MEMORY
STUDIES

Putting the pieces together: Understandings of memory as assemblage within interaction

Taylor Annabell [iD]
Utrecht University, The Netherlands

Abstract

This article explores memory as a process of assembling fragments of the past and the concept of memory as assemblage. It examines how the lens and language of assemblage are employed in a 3-minute extract from a research interview, which was selected for analysis by the contributors to this special interview. It uses the interviewer's articulation of memory work by 'put[ting] all the pieces together' as the starting point to discuss how memory is co-constructed by two individuals in a specific interaction. Adopting a narratives-in-practice perspective, the micro-analysis looks at (1) the role of the interviewer as a memory agent and co-constructor of memory and (2) how two stories are told in the interview by the participant with a focus on material traces and objects. This article brings the analysis of assembling memory and mnemonic assemblages within the interaction into dialogue with frameworks and theories of assemblage memory studies to demonstrate how they are mobilised in everyday talk.

Keywords

assemblage, interaction, micro-memories, mnemonic actors

Introduction

This article examines how memory is presented as an assemblage of fragments of the past within a 3-minute fragment from a research interview. In keeping with the premise of the experimental data sessions and the rationale of this special issue, the focus on the assembling and assemblages of memory arises from the data selected for analysis by participating contributors (see Supplemental Appendix for transcript). In line 48 of the transcript, the interviewer responds to the participant by saying 'And so if we put all the pieces together'. This phrase not only immediately struck me when first encountering the extract but also as I carried out the iterative process of close examination of the extract. As I unpack through my analysis, the phrase 'put[ting] all the pieces together' evokes

Corresponding author:
Taylor Annabell, Utrecht University, Achter Sint Pieter 200, 3512 HT, Utrecht, The Netherlands.
Email: t.annabell@uu.nl

an understanding of memory connected to concepts of assembling memory and memory assemblage. I suggest this is a productive lens through which to understand how memory is conceptualised and then imposed in the specific interaction by the interviewer. I tease out how assembling of memory can be deployed analytically to make sense of the stories told by the participant in the interview.

This article examines how memory is constructed and presented as an assemblage, identifying how memory and memories are assembled by interviewer and participant. It is interested in how memory as a concept is positioned in the interaction, situating this within the models and metaphors of memory that have concerned the field of memory studies. For example, memory as a storehouse or archive persists as the dominant metaphor of memory and is premised on the assumptions that experience can be encoded, stored within a structure and then retrieved (Brockmeier, 2015). Metaphors are embedded within everyday life, structuring our understanding, perception and expression (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) and acting as 'a filter in front of our perception of memory' (Draaisma, 2000: 20). In addition, the article grapples with what is being remembered in the specific interaction and how the she tells stories about the past in the interview by drawing on a narratives-in-practice perspective and a micro-analytic toolkit.

The understanding of memory as assembled and assemblage alluded to by the interviewer in the extract can be brought into dialogue with theoretical and methodological discussions in memory studies. In what follows, I introduce how an assemblage model of memory has been taken up in memory studies by Erll (2008, 2011b) and incorporated methodologically into research by Chidgey (2018) and Reading (2011, 2016) drawing on assemblage as theorised by Deleuze and Guattari. Within the analysis of the extract, I consider how these conceptualisations apply to the interview extract. I begin by looking closely at line 48 to discuss the understanding of assembling memory and address the role of the interviewer as a memory agent and co-construction of memory. In the second part, I examine the telling of two stories by the participant and consider how these can be understood as part of a memory assemblage with a particular focus on how material objects are mobilised. In doing so, I demonstrate how the participant and interviewer engage with the concepts of assemblage and assembling memory as part of the interaction, and what this indicates about how memory is made visible within and through narratives.

Assembling memory

Central to the field of memory studies is an understanding that memories are subjective, selective reconstructions of the past shaped by cultural context. Halbwachs (1992) refers to social frameworks in his work on collective memory, emphasising how society provides the means for the individual to reconstruct memories. As he expresses, 'it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories' (Halbwachs, 1992: 38). Memories are shaped by the space in which they are articulated, resources available, relational dynamics and circumstances of the person remembering. Put another way, shared beliefs and collective experiences through belonging to different social groups influence 'the interplay of present and past' (Erll, 2008: 2). This must be understood according to Laanes and Meretoja (2021) in specific cultural contexts. Individual processes of meaning-making and remembering are mediated by cultural filters and collective practices.

In emphasising the constructed nature of memory shaped by the present circumstance, which is subject to change, Astrid Erll (2011b: 8, emphasis added) positions remembering as 'an act of *assembling* available data that takes place in the present'. Here, the verb 'assembling' is critical to the model of memory, denoting the process of bringing together different pieces of the past or as she puts it, 'available data', together. 'Assembling' is also implicit in her discussion of family

memory wherein the social group of the family functions as a social frame through which individuals develop a sense of their past. Given the 3-minute extract under analysis concerns how the participant understands and knows about her father's past with the Second World War, it is useful to situate the discussion of assembling memory in literature on family memory.

Family memory is dynamic, shaped by the 'multidimensional cadres sociaux of family members' and mnemonic meanings attributed by these different individuals to the past (Erll, 2011a: 306). Erll (2011a) proposes that family memory, as a particular form of collective memory, emerges from the ongoing social interaction between different members of the family across generations, children, parents and grandparents. This may involve the repeated telling of stories about past events, which facilitates the sharing of memories beyond those who experienced firsthand. Through this relational process tied to communication, fragments of the past are produced, disseminated and received, feeding into the construction and 'assembling' of memory.

Although not explicitly referring to processes of 'assembling', Shore and Kauko (2018) address family memory as 'not a thing but as a process, a perpetual weaving and reweaving of family members' threads of memory'. They distinguish between memories shared by family members with memories about the family or the family's past. Fivush and Merrill (2016) also pay attention to different levels of family narratives as part of an ecological approach to family memory. 'Shared family narratives' are co-constructed and can be highly collaborative. These are narratives shared in social interaction about shared experiences between family members. 'Communicative family narratives' are those experienced by the teller but not the listener, exposing other family members to worlds they have not directly experienced and going beyond the scope of family memories constituted in narratives discussed by Shore and Kauko (2018). Fivush and Merrill (2016) propose that shared and communicative family narratives may be placed within the larger macro structure of family history, fostering connections between the micro and macro. Both forms 'live in everyday interaction and communication' to borrow from Assmann's (2008) conceptualisation of 'communicative memory', which he uses to distinguish from formalised 'cultural memory' that is objectified and institutionalised. As such, families produce different types of family narratives that are about or relate to the past, which members 'assemble' and bring together.

Memory as assemblage

While Erll (2011b) refers to the assembling of memory as a process of bringing different elements together, other memory scholars present an assemblage approach to memory. This goes beyond an understanding of assembling by drawing on assemblage theory to broaden the critical vocabulary on memory. Based on her reading of Deleuze and Guattari, Red Chidgey (2018) proposes a model of assemblage memory, which she uses to trace the afterlives of feminist memory work. The active, intentional enactment of the past in the present known as memory work (Kuhn, 2002) can be examined through the lens of assemblage. Assemblages consist 'of expressive content (signs and signifying systems) and materiality (affects, technologies, objects and embodiments), which move through different thresholds and shifting relations to each other' (Chidgey, 2018: 42). These constellations of heterogeneous elements include people, objects, expressions and practices.

An assemblage perspective is attentive to conditions, trajectories and forces that are being brought together. The dynamic nature of memory and ways in which memories are contested and mobilised across contexts makes this analytic framework valuable for analysis. It facilitates social complexity, agency and malleability of memory traces as they traverse across both space and time. In her work, Chidgey (2018) advocates for mapping memory assemblages by following expressions and remediations through different contexts to examine how memory work and meanings are enacted. For example, in her case study of the Rosie the Riveter 'We Can Do It!' assemblage, she

demonstrates how this figure becomes constructed and mobilised as a feminist icon and comes to resonate with neoliberal values. Thus, she demonstrates how memory assemblages travel across and are informed by these 'horizons of memory formations' (Chidgey, 2018: 44) such as the discursive conditions of postfeminist culture. Bringing this to the extract under analysis allows for sensitivity towards how memory traces travel in the stories told during the interaction and may be remediated across different contexts including the interview setting.

An assemblage approach is also used by Reading (2016) to reveal the gendering of memory work in relation to digitisation and globalisation. For Reading (2016) memory assemblages can be understood through different connectivites, which vary in terms of velocities and extensities. By this, Reading (2016) means the speeds at which memories are circulated and how memories extend and travel beyond their starting point. She identifies how such analytical trajectories allow us to make sense of not only which memories gain prominence but also those that are not mobilised. In other words, the stickiness, bonds and links between memories as well as disconnections are part of the methodological approach over a focus on singular iterations of memory. Following Reading (2016), the analysis of a 3-minute interview extract might be at odds with an assemblage methodology given its focus on mapping movements and transformation of memory. However, I argue, that it can be usefully brought into analysis to understand the way memories are constructed by both participant and interviewer in the interaction as an analytical framework.

Integral to the assemblage approach to memory is the blurring of boundaries between binaries of human and non-human, material and immaterial. This perspective is sensitive to the mnemonic agency within the assemblage identifying and tracing agents that are involved in the processes of assembling or dissembling. Erll (2020: 539) clarifies this does not mean that all agents 'have' memory rather that 'memory emerges from associations of biological, mental, social and material actors in particular assemblages'. The status of nonhuman actors within memory work does not require or imply an asymmetry with humans. As Chidgey (2018) suggests, memory cannot hold value in the same way for an algorithm as a person. Thus, the memory work cannot be 'flattened and made equivocal' (Chidgey, 2018: 54). Smit (2020) takes this further by considering how each actor, regardless of their category (individual, group, technology or object) is socially and culturally embedded differently to avoid treating non-human actors in particular as neutral intermediaries.

The identification of agents within the constellation resonates with actor-network theory (ANT). ANT emerges from the sociology of science and technology as a way to understand social relations as 'the product of complex interactions between human and non-human actors' (van Loon, 2007: 114). Bruno Latour (2005), a significant developer of and advocate for ANT, proposes when looking at 'the social' 'who and what participates in the action' must be considered (p. 72). Rather than limiting agency to intentional and meaningful actions of human actors, anything that modifies the state affairs or makes a difference to another agent's action is an actor. As such, ANT rejects the assumption that human and material objects should be divided or treated differently analytically (Law, 1992). Instead, human and nonhuman actors hold agency when they transform and modify meaning, which is included in the assemblage of memory. The call from Latour (2005) to 'follow the actor' when analysing interactions is reworked by Chidgey (2018) as 'follow the memories'.

I propose that such theoretical work that frames our understanding of memory as assemblage can be brought into the analysis of how human actors interactively construct memories by being attentive to non-discursive resources and material objects brought into the interview by participants. As such, we can understand how nonhuman actors and material objects take on meaning in the assemblage In the context of interview data; however, the analysis is limited to how material aspects affect humans and relies on the agency of the humans rather than mapping interactions between actors using other sources of data. In addition, Wetherell's (2012) work on material,

embodied factors within her conceptualisation of affective-discursive practices is also valuable. Here, she advocates for multidimensional analysis that brings together the material with embodied and emotive aspects to micro-level analysis. Although her approach significantly intervenes in discursive analysis through the framework of affect theory, it can also be useful for thinking through materiality, aligning well then with interests in memory studies on assemblage, underpinned by the distribution of agency beyond the human.

Methodological approach

The extract is approached in the analysis that follows from a narratives-in-practice perspective (De Fina, 2021). This perspective is characterised by careful observation of what participants do rather than bringing in narrative structures or models, which nicely aligns with the data analysis sessions. Central to the narratives-in-practice approach is an understanding of storytelling as a complex process of sense-making embedded within discursive practices and environments (De Fina, 2021; De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2008). De Fina (2021) suggests that narrative analysts need to look at the conditions of the production and reception of narratives and how these narratives are embedded within other practices. While being restricted to only a 3-minute extract might be at odds with understanding the wholeness of the storytelling event, I propose, it is nevertheless useful to anchor the analysis. It necessitates an attentiveness to how the storytelling takes place in the interactional details of the extract itself. The navigation between the micro-level of interaction and macro-levels of social and cultural contexts resonates with the interest in memory studies in analytically traversing scales.

The data extract under analysis, like any interview, can be understood as an interactional event (De Fina, 2019). This means that the narratives shared are shaped by the interlocutors involved including the interviewer. As De Fina (2019) explains, the questions that were asked, the power dynamics between interviewer and interviewee and how storytelling relates to the roles of the interlocutors are part of the interactional event. Stories told in the interview setting are interpretations, produced and negotiated in this specific context. What this means for memory studies is taking seriously how the identity of the interviewer and the context of the interview carried out for research purposes may relate to and shape the enactment of memory work and telling of stories related to the past as has been widely discussed in oral history (see Bornat, 2013; Hughes, 2013; Portelli, 1997 for discussions of inter-subjectivity and relationship between oral historian and interviewee).

The narratives-in-practice approach to narrative research has implications for narrative analysis. As part of their toolkit for narrative research, De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2008) propose that interactional features should be transcribed in interviews to facilitate the identification and analysis of interactional features and language details in narratives. Analysis might focus on sequential mechanisms or the telling roles in the course of the narrative. Critically, the micro- and macro-levels should be operationalised in analysis by 'always taking the local level of interaction as the place of articulation of phenomena that may find their explanation beyond it' (De Fina, 2018: 44). Inspired by this analytical framework, I carry out a micro-analysis of the extract paying attention to interactional dynamics and how storytelling about the past emerges through interaction between interviewer and participant as well as tease out how narratives may connect and function with other social practices. Although the interviewer is identified in the introduction to the special issue, I refer to the interlocutors as 'interviewer' and 'participant' in my analysis given the lack of name or pseudonym in the transcript for the participant.

Piecing the past together

I begin the analysis by focusing on line 48 to contextualise the focus on assembling memory that follows. In the first part of line 48, the interviewer responds to a short pause after the participant has told two stories by saying, 'And so if we put all the pieces together' as mentioned in the introduction. The phrase 'put all the pieces together' connotes assembling and bringing together fragments into a singular form. This not only resonates with the conceptualisation of memory put forward by Erll (2008, 2011b) but makes it visible and explicit for both interlocutors. The interviewer's use of the phrase 'put[ting] all the pieces together' suggests how she views the stories and responses from the participant in the interaction as 'pieces' that can be linked together and understood as meaningfully related. Critically, these 'pieces' need to be 'put . . . together' or assembled, which also indicates how the interviewer may be experiencing the flow of interaction and telling of stories as slightly fragmentary. It implies the interviewer understands stories and responses from the participant as 'pieces' that can be brought together to form memory.

The 'pieces' that the interviewer puts together (if we limit ourselves to what is evident within this extract), comprise responses to questions, which include the telling of two stories along with historical and cultural knowledge that the interviewer brings into the interview context. What the interviewer pieces together can be connected to the questions she asks in line 1 ('so your dad was a prisoner during the war?') and lines 3–5 ('a prisoner then of the Germans or uh or was it rather imprisoned after the war in relation to these stories of collaboration by the Belgium state') regarding when the participant's father was imprisoned. As such, through her contribution in line 48, the interviewer provides a synthesis of what has just been discussed, reinforced through the conjunctions that open this sentence, 'and so if', to construct a connection between the responses and her interpretation that follows in lines 49–63.

A critical part of lines 48–63, I suggest, is the active role that the interviewer plays in assembling the pieces of the past together and imposing this framework of memory assemblage on the interaction. The interviewer's use of the plural pronoun 'we' rather than 'I' may also explicitly recognise how memory in the interview is co-constructive as both interlocutors engage in memory work through telling stories about the past and interpreting these stories and moments of talk. As part of an assembling process, the interviewer refers to the age of the parent's father. This begins after a 1-second pause in the second part of line 48 'if I calculate correctly your dad was around 15 years old at the beginning of the war and so probably too young to fight in the the the 18-day campaign with Belgium'. It can be connected to line 11 in which the interviewer seeks to clarify his age ('I imagine that he was too young to have uh (.) [been part of the army]'), which does not seem to be directly engaged with by the participant in the subsequent turn. As part of putting pieces together, this calculation of age, which suggests the interviewer may have access to demographic details, invokes other ways of understanding the past. She contributes to assembling the memory of the participant's father by proposing how old her father may have been, and this assessment of likelihood is endorsed by the participant.

Within this part of the transcript, there is overlapping speech (lines 49 and 50; lines 52 and 53; lines 59 and 60) in which the participant affirms the interviewer's calculation and proposition, exemplifying the co-construction of meaning through the interaction. One of the overlaps (lines 52 and 53) emerges following a short pause (0.4) as the interviewer clarifies that the participant's father was likely too young to have fought. As part of her expression of agreement, the participant selects 'the real war' (line 52) as the label for the event, which is referred to by the interviewer as 'the 18 day campaign with Belgium' (line 53). The use of the adjective 'real' is meaningful in revealing how the participant makes sense of history. I return to the co-construction of mnemonic

assemblages and the way that the interviewer weaves the stories told by the participant into this discussion of age at the end of the following section.

Mnemonic assemblages of war-related imprisonment

The assembling instigated by the interviewer that I have just explored draws on a series of recollections that I now turn to. Chidgey (2018: 10) proposes that to invoke a model of assemblage memory is to 'question who the agents of memory are in a given context, and the duration and intensity of memory formation over time and space'. This, I propose, can be analytically utilised in the interview setting as the extract demonstrates a multiplicity of memory agents in the time and space of the interview and in the stories that are told by the participant which also gesture towards the distribution of agency in the formation and construction of the memory of her father's imprisonment during the war.

In lines 12 and 13, the participant labels the ensuing narrative as a 'story' and introduces it to the interviewer by explaining that her father would tell this 'story' and it is one that her kids 'remember very well'. Memory work, then, is performed both through the participant's retelling in the interview setting as well as in the story world by her father and alluded to by her children and herself. The story is presented as recurring by the participant, occurring 'from time to time' and can be classified as a 'communicative family narrative' (Fivush and Merrill, 2016). The sound made when her father scratched his eye is presented as a catalyst for her children to ask why and the story related is told in lines 19 and 20. The participant uses reported speech to narrate the story 'ah but that it is when there was a shell that exploded and I was hit by shrapnel'. Here, we see how material objects are integral to the assemblage. It is through the material traces of the shrapnel scar within her father's body and then the sound produced when scratching his eye that his experience of war enters into conversation within the family.

In lines 22 and 23, the recollection of this 'story' shifts from a generic version to a specific one as she reports the question she asked about where he got it ('I know that at a certain moment I said'). Again, the participant uses reported speech in her telling as she recalls his response: 'when I was wounded'. She also presents her reaction across time. First, she constructs a reflection from the past using 'afterwards' to temporally situate this in lines 24 to 26: 'and so it was afterwards that I said to myself: 'wounded (.) the eye (.) shrapnel' with the micropauses as she lists evoking a making sense or piecing together of the different strands of dialogue. Second, she offers an additional reflection on this story, moving back into the present tense in which she states 'so that's it but is it true is it false (.) I couldn't tell you'. Through this elaboration, the participant raises the question of the truthfulness of 'it', suggesting, then, a continued ambiguity for her concerning the story and what it reveals about 'what happened' to her father.

Another 'piece' is offered through the next story that the participant tells, which begins in line 27 following a pause, which comes chronologically after the shrapnel eye story. This takes place 'at the time of my father's death' and is told through a recalled conversation with her 'brother whom I don't see anymore' related to paperwork. Again, the participant alludes to the role of material objects as a vehicle for having interactions about her father's past, positioned by her as a form of catalyst. The role of external objects is also illuminated because the interaction about paperwork was instigated by the father's funeral, which in turn became a site through which the interviewee could ask her brother about the pension.

The participant's phrasing of the question 'but do you know this story about dad's pension from Germany' (lines 31–32) and 'you know more about this story' (lines 33–34) repeats the framing of her father's past as a series of fragmented 'stories'. The demonstrative adjective 'this' signals her interest in knowing more about the specific story of the pension from Germany, alluding to both a

shared understanding between her and her brother as to what 'this' pertains to along with the imbalance in knowledge. It also feeds into her expression of frustration as she recalls her follow-up questions that culminate in lines 38–39 as the participant expresses 'but you you know some things'. The opening of this reported speech 'but' is emblematic of how she chooses to retell the exchange in which her brother's answers are experienced as unsatisfactory. The 'story' according to her reconstruction of this conversation is that her father asked her brother to proofread a letter in German that ensured the continued payment of his pension. The participant also offers the interviewer further details on the nature of her relationship with her brother and his knowledge of the family exemplified through him knowing 'we might have a half-sister somewhere'. This contextualisation of the family dynamics potentially acts as an explanation to why the participant has limited knowledge, demonstrating the intersections between different assemblages.

Both stories are interesting in how they share similar linguistic and thematic patterns. The participant uses questions and reported speech to structure her storytelling with conjunctions such as 'so' used to suggest a logical sequencing. It is through the reconstruction of previous interactions with her children, between her children and father, with her brother and between her father and brother that memories of the past emerge. They are elicited in and through conversation (Fivush and Merrill, 2016; Shore and Kauko, 2018) and distributed across multiple temporalities in connection with material objects. This pattern continues within the interview setting where again memory emerges through the telling of stories in response to questions (in this instance from the interviewer) and requires as the interviewer puts it 'put[ting] the pieces together'. Within the two stories that the participant chooses to tell, she hints at the way that memory of her father's time in prison is distributed among her family where fragments of the past are uncovered through particular members of the family asking questions. The participant concludes both stories by saying 'so that's it' (lines 25–26 and line 39) which clearly signals the end of the story but also hints at the boundaries of her knowledge about the past.

The way the participant tells both stories and the narratives themselves suggest how the memory of her father's past in relation to war is experienced as a mnemonic assemblage. By this, I mean, the way the participant positions her understanding as in flux and unfolding over time requiring an 'assembling' by herself through different conversations she has with her family members. We see in the interaction, at times, a hesitation to make explicit interpretations and connections or 'piece it together' what these stories mean compared with the interviewer. She repeats 'I don't know' (lines 46 and 47), which speaks to the instability and precarity of memory assemblages. In the interviewee's elaboration of context and the details she offers, she alludes to the conditions and forces that affect this constellation, which an assemblage approach would then engage in mapping. Furthermore, her storytelling in the interview demonstrates how the memory assemblage intersects and connects to other social aspects such as changing family dynamics.

Finally, I want to return to how the story 'pieces' told by the participant are constructed as a mnemonic assemblage by the interviewer. What is interesting about the interviewer's focus on the calculation of the father's age near the end of the extract is how it responds to her earlier questions as I previously explained. It is not until line 60 that the interviewer explicitly refers to the narrative of one of the stories told by the participant. In her assembling of the participant's father's war experience, the interviewer integrates this 'piece' regarding the wound the father receives because of the shrapnel. She does this by presenting possibilities of the past through multiple potential narratives: 'he might have left for the Eastern Front or' 'he might have stayed somewhere else'. This also indicates how the interviewer inserts the individual into cultural narratives of what happened during this period, bringing in her knowledge of this time period.

The story told by the participant about the German pension is not brought into the assembling of memory by the interviewer in lines 48–62 in the same way. However, in this part of the extract,

it is perhaps alluded to. The interviewer provides space for ambiguity by saying 'he might potentially' to describe the father's possible alignment with the German army, which also perhaps is connected to the participant's comments in lines 6 to 8 about his hospitalisation in Germany and imprisonment by the Belgians and Allies. This can be contrasted with her more definite assertion 'he would have been' when she refers to his presence in combat which led to the shrapnel. Thinking through how the German pension story might be used by the interviewer to make sense of the father's involvement in the war or how it connects to other narratives the participant tells throughout the interview, I propose, speaks to the boundaries of examining this extract. Although the extract offers insights into mnemonic assemblages and the particularities of how they are articulated by the participant, it also raises questions about how it fits with other parts of the interview. For example, are there other instances of the participant and interviewer collaboratively assembling memory? Does the participant present other mnemonic assemblages and experience memory through an assemblage lens beyond the analysed 3-minute segment?

Conclusion

I have approached the extract selected for this special issue as an opportunity to closely examine how memory is positioned and approached by two individuals within the interview setting. In the narratives-in-practice perspective (De Fina, 2021) I have sought to adopt through my micro-analysis, I have drawn attention to the ways memory can be understood through the lens and language of assemblage. Although this analytical focus emerges from the extract and the interviewer's assertion of 'put[ting] all the pieces together', I have suggested there are interesting resonances between what is happening in the interaction with how to understand memory. In doing so, I refer to Astrid Erll's articulation of memory as assembling and the concept of memory as assemblage through the work of Red Chidgey and Anna Reading.

Within the analysis, I demonstrate how connecting fragments of the past and attributing meaning to these experiences (assembling of memory) is central to the interaction between the interviewer and participant as well as to how the participant tells stories within the interview setting. The mnemonic assemblages presented by the participant involve multiple memory agents, material objects and affective relations suggesting that assemblage is not only a way to map and trace mnemonic constellations but these dimensions are also integral to how memory is experienced and articulated by people. An orientation towards the specificities of how this interaction unfolds is well-suited to examining how the participant in this instance is bringing together different heterogeneous elements to construct for the interviewer, responses to questions concerning her father's past. Even at the micro-level, we can see the presence of different scales and sites, affective attachments and intensities, bodily performances, discourses and materialities.

Thinking through assembling and assemblage in the context of interviews in memory studies also reinforces the significance of the interviewer. As narrative studies insists, the interview is an interactional event in which the interviewer is part of shaping the production and interpretation of narratives and meaning. Consequently, stripping stories from the interview as fragments to be analysed by a memory scholar overlooks how the interview and interviewer constitute the sociocultural setting of memory performance. Again, a micro-analytic orientation can be sensitive to this. This extract indicates how the interviewer may act as an 'assembler' of memory and moving beyond the 3-minute fragment to the wider interview might offer additional evidence of this process at work as well as how it shapes the stories that are told by the participant.

The interviewer as an assembler of memory and participant in mnemonic assemblages resonates with how the researcher has been described as a type of mnemonic agent. In Chidgey's (2018: 54) assemblage model of memory, she describes how the researcher is an 'assembler' and 'can become

a mediator, shaping the memory assemblage as it unfolds and travels'. In other words, the researcher is implicated in and by their assembling, reassembling and disassembling of memory. Reading (2016) coins the neologism mnemologist to refer to a scholar whose subject specialism is memory studies, elaborating that the mnemologist 'studies, researches and actively creates and mobilises social and collective memories' and acts as a collaborator by connecting memories and stories (p. 175). This work also draws attention to how the analysis of this extract contributes an additional layer of assembling as I have sought to make sense of how both participant and interview assemble memory.

ORCID iD

Taylor Annabell [iD] https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6384-6754

Supplemental material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

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Author biography

Taylor Annabell is a postdoctoral researcher in the ERC Starting Grant HUMANads project at Utrecht University. Her research interests include platform governance and influencer cultures, everyday experiences of datafication and constructions of memory by and through social media platforms.