Friendship Photography: Memory, Mobility and Social Networking

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Introduction

In his controversial book *The Social Conquest of Earth* (2012), Edward O. Wilson, Professor Emeritus at Harvard University, biologist and Darwinist, claims that it is not the family that has been fundamental to human evolution but friendship. He defines this as ‘highly flexible alliances’ between prehuman ancestors whose ‘bonding is based on cooperation among individuals or groups who know one another and are capable of distributing ownership and status on a personal basis’ (2012: 17). What is striking about Wilson’s book is his emphasis upon multidirectional alliances between families, genders, classes and tribes whose ‘memories had to travel far into the past to summon old scenarios and far into the future to imagine the consequences
of every relationship’ (2012: 17). Wilson’s research (while clearly grounded in the biological sciences) resonates with our contemporary culture, which stresses the importance of friendship, collectives, tribes, networks and their memories, emotions and sociality.

This focus on friendship over family can be clearly located within the sphere of media and communication studies. It has shifted its attention from the privacy of the family as the context of production and consumption to the public domain of networked intimacy. While the current focus on networked photography as social currency may be new in terms of ubiquitous computing, the idea of public intimacy produced through the snapshot is not. In Elizabeth Siegel’s *Galleries of Friendship and Fame: A History of Nineteenth-Century American Photograph Albums* (2010), she explores the precedent for exchanging self-portraiture through a photo calling card (*carte-de-visite*) in the 1860s, thus already demonstrating the importance of affective branding among networks of elite persons and families that sought intimacy through photography. The intimacy explored in this chapter differs in that it is ordinary and technologically distributed. Again, this is not entirely new either. Gillian Rose has written extensively on the family photograph in terms of its movement into the public sphere and its mobility among

However, as with previous studies of family photography (see Hirsch 1997) the focus is on the domestic, the family and the importance of memory for shoring up familial relations. In terms of the emergence of a concept of friendship photography, this chapter argues that the pervasive ubiquity and ordinary affective mobility of mobile-phone camera photography has an impact on memory and forgetting. Particularly, if those images are made by networks of young people for whom friendship is more important than family. In this chapter, I shall consider the production and movement of camera-phone images created by young people. Their practices may complicate the notion that memory, archiving and gift-giving is defining the movement of domestic photography within our visual economy, largely dominated by women and mothers as producers of affect and intimacy (see Rose 2010).

I therefore reflect on the research I undertook regarding young people’s mobile camera phones in the context of their use of social-networking sites towards their production of personal memories for public consumption. This research was conducted in 2009–10, with young people in the UK aged 15–18, through the completion of 94 questionnaires and five focus groups. It found that their use of camera phones was
fundamental to documenting the places, locations and communities they inhabited. Unlike some older mobile-phone camera users, their level of literacy and creativity suggests a desire to connect in placed, emotive and meaningful ways through everyday photography. They did not have a ‘hostile worlds’ view of the relationship between a sacred private sphere of the family and a dangerous public sphere of the internet. Nor did they have a scarcity approach to visual media. For these young people, managing everyday photography was fundamental to a constant and important process of ‘becoming’ rather than a more traditional identity-politics focus on ‘being’.

I have detailed the methodology used in this research project in *Media and Memory* (2011). The focus there was on using the results to provide a framework for thinking through the practices of memory and forgetting by young people. I would like to expand upon the notion of ‘connected memory’ that I began to explore in that book. Here I aim to understand the affective uses of photographs of everyday life as a form of friendship photography that has a different relationship to memory as mobile and networked intimacy. While Susan Sontag has argued that the circulation and dissemination of photos becomes more important than their saving and archiving (2004: 26), José van Dijck has maintained that new forms of connectivity and sharing (particularly through
photographs) are challenging pre-existing social and cultural theories of individuality and collectivity (2011, 2012).

Drawing upon Annette Kuhn’s autobiographical memory work through her analysis of the family photograph album (2002) and Anna Reading’s concept of ‘memobilia’ (Reading 2009), this chapter examines the emergence of the photograph as a shared, networked and thus connected reflection of the everyday lives of young people. No longer laid out in a hard-copy album, the photograph exists in personal archives, from the memory cards of mobile camera phones to computer hard drives and online digital vaults. Once shared online it becomes *networked friendship photography*. Thus, the generation that takes family photographs and lovingly sticks them in an album will soon be replaced by a generation that acknowledges the fruitless preservation of a sacred, private sphere of families as opposed to an online public sphere of rapidly contracting and expanding visualized connections and alliances.

**Family Photography, Memory, Media**

An understanding of personal and public histories is structured through what José van Dijck has termed ‘mediated memories’ (2007). This term refers to the ‘activities and objects we produce and appropriate by means of media technologies, for creating and re-creating a sense of past,
present, and future of ourselves in relation to others’ (van Dijck 2007: 21). Family photographs are an articulation of these mediated memories, such that ‘the personal memory of an individual is perceived as enmeshed within a whole, ultimately indivisible from its contextual webwork, yet personally unique and situationally distinctive’ (Booth 2008: 300). While this chapter does not produce memory work from young peoples’ personal reminiscences around digital photography, it is important to note that generations of families have ‘create[ed] themselves through memory practices like photography’, such that ‘by defining their memory, they define themselves’ (Tebbe 2008: 201). While the same can be said for friends and couples, it is the domestic, intimate and affective power of a sacred familial space and experience that has held sway over lay photography. It has been the *ordinary family* that has required construction and remembering.

However, what I do not notice when researching my own social-networking pages is the ‘loss’ and ‘longing’ that Annette Kuhn (2002) isolated when analysing her own family photographs of her childhood. ‘Why should a moment be recorded,’ asks Kuhn, ‘if not for its evanescence’? (Kuhn 2002: 49) If the way in which we view photographs is very much linked to our personal memories and our shared stories of being and becoming, then what difference do the
photographs of my friends make to my life (story)? In fact, mobile-phone and digital-camera images are now so ubiquitous that their multiple displays on my computer screen, taggable and shareable, no longer suggest loss. They immerse me in a default archive or montage of embodied, fragmentary and episodic lives that has more to do with the incompleteness of networked memory than the completeness of family narratives. The photographs we witness, scrutinize, surveil and forget on Facebook, for example, no longer seize a moment as if they have only that one chance to capture events. Rather, they are constantly ‘metonymically transport[ing] you’ (Tolia-Kelly 2004: 316) to times and places that you have never experienced and that belong to others yet into which you are extended. In the context of film studies, Alison Landsberg describes these prosthetic memories as ‘not strictly derived from a person’s experience’, but ‘experienced with a person’s body as a result of an engagement with a wide range of cultural technologies’ (2004: 26). Thus, the images are close to my body (prosthetic and supplement as both needed and extra) and I get to live my friends’ lives just for a moment.

For Annette Kuhn (2002), the production of a family photograph album involved the careful and detailed presentation of well-chosen photographs from expensive cameras. These were carefully developed and selected, then
lovingly and with great skill placed and preserved in beautifully presented bound albums or singly framed for display. Now, an album of everyday life is carried around in our pocket, instantly accessible any time, any place, anywhere. But is it even an album? Most significantly, the mobile phone has become a technological archive(r) of everyday life and narratives – visual, aural and textual – that can be ‘messaged’ as Gillian Rose defines it (2010: 68) and shared. Daniel Rubinstein and Katrina Sluis (2008) argue that our life has become more photographic because of the mobile camera phone: not in a traditional printed way, but in a screen-based and networked way, transformed from an individual to a communal activity (offline and online), with no lone photographer taking that singular image with its ‘aura’ of uniqueness. With this in mind, the tendency might be to enframe mobile-phone memories in discourses of globalization and technologization in order to recognize the rapid social shifts in production and consumption. These shifts should not be seen to dominate our understanding of what we actually do with mobile camera phones and how we feel about them and the images they produce.

Thus, it is important to interrogate how and why mobile-phone users produce and consume their photo albums in the context of friendship photography so as to isolate continua from an old media economy to a new one, as well as
to understand shifts in domestic/public practice. Kuhn says that memory work (and in this case with mobile-phone users) can make possible the exploration of the ‘connections between “public” historical events, structures of feeling, family dramas, relations of class, national identity and gender and “personal” memory’ (2002: 4). The movement of images from our phones to the internet represents the making public of a previously private gallery of images towards the ‘collective nature of the activity of remembering’ (Kuhn 2002: 4). However, the term ‘collective’ – in the context of the seminal work by Maurice Halbwachs (1992) – may no longer be useful for undertaking memory work with mobile-phone camera images because the group today is not simply defined in terms of family, kinship or geographically specific places. Rather the concept of ‘joint memory’ (Ashuri 2011) might explain the practices of sharing photographs of family and friends through media technologies because it does not assume a ‘hostile worlds’ view of a division between private/family and public/internet.

Within the context of war, conflict and remembering, Tamar Ashuri seeks to address the ethical question of what we should remember, considering the role of ICTs in witnessing and recording. In making ‘their personal memories visible to the public domain’, Ashuri posits that the term ‘joint memory’ aptly expresses ‘an aggregation of memories of
individuals which are accessible to members of a community who were absent from the occurrences in time, in space, or in both’ (2011: 106). Thus, what we actually do with camera phones is to connect more deeply and emotionally to the physical places and spaces we do and do not inhabit and the times we experience, jointing ourselves to our cultural geographies as well as to those not geographically proximate. Katz and Aakhus (2002) have written of mobile-phone culture as one of ‘perpetual contact’, while Srivastava (2005) has reiterated this idea of perpetual contact: as being in the world (or ‘becoming’) rather than as being contactable for giving and receiving information. Towards this end, academic theory has explored the mobile phone’s situatedness (positioned near the human body, close to the user’s personal sphere of belonging) as much as its mobility (see Richardson 2005).

Therefore, what people actually do with (and are able to do with) their mobile phone in terms of its mnemonic capabilities as a visual recorder of everyday life should be considered not as private or public but as a syncing of memories to lived life and a tagging of emotional connections within situated experiences. It is the younger generation who will negotiate the transition between the narrative-driven analogue family album and the wearable, mobile friendship album as their own lives develop within both platforms. They are literally the ‘joints’ who compile personal memories in
multiple formats and for whom mobility is constrained due to a dependency on family, but for whom freedom and the right to communicate about their daily lives is opened up within multiple social-network platforms.

The ‘public compilation of personal recollections’ by young people can be seen as a domestic version of Ashuri’s joint memory agents in action (2011: 106). Such agents in Ashuri’s research serve to undermine the ‘domination of professional agents who establish, maintain, and hence control the channels of description by which memory travels from people who have experienced a certain event first-hand to those who lack such experiences’ (2011: 106). As such, young people representing their everyday lives from phone to internet may not be witnesses to the kind of events that professionals are narrating (as in newsworthy events). Rather, their childhoods and development are being narrated and documented by parents and family members who have hitherto established, maintained and controlled the stories through analogue means. With this in mind, it is important to understand their friendship photography as one that is dynamic and mobile.

**Mobile Phones: Wearable Albums**

Interestingly, Anna Reading’s (2008) mobile-phone-using female participants aged 20–35 involved in her 2006 research project viewed the ‘family album’ contained within the phone
as a transient and contingent album. It was either not worth keeping, transferring or producing in hard copy, or not possible to keep due to the commercial imperative of short-term phone contracts. Like Rubinstein and Sluis (2008), Reading identified the transitory nature of taking photos (being able to delete instantly) and the proliferation of images captured (again due to the delete function). The women used the phone as a ‘portable “family album”’ (2008: 361) to embed visually their daily lives and carry those visual memories with them to show to others. As in Gillian Rose’s extensive research of doing family photography (2003, 2004, 2005), the producer had not changed: women were controlling how the family was represented within this emergent and networked intimacy.

Anna Reading’s research (2008: 356) foregrounded the ‘family gallery’ and its wearability on the human body through what she termed the ‘memory prosthetic’ of the mobile phone. Here, mobile-phone users perform and shore up their identities through co-present screenings in public spaces of mobile photo albums. Yet, one should not let the mobility of the camera phone undermine the desire to joint the device to the places we inhabit and the memories that we connect to geographies (see Jones and Garde-Hansen 2012). Mobile blogging (or ‘moblogging’) sites such as Twitter or Sina Weibo and social-networking sites such as Facebook use
prompts that want to know what you are doing and where you are at any given moment, and photographs provide the proof of this with geo-tagging potentialities. Hence, the mobile phone’s camera is a visual extension of ‘the most intimate aspect of a user’s personal sphere of objects (e.g. keys, wallet, etc.)’ (Srivastava 2005: 113) and it visualizes the intimacy of the people and places that position the user in a specific space (like visual anchors), thus allowing the ephemerality of Facebook images to be tagged vertically into place as much as horizontally across online networks.

Anna Reading’s more recent concept of ‘memobilia’ draws on research within the field of digital and mobile memories (see Garde-Hansen, Hoskins and Reading 2009). Such that ‘[m]obile digital phone memories or memobilia are wearable, shareable multimedia data records of events or communications’ which are ‘deeply personal and yet instantly collective through being linked to a global memoryscape of the World Wide Web’ (Reading 2009: 81–2). This in turn is a development of her earlier theorization of a gendered mobile gallery made possible through the wearability of the camera. It is the new relationship with photography and everyday life (particularly family life) that is of importance here, and, by extension, the central question becomes who gets to represent that domestic sphere and in what ways: parents or children?
Like Reading, Rubinstein and Sluis identify the most significant feature of the technological shift from analogue camera to digital camera phone as the drawing of the means of production and distribution closer to the individual (2008: 12). Yet, what if that individual is not yet considered to be a legitimate maker of family memories? Once the subject of a childhood narrative and now the producer of that narrative outside the direct control of the family, the teenager can construct his or her own version of family life. As Sara McNamee (2000) has argued about children’s everyday lives, they are finding within their leisure spaces Foucauldian heterotopias that enable them to resist and escape control, which can now be extended much farther into the decreasing boundaries of online life.

As I have argued in *Media and Memory* (2011: 139), the ‘creative imperative has become far more central to [teenagers’] existence in a mediated world.’ Rather than ‘occasional or dedicated consoles of ludic and narrative connectivity’ mobile camera phones are swiftly becoming ‘emergent nodes of creativity and digital art’ (Richardson 2005). Thus, I have proposed that the concept of ‘connected memory’ (Garde-Hansen 2011: 136) will have far more resonance in teenagers’ everyday lives than Kuhn’s continuously structured flow from personal to collective memory (2002: 4) that she isolates in her analysis of family
life and photography. Rather than emphasize mobility (Reading 2008, 2009) and itinerancy (Richardson, 2005), Nicola Green and Leslie Haddon (2009: 48) have argued that camera phones and social networking can intensify strong ties through the connected presence of established cliques. In my research, I found that all the teenagers had acquired their mobile phones when they were 11 or 12 years old. The majority owned the most up-to-date handset (often a better version than their parents’). They knew how to use the device to produce strong ties to connect and disconnect. Some had even programmed a shortcut button onto the screen, which they could secretly press to make their phone ring. This was for the many awkward, boring and uncomfortable social situations they sought disconnection from, and many of them considered it to be fundamental to lived life.

(Dis)connecting Memories

With the majority of male and female respondents defining their phone as a source of entertainment, connection and a lifeline, it is no surprise that photographs and connecting with friends were the two main functions used by teenagers, whether the latter is through texting or social networking. The older the participants, the more photographs they had accumulated on their phones (in most cases more than 200 photographs were stored in the phone’s memory) and these
consisted of images of everyday life for them: friends, family and fun times. The camera phone was theirs to document daily life, whereas special family occasions were considered in the control of parents: Christmas, weddings, formal birthday parties were imagined to require the stability, dependability and tradition of a stand-alone (albeit digital) camera. Hence, family rituals that involved the remaking of relationships between family members fell within the domain of parents with their more expensive equipment.

Photos of friends and everyday life, or as they termed them ‘out and about’ photos, were frequently cited as the main use of their camera phones. Regardless of gender, photos of friends, family and funny things were shared face-to-face, mobile-to-mobile and mobile-to-internet, in order to establish trusted networks of connected memories. These fell outside the ‘official’ family narratives produced by parents, and the teenagers had complete control over them, thus according with Reading’s (2008: 362) statement that:

Rather than the personal album or shoebox of memories in the dusty cupboard, the mobile ‘archive’ suggests that even in relation to their own personal memories the individual now performs the role of a public librarian or trained archivist, ordering and maintaining documents relating to the
past with its concomitant status, authority and location within the public realm of the lifeworld.

Unlike their parents, the teenagers were not precious about their images. They did not conceptualize their mobile phones as handsets of digital treasures, but they did see their importance for establishing and maintaining friendships and connections offline and online.

However, throughout my research I was keen to focus on the hows and whys of teenage archiving and storage of memories using mobile phones. It is important to note that 67 per cent said that they deleted their photographs from their handset through what I termed in the book Media and Memory four deletion dynamics: not MY memory, future memory, save memory and transfer memory (2011: 145–8). It is the first two of these that I wish to focus on in more depth in the context of this chapter’s attention to photography and its changing practices in capturing everyday life. The not MY memory deletion dynamic was driven by a sense of ownership and aesthetic standards, suggesting that the teenage users were not just randomly taking digital snaps in a throwaway manner as a deliberated use of the camera phone. Rather, common to this age group were accidental shots, delayed image-taking by the handset, poor construction or out-of-focus photos. Moreover, the production of images not taken by them when their phones had been knowingly or unknowingly purloined
was a frequent occurrence (what in the context of stealing and despoiling social-networking sites is termed ‘fraping’ or ‘Facebook raping’). Regardless, the not MY memory deletion dynamic was driven by temporal and spatial factors rather than content: out of date, needs updating, forgotten what the photo is about, I did not take that photo. Such an excess of images of the everyday speaks to the movement from ‘scarcity to saturation’ that Ben Highmore considers fundamental to the question of ‘the ordinary’, posed for media not as ‘a question of representation but of attention’ (2010: 115) and, I would add, of necessary forgetting.

Quality control, privacy control and constant updating were frequently cited by the teenagers as the mobile-phone camera practices they undertook because they intended to connect and share the images with a wider audience off- and online. I have termed this the future memory dynamic, in which, as image-entrepreneurs, they effectively brand their identities through online self-portraiture. Aware of how they want to see themselves and how they want others to see them, the teenagers recognized their own development as young people, the changeability of their everyday lives and the constant need to replace images in light of new haircuts, clothes, pets, activities, friendships and places. Furthermore, the deletion dynamic allowed the future memory photo to emerge into being, to be tested with an audience and then to become
memorable. They even cited that their best photos for sharing online were the unintentional, the accidental or simply the ones that had escaped deletion on their phones (and so by a process of de-selection were selected). Friendship photography is about working out how to deal with a saturation of everyday images by paying attention to media as heterogeneous and complex through pragmatic and deliberate forgetting rather than the active remembering so important to family photography.

Therefore, deletion was a conscious and deliberate forgetting in order to move forward (particularly when their camera phone had captured them in a pose they considered ugly). As Paul Connerton (2008: 63) explains of the wider social context of history, but which is equally applicable to these teenagers deleting the photographs that do not represent them in the best light at that moment in time:

The emphasis here is not so much on the loss entailed in being unable to retain certain things as rather on the gain that accrues to those who know how to discard memories that serve no practicable purpose in the management of one’s current identity and ongoing purposes. Forgetting then becomes part of the process by which new memories are constructed because a new set of memories are
frequently accompanied by a set of tacitly shared silences.

The power over erasure is very important here compared to their parents’ desire to hold on to memories. As I have argued previously, ‘we cannot ignore the powerful politics of archiving and friendship at stake in social-networking sites’, in which Facebook architecture ‘may not be liberating personal memory at all but enslaving it within a corporate collective in order to shore up abiding ideologies through its public sphere and commercial activities’ (Garde-Hansen 2009: 136). Thus, teenagers’ anarchivization of everyday memories evolves within a context of technological remembering, whereby nothing is forgotten and everything is archived. Deletion then becomes far more important a practice than preservation. Not because of commonplace assumptions that the digitally literate generation is a throwaway generation, but because they may emerge to understand the politics of archiving and who controls the archive (see Derrida 1996).

In the last decades, the family photograph has been largely theorized as a project in which the messy unconventionality of everyday and real life is represented as a socially acceptable, coherent and happy unit (see Chalfen 1987; Slater 1995; Rose 2003). The internet has not changed that project. In fact, it has remembered it with a renewed intensity to fit in.
My own Facebook page is testimony to the social Darwinism at play, in which strong family units are photographed as engaging in ceremonial and ritual events even though the single unit of a social-networking site is the individual. Though full of friends, one of the interesting things to note in social-network sites is the predominance of happy faces. People often use these sites for posting photographs of smiling faces: smiles over the birth of a baby, smiles at the altar, smiles on the beach. These are still Annette Kuhn’s ‘imagined communities’, pre-existing public faces whereby ‘every effort’ is made ‘to keep certain things concealed from the rest of the world’ (Kuhn 2002: 1–2) while at the same time opening out the intimacy of family lives to an online network. Are happy smiles also prevalent among these teenagers?

The teenagers in my research (formerly the subjects of family photography) were consciously forgetting themselves and their families through practices of deletion in order to remember their lives as dynamic and lived in the present. They persistently reiterated the phrases: ‘rubbish photo’, ‘I don’t like them’, ‘boring’, ‘not nice ones’, ‘I look ugly’, ‘embarrassing’, ‘they don’t mean anything to me anymore’, ‘I don’t need them’, ‘they’re not wanted’, ‘my friends don’t like them’, ‘they need updating’, ‘they’ve got old’. Aware of the mythic function and cultural myths that images enact, they
took an entirely pragmatic approach toward photographing their lives. The vast majority of the more than 2 billion photos uploaded each month to Facebook functions to bolster existing networks of relationships and allows users to manage their relationships in a connected, communal and emotionally rewarding way. Teenagers know this and we do a disservice to them when moral panics over cyberbullying position them as entirely vulnerable. Awareness of every image’s future actualization, its future affective value built in at the moment of production, means that instant deletion and forgetting is the pragmatic solution.

Friendship Photography and Networked Intimacy

In *Media and Memory* (2011), I used my research to evoke a concept of connected memory. However, further exploration of how friendship photography is fundamental for making visible emotional and social ties has compelled a revisiting of the research data of the teenagers’ camera-phone usage. While they clearly engaged in practices of deletion for future memory purposes, I missed their articulation of deletion in the context of their emotional connection to their own handsets. The mobile phone was their friend and they were emotionally attached to it. Thus, intimacy was as important to consider as memory. Ongoing research by Amparo Lasén (2004, 2010a, 2010b, 2011; Lasén and Gómez-Cruz 2009) reveals that while
mobile-phone users are emotionally attached to their phones, and although mobile culture may be shared, that does not mean that it feels the same to those within the network. Thus, multimodal possibilities and practices for the performance and consumption of intimacy online are afforded through the transpersonalization of media and communication devices that bridge the gap between collectivity and individuation (see Lasén 2010a). A tension is created between sameness and difference. For while one’s friends online become ‘dormant memories’ as Andrew Hoskins describes them (2010), they continue streaming visual data of ordinary memories across a diverse network of members, many of whom have never met each other.

I am not the only one to have noted these tensions between individuation and collectivity, active intimacy and dormant memories, proximity and distance: Facebook itself has. And, for the purposes of thinking through this concept of friendship photography, it makes sense to understand how a social-networking site with almost 1 billion active users at the time of writing images and imagines friendship online as big data. If we take a look at the diagram produced by Cameron Marlow (Facebook’s own sociologist) for his weblog Overstated.net (see 5.1), we can see the data connections of one person’s network.
In researching whether Facebook increases communication in a network, Marlow and his colleagues illustrated the data to create a diagrammatic representation of four ways of looking at the connections a co-worker was making. Marlow draws attention to the intensified ‘clusters’ as seen in the top-left diagram, which denote the highly connected network of the Facebook co-workers as a whole. If we contrast this cell with the one on the bottom right, Marlow points to the fact that in this network of mutual communication (the most meaningful and emotionally supportive) we see that many ‘of the individuals in his network are completely disconnected or out of touch with each other’ (Marlow 2009). Key for social networking is that the network can expand and contract through ‘passive networking’ via the news feed. Marlow often cites the uploading of an ordinary photograph of a new baby as the example par excellence, which when passively consumed through the news feed may prompt intensified connections, which then retract back to the reciprocal network. The other connections do not disappear; they are simply not expanded upon and only do expand when the demand for lay friendship photography is met.
5.1 Screenshot from webpage of diagram of systemic effects of a twofold increase in connectivity for a network. Marlow et al. (2009), ‘Maintained relationships on Facebook’, posted 9 March 2009.

Sharing photos of everyday life and the milestones of living have a particularly important function then in visualizing networked intimacy in our new media ecology. They propagate connections very quickly, allowing relationships to be maintained and users to manage those relationships. They track back memories and track forward to future potential connections. They also provide the Facebook Data Team with
the valuable ‘tipping’ points for understanding how social networks fade and intensify within a system of networked experiences. The connections expand and contract as friendship photography is created and shared.

The increase in the importance of online self-portraiture (see Schwarz 2010a, 2010b), the rise of online friendship (see Boyd 2008; Boyd and Ellison 2007) and the importance of social-networking profile images for learning about others suggests that friendship photography has an integrated sense of sharing built in, which moves it very quickly from personal to public. Research by Larissa Hjorth (2007) notes the positivity of the gift-giving economy imbued in camera-phone practices whereby the sharing of moments between intimates becomes commonplace privately and publicly. The concept that ‘we are all friends online’, alongside the proliferation of the domestic sphere into online spaces and the technologization of the home in real space, serves to reinforce the notion that what is private is also (by rights) public.

The appearance of images of family and friends on Facebook pages, which function now as archives of everyday life (caching and storing memories to be shared with others), suggests that we have found a new way to photograph intimacy as ordinary and shared. For young people, the emergence of a demand for lay photography has dovetailed
with their affective relationship with their mobile phones. Their everyday lives (hitherto under-represented in family photography) have become the testing ground for new uses of the friendship photograph: from baby photos on the news feed to the autotelic uses of camera phones as self-portraiture, whereby teenagers, for example, might photograph their bodies and body parts for the purposes of self-exploration, learning and self-representation (see Garde-Hansen and Gorton 2013).

Thus, the shift from the domestic to the public also changes the production and consumption of photography and intimacy, which was once firmly rooted in the family. Parents controlled the means of production and how the intimacy of the family was represented to their children and the other family members. Yet, it seems that young people’s use of mobile camera phones for representing their own strong ties is symptomatic of a haptic–affective economy of individualized media (see Campbell and Park 2008). This may no longer be focused on the family but on their own lives as they ordinarily live them. Jane Vincent argues in ‘Emotional attachment and mobile phones’ (2005) that ‘[t]he very act of using a mobile phone involves the simultaneous engagement with more senses than we use for other computational devices as we simultaneously touch, hear and
see via the mobile phone in order to keep in touch with our buddies’ (2005: 120–1).

For Hjorth, mobile phones and ICTs are defined by the ‘various forms of labour and intimacy’ that produce them and ‘have become part of the emotional landscape of the Internet’ to form ‘imaging communities’ that ‘demonstrate unofficial forms of reterritorialisation that counteract the bounded territorialisation of “imagined communities”’ (2008). Whether these are ‘tribes’ or ‘communities’ of shared emotions, what we are witnessing through the visualization of friendship (particularly among young people) is the emergence of new audiences for lay photography (see Schwarz 2010b). My research has revealed that teenagers’ control of this new audience for images of their young lives can only be managed through instant and mobile editing (deleting/forgetting) and not simply storage, selection and sharing (remembering).

This new audience of lay or friendship photography demands the ordinary. In the light of Ben Highmore’s *Ordinary Lives: Studies on the Everyday*, the intimate private life of ‘friends’ that ‘routinely takes place in cyberspace’ is a symptom of the ‘suggested collapse of the private/public spheres’ (2010: 16). The teenagers’ photographs that were shown to me during the focus groups for my research (taken of domestic spheres, out and about, during daily routines or of one-off adventures)
were aesthetic, spontaneous, dull, enviable, repetitive, creative, uninhibited, crowded, contrived and familiar in their non-event-ness. They called my attention and called attention to ordinary lives turned into events in the moment of viewing. Their pervasive ubiquity that made them non-events (ordinary, shared, mundane) was mediatized as a form of ‘ceremonial participation’ akin to Dayan and Katz’s live broadcasting of history (1992). At that moment (and only in that moment), I was invited to feel and to display sentiment towards their images of ordinary life. Friendship photography, then, expands and contracts the intimacy of the family well beyond personal and collective memory and remembering. It seeks to make an emotional connection in the present, establish a social tie, perform intimacy and joint memory as simultaneously offline and online.

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