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The Politics of Memory

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The Politics of Memory

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter considers the definitional and disciplinary politics surrounding the study of memory, exploring the various sites of memory study that have emerged within the field of communication. Specifically, this chapter reviews sites of memory and commemoration, ranging from places such as museums, monuments, and memorials, to textual forms, including journalism and consumer culture. Within each context, this chapter examines the ways in which these sites have interpreted and reinterpreted traumatic pasts bearing great consequence for national identity. It concludes with a discussion of the challenges set forth by new media for scholars engaging in studies of the politics of memory and identifies areas worthy of future research.

Keywords: collective memory, public memory, history, identity, commemoration, memorials, new media, journalism, consumer culture

As Thelen (1989) states, "Remembering, we tend to think, is a process by which people search some kind of storage system in their minds—a filing cabinet or computer 'memory,' perhaps—to see whether they can retrieve some objective record of a fact or experience they had learned or observed at some earlier point" (1119). Memories constitute the metaphorical "files" retrieved in this process. In remembering, we are called to engage with the past, with history. Yet, remembering signals more than an act of cognitive recall. As Schwartz (1982) argues, "To remember is to place a part of the past in the service of conceptions and needs of the present" (374). Thus consideration of memory requires less attention to issues of "accuracy" or "authenticity" than it does to the values, beliefs, and norms shaping cultures at a particular historical juncture. Whether memories present a past that can be deemed objectively "true" is beside the point. As Sturken (1997) writes, "What memories tell us, more than anything, is the stakes held by individuals and institutions in attributing meaning to the past" (9). Memory is a dynamic entity, crafted and recrafted in dialogue with the political, social, and cultural imperatives of the present.

Out of this acknowledgement of memory's malleability, some have focused on the "politics of memory" as a means of sharpening the bounds of the interdisciplinary enterprise of memory studies. Summarized by Confino (1997) as "a subjective experience of a social group that essentially sustains a relationship of power," the politics of memory engages the questions of "who wants whom to remember what, and why" (1393). In focusing on the politics of memory, we move from the individual and more psychologically oriented frameworks for studying memory and toward a more socially oriented understanding that considers memory as part of a broader network of relationships. Such an approach is especially well suited to communication studies, given the field's particular emphasis upon issues of identity formation, power, and politics. However, in moving toward considerations of memory as a social phenomenon, memory studies open themselves up to the questions raised by the need to engage a shifting cultural, political, and technological landscape.

This chapter revisits some of the scholarly pleas for a more conceptually precise rendering of memory and considers the various sites of memory study that have emerged within the field of communication. Specifically, this chapter reviews sites of memory and commemoration, ranging from places such as museums, monuments, and memorials, to textual forms, including journalism and consumer culture. Within each context, I review the ways in which these sites have interpreted and reinterpreted traumatic pasts bearing great consequence for national identity, from the World War II and Vietnam Veterans Memorials in Washington, DC, to the Take Back the Memorial website created by the families of the victims of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. I focus on places and texts engaging traumatic pasts as particularly illustrative sites of memory, or what Nora (1989) refers to as *lieux de mémoire*. In the wake of trauma, as Berkowitz (2010) notes, "meanings and values in society become confounded and ambiguous" (644), as the public searches for ways to make sense of what has occurred and return to normalcy. Memory sites thus assume a particular cultural role in helping collectives manage and work through trauma. In this process, as Sturken (1997) argues, "Questions of who is sanctioned to speak of particular memories are often raised, and issues of difference and exclusion from the "imagined community" of the nation come to the fore" (13). This chapter points to the ways in which "imagined communities," as theorized by Anderson (1983/2006), have been configured and ultimately reconfigured through memory. It then concludes with a discussion of the challenges set forth by new media for scholars engaging in studies of the politics of memory and identifies areas worthy of future research.

Defining Memory

Memory is, as Davis and Starn (1989) argue, "polymorphic" and thereby interpreted variously, depending on the context within which it is used (2). As such, memory studies can be envisioned as stretching along a "spectrum of experience," as Thelen (1989) notes, "from the personal, individual, and private to the collective, cultural, and public" (1117). Consequently it is important to parse these "modifiers" (e.g., individual, social, collective, and public)—a term I borrow from Blair, Dickinson, and Ott (2010)—to stress not so much memory's distinctive forms but the conceptual implications of embracing them (6). Although some have spilt considerable ink differentiating these concepts as kinds of memory (Casey, 2004), here I suggest that their differences are significant but mostly heuristic in nature. As a result, this chapter focuses on collective memory as the central concept around which memory studies orbit when approached by scholars within the field of communication. I work from the assumption articulated by Olick (1999) when he noted that "we need to inquire into the value added by the term [collective memory], to specify what phenomena the term sensitizes us to as well as what kind of a sensitivity this is" (333–334).

Since the publication of Maurice Halbwachs's influential work (1952/1992) theorizing memory as a fundamentally social phenomenon, scholarly attention has focused largely upon the formulation, interpretation, and dissemination of collective/social memory. For Halbwachs (a follower of Emile Durkheim), individual acts of recollection are dependent upon the social frameworks within which one is situated (e.g., class, family, and religion). Scholars such as Schudson (1995) have argued, echoing Halbwachs, that "there is no such thing as individual memory" (346), claiming that memory resides within institutions and what Schudson refers to as "dedicated memory forms." These forms—including books, statues, and souvenirs—are deliberately imbued with meanings that serve specific ends and fulfill particular rhetorical functions (346–347). Such material forms of memory evidence but one basic premise, as Zelizer (1995) argues, for collective remembering. In addition to being material, Zelizer states, memory is unpredictable, usable, both universal and particular, as well as processual (218–234). Understanding collective memory in this way—as a dynamic entity subject to reinterpretation in time and space—invites inquiry into the ways in which meaning is made—how it functions and is ultimately "contested, subverted and supplanted by other memories" (Phillips 2004, 2). If conceptualized in this way, memory is a communicative process that occurs in terrain that is simultaneously contested and negotiated. Memory is political.

Disciplinary Politics of Memory

The coexistence of varied approaches to the study of memory has compelled scholars to contend with questions of disciplinary ownership and authority. Who wields the power to analyze how the past is remembered? Which disciplinary tool kit is best suited to the study of memory? Such questions necessarily identify historians as the scholars with the most at stake in memory's rise as an academic enterprise. If memory is in fact contingent and multiple, how does one explain memory's relationship to history—the discipline that trades in narratives of the past?

Just as Halbwachs considered collective memory a fundamentally social phenomenon, he envisioned memory as under attack by the discipline of history. This perspective, echoed years later by French historian Pierre Nora (1989), suggests that memory and history exist in a state of fundamental opposition. For example, Nora writes,

> Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past. Memory, insofar as it is affective and magical, only accommodates those facts that suit it; it nourishes recollections that may be out of focus or telescopic, global or detached, particular or symbolic. … History, because it is an intellectual and secular production, calls for analysis and criticism. (8–9)

This divide—between the dynamic and the static, between the lived experience and the presentation of it—elicited initial skepticism of memory studies among historians. Memory was firmly grounded in the present; history in the past. If memory ensures that the grand narratives offered by the historian are inherently flawed and incomplete, what of history's future?

Since Halbwachs's and later Nora's expressed concerns regarding the opposition of history and memory, historians have taken a decidedly less antagonistic approach to memory studies. Some historians have argued that a more productive approach is to emphasize the interdependence of memory and history. Rather than envisioning history and memory as inherently antithetical, Davis and Starn (1989) write, "If anything, it is the tension or outright conflict between history and memory that seem necessary and productive. The explosive pertinence of a remembered detail may challenge repressive or merely complacent systems of prescriptive memory or history; memory, like the body, may speak a language that reasoned inquiry will not hear" (5). Historians, however, were not always so willing to see memory's potential to enhance historical practice.

I feature this tension between memory and history not simply because it has informed memory studies broadly but also because it emphasizes the analytic potential of communication studies scholarship. In discussing what they term "public memory"—a form of collective memory that is highly visible and accessible within the public sphere—Blair, Dickinson, and Ott (2010) argue that rhetoric, concerned with the "meaningfulness" of texts—including not simply speeches but performance, visual imagery, commodities, and other forms of popular culture—is particularly well suited to the type of work at the center of collective memory studies. As such, communication moves beyond some of the more functionalist explanations of memory's place within culture (e.g., Blair, Dickinson, and Ott's review of critiques of Hobsbawm and Ranger's [1983] "invention of tradition" model) to consider the ways in which texts are imbued with meaning. Romano and Raiford (2006) summarize as follows: "Representations of the past can be mobilized to serve partisan purposes. They can be commercialized for the sake of tourism; they can shape a nation's sense of identity, build hegemony, or serve to shore up the political interests of the state; and they can certainly influence the ways in which people understand their world" (cited in Hume 2010, 181). However, as Schwartz (1991) and Schudson (1992) remind us, these modes of remembering are not without limits. Communication studies' particular emphasis upon identity formation, power, and politics suggests that this inherently interdisciplinary field is well equipped to bring its array of tools and interests to bear on questions of the collective and to mediate between history and memory.

Methodological and Theoretical Politics of Memory

The disciplinary politics surrounding memory's academic study raise a central methodological question in memory studies: Whose memory do we study and how? Although there is no "correct way to 'do' memory," as Confino (1997) contends, the different entry points into memory studies within the field of communication broadly suggest the multiple ways in which rhetorical analyses, discourse analyses, and textual analyses may be brought to bear on different memory sites. The following categories, though hardly exhaustive, constitute the dominant sites for memory study in communication scholarship: place, journalism, consumer culture, and new media. Through these sites of struggle, we gain insight into the stakes involved in the politics of memory as well as their implications for the present.

In considering the construction of the World War II Memorial on the Washington Mall and several popular texts representing the Second World War—such as the film *Saving Private Ryan,* Tom Brokaw's book *The Greatest Generation*, and the Women in Military Service for America Memorial—Biesecker (2002) argues that "these extraordinarily well-received reconstructions of the past function rhetorically as civics lessons for a generation beset by fractious disagreements about the viability of U.S. culture and identity" (394). Rather than teach about the past, Biesecker (2002) argues, such texts become primers on how to become "good" citizens, serving as modes of establishing social consensus. This need to unite collectives—to build community—rests at the core of each of the four memory sites discussed here. As such, these sites transcend the events they commemorate, offering collectives the opportunity to reaffirm identities in the face of national crises. However, the processes by which these sites have come to be are often highly contested, bringing the "politics of memory" to the fore and in turn opening up areas for future research.

"Memory places," according to Blair, Dickinson, and Ott (2010), "may function as the secular oracles for the current moment of a civic culture, offering instructions in public identity and purpose not only through proclamation, parable, or proverb, but even more importantly by modes of interaction and contact in the place" (27). The significance of sites such as museums, monuments, and memorials rests in their rhetorical power to act upon bodies and cultivate narratives that provide anchors for collective identity. Memorials, Ehrenhaus (1988) argues, "speak" to communities. Inscriptions at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC, he suggests, "focus and direct our appreciation of that greatness, and instruct us in the manner in which we *ought* to interpret our encounter with the memorial." (47). In so doing, "memory places" guide communities toward particular interpretations of the past, often limiting the possibility for alternate readings. However, as studies have shown, efforts to create consensus through place have hardly been seamless, generating controversies surrounding commemorative form and narrative as well as questions regarding "appropriate" uses of the past.

Nowhere are these issues engaged as dramatically as in sites grappling with traumas such as war. Building upon Biesecker's (2002) claim regarding the ideological function of World War II within American political culture, Balthrop, Blair, and Michel (2010) offer a reading of the World War II memorial on the Washington Mall deemed "culturally illegible" by critics. Cited for its "surfeit of symbolism" (Balthrop, Blair, and Michel, 2010, 174), the World War II memorial was criticized for its inappropriate and confusing symbolism as well as its lack of emotional resonance with visitors. However, when read against the memorial's dedication events, Balthrop, Blair, and Michel (2010) argue, the World War II Memorial can be made legible as a tool advancing a US imperialist agenda. Serving to bolster support for the US invasion of Iraq, the World War II Memorial, argue

Balthrop, Blair, and Michel (2010), broke with the event being commemorated to speak to more presentist aims, leading them to question whether the past was indeed "hijacked."

The issue of the hijacking of history was similarly considered by Linenthal and Engelhardt (1996) in their volume analyzing the controversy surrounding the National Air and Space Museum's attempt to create an exhibit including the *Enola Gay*, the plane from which the atomic bomb was dropped on Japan, ending World War II. As Engelhardt and Linenthal (1996) argue, the *Enola Gay* controversy offers a case in which historians "found their work debated or attacked, misused and abused, and themselves accused of aiding and abetting the post-Vietnam War fragmentation of an American consensus" (5). An exemplar of the "history wars," the *Enola Gay* controversy illuminates the ways in which collectives have sought to strategically "forget," or exclude elements of the past that complicate and challenge preexisting narratives of the "good war." The eventual cancellation of the exhibit signaled the political stakes involved in crafting a narrative that might retell the war's end.

Monuments, memorials, and museums relating to civil rights have similarly been identified as rhetorically powerful sites where arguments of consensus and reconciliation largely overshadow conflict and struggle (DeLaure, 2011; Gallagher, 1999). Gallagher (1999) argues Birmingham, Alabama's Civil Rights Institute advances a discourse of progress that allows for an interpretation of the past that privileges hope. In such cases, the desire to establish a consensus interpretation of the past translates into a form of cultural amnesia (Gallagher, 1999), whereby elements of the past are finessed so as to minimize conflict. Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki (2006) argue that a similar phenomenon is at work at the Plains Indian Museum in Cody, Wyoming, where narratives of Euro-American colonization and the decimation of the native population are positioned so as to instill a "rhetoric of reverence" that simultaneously serves to advance both a degree of respect for the Native Americans and cultural distance from the native "Other."

Although most of the aforementioned case studies have focused on the ways in which the past has been seized to bolster national unity in the present, studies of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, have pointed instead to the ambiguities surrounding the war's memorialization, begging the question "How is commemoration without consensus, or without pride, possible?" (Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz, 1991, 379). Unlike World War II, the Vietnam War itself was a site of fierce contest on the home front. The Vietnam War's commemoration was no less contentious. Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz (1991) argue that the Memorial designed by Maya Lin, "informed by ambivalence about both the cause and its participants," was moved "in the direction of the muted and unobtrusive" (392). In contrast to the World War II memorial, so laden with symbolism as to render the structure inchoate according to critics (Balthrop, Blair,

and Michel, 2010), the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is so controversial because it lacked the markers of traditional war memorials. Instead of offering a clear message, the memorial, Ehrenhaus (1988) claims, "places both the burden and the freedom upon us to discover what these past events mean, whether these deaths do have meaning, what virtue is to be found in sacrifice, and what our own relationship should be to our political institutions" (55). The Vietnam Veterans Memorial reflects, according the Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci (1991), the "`both-and' of postmodern architectural practice." They argue, the Memorial "does not suggest one reading or the other, but embraces even contradictory interpretations. The Memorial both comforts and refuses comfort. It both provides closure and denies it. It does not offer a unitary message but multiple and conflicting ones" (281).

Collectively, these exemplars of "memory places" have largely emphasized "official" memory, or memory sanctioned by individuals/institutions wielding power and on the dominant discourses that emanate from them. However, studies have also emerged that consider not simply "vernacular" or "popular" memory as official memory's relatively powerless opposite, which emanates from the ground up, but also the tension generated between such types of memory. Rather than being distinct and fundamentally opposing entities, as some have charged (e.g., most notably Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 1992), one can envision official and vernacular memories as coming into direct conflict and producing, in some cases, a more robust understanding of the past. Armada's (1998) study of the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tennessee, and the countermemorial forged by former Lorraine Motel resident and civil rights protester Jacqueline Smith suggest that the consumption of memory is made more productive by Smith's presence, whether one agrees with her critiques or not. When Smith was removed from her home at the Lorraine Motel by police in the 1988, leading her to create a makeshift counter-memorial across the street, she called visitors to the eventual museum to consider the use of the space and the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who was assassinated at the site in 1968.

Studies of place, focusing largely on the meanings imbued by those with power, will necessarily leave out the experiences of those who were not privy to the decision-making process. Doing so, argues Confino (1997), reduces memory to its very political core and consequently "underplay[s] the social" (1394). As a result, "we miss a whole world of human activities that cannot be immediately recognized (and categorized) as political, although they are decisive to the way people construct and contest images of the past. We can think of the family, voluntary association, and workplace but should also include practices such as tourism and consumerism" (Confino, 1997, 1395). The two sites on which I focus next, journalism and consumer culture, answer this call specifically.

Despite eliciting relatively little scholarly attention as a site of memory, journalism functions, as Zelizer (2008) argues, in often unrecognized ways as a source of collective memory and medium of memory's dissemination. The cliché that "journalists write the first draft of history" suggests a significant role for journalists in collective memory formation, as Edy (1999) notes. This role extends beyond written text to news images, which as Zelizer (1998) has argued, "need to be considered as markers of both truth-value and symbolism" (10). However, comparatively few inquiries into the memory work performed by journalism reveal how little traction journalism has gained as an area of memory inquiry within the academy. Recent work has sought to fill this void (e.g., Berkowitz and Gutsche, Jr., 2012; Carlson, 2006, 2010; Carlson and Berkowitz, 2012; Hoerl, 2009; Maurantonio, 2008; Robinson, 2006, 2009; Serazio, 2010; Zelizer and Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2014); yet, as Zelizer (2008) argues, there is still considerable work to be done.

Studies have shown the ways in which journalists function as public historians through commemorative practices that occur on special occasions, such as anniversaries (Kitch, 2002a, 2006) as well as news media's work in "creat[ing] and convey[ing] a feeling of (temporary) national consensus" (Kitch 2003, 213), particularly in the wake of disasters such as the events of September 11, 2001, and the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. In the face of crisis, journalists are called to make sense of events for their audiences. They must tell stories (Bird and Dardenne, 1997), rendering the often inexplicable accessible. One strategy for doing so is to rely on collective memory, thereby transforming the unknown into the familiar, as the cases of the 2003 Columbia space shuttle destruction (Edy and Daradanova, 2006) and the 2007 Virginia Tech shooting (Berkowitz, 2010) demonstrate.

In addition to conveying information to audiences, journalists also, as Berkowitz (2010) notes, "bring people together for catharsis through the stories they tell" (644). Journalists do this through the construction and maintenance of myth, which, as Lule (2005) argues, "is an essential social narrative, a rich and enduring aspect of human existence" (102). Myths help legitimate collectives, providing them with modes of interpretation. As Kitch (2002b) argues in her analysis of coverage of the death and funeral of John F. Kennedy Jr., mythical narratives "offer a promise of hope and healing, a message meant not just to console, but also to restore the social and political status quo" (305). The implications of these narrative decisions, however, are not all unproblematic. As Serazio (2010) argues in his analysis of sports journalism in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, triumphalist narratives of recovery pervaded journalistic discourse, providing an escape from the traumatic memories of Katrina and the harsh realities of a city where recovery is far from over.

Journalists' stories, however, not only facilitate audience understandings of traumatic events. They simultaneously bolster the interpretive authority of the institution (Zelizer, 1992). As a form of "imagined community," Carlson (2006) argues, journalism can be seen "as a symbolic collective connected by common normative ideas and a shared history that positions it within the larger cultural framework" (108). As an "interpretive community" (Zelizer, 1993), journalists rely on shared understandings of the past to maintain the cohesiveness of the institution.

Just as journalism provides one site of scholarly inquiry and an outlet through which individuals and collectives alike engage in the politics of memory, in considering the politics of grief and trauma, Sturken (2007) considers an alternate entry point: consumer culture. The linkage between consumption and politics did not emerge in the twenty-first century, as Dickinson (2005) reminds us. However, in analyzing the ways in which acts of consumption depoliticize trauma and grief, Sturken (2007) argues that an existing "culture of comfort" that takes refuge in kitsch commemorative objects such as teddy bears and snow globes allows consumers to distance themselves from broader political contexts. Examining objects that proliferated in the wake of traumas such as the Oklahoma City bombing and the attacks of September 11, 2001, Sturken (2007) argues that "an American public can acquiesce to its government's aggressive political and military policies, such as the war in Iraq, when that public is constantly reassured by the comfort offered by the consumption of patriotic objects, comfort commodities, and security consumerism" (6). In so doing, Americans are situated, according to Sturken (2007), as "tourists of history."

The emergence of new digital media technologies that have made archiving and accessing of memory possible has raised a series of new questions for scholars working within each of these subfields. As Savoie (2010) notes, "new media's democratizing role in memory work makes the translations and tradeoffs included in the production of collective memory increasingly visible" (3). Specifically, digital technologies such as blogs, memorial sites, and online archives change the ways in which we memorialize. After analyzing the September 11 digital archive, Haskins (2007) argues that "digital memory, more than any other form of mediation, collapses the assumed distinction between modern 'archival' memory and traditional 'lived' memory by combining the function of storage and ordering on the one hand, and of presence and interactivity on the other" (401). While presenting opportunities for individuals to engage with pasts they may not have experienced, new media give individuals access to sources that were previously unavailable. With these possibilities come consequences.

The vaunted democratization attributed to the Internet has raised theoretical questions both about new media's democratic function as well as new media's role as a space to

contest the authority to interpret memory. Although contests surrounding interpretive authority did not emerge with the development of the Internet (see, for instance, Heyse, 2010), the Internet has provided a new arena within which such contests can unfold. As Donofrio (2010) argues in her analysis of the Take Back the Memorial (TBM) website, the families of the victims of the September 11, 2001, attacks eschewed "politics," locating themselves in opposition to the left-leaning academics, commercial interests, and politicians who might have seized the 9–11 memorial to capitalize on the suffering of others. In so doing, the families staked claim to interpretive authority by virtue of their suffering. Yet, as Donofrio (2010) notes, TBM's declared opposition to what they deemed "political" meant that the organization would "privilege a narrative of American innocence and dismiss entreaties to engage in larger a conversation about the US's role in international politics" (163). In advancing this argument, Donofrio builds upon Sturken's (2007) claims surrounding the use of consumer goods to distance individuals from the political stakes involved in memory.

In exploring these four sites where the politics of memory are considered centrally within the field of communication, we see both the possibilities as well as potential challenges for scholarly inquiry. Some have criticized studies examining the politics of memory for overemphasizing sites of memory and correspondingly paying little attention to issues of reception, or how audiences make sense of these sites (Confino, 1997). This latter concern, however, is one communication studies is well equipped to address, given the field's interests in the ways audiences make meaning from different texts. Reception remains, however, an area open for future research.

Future Research in Politics of Memory

The disciplinary, methodological, and theoretical stakes involved in memory studies are high. In exploring the politics of memory, we examine not only what is being remembered but how and why. In so doing, we necessarily beg the questions of identity and collectivity that strike at the core of human experience. Communication scholars confronting issues of memory must consider further how various voices are privileged and marginalized in memory's construction, the ways in which memory is shaped and appropriated by individuals and collectives, and the ways in which memory's very existence is being challenged by new media. These future directions require greater attentiveness to two central issues: forgetting and reception.

Memory is not simply about what we remember or opt to recall, as the case may be. Just as remembering is contingent, so too is forgetting, as Connerton (2008) reminds us.

Although Connerton (2008) claims that "forgetting" is commonly associated with a failure of memory, forgetting, like remembering, is differentiable. Just as there are modes of remembering, there are modes of forgetting. Forgetting can be directed by the state, can emanate from what may be seen as pure interests, can emerge from lack of information, or can be a form of "planned obsolescence." The categories do not end there (Connerton, 2008). Acknowledging the dialectic between remembering and forgetting invites further interrogation of this relationship. As Vivian (2010) argues, remembering and forgetting are part and parcel of larger processes by which "we construct, amend, and even revise altogether our public perceptions of the past, including our collective interpretations of its lessons, in response to the culture and politics of the day" (10). Rather than opposing forces, they are intimately connected. Within this framework, not all forgetting may be necessarily bad, as Vivian (2010) suggests.

Closer attention to forgetting as a subject of scholarly inquiry opens possibilities to address laments that studies of the "politics of memory" overemphasize "visible places and familiar names, where memory construction is explicit and its meaning palpably manipulated" (Confino, 1997, 1395). Consequently Confino (1997) calls scholars to search for memory "where it is implied rather than said, blurred rather than clear, in the realm of collective mentality" (1395). Such a call might seem easier said than done—seek out the subtlety, complement the visible. Perhaps now more than ever, with the enhanced ability to record, archive, and preserve, we stand at a moment of great potential. We may not only catalogue history as it unfolds but also give voice to those whose pasts may have been, even if only temporarily, forgotten. Reception studies offer a productive entry point to address these issues, leading to more nuanced understandings of the ways in which individuals and collectives negotiate memory as it is contested.

The value of such studies, however, rests not merely in added dimensionality. Surely it is important to grapple with the complexity of the past and the individuals who inhabited it. With greater access to traces of the past via new media, we have a greater capacity to explore how memory is used, moving beyond the sites where memory is commemorated to how it is enacted and performed. While much scholarship has considered the rhetoric of the monument, memorial, or museum exhibit, less attention has been paid to how visitors to these places respond to them. Similarly, journalism studies have tended to emphasize particular news items rather than how audiences make meaning from them. In adopting more audience-centered approaches to the study of the politics of memory, we may develop a more complete understanding of the "imagined communities" at stake and deeper insight into the collectives that form the fabric of the nation.

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