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## Photography, music and memory: pieces of the past in everyday life

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# **Photography, Music and Memory: Pieces of the Past in Everyday Life**



**Michael Pickering and Emily Keightley**

To  
Steve Armfield and Karen Pickering

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## Introduction

### Technologies of Memory

In this book we deal with two very different communications technologies. Our interest in them derives from this difference, but is also directed towards something they have in common, which is their relationship to memory. The relationship varies because of the contrast between them, and that is what we want to explore. Photography and recorded music have been chosen for concerted attention because our empirical research has shown that they are the two most significant technologies of remembering in everyday life, and have been for a considerable period of time. This research has involved us in several interrelated projects.<sup>1</sup> Across this work photography and music were the two media most referred to as mnemonic resources or devices. As a result the overall purpose of this book is to examine how they operate as ways of facilitating processes of recall and recollection, looking at them both in their own right and in their interrelationship. We look at them in these ways because, although they are for the most part used independently of each other, they are often compared in what people say of them. They are regarded as complementary means for regaining the past and relating the past to the present, however partially and selectively this may be done.

It has long been recognised that photography and remembering are closely connected, but bearing in mind what a fecund resource it is, how photography features in remembering as an everyday social practice has not received as much empirical investigation as it deserves. This is even more the case with recorded music, and with the complementary practices, purposes and values of photographic and phonographic remembering. In focusing on photography and recorded music as conveyances of vernacular memory, we are dealing with what has often been neglected in both the history and aesthetics of photography, and the critical analysis of popular music. The bearings these two technologies have on recall and recollection is also largely ignored in media studies and memory studies alike. Photography in its home-mode uses as a form of remembering and retaining connection to the past has received more attention than recorded music as a facilitator of memory, but both are marginal concerns.

In studies of music important work has been done on its consumption and the place it has in people's lives, as for example in creating or connecting with emotions, enhancing mood, or forming the basis of various embodied experiences, including popular dance. A good deal of attention has been paid to gender and sexual politics, to social movements and political campaigns, and to youth and fandom, where among other things an ardent identification with various aspects of the music provides a symbolic source and marker of identity. Much less attention has been paid to the value of music for older generations, or to cross-generational uses of music, and while the social analysis of popular music has increasingly turned to the ways in which it contributes to the texture and rhythm of everyday life, this has been a fairly recent development, with the relations of music and memory remaining very much neglected.<sup>2</sup> Popular music studies has devoted itself in the main to matters relating to industry, technology, genre, performance and questions arising primarily out of recording and recorded content. These are all important, but their study far outweighs research into such social phenomena as the contextualised narrative meanings made out of music by people in local settings or the biographical significance derived from music across the ongoing course of their lives. It is the voice of the scholar, critic or aficionado which generally prevails in the assignment of musical value. When we turn to the relations of vernacular photography and memory, it is again only fairly recently that they have begun to receive any serious attention. For most of the period following the Second World War, the predominant

critical tone towards vernacular photography was one of disparagement and derision. From the vantage point of art photography and photography theory, vernacular forms were regarded as banal, hackneyed and trivial. The high-handed error in this involved the evaluation of such photography through inappropriate aesthetic criteria, and either glibly dismissing it or making gross generalisations about its myriad contexts of use. Vernacular photography has also merited little, or at best fleeting attention from sociologists and historians unless of use for some other purpose, such as the illustrative embellishment of a more serious topic, so seen. It has rarely been considered in its own right.

The only exception to this dismissal and neglect has been the feminist critique of family photography. In such photography the balance shifted over the course of the twentieth century from studio photography to privately taken photos in which formally posed portraits have decreased and snapshots with an emphasis on immediacy and spontaneity have increased. It has been an uneven and haphazard shift, but the alterations of expressive and aesthetic values indexed by it relate more broadly to changed roles and relations in the family, and to changed views on what should be involved in cross-temporal transmission from past to present and present to future. Domestic photography became associated with specific situations or occasions, especially in the way cameras and film were advertised and marketed. Accordingly, snapshots of holidays and young families, and particularly children, were chosen as the predominant photographic topic of people in their leisure time, coming together and uniting in unblemished harmony. This tended to validate certain kinds of moment while diminishing others in subsequent remembering, and the feminist critique has highlighted the selective idealism of such photography (entailing, among other things, the absence of work, including domestic labour) as well as its reinforcement of conventional gender roles and relations.<sup>3</sup> Often in alignment with left-wing activist groups, such critique was of considerable value, leading to significant work during the last three decades of the twentieth century, but its undoubted strengths were also its latent weaknesses. This was not so much that its often illuminating autobiographical focus encouraged an overuse of personal artefacts and at times revealed an overriding concern with projects of personal redemption, but rather that the critique seemed at times to assume that this was all that need be said, and that there would be little point in conducting detailed investigation into what people across various communities and social groups themselves felt about the value of their own photography. Such investigation was thereby discouraged, and in consequence little sustained empirical inquiry has been conducted into how everyday photography is done or what it means to its practitioners.

Interestingly, this is not true of the historical analysis of nineteenth-century amateur female photography, which is certainly informed by feminist values. This has produced evidence that is quite contrary to at least some of the feminist critique of late-twentieth century family photography. Among other things, it has shown that 'far from naively reproducing dominant ideologies of domestic femininity, family albums often negotiate such ideologies with remarkable skill'.<sup>4</sup> It has also made clear that vernacular photography is far from monolithic, an impression which sweeping assertion, without the support of sufficient empirical data, readily encourages. The development of a more expansive and sympathetic approach to such photography has been gradual, but there are now clear signs of it, as for example in Gillian Rose's work and her general argument that family photography, among other vernacular uses of the medium, is 'a more ambivalent and complex field of cultural practice than it has often been given credit for, even by feminists concerned with women's domestic lives'.<sup>5</sup> Rose adds to this that while family snaps are conventionalised, when we move from attending to them simply as images and think of them more in terms of what is done with them, the ambivalences and intricacies of association deriving from them become far more apparent. In attending to the practices of remembering with which photography and recorded music are affiliated, we very much concur with this,

for we have found that the ways in which these two media are assimilated into everyday life can be dense in meaning, rich in emotion, and complex in mnemonic significance.

Another exemplary figure in this slow move towards taking vernacular photography seriously is Geoffrey Batchen, not least because he celebrates the ways in which its idiosyncratic morphologies 'refuse to comply with the coherent progression of styles and technical innovations demanded by photography's art history'; 'muck up the familiar story of great masters and transcendent aesthetic achievements'; and 'disrupt its smooth Euro-American prejudice'.<sup>6</sup> With certain adjustments being made, similar points could be set forth about popular music studies, despite its occasional overlap with ethnomusicology.<sup>7</sup> In his prospectus for studying vernacular photographs, Batchen makes clear the need to operate with an anti-canonical historical typology of amateur practices and uses. He highlights, in his own work, the tactile dimension of such practices and uses, even while acknowledging that it is the combination of the haptic and visual which 'makes photography so compelling a medium'.<sup>8</sup> He does so because it is through this dimension that vernacular photographs can tantalise 'precisely by proffering the rhetoric of a transparency of truth and then problematising it, in effect inscribing the writerly and the readerly in the same perceptual experience'.<sup>9</sup> Batchen offers a fascinating examination of this dimension in his book-length study of photography and remembrance, but because of the direction our fieldwork experience has pointed us towards, in our own study we place greater emphasis on the visual meanings and values of amateur photographs.

Whereas Batchen is engaged in historical analysis of photographic images and their framings, with their subjects and users having long since passed on, our work has been for the most part with living informants who have discussed with us the relationship for them of photo-images and remembering.<sup>10</sup> In such discussion the visual has predominated. We fully acknowledge the ample tactility of amateur photographic use, but for our informants the visual dimension of photographs, whether in albums, shoeboxes or on display, is valued more for practices of remembering, even though they may touch an image in the process of talking about it or, when we move to their pictures on open display, lovingly hold a picture frame taken from a mantelpiece. So while we see the tactile and visual components of vernacular photography as continuous with each other, with the one informing and supporting the other, in everyday mnemonic usages, rather than in longer-term commemorative practices, we have found the iconic indexical quality of photographs to weigh most significantly with our research participants. Although it is the case that 'image and referent are laminated together' in a photograph, as in a 'landscape and the window pane' through which it is viewed, the majority of those we interviewed have concentrated in their discourse on the landscape rather than the window.<sup>11</sup> We have tried to honour that relative emphasis throughout the book. Such emphasis does not necessarily mean – though of course it can – that viewers of photos are not aware that the image depicted in a photo is different to how they see the world with their own two eyes. It simply indicates that the image is often held to be more important as a mnemonic resource than its material qualities, and that as an image it does have a clear 'evidential force'.<sup>12</sup>

The major exception to this visual emphasis, as we shall see in the first chapter, occurs when people reflect on the loss threatened by digital photographs of the material qualities valued in experiencing their analogue predecessors, but apart from that it is photography's potent indexicality which has also been compared and contrasted most of all with the mnemonic powers of recorded and/or transmitted music. Indeed, our analytical emphasis on the visual dimension has been consolidated by the more-or-less complete absence for our informants of a tactile dimension in hearing and listening to recorded music, even though again we have occasionally noticed the affection with which one or two people have held certain L.P. sleeves as they have discussed the vinyl albums they

contain. So we differ quite significantly from Batchen, and in this his overriding point remains true, for if we are to operate with a wide-ranging typology of photographic practices and uses, we need to adopt a variety of approaches, and different key points of focus. The choices we make between them will depend on our explanatory purposes.

This book builds on the work of scholars like Batchen and Rose, but also extends it by discussing photography alongside recorded music and considering both as vehicles or catalysts of memory. Doing so is in part designed to offset the neglect and disdain with which vernacular photography has been met by setting it critically on a par with studies of fandom and the serious attention that has been paid to passionate or enthusiastic engagement with music. In addition to this, focusing on the practical take-up of two everyday media simultaneously is rarely done in media studies or in the specialist studies of particular media, at least where detailed empirical work is concerned. We find this rather odd because, in everyday life, various media become interwoven in the ways they are used, informing and complementing each other precisely because their communicative modes vary and provide different experiences. This is certainly the case with acts and processes of remembering. It would then seem peculiar to study only visual media or only audio media. They are both part of the texture of our day-to-day lives; they are both part of the same mnemonic environment; and both are drawn on for the ways they contribute to maintaining connections between past and present and developing an understanding of how those connections make possible an ongoing narrative. Of course they do not make these contributions in an incessant side-by-side relation, for at times photography is a preferred mode of remembering and at others recorded music is the medium that prevails, but in everyday life they do not operate within rigidly compartmentalised spheres – they are used interchangeably and also converge in helping to keep the past in fertile interaction with the present. Comparative studies of media in their various and changing uses facilitate a more refined sociological understanding of their role in everyday life.

We could certainly point to the greater neglect of the relations between recorded music and remembering and claim that this would justify exclusive attention being given to music and memory, but that would ignore the weight placed upon both media technologies when people talk about their everyday practices of remembering. While we need to give full recognition to their various differences in how people regularly use them to mark past events and periods in their lives, we need also to attend to the ways to the ways they cross-refer and at times illuminate each other, both analytically and in reflective relational evaluations of everyday media as mnemonic vehicles. This book does both, and in the end insists most of all on the significance of these visual and sonic technologies for the complementary, even interlocking manner in which they serve vernacular interpretations and understandings of the past. In this respect their overlooked mutualities may be just as significant as how they operate on their own.

Attending to these two cultural technologies in particular is intended to make at least some small adjustment for the fact that they have both been ignored, sidelined or played down in the history of communications. Photography and phonography are either absent, assigned the status of bit players in contrast to the commanding stage presence of the press, telegraphy, cinematography, radio and television, or regarded as belonging primarily to the domains of art history, musicology and music history. These two media do not merit being downgraded or shunted aside in this way, for they have made significant contributions to modern experience and more specifically to the ways in which we remember in modern and late modern life. At the same time the book is intended to contribute to the growing literature on the integration of media technologies in everyday life, looking not at how specific media like television are received but at how these technologies are used and assimilated alongside

others – how in our case self-made photographs are woven into ongoing narratives and how self-chosen music becomes integral to our identities, attaining value and significance for remembering as it is held up against the passing of time. A further reason for deciding to focus on these two particular media is that we wish to contest a frequently made assertion that ‘social media’ have inaugurated a new participatory communicative environment. This is historically abbreviated. ‘Social media’ has arisen as a term in direct alignment with digital technologies, but the forms of interaction and sociality with which they are associated extend much further back, even though the ways in which they are used are obviously in some ways specific to these technologies. Photography and recorded music have been widely used as social media for well over a century, and are part of a longer pattern of everyday media use that has been extended, not brought into being, by such devices as the mobilecameraphone and the iPod. By attending to the ways in which our two everyday media are used in making sense of social experience over the course of time, we intend to recover an understanding of traditional media as participatory and creative in relation to the communication of experience and the temporal uses of experience. Potentially at least, this retrospectively situates new social media in a longer durational sequence and historically contextualises such media and their uses in everyday life.<sup>13</sup> Our own analytical focus in relation to that sequence and context is on how they operate mnemonically, rather than across the broader spectrum of their everyday usage, and that in itself is important, for much is said about mediated memory in the abstract, with little attention being paid to what this involves empirically on the ground, and what the technological mediation of remembering may entail. It is to this issue, and the mundane settings in which it applies, that we now turn.

### **Vernacular Memory**

Both photography and recorded music act not only as conduits of memory but also as ways of configuring it, as a particular image comes to stand as the memory we have of an event or place, perhaps acquiring greater significance than the moment it captures, or a certain song carries such resonant associations with a friend we have lost touch with or an unsettling episode in the past that they eclipse other occasions on which we have listened to it. Memory is malleable, though not infinitely so. We need to retain some claim on its accuracy, or at least lack of distortion, and maintain belief in its relative fidelity to previous experience. In contrast, photography and recorded music in their exact fixity of representation seem to offer an unequivocal alibi for what we remember being directly congruent with the past. It is this which then provides the basis for investing what we remember with its narrative meaning and value. This can feel intensely personal, its significance seeming to be lodged entirely in our developing sense of self-identity over the passage of time, but just as importantly photography and recorded music become charged with meaning and gain their cross-temporal significance through the ways in which they are shared among, for example, lovers or spouses, growing children or boon companions. Much of how they operate as vehicles or catalysts of memory occurs in the interstitial spaces between personal and popular memory. It is within these spaces that we can locate vernacular memory.

In attending to the value of photography and recorded music for remembering in everyday life, we are building on our conception of the cross-mediations of personal and popular memory which we developed at length in our previous book, *The Mnemonic Imagination*.<sup>14</sup> While we maintain and extend that conception, our concern in this book is with how particular resources are adopted and used in everyday life as ways of connecting past and present, ensuring certain lines of continuity over time, and registering inevitable changes across different stages in personal life and interpersonal relationships. These resources, in our case photography and recorded music, are deployed in planned and unplanned

ways as both forms and facilitators of remembering within a broad patchwork of cultural artefacts and practices. They are, for many people, integral to the effort to sustain particular trajectories of living and create across time a relatively coherent sense of identity. Central to this effort, in the familiar milieu of everyday life, is the process of localisation. It is this which runs through the heterogeneous assemblage of images and sounds that are part and parcel of everyday remembering. Our preferred term for this is vernacular memory, and we set out our conceptualisation of it at the outset not only in order to identify its main characteristics and consequences, but also because it is this modality of remembering that is the focus of the book as a whole.

Numerous studies have looked at commemorative vernacular activities, and at the tensions or contestations between official and vernacular memory discourses. These involve responses to national events such as the Oklahoma City bombing of 1995, or tragic occurrences affecting a relatively small social circle, as for instance with fatal traffic accidents.<sup>15</sup> Far fewer studies have attended to vernacular memory in their more continuous, extended, and mundane forms. In our own effort to move in this direction, we conceive of the process of localisation as a way of 'making our own' in the contexts of our everyday lives. Making our own past-present connections in this way means taking whatever materials are at hand and using them to forge and maintain a sense of cross-temporal transaction, as our lives change and years pass and distance increases between an event in the past and our contemporary perspective upon it. As our two technologies of remembering make clear, these materials can be self-produced and already situated in local settings, or derived from mass-mediated cultural products that are then made over in the realisation of their personal and interpersonal significance. Even though produced and distributed on a global industrial scale, music informs and at times becomes integral to personal experience and interpersonal relations, often of the most intimate kind. It may also become part of the fabric of vernacular memory through the ways in which it speaks of, or to, collective experiences of various sorts. In any case, as Michel de Certeau put it, the 'consumer cannot be identified or qualified by the newspapers or commercial products he assimilates: between the person (who uses them) and these products (indexes of the "order" which is imposed on him), there is a gap of varying proportions opened by the use that he makes of them'.<sup>16</sup> It is in this gap that the relations of memory and recorded music are formed, so that regardless of the different points of origination and circuits of distribution in which popular music and photography are involved, the process of making our own occurs in, or is reoriented to, the known and habitual settings and contexts of everyday life.<sup>17</sup> It is these settings and contexts which configure the social and symbolic spaces 'in which cultural forms are actively deployed, the set of relations and interdependencies through which people define themselves and each other, act and interact, in terms of the cultural resources available to them'.<sup>18</sup> The cultural resources of images and sounds which for particular individuals and groups become both deliberately and contingently associated with the past are brought together through the ongoing process of making them aesthetically proximate, so constituting them as the artefacts that have the most intimate meaning and strongest mnemonic resonance.

Vernacular memory is a collective form of memory but far from the abstracted or mythical level of the nation, where collective memory is hegemonically constructed through official commemoration, state ritual and invented tradition. It also exceeds private memories whose significance is primarily or even exclusively for a single person, at least to the extent that it has come to appear as such to that person. Vernacular memory exists in the intermediate social and symbolic spaces within particular groups and between the individuals who comprise them.<sup>19</sup> It involves individuals' memories but in the local sites and spaces where they are shared, such as a domestic mantelpiece or the pub down the road, and it also involves national events but in the local sites and spaces where these are assimilated and related to lives close at hand, personally known and shared. So, for example, in vernacular memory-

making, those who produce and draw on such mnemonic resources as photographs share in some kind of proximity – spatial, social, cultural or affective - unlike the production and consumption of newspapers or television programmes. The roles of producer and user in domestic photography are socially intertwined and always potentially interchangeable even when they take on gendered associations. This is only rarely the case with recorded music. Such music is nevertheless an integral component of vernacular remembering because its meanings are the result of a dynamic interchange between producers and listeners. Meaning-making and the assignment of value does not reside solely within the musical text; they are also realised in its reception and interpretation, and it is the cross-temporal consequence of this which is then active when hearing a song or piece of music generates a profound emotional response as it reconnects us with a particular past scene, person or pivotal moment in our lives.

Characterising vernacular memory in this way requires immediate qualification because the mnemonic resources on which we are focusing may be shared and talked about across huge physical distances, as for example when photographs are sent as email attachments or posted on websites like Flickr or Photobucket. Of course, even when nothing is digitally sent or posted, we may describe in a letter to a distant friend or relative the past associations which a sonata by Robert Schumann or a pop ballad by Céline Dion may have for us. But our point is that vernacular memory does not only occur in familiar offline sites. For example, Aaron Hess has explored how, after the tragic events of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, web memorials have provided a site and medium for communicative expression of the vernacular voice. He shows that memorialising on the internet is a significant form of communal vernacular discourse contributing to the formation and transmission of popular memory. Hess also contends that web memorial discourse provides an opportunity for us to engage more closely and extensively with vernacular responses to historical events and circumstances.<sup>20</sup>

Examples such as this are legion, and what they show is that remembering in place and across space mutually interact in various different ways on various different scales, and that technologically mediated forms of communication contribute to and exert influence over processes of remembering. We should see these processes as a continuum between physical locations where we engage in face-to-face interpersonal acts of remembering with those who are co-present with us, and the social environments created by communications media which permit access to and parallel acts of remembering with those who are physically absent from us, as for example in a telephone conversation, with at least some attenuation from these two-way modes of communication in the realm of parasocialinteraction where there may be a felt sense of intimacy at a distance but also a concomitant loss of reciprocity.

It should therefore be clear that localisation takes various forms, and is certainly not to be regarded as synonymous with geographical proximity even though it can of course involve the intimate attachment involved in a sense of place. The sense of a known social world being confined to one's immediate locality has become steadily eroded as societies have become modern. It endured for a long time, so that even in the mid-twentieth century it was noted of a Yorkshire pit village that 'the world outside Dinlock to Barnsley is too distant to consider, and after Barnsley simply doesn't exist'.<sup>21</sup> Reference to the 'outside world' is now increasingly rare, with distinctions between here and the world outside having been hugely altered by modern communications, extending from early cinema to the internet and online encounters and exchanges. Indeed, such reference now seems terminally parochial, and vernacular localisation is extensively different in orientation since it can operate in virtual as well as geographical locations, is not confined to any one location, and continues as a process when, from childhood onwards, we move from place to place, settling in different parts of a country, or migrating to

another country. This doesn't mean that the increased deterritorialisation of social life as a consequence of a globalising world has rendered territoriality and territorial logics completely unimportant. It is rather that the proliferation of wider and wider connections occurs in interaction with the persistence of sense of place, with localization being central to that interaction. In this way the process of localization associated with vernacular remembering tends to be geared towards forms of association that are different to the myriad anonymous interactions in the teeming metropolitan city, and forms of affiliation different to the putative bondings of the 'imagined community' of the nation. This is because it is evinced and experienced primarily in terms of group-belongings, whether these are family or friends, or broader networks and coteries of shared interests.

Vernacular remembering is thus always a matter of the scale of reference and relation which memory has for those involved. This is as significant as the specific content of shared recollections or the social frameworks in which they occur, and it is because of this that it can incorporate both first- and second-hand experience.<sup>22</sup>With the latter, which derives from events or processes outside of people's direct everyday experience and comes from, say, reported news or a once-topical film, experience is absorbed into vernacular sense-making and so integrated into how individuals within groups assemble their own past lives together, in their day-to-day relationships. Certain acts of remembering come to us through their media constructions and representations, but in vernacular memory these have devolved from their broad national or regional dissemination; they have been down-scaled and in consequence woven into the remembered experience and remembering practices of particular groups. It is in such ways that externally derived materials relating to past-present relations become assimilated into the patchwork commingling of personal and interpersonal memories that constitute vernacular memory. The movement is opposite in symbolic direction and purpose to nationalist appropriations whereby vernacular memory is at times taken up, retooled and up-scaled in the interests of a quite different discourse, such as that of patriotism or the ideological construction of large-scale collective identity. One of the classic examples of the process of rescaling from national and international levels to vernacular level is the death of John Kennedy, the U.S. President assassinated in Dallas, Texas, on November 22<sup>nd</sup> 1963. This is an event which many people relate directly to what they were doing, in particular places and situations. The example is, however, exceptional. Our assimilation of tragic world-encircling news reports is just one among many examples of the rescaling involved in localising processes. It occurs in a variety of ways, and is commonplace in the construction of vernacular memory. All kinds of different events or chains of events extrinsic to a particular social group can become a definite point of reference in the landscape of memory and so resonate with other memories within the group, as well as more generally with how meanings are made out of the past among members of the group.

Vernacular memory is a field where individuated memories and a shared group past overlap and influence each other, where for example an extended group of family and affines are found sitting in a close huddle, 'piecing together some memory, each contributing his own little patch and then sitting back to see how it would turn out'.<sup>23</sup>There is no clear defining line between them, but we all distinguish shared group pasts from those memories we call our own, that have, or have been made to have, intensely personal significance. These may be of an intimate moment with a young love, or a word of praise from a parent at some now trivial childhood achievement, but individuated memory also entails the whole corpus of assimilated experience that has been deeply absorbed and, in ways we rarely grasp in a comprehensive manner, come to form who we are, and how we are seen by others. From another perspective, as members of social groups we all recognise that our individual memory is imbricated with the memories of a broad range of other people, such as sister, mother, friend or neighbour. Personal memory is as much socially formed as individually shaped. It is always interwoven with vernacular

memory, in a myriad of ways. This is affected by degrees of social and cultural inclusion in any one group, and by our membership of various groups and collectivities, as a result of which tensions and conflicts may arise from the acts and processes of vernacular remembering occurring between as well as within them. Vernacular memory within distinct social groups such as families or circles of friends nevertheless tends to be integrative in how it operates, becomes clearly manifest and leads to various consequences, since to a great extent it serves to bring together members of groups through shared narratives of the past. It acts to cement relations of self and social world through the ways in which these are collectively configured in processes of recollection. That is why there is always some degree of direct participation in vernacular remembering, as for instance in assembling and sharing a family album, or reminiscing about past music concerts with friends. Both within generations and across them, this sense of locally experienced or locally assimilated participation is a vital component of vernacular memory, and it is palpable whenever people interact via memory or objects of memory. Again, this contrasts markedly with national or transnational collective memory, for although that can involve sharing in commemoration of a past event or famous person, this sense of participation is not required, and different social and symbolic scales of remembering are necessarily in operation.

As a cross-modal field vernacular memory is therefore loosely defined by those sites where personal and shared practices and objects of remembering flow together or interact. Vernacular memory is always shared memory in the dual sense that our past experience is imaginatively reworked into memory products using interpretative schemata and social frames of understanding associated with the various different groups to which we belong during the life-course. In this ongoing process we are not only continually realising and achieving our narrative self-identity, but also continually contributing to and drawing from the identities of those collectivities to which we are affiliated. At a vernacular level such memory-texts are sometimes intimately shared, as for example when the affective and symbolic value of a family heirloom or framed photograph on a living room wall is consensually arrived at, and so becomes the basis by which it is mutually treasured. Even where memories and the artefacts associated with them are regarded as individual, private possessions, their value is often inseparable from those to whom they socially and culturally relate, such as children, a close family friend or a much loved scene. Regardless of where such value is placed, vernacular memory is either local and immediate, even in the face of the numerous material and virtual mobilities of modern times, or the result of the localisation which helps certain widely marketed cultural products gain mnemonic significance for a particular group or community, perhaps because of their counter-valence to modern mobilities. Contingent upon its local or localised significance, the meanings and associations characterising vernacular memory are realised in focused gatherings, and it is through these gatherings that first- and second-hand forms of remembering interact and inform each other, at times even changing places. In such ways as these, thinking of everyday remembering through the lens of vernacularity offers us ways of analytically tackling the vital social betweenness between individuals and groups that we are particularly interested in. Vernacular memory is in this sense transitional between memory tending more to the personal, of a moment of embarrassment when first meeting one's future parents-in-law, for example, and memory tending more to the collective, as for example with a hit song absorbed into family lore. In light of this, we use the term vernacular memory because it helps us keep in our sights the reciprocal, at times dialectical shaping of the individual and the collective in how we make sense of the past. Vernacular memory is at once individual *and* collective: partaking of both, and being interpenetrated by both, it is neither reducible to nor determined by either.

Vernacular memory can of course be quite at odds with the formalised, idealised acts of remembrance in official culture, as for example Sabine Marschall has shown in her study of the disjunctions in South Africa between vernacular memory and official forms of commemoration relating

both to the struggle against apartheid and to post-apartheid reconciliation and nation-building. Historical monuments created without reference to vernacular practices of remembering have been treated with indifference and disrespect, even vandalised and urinated against.<sup>24</sup> Yet this should not lead us to think that vernacular memory is necessarily in conflict with and defined against official memory, or to regard it as always concerned to contain or challenge official memory, for nationally oriented memories can become absorbed into vernacular memory, in a process that may involve infiltration of the requirement to commit to an 'imagined community' but may also make of official memory something that is valued as much as locally oriented memories. For this reason, in our own use of vernacular memory as an analytical term, we do not see it as dichotomously offset against official memory as this might be promulgated by nation-states, political elites or media systems. That is how John Bodnar presents the term in his book *Remaking America*. In exploring public commemorations, his perspective is on the conflict between official and vernacular cultures. Such conflict occurs and obviously has to be central to thinking about relations between them, but Bodnar's stark opposition between authentic vernacular memory and manipulative official memory relies upon idealising vernacular memory, 'which he describes in terms – shared experience, protecting values, small-scale communities – that convey in our culture authenticity and intimacy'. As Alon Confino has pointed out, the dichotomy between vernacular and official memory 'governs his analysis, method, and conclusions', but 'in the real world, things are not as neat'.<sup>25</sup> How official and vernacular cultural narratives come into dialogic encounter with each other is rather more complicated, as is apparent in the various ways in which the 'big' official narratives provided by history museums come into engagement with the 'little' vernacular narratives offered by visitors.<sup>26</sup> Attending to the relationships between these narratives is vital, though it is important also to look at vernacular memory from 'below' rather than primarily via the forms of public memory which emerge from the intersection of official and vernacular representations. In this respect, Bodnar's conception of vernacular memory as solely derived from first-hand experience in small-scale communities fails to acknowledge the value which mass-produced cultural products may attain at a vernacular level. We hope to have made clear that in vernacular memory there is only a general distinction, and not a sharp demarcation, between the value attached to self-made artefacts like photographs and the value personally and interpersonally made of mass-produced musical commodities. Vernacular memory acts not to dissolve this distinction but to combine local and localising cultural processes in the interests of utilising and bringing together different mnemonic resources.

We also use the term vernacular memory as an alternative to José van Dijck's concept of personal cultural memory. In *The Mnemonic Imagination*, we endorsed this concept for the way it keeps relationships between individuals and groups, and the productive tensions between the personal and public, at the forefront of our analytical attention to acts and moments of remembering, and to the role which mnemonic technologies play in these acts and moments. In arguing against the dangers of reifying collective memory or seeing it as simply an aggregation of individual memories, we positioned the individual rememberer as an active agent but one always operating within particular social schemas and frameworks, and in this respect our approach was closely in line with van Dijck's, as for example when she states that while personal memory 'can only exist in relation to collective memory' and 'we have to constantly align and gauge the individual with the collective', nevertheless 'the sum of individual memories never equals collectivity'.<sup>27</sup> Her definition of personal cultural memory as referring to 'the acts and products of remembering in which individuals engage to make sense of their lives in relation to the lives of others and to their surroundings, situating themselves in time and place' closely relates to our objects of study in this book, yet at the same time we have chosen to use vernacular memory as an operative concept.<sup>28</sup> We agree with van Dijck that the 'personal' and the 'cultural' are 'the threads that bind memory's texture', and that we need to move continuously between the 'personal' and 'cultural' as two interstratified points of emphasis, as for example when we consider autobiographical memory and

life-narratives while also taking into consideration the sociocultural conventions and contexts through which they are articulated.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless we find 'personal cultural memory' an awkward compound.

As a matter of anthropological necessity, personal memory is culturally constituted and cultural memory is registered in personal memory even if it extends beyond it. In this respect the term is tautological, with its conceptual significance blurring at the very point of the relation between the 'personal' and 'cultural'. For this reason it fails either to show or explain anything beyond what is already known about this relation in either memory studies or cultural studies. The term also privileges the personal, not least through using this qualifying adjective as its initial lexical choice. While van Dijck's concept of personal cultural memory is offered as a counterbalance to memory studies which privilege the collective to the detriment of the individual, it nevertheless lays too much stress on private memory.<sup>30</sup> At least it does so from the perspective we take here where we are concerned with the interrelations between specific practices of remembering and specific social categories and contexts. Our own work shares in van Dijck's aim of putting the individual rememberer properly back into the analytical frame, so challenging erroneous or exaggerated notions of collective memory, but in pursuing this aim we regard our own intellectual concerns as better served by thinking of everyday remembering as vernacular. Taking up Batchen's point again, it is always a matter of analytical horses for conceptual courses.

### **The Mnemonic Imagination**

The difference between domestic photography and recorded music because of the latter's industrial organisation and mass circulation is in a sense irrelevant for its relationship with memory, for although there is not the same self-production of memory artefacts, recorded music facilitates a powerful evocation of the past only when it has long since acquired personal meaning and had invested in it some strong affective and symbolic value as well as biographical significance. In another sense there always remains some tension between this meaning, value and significance on the one hand, and the extensive geographical distribution of recorded music on the other, as for example in the unease caused by the fact that 'our tune' can potentially be anyone's regardless of all it means to 'us'. Putting it another way, commodification has made the tune available to 'us' but commodification may also seem at times to undermine the importance ascribed to it by 'us'. For Alison Landsberg, the opposite is the case. Via her concept of prosthetic memory she explores how, in what she claims is a specifically modern form of cultural memory, people engage with historical narratives as these are mediated and widely circulated by communications media such as the cinema, the medium with which she herself is mainly preoccupied. Through such engagement the narrative becomes integrated with personal memory and incorporated into people's own archive of experience. There is no denying that such engagement takes place, and many examples of it could be cited, but Landsberg nevertheless looks one-sidedly at the phenomena of cultural commodification, focusing only on grand-scale circulation and playing down the negative effects of this as well as the manner in which it moulds cultural production in all its massified forms.<sup>31</sup> These effects may well be felt in those vernacular areas between private and public space which are straddled by the marketisation of social and cultural life.

Obviously there are benefits with large-scale distribution, but Landsberg idealises them in the attention she pays to their potential for participating in broad historical narratives and interweaving these with our more personal memories. The 'utopian dream' she locates in forms of prosthetic memory is of new political alliances based on collective social responsibility deriving from mediated forms of identification.<sup>32</sup> We have nothing against utopian dreams, but we have found no evidence of such new

alliances in the fieldwork we have conducted, and so this aspect of Landsberg's work is of limited relevance to us in this book. There nevertheless seems to be some conceptual kinship between prosthetic memory and the terrain of betweenness traversing individual and collective memory which we sketched out in the previous section, for what we *have* found abundant evidence of is that recorded music, produced as a mass-mediated cultural commodity, does become densely woven into the fabric of vernacular memory and at times takes on a deeply personal and interpersonal resonance and significance. The process this involves seems close to what Landsberg means by prosthetic memory when she talks of it operating at the interface between individual and collective experience, and so relates it to the same practices of making meaning and value across the temporal tenses that we have identified with vernacular memory. Landsberg refers to 'privately felt public memories', while we are focused somewhat differently on the intermediate areas between private and public by exploring what is involved in 'making our own' past-present relations out of both self-made and already-produced resources, yet there is clearly a continuum across these different modalities of remembering in that they likewise gain their affective force through the process of localisation.<sup>33</sup>

Conceptual kinship of this kind supports our own effort to shift memory studies away from sweeping, abstract theorising about collective memory, but it is difficult to assess Landsberg's key term and the value of its applications when these are not attested by any ethnographic evidence as to how prosthetic memory operates in everyday life. To that extent at least her approach is delimited by its analytical focus on attentive readings of particular cultural texts.<sup>34</sup> Although Landsberg is trying to widen the sense of belonging associated with practices of remembering beyond the familiar ambits of family, neighbourhood and immediate social group, she fails to identify the interactive mechanism by which personal memories and historical narratives or other widely circulating cultural resources become integrated. At the same time she tends to exaggerate the extent to which extended memories are specifically modern. Imaginative involvement with songs and stories transmitted in oral tradition are among many examples of pre-modern cultural resources which became integrated into and helped shape people's subjectivity and outlook on the world. What is without doubt specifically modern is the scale and scope by which cultural resources are transmitted and made available. Relating narratives to one's own experience has a long pedigree, and it is to this that powerful communications technologies have been added. It is in view of the vast array of such resources today that we need to go beyond textualist approaches in trying to find out more about how those resources are assimilated into vernacular memory, how for example, despite (as well as because of) its commodification, people wrest aesthetic and affective meaning from recorded music, and how this becomes the *sine qua non* of its value in memory. There is often a quality and at times an intensity in this which is entirely absent from the exchange value of the musical product, and for us the mechanism by which it is realised is the mnemonic imagination.

The mnemonic imagination constitutes the theoretical hub of our overall approach to memory and memory phenomena, and for this reason it centrally informs our study of memory, photography and recorded music. It is therefore important that we identify its operative features at the outset. These involve our imaginative engagement with both voluntary and involuntary acts and processes of remembering. Such engagement occurs both in and across time as we strive to draw fruitfully upon the past and apply it flexibly to the present for the sake of its enrichment and enhancement. A two-way movement is generated as memory feeds into and fuels our imagination, and memories are connected together and emplotted into a narrative structure and sequence. This is an ongoing process, with a changing narrative. Over the course of time the meanings, interrelations and estimations of significance of pieces of the past are reworked by the mnemonic imagination in order to accommodate changing trajectories in a mobile present. The consequence of this is that the narrative of a life as it is lived, or

the stories informing and sustaining families and friendships, are always in some degree fluid, being adapted to changing social circumstances and arrangements, or new ways of seeing and thinking. The concept of the mnemonic imagination shows that the production of meanings about past, present and future, along with their interconnections and influences on each other, is a creative process. We use it in our work in opposition to long-established claims that memory and imagination are utterly separate, and figure only as each other's foes.<sup>35</sup>

There are various ways in which memory and imagination are brought interactively together, for at times there may be harmonious synthesis or fusion, while more often they operate in productive tension with each other within a process of patchwork reconstruction as a result of which some long-term sense of pieces of the past fitting together is created, maintained, reinterpreted or repaired. The mnemonic imagination facilitates the intelligible transformation and continuous ordering of past experience. It draws on the fund of past experience in seeking fertile interaction with expectation, possibility and movement into the future. Through the mnemonic imagination we look back in order to see forward. This is the case not only with the memories associated with our own first-hand, lived experience, but also with the relations between such experience and mediated or inherited second-hand experience. The mnemonic imagination is the active means by which we grasp these relations and allow them to inform each other, so enriching our understanding of broader processes of change and broader patterns of continuity. In devising the concept of mnemonic imagination in order to develop what we have called a sociological aesthetics of remembering, the intention is both to show the creative dimensions of memory and bring these into encounter with an ethics of remembering. For us the aesthetics and ethics of remembering inform the ways in which the mnemonic imagination takes us beyond our own experiential horizon and into contact with the past experience of others, as well as with the longer-term historical narrative to which Landsberg refers. Yet it is crucial that we see these cross-temporal interanimations which the mnemonic imagination fosters and facilitates as occurring not in isolated moments, in the present as a sufficient-unto-itself segment of time, but rather in the way in which Max Silverman has recently conceived of it as a composite structure made of different traces of time which lie in varying layers of visibility at any one particular time.<sup>36</sup> Each of these temporal traces in and across the varying layers from which we recall them and rework them are capable of mediating, and being transformed by, another. Time present thus has a palimpsestic quality, and it is this quality which the mnemonic imagination operates with as it activates the linkages between different moments and episodes occurring in disparate spaces and places.

These can involve inherited memories, or what Marianne Hirsch calls postmemory. Postmemory refers to memories and memory artefacts inherited from a previous generation, but in her use of the term Hirsch is particularly interested in inherited memories which are overwhelming and may threaten to overshadow or displace one's own life-narrative because of difficulties or damaging consequences in their transmission, or because they can involve such a marked degree of imaginative investment and affective engagement. The family is often the key space for transmission in this respect, and Hirsch's work is especially concerned with Holocaust postmemory.<sup>37</sup> Her work is of enormous value in providing a framework for understanding inherited experience and inter-generational mnemonic transmission, and particularly the complex relations of first- and second-hand experience among Holocaust survivors and their offspring. It is also commendable for its transcendence of the limitations of textualism and adoption of other methods of investigation, yet as we have noted elsewhere, the means by which these inter-generational relations are navigated, and the very domain of 'post-ness' they involve, remains elusive.<sup>38</sup> In addition to this, Hirsch's key term seems to have built into it a set of temporal assumptions concerning 'pre' and 'post' that suggest reliance on a linear, progressive conception of time as a consequence of which it cannot provide an adequate analysis of how mnemonic transmission and

synthesis operate, never mind account for the phenomenological sense of time dilating or expanding in relation to arresting experiences or memories of them.

When positively assessed, the interaction between inherited pasts and our own narrative self is a creative one in which both memory and imagination move beyond their own distinctive capacities and achieve new meaning and understanding precisely because of the alternating pattern of their convergence and divergence. The mnemonic imagination facilitates these cross-temporal encounters and exchanges and so brings different forms and dimensions of memory into dialogue with each other. In this sense the concept is intended to help us develop a more refined understanding not only of the differential scales at which remembering practices operate, but also of how such practices move between a wide array of networks, associations and institutions, and across the varying spaces between the situated/mediated, personal/public, individual/collective sites associated with vernacular memory. These are the experiential sites in which photography and recorded music are used and evaluated as mnemonic resources, and in investigating the roles of these two media in everyday modes of remembering, we seek to create a better analytical sense of remembering well and what this signifies.

### **Aims and Intentions**

There are no fixed or absolute criteria for assessing what remembering well entails or whether it has been achieved, but everyone has some conception of it, everyone values it, and everyone strives to remember as well as they can, according to their own lights. In our own conception of it, remembering well is not so much having an accurate recall of what time our air flight descends into Seattle or where on our bookshelves we placed that book by a colleague about the Spanish Civil War, or even being starkly held by an image from the past – ‘young girls singing in a country choir, their hair shining with brushings and grease, their voices the voices of angels’.<sup>39</sup> It is more to do with those occasions when the mnemonic imagination is able to make past and present transactional, involving our own personal experience along with the experiences of others, sometimes in other periods and places than our own. To greater or lesser degree, this is integral to people’s autobiographical experience and the ways they understand their own lives in relation to a wide range of other lives, in time and across time. The communications technologies which are the twin focus of this book contribute to this understanding and figure centrally in the efforts people make to remember well; they are regarded as definite aids and alibis in achieving this, at least to their own satisfaction. There are certainly cases where the mnemonic imagination is obstructed, for one reason or another, as we shall see later in the book, but in the main efforts are continually made to ensure that the mnemonic imagination operates effectively in developing people’s understanding of how they make sense of their own and other people’s experiences.

It is important that we begin to be more considerate of what this involves. Memory studies as a field has devoted an inordinate amount of attention to disturbances of memory, to traumatic experience and the difficulties this causes in making memories functional. The consequent emphasis is on suffering, victimhood and damaged identities, with questions of remedy, resilience and resourcefulness being sidelined as a result. Attending to war, atrocity, spectacular violence and the ways these are remembered or distorted in memory is obviously of huge critical importance, but at the same time the space given over to such issues is out of kilter with what goes on for majority populations in their day-to-day lives, and for this reason there needs to be corresponding attention given to individual and collective remembering processes in everyday settings and contexts and the smaller-scale struggles over remembering that are part and parcel of those processes. Without this we fail to

maintain a fair balance between remembering well (however that is defined) and remembering that is disrupted (however that is defined). We fail to maintain a prudent sense of the relationship between the routine and the exceptional. By looking mainly at the latter we can also easily overlook the intricacies and intensities that are involved in everyday remembering. Remembering as creative practice is not in itself exceptional, for it goes on all the time in everyone's lives, involving applications of the mnemonic imagination in making meaning and deriving value out of all that has happened to us and to those we know in a series of interwoven pathways that we somehow retrace when we think of the past and what it makes of us.

With photography and recorded music as conveyances of memory, we see this as operating over three broad, overlapping stages. These involve drawing on photography and recorded music as cultural resources that facilitate remembering in one way or another; integrating them into life narratives in order to help make at least some semblance of meaning, order and coherence out of all that happens to us and those around us, with the mnemonic imagination being the key mechanism for achieving this; and in some relation or other to these resources, assessing the quality and value of experience over the course of time, particularly in relation to how our experience has become formative of who we and others are in our own identities. These three stages have been identified through our thematic analysis of the many interviews we have conducted, and we shall explore each of them in chapters two, three and four. As resources, they do not speak for themselves. We need to take their content into account, but we also need to assess this alongside what people say about their meaning and value. Just as 'a photograph can best be understood not as an answer or an end to inquiry, but as an invitation to look more closely, and to ask questions', so a recorded song or a piece of music provides us with an access point, a way of beginning to investigate the relationship between mundane communications technologies and the acts and practices of remembering that are integral to everyday life.<sup>40</sup> To comprehend this relationship for both photography and recorded music, we need to talk to people, and not presume that without doing so we can know anything in detail of the practices which activate the relations between mnemonic objects and remembering subjects.

During the course of the research on which we draw in this book, we conducted over a hundred in-depth, semi-structured qualitative interviews, and organised several focus groups. All of these were centred around the relationship between processes of remembering and the personalised use of media technologies. Most of the interviews were one-to-one but a few were conducted with couples and families. We started the project with a dozen pilot interviews. It was on the basis of these that we identified photography and recorded music as the two most salient media of remembering in everyday life. In designing the research we decided on our desired sample, produced an information leaflet, opened a website, devised our interviewing strategy and schedule, and identified various community networks and associations through which we could recruit participants. In the main, recruitment involved snowball sampling, starting from our initial contacts in various villages, towns and cities, with a premium being put on achieving a balanced composition across the key social categories of gender and generation, social class and ethnicity. We aimed for an equal mix of men and women across the four age categories of 18-35 years, 35-50 years, 50-65 years, and 65 years plus. We also targeted three key ethnic communities local to the English East Midlands where the research was primarily based – white British, African Caribbean and Asian – and were fortunate to interview a dozen people from across Europe while they were attending a university summer school. Additional funding enabled us to broaden out from the East Midlands as a geographical area by organising a Mass Observation call on photography, music, and memory. This was based on our main research questions and so was complementary to our interview transcripts. It generated 168 responses. At the start of the research we gave a number of presentations to various community groups, again as a recruitment strategy;

engaged in interviews on local radio programmes; wrote short pieces for local newspapers; and distributed our leaflet through various strategic channels and public places. As volunteer informants got in touch with us, we began our long series of interviews, conducted both in the day and during evening sessions once our informants' other commitments had been fulfilled (e.g. attending to work and/or children). All our interviews were digitally recorded, and informants asked to sign an agreement about our subsequent use of the data.

A key concern in conducting our interviews was that we developed a high degree of consistency in our overall approach, so ensuring that the resulting data was comparable in terms of response to our questioning and to our overall research aims and interests, but of course there is no 'one size fits all' format for interviews about media and memory. We were aware of this from our pilot interviews, and so tried to balance consistency of approach with flexibility in its application. The main areas of questioning were based on the main aims of the research. These included how photography and recorded music feature in everyday life as vehicles or catalysts of remembering; how these two media operate in both divergent and convergent ways within the same mnemonic environment; how resources of remembering are built up and deployed in relation to processes and practices of remembering more broadly; how memories are transmitted in time and over time, or serve to bring past and present into active dialogue; and finally how individual memories are woven into wider shared narratives and cultural representations of the past in the discourses of day-to-day, year-to-year remembering.

As a consequence of some of the earliest interviews we conducted, we devised the innovative method of the self-interview. Personal memories can unleash a torrent of feeling; they can engage still unresolved emotional states or processes, such as resentment, remorse and grief. In one of these early interviews an elderly man broke down several times, his tears preventing him from replying to our questions. These were surmounted, and even though we offered to close the interview and leave, he insisted on continuing. It felt nevertheless that his privacy had been breached, and we had intruded in an area – his abiding sense of loss for his wife who he still missed profoundly even though she had been dead for ten years – where we should not have trodden. This was the initial impetus behind our developing the method of the self-interview, but we soon realised that it was particularly suited for researching memory in a number of ways. The main virtues of the method are that informants can pause the recording if their feelings well up and prevent them speaking, so enabling them to regain their self-composure in their own good time; if they wish to think further about which mnemonic resources to discuss or which experiences they wish to communicate; if they decide to check on certain details associated with their memories; or if they want to pace the interviews according to their own schedules and priorities.<sup>41</sup> In one or two cases as well, informants asked if they could keep an electronic diary, the writing of which is a well-known qualitative social research method. This became another means of gathering information, and afforded some of the same advantages. With both self-interviews and diaries, informants were given a guidance sheet that outlined the purpose of the research and set out a list of main topics and questions to be covered. The bulk of the data was collected between July 2010 and December 2013.<sup>42</sup>

Initially we coded all our data using the software package NVivo, having developed our own coding system within its overall programme.<sup>43</sup> This was useful in helping us begin to organise our material and identify some of the key lines of response seeming to run through the data. Out of this process emerged the first iteration of our thematic categories, around which the book is structured, but after a prolonged trial we felt that this software was proving somewhat too crude, and so we started combining this approach with selecting extracts from the interview transcripts and putting these together under different headings. This still didn't afford us sufficient flexibility in developing the

refined analytical framework we felt our data required, and in the end we found that there was no satisfactory substitute for the old-fashioned but time-honoured procedure of sitting down, reading carefully through the material, and discussing it at length. This we did at weekly meetings between summer 2013 and summer 2014.<sup>44</sup>As we went through all the material at our disposal, we made lengthy notes on the loose patterns that were emerging with respect to the relationship between personal and interpersonal uses of media and practices of remembering. We kept a constant eye out for both what seemed to be social commonalities and what seemed to be individual peculiarities in order very gradually to discern what connects such uses and practices, and what differentiates them.<sup>45</sup> It was at the end of this process that we settled a final version of our thematic framework and analytical categories.

Perhaps inevitably, we found our research material to be of variable quality, but we were still struck by its overall richness and range, far more so than at the time we were immersed in the immediate process of interviewing such a wide range of people, and as we proceeded with our analysis it became clear that some interview transcripts were especially interesting. Indeed, they stood out as quite remarkable sources of information and insight, and as truly absorbing records of experience and practice. In light of this we decided to focus on them as case studies that could run through the book. Rather than just be occasional voices, they develop throughout the book as significant *dramatis personae*. The chief virtue of this is that it creates the opportunity to engage more fully with particular individuals, couples or families, their uses of the two media, the means by which they have derived lasting meaning from them, and the ways in which they have found them valuable when relating to and drawing upon the past. The case studies show the considerable thought that can go into the deployment of these media in everyday life, along with the range of feelings that arise in connection with their correlated memories, and the high degree of self-reflexivity accorded to both practices of remembering and the forms in which memories are reconstructed and interwoven with ongoing narratives relating to self-identity, relationships and modes of sociality. At the same time as working on these case studies, we continued to analyse and thematise the material in our wider range of interview transcripts, even though we derived quotations from them in a more occasional manner. The case-study method we adopted explains why certain names crop up regularly throughout the book, whereas other people are cited only one or a few times. Developing a case-study approach enabled us to do justice to the quality of remembering and responsiveness offered by certain informants, and at least begin to map out the main traces of vernacular uses of our two mnemonic media in the broader context of the life course and the longer-term patterns of appraisal and accounting that are integral to what we do when we draw on our memory and think about where we have been, what we have done, and who we are.

The participants in the research who we developed into case studies and drew on repeatedly throughout the book are set out in the following table:

<b>GENDER</b>	<b>AGE GROUP</b>	<b>NAME</b>
<b>WOMEN</b>	18-35	Lisa – white mother of two children, university graduate previously working in local council education.
		Val – white woman from Bulgaria, now resident in the UK; mother of three children, working in higher education.
	35-50	Helen – white mother of two children, previously working in further education, now a freelance educational consultant.

	50-65	Jocelyn – white mother of two children, working as a research assistant.
	65+	Janice – white mother of two children, retired secondary school teacher.
<b>MALE</b>	18-35	Deon – second generation African Caribbean, youth worker, father of two.
		Pradip – Indian, now resident in the UK; doctoral student.
	35-50	Peter – white, married, working in engineering.
	65+	Gabor – retired, agricultural sector; living with long-term partner; originally from Hungary, resident in the UK from age sixteen.
Benjamin – white, married, retired from work in computer science.		
<b>GROUPS</b>	65+	Iris and Matthew – white, parents of four children, retired.
	35-50/18-35	Vanca, Fara and Sihi– British Asian family, mother working in community organisation, daughters at university.

The case-study informants are both usual and unusual. They are usual in more or less according with a general pattern of response, but unusual in the quality of that response to questions about their media uses and remembering practices. They are also more generally usual in some respects but unusual in others, revealing an interesting deviation from what is elsewhere pretty much common to the ways the two media are used in everyday life and associated with past moments or past episodes in their lives. It is in these ways that we have integrated our case studies into our overall analysis, marking where they are comparable with other examples of cross-temporal relations in the inventory of everyday remembering, and discussing where they depart from what is habitual and appear, relatively speaking, to be rather irregular or incongruous. In this respect the approach we have taken to the case studies accords with our overall attempt to give due light to what is dissident, at least in relation to the rest of the data we have gathered, while also attempting to establish and set out the loose patterns that are identifiable within that data, relating these to the balance we tried to achieve across informants in the social categories of gender and generation, social class and ethnicity. Here our intention from the get-go was not to build a statistically representative sample but instead to select participants from these categories on the basis of their citation as possible sources of variation in personal media use and practices of remembering. In the course of the research we found that there is as much variation within as between these categories. That is why we have tried to avoid atomising people into stand-alone representatives of discrete social categories. While these are significant aspects of identity, they intersect, at times multiply, and may affect practices of remembering in various ways, sometimes directly, sometimes obliquely.

To elaborate further on this, it may well be that in some respects the generation to which someone belongs affects the practices associated with using both recorded music and photography, and it is certainly the case that in the past gender has been of greater significance for differentiation in photographic practices than it has been for such differentiation in music listening practices, but various complications can be added to such loose patterns, with changes to preceding photographic practice, for example, occurring at the intersections of gender and generation: over the past fifty years, at least in Britain, who takes the pictures and who curates them seems to have become less defined by gender roles and identities as older distinctions start to fade. Even as we take such complications into account, things are not always quite so clear. It has long been recognised that our memories are influenced by

our cultural ways of seeing and being, even though these change throughout our lifetimes. Two of the pioneers in the modern study of memory, Frederic Bartlett and Maurice Halbwachs, both wrote about schemata and social frameworks, with definite schemata providing organising structures for the accumulation and reconstruction of our memories, and shared frameworks of meaning helping us in our everyday social relationships to make contextualised sense of our memories over long and uneven periods of time. That in itself seems fine, but what remain less discernable are the micro-sociological specificities of our experience/memory relations that would allow us to fully recognise and chart the influence of such factors as our membership of various social groups or our changing structural position in society on the way we orientate ourselves to memory and operate as remembering subjects. The influence of some factors, such as gender, are perhaps now better understood than others, such as ethnicity, yet we lack a comprehensive picture of the ways in which associations with particular social groups and collectivities inform, shape and guide our remembering practices and help to form the organising frameworks within which we develop our understanding of the relations between past and present.

While we may readily acknowledge this, is such a picture anything but chimerical when the relations that are involved may seem at times as ever-changing as waves upon water? That is perhaps putting it somewhat melodramatically. We can at least identify what we see as waves with a certain regularised formation to them, for they move in rhythm with each other and flow in a particular direction. That is why we refer to patterns, but emphasise their looseness, for it is important that we avoid willfully imposing different social categories and positions on remembering practices and organising frameworks, as if they always act in symmetrical alignment with each other. In this respect what the data show are not broad general features connected with social categories; rather, the social categories themselves provide a starting point in explaining popular remembering experiences and practices. Different forms of social identity and subject-position, different lifestyles and place in the social order, lead to diversity in the ways practices operate or challenges are made to the conventions adopted in engagement with practices, and they certainly affect degrees of competences in such operation and engagement, but they do not always do so in any straightforward or simple manner. They may affect how meanings are made of the relations of past and present in quite indirect, complex and interacting ways. The purposes to which the resources of photography and recorded music are put and the interpretations of experience which are generated through them are not in each and every case reducible to sociological variables. Such variables must be accounted for where they are relevant to all that remembering involves and all that is said about it, but they are not necessarily directly visible or even indirectly traceable in the narratives that are offered. That is a condition of studying everyday remembering but it does not compromise our overriding intention of gathering evidence that shows the considerable sophistication of vernacular memory and its associated practices. Across the book as a whole we make sense of this evidence most of all by employing the concept of the mnemonic imagination in order to develop and refine our understanding of how creative remembering is a key component of people's lives as they have been recounted for us. Creative remembering is of course not synonymous with remembering well as it may have quite negative, if not disastrous consequences; creative remembering is nevertheless a precondition for remembering well and that it is why this is important. It is this above all that we want to demonstrate.<sup>46</sup>

## **Postscript**

The importance of bringing photography and music together in investigating how they operate in conjunction with each other, as well as separately, for the ways in which we refer back to and think

about the past, was confirmed by happenstance when one of us was driving and listening to the radio. Halfway into the show a popular song from the early 1960s was introduced. Except to those acquainted with country music and the popular music of this particular period, 'She's Got You' is a rather obscure song. It did become a hit record, yet hardly a standard, and it is not among the most well-known songs associated with its two most celebrated singers. It was written by Hank Cochran (1935-2010), one of Nashville's most famous songwriters, and first sung by Patsy Cline (1932-1963) who, along with other female singers like Brenda Lee, contributed to the country/pop music crossover of the late 1950s, early 1960s. Following Katie Wells, Cline helped pave the way for the success of other women in the Nashville country music industry.<sup>47</sup> These included Loretta Lynn (b 1935), to whom Cline had been friend and mentor.<sup>48</sup> Later, Lynn also recorded 'She's Got You', along with a whole album of Patsy Cline's songs, but it was Cline's version that seemed to endorse our comparative analysis of photography and recorded music.

The quality of this version and the emotions expressed are enhanced by knowledge of Cline's early death, and of a singular voice cut off in its prime.<sup>49</sup> The song tells the tale of the jilted lover. This is a familiar story in country songs of the mid-twentieth century. The theme may seem formulaic and outworn, but apart from the fine, delicate way it was sung, what is significant about it is the way the singer looks back at her lost love, and the objects she uses in doing this. She turns to photographs and phonograph records in acceptance of their mutual compatibility and interaction as conveyances of remembering, yet these are more than objects of memory for the singer. The pathos surrounding them creates the mood in which her thoughts and feelings are suffused. In a reduced present that contrasts dramatically with a diffused time she equates with romantic happiness, the singer/storyteller has got the picture of her ex-lover, and the records they played when they were together, but 'the only thing different, the only thing new', is what is sorrowfully encapsulated in both the title and refrain of the song: 'she's got you'. Three simple words, yet each achingly emphatic of the transition and change involved.

The loss of a flesh-and-blood lover is articulated through the media-related memories possessed by the singer, the artefacts of photos and records linking her back to a time when both experiences and memories were shared with him. It is this difference in how she looks back that imbues these objects with pathos, for it is clear from the song how powerful they are. The photographs and pieces of music are precious in permitting access to the past, yet the loss and regret of the song, which is its musical and lyrical signature, derive from the different sense of what they mean to her, what their meanings are now, in a different form of remembering. On the one hand they convey only apparitions from the past because the moments of togetherness they enshrine will never be experienced again. That is what her photos and phonograph records tell her in their constant reminder that 'she's got you'. On the other hand, she remains in the grip of the memories they invoke. As Patsy Cline sang the line 'I've got your memory, or has it got me?' her slurring of the word 'or' succinctly conveys this profound ambiguity of experience. As Richard Leppert has noted, 'the sound of Cline's voice reclaims the very agency that many of the songs she sang ... eschew'.<sup>50</sup> We remain uncertain as to who is possessor and who the possessed, or even what it is that she possesses or is possessed by. Hearing the song again happily supported our sense of the need to investigate how these two cultural technologies mediate personal and social memories, and why they become bracketed together as media of memory. It seemed quite natural that they were placed together in the song, and this corroborated our realisation of the importance of attending to these technologies comparatively. That is the point of all that follows.