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Remembering Our Lives in the 21st Century

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Living in the digital age means creating and sharing immense amounts of data. How does this shape the way we document, reconstruct, and remember our lives? As illustrated by the ten insightful and thought-provoking commentaries in reaction to our target article (Hutmacher et al., this issue), we are by far not the only ones who are trying to find an answer to this question. We appreciate the largely positive responses to our AMEDIA-Model and enjoyed reading the creative ideas that the commentary writers have shared. We have divided our reply to the commentaries into three parts. In the first part, we explain our motivation for proposing our AMEDIA-Model. In the second part, we clarify several aspects of our target article that have invited misunderstandings. In the third and final part, we touch upon several potential future directions that emerged from the commentary writers' thoughts and suggestions.



A Model for Autobiographical Remembering in the Digital Age is Needed

It has repeatedly been argued in recent years that the psychological literature is full of micro-theories that lack integration, leading to an uncoordinated host of proposals and counterproposals (Eronen & Bringmann, 2021; Oberauer & Lewandowsky, 2019; see also Hutmacher & Franz, 2024). Against this background, it seems important to consider whether there really is a need for publishing a new model in a certain field of research. As we see it, new models are particularly helpful when they (a) address a new phenomenon and (b) this new phenomenon cannot adequately be explained by already existing theories and models. Both conditions are met in the case of our AMEDIA-Model. By elaborating on this in the following, we want to clarify our motivation for proposing a new model as well as the ways in which our AMEDIA-Model differs from previous efforts.

What is New in the Digital Age?

To begin with, the idea that digitally technologies shape the way individuals remember their lives has some intuitive plausibility: Recent technological developments have led to an *increased density of recorded life episodes* in the sense that

people living in the 21st century tend to preserve much more information about their private and professional lives than previous generations (e.g., Heersmink & Carter, 2020; Kalnikaitė & Whittaker, 2012). Of course, however, the question whether this alters the way individuals remember their lives cannot be answered through an appeal to intuitive plausibility but only through empirical evidence. In this regard, it has been argued in two commentaries that “we don't have strong evidence for significant changes in how we remember and misremember that are solely related to technology” (Murphy & Greene, this issue, p. 131) and that “it is not [...] clear whether digital technologies fundamentally alter how individuals remember their autobiographical remembering” (Stone, this issue, p. 139). We have three comments regarding both sentiments. First, we fully agree that investigating autobiographical remembering in the digital age is still a nascent field of research and that it would be premature to make too strong claims regarding the changes that are awaiting us as well as those that might have already happened. Second, we also acknowledge that there is research demonstrating similarities between autobiographical remembering in the pre-digital and the digital age. For instance, it has been shown that digital technologies can distort memories but that these memory distortions are similar to the memory distortions observed when using technologies that were already available prior to the digital age (Greene et al., 2022; Murphy & Flynn, 2022). Third, and as demonstrated by an abundance of evidence summarized in our AMEDIA-Model, however, the way information is encoded, curated, and retrieved in the digital age crucially depends on the way individuals use and apply the available technology. To reiterate but one example, several studies have shown that having access to photos documenting one's life can help to reconstruct past experiences that are not accessible in unaided recall (see, e.g., Finley et al., 2011; Mair et al., 2017; Martin et al., 2022; for reviews, see Foley, 2020; Silva et al., 2018; for some more examples that were not yet included in the target article, see in particular the commentaries by Henkel & St. Jacques, this issue and Weilenmann, this issue). Underlying our model is the assumption that digital technologies offer a new environment with distinct affordances that can change how humans

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deploy their abilities of thinking, reasoning, and remembering. Our model does not presuppose that digital technologies change humans' fundamental cognitive architecture underlying autobiographical remembering.

Building On and Going Beyond Previous Models

Our AMEDIA-Model was not built from scratch but incorporates a wide range of previous efforts trying to conceptualize autobiographical remembering such as the discussions about the extended mind (e.g., Clark & Chalmers, 1998; Heersmink, 2020; Schönplflug & Esser, 1995; Sutton, 2010), transactive memory (Wegner et al., 1985; for a review, see, e.g., Huebner, 2016; Peltokorpi, 2008), and electronic memory (Clowes, 2013; see also Bell & Gemmell, 2009). From our point of view, including these previous efforts is a strength of our model, as it gave us the opportunity to use previously formulated insights and to develop them further. In the following, we will point out four crucial advancements of our AMEDIA-Model.

The Need for a Comprehensive Model

Although previous efforts have touched upon various sub-aspects of autobiographical remembering using externally recorded information, a comprehensive model on autobiographical remembering in the digital age was absent. In other words, while the existing theories and models provided an important basis for the conceptualization of our model, they were in our opinion not sufficient and not fine-grained enough to understand autobiographical remembering in the digital age (see Stone, this issue, for a critical reading of this claim). Two examples may suffice to illustrate this. For instance, Stone and Zwolinski (2022) have provided an important and inspiring contribution to understanding mnemonic consequences associated with sharing personal photographs on social media. However, sharing personal photographs on social media is only one sub-aspect of autobiographical remembering in the digital age. In a similar vein, the idea that individuals are embedded in a memory ecology in which they have access to a wide range of externally recorded information is not new (see, e.g., Donald, 1991; Finley et al., 2018; Heersmink, *in press*; for a recent empirical investigation into the role of beloved objects, see also Hutmacher & Schwan, 2023), but it has not been systematically applied to autobiographical remembering in the digital age. In contrast to these efforts, our AMEDIA-Model provides the first systematic and comprehensive framework for understanding autobiographical memory in the digital age in the sense that it identifies both the structural and process components that play a role when remembering our lives using high-tech external resources. This also refers to the various sub-dimensions that we have identified on all three stages and that can indeed be used for analyzing how individuals reconstruct their personal past. One eloquent example is provided in the commentary by Talaifar (this issue) who applies our model to Sheila Heti's autobiographical book *Alphabetical Diaries*. While Heti did not

make use of the full range of high-tech resources available in the digital age but limited herself to working with text, these kinds of analyses could be helpful for identifying the different practices that individuals engage in when it comes to remembering their own lives using high-tech resources (see also Hutmacher et al., 2023 for an analysis of smart journaling practices). Importantly, so far *only* the AMEDIA-Model allows for such a nuanced and detailed analysis.

Combining Theoretical Considerations and Empirical Evidence

Our AMEDIA-Model does not merely consist of a set of theoretical propositions but also relies on an integration of the available empirical evidence with respect to technology-mediated memory. On the one hand, we used the available empirical evidence as a basis for identifying and describing the several sub-dimensions that are relevant for understanding how individuals encode, curate, and retrieve autobiographical memories in the digital age. Crucially, this also means that the AMEDIA-Model is open to refinements in case the available empirical evidence should suggest specifying additional sub-dimensions or dropping sub-dimensions that have become irrelevant. On the other hand, the AMEDIA-Model provides a framework for systematically integrating new empirical evidence. That is, the AMEDIA-Model offers a framework for contextualizing future studies on autobiographical remembering in the digital age. The close connection between theoretical considerations and empirical evidence that is unique to our AMEDIA-Model is valuable for at least two more reasons: First, the AMEDIA-Model can help to identify existing research lacunae. As highlighted at different points of our target article, the field of research on autobiographical remembering in the digital age is still nascent so that there are far more questions that should be answered than questions that have already been answered. Second, and connected to the previous point, the AMEDIA-Model can have a heuristic guiding function for organizing and conducting future research.

Extended Minds and "External Memories"

As already stated above, we acknowledge the importance of debates around the extended mind and – more generally – the idea that human cognition is often embodied, embedded, extended, and enacted (so-called "4E cognition"; Clark & Chalmers, 1998; Gallagher, 2017; Malafouris, 2020; Varela et al., 1991; for an overview, see Newen et al., 2018; for applications in the context of human memory, see Heersmink, 2020; Heersmink & Carter, 2020; Michaelian & Sutton, 2013; Sutton, 2010). Most importantly, these debates serve as a reminder that it would be a fundamental mistake to view autobiographical remembering as a process that is only happening in our minds. Nevertheless, two things should be noted: First, although the ideas about extended minds and 4E cognition provided an important background for the construction of our AMEDIA-Model, they are in themselves not sufficient for a nuanced understanding of autobiographical remembering in the digital age, because

they do not touch upon the specific processes and sub-processes at play (see also the section on “The Need for a Comprehensive Model” above). Second, we do not subscribe to all assumptions that are usually made in these contexts (for a brief overview of the different waves of extended mind research, see Stone, this issue). In particular, we want to emphasize that autobiographical remembering is in our perspective something that a *person* does and that, *in principle*, cannot be delegated completely to the environment. This is also the reason why we do not speak about *external memories* but about *external resources for autobiographical remembering*. In case there is no one who makes sense of the digital traces that we leave about our lives, these digital traces remain unconnected to the way we remember our past. That is, external records of one’s life whose retrieval is not accompanied by auto-noetic consciousness (i.e., the awareness of the self having experienced the event in the past) should from our perspective not be counted as autobiographical memories.

Curation instead of Storage

Usually, models of (autobiographical) remembering distinguish between the three stages of encoding, storage, and retrieval. We replaced the storage stage through a curation stage. As acknowledged in several comments (see Ewoldsen, this issue; Henkel & St. Jacques, this issue; Weilenmann, this issue), this is not a mere play of words but an intentional choice to reflect the fact that information is not simply stored and kept in external resources until it is retrieved later but that the whole process is – at least potentially – much more dynamic and reconstructive. As Henkel and St. Jacques (this issue, p. 120) write, this wording is not only important from a theoretical perspective but also because it cautions against the seemingly common sentiment “that people can turn to photos and videos as proof of what really happened, that photos and videos are reliable, objective, and veridical evidence of reality.” This is an important reminder that the external high-tech resources that individuals use for remembering their lives do not (necessarily) offer a veridical perspective on past events. Quite the contrary, what individuals find in their data crucially depends on the kind of data they have encoded and the way they have curated the encoded data. Other than many memory models, the AMEDIA-Model explicitly acknowledges this.

Clarifications

Autobiographical Memory in the Digital Age: Utopia or Dystopia?

If the way individuals document and remember their lives changes in the digital age, the question arises, of course, as to whether these changes are changes for the better or for the worse. Interestingly, our own take on this question was interpreted differently by different commentary writers. On the one hand, McAdams and Jennings (this issue, p. 126) write, for instance, that we “seem mainly upbeat when it comes to the powers of digital technologies for augmenting autobiographical memory” and Talaifar (this issue, p. 143)

adds that her “own perspective is more pessimistic” than ours. On the other hand, Murphy and Greene (this issue) write that we “offer some dystopian predictions about memory in the digital age” (p. 132) and that “many of the applications of the AMEDIA model are presented as deeply concerning” (p. 132). Against this background, we want to emphasize that we abstain from answering the general question whether autobiographical remembering will change for the better or for the worse in the digital age. Rather, we assume that including high-tech external resources in our memory ecologies is likely to have positive as well as negative effects and that it will be the task of empirical research to identify these effects and their boundary conditions (for an example, see the brief literature review on the discussion about cognitive offloading versus memory augmentation provided by Gilbert, this issue). That is, while theory and research may provide a starting point for thinking about the challenges and opportunities with respect to autobiographical remembering in the digital age, the importance of testing predictions and providing cautious interpretations before jumping to hasty conclusions cannot be overstated.

Curation

As reiterated above, we replaced the more traditional storage stage through a curation stage in order to emphasize that information is not simply stored and kept in external resources until it is retrieved later but that the whole process is – at least potentially – much more dynamic and reconstructive. In her commentary, Weilenmann (this issue, p. 146) states that it “is still the case that some data is in fact, only stored” and that “‘no curation’ or passive storage seem to still exist as externally recorded and stored information”. Weilenmann concludes that what we call “no curation” is not a case of curation at all. While Weilenmann seems to think that we would disagree with this conclusion, we do in fact agree. As we understand it, curation is something that *can* happen and not something that does automatically happen. In other words, we hold that curation is the appropriate name for the intermediary process component because individuals are able to work with the recorded data instead of merely storing them and not because they will always engage in these kinds of curatorial practices. As indicated by our differentiation between human curation and algorithmic curation, however, we disagree with Weilenmann’s suggestion that curation refers to all processes “where a user is taking a decision on what to do with the data” (p. 146). Quite the contrary, recorded information may also be curated without the users’ consent (e.g., when a smartphone algorithm creates new albums based on locational and temporal information) or even without the users noticing the curatorial activities performed by an algorithm.

Internal Autobiographical Memories and External Records Working in Concert

One of the key assumptions of our AMEDIA-Model is that internal autobiographical memories and external records

work in concert to bring about autobiographical remembering. Henkel and St. Jacques (this issue) elaborate on this point by summarizing evidence for the observation that the photographic viewpoint (e.g., first-person versus third-person viewpoint) can influence the way that people remember events (King et al., 2024; Marcotti & St. Jacques, 2017, 2021) including phenomenological properties (for a review see Küçüktaş & St. Jacques, 2022). Based on this, Henkel and St. Jacques conclude that “digital resources may go beyond merely ‘working in concert’ with autobiographical memories, to actively reshape the phenomenology of memories” (pp. 118–119). We fully agree that the way data has been encoded and curated may significantly influence how these events are remembered later. That is, we fully agree that the technologies that individuals use bring their own dynamics and affordances into the process of autobiographical remembering in the digital age. When writing that internal autobiographical memories and external records *work in concert* to bring about autobiographical remembering, we simply wanted to express that autobiographical remembering in the digital age can be viewed as the result of the iterative process of combining information stored in the mind and information stored in the environment using high-tech devices and applications. That is to say that we want to understand the expression “working in concert” as a rather descriptive term and not in the sense of a necessarily harmonious process that always leads to the best and most objective outcome possible that is in line with an individual’s intentions and preferences.

Future Research and Applications

As outlined above, the AMEDIA-Model is the result of combining and interpolating theoretical considerations and empirical evidence. This implies that the AMEDIA-Model is open to refinements in case the available empirical evidence should suggest specifying additional sub-dimensions or dropping sub-dimensions that have become irrelevant. While we are confident that the core elements of our AMEDIA-Model – such as the tripartite structure of encoding, curation, and retrieval or the idea that the iterative combination of internal autobiographical memories and external records brings about autobiographical remembering – will remain unchanged, we consider it highly likely that future research – as well as the proliferation of new technologies that might critically shape our digital environments – will make adjustments necessary. In the following, we discuss the suggestions provided by the commentary writers that we found most instructive in the sense that they contribute to deepening the understanding of different elements contained in the AMEDIA-Model.

Feedback Loops

Autobiographical remembering is a highly dynamic process. This is the reason why we replaced the traditional storage stage through a curation stage and why we emphasized at different points of our target article that the way

autobiographical memories are constructed and reconstructed during retrieval crucially depends on the way the information has been encoded and curated. What was kept rather implicit, however, was the idea that these kinds of influences across stages may also work exactly the other way around (see Ewoldsen, this issue): That is, the experiences that individuals make during an attempt to remember a certain life event may influence how they encode and curate future events, suggesting the existence of forward *and* backward feedback loops. When realizing, for instance, that one consistently takes so many pictures of past events that it becomes difficult to curate them later, individuals may choose to change their photo-taking practices. In a similar vein, realizing that certain information that one used to record and keep is not really helpful for remembering one’s past or that the technology that one is using is optimized for certain kinds of data might also lead to making individual adjustments. Crucially, one might hypothesize that these adjustments are not necessarily conscious and intentional but can also be subtle and indirect. These ideas are also elaborated upon in the commentary by Soares (this issue) who thinks about the way metacognitive judgments of internal autobiographical memory, external resources, and the interaction between the two might shape the way individuals encode, curate, and retrieve autobiographical information in the digital age. Although much research on metacognitive judgments with respect to digital environments is concerned with semantic information (e.g., information that one finds on the internet), there is at least some preliminary evidence that metacognitive judgments might indeed play a role in the context of autobiographical remembering as well. In one study highlighted in the commentary, for instance, it was shown that individuals seem to prefer detailed digital records for events that they already remember well rather than using digital records to compensate for memory failures (Soares, 2023). To date, the extent to which previous experiences with encoding, curating, and retrieving autobiographical memories using high-tech external resources shape future behaviors is hard to determine. Nevertheless, more research in this direction will certainly be fruitful for deepening our understanding of autobiographical remembering in general and the sub-processes postulated in our AMEDIA-Model in particular.

The Social Embeddedness of Autobiographical Remembering

The social environment profoundly shapes the process of autobiographical remembering. This concerns the encoding and curation of information as well as the later retrieval of autobiographical events. We briefly want to iterate a couple of examples already described in our target article: As far as *encoding* is concerned, it seems to matter, for instance, whether the information stored in high-tech external resources is kept private or made publicly available (i.e., shared with others; cf. Johnson & Morley, 2021; Marsh & Rajaram, 2019). In addition, the reactions (e.g., likes, shares, comments) that others provide to the content that one has

posted online can be seen as important contributions to the *curatorial process*. In relation to this, we also speculated that the way others in one's personal environment curate their data as well as norms about what is considered an appropriate degree of curation will influence the curation strategies that individuals use. With respect to *retrieval*, we emphasized that the processes of narrating one's life and reasoning about autobiographical events are deeply social in nature and often take place in conversations (Grysmann et al., 2023b; Nelson & Fivush, 2004; Pasupathi & Wainryb, 2010) and that it would be important to understand whether and, if so, how this changes in the digital age when high-tech devices and applications are used (see, e.g., Bartoletti, 2011; Jungselius & Weilenmann, 2023). The importance of the social dimension was also pointed out in several commentaries (Grysmann, this issue; McAdams & Jennings, this issue; Weilenmann, this issue). We hope that this can serve as a reminder that researchers should systematically consider the potential contributions of the social environment to the way individuals remember their lives using high-tech external resources. Just as autobiographical remembering does not only happen in our minds but in interaction with the technological memory ecology in which we are embedded, autobiographical remembering is not merely an individual endeavor but profoundly shaped by social processes and social interactions.

Digital Substitutes and Innovative Tools

One sub-dimension identified in our AMEDIA-Model concerns the distinction between *digital substitutes* (i.e., already existing low-tech tools being replaced by their digital counterparts) and *innovative tools* (i.e., tools that did not exist prior to the digital age). In this context, we also note that the expression "innovative tools" serves as an umbrella term that summarizes vastly different platforms with vastly different affordances. We illustrate this thought using an example, namely macroblogging (i.e., writing a blog on a personal web page) and microblogging (i.e., posting about one's whereabouts on social media), with the idea being that macroblogging is more likely to lead to the telling of a coherent and narratively integrated story than microblogging (Wang, 2013, 2021). Weilenmann (this issue) notes that this juxtaposition may be oversimplified because social media platforms are not necessarily geared toward immediate sharing (cf. Bucher, 2020) and because posting on social media often indeed has narrative qualities (Annabell, 2023; Weilenmann et al., 2013). We can only welcome such a differentiation that helps the scientific community to understand in more detail what distinguishes different innovative tools with respect to their affordances and effects on remembering (see also the commentary by Gilbert, this issue, for some more ideas on the relevance of the distinction between digital substitutes and innovative tools). As we see it, understanding the characteristics of different platforms and the effects of these characteristics on autobiographical remembering will be one of the most important tasks of future research.

Interindividual Differences and Narrative Identity

Talaifar (this issue, p. 142) writes that it would be interesting to know "how a person's identity influences which digital environments they *select* (or avoid) for autobiographical remembering, how their identity may inform the degree to which they actively *manipulate* the content and features of their digital environment to facilitate autobiographical remembering, and how their identity might unintentionally *evoke* certain forms of autobiographical remembering from their digital environment to the exclusion of others". We agree with this observation. In addition to an individual's identity, various interindividual differences might play a role in the way individuals encode, curate, and retrieve autobiographical events in the digital age. Hence, we encourage conducting research in this direction. At the present point, however, we decided against including these aspects in our model for two reasons. First, our AMEDIA-Model was primarily aimed at describing the general functioning of autobiographical remembering in the digital age, that is, at capturing commonalities and general patterns. Second, and as reiterated above, the choice of our sub-dimensions was informed by the existing empirical evidence. To our knowledge, there is unfortunately no strong empirical evidence regarding interindividual differences with respect to autobiographical remembering in the digital age yet.

Another important – and somewhat related – aspect was raised in the commentary by McAdams and Jennings (this issue) who focus on exploring the similarities and differences between autobiographical remembering and the construction of narrative identity in the digital age. One of their main ideas is that autobiographical remembering is usually aimed at "recalling the personal past with as much veracity, vividness, clarity, and verisimilitude possible" (p. 125) while "the accuracy and accessibility of what happened in the past are less important than what a memory may mean" (p. 125) when it comes to narrative identity. Life stories and narrative identity draw from the reservoir of autobiographical memories, of course, but as the authors also emphasize, not all autobiographical memories that we have are ultimately woven into our life stories and become important parts of our narrative identities. Against this background, we sympathize with McAdams' and Jennings' idea to view autobiographical memory and narrative identity as "twin standpoints" (p. 126). That is, we also agree that the similarities and differences with respect to the uses and functions of external resources in the digital age require careful consideration. We hope that the AMEDIA-Model and the additional thoughts offered by McAdams and Jennings can help to pave the way in this direction.

Intradisciplinary and Interdisciplinary Cooperation

In our target article, we have already tried to illustrate that understanding autobiographical remembering in the digital age is an important task from the perspective of various subdisciplines within psychology, such as cognitive psychology, developmental psychology, social psychology, and clinical psychology. The commentary writers provide two

important additions to this general idea. On the one hand, Ewoldsen (this issue) points out that the theories and mechanisms known from the analysis of fictional narratives might also be helpful for understanding life narratives and autobiographical memories. We agree with Ewoldsen that there is a somewhat surprising lack of integration between these two strands of research, and we also agree that it could enlightening to transfer theoretical conceptualizations such as the event indexing model (Zwaan et al., 1995) to studying autobiographical memories (see also Green & Appel, 2024). Before including such ideas in our AMEDIA-Model, however, we would first like to see empirical evidence demonstrating that these frameworks are indeed fruitful when it comes to advancing our understanding of autobiographical remembering in the digital age. On the other hand, Weilenmann (this issue) convincingly argues that arriving at a proper understanding of autobiographical remembering in the digital age might require going beyond the disciplinary boundaries of psychology. We appreciate this call for interdisciplinary cooperation and are convinced that the attempt to advance our understanding of autobiographical remembering in the digital age is likely to benefit greatly from input from neighboring disciplines. We are confident that the AMEDIA-Model also offers a valuable framework for researchers outside psychology who are interested in understanding autobiographical remembering in the digital age. In fact, we believe that much research with respect to new media and digital environments is already conducted in a highly interdisciplinary field that brings together scholars from psychology, communication science, and computer science.

Going Beyond the Laboratory

One important lesson that directly follows from our AMEDIA-Model is the importance of embracing methodological pluralism (cf. Hutmacher, 2023; Hutmacher & Franz, 2024; Mayrhofer & Hutmacher, 2020) and moving beyond a strict focus on laboratory experiments. For instance, capturing the dynamic interplay of internal autobiographical memory and high-tech external resources may require using the entire toolbox of psychological research methods, including qualitative and mixed methods, ambulatory assessment, and mobile sensing. Overall, the commentary writers seemed to agree with the need for using methods that help to map the entire memory ecology in which humans are embedded (see, e.g., Weilenmann, this issue). Two additional observations seemed particularly interesting in this respect. On the one hand, Henkel and St. Jacques (this issue) mentioned a lot of evidence that further strengthens our idea that it does not suffice to focus on the amount of recalled information when talking about autobiographical remembering in the digital age. More specifically, empirical research should also look at the phenomenological characteristics of autobiographical memories as well as the subjective experience of remembering. On the other hand, Grysman (this issue) describes several recent studies demonstrating that memory mechanisms established via laboratory paradigms do not necessarily

generalize to autobiographical remembering in real life (see, e.g., Grysman et al., 2020, 2023a). As this already makes clear, a diversification of methods and paradigms has the potential to lead to a more complete understanding of autobiographical remembering in the digital age but will also create new challenges, as this diversification will make the integration of the resulting findings more difficult.

Developing Predictions

Our call for the use of a more diverse set of methods is closely connected to another challenge: Soares (this issue, p. 136) argued that it will be important “to develop clear, testable, and theoretically informed predictions” and Talaifar (this issue) stated that our AMEDIA-Model is focused “on description over prediction” (p. 142) and that our target article “would have benefited from an overview of the exact research questions the model can and cannot answer and the exact hypotheses the model does and does not generate” (p. 141). To begin with, it is true that our AMEDIA-Model is focused on a description of the structure and the process of autobiographical remembering in the digital age. From our point of view, such a comprehensive description is an indispensable precondition for arriving at specific predictions: Only if one knows what kind of outcomes one wants to predict and only if one also knows which aspects need to be taken into account, clear and testable hypotheses are within reach. Going beyond mere description, however, our target article contains several sub-sections in which we lay out open research questions and sketch avenues for future empirical investigations. In addition, we also believe that we are not in a position to prescribe what kind of research questions or hypotheses others may want to investigate based on our AMEDIA-Model: From our perspective, the AMEDIA-Model provides a framework for thinking systematically about autobiographical remembering in the digital age that will hopefully inspire and coordinate diverse research efforts. Ultimately, this will also help us to gain more knowledge about the minutiae of the different sub-processes identified in our AMEDIA-Model and their effects on autobiographical remembering.

Conclusion

The large majority of people born about a hundred years ago had few, if any, pictures from their childhood days. People’s activities that took place in the 1990s (e.g., playing in a sports team, going to a bar after work, meeting with friends) have in many cases resulted in few recordings. In comparison, today’s lives of people are incredibly well-documented. Usually, parents will record countless moments and share them with family and friends. This kind of intensified documentation of people’s lives continues into their adult days. Understanding how this shapes the way we later remember and reconstruct our lives is a key component for understanding how digital environments impact the sense of who we are. Having read the commentaries, we are even more convinced that research on autobiographical

remembering in the digital age is both necessary and fruitful – and that our AMEDIA-Model can provide a valuable basis in this regard.

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