COST OF REMEMBERING: GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF ENGAGING WITH 'MEMORIES' ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

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Instagram and Facebook assert through their memory products that certain previously shared digital traces are 'memories'. The use of the term 'memories' like the algorithmic resurfacing platform infrastructure is not neutral but puts forward a particular understanding of what memories are. Unlike memory studies scholars who argue there is a distinction between the representation of the past in mediated texts and processes of remembering, the platform collapses representation with remembrance. Jacobsen and Beer (2021) identify that a pre-existing classificatory framework of what is memorable is core to this algorithmic resurfacing. The ontological promotion of certain content as 'memories' relies on ranking data that falls within the taxonomy of memory to determine the meaningfulness of memories for the user. While this has been situated within Facebook's wider economic strategy to foster greater levels of intimacy with the platform (Prey & Smit, 2019) and infrastructural logic of attention (Jacobsen & Beer, 2021), I propose algorithmic memory products can be situated within the dynamic of data colonialism.

Data colonialism refers to the "capture and control of human life itself through appropriating the data that can be extracted from it for profit" (Couldry & Mejias, 2020, p. xi). Memory becomes another layer of human experience that is subjected to datafication for capitalist gain. The development of Facebook's memory product relies on mining user data to develop a taxonomy of memory themes, which has been integrated into the On This Day algorithm. Facebook's artificial intelligence, visual recognition engine and sentiment analysis contribute to the personalisation of the memory product for users and more generally, are part of ongoing extractive processes of data collection and processing. The reconfiguration of memory and articulations of 'memories' is part of how "capitalism extends its capacity to exploit life" (Couldry and Mejias, 2020: xvii). Following Couldry and Mejias (2020), I ask what the cost for individuals, groups and societies is that our data is selectively repackaged as 'memories' through extractive, commercial processes, and how might identity shape these experiences.

I focus on how turning human experiences and memories into data and extracting profit from the mobilisation of 'memories' intersects with gendered pressures. This follows work in feminist memory studies in which gender is taken seriously as a structural framework that shapes the construction of memories (Keightley, 2011; Reading, 2016). Yet, with the exceptions of Reading (2016) and Chidgey (2018), digital memory studies have overlooked gendered identities and the "mnemonic conditions of a postfeminist regime" (Chidgey, 2018: 20). Postfeminism is a sensibility characterised by distinctive, interconnected themes and features, which shape subjectivity and the articulation of gender. Of relevance to this paper is how postfeminism operates through affective and psychic registers that implicate young women in particular (Dobson, 2015; Gill & Kanai, 2018; Kanai, 2019). Specifically, confidence, resilience and a positive mental attitude are the 'right' types of dispositions to display (Gill, 2017).

I explore connections between data colonialism and postfeminism sensibility through the performance of digital memory work of young women. I draw on semi-structured interviews using the scroll back method, ethnographic observations of their Instagram and Facebook profiles for 6 months and focus group discussions to present three themes.

First, I propose young women are interpellated into happy remembering. A clear logic is presented by participants when they describe typical interactions with memory products. When participants view what is resurfaced, they expect the digital trace to act as a vehicle for remembering and assume this will elicit a positive emotional response. The interplay of affordances and cultural practices means that the cost of remembering is at the expense of feeling or making visible other emotional responses both within interview contexts and the reshared digital traces on platforms. I argue young women are not only implicated as users of the platform to perform happy remembering, as part of the broader emotional architecture of positivity (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2018) but as postfeminist subjects. Memories become another cultural sphere in which young women enact postfeminist subjectivity displaying the 'right feelings' (Kanai, 2019). The way feelings are structured by the platform fosters an affective environment in which happiness is pre-empted by both platforms and participants as the 'right feeling'.

The second intersection between the mobilisation of memories within commercial platforms and postfeminist sensibility concerns expressions of gratitude to platforms. Participants positioned platforms as spaces for preserving and keeping memories beyond the 'memories' feature. The use of storage metaphors conveys feelings of trust; the platform will safeguard, protect and preserve 'memories' on behalf of the individual, which is connected to assumptions regarding security, stability and longevity. While expressions of gratitude reveal the non-commercial value of the platform as a memory agent in facilitating connectivity as well as memory work, the exploitation of this mnemonic value for commercial gain reveals uneven relationships.

Thirdly, I suggest the social media logic of metrics and evaluation embedded within the algorithmic resurfacing of 'memories' influences both resharing of 'memories' and sharing in-the-moment more broadly. For some, there was a collective quantified assessment of what constitutes 'memories' while others mobilized 'sharing for

memories' as a justification opposing 'sharing for likes' culture. I argue quantification of memories and reliance on measuring value shape and mediate how participants approach sharing on platforms and the circulating discourses that young women navigate. The tension speaks to how Facebook's infrastructure is built on a history of social comparison and ranking of female bodies, beginning with Facemash.

Bringing together data colonialism, digital memory work and postfeminism have the potential to illuminate how engagements with memories on platforms are shaped by cultural, economic and personal systems of value and how encounters with memories on platforms and conceptualisations of memories are tied to gendered subjectivities. Navigating gendered pressures and performing normative femininity are part of the cost of engaging with memories for young women.

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