of remembered experience is displayed and positioned across the interplay of past, present and future. Young women's sharing in-the-moment reconfigures the function and meanings of 'memories' beyond the platform's mobilisation of the term. It is part of how they express feelings and experiences about their unfolding lives.

Keywords: small stories, memory, temporality, digital memory, social media, Instagram

Introduction

On Instagram, young women intersperse telling stories that are temporally close to the time of sharing with moments from their past. In the same week, one of my participants, Ava, posted a sunset hiking landscape followed by a posed friendship group photo. In the first caption, Ava temporally situated the represented moment in the deictic field of the here and now. It was the "first sunset adventures of summer" from "last weekend". Whilst in the second caption, her emotional expression of "missing these glory days" indicates how the image was not from a moment unfolding in the present. Instead, the photo was held up as an example of the everyday possibilities enjoyed prior to Covid-19. Through a performance of remembered experience, Ava displays feelings about her here and now.

As shown by this example, the temporality of sharing on the platform is connected to but distinct from the temporal orientation(s) represented in a digital trace. Temporalities are shaped and produced within digitally mediated environments (Barassi, 2020; Cifor, 2021; Drakopoulou, 2017; Georgakopoulou, 2017, 2019, 2021; Hoskins, 2009; Humphreys, 2020; Kaun, 2016; Kaun & Stiernstedt, 2014), which fosters expectations for how sharing should take place. The temporality of Instagram is oriented towards the production of the continual present or what Coleman (2020) refers to as 'the now'. The design of Instagram Stories¹ promotes sharing in-the-moment (Georgakopoulou, 2017, 2021; Leaver et al., 2020), which cannot be conflated with sharing about the here and now. As Keightley's (2012) asserts, temporality is not only determined by media

¹ . Instagram Stories is a feature that allows users to share vertical photos and videos that disappear after 24 hours. They are displayed at the top of the Instagram app rather than within the Instagram feed.

technologies. Individuals respond to directives embedded in the interface, expressing agency as they perform within the parameters of the platform.

The social media convention of ‘throwing back’ to an earlier time by posting an old photo illustrates how the past is mobilised in sharing in-the-moment. On Instagram, 577 million posts use the hashtag #tbt (throwback Thursday) and 120 million posts used #throwback, at the time of writing. Despite this, the practice has only received a cursory glance from scholars. Leaver et al. (2020, p.71) define throwbacks as an “opportunity to delve into past content” through sharing about “prior experiences, younger selves and reminiscences”. Humphreys (2018, p.111) classifies throwbacks as a reckoning practice that reconcile a sense of “who we are now with who were then”. This suggests that sharing the past in-the-moment has implications for identity and memory work, which resonates with research interests of digital memory work studies.

The subfield of digital memory studies focuses on the intersections of digital media and memory research. It presupposes that engagement with memories and the past takes place in ‘the now’ of digital media. While research has assessed how digital media, platforms and technologies configure memory (Hoskins, 2011, 2016, 2018; Jacobsen, 2021; Pogačar, 2018; Prey & Smit, 2019; Schwarz, 2014; van Dijck, 2005, 2017) and how cultural and collective memories are constructed and engaged with in digital cultures (Armour, 2018; Birkner & Donk, 2018; Kaun & Stiernstedt, 2014; Khlevnyuk, 2018; Smit, 2020; Smit et al., 2018), remembering as part of everyday practices of sharing has not received the same attention.

In this article, I seek to demonstrate the value of the small stories analytical framework for carrying out empirical research on how the past is mobilised in everyday interactions. Georgakopoulou (2017) and Giaxoglou (2019, 2021) show how small stories research offers insight into the messiness of how people tell stories online as part of their ongoing construction of identity and within the process of hyper-mourning, respectively. Through a modified mode of analysis focused on selecting the past, showing and telling the past and interacting with the past, I examine three types of digital traces shared on Instagram by young women living in London: responses to specific past moments, reflections on change and marking recent occasions. Within each, I tease out how the performance of remembered experience is displayed and positioned across the interplay of past, present and future. For young women, the performance of remembered experience in sharing in-the-moment is part of how they express feelings and experiences about their unfolding lives. As such, I argue that sharing reconfigures the function and meanings of ‘memories’ beyond the platform’s mobilisation of the term.

The past on platforms

I propose, in line with others (Garde-Hansen et al., 2009; Hoskins, 2018; Reading, 2011, 2016), that existing methodologies in memory studies are insufficient for grappling with the dynamics of memories with, on and through digital technologies. I want to contextualise this by addressing two dominant strands of research in digital memory studies.

The first continues with the tradition of memory studies in addressing how narratives of the past connected to groups, cultures and societies are negotiated. Empirical case studies in digital memory studies demonstrate how such memories are constructed and engaged with in online spaces (see Armour, 2018; Birkner & Donk, 2018; Kaun & Stiernstedt, 2014; Khlevnyuk, 2018; Smit, 2020; Smit et al., 2018). An understanding of how memories are part of sharing is situated within the specific affordances of the platform. For example, Kaun and Stiernstedt (2014) argue it is “difficult” to create and disseminate memories based on their analysis of a Facebook page. Furthermore, these studies also predefine what aspect of the past is of interest and so approach interaction around the memory as the object of enquiry. By taking the individual rather than the

past as the starting point, this article offers an alternative way to understand how remembering is part of digital culture. This is a way to orientate towards everyday practices of remembering by people, which is not limited to cultural or collective memories, or continues the perpetuation of the traumatic paradigm in the field (Arnold-de Simone, 2018, 2019; Ortner & Sindbæk Andersen, 2019; Pickering & Keightley, 2015; Rigney, 2018; Sindbæk Andersen & Ortner, 2019).

The second strand of research in digital memory studies draws on media and platform studies to explore articulations of memory within infrastructure and affordances of digital platforms. As such, scholars investigate the change and transformation of memory (Hoskins, 2011, 2016, 2018; Jacobsen, 2021; Pogačar, 2018; Prey & Smit, 2019; Schwarz, 2014; van Dijck, 2005, 2017). For example, a leading scholar in the subfield, Andrew Hoskins (2009, 2011, 2018) theorises memories on platforms are constructed 'on-the-fly', emphasizing the continuous, ongoing accumulation of traces within the connectivity of networks. His interest in the ontological transformation of memory centres on the dynamics of digital media, alluding to the agency of people as memory agents but not drawing their practices or perspectives into research outside of anecdotes.

Research on memory products on platforms also focus on the logic of the platform. Platforms including Instagram have developed features that prompt reengagement with previously shared content of the same date. These resurfaced digital traces are labelled 'memories'. Addressing the ontological question of how memory is conceived on these memory products, demonstrates how past content is selectively classified and ranked to be resurfaced to users as 'memories' (Humphreys, 2020; Jacobsen & Beer, 2021b, 2021a; Prey & Smit, 2019). As critical analysis reveals, algorithmic resurfacing is shaped by research on what people want to remember and becomes personalised to the user based on their own rhythms of remembering (Jacobsen & Beer, 2021b). Humphreys (2020) speculates that the narration added to a birthday post or shared 'memory' amplifies the social significance of the content. Underlying this claim are assumptions about how meaning is attributed in written text and how the (re)circulation of such digital traces is meaningful, which require interrogation through empirical research. There is an absence of research addressing how people interact with and go on to share 'Memories' except for Jacobsen and Beer's (2021b) use of focus groups on Timehop.² The examination of the interplay of affordances with practices of sharing is necessary for the critical assessment of how memory is transformed in digital media ecologies. I turn to the extension of small stories research into a narrative paradigm for the analysis of social media (Georgakopoulou, 2016a) to provide methods and analytical tools to carry out such an enquiry.

Narrative approaches to social media sharing

The small stories research paradigm for narrative and identity analysis was developed in response to dominant models in narrative studies (see Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; Georgakopoulou, 2007, 2015). Small stories are atypical narrative activities including tellings of recent or ongoing events (breaking news), future or hypothetical events (projections), shared events and other fragmented tellings. Small stories research is part of the second wave of narrative studies focused on the study of narrative-in-context rather than narrative-as-text. This means that storytelling is approached as a complex process of sense-making and is embedded within discursive practices and environments (De Fina, 2021; De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2008). The analysis is shaped by what participants do rather than pre-determined narrative structures

² . Timehop is an app that automatically shows photos and updates posted on the same day a year or more ago from social media platforms, phone gallery, Google Photos and Dropbox.

(De Fina, 2021), so the “messiness, performativity, incompleteness and fragmentation” of how people tell stories is grappled with (Georgakopoulou, 2017, p.264).

Small stories research is also oriented towards understanding how stories are used in the ongoing process of identity work. Critically, this moves beyond viewing narratives as representations of identity and the world, to conceiving narratives as holding social function and action. I argue these interventions resonate with areas I have identified in digital memory studies pertaining to everyday remembering and the challenge of how to approach the dynamics of memories in online interaction. It provides a way to analyse how the representations of (past) experiences have social functions in the specific interactional context of platforms. As such, I seek to continue the efforts to bring memory and narrative studies together. For example, the way individuals recount past experiences in Holocaust survivor interviews and testimonies demonstrates an integration of memory, narrative and interaction (Schiff, 2005; Schiffrin, 2002, 2003).

I also offer an intervention to small stories research by demonstrating how this analytical framework can usefully focus on engagement with the past in online storytelling. Georgakopoulou (2021) argues that the breaking news genre of small stories (stories about recent or unfolding events) is well-suited to the directive encoded in the interface, which she refers to as sharing-life-in-the-moment. The orientation of storytelling is positioned as “backgrounding the past, memories and reflections on past events” (p.3) and “at the expense of reflecting on and reconstructing (completed) events” (p.7).

Giaxoglou’s (2021) work on everyday mourning on a Facebook memorial site does offer a challenge to these assumptions by demonstrating how ‘acts of remembrance’ are part of sharing. She identifies three types of small stories: breaking news stories, projections (stories about the near future or future or hypothetical events) and habitual stories of grief (the deceased is presented as an absent present for the living). She found that temporality in posts tended to focus on the present or recent past and rarely invoked memories from the distant past. Although this reinforces Georgakopoulou’s (2017, 2021) work on sharing-life-in-the-moment in how temporality was represented, it also points to how engagement with the past is part of in-the-moment sharing.

Method and data

Georgakopoulou (2017) and Giaxoglou (2019, 2021) have developed heuristics for the analysis of small stories that explore separate yet connected layers of analysis, which I adapt for the analysis of digital memory work on Instagram. Georgakopoulou (2015) focuses on ways of telling, sites of telling and tellers, which she argues are configured based on the stories and media environments. Analytically, these layers of analysis will also be weighted differently based on the priorities governing the study. In her analytical framework for sharing mourning and death online as small stories, Giaxoglou (2019) builds on Georgakopoulou’s layers of analysis looking at sharing as selecting, sharing as storying and sharing as positioning.

Extending these modes of analysis, I examine how young women through their digital traces are selecting the past, showing and telling the past and interacting with the past. Selecting the past focuses on what and when past moments and experiences are identified as worth sharing. Showing and telling the past focuses on how the stories are told in the digital trace, paying particular attention to temporalities and the types of small stories (such as breaking news and projections). Georgakopoulou (2017) usefully presents the storytelling modes of telling the moment and showing the moment to account for the shift in stories on social media from descriptions in language to brief, affection captions on photos and videos. My interest rests in how the visual representation of the past relates to the written text. Interacting with the past refers

to the networked interaction between users, and between individuals and the platform such as the use of Instagram's memory product, On This Day.

The dataset for this article is from the Instagram activities of 16 young women aged between 18–21 years old living in London.³ For six months, I collected screenshots of Instagram Stories, posts and other changes to their profile. This period started with an interview using the scroll-back method and participants were invited to participate in subsequent interviews and a focus group to reflect on the preliminary findings of the research. The earliest collection began in December 2019 and the final ended in November 2020. From the 4,386 Instagram Stories and posts collected, I identified 263 Stories and 23 posts that incorporated the past. This included digital traces that were remediations of previously shared Instagram Stories and posts as well as new digital traces that used images from the past.

In the next section, I examine how the performance of remembered experience is visible and positioned in digital traces that visually represent moments from the past. Across the data, I have identified three types of digital traces: responses to specific past moments, reflections on change and markers of occasions. I employ Georgakopoulou's (2016b) technique of zooming-in to analyse selecting of the past, telling and showing the past and interacting with the past in specific examples, which clearly illustrate each type.

Analysis

Responses to specific past moments

The first type of story told in digital traces was a response to a specific past moment. These digital traces displayed an image or previously shared content, typically a happy moment with friends or family. The participant used written text and emojis to present their feelings towards the represented past moment. As such, the narration represents an experience of remembering, relying upon an understanding that showing the past is a catalyst for remembering. In Example 1, the act of remembering is overtly referred to as an activity to be engaged with.

- (1) Written text above image: REMEMBER THAT TIME WE HUNG OUT IN ITALY 🥰🥰🥰🥰

³ . The project was granted ethical approval by King's College London Research Ethics Committee and involved informed consent from all participants to observe their profiles and capture and publish screenshots. Pseudonyms chosen by the researcher are used and the usernames of participants have been removed from figures to ensure a level of privacy for participants.



Figure 1. Instagram Story reshared⁴ by Chloe on 12 February 2020 from her friend Lara’s original post on 6 July 2019

In this example, Chloe has selected a photo from a holiday in Italy taken in the previous year to reshare. Through the image, she ‘shows’ a moment in the past in which she and her friend Lara are visibly happy. She repeats the heart eye emoji to display a happy emotional response to the reshared post. This positions her experience of remembering this moment as positive. In the written text, Chloe constructs a relationship between remembering and the representation of the past in the image. Through the imperative “remember” Chloe frames how the resurfaced image should be engaged with by the viewer. In showing this representation of the past to Lara, who is directly involved through the first person plural “we”, Chloe expresses an expectation for the post to act as a vehicle to remember the specific experience of being away together. Other followers are also implicated in the encouragement to engage in remembering. They cannot participate in recalling the lived experience of the trip but may remember their experience of seeing Chloe sharing the trip in-the-moment.

In Example 2, the platform assumes a role in instigating Chloe’s interaction with the past as she reshares her own Story through the On This Day feature.

(2) Written text in original Story: We had a picnic today 🥰🥰🥰

Written text in reshared Story: Insta memories breaking my heart 🥰🥰

Below written text is the Memories sticker with the date 7 May 2019

⁴ . When a post is reshared to a Story, Instagram automatically selects the background colour based on the original image. The original post is displayed with the original username of the account underneath it. The Story can be edited to add more content to the reshared post such as text in Examples 1 and 4.



Figure 2. On this day⁵ Instagram Story shared by Chloe on 7 May 2020

On a linguistic level, this Story is temporally oriented towards the present. Chloe uses the present continuous (breaking) and tells a breaking news story in the original Story with the temporal deictic “today” anchoring the moment of sharing in what was the here and now. The date, 7 May 2019, reconciles the written text elements, demonstrating how Chloe is using the text to attribute meaning to her experience of having a picnic with her nephew on different dates.

Chloe co-constructs with Instagram that her original Story is a memory by leaving the Memories sticker automatically added by the platform. This points to an understanding of memories as something that can be encoded, stored within an archival structure and retrieved (Brockmeier, 2015). It is not only that this past representation is considered to have mnemonic value in how it was resurfaced for Chloe but her interaction with the past is also assessed as worth sharing in-the-moment. She transforms her private interaction with On This Day into a networked interaction, affirming how past moments contribute to sharing life inthe-moment. Chloe also attributes agency to the platform for how she is emotionally experiencing the resurfaced Story. The added emojis suggest it is painful, but she positions the platform rather than the image itself as breaking her heart. Her choice to narrativize her negative response to the platform implies that the experience constructed positively in the original Story continues to be understood in this way.

There is a consistency across Examples 1 and 2 in telling the past, whether the digital trace is resurfaced by the platform or individual. The selective display of past moments is centred on the affective response, indicating how sharing a performance of remembered experience involves the individual positioning it in the here and now. Example 2 is characteristic of how Chloe and other young women represented their engagement with the past and ‘memories’ during Covid-19 restrictions, which differed from the performance of remembered experience as happy as illustrated in Example 1. For Chloe, the experience of being unable to see her nephew regularly as she had previously (indicated by her previous sharing in-the-moment) shapes how she experiences the prompt to remember through On This Day. The performance of negative feelings in these digital traces in responses such as Example 2, although minor, disrupts the norms of sharing. As users, young women are expected to feel happy; the memory products on platforms

⁵ . On This Day content is accessed through the Stories Archive on Instagram in which users can access all previously shared Stories or through the Create feature on Instagram Stories. When the selected Story is reshared, Instagram automatically adds the Memories Sticker and displays the original Story following conventions of the reshared post.

prioritising happiness (Humphreys, 2020; Jacobsen & Beer, 2021b, 2021a; Prey & Smit, 2019), which fits within the broader emotional architecture of positivity on the platform (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2018). Furthermore, young women are called upon as postfeminist subjects to be ‘happy’ and ‘confident’ (Dobson & Kanai, 2019; Gill, 2017; Gill & Orgad, 2015; Kanai, 2019), which shapes how the self is produced by young women in online spaces (Dobson, 2015; Kanai, 2019). Chloe diverges from the display of happy remembering to acknowledge how this experience of remembering is situated within her present circumstances.

Reflections on change

The second type of digital traces offered reflections on the current circumstances in which remembered experiences were part of expressing feelings about change over time. The emphasis in these digital traces was constructing a narrative in which moments in the past were folded into the broader reflection. This differs from the way that digital traces in the previous section were centred around a specific moment or experience.

(3) Caption: current lockdown activities include; thinking about road trips & planning road trips

Location tag: Can I Leave The House Yet



Figure 3. Instagram post shared by Ava on 26 April 2020

In Example 3, Ava has selected an image of her friend in the Scottish Highlands. On 22 July 2019 Ava shared a post from the same location with a similar visual composition and framing. In 2020 rather than telling the past as digital traces in the previous section, she shows the representation of the past and uses the caption to tell a story about her “current” experiences. The presence of the image on Instagram shows that part of her recent experience involved looking over photos from road trips. The experience of remembering is not visible within Ava’s post. Instead, it could be assumed to have taken place, given the treatment of digital traces as prompts to remember. The friend who appears in the image comments on this post, which involves an evaluation of the experience (best few days with u). She offers a response to being shown a specific moment from the past, implying a performance of remembering.

Ava also constructs lockdown as a temporal experience in the caption and location tag (Can I Leave The House Yet). Location tagging on social media is a performative, temporally meaningful act that contributes to the representation of identity (Drakopoulou, 2017) and place-making

(Arrigoni & Galani, 2019). Drakopoulou (2017, p.3) positions geotags as “memory tags” because they offer a retrospective account that “I was there once – very recently”. This does not anticipate the creative repurposing of geographical locations to express feelings towards the experience of a socio-temporal setting. In her tag, Ava uses the direct modal verb of permission “can” to demonstrate how she is conceiving of her relationship to her house. This question draws attention to the distinctive experience of Covid-19 in which government regulations restricted social mobility. A sense of dissatisfaction with where she is amplified through the adverb “yet”, allowing her to construct her experience of being located at home through duration.

As well as presenting an experience in time in this post, Ava also displays a narrative of continuity across a time of change through her caption. The verbs (planning and thinking) refer to processes that are oriented towards a vision of the future in which road trips will be possible. Although the image of the past represents what has taken place and is contrasted with the social immobility of the present, Ava anticipates returning to activities enjoyed in the past in the future. This positions Covid-19 as a temporary disruption. In Ava’s reply to the comment from the signalled friend, she elaborates on the telling of projection (can’t wait for the next adventureeee). She shifts the focus from what has been to what will be.

In Example 4, Chloe also traverses the past, present and future in the written text she adds to a recent post created by her friend Lara.

- (4) Written text next to image: A year ago life looked very different. I feel so privileged that I could have jumped on a plane, hugged my friends tight and danced the night away to celebrate two of the greatest all the way in Canada. I am so very grateful for the friendship I’ve found in these two & I am SO excited for the day that we can be together again making new memories. Until then @Lara @Elena pls keep sending me videos of your puppies, dramatic stories and beautiful faces for me to wake up to. 🥰
 Written text under image: Cheers to you guys 🥂



Figure 4. Chloe reshared a post from her friend Lara on 29 May 2020 to her Instagram Story

In her added written text, Chloe begins with a retelling of the experience represented in the image, which she situates in the past through the temporal expression “a year ago”. Instead of using the past tense, her use of the past modal verb (could have) allows her to position the experience of travelling to Canada along with other friends around the world to take part in a friend’s wedding

as representing possibilities afforded to her in the past. Chloe attributes meaning to the remembered experience based on her experience in the here and now.

Within the Story, Chloe constructs her friendship with Elena (visible in the image and tagged in the Story) and Lara (created the original post and tagged) as continuous over time. As well as the telling of the past, Chloe suggests how their friendship has been maintained in the present through the list of examples she includes of how they interacted. She also projects what their friendship will look like in the near future and the distant future in which they are reunited in person. She connects the latter experience of being together with “making new memories” in the written text. The understanding that memories can be made in the moment diverges slightly from the conceptualisation of memories as reconstructions of the past. I situate Chloe’s use of the word memories within broader patterns of how young women referred to memories in digital traces and the interview context. “Memories” is a way to signify certain experiences and moments as personally and socially worth remembering within a gendered classification of experience. As such, Chloe expects when she spends time with the two signalled friends, she will want to look back on these moments. They will be “memories”. Her use of the adverb “again” and adjective “new” signal she has had prior experiences of “making memories”, which might include the wedding in Canada.

The performance of remembered experience occupies a different position in Examples 3 and 4 from 1 and 2 because the written text presents a reflective narrative across time. The past as represented by the visual image is treated as mnemonic evidence of what was. Following this, the specificity of the memories connected to that moment is less important than in the digital traces discussed in the previous section. In this type, what is distinctive is how breaking news, retellings and projections stories were part of the same digital trace, indicating the interplay of the past, present and future within Instagram posts and Stories that mobilise the past. Examples 3 and 4 are emblematic of how young women circulated narratives of change and continuity related to Covid-19, which were tied to the construction of friendship in a time and enduring across time. However, reflections of the current experience of life and how life had changed was evident in sharing in-the-moment prior to lockdown particularly related to the ongoing performance of friendship. Due to the timing of the fieldwork, Covid-19 was the topic that young women frequently chose to reflect on during this time. The orientation toward the future in these digital traces reveals how the experience of change was being publicly articulated. Young women such as demonstrated in Examples 3 and 4 often presented the future as populated by the similar moments previously experienced.

Marking occasions

The third type of digital traces that integrated the performance of remembered experience was marking occasions anchored in the here and now. Images from the past were selected as shareable to celebrate annual events (birthdays and commemorative days such as Mother’s Day and Canada Day), milestone achievements (such as graduation) and to mourn the loss of a loved one (such as a relative or pet). The past was turned to as a resource for sharing culturally recognised moments.

Within the dataset, 174 digital traces (61%) marked the birthday of 52 different individuals. Humphreys (2020) situates birthday posts on platforms in the longer social pattern of birthdays as celebrations of the individual being alive for another year rather than remembering their birth. The celebration of the individual, I argue, involves the selection and sharing of multiple images, which act as evidence of the friendship over time and visually reinforce the written sentiments of love and adoration. Example 5 is two Stories from a series produced by Poppy to celebrate her friend Indie’s birthday. Through tagging Indie in each digital trace, Poppy consistently signals her

as the intended recipient within the digital trace and presents her with the opportunity to interact. Instagram automatically sends the tagged user a direct message with a link to repost it to their Story. As such, Poppy publicly and privately presents these stories, retelling past moments, to Indie. Considering the way that previous examples demonstrate how participants, other users and platforms position the representation of the past in digital traces as “memories”, I suggest that the telling and showing of the shared past cues a process of remembering for the birthday holder, allowing memories to be exchanged as part of celebrating birthdays.

(5) Written text under image in first Story: Take me back to making faces at babies on trains @Indie

Written text above image in second story: And cuddles on the beach drinking Prosecco

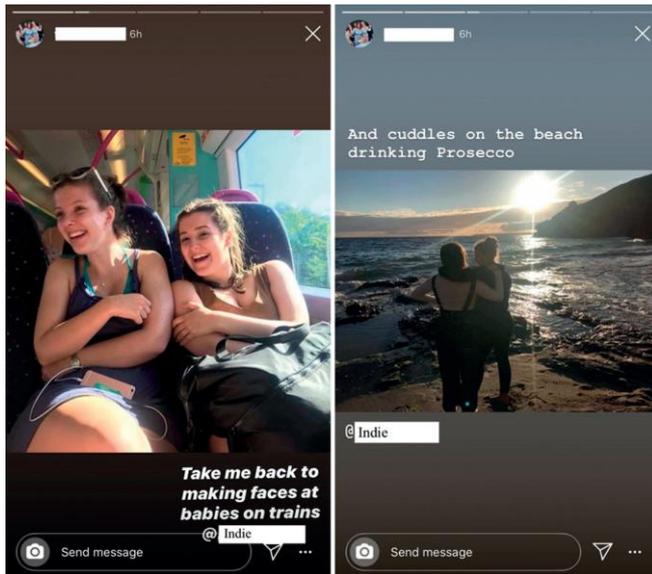


Figure 5. The second and third Instagram Stories of five shared by Poppy to celebrate Indie’s birthday on May 8 2020

In Example 5, Poppy assigns meaning to the represented moments through her retelling of past experiences. These details suggest Poppy is engaged in remembering these shared experiences prior to sharing. She develops a narrative across the two Stories using the spatio-temporal deictic “take me back”. Her description provides details about the moment represented in the image that cannot be observed such as why they were smiling. By displaying a desire to return to these moments, she also indicates a positive evaluation of them. The use of the continuous verb form (making) and present tense (cuddles) rather than the past tense suggests that Poppy uses these past experiences as emblematic examples of their friendship.

In my first interview with Poppy, anticipated creating digital traces for Indie:

I have one friend whose birthday is coming up and I’ve already started looking for photos because it is their 21st and she is obsessed with her birthday and if I don’t post a picture, if I don’t post loads of pictures for her birthday and make a public thing about wishing her a happy birthday she’ll be upset so I will do it for her. (Poppy, 16 April 2020, 21 years)

A sense of frustration in having to engage in the ritualistic practice of birthday sharing, which Poppy expresses in the interview, is not evident in the digital traces. Through the performance of remembered experience, she performs friendship and positions herself as a good friend. The presence of the past in these digital traces hint at the labour of sourcing past happy photos

together and crafting birthday wishes. The social pressure to turn to the past to share birthday wishes also necessitates a culture of capturing moments together to draw upon.

- (6) Written text on original Story: I'm a proud roomie @Robin THIS ANGEL JUST WENT AND GOT A 1st CLASS DEGREE
(I take some credit for forcing her to get up and be at the library before the sun)
let's celebrate

Written text on reshared Story: Props to Gemma for keeping me sane & forcing me into the lib 🥰 love ya bestie



Figure 6. Instagram Story produced by Gemma about Robin's university result that was reshared by Robin with additional written text on 27 July 2020

The practice of repurposing collected images and videos for sharing in-the-moment is also evident in Example 6. In the original Story produced by Gemma, the breaking news story of Robin being awarded a first in her university degree is told. The first person plural imperative “let’s celebrate” further suggests the Boomerang video as part of the recent past. The Boomerang style plays their happy expressions and excited gestures back and forward in a loop. Focusing on the GIF format, Miltner and Highfield (2017) position looping as a way to heighten the captured scene for the performance of affect. The repeated motions perpetuate an ongoing celebration that is simultaneously frozen in time. The location of the Boomerang situates this moment in the past. Robin and Gemma moved out of the flat several months prior due to Covid-19 (Robin shared Stories and a post about moving). Gemma has selected this (past) Boomerang to mark a (recent) milestone. Yet, she does not use the written text to reconstruct the moment. Instead, it is backgrounded in two ways. The image appears behind the overlaying text focused on telling the story of the achievement and their friendship. It also visually references their history of living together and close friendship.

The co-construction of friendship is continued in the written text with identity labels. Gemma identifies herself as her “roomie”, suggesting this status holds value in signalling their close friendship to the extent she continues to use it after they moved out. Robin refers directly to Gemma as her “bestie” in the text she adds when she reshares the Story. Gemma also positions herself as a good friend. She contextualises Robin’s achievement by describing her role in “forcing” Robin to study in the morning. The use of the continuous tense emphasises how her support through these actions was ongoing and repeated. Her use of brackets and smaller font

size situate this retelling of the past as less significant than the core breaking news story, which is capitalised. It infers that her role also should be treated as supportive and secondary to Robin's. The added text by Robin shows an alignment with Gemma's narrative through her repetition of "forcing" and elaboration on Gemma's support, adding the clause "keeping me sane". Her response is focused exclusively on expressing gratitude for Gemma rather than her achievement.

The following week, Robin creates a Story to announce Gemma's degree result also using a photo from the past. Unlike other milestones, participants did not produce their own digital traces to break the news of their results. Instead, they reshared the Stories from their friends and only displayed responses of gratitude for the support of their friends. It suggests a boundary to how young women perceive presenting the self as a high achiever in the postfeminist affective environment (Kanai, 2019). By announcing each other's results participants perform solidarity in girlfriendships (Winch, 2013) turning to the past as a resource to be drawn upon as they navigate such gendered pressure.

The final example examined in this article commemorates the death of Chloe's grandmother. As Giaxoglou (2019, p.139) has demonstrated death is transformed into an occasion for "sharing moments, thoughts, feelings and experiences in the here-and-now, with and for others". Chloe shared 10 Stories the day following her grandmother's death and then a post on the day of the funeral. On each occasion, she selected photos of herself with her Nan since she was a baby. Their presentation on Stories did not follow a chronological order but showed a visual history of their relationship.

(7) Written text at top of image: Last one. The last time I ever held her hand. So grateful.

Date sticker under written text: 8 APR 2019

Written text at bottom of image: Rest in Peace Nan. You were a world changer. See you one day soon.



Figure 7. Tenth Story in the series Chloe shared about her Nan on 8 April 2020

Example 7 is a posed photo of Chloe and her grandmother holding hands with a date sticker. Similar to the Memories sticker, the day, month, and year that the photo was taken is automatically added by Instagram when an image is uploaded to Stories that is older than 24 hours. This contextual metadata reinforces the directive of sharing life-in-the-moment (Georgakopoulou, 2017, 2021) by situating it in the past. The date sticker contributes to an understanding of when the "last time" was referred to in the text. It also makes alludes to the

labour of producing this digital trace. To present this digital trace, Chloe will have scrolled through her photos displayed in reverse chronological order to locate the last photo she had with her grandmother.

Chloe uses the written text to tell the story of the represented moment, assigning value to the representation – she is “so grateful”. This expression of gratitude is connected to the last time she was with her grandmother but also potentially having captured the experience given the importance for young women in displaying mnemonic evidence.

In the lower written text, Chloe turns from telling the past to reflecting on the occasion. She adopts the position of an appreciative mourner (Giaxoglou, 2019), expressing gratitude for her grandmother’s life and impact as well as spending time with her as reinforced by the selection of the image. Chloe shifts between referring to her grandmother in the third person to second and from using the past tense to the present with the time adverb “soon”. By situating her assessment of her grandmother as a “world changer” in the past, Chloe constructs distance between them, which Giaxoglou (2021) found occurred when sharing online close to the time of the death. Yet, this division between the living and dead is blurred when Chloe anticipates being reunited in the future. Through this, Chloe constructs a continued bond with the dead, intensified by her direct address, which is underpinned by her religious beliefs.

Although the occasions of Examples 5, 6 and 7 are related to different timescales, they collectively demonstrate how the past (and at times, the performance of remembered experience) is drawn upon to emotively celebrate or mourn occasions unfolding in the present. Participants did not rely on capturing the recent past or unfolding present to represent the occasion. Indeed, they often anticipated how they would share digital traces spanning multiple timeframes for these occasions. Chloe, in our first interview, suggested it was likely she would share old photos on Instagram in the event of her grandmother’s death. It was this moment that she thought of when discussing sharing throwbacks. In my interview with Robin, she presented her Instagram as “memories” of “milestones and big moments” that she knew she wanted to share ahead of time. Her use of the word “memories” instead of digital traces in the interview suggests that the public display of images from the present and past can be thought of as markers in time, allowing Robin to look back and remember what has been achieved. Coupled with the examples in this section, this suggests how sharing on Instagram is valued by young women as they navigate through life. Past photos and digital traces are resources that amplify the message and sentiment being communicated, functioning as mnemonic evidence.

Conclusion

In this article, I have explored how young women intentionally engage with the past within their Instagram Stories and posts as they respond to the directive of sharing-life-in-the-moment embedded in the platform (Georgakopoulou, 2017, 2021). I have identified three different types of digital traces that visually represent the past: responses to specific moments, reflections on change and markers of recent occasions. Within responses to specific past moments, the performance of remembered experience was central to the relationship between showing and telling the past. Whereas within digital traces that reflected on change and marked an occasion, showing the past through the visual image did not necessitate the performance of the remembered experience in the written text. Instead, the written text negotiated multiple temporalities as participants told stories that spanned the past, present and future.

The performance of remembered experience in sharing in-the-moment by young women reveals how the past is mobilised to tell stories about their lives in their here and now. It is connected to a range of occasions and social functions including constructing personal identity,

performing and maintaining friendship and managing the experience of change especially related to Covid-19. The meanings attributed to the past are connected to experiences, occasions and circumstances of the here and now. This may contribute to the tendency among participants to create new Stories and posts or reshare digital traces they have sourced rather than the resurfaced prompted 'memories'. The algorithmic logic of platform memory products is unable to anticipate or replicate these functions, which are unfolding in the present, because of how relevance is connected to the anniversary of when the digital trace was shared.

I argue that the experience of immediacy and flow does not constrain the sharing of memories as anticipated by Kaun and Stiernstedt (2014). I similarly challenge Georgakopoulou's (2021) position that the mode of storytelling in sharing on platforms creates difficulties for reflecting on the past. The categorisation of reflecting in opposition to announcing ongoing happenings and telling stories about the experiences in the recent past overlooks the messiness of sharing online. The performance of remembered experience may be part of how breaking news or projection story is told as exemplified by my analysis. This means that the narratorial position of the reminiscing narrator is adopted by young women in their online interactions.

Thus, the small stories framework (Georgakopoulou, 2017; Giaxoglou, 2021; Giaxoglou & Georgakopoulou, 2020) provides a way to examine at a micro level the performance of remembered experience. This responds to Brockmeier's (2015, p.183) challenge that the "sociolinguistic focus on the here-and-now configuration of storytelling" omits the mnemonic dimension of identity formation. Whilst not drawing on the recent and past experiences or memories of participants into analysis, I point to the way that processes of remembering are being positioned. On a micro level, there is evidence that young women accept Instagram's claim that representations of the past can be treated as 'memories'. This exists alongside the way that young women positioned the representations of the past as a catalyst for remembering, with the comment discussed in Example 3 indicating a mnemonic response to being shown the past. Consequently, "memories" are understood as something to be interacted with, exchanged and valued as mnemonic evidence.

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