

EDITORIAL

## Editorial I: Journeys, cases and conversations: An introduction to *Memory, Mind & Media*

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On 27 September 2018, Dr Christine Blasey Ford and Judge Brett Kavanaugh appeared before the United States Senate Judiciary Committee on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC as part of Kavanaugh's confirmation as a new US Supreme Court Justice (Berman 2018). The Supreme Court is the highest court in the US federal judiciary and new Justices are afforded lifetime tenure. Once nominated, confirmed by Senate and appointed, they influence judicial opinion for years if not decades. Judge Kavanaugh, a Judge on the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, was nominated in July 2018 by President Donald Trump.

During the confirmation process, Blasey Ford, a Professor of Psychology, came forward and alleged that in the summer of 1982 when she and Kavanaugh were in high school, he sexually assaulted her at a party (Jennings and Thebault 2018). When given the opportunity before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Blasey Ford recalled the assault in detail, describing the events as 'seared' into her memory and as having 'haunted' her throughout her life; she testified that although she rarely talked of these events to others, she had never forgotten them. But when given his opportunity before the Committee, Kavanaugh unequivocally and angrily denied Dr Ford's accusation and memories (Naylor 2018).

We, Amanda Barnier and Andrew Hoskins, were in the same place at the same time – in Glasgow – when Blasey Ford and Kavanaugh gave their testimony. Together, we watched the questions and reactions of the Senators and other people in the Senate room. And we followed on mainstream news, social media and blogs the evolving reactions to their competing claims (NBC News 2018). We noticed how much Blasey Ford's and Kavanaugh's conflicting memories spilled out into the world, offering a fascinating case study of the collision of *memory in the head* (the study of the human world of remembering) and *memory in the wild* (the study of the social/cultural world of remembering) (Barnier and Hoskins 2018). We also observed what each of us noticed about the case, which often was quite different.

At its heart, the Kavanaugh case turns on contested memories of distant events. Although sometimes complex, such cases are not uncommon in the legal system and often share similar features. For instance, the complainant was adamant that the events occurred despite decades passing before their test in court. When asked by Democratic Senator Durbin in the Senate Judiciary Hearing, 'with what degree of certainty do you believe Brett Kavanaugh assaulted you', Dr Blasey Ford replied 'one hundred percent'. Meanwhile, the alleged perpetrator, Judge Kavanaugh denied it ... furiously.

Although similar in many respects, the Kavanaugh case diverged sharply from a more typical criminal case of contested events in two important ways. First, in the Kavanaugh case, memories were provided in a public spectacle with unusual rules and no clear expert input. Second, their memories were ‘tested’ via partisan cross examination of the most extraordinary kind and via public opinion in real time as well as before and after. What we saw were multiple, colliding ‘ecologies’ of memory (Hoskins 2016); reporting and discussion of personal memories not just in a court room but unfolding in many different settings. Blasey Ford and Kavanaugh’s memories were described and then challenged in the Senate Judiciary Hearing Room, dissected as a live televised ‘event’ (The New Yorker 2018) and spread and interpreted in real-time across social and other media.

As Andrew has argued (together with Huw Halstead) (Hoskins and Halstead 2021), such memories are not ‘something purely personal to be treated in terms of accuracy and error’. Rather, they illustrate ‘a new memory ecology, a new twenty-first century (re) ordering of the past by and through multiple connectivities of times, actors, events and so on’ (Hoskins and Halstead 2021).

Social media, in particular, enables new ways for memories to ‘travel’ (Erl 2011). One Australian journalist, reacting to Blasey Ford and Kavanaugh’s memory disclosures on the other side of the world, wrote:

I am sixteen-and-a-half thousand kilometres away from the rooms in which these events have transpired, yet late at night and in moments of quietude, I am in all of them – rendered something supernatural and out of space and time by a rage that’s as hot and thick as lava. And I’m not alone (Badham 2018).

And yet, in terms of scholarly responses and analyses of Kavanaugh’s confirmation and Blasey Ford’s testimony, commentary and published contributions overwhelmingly came from psychologists (APS 2018). The hearings and testimony were reported as mostly in the head issues by experts on cognition, trauma and individual remembering and forgetting. There didn’t seem to be much, if any, coverage devoted to memory in the wild perspectives. There was almost no focus on the evolving contexts in which memories were formed, expressed, changed and of course, lost.

Is it that psychologists are wary about making claims about memory in the wild, or what Daniel Schacter (2022) in our Inaugural Essay called ‘domain-general’ effects? Are social and cultural worlds seen as beyond the scope of traditional psychological experimentation because they are not easily replicable or testable? And why didn’t non-psychologists – sociologists, historians, cultural studies or media scholars – see this case as within their scope?

Perhaps because the memory phenomena at play in the case of Blasey Ford and Kavanaugh are not reduceable to head or wild. Instead, to invoke Schacter’s (2022) essay again, they are always multi-domain. To accept this, we must combine our disciplinary perspectives to navigate complex collisions of individual and social/cultural memory (Edwards 2018); of intersecting ‘memory ecologies’ (Hoskins 2016). This seems especially so when environments for reporting and interpreting memories are far from neutral; when digital trajectories of information and experience can radicalise memory, and when expertise about memory and its impacts are questioned.

‘Connective memory’ is forged, layered, but also lost, through ‘interactional trajectories’ of remembrances which rage, collide, compete, drift and fade, through individuals and groups encountering others, objects, media and so on (Hoskins 2011). This is not a completely new relationship between memory in the head and memory in the wild. However,

in the digital era, experiences and memories can be represented, stored and shared, but also obscured and lost in the wild in new ways, at new speeds, and at a new scale.

Memory also is entangled in the digital's promise of 'friction-free' living. All our pasts are apparently instantly available to us through a tap, a flick, a swipe or a spoken command, with the smartphone the intimate yet pervasive portal of all our former, as well as unfolding experiences (Hoskins & Cimová, [forthcoming](#)). But the very accelerant of the digital sharing of the past burdens it with a new kind of uncertain history. This is a past of suspect provenance, of a radicalisation of memory, as algorithms reward rage over reason in the 'attention economy' (Lewandowsky and Pomerantsev [2022](#)). Thus, in the Kavanagh case, memories also 'travelled' via misinformation and conspiracies (Rothschild [2018](#)); strange claims shared and reshared thousands of times on the internet.

Our new journal, *Memory, Mind & Media*, aims to offer a unique new venue for these complex cases and interdisciplinary conversations as we explore the impact of media and technology on individual, social and cultural remembering and forgetting. Our journal is situated at a juncture of transformational digital change. Today, the 'connective turn' (Hoskins [2011](#); Hoskins [2018](#)) – the abundance, scale and immediacy of digital media, communication networks and archives – forces a view unprecedented in history. It has re-engineered memory, liberating it from traditional bounds of the spatial archive, the organisation, the institution and distributed it on a continuous basis via connectivity across minds, bodies, and personal and public lives. This opening up of new ways of finding, sorting, sifting, using, seeing, losing and abusing the past, both imprisons and liberates active (intentional, conscious, purposive) human remembering and forgetting.

You will find fascinating examples of these forces at play within the essays of our Inaugural Collection. These include Wang's ([2022](#)) novel 'triangular theory of self, who argues that social media shape an experience of selfhood 'unprecedented in modern times'; Zelizer's ([2022](#)) expert illumination of the often hidden and vital memory work of journalists; and Nightingale and Wade's ([2022](#)) worrying caution on fake media's capacity to distort human memory, cognition and behaviour. These are all vital issues for the study of memory of our time.

Another rationale for *Memory, Mind & Media* is a persistent question we have asked one another in our more than decade long collaboration as well as many colleagues: is it possible to journey from individual, disciplinary, separate perspectives about memory, mind and media to find common, transformative language, questions and approaches? We think yes!

So, we welcome your contributions. We want this journal to be a home for scholars working within, across and beyond history, philosophy, media, communication and cultural studies, law, literature, geography, anthropology, political science, sociology, neuroscience, psychology, computational science and more. We're interested in work that addresses the following sorts of topics, although this list is by no means the beginning or end of the Journal's interests:

- Autobiographical memory and digital practices, networks, archives;
- Nostalgia, melancholia, reminiscence;
- Forgetting, including blockage (of mind and culture), finitude, overload, glut, distraction, stigma, closure, remorse, digital decay, degradation, disconnection, erasure, bit-rot, obsolescence, censorship, legislation, rights (e.g., the 'right to be forgotten and erasure');
- Memory distortions, false memory, belief, trust, post-truth/post-trust media, fakes, deep fakes;
- Extremism and extreme pasts, the radicalisation of memory, conspiracy theories;

- Reliance vs. dependency, including active remembering, visibility and self/acknowledgement of agents/actors of memory;
- Memory experts and expert discourses;
- Public mediations of memory, including public intellectuals, sceptics, gurus, news and journalism;
- Mapping shifting paradigms of human, social and computational approaches to media and memory, including overlaps, gaps, contestations, agendas and debates;
- Clinical disorders and public representations, sharing and knowledge;
- Generations of memory, including practices and effects of media associated with particular stages of individual, group and society development (e.g., especially media and technologies seen as formative – ‘memory bump’ years, etc.);
- Relationship of media/memory to the future; utopian and dystopian predictions; past–present–future trajectories;
- Images, including actual and presumed influence of visual content across types and scales of remembering, icons, flashbulb memories, images as beyond human vision;
- Art, including aesthetic, critical, ethical, experimental and multimedia interventions in memory and history;
- AI, algorithms, including weaponisation of archives, recommendation algorithms, future shaping, ownership and uses of personal data (e.g., creating an ‘unremembered’ self);
- Sensor revolution in objects, clothing and materials; implant revolution in people;
- Video gaming, including short-term and long-term memory.
- Media archaeology, including the historical and material genealogy of the digital in previous media platforms and power/knowledge apparatuses;
- Ethics and morality;
- Privacy and secrecy, including surveillance, personal data and identity, digital traces;
- Digital afterlife, including management, digital assets, ownership, law;
- Bifurcation of and relationship between media/memory cultures, as formalised, institutionalised, regimented (including online); yet also emergent, confrontational and fragmented;
- War and conflict, including memorialisation, witnessing, trauma, unforgetting, legitimisation, ‘learning lessons’, memory booms;
- Archives, including in digital and networked archives, amateur and professional, illicit and sanctioned, personal and official, and past and present; platforms as archives, records, ownership, access and control; weaponisation, testimony, evidence, confession, justice, organisational memory, policy, official and amateur histories, law, forensics;
- Museums, exhibitions, curatorial strategies, digital publics;
- Media ecologies and infrastructures, including shifting intersecting social, cultural and technological change to everyday (and often local/national) media environments;
- Imaginaries/formations of memory, including mind, body, group, individual, social, cultural, public and multitude.

We especially seek high-quality, agenda-setting submissions that combine scientific and humanistic approaches to the study of memory in the digital era; that reflect upon and signal how we can push the boundaries of existing knowledge and methods at the intersection of memory, mind and media. And we will preference jargon-free contributions that encourage cross-disciplinary and/or interdisciplinary dialogue and debate as well as engagement by non-experts and student readers. Finally, we offer gold open access, continuous publication and broad ranging and flexible content types – commentaries, case studies, experiments, images, interviews, artworks or video essays, as well as traditional research-length articles and responses to published work – to encourage and sustain timely conversation as we shape this emerging field together.

We hope you have enjoyed our Inaugural Collection of agenda-setting essays. We look forward to receiving, reading and publishing your work as we continue to map the terrain of *Memory, Mind & Media!*

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