Performative Experience Design: Theories and practices for intermedial autobiographical performance

by

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Declaration

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Abstract

A growing body of human-computer interaction (HCI) research uses performance to explore embodied or multi-user interactions with technology. At the same time, digital technology is reconfiguring approaches to performance practice and research. This interaction design thesis identifies areas of overlapping interest within these two fields: digital media sharing in HCI, and autobiographical performance in performance studies. It posits a practice of ‘intermedial autobiographical performance’, in which people engage with a technological intervention to create autobiographical performances by sharing photos and stories of their life experiences. To explore this practice, the thesis develops a hybrid methodology that draws on relevant theories in both disciplines, as well as detailed analyses of four autobiographical performances, to create a two-phase interactive technology called Collect Yourselves! The first phase uses prompts to guide participants who do not identify as performers through a process of selecting and contextualising their personal digital media. The second phase provides a structure through which they perform their media for each other, engaging with the properties of autobiographical performance. Analyses of the Collect Yourselves! performances reveal new theories for both digital media sharing and performance, including ‘doubled indexicality’ and ‘performed photos’, as well as frameworks of reminiscing and storytelling, comfort and challenge, and ‘attending’ and ‘marking’. These frameworks help to explain the workings of an interactive performance event centred on personal digital media. Finally, the methodology and findings point towards a larger field of Performative Experience Design (PED), situated between HCI and performance studies. Intermedial autobiographical performance is only one part of this emerging field, in which performance is understood not as a rarefied or optional realm that exists only for its own sake, but rather as an insightful, intimate, risky, and potentially transformative experience that personal digital media technologies are particularly well suited to enable.
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Part I: Two fields, one question

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Literature reviews

Chapter 3: Methodology
Chapter 1.
Introduction

MOTIVATION

I used to make a living developing e-learning material, then became a user experience architect. On one hand, I was working to contribute in some way to the quality of life of individual human beings: never purely rational, prone to whim or passion, forever dancing through a process of being and becoming. This was my perspective after decades of study in the arts—theatre, music, filmmaking, and creative writing. On the other hand, I was working with digital media technology. Every digital artefact was a static, fixed unit—the very opposite of human experience—and people were not people, they were ‘users’. Of course, there is a substantial tradition of digital art that is anything but static, but such art figures very little in most people’s everyday lives. The digital technology that tends to matter to irrational, passionate, mutable human beings is the media with which they identify: digital photos, social networking interactions, and their favourite games, sites, or apps.

I want to bridge the gap between people and their digital media, and for me, the bridge is performance. I know from experience that performance is more than a transmission of information, and that being in an audience is more than processing information. Performance is a sometimes exhilarating, sometimes exhausting experience, made up of but experientially very different from a person’s normal activities. I wanted to experiment with ways to use a static media artefact as a trigger not just for recollection or conversation but for emotional and ‘artistic’ engagement with self and other, reflecting and incorporating personal digital media as an integral part of the person’s lived experience.

Relatively recently, the fields of human-computer interaction (HCI) and performance studies have taken tentative steps towards each other. The need to address the full ‘felt experience’ (McCarthy & Wright 2004, p. ix) of technology users has occupied the minds of some HCI researchers. Similarly, performance researchers have tried to make sense of new media technologies in performance. Lively debates on the ontologies of liveness and mediation have given way to more nuanced examinations of the effects of
digital technologies in performance. Surely performance studies can contribute to HCI, and HCI to performance studies, if the right focus can be found.

That focus for me is the concept of the personal: small groups of people occupying the same time and physical space, sharing their own personal digital media with each other. This phenomenon exists in the practice of digital storytelling as invented and championed by Joe Lambert and others at what has become the Center for Digital Storytelling in Berkeley, California. With the advent of consumer-level media software in the early 1990s, Lambert, Nina Mullen, and Dana Atchley foresaw the transformational potential for people to create deeply meaningful ‘digital stories’ (Lambert 2002) out of their own life stories and personal photographs. However, digital stories only use a live, co-located audience in the developmental phase, during the ‘story circle’ (Meadows & Kidd 2008, p. 102). A completed story is a pre-recorded multimedia show likened by Daniel Meadows to a ‘mini-movie’ (2008, p. 2). The audience that Lambert envisions for digital stories is not the co-located group in the story circle but the millions or billions of potential viewers of the finished digital story artefact, delivered via the internet. Sadly, actual audience numbers for digital storytelling are usually tiny.

In the same time frame, online social networking sites like Facebook have attracted those billions of geographically and temporally distributed viewers. Online social network sites are, in essence, platforms for the sharing of personal information, but in a much more fragmented and ad hoc form than Lambert’s digital stories. Eventually, other platforms such as Cowbird and SonicPics1 were created to handle more deliberate narrative constructions. Whether on Facebook or on Cowbird, though, the result is a static narrative that is disseminated rather than shared, fragmented rather than contextualised, offered rather than engaged with.

This thesis is an attempt to contextualise digital media sharing by bringing the storyteller, her audience, and the mediating technology together into a unique performance event. The aim is performance, not in Richard Schechner’s sense that ‘just about anything can be studied “as” performance’ (2006, p. 30), but a structured event drawing deliberately on established traditions within performance studies. Using tools from performance studies and of HCI, this thesis stakes a claim to a new branch of experience design that is

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equipped to design for, and make sense of, the performance of technologically mediated interactions.

**DISCIPLINARY VIEWPOINTS**

This thesis draws primarily from two very different disciplines: human-computer interaction (HCI) and performance studies. I will argue that certain areas of interest within these two disciplines share a number of epistemological and methodological perspectives, such that the work of this thesis becomes less of an interdisciplinary endeavour than a project of formulating a new area of research drawing equally on both. This project is called Performative Experience Design (PED) (Spence et al 2013b; Spence et al 2013a). Before making that argument, though, I will sketch out the perspectives that each field offers individually. These sketches will be more fully fleshed out in Chapters 2 and 3, but will serve for the moment to orient the reader to the reasoning behind the thesis.

**AN HCI POINT OF VIEW**

In broad terms, HCI examines the ways in which people interact with digital technology. HCI is anything but homogeneous. Three ‘waves’ (Bødker 2006), or epistemological assumptions, have driven the field over the past thirty years or more. First-wave HCI, which emerged during the early 1980s, focused on making it possible for an individual to use a computer to complete a task without knowing how that computer had been built or programmed (Bannon 1991). The ‘hegemonic discursive practices of rationalism’ (McCarthy & Wright 2004, p. 24), underpinned by the ‘dominant paradigm’ of cognitivist psychology (Kaptelinin et al 2003, p. 692), attended to one generic user performing one task on one machine.

This focus on the single, decontextualised and almost disembodied user gave way to second-wave HCI, which took a broader perspective. Researchers in this wave viewed users in a larger context and paid more attention to the situations in which they found themselves performing tasks on computers. New theories were brought into play, such as activity theory and distributed cognition (Kaptelinin et al 2003). John McCarthy and Peter Wright describe this shift as a change from perceiving the user as a ‘cog’ (2004, p. 6) in the 1970s and 1980s to perceiving the user as contextualised, situated, relational ‘social actor’ (2004, p. 7) in the 1980s and 1990s.
In recent years this second wave has been overtaken by a third wave, which moves even further from the original focus on one user applying only cognitive processes to a single task. Third-wave HCI looks to understand a multiplicity of users, bringing their minds, emotions, bodies, and full personalities to bear on each situated interaction. These interactions are often not task-oriented but ‘non-work, non-purposeful, non-rational’ (Bødker 2006, pp. 1-2). Susanne Bødker, the first to describe this third wave, sees it as concerned with culture, aesthetics, emotions, and experience, including a pragmatic approach to experience (2006, p. 2). These areas of focus open a Pandora’s box of potential motivations, requirements, modes of interaction, and social implications, any of which might interconnect.

Alongside the development of the three waves in HCI lies the tension in the area of user experience (UX) between the predominantly qualitative ‘design-based UX research camp’ and the predominantly quantitative ‘model-based UX research camp’ as described by Effie Lai-Chong Law (2011, p. 4). The former values qualitative methods to unearth emotional responses to designed interactions, while the latter values more positivist attempts to derive models on which to base interaction designs (pp. 4-5). While neither Law nor I argue that these camps are diametrically opposed, with one camp’s methods off limits to the other, the tensions between the two reveal the structural effects of the development of third-wave HCI. HCI, with its strong roots in the hard sciences, struggles to address emerging topics such as ‘affect’ (Picard 2003), ‘fun’ (Blythe et al 2002), ‘enchantment’ (McCarthy et al 2005; Sengers et al 2008), and ‘aesthetics’ (Petersen et al 2004; Dalsgaard & Hansen 2008).

**A PERFORMANCE STUDIES POINT OF VIEW**

The field of performance studies is a broad church. Arguably its most influential denomination, at least in the Anglophone world, was born from the fusion in the 1970s and 1980s of theatre studies, under Richard Schechner, and anthropology, under Victor Turner (Phelan 1998, p. 3). They combined their fields of expertise to imagine a new field of performance studies in the United States. Schechner writes with Willa Appel that their goal in the early stages was ‘to approach the genres of theatre, dance, music, sports, and ritual as a single, coherent group, as performance’ (1990, p. 3). Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett observes that the field ‘sets no limit on what can be studied in terms of medium and culture. Nor does it limit the range of approaches that can be taken.’ Though this expansiveness has its risks and downfalls, it can ‘enrich the discussion of discourse,
representation, the body (to be distinguished from embodiment), and identity’ (2007, p. 43).

Schechner’s and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s version of performance studies at New York University was not the only one: at Northwestern University, Dwight Conquergood saw performance studies as an extension of the oral interpretation of literary texts rather than as a direct challenge to theatre studies (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2007, p. 45). In their different ways, though, both the East Coast and the Midwestern approaches aimed attention at what Conquergood described as the ‘finely nuanced meaning that is embodied, tacit, intoned, gestured, improvised, coexperienced, covert—and all the more deeply meaningful because of its refusal to be spelled out’ (2002, p. 146).

As Marvin Carlson (2008) explains, these developments in performance and their relation to theatre and oral interpretation, while influential in the Anglophone world, were latecomers compared to the German field of Theaterwissenschaft, which from the 1920s has studied ‘theatre as a social event and a process of embodied action rather than the communication of a literary text’ (p. 4). This approach maintains a direct relationship to theatre without the unfortunate side of effect of setting up performance and theatre studies as antagonists. It is not my intention to contribute to the disparaging of theatre or theatricality that Bert O. States identifies so eloquently (1996, p. 9); I am simply focusing on those elements of performance that are most directly relevant to practices of digital media sharing.

In contrast to much of the theatre studies literature, performance studies tends not to assume a literary script brought to life by actors playing fictional roles. I am by no means attempting to establish (or resurrect) a division between performance studies and theatre studies on the spurious claim that all theatre is text-based fiction, or that performance studies excludes text-based fiction. However, the focus of performance studies on ‘behavior [as] the “object of study”’ (Schechner 2006, p. 1) rather than on the staging of a given fictional text makes performance studies particularly useful for this thesis. As will be elaborated in Chapter 2, certain areas of research that tend to be labelled as theatre studies rather than performance studies, but which share this focus, will also be included in the discussion.

A SHARED PERSPECTIVE

For all their differences, HCI and performance studies each have relatively small areas of interest whose aims and even some methodologies tend to converge. In HCI, this area is
digital media sharing. Studies in this area examine how people are integrating personal digital media such as photographs into their everyday lives, often investing a few with a great deal of emotional significance while losing track of overwhelming numbers of forgotten image files (Van House 2011). However, digital media sharing is not primarily a visual activity: ‘[t]he act of sharing photos in a photo album was as much (if not more so) about talking with family and friends as it was about looking at the photographs’ (Van House et al 2004). So, in effect, people who engage in digital media sharing perform stories and conversation for and with each other, with their personal media as integral elements of this social performance.

In performance studies, the corresponding area of interest is autobiographical performance. Here, individuals create performances around their own experiences, often incorporating digital media. The ingredients of media, storytelling, and co-located performer and audience are the same as in digital media sharing as studied by HCI researchers, but with at least two key differences: these performers are planning their performances in advance, and they aim to create an ‘artistic’ event that goes beyond everyday conversation. Performance studies allows for a rich and holistic perspective on the most important aspects of a digital media sharing event: the workings of autobiographical performance; the relationships among performers and audience members; the processes by which people select materials and create a performance from them; storytelling; the workings of digital media technologies in performance; and the unique, emergent event where these elements are made ‘special’ (Dissanayake 2003) through processes I refer to as ‘attending’ and ‘marking’ (see Chapter 8). While anthropologist Ellen Dissanayake does not speak specifically to performance studies, her attention to the transformation of everyday experience through ritual or artistic practice addresses the central concerns of performance studies as conceived by Schechner and Turner.

Perhaps most importantly, performance studies rests on a foundation of practice that parallels the design practice at the heart of interaction design, experience design, and ultimately to HCI as a whole. Performance studies theorises from the work of countless practitioners who continually create new ways of presenting, representing, interrogating, and challenging the human (or posthuman) condition, while HCI theorises from the work of researchers who continually explore the boundaries of human interaction with technology. Resting on the foundations of practice in both fields, digital media sharing and autobiographical performance can offer each other complementary theories and methods that expand the boundaries of both performance studies and HCI.
The shared perspective of HCI and performance studies in the research areas of digital media sharing and autobiographical performance leads to the specific topic of this thesis: intermedial autobiographical performance, created by people who do not identify as performers, whose only resource for creating an extra-conversational performance out of their media sharing event is the technological system designed for this purpose. However, intermedial autobiographical performance is only one phenomenon within the broader category of interactions with technology that are fundamentally performative. Therefore, this thesis posits a larger field where the interests of HCI and performance studies begin to converge, and where the space between the two fields opens up in a new area of research that I identify as Performative Experience Design.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND GOALS

Given the areas of interest and overlap between digital media sharing and autobiographical performance described above, this thesis sets out to answer the following research question:

How can intermedial autobiographical performance advance the understanding of interactions among people and their personal digital media?

It is a key argument of this thesis that specific constituents of a performance event, including a ‘heightened attention’ to the present moment of performance (Bauman 1975; Fischer-Lichte 2008b), can extend how researchers understand the interactions among individuals, their personal digital media, and other individuals (their co-performers and audience). To test this argument, I designed a system with the goal of creating media-sharing events that would redefine their participants, from ‘speaker’ and ‘listener’ to ‘performer’ and ‘audience member’, and prompt them to engage with their media in ways that would parallel the ways in which professional performers create works for the stage. The resulting autobiographical performances are intermedial, digital ‘from the bottom up’, directly addressing the role of digital media as reflective and constitutive of an individual’s identity in a given context.

Analyses of four performance events using the system created for this thesis reveal interactions marked by a higher level of connection and intimacy than would be expected from a similar period of ordinary conversation or unstructured media sharing. Many participants found the experience of using the system to be challenging, even to the point of discomfort, yet in most cases this discomfort gave way to a sense of pleasure at the connection and intimacy. All performances were ‘marked’ by performers who made
themselves vulnerable or took risks in front of their audiences, sometimes surprising even themselves in the process, and often creating emotionally moving experiences for their audiences as well. Using this system to prompt and shape their interactions with their own personal digital media, people who did not identify as artists were able to create intimate, risky, and potentially transformative experiences. I strongly believe that this experiment does not exhaust the potential for HCI and performance studies to work together. Instead, it points towards a fruitful area of research into the many emerging types of interaction with technology that involve elements of performance.

THESIS OVERVIEW

This thesis is divided into four parts. Part I introduces the goals, research questions, background, and methodology of the entire project, which not only defines and analyses intermedial autobiographical performance, but also points towards the larger area of interest described as PED. Part II takes a narrower focus, presenting in detail the processes by which the prototype for intermedial autobiographical performance was created. Part III continues this narrow focus by analysing in detail the performances created using this prototype, resulting in a set of findings, guidelines for HCI, and implications for performance. Part IV broadens the perspective again. It defines PED as a field of study in its own right, with intermedial autobiographical performance as just one example of many possible avenues of research into performative interactions with digital media technology.

Part I is made up of this introduction, Chapter 2, and Chapter 3. Chapter 2 provides an overview of relevant existing research in both HCI and performance studies. The first section pertains to the HCI literature. It first maps out the history of digital media sharing research in HCI, then identifies contributions from HCI research into reminiscence and memory, which strongly influence digital media sharing. Lastly, it charts previous attempts to adopt performance theories and methods into HCI. The second section of Chapter 2 explores autobiographical performance, then traces additional practices and theories that can inform digital media sharing: storytelling, devised theatre, intermedial performance, liminality, transformation, and what Dissanayake describes as the ‘making special’ (2003) of everyday experience through art. This chapter establishes a place for research that goes beyond the performative nature of (gendered) identity (Butler 2002) or the ‘presentation of self’ (Goffman 1959) to the deliberate, creative expression of technologically mediated identity within a bounded performance event.
The methodology for answering the research questions that drive this thesis is a hybrid methodology, discussed in detail in Chapter 3. It incorporates standard and accepted methods from the fields of design-oriented research and experience design, including investigation, design exploration, prototyping, and analysis. It also adopts the method of performance analysis alongside the argument within performance studies that methodologies must be reflexive and take into account the unpredictability of research processes (Kershaw & Nicholson 2011). This hybrid methodology involves the creation of a hybrid method: ‘coded performance analysis’, which combines HCI’s thematic analysis techniques with performance analysis.

Part II comprises two chapters describing the process of designing a prototype for intermedial autobiographical performance. The starting point, Chapter 4, presents a detailed analysis of four autobiographical performances associated with the Live Art tradition in the UK. One is an iconic performance that took place many years before I moved to the UK, and so has been analysed through video and print documentation as well as secondary sources. The remaining three performances were experienced live, two of these on multiple occasions. I also had the opportunity to speak with two of the performers about their goals, devising practices, and experiences. The analyses of these performances allowed me to identify the most interesting and generative issues addressed by this cross-section of twenty-first century, British autobiographical performance. These are self-making; a ‘heightened attention’ (Bauman 1975, p. 293; Fischer-Lichte 2008b, pp. 166-67) to the objects, bodies, and structures that make up the performance; situatedness, meaning attention to the spatiotemporal and social context of the performance; and the ‘aesthetics of the event’ (Fischer-Lichte 2008b, pp. 163, 189) that distinguish performance from ordinary conversation.

The four properties of autobiographical performance identified in the performance analyses formed the focus for my design exploration process, described in Chapter 5. My goal was to design a system that would create opportunities for people to engage in processes of self-making, ‘heightened attention’, situatedness, and the ‘aesthetics of the event’ in the sharing of personal digital media. While I kept in mind any number of issues and influences, from the theories of Butler, Bauman, Fischer-Lichte, Fällman, Bardzell, and Dewey to the limitations of the technologies available to me, I engaged most directly with these performances at every stage of the design process. The design process began with an ideation stage that resulted in a design workbook and a mapping of the design space of intermedial autobiographical performance. Each design concept demonstrated a possible route for lay audiences to perform stories of their life.
experiences through their personal digital media, but none engaged sufficiently with the most powerful extra-conversational elements of performance. A second round of ideation resulted in a number of breakthroughs in that respect, but its proposed system proved impractical. In the end, the least technologically exciting option held the most promise, because it allowed participants to engage with their digital media on their own terms, reflecting and challenging their individual habits of capture, storage, viewing, and sharing as part of a two-phase performance experience. Chapter 5 ends with a detailed description of the prototype, titled *Collect Yourselves!* and a discussion of the design goals that it aimed to achieve.

Part III is made up of three chapters that analyse the implementation of *Collect Yourselves!* as performed on four separate occasions: two performances by groups of friends (Chapter 6) and two performances by groups of strangers (Chapter 7). Chapter 6 begins with an explanation of recruitment and implementation procedures for all four performances, then focuses on the Friend Groups. It briefly describes a baseline Friend Control Group study, not involving *Collect Yourselves!* in which a group of friends came together for an unstructured interaction in which they could share personal digital media if they wished. This study revealed the hallmarks of quotidian conversation, including a markedly dominant speaker, fluid and overlapping speech, and very little sharing of digital media. After establishing this short example of unstructured interaction, the chapter describes the experiences of the two Friend Groups who performed their stories and digital media using *Collect Yourselves!* Each performance is analysed from four perspectives: a thematic analysis of the first (devising) phase, an interaction analysis of the second (performance) phase, a coded performance analysis of the second phase, and a thematic analysis of reflections on the entire experience. The chapter concludes with a discussion of findings from these Friend Group performances. The main findings include a much more even distribution of time spent speaking compared to the Friend Control Group; much greater and more complex engagement with digital media; self-disclosure and self-discovery; significant insight, connection, intimacy, and risk shared between performers and audience members; and liminal and potentially transformational moments in which emotions were heightened and attitudes might shift. All of the identified properties of autobiographical performance were in evidence, to varying degrees.

Chapter 7 concerns *Collect Yourselves!* as it was used by groups of strangers. This chapter also includes a brief description of a baseline Stranger Control Group study, in which four strangers came together, first to share some personal digital photographs in
the absence of any technological system or performance rules, then to play a board game involving reminiscence. This study confirmed the expectations suggested by the relevant literature: the interactions were physically and socially awkward, unbalanced, and for the most part devoid of the properties of autobiographical performance. The chapter goes on to describe the two Stranger Group performances of *Collect Yourselves!* Stranger Groups made somewhat different use of the opportunities afforded by *Collect Yourselves!* than did the Friend Groups. Nevertheless, the Stranger Groups also brought out all of the properties of autobiographical performance.

Chapter 8 draws together the findings of all four *Collect Yourselves!* performances. It begins with a discussion of the similarities and differences between Friend Group and Stranger Group performances, which lay mainly in a tendency for Friend Groups to cohere and for Stranger Group participants to differentiate themselves from each other. The chapter then returns to the design goals set out in Chapter 5 and looks at each one in turn to determine the degree to which the *Collect Yourselves!* performances met each goal. This includes a discussion of phenomena that emerged unexpectedly from the *Collect Yourselves!* analyses, including the framework of ‘attending’ and ‘marking’ to describe what otherwise might be termed the consumption and production of an aesthetic event. This chapter offers a full definition of intermedial autobiographical performance and answers the primary research question. The second section of the chapter lists guidelines for HCI researchers who investigate performative interactions in a variety of situations, including but not limited to digital media sharing. The chapter concludes with a list of implications for performance studies researchers and practitioners working in intermedial and/or autobiographical performance, though again, these implications may have a wider remit within the field.

Part IV consists of a single chapter, Chapter 9, which moves from the interdisciplinary perspective of Parts II and III to posit an emerging field of Performative Experience Design, which occupies the space between HCI and performance studies. This chapter lays out a vision for how PED might advance from the starting point of intermedial autobiographical performance. It discusses the contributions PED might make in terms of HCI and performance studies research, not to be re-absorbed by these two fields but to open a dialogue among all three. The chapter ends with directions for future research in PED and a re-imagining of existing research in terms of this new field. In PED, performance is not some rarefied or optional realm that exists only for its own sake, but rather an intimate, risky, and potentially transformative experience that digital media design is well suited to explore.
Chapter 2.
Literature reviews

INTRODUCTION

Given the interdisciplinary nature of the thesis, this chapter aims to set out the topics in both HCI and performance studies that are most relevant to the research question: How can intermedial autobiographical performance advance the understanding of interactions among people and their personal digital media?

The first section begins with two examples of design-oriented research (Fällman 2003; Fallman 2007) that illustrate key areas of interest in HCI: media sharing practices, reminiscence, autobiographical memory, and approaches to performance within the field. The section then charts research germane to these areas. The major insights from this section are the relative lack of research into the emotionally and socially important phenomenon of co-located media sharing; the importance of the interaction between speaker and listeners in the present-moment experience of media sharing; the importance of triggers in re-creating—not retrieving—autobiographical memories; the many difficulties commonly encountered by casual digital photographers; and the promise of performance for driving research into multi-user, multi-role engagements with digital technology.

The second section begins with two examples of performance that share many of the features of conversational media sharing. These features include the use of story and anecdote through direct address to a small audience, the use of or reference to personal media such as photographs, and autobiographical content presented without the playing of fictional roles. The section then describes the key performance practices that relate to the performance of personal and/or digital media: autobiographical performance, storytelling, devising, and intermedial performance. The most productive theories in this field pertain to ‘heightened attention’ and the ‘aesthetics of the event’, as understood from a variety of perspectives. These are predicated on an understanding of non-‘theatrical’ performance styles that came to prominence since the 1960s. Therefore, the

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2 Fällman and Fallman are alternative spellings of the same name.
chapter includes a brief history of the most pertinent of these, in order to frame the relevant theories.

The final section of this chapter is a discussion of the insights drawn from the review of the relevant literature. These insights overlap to a remarkable extent, indicating the surprisingly close alignment between the two disciplines and their potential to productively inform each other. However, to maintain clarity in discussing this complex and interdisciplinary work, three subsidiary research questions have been developed. One concentrates on the contributions of design-oriented research within HCI, the second concentrates on the contributions of performance theories and practices, and the third points towards the field that emerges between the two disciplines. These subsidiary research questions provide focus to the primary research question and structure to the subsequent chapters.

**HCI: UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL**

**DESIGN RESEARCH PRACTICE: 4PHOTOS & HUMANAQUARIUM**

*4Photos (2010)*

Five friends gather around the dinner table. A small, four-sided centrepiece catches their attention with photographs drawn automatically from their Facebook albums. As the images float from one screen to the next around the centrepiece, they foster free-flowing conversation and reminiscence around personal stories.

The display is called 4Photos (ten Bhömer et al 2010). In field studies, groups of friends and family interacted with 4Photos while sharing a meal. The photographs guided topics of conversation and created an opportunity for participants to learn more about each other’s lives (pp. 57-58). The talk was highly interactive and depended upon seating position and the ongoing flow of conversation. Hence much of the analysis focuses on spatio-temporal arrangements, dynamics of use, and the moment-by-moment access to

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3 Parts of this section have been previously published in Spence et al 2013.

4 4Photos would seem to have much in common with commercially available photo frames or research projects such as an affect-responsive frame (Dibeklioğlu et al 2011) and the Cherish digital photo frame (Kim & Zimmerman 2006). Their primary function seems to be the choice of image to display, in the hope of provoking affective or behavioural changes. As the aim of this thesis is to understand interaction, display systems will not be discussed further.
displayed media. *4Photos* calls attention to the need for careful design of both media content and media player in conversational settings, and a sensitivity to the experiential effects of mediated encounters that unfold over time. It facilitates reminiscing and storytelling encounters that allow people to express themselves as much as they wish and discover unexpected new levels of intimacy and participation.

![Image of a device](image.png)

**Figure 2.1 4Photos. Photograph courtesy of Martijn ten Bhömer, used with permission.**

*humanaquarium* (2011)

Where *4Photos* explores conversational media sharing in a private setting, *humanaquarium* ‘was conceived as an application of performance practice to the exploration of public behaviour’ (Taylor *et al* 2011, p. 1856). *Humanaquarium* is made up of ‘the box’ (p. 1856), a 1.5 metre cube whose front side is a touch-sensitive screen that provides the interface for audiences to manipulate the audiovisual components of a live performance. The performers are two of the project’s designers, Robyn Taylor and Guy Schofield, who sit inside the cube and make music. Taylor and Schofield experienced the performer’s point of view, closely witnessing reactions that would have been invisible from any other vantage point. They were then able to incorporate those experiences into their design practice. As each performance was situated in a unique social and spatio-temporal social context, ‘ephemerality and non-repeatability’ (p. 1858) became important factors for design.
The *humanaquarium* project aimed to engage audiences deeply in a collaborative performance. Design decisions included an attention to playfulness, ambiguous rules for interaction, and the need to manage participants’ ‘fears of appearing foolish in public’ (Taylor *et al* 2011, p. 1859). Failure to manage those fears would result in a non-interactive performance. One key finding after dozens of performances was the difficulty in finding a balance between a complex, aesthetically pleasing musical performance and a simple, easy-to-understand invitation for participants to collaborate via the touchscreen. Complex performances were more satisfying for the designers but ‘inadvertently sacrificed some of the unpredictability of the medium’ (p. 1864) that encouraged audiences to join in.

*4Photos* and *humanaquarium* provide conceptual brackets for the design work of this thesis. On one hand, I am interested in conversation around personal digital media, a vernacular practice in which everyone can be a storyteller. However, investigating conversational storytelling as such would not offer perspectives for understanding the heightened sense of risk, vulnerability, and insight that comes with performing in front of an audience. *humanaquarium* is an example of using interaction design with performance to better understand both fields. However, like most other explorations of performance within interaction design, it is a public experience that requires a core of in-the-know ‘orchestrators’ (Benford & Giannachi 2011) who must manage the gulf between the
researcher-performers who create the performance experience and the members of the public who become performers through interaction with the device.

This thesis explores the design space, which William Gaver describes as a ‘metaphor’ for the ‘territory’ that a design process might cover (2011, p. 1554), between 4Photos and humanaquarium. It seeks to engage people who do not think of themselves as performers to speak about their digital photos in a private, enclosed, invited space (as 4Photos does), but to do so in a way that goes beyond everyday conversation, drawing on performance strategies and aiming towards a ‘creative’ (Taylor et al 2011, p. 1856) performance experience (as humanaquarium does). I must state emphatically that this thesis is not attempting to define the boundary between conversation and performance or to create a set of design guidelines that, if met, would guarantee a wholly extra-conversational performance. Rather, this thesis attempts to use theories and practices of performance to create conditions that nudge people into a potentially transformational relationship with their personal digital media, with themselves, and with other people (the idea of ‘nudging’ is inspired by Leong et al 2011b). The rest of this section describes related work within HCI, maps out the areas of research interest most relevant to such work, and explains the theories that underpin these areas.

**DIGITAL MEDIA SHARING**

The example of 4Photos raises the question of what other research has been done within the HCI community on co-located digital media sharing and related topics. As Jarno Ojala and Sanna Malinen (2012) state, ‘services that aim for supporting working with limited and intimate groups are still in their infancy’ (p. 69). This may be true in the sense that the questions driving such research have not been fully explored, but the area reaches back well over a decade. It includes studies of pre-digital photo-sharing practices, which continue to shape user behaviour and inform studies of digital media sharing. Frohlich et al (2002) coin the terms ‘photo-talk’ to describe ‘conversation around photographs’ (p. 167) and ‘photoware’ to describe the technologies that allow for collaborative capture, archiving, and sharing of photographs in digital formats, whether the original photo was analogue or digital (p. 166). These terms are complemented by David Kirk et al’s (2006) definition of ‘photowork’ as the practices surrounding the capture, storage, and use of digital photographs (p. 764), with implications for functions of search, browse, edit, organise, and archive.
Frohlich et al (2002) investigate the impact of digitisation on existing practices of taking, archiving, and sharing photographs. Of their many findings, two are of particular importance to this thesis. The first is the difference between storytelling and reminiscing talk, which stems from ‘recipient design’ (Sacks et al 1974, p. 727), or the tendency to frame conversation to suit the expectations of the audience. Storytelling is characterised by fewer turns, dominated by the person with ‘status, experience and wisdom’ to communicate to those not present when the photo was taken. Responses may come in the form of ‘second stories’ (Frohlich 2004, p. 138) or ‘response stories’ (Norrick 2000, p. 112) that indicate understanding by following the themes of the story just told. Reminiscing is characterised by multiple, overlapping turns as those present when the photo was taken contribute details, ‘jointly “finding” the memory together’ (Frohlich et al 2002, p. 171) and sometimes straying from the narrative. Mixed groups engage in collaborative telling (p. 172).

The second key finding concerns the value of media sharing:

Of all the methods of interacting around photos, sharing photos in person was described as the most common and enjoyable. Such co-present sharing was seen as a way of re-creating the past and reliving the experience with others who were there at the time. (Frohlich et al 2002, p. 170)

The authors do not speak of conveying static information but of the present-moment experience of re-creating past events. They suggest that such experiences might best be fostered by technologies that would maintain the ‘inefficiencies’ of print-based sharing (p. 174). I suggest that many of the benefits of those ‘inefficiencies’ might be created through practices of performance.

Andy Crabtree, Tom Rodden, and John Mariani (2004) elaborate on the present-moment experience in terms of how stories around photos are shaped and controlled collaboratively. They also highlight recipient design in photo sharing, but they focus on the ‘control centre’ (p. 399) that emerges around the person who owns the photo(s) being shared. Photos distribute some of the control by allowing others to interrogate, comment, or form temporary sub-groups with their own conversations. Part of the remarkable ability for groups to coordinate these activities is due to ‘a host of embodied interactional gestures that enable persons using photographs to establish mutual orientations [and] to furnish topics’ (p. 401). However, Siân Lindley and Andrew Monk (2006) uncover tensions in the collaborative negotiation of digital media sharing. Participants speaking
about their own photographs were frustrated with automated slideshows whose tempo they could not control, but not frustrated enough to relinquish control of photo display to their audiences. Therefore, any new design for digital media sharing should build on these observations to resolve or fruitfully heighten these tensions.

Nancy Van House et al (2004) present a rich and nuanced analysis of what I would identify as the sharing aspects of photowork as defined by Kirk et al (2006). Van House et al note the importance of the precise and unique situation of each digital media sharing session in supporting the social aspects of ‘memory, creating and maintaining relationships, and self-expression’ (2004, p. 1; see also Stelmaszewska et al 2008). In later work, Van House describes the value of photos as triggers to enactments of identity and relationships (2009, p. 1074). These enactments are not by-products of some other process but are key to the motivation for, and enjoyment of, the present-moment act of sharing personal photos.

As noted by both Kirk et al and Van House, the continuing development of digital photography creates challenges to practices of photo sharing as people are ‘quickly overwhelmed by the size of their collections and the opacity of computer-based storage, with indecipherable filenames’ (Van House 2009, p. 1078; see also Van House 2011, pp. 128-129; Keightley 2014, pp. 581-582). Sarvas and Frohlich (2011) identify the challenges of taking, editing, storing, and finding increasing numbers of photographs from increasing numbers of devices, as well as issues of privacy and regulation. The techniques used to navigate a few dozen physical snapshots do not translate directly to the management of multiple terabytes of digital media (p. 97). Steve Whittaker, Ofer Bergman, and Paul Clough (2009) note that participants exhibit both poor performance and an exaggerated belief in their abilities to retrieve photos more than a year old. These difficulties in navigation and retrieval might be compounded by the observation that digital mementoes, including photographs, are sometimes perceived as less valuable than physical photographs or other mementoes. Daniela Petrelli and Steve Whittaker (2010), who discovered this phenomenon, surmise that digital archives (as folder or file names on a screen) do not spring to mind the way that physical objects do, and that digital photographs are seen as transient or ephemeral (p. 166). Clearly, there is a conflict between existing practices of selecting and retrieving digital photos to share and the socially and emotionally valuable practices of co-located digital media sharing.

HCI researchers have created a number of prototypes for digital media sharing over the past decade and a half. Anything within the field of digital media sharing might qualify
as what Bødker would describe as ‘third-wave’ because media sharing is a cultural and emotional experience that is ‘non-work, non-purposeful, non-rational, etc.’ (2006, pp. 1-2, 6). However, I find that existing work in media sharing can be more usefully grouped by the epistemologies implicit in the focuses they choose. First-wave thinking is seen in products that deal only with the production or offering of a media artefact, not the sharing of the experience triggered by that artefact. Examples of first-wave thinking include web-based tools such as Aisling Kelliher and Glorianna Davenport’s Confectionary, which provides rigid structures for building narratives and promises ‘an easy, risk-free and playful’ environment (2007, p. 928; see also Landry & Guzdial 2006; Fono & Counts 2006). While Confectionary is non-work, it is certainly designed to be both purposeful and rational, and is evaluated in those terms. Their Everyday Mediated Storytelling Model (p. 928) is, in turn, reminiscent of the standard model of production and consumption that this thesis challenges.

Other researchers take a second-wave HCI approach in their examination of how products impact and are impacted by the context of use. A seminal example is StoryTrack (Balabanović et al 2000), an augmented photo display system that supports co-located interaction in a manner closely analogous to the telling of stories over physical photos. The interface uses stories as an organisational tool, asking users to order their photos in the way that makes most sense in the telling. A key finding is the difference between photo-driven ‘stories’, which cover only one photo each, and story-driven ‘stories’, which are told using more than one photograph. Story-driven stories dominate for remote sharing, while the photo-driven style is used for local telling (p. 570). Other epistemologically second-wave media sharing research includes the Personal Digital Historian (Shen et al 2003), an interactive tabletop system for story sharing that aims for agency on the part of all participants but runs the risk of channelling users into predetermined modes of representing their ideas and experiences; Leonard M. Ah Kun and Gary Marsden’s (2007) interactive system for managing photo sharing on PDAs; MobiPhos (Clawson et al 2008; Clawson et al 2009), an application for the capture and immediate sharing of photos within small groups of co-located users; Christian Kray et al’s (2009) Bluetooth®-based photo sharing technique that uses spatial proximity regions to control the viewing and sharing of virtual ‘stacks’ of photos; Andrés Lucero, Jussi Holopainen, and Tero Jokela’s (2011) pass-them-around prototype that allows for both sequential and ad hoc photo sharing; and Anne Marie Piper, Nadir Weibel, and James Hollan’s (2013) in-depth study of audio-enhanced paper photos designed to support reminiscence and social interaction among a very elderly user, her family, and her care staff.
The studies I have described as epistemologically second-wave take the digital infrastructure as given: researchers input photos into a device as part of the research project, rather than designing for the full range of archive and selection activities that are an integral part of the experience of digital media sharing. These second-wave projects also tend to focus on interactions with the products themselves and frame those interactions in terms of accomplishing goals or having pleasant experiences. Framings like these can limit possibilities for the peculiar, sometimes intense, and potentially transformative interactions that can arise in some storytelling performances. These may be impromptu, conversational, and vernacular, but they remain performances in a wide range of senses, from the Butlerian performativity of the gendered self (Butler 2002) and Goffman’s (1959) presentation of self to folklorist Richard Bauman’s ‘verbal art’ (1975) and Heddon’s ‘performing “I”’, which is ‘strategically complex and layered’ (2008, p. 8). A substantially third-wave approach would create triggers for people to approach their personal digital media archives critically and unconventionally, with the goal of establishing an emotional or insightful connection among people.

A related practice that espouses this goal is digital storytelling as established by Joe Lambert, Nina Mullen, and Dana Atchley of the Center for Digital Storytelling in California. In the early 1990s, they used emerging consumer-level video editing technology to teach people to create personal digital stories narrated over their own photographs. CDS-style digital storytelling aims to ‘assist in this larger project of allowing us to coexist in a world of fluid identity’ (Lambert 2002, p. 17) but instead creates a static ‘mini-movie’ (Meadows 2008, p. 2) for each participant, often hosted on an institutional website. Jenny Kidd (Meadows 2008) and Jo Tacchi (2009) argue that digital storytelling is reactive rather than interactive, while Jerry Watkins and Angelina Russo (2009) deny the interactivity promised by the ability of some web pages to host written comments to a fixed digital story (see also Van House 2009, p. 1085). In fact, it is the process of live, co-located storytelling over photos in the ‘story circle’, prior to the creation of the digital story ‘mini-movie’, that many hold up as the most important and most enjoyable element of digital storytelling (Lambert 2002, p. 88; Hartley & McWilliam 2009, p. 3; Lundby & Kaare 2008, pp. 118-120). Third-wave promises of a technologically mediated story circle are defeated by digital storytelling’s second-wave mechanisms of production and first-wave mechanisms of consumption. However, the story circle remains a tantalising focus for the design of co-located digital media sharing technologies.
Third-wave intentions in design for media sharing can be seen in very early work such as the audioscanner and audioprint player mocked up by David Frohlich, Guy Adams, and Ella Tallyn (2000). These aim to give ‘mood and life to the photo and trigger a richer remembering of the event’ (p. 1). Similarly, Frohlich et al’s audiophoto desk offers ‘a way of bringing ordinary objects to life’ (2004, p. 2) by combining photos and sound through embodied interaction. Several recent media sharing projects, including 4Photos (ten Bhömer et al 2010; O’Hara et al 2012), build on these third-wave intentions. Tuck Wah Leong uses serendipity as a design driver (2009). The photo display system developed by him, Richard Harper, and Tim Regan (2011b) ‘nudges’ users towards serendipitous experiences of sharing digital photos. Other examples include Rider Spoke (2007), a participatory performance developed by Blast Theory and the Mixed Reality Lab at the University of Nottingham, in which users on bicycles engage with their location through personal storytelling; Cueb, a pair of interactive digital photo cubes designed actively to encourage self-disclosure between parents and their teenage children (Golsteijn & van den Hoven 2013, p. 274); David S. Kirk et al’s Family Archive device, ‘which offers novel and open interaction possibilities [that] can highlight, disrupt, change, or otherwise impact existing practices’ (2010, p. 262, emphasis in the original); and the theory-rich research-through-design work of Thomas Reitmaier, Pierre Benz, and Gary Marsden (2013) on co-located interactions around digital media. All of these examples focus on the personal and social nature of interaction, positioning the participant as one ‘who brings her entire life to the design’ (Bødker 2006, p. 6).

These examples reflect not only steps towards Bødker’s third wave, but also examples of what Jeffrey Bardzell, Jay Bolter, and Jonas Löwgren (2010) refer to as the ‘performative view’. This contrasts with the ‘procedural view’, which would map roughly to the first and second waves in Bødker’s terminology. In the performative view, which ‘draws on the rich tradition of performance studies’, a user is ‘working through the application to communicate with an audience. … These applications are successful precisely because they make it easier for users to reinvent their identities in the act of performance’ (p. 34). The authors see the performative view at work in social networking sites such as Facebook and online games. Van House also believes that sharing asynchronously does not preclude any of the identity-forming or relationship-building functions of co-located photo sharing (2011, p. 131). However, I believe that the performative view can involve much more than simply communicating with an audience or describing online interactions: performance has the potential to create transformational moments of empathy, emotion, and insight (Phelan 2004; Dolan 2005; Fischer-Lichte 2008b). Rather than assuming that relationships at a distance are as meaningful and visceral as those in a
shared time and space, researchers following the ‘performative view’ should explore performance as directly as possible, making full use of the live interaction with a co-located audience as part of the ‘rich tradition of performance studies’ (Bardzell et al 2010, p. 34). Findings from co-located interactions could then be tested or used as probes (along the lines of those described in Gaver et al 1999) in online, asynchronous communication.

**AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL MEMORY AND REMINISCENCE**

Elise van den Hoven and Barry Eggen (2007) observe that human memory does not function as a library of static memories ready to be plucked out, viewed, and returned unaltered. Instead, they argue that autobiographical memory should be understood in line with constructionist theory as a process that needs to be cued (p. 435) and that results in a different recollection each time (p. 434). These findings echo what van den Hoven and Eggen (2003) found in their study of the portable *Photo Browser*. Their participants spoke not about the memory triggers themselves but about the experiences behind the triggers, which indicated ‘that the focus should be on how the media stored in the system can optimally trigger and set the right conditions for the experience of remembering’ (p. 1003).

Two key possibilities for designing ‘the right conditions for the experience of remembering’ have emerged in interaction design research: selectivity and context. Daniela Petrelli, Elise van den Hoven, and Steve Whittaker (2009) asked participants to create a time capsule. They found that all participants were selective about their choices; none aimed for a comprehensive record. Along with selectivity, context is highly important. *Pensieve* is a system that emails daily ‘memory triggers’ to its users. Analysis of *Pensieve* by Dan Cosley et al (2012) highlights the need for personalised or culture-specific triggers that reflect topical and/or temporal contexts (pp. 193-95). Another important finding from work with *Pensieve* was the observation that because online social networks (specifically Facebook) orient users towards recent events, ‘[u]sing social media to support reminiscing may also bias people towards reminiscing about recent or easily captured events’ (Peesapati et al 2010, p. 2035). Therefore, any technologically mediated system for engaging with the past should consider selectivity and context in shaping the parameters for engagement with both memory triggers and the present-moment sharing experience.
Memory and reminiscence as understood within the HCI literature align with concepts widely accepted among cultural theorists and psychologists working in memory research. Julia Andres et al (2010) confirm that what they call the ‘storage-space model’, like van den Hoven and Eggen’s ‘library’, is convenient but unhelpful. Rather, memory should be conceived of using a ‘work space model’ (p. 8) in which memory becomes ‘a site of identity formation, empowerment, and resistance for individuals and communities’ (p. 16). Similarly, cultural theorist Annette Kuhn (2007) examines performances of memory including ‘performative viewings’ of family photos (p. 285). Her findings indicate that memory work is not a direct insight into the soul: ‘the task is not to psychoanalyse people but to be helpfully at hand at the birth of new insight and fresh understanding’ (p. 284). Psychologists Alisha C. Holland and Elizabeth A. Kensinger (2010) note that autobiographical memories are affected by emotions experienced at the time of remembering (p. 108), lending yet more credence to the view that autobiographical memory is a living process. All of these perspectives lead to the conclusion that designs for digital media sharing should focus on the present-moment reconstruction and re-experience of memory, allowing memories to expand or alter the participant’s sense of self in the world as she experiences it in the moment of remembering.

One final issue to note in dealing with design for reminiscence and memory is the contradiction between the benefits of reminiscence, both self-reported and assessed by psychological metrics as in Isaacs (2013), and the reluctance that many feel to reminisce. With Pensieve, participants appreciated the opportunity to reminisce but rarely did so when not directed to (Peesapati et al 2010, p. 2034; Cosley et al 2012, p. 180). Petrelli et al (2008) also discovered that a significant proportion of participants’ mementoes were hidden from view for a variety of reasons, and that despite the positive experience of discussing them, participants rarely did so (p. 58). This situation is likely to be exacerbated by the increasing rate of accumulation of digital artefacts noted by van den Hoven, Sas, and Whittaker (2012), whereby people hoard digital media to supplement their memories and because it is easier to collect than to select (p. 2; see also Frohlich et al 2013).

An answer would be to bring more digital artefacts into easy view and increase opportunities for reminiscence. However, as Daniela Petrelli, Steve Whittaker, and Jens Brockmeier (2008) warn, ‘[h]aving these objects in constant view would habituate people; so concealing them makes more salient the contrast between that past world and the current one’ (p. 60). David Frohlich and Jacqueline Fennell (2006) similarly advise that ‘less’ is often ‘more’, advocating audiophotographs in place of video to stimulate
reminiscence (p. 107; see also Dewey 2009, p. 108). As Kuhn (2010) points out, the ‘value is placed on keeping—preserving family photographs and albums, even (and perhaps especially) if they are rarely looked at’ (p. 304). A recent design approach in this direction is to design for forgetting, as a critique of the drive to capture and store increasing amounts of data (Bannon 2006; Frohlich et al 2013). Rather than designing for forgetting, I believe that more work can be done in designing according to current perspectives on autobiographical memory and reminiscence. Performance offers valuable practices for selecting and contextualising material in a shared, present-moment experience.

**PERFORMANCE IN HCI**

As I have described, this thesis can be understood as an attempt to design for digital media sharing in a space between 4Photos and humanaquarium. The history of digital media sharing in HCI, which neatly culminates in the development of 4Photos, is fairly straightforward. However, humanaquarium represents a foray into performance, using trained musicians performing in a public space as an invitation to digital interaction. This raises the question of how performance has been used by the HCI community, and the answer is complex.

For many years, performance has been understood as a potentially fruitful means of conceptualising HCI. Brenda Laurel’s *Computers as Theatre* (1993) sets out drama as a theoretical framework, choosing Aristotle’s *Poetics* as ‘appropriate to the state of the technology to which we are trying to apply it’ (p. 36). This was a forward-thinking statement when first published in 1991 and has influenced the thinking of many HCI researchers over the past two decades. Over a similar period, the Creativity and Cognition conferences have included performance in their investigation of the creative process. In the past ten years, though, the HCI community has begun to search for stronger and more varied contributions from the very broad field of performance studies, primarily through conference workshops (Wakkary et al 2004; Rico et al 2010; Hansen et al 2011; Leong et al 2011a; Williamson & Hansen 2012). At the same time, the Digital Arts Community of the Association for Computing Machinery’s Special Interest Group on Computer-Human Interaction (ACM SIGCHI) has pursued both digital and performance arts to ‘push the boundaries of HCI research and practice’ (England et al 2011, p. 609).

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5 An extended version of this section has been published in Spence et al 2013.
HCI researchers use performance to serve a variety of purposes. For example, Katri Mehto et al (2006) look to drama for ‘representing and communicating a scenario’ (p. 979) and allowing ‘the design/research group [to] experience the information’ that is ‘represented’ in this way (p. 984). This is very different from Peter Dalsgaard and Lone Koefoed Hansen’s intention ‘to understand performance as a very physical thing; it is the actual actions taking place and not a dramaturgical or narrative term’ (2008, p. 9), or Mark van Doorn et al’s pithy intention of ‘[v]iewing life as social theatre’ (2008, p. 1) along the lines of Goffman’s The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1959). One might use performance to understand aesthetic experience (for example, Dalsgaard & Hansen 2008; Laurel 1993), investigate story and narrative (for example, Geigel & Schweppe 2004; van Doorn & de Vries 2006), develop theories of presence (for example, Wagner et al 2009), or explore audience perception of digitally mediated performance (Corness et al 2011). Using a term like ‘performance’ to refer to only one of these approaches can bring up unintended implications for readers more accustomed to another use of the term, and causes the HCI community to miss all but a small fraction of performance’s potential to contribute to HCI.

In an alt.chi paper from 2013 (Spence et al 2013b), I developed a taxonomy that categorises the use of performance within HCI according to the degree to which the performance situation overlaps with the HCI situation. The terms range from a user alone (‘portrayal’), to a user interacting with a device (‘enactment’), to multiple users interacting with one device (‘staging’), to multiple users adopting different roles in their interactions with, or occasioned by, a technological device or system (‘engagement’). ‘Engagement’ opens up an opportunity for performance to function as more than a metaphor, or a pointer towards embodiment or multi-user interaction. ‘Engagement’ is a narrower but potentially richer application of performance, as it makes use of specific practices and theories that can be applied, tested, and extended through HCI and design research. In fact, the Inputs/Outputs conference on ‘the intersection of HCI and performance’ had ‘engagement’ as its theme, and several of its speakers advocated a similarly rich overlap between the two fields.

Perhaps the most substantial and sustained body of work in the ‘engagement’ category is the collaboration between Blast Theory and the Mixed Reality Lab at the University of

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6 For a similar critique from within performance studies see States 1996.
7 Held 26 June 2013 at the University of Sussex, Brighton, UK, which I attended but to which I did not contribute.
Nottingham. Blast Theory works in a complex mix of fields to ‘create projects that merge different technologies and dramaturgical structures, converging disciplines such as live performance, media arts and games’ (Chatzichristodoulou 2009, p. 107). These ‘mixed reality performances’ (Benford & Giannachi 2011, p. 1) often take place in dense, urban environments, drawing audiences from the general public and engaging them with game mechanics.

Four papers addressing ‘engagement’ discuss user roles. The first of these is ‘A Manifesto for the Performative Development of Ubiquitous Media’ (Jacucci et al 2005), which separates the role of performer and spectator in ‘activities with interactive technology’ (p. 24). The second and third papers offer taxonomies that address spectatorship, one centred on ‘manipulations’ and ‘effects’ (Reeves et al 2005), and the other differentiating ‘audience’ members from ‘bystanders’ (Benford et al 2006, p. 434). Dalsgaard and Hansen (2008), the authors of the fourth work, distinguish between the ‘participant roles’ played by a single user of an interactive system: the operator of the interactive system, the performer, and the spectator perceiving her surroundings as well as herself performing for others (p. 20).

Terminology for the various types of ‘user’ is currently unstable. Where Joe Geigel and Marla Schweppe distinguish between ‘audiences’ that are ‘active’ or ‘passive’ (2004); Dix et al (2006) identify ‘performers’, ‘participants’, and ‘bystanders’; Reeves et al (2005) identify ‘performers’ and ‘spectators’; and Steve Benford and his colleagues identify ‘performers’, ‘audience’, ‘bystanders’ (Benford et al 2006), and ‘orchestrators’ (Benford & Giannachi 2011). As Dalsgaard and Hansen (2008) point out, the term ‘performer’ is not used in the same way by Reeves et al and Benford et al, due most likely to their different contexts: interactive art in the former, and mixed reality performance in the latter (p. 8). Not even the term ‘user’ is stable: as Johan Redström (2006) observes, ‘[a] “user” is something that designers create’ (p. 129).

Research in the ‘engagement’ category might be fragmented at the moment, at least in its terminology, but it makes the fullest use so far of performance within HCI. It is the intention of this thesis to extend ‘engagement’ in two ways: first, by examining more closely how performers and audiences create potentially transformative experiences, and second, by conducting this examination in the context of a private space.
PERFORMANCE: LIVING BODIES, LIVING MEDIA


*Kitchen Show* (1991)

You walk into the kitchen of an unexceptional terraced house in north London. The owner offers you a tea or coffee. While she fixes your drink, she confides that she never feels comfortable until her guests have a hot drink in their hands. Then, to mark this self-disclosure on her body, she wraps elastoplast around her thumb and forefinger, binding them in the perfect position for stirring milk and sugar into tea.

The kitchen was the performer’s own, arranged to seat up to 25 people for performances of the ‘very structured’ (Baker quoted in Iball 2007, p. 186) 70-minute work called *Kitchen Show*, produced as part of the London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT) 1991. *Kitchen Show* is much discussed in performance studies literature (Baldwyn 1996; Heathfield 1999; Aston 2000; Ferris 2005; Barrett 2007; Harris & Aston 2007; Iball 2007) and is arguably a touchstone in Live Art (Etchells *et al* 2000) and autobiographical performance (Heddon 2006; Heddon 2008; Lawson 2009). *Kitchen Show* was made up of 13 actions rooted in the practices of everyday life including making tea, resting a wooden spoon on a pan, opening a new tub of margarine, and dancing to opera while cooking. Each action had an associated story, often intimate and always implicitly autobiographical.

What *Kitchen Show* is trying to convey is the whole range of associations and experiences of being in a kitchen doing routine tasks. It makes you think about why you do things—out of habit, upbringing, indoctrination. It's not a simple thing. … Some cry—which pleases me. I feel deeply harrowed by a lot of it myself.

(Baker quoted in Brown 1993, np)

Each action was ‘marked’ on Baker’s body, as in the elastoplast example, or applying lipstick (see Figure 2.3), so that by the end of the show she was ready for her thirteenth action: ‘[s]howing all the marks whilst standing on a cake stand placed on a coffee table and showing this image to the public’ (Barrett 2007, p. 54). Baker did not offer a
photograph, digital or otherwise, but held her pose long enough to achieve the effect of ‘showing this image’.

![Figure 2.3 Bobby Baker in Kitchen Show. Image © Andrew Whittuck, used with permission.](image)

The image is a startling one, funny and poignant because of the ties to Baker’s autobiographical stories of habit, frustration, and desire. According to Geraldine Harris and Elaine Aston (2007), the ‘autobiographical stories … tend to provoke a personal identification with Bobby’ (p. 112). Baker notes the same of her audiences: ‘People relate to these shows by constantly and to an extraordinary degree relating them to their own experiences’ (Baker quoted in Iball 2007, p. 188).³ This sense of personal connection comes from the ‘heightened potential of blurring the borders between performance, theatricality and autobiography’ (Iball 2007, p. 186) that Helen Iball sees as central to Baker’s work. Harris and Aston note that Baker’s performance is marked by ‘a slight physical and vocal “awkwardness” [that] guarantees the “ordinariness” of her persona in ways that invite trust and identification’ (2007, p. 111). Lesley Ferris makes a similar point, saying that one ‘characteristic of her language … is the sense that she is speaking aloud an inner, private monologue. We are privy to her personal thoughts’ (2005, p. 194). Thus it is not only the autobiographical content of her stories but her manner of performing that builds intimacy with her audiences. Critically, this intimacy is enriched by the audience’s exposure to the traces of Baker’s lived experience: the ‘anecdotes, photographs, mugs and spatulas’ (Iball 2007, p. 185). Each spectator will likely have her attention caught by a different combination of details, all of which contribute to a sense of connection that Baker develops through the stylistic and material context of her stories.

³ Baker is referring to re-stagings of Kitchen Show that she has done throughout the world.
In *Kitchen Show*, Baker could ‘celebrate[] the active presence of [her] audience’ (Iball 2007, p. 185) in the small and intimate space of her own kitchen. Thus, when Baker performed a transgressive or potentially risky action, like hurling objects across the room or explaining her urge to say the Lord’s Prayer, some in the audience could experience ‘a discomfiting sense of complicity in witnessing the public exposure of profoundly personal and painful experiences’ (Harris & Aston 2007, p. 110). The notion of touching or feeding a small audience of strangers introduced a further route for risk and transgression. ‘The kind of transgression I am after is very slight, but nonetheless present. The danger is there in small gestures rather than large ones; the risk in intimacy’ (Baker quoted in Heathfield 1999, p. 102). Thus in *Kitchen Show*, even stirring milk into a cup of tea could become a risky and intimate interaction.

*Bubbling Tom* (2000)

Mike Pearson’s *Bubbling Tom* (2000) was a site-specific performance in Hibaldstow, the remote Lincolnshire village where he had lived as a small boy nearly fifty years previously. Pearson identified ten locations for which he had personal stories to tell, nine of which had a corresponding personal photograph. The performance involved Pearson walking through the village with his small audiences, stopping at these ten locations (see Figure 2.4) to talk about his memories. His interest was more in a ‘making strange’ (Pearson 2003, p. 175) than a comfortable homecoming, creating a work that ‘engages and re-engages the audience with material which is intimately familiar and infinitely other’ (p. 175). This ‘making strange’ differs from the political aims of Brechtian alienation (as discussed in Wilson 2006, pp. 53-54); instead it is intended ‘to hold the interest of the listener’ in a deeply personal way (Pearson 2003, p. 176).

In line with his theories of the layered and interpretive nature of performing history (Pearson & Shanks 2001), Pearson did not aim for a transparent representation of the past, which he would deem ‘inevitably fictional and illusionary’ (Pearson 2003, p. 175). Instead, he created an experience involving ‘anecdotes, traveller’s tales, poetry, forensic data, quotations, lies, jokes, improvised asides, physical re-enactments, impersonations and intimate reflections’, which ‘catalyses personal reflection and the desire on the part of the listener to reveal her own experiences, the minutiae of genealogy’ (p. 176). Adrian Heathfield and Deirdre Heddon provide evidence for the success of *Bubbling Tom* as catalyst. Heathfield reports a ‘very acute recognition from people …. You don’t have access to those things, but what you have access to is your sense in which they might be like some of your own things’ (quoted in Heddon 2002b, pp. 72-73). Heddon confirms
this ‘sense’ by responding to Pearson’s recollections of watching the Lone Ranger with her own Dr Who memories (Heddon 2002b, p. 82). 

Pearson’s audience consisted ‘predominantly’ of friends and family members, including his mother, some old enough to remember the facts of his stories better than he did himself (Wilkie 2004, p. 111). They also had to make the effort to move from location to location, and to continually re-orient themselves to Pearson and to each other in each new location. As a result, the borders between everyday interaction and traditional performance blurred. Audiences commented on, questioned (Wilkie 2004, p. 130), corrected, and challenged (Heddon 2008, p. 101) Pearson’s memories. Their active engagement helped to create an experience that Pearson describes as ‘intimate, informal, at the edge of performance itself’ (Pearson 2003, p. 175).

While Pearson’s use of location in Bubbling Tom figures prominently in the literature on autobiographical performance (including Heddon 2002b; Wilkie 2004; Gorman 2008; Heddon 2008), his use of personal photographs has received less attention. Pearson provided each audience member with a photocopied ‘guidebook’ containing, among other things, his personal photographs (Pearson 2003, p. 176). As observed by Fiona Wilkie (2004), these guidebooks ‘serve to remind us of the gaps conjured up by the performance: gaps in the act of recalling; gaps between (childhood) sites and the stories

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9 Bubbling Tom has also inspired at least two re-performances that operated through imagination at least as much as through memory, one by Heddon (2002b) and one by Kris Darby (2010)— neither of whom grew up in Hibaldstow, or in the 1950s.
we tell ourselves about them (as an adult); gaps between performer’s and spectator’s experience of space’ (p. 132). The photos helped the audience to imagine their way into the gaps between the adult Pearson and his early memories.

This thesis draws from autobiographical performances in the tradition of *Kitchen Show* and *Bubbling Tom*. Both of these works were rooted in autobiography, though neither claimed to present a transparent view of the performer’s inner life or history. Both were sensitive to their contexts of performance and allowed for a sense of connection or intimacy between performer and audience member. Both involved a subtle but very real sense of risk where ‘the danger is there in small gestures’ (Baker quoted in Heathfield 1999, p. 102) and ‘changes in status are possible’ (Pearson 1998, p. 40). The emphasis of both performances was on the carefully crafted performance of ‘protoselves’ (Barclay 1994) to a co-located audience. The following sections set out theories and practices within performance studies that pursue similar aims.

**AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PERFORMANCE**

Autobiographical performance is a relatively underexplored area. Performance theorist Bonnie Marranca, writing in 1979, states that ‘autobiography, in the sense of the “self as text,”’ is one of the characteristic features of current experimental theatre and performance art’ (p. 86). More recently, Marranca sees ‘a return to authenticity—to the real—in the unrestrained drive toward the ecstasy of presence’ (2006, p. 82) that is implied, though never fully achieved, in autobiographical performance. A thorough examination of the history of autobiographical performance, particularly by women, can be found in Áine Phillips’s doctoral thesis *Live Autobiography: An Investigation of Autobiographical Performance Practice* (2009). Further examinations of autobiographical performance can be seen in texts on individual performers or performances (for example, those cited in the previous section as well as Schechner 2002; Ferris 2005; Bean 2006; Mock 2009; O'Bryan 2011; Blažević & Jablanovec 2012).

The most substantial recent work is Deirdre Heddon’s *Autobiography and Performance* (2008). Her key focus is the means by which performers negotiate their ‘identity’ and ‘experience’ (pp. 96-97). Memory, though necessary for autobiography, is a tricky ‘action’ (p. 63) marked by gaps and errors, placing autobiographical performance ‘precisely and precariously on the intersection between imagination and memory’ (p. 64). Heddon identifies four constitutive themes in autobiographical performance: politics, history, place, and ethics. Heddon’s notion of ethics deals directly with the relationships
among performers, audience members, and the people referred to or implied in the stories being told, both living and dead (p. 124).\textsuperscript{10} Ethics are deeply implicated in the co-opting of others’ experiences with or without permission; biography is an unavoidable consequence of autobiography (p. 127). This emphasis on relationality culminates in Heddon’s assertion that autobiographical performance’s most powerful potential is in the structural relations between performer and audience in ‘the shared time and space’ of the live encounter (2008, p. 167). Given the focus on interactions among people in the research question driving this thesis, Heddon’s theory of autobiographical performance as primarily relational can both frame and inform a ‘performative view’ (Bardzell \textit{et al} 2010, p. 34) of digital media sharing.

Furthermore, Heddon believes that the emotional or political power of autobiographical performance can be increased by a potential for audience contribution, sufficient autonomy and agency for the performer in the face of market pressures (2008, pp. 168-69), and a move away from stages towards small or even one-on-one performances (p. 168). Because co-located digital media sharing as it is currently practiced tends towards all three of these conditions, it is worth briefly investigating one-to-one performance. In that genre, a single performer spends time in close proximity with a single audience member. The performer might be overtly playing a role, as for example Adrian Howells sometimes performed as Adrienne (Heddon & Howells 2011), but often this is not the case. One-to-one performances are often participatory, as when Howells engaged his audience members in conversation or ‘spooned’ them on a bed in \textit{Held} (2006) (pp. 4-5), though it can be argued that any one-to-one performance is participatory in that there is no avoiding the expectant gaze of the other. Such performances involve a great deal of ‘risk’ (p. 2) and can prove ‘challenging’ as well as surprisingly ‘intimate’ for audience members (p. 7). They can also confront audience members with odd paradoxes in their own behaviour, as when Rachel Zerihan found herself unable to resist eating a detested strawberry in her self-imposed ‘role of dutiful spectator’ in Howells’s \textit{The Garden of Adrian} (Heddon \textit{et al} 2012, p. 123), or when Helen Iball felt threatened by memories triggered by getting into Sam Rose’s bed in \textit{Bed of Roses} (Heddon \textit{et al} 2012, p. 128). Overall, they create ‘the potential to produce more intimate connections to the “integrity of experience”, through “immediacy”, “relationship”, “awareness”, and “attention” (p. 133). An understanding of the potential of one-on-one performance in the context of

\textsuperscript{10} Ethics are not foreign to HCI. As Ann Light points out, design ‘must recognise how the activity of interpreting technologies for use is charged with political possibilities’ (2011, p. 431), especially when those technologies are directly mediating the construction of identity.
autobiographical performance underscores the ability for performance practices to engage directly with interactions among performers and audience members.

Heddon’s theories are tightly bound to Judith Butler’s influential notion of gender performativity (2002). For Butler, gender is neither a biological fact nor an act of choice on the part of the individual, but a ‘performativ[e]’ act constrained by its ‘inherited discourse’ (p. 33). In other words, the act lies outside the full or direct control of the individual. Moreover, the individual is continuously in flux: ‘gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed’ (p. 33). The element of Butler’s theory that Heddon and many others (for example, Watson & Smith 2005, p. 20; Sandbye 2005; Fischer-Lichte 2008b) take to be key is that individuals do not possess a static identity waiting to be revealed, whether specifically a gender identity or a more wide-ranging sense of self; rather, ‘that identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results’ (Butler 2002, p. 39). The implications of this statement reach far beyond the scope of this thesis, but at the very least, they indicate that acts of self-disclosure in autobiographical performance are part of a contingent, shifting, moment-by-moment creation of the performer’s sense of self. Just as memories are not filed away and retrieved identically each time, psychologist Craig R. Barclay writes that ‘a unique remembered self does not exist, nor does a remembered self exist only as the current “text” of a life story or personal narrative’ (1994, p. 57). Instead, ‘self, and the remembered self especially, is initially a consequence rather than a cause of activity’ (p. 62). Barclay’s term ‘protoselves’ reflects the multiplicity of experiences of the self that a person will have when engaging with autobiographical memory, and it does so without claiming a destructive fragmentation of the self that could so easily be assumed by invoking the idea of ‘multiplicity’ (pp. 71-72). In a similar vein, psychologist Jerome Bruner extends cognition and emotion with the possibilities of narrative and imagination. He argues ‘that Self is not an entity that one can simply remember…. Self is a perpetually rewritten story’ (Bruner 1994, pp. 41-53). Bruner’s self is not strictly tied to the ‘facts’ surrounding a remembered event. His theory allows for intentional or unintentional fictionalising on the part of the ‘thinking’ (p. 43) subject. Bruner’s ‘self’ is unstable and multiple, but like Barclay’s ‘protoselves’, it is not necessarily fragmented in a postmodern understanding of the term. It is instead dialogical, outside the full control of the subject but still malleable to a certain degree (see Fischer-Lichte 2008b, pp. 164-65). Most importantly, according to these psychologists, identity is imbricated with narrative, imagination, performance, and performativity, all of which are involved in autobiographical performance.
While personal digital media in autobiographical performance has been discussed in the literature to a limited extent (for example, Lisa Kron’s 2.5 Minute Ride in Heddon 2008, pp. 83-85), there is no sustained discussion of the role of digital media technology in creating or performing an autobiographical piece. This gap is particularly startling as digital media become more tightly integrated into the everyday lives of both performers and spectators. However, one strand of research in intermedial performance indicates that the focus on the negotiation of ‘identity’ and ‘experience’ (Heddon 2008, pp. 96-97) through memory and imagination might be supported by the incorporation of digital media. Bruce Barton (2013) argues that digital media technology does not necessarily disrupt the potential for intimate connections, but rather that it displaces intimacy from ‘shared understanding’ to ‘shared experience’ (Barton 2013, np). Because theories of autobiographical performance, autobiographical memory, and the self reject any static self to be transparently understood, the emphasis moves to the construction of a performance experience defined by relationships in a shared time and space.

**PERFORMANCE PRACTICES**

Autobiographical performance and digital media sharing both involve the presentation of primarily or presumably non-fictional material drawn from the performer’s own experience to a co-located audience. Autobiographical performance often, though not always, connects these experiences to specific artefacts such as personal photos displayed for the audience to view. However, this is not the only performance genre or practice that can inform digital media sharing. First, the life experiences presented in both autobiographical performance and digital media sharing tend to take the form of spoken stories. Therefore, an examination of storytelling as a performance practice will extend understanding of that element of autobiographical performance. Second, performances involving stories drawn from the performer’s life experiences cannot start from an existing script, a situation that raises the question of how such performances are created. This leads to a discussion of devising practices and the performance of everyday life. Finally, digital media are a common but not central concern of autobiographical performance as it is currently theorised. Intermediality provides a perspective from which to understand the role of media in autobiographical performance.

While storytelling might be thought of as a traditional practice unconcerned with emerging concerns in performance studies, Michael Wilson (2006) traces its lineage to the 1960s (p. 9), calling it ‘a branch of vibrant alternative theatre’ (p. 16). Wilson’s theories therefore embrace fragmented or non-linear narratives (p. 121) such as those
found in digital media sharing or some autobiographical performance. ‘Non-platform’ storytelling is particularly relevant to digital media sharing, as it involves minimal sets, props, or costumes (p. 71). As practitioner Taffy Thomas puts it, storytelling is ‘a reported art form in the way that you report the story, a couple of paces away from it’ (quoted in Wilson 2006, p. 189). In part because of this emphasis on the diegetic over the mimetic, storytelling aims to break down the fourth wall of conventional theatre—the imaginary wall at the edge of the stage that separates the scene being represented from the world inhabited by the audience—permitting the audience to see the teller as well as the story (Wilson 2006, p. 5). Wilson’s view of storytelling accords with that of Walter Benjamin (2006), who identifies it as the creation of a connection in a shared time and space between the storyteller and the audience, to whom she is attempting to offer a meaningful model or strategy for empowerment (Wilson 2006, p. 24; see also the contribution of storytelling to ‘emergent culture’ in Bauman 1975, p. 306).

As Wilson (2006) is less concerned with the content of individual stories than with the ways in which they are performed, his ‘performance continuum’ (p. 9) allows individual storytelling performances to be evaluated on the degree to which they diverge from the purely conversational (the left side of the spectra) and approach the highly professional (the right side of the spectra):

- conversation ................cultural performance
- low intensity ................high intensity
- informal ......................formal
- subconscious ...............conscious
- low risk ......................high risk
- low rewards ..................high rewards (p. 9)

The performance continuum is useful in analysing performances that break the traditions of contemporary, Western, mimetic theatre but which do not fit the mould of a typical storytelling performance. For example, Kitchen Show would be highly ‘conscious’ in that it was meticulously devised and officially commissioned, with fairly ‘high risk’ for its experimentation with place. The ‘formality’ of Baker’s performance was heightened by the unusual actions and marks on her body, which contrasted with the ‘informality’ of her making cups of tea for each audience member. Conversational digital media sharing would tend to fall on the left side of these spectra, while increases in the criteria of consciousness, intensity, and risk could ‘nudge’ a media sharing session to the right of the performance continuum.
As storytelling is poorly represented in the performance studies literature, theories of storytelling from outside the field of performance can help to illuminate interactions between performer and audience. Key among these are the work of Kristen Langellier and Eric Peterson on ‘performing narrative’ (2004), a term which ‘incorporates both performance and performativity’ (p. 3). They argue that stories people tell about themselves are integral to their sense of self; they are designed (if subconsciously) to meet the expectations of their recipients; and they are not to be understood as fixed or essential elements of a fixed and fully agentive self. For these reasons, the most important element for analysis is not a story’s content but its singular, situated performance. Similarly, Neal R. Norrick (2000) extends the seminal work of William Labov and Joshua Waletzky (1967) by analysing stories as they emerge in conversation as an ‘interactional achievement’ among speakers and listeners (Norrick 2000, p. 2). Norrick’s extremely detailed analyses reach similar conclusions to those drawn by Langellier and Peterson as well as many HCI and performance researchers discussed in this chapter, namely that conversational storytelling is much more than the repetition of a fixed text. ‘Far from simply recapitulating past experience, storytellers often seem to relive, re-evaluate and reconstruct remembered experience’ (Norrick 2000, p. 2). Finally, psychologists Janet B. Bavelas, Linda Coates, and Trudy Johnson (2000) study the surprisingly active and influential role of listeners in conversational storytelling. Even when the storyteller ‘has the floor’ to tell his or her story in a single turn, generic responses (such as ‘mm-hm’) and specific responses (such as displaying appropriate facial expressions) contribute significantly to the story itself, far more than previous theories of autonomous conversation or back channels would allow (p. 942).  

The storytellers investigated by Wilson tend to work from a repertoire of existing, often traditional material, and tend to allow for flexibility in their tellings rather than adhering strictly to a written script. As Michael Parent says, ‘[a] script can handcuff a story’ (quoted in Wilson 2006, p. 187). Autobiographical performances must be created by their performers in order to be autobiographical, but they need not be scripted in the same

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11 This article cites similar findings by Deborah Tatar in her doctoral dissertation. Tatar went on to work with interaction analysis, and her current research interests have much in common with the work of this thesis.

12 One could make any number of rebuttals to this statement, from the standard acting technique of drawing on personal experience, to the trade-offs of authorial responsibility in Robert Wilson’s The Life and Death of Marina Abramović (2011), to the blurred line between fact and fiction that autobiography requires. I am speaking here of the most straightforward sense in which person A, claiming the life experiences of person B in performance, could be seen as lying about her own experience.
way as a traditional theatrical play. In fact, the term used in the very few references to the process of creating an autobiographical performance is ‘devising’ (Heddon & Kelly 2010; see also Baker 2001; Govan et al 2007 pp. 59-68; Heddon 2008, p. 157). Devising is defined by Deirdre Heddon and Jane Milling (2006) as ‘a mode of work in which no script … exists prior to the work’s creation … [although] the creation and the use of text or score often occur at different points within the devising processes’ (p. 3, emphasis in the original). For Allison Oddey (1994), devised theatre is ‘different to conventional theatre in the sense that it explores the dynamics in the relationship between performer and spectator in the chosen space’ (p. 19). This exploration of performer-spectator interaction is evident in Kitchen Show’s treatment of strangers as guests in the performer’s home, and in Bubbling Tom’s incorporation of comments and challenges to the performer’s childhood recollections. Although devising is primarily thought of as a group activity and autobiography as a solitary endeavour, solo autobiographical performances are rarely created without some amount of collaboration (Heddon 2008, p. 9), and there is nothing to prevent individuals from using devising practices such as improvisation, games, physical experimentation, chance, tasks, or collage (Heddon & Milling 2006, pp. 8-11). This thesis will posit digital media sharing and prompted reminiscence as two further devising practices.

Given the broad remit of performance studies, which is ‘adjacent and related’ to practices ‘such as oratory’ and ‘folklore’ (Jackson 2004, p. 11), Schechner’s term ‘proto-performance’ could complement devising. A proto-performance ‘precedes and/or gives rise to a performance … [it] might be an upcoming date that requires a performance—a birthday, Christmas party, or initiation rite’ (2006, p. 225). This term is helpful for widening the scope of starting points for performance, especially in light of emerging practices of digital media sharing that initiated Cape Wrath (discussed in Chapter 4). Other practices that might be considered as devising include the processes by which performances of the everyday are created. For example, in Time Clock Piece (1980-1981), Tehching Hsieh photographed himself punching a time clock every hour for a year, then turned the photographs into a film. The performance consisted of his hourly interactions with the time clock and camera, as well as the restrictions on his sleep and movement patterns necessitated by those interactions. Other examples include Rirkrit Tiravanija’s pad thai (1990), in which the artist cooked for his audience, and Roberto Cuoghi’s six-year attempt to physically re-form himself into his father, living every day as a much older and less healthy man (Hoffmann & Jonas 2005, pp. 106-07). A thoughtful, unusual approach to even the most quotidian of experiences can serve as a process for creating performance.
Given the technological orientation of this thesis, it would seem obvious to study digital media technology in the process of devising and performing works of autobiographical storytelling. However, until recently, the approach to digital media in performance studies has been dominated by analyses of the functions of digital technology on stage, on screen, in virtual reality, or via cyborgs (for example, Auslander 1999; Dixon 2007). Steve Dixon’s definition of digital performance is one of any kind ‘where computer technologies play a key role rather than a subsidiary one in content, techniques, aesthetics, or delivery forms’ (2007, p. 3). This definition leaves little room for exploring how digital media might shape performance beyond the way in which its display technology impacts the events on stage. Even Dixon’s single chapter on interactivity (Chapter 23) focuses more on how certain digital performances replicate or problematise the performer-audience relationship established in pre-digital performances than on the role that digital media might play in forming a new set of relationships through performance. Therefore, I do not pursue techno-centric framings of ‘digital performance’ such as Dixon’s, which strongly evoke the essentialist debate about liveness and mediatisation (for example, Phelan 1993; Auslander 1999) that has gradually given way to a less combative understanding of the role of technology in performance (for example, Varney & Fensham 2000; Boenisch 2006, p. 103; Salter 2010, p. xiv; Reason 2010, p. 26).

A more productive way of approaching technology, particularly in autobiographical performance, is encompassed by the term ‘intermediality’. According to Robin Nelson (2010), current intermedial research attempts ‘to mark the concrete effects of being definitively multiple and interrelational’ (p. 17). Rather than positing the digital in contrast to the live or seeking a space between the two, intermediality addresses ‘this very aspect of digital culture — where devices, events, and activities are formed out of relationships, necessary interdependencies, and mutually co-relating entities’ (p. 17). Therefore, many researchers of intermedial performance are interested ‘in how—singularly and collectively—intermedial performances may have elicited a new cultural way of seeing, feeling and being in the contemporary world’ (p. 18). The inverse of this question is at the centre of Chris Salter’s investigation of technology in performance, which uncovers how technologies and ‘socio-political-cultural-economic contexts’ have changed how performances are created and perceived (Salter 2010, p. xiii). Intermediality looks at performances that are marked by digital media technology in any way and interrogates their reciprocal relationship with their performers and audiences. This perspective allows for a rich investigation of the processes of both devising and performing autobiographical works using everyday digital media practices.
One recent proposal for a new term to cover the complexities emerging in intermedial performance is Andy Lavender’s *mise en sensibilité*, which he outlined in a presentation at the International Federation of Theatre Research conference in July 2013. Lavender uses *sensibilité*, or sensibility, to reflect the move towards embodied and immersive experience demanded by intermedial performances that engage users beyond the visuals ‘over there’ on the stage (2013, p. 9). ‘Sensibility’ and the driving questions of intermedial performance provide a useful perspective for understanding media technology as constitutive of the creation, production, and perception of autobiographical performance using personal digital media. I address the main research question of this thesis by exploring how emerging ways of ‘seeing, feeling, and being’ create new ways of engaging performatively with personal digital media.

**LIMINALITY, TRANSFORMATION, AND MAKING SPECIAL**

Practices of autobiographical performance, storytelling, and devising, seen from the perspective of intermedial performance, provide a foundation for understanding how people might interact performatively with their personal digital media. However, there is one critical aspect of performance that these practices do not directly address: the ‘poetic’ (Langellier & Peterson 2004, p. 54) or ‘intense’ (Wilson 2006, p. 9) aspect that makes many performances different from and often more emotionally powerful than an ordinary, everyday interaction. Salter refers to something similar when he notes that ‘performance as knowing takes us beyond the quotidian…. The everyday is extraordinary only when we can observe and experience it as such’ (2010, p. 352). The approaches to this aspect of performance that are most useful in terms of digital media sharing are based on performance traditions that emerged in earnest since the 1960s. This section provides a brief outline of the most relevant traditions, followed by the theoretical approach used in this thesis.

In contrast to traditional mimetic theatre, referred to as the ‘theatre of dramas’ by Hans-Thies Lehmann, works of ‘postdramatic theatre’ (2006, p. 21) are ‘the execution of acts that are real in the here and now and find their fulfilment in the very moment they happen’ (p. 104). Marco De Marinis (1993) refers to a similar distinction with his terms ‘representational theatre’ and ‘presentational theatre’, where ‘the so-called *presentational* aspect variously prevails over the representational aspect’ (pp. 48-49, emphasis in the original). Presentational and representational performance are not opposites, and each type contains elements of the other; States uses the term ‘collaborative mode’ (1983, pp. 365-69) to describe the imbrication of the two as seen in direct and indirect address to the
audience, including the ways in which actors make audiences laugh (pp. 365-66). However, the emphasis in presentational performance is on self-reflexivity and the production of reality, which is an apt description of both autobiographical performance and digital media sharing.

De Marinis’s term covers other relevant performance genres as well, primarily the works of Allan Kaprow. His Activities, which began in the 1970s, were small-scale participatory performances that ‘consisted of predetermined actions based on highly structured routines derived from everyday life’ (Morgan 2010, p. 11). They used instruction booklets with photographs to explain precisely how the participants—non-professionals in every case—were to carry out the Activity. As Laura Cull (2011) explains, Activities encouraged participants to increase their physical and mental attention to everyday activities with the aim of an ‘experienced insight’ to the everyday (p. 86). Kaprow believed that his participants must be guided towards an experience that is partly routine and partly made unusual, ‘like “Art art”’ (Cull 2011, pp. 90-91). Activities aimed to put artistic performance into the hands of non-performers so that they could experience performance from the inside and come to a richer appreciation of the details of everyday life.

Activities are also arguably examples of ‘performance art’ (the preferred term in the United States) or Live Art (the preferred term in the United Kingdom). These are unstable terms that refer to a wide range of experimental, often presentational performances. As RoseLee Goldberg (2011) observes, ‘performance defies precise or easy definition beyond the simple declaration that it is live art by artists’ (p. 9). Goldberg includes autobiographical performance in her history of the medium (pp. 172-77), while Bobby Baker and Mike Pearson have been major figures in the UK Live Art field for decades. Performance art and Live Art often explore the space between performance and everyday life and can therefore contribute to an understanding of how performance practices might affect an ordinary conversation or media sharing session. However, just as De Marinis (1993, pp. 48-49) sets out presentational and representational theatre as two extremes on a spectrum, or as Wilson (2006, p. 9) defines his performance

13 Some will argue that these terms are not synonymous (Johnson 2012, p. 7), or that they are closer than some in the UK would care to admit (Roms & Edwards 2012). However, the phenomena to which they refer are close enough for the purposes of this thesis that they may be used interchangeably except where noted. I use the term preferred by the writer I am referencing; in my own text, I use ‘Live Art’ to refer to British artists and ‘performance art’ as a more inclusive term that incorporates practices from other countries.
continuum, or as United States pragmatist philosopher John Dewey finds the ‘aesthetic’ in the ‘integration’ of everyday experience (2005, p. 57), I argue that there is no single criterion distinguishing purely ordinary interactions from those that are ‘like “Art art”’ (Cull 2011, pp. 90-91). Rather, it is necessary to investigate the dynamics of the performer-audience interaction in the co-creation of a performance event. Those elements that stand out from ordinary interactions can then be pursued.

The most substantial framework for understanding those elements is found in the work of theorist Erika Fischer-Lichte (2008b). She draws on performances since the 1960s, including many works of performance art, to establish an aesthetics of performance as an energetic, ephemeral event from which ‘an extraordinary state of permanently heightened attention’ (p. 168) can emerge. By ‘heightened attention’ (pp. 165-66) she refers to the audience’s awareness of the objects (‘conspicuousness’), people (‘intensity of appearance’), and structure (‘deviation and surprise’) of the performance event. This heightened attention ‘transform[s] what has been ordinary into components of aesthetic experience’ (p. 168). Her concept of aesthetic experience also comprises three components: the collapse of dichotomies, such as between the ethical and the aesthetic (see also Heddon 2008); autoopoiesis and emergence, or the self-generating nature of the event; and ‘liminality and transformation’. The first two components may alter ‘the physiological, energetic, affective, and motoric state’ (Fischer-Lichte 2008b, p. 177) of the audience, meaning that they can create physically perceptible emotional changes and ‘enable experiences that always carry a liminal dimension’ (p. 176). She uses ‘liminality’ as defined by Turner to imply a sense of ritual transformation whereby the audience member transitions from one state to another, though she acknowledges that performance is likely to cause only temporary shifts in emotions, attitudes, and behaviours (pp. 179).

Taken together, heightened attention converts the quotidian into an emergent performance event with ethical dimensions; and all of these components create the possibility for audience members to enter a liminal state in which their emotions, attitudes, and behaviours might be temporarily transformed.

To explore this important concept more fully in the context of investigating the space between ordinary media sharing conversation and performance, I temper Fischer-Lichte’s framework with the perspectives of Bauman (1975) and Dissanayake (2003). Bauman’s work on ‘Verbal art as performance’ (1975) shares many of Fischer-Lichte’s concerns as he endeavours to distinguish the performance event of speech from its script or transcription. However, he finds performance to be ‘a unifying thread tying together the marked, segregated esthetic genres and other spheres of verbal behavior into a
general unified conception of verbal art as a way of speaking’ (p. 291), and he cites ‘personal narrative’ as an example of this ‘verbal art’ that can be perceived either as a mundane communication or as a ‘performance’ (p. 298). Bauman does not intend to define aesthetics, yet his description of performance resonates with Fischer-Lichte’s:

Performance … is marked as available for the enhancement of experience, through the present enjoyment of the intrinsic qualities of the act of expression itself. Performance thus calls forth special attention to and heightened awareness of the act of expression, and gives license to the audience to regard the act of expression and the performer with special intensity. (Bauman 1975, p. 293)

Bauman views the variations in ‘the degree of intensity with which the performance frame operates’ as distinct from any notions of ‘the relative quality of a performance’ (1975, p. 297). This idea of varying intensities helps to further distance the concept of ‘heightened awareness’ or ‘heightened attention’ from any implications of defining an event as either aesthetic or non-aesthetic. Rather, ‘heightened awareness’ and ‘heightened attention’ point to specific actions and attitudes that can be consciously approached, analysed, and designed for. The notion of ‘aesthetics’ can then be viewed as the emerging, self-generating condition in which the ordinary can ‘appear as extra-ordinary’ (Fischer-Lichte 2008b, p. 179), relatively free from notions of what a ‘good’ performance ‘should’ look like.

A simpler way of describing the extraordinary is what Dissanayake refers to as ‘making special’ (2003), a term that she defines as an ‘intention to appeal to … another’s faculty for apprehending and appreciating a specialness that is more than what is necessary to fulfill a practical end’ (p. 28). For her, ‘making special’ applies to all art, as well as play and ritual (compare Schechner 2006, p. 17), and describes those behaviours through which ‘everyday reality is transformed’ (Dissanayake 2003, p. 28). Her phrase echoes the overarching purposes or hopes for performance as identified by a number of theorists: a heightened attention to others (Bauman 1975; Fischer-Lichte 2008b), a practice of empathy (Dolan 2005, p. 14), and the possibility of ‘transformation’ (Phelan 2004, p. 574; Fischer-Lichte 2008b). The work of this thesis can be understood as a way for people to make ‘special’ (Dissanayake 2003) the ‘routinely intermedial’ (Lavender 2013, p. 9) personal digital media that are woven into our everyday experience by heightening attention to the selection and presentation of those media to a small group of co-located individuals.
DISCUSSION

Four examples of practice anchor this chapter. *4Photos* reflects third-wave HCI values of cultural, emotional, and experiential engagement across ‘multitudes of hardware and applications’ in a non-work environment (Bødker 2006, p. 2). It involves its users in a dynamic interaction with each other using personal digital media as a trigger to storytelling and reminiscence. While not contradicting research into autobiographical memory, it does not exploit this research to the fullest, and it makes little use of performance. *humanaquarium* sets out to explore ‘designing from within’ (Taylor et al 2011) a performance event, inviting members of the public to become observers and then participants in an interactive performance. This work exemplifies and in some ways expands the ‘engagement’ category of performance within HCI, but participants have no part in designing, composing, or contributing to the substance of the performance. *Kitchen Show* involved a performer and audience members in an intimate, autobiographical performance set in a private space. It raises interesting and important issues of the ethics of interaction, particularly as they pertain to the ‘risk in intimacy’ (Baker quoted in Heathfield 1999, p. 102) that Baker pursued in this work. While Baker heightened her audience’s attention to the practices of everyday life, *Kitchen Show* was interactive to only a very limited degree, and the oddness of her ‘actions’ and ‘marks’ heightened ‘the degree of intensity with which the performance frame operate[d]’ (Bauman 1975, p. 297) in such a way as to set the event itself firmly on the ‘cultural’ side of the performance continuum (Wilson 2006, p. 9). *Bubbling Tom* was a ‘presentational’ (De Marinis 1993, pp. 48-49) work of Live Art that used storytelling, site-specificity, movement, and small audiences including friends and family members to create a very personal and interactive performance event. This piece used personal analogue media—snapshots from the 1950s—as a structuring mechanism, and it shared those media via a photocopied guidebook with each audience member. Given the era in which this performance was created, it is unsurprising that it did not explore more technological means of engagement with those photos.

This chapter has outlined existing work in both HCI and performance studies literatures that interrogate the possibilities for multiple participants to interact with each other via their personal digital media. These literatures overlap in the concerns, findings, or methodologies in a number of ways:

- Both digital media sharing and autobiographical performance posit a performer who has no fixed, static memory or sense of self to conceal or reveal at will, but rather a
performer who is created in relation to past experiences, present-moment relationships, and the imagined future.

- The emotional value of the present-moment experience of media sharing resonates with the ‘heightened attention’, ‘liminality’, and potential for ‘transformation’ in performance (Fischer-Lichte 2008b), as well as performance based on everyday experience. The fact that some very powerful theories and practices of performance are framed as spectra or continua, including mundane, conversational interactions, gives HCI researchers a number of entry points for designing interactions on the more ‘cultural’ (Wilson 2006, p. 9) or ‘Art art’ (Cull 2011, p. 91) sides of those spectra. Performance contributes a focus on the ethical (and political) implications of such interactions, as well.

- People using an interactive system or involved in performance are understood through the roles they play. HCI subdivides members of the public into various audience roles, while performance studies is increasingly interested in theories of active spectatorship (for example, Oddey & White 2009; Fearon 2010; Ginters 2010; Reason 2010; Rancière 2011; Boenisch 2012; Fensham 2012; Lavender 2012), and intermediality is arguably located in the ‘body’ (Nibbelink & Merx 2010, p. 220) or ‘perception’ (Boenisch 2006, p. 114) of the spectator. The use of the term ‘audience’ in this thesis accommodates the active part played by those who watch and listen to a performance, without delving too deeply into the intrapersonal mechanisms of spectatorship or emphasising its visual aspect. My interest lies in the interactions among performers and audience members as they co-create the ‘autopoietic feedback loop’ (Fischer-Lichte 2008b, p. 165), the self-generating and emergent performance event. This interest is reflected in the theories of both disciplines as described throughout this chapter.

- Close attention to everyday experience, and to attention itself, is an important thread in performance practice and theory, while emerging cultural ways of ‘seeing, feeling, and being in the contemporary world’ (Nelson 2010, p. 18) are created by intermedial performance. Current practices of ‘photowork’ (Kirk et al 2006) and co-located digital media sharing, which are far from effective, are prime examples of everyday experience to which close attention could be paid, possibly resulting in intermedial performances that both reflect and generate new ways of ‘seeing, feeling, and being’.

- The story circle at the heart of digital storytelling can be seen both as a (digital) media sharing event and as a devising practice for autobiographical performance.
Conversely, devising practices may offer methods for designers to use, particularly as the creation of a performance involves great attention to selectivity and context—two elements that emerge from the HCI literature as key to design for reminiscence and autobiographical memory.

- Both HCI and performance studies explore their phenomena of interest by examining specific examples of practice. These are often created solely for the purpose of furthering the research at hand, as in design-oriented research in HCI (Fällman 2003; Fallman 2007) and practice-as-research and its variants in performance studies (Nelson 2006). Therefore, despite any number of differences and potential conflicts between the two fields, they share a fundamental understanding of the epistemological value of practice.

The insights from this literature review indicate that an answer to the research question of this thesis would begin with a methodological innovation, combining empirical methods from both HCI and performance to reflect the concerns of both fields. This Performative Experience Design (PED) methodology is described in Chapter 3. Even given the remarkable overlaps between the two fields, though, it would be unwieldy to attempt a full response to the research question from a single perspective. In order to focus on each discipline in turn, I have created two subsidiary research questions. The first, which pertains to HCI, drives the discussion of the design process (Chapter 5):

1. How can HCI research into digital media sharing, autobiographical memory, and reminiscence contribute to an understanding of intermedial autobiographical performance?

Intermedial autobiographical performance will be fully defined in Chapter 8, in light of the findings of the entire design process. A simpler definition will suffice to drive the research forward: intermedial autobiographical performance is the live, co-located performance of stories from the performer’s own life using both oral storytelling and the display of the performer’s personal digital media. This subsidiary research question seeks theoretical, epistemological, and methodological means for HCI research to approach a multi-user interaction with personal digital media that can be identified as a performance. The term ‘performance’ is used in this thesis to refer to an exchange that at least has the potential to ‘take[...] us beyond the quotidian’ (Salter 2010, p. 352) by demanding ‘special attention to and heightened awareness of the act of expression’ (Bauman 1975, p. 293); an interaction that fulfils those criteria and does not fall fully to the left side of Wilson’s ‘performance continuum’ (2006, p. 9) can be considered a ‘performance’.
The term ‘performativity’ as it is used in the performance studies literature discussed in this chapter is based in part on the work of J.L. Austin (1962), a philosopher of language who identifies ‘performative utterances’ as words that actually accomplish the action they describe. For example, under appropriate conditions, the speaking of the phrase ‘I do’ creates a marriage bond (1962, p. 6). Austin’s idea that in some cases ‘by saying or in saying something we are doing something’ (1962, p. 12) is vital for the development of Butler's concept of gender performativity (2011, pp. 170-171; 2002), on which much of the theory of autobiographical performance rests. HCI researchers tend not to invoke Austin's sense of performativity, but rather use ‘performativity’ to refer to the ‘event and processual character’ of an interaction that involves a mental process of staging and the negotiation of social norms (Williamson & Hansen 2012, p. 791; see also Jacucci 2004; Salter 2010, p. 352). In other words, ‘performativity’ in HCI tends to be used as a description referring to performance: as Steve Benford and Gabriella Giannachi put it, ‘our everyday interactions become ever more performative in the sense that they are witnessed by others nearby’ and those others ‘often embrace roles in these interactions’ (2012, p. 38). In this thesis, I use the term ‘performativity’ to mean the durational, embodied, and situated nature of an event in which interactions with technology involve a sense of ‘showing doing’, as Schechner defines performance (2000, p. 28). However, this does not contradict the Austinian sense of the word ‘performativity’, because in the case of intermedial autobiographical performance, this ‘showing doing’ simultaneously creates a new experience of the self in relationship to audience members, memory, and imagination (Spence et al 2012).

The second subsidiary research question, which pertains to performance studies, drives the analysis of autobiographical performances (Chapter 4):

2. How can theories and practices relevant to autobiographical performance contribute to an understanding of the synchronous, co-located sharing of personal digital media?

This subsidiary research question inverts the one before, seeking the theoretical, epistemological, and methodological means for performance studies to inform HCI research into digital media sharing. The focus within performance studies is autobiographical performance and those theories and practices that have been described in this chapter as being tightly relevant to the concerns of autobiographical performance. By understanding how performers create ‘special’ (Dissanayake 2003) performances of their own lives, it is possible to formulate a practice within which people who do not
identify as artists can perform their own media and the stories around them. In return, a
deeper understanding of how people engage with technology can illuminate the creation
and perception of intermedial autobiographical performances.

Finally, this thesis will map out the space between HCI and performance where
researchers can investigate mutually dependent and emerging issues of technologically
inspired performance. The final chapter will respond fully to the third and final
subsidiary research question, which has so far been implied but not defined:

3. How does the juncture between autobiographical performance and digital media
sharing point towards a new field of Performative Experience Design?

At this point, PED might best be described as a means of approaching 4Photos,
*humanaquarium*, *Kitchen Show*, and *Bubbling Tom* as instantiations of a single field of
interest. It represents a holistic approach to performances, or performative experiences,
involving digital media technology. PED responds to the call for a ‘performative view’
(Bardzell *et al* 2010) with Pearson’s impassioned call ‘to get rid of the theatre “object”,
the play, the “well-made show”’, and to replace it with ‘a “special world” where extra-
daily occurrences and experiences and changes in status are possible’ (1998, pp. 39-40). I
believe that PED’s combination of performance and design can create Pearson’s ‘special
world’, a ‘making strange’ that ‘engages and re-engages the audience with material
which is intimately familiar and infinitely other’ (Pearson 2003, p. 175).
Chapter 3. Methodology

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the methodological priorities of HCI and performance studies as they pertain to the research questions identified at the end of the previous chapter. The first section explains the most relevant approaches for this purpose within HCI, along with commonly used methods and the rationales behind them. The second section outlines the very complex and not always clear-cut territory of performance methodologies, identifying the most relevant perspectives and methods within that field. Each section then provides the beginning of a response to the first two subsidiary questions of this research: the first explains the potential methodological contributions of HCI to the work of this thesis, and the second does the same for performance studies.

I will argue that neither field on its own offers a satisfactory methodological approach for my purposes. However, a study of methodological approaches in both fields reveals a remarkable degree of similarity in terms of perspectives and values, if not individual methods. Design-oriented research and performance studies share a high regard for the value of practice, as both are fundamentally oriented towards the creation and analysis of novel works in order to advance understanding in their fields. Both value the individual agency of the creator/analyst, and both favour flexibility and novelty in their approach to the research topic.

Starting from these (mostly) shared viewpoints, I have developed a unique methodology suited to the aims of this thesis and, as I will argue, any of a range of projects investigating performative, multi-user interactions with digital media technology. The Performative Experience Design (PED) methodology incorporates specific methods from both HCI and performance studies into a practice-driven design cycle. In this way, this chapter suggests the beginning of a response to the third subsidiary research question of this thesis:
How does the juncture between autobiographical performance and digital media sharing point towards a new field of Performative Experience Design?

The final section of this chapter offers a map of the PED methodology, along with brief examples of how it was applied in this thesis. (The full exploration of the design process appears in Chapter 5.) The methodology of PED addresses the creation of the ‘special world’ (Pearson 1998, p. 39) of performance that traditional HCI methods, including design, fail to fully grasp. It also provides new tools for approaching and analysing performance, primarily through the development of a hybrid method referred to as ‘coded performance analysis’. The methodology described in this chapter addresses key concerns of both fields by offering an approach based on practice and grounded in the rigorous analysis of performance as it is experienced, from both the performer’s perspective and the audience’s.

HCI CONTEXT: DESIGN–ORIENTED RESEARCH AND DESIGNING FOR EXPERIENCE

As mentioned in Chapter 1, HCI has deep roots in positivist or postpositivist methodologies. In first- and even some second-wave HCI, usability was at the heart of the methodologies for approaching ‘a confined problem space with a clear focus that adopted a small set of methods to tackle it’ (Rogers 2009, p. 2). Usability is judged by measuring the efficiency, effectiveness, and satisfaction (ISO 1998) of an interaction through such classic methods as user testing. For example, although Balabanović et al (2000) provide a rich set of findings about digital media sharing behaviour, their methodology was the straightforward design of a prototype whose ‘efficacy’ was ‘evaluated’ (p. 568) with user tests which, incidentally, excluded the process of selecting the photos used in the testing. Ten years ago, Yvonne Rogers (2004) identified common usability or user experience ‘design methods, including scenarios, storyboards, sketching, lo-tech and software prototyping, focus groups, interviews, field studies and questionnaires and use cases’ (p. 24). These methods can provide rich, qualitative data, but do not push the bounds of understanding user experience within second- or third-wave HCI.

With the expansion of usability to user experience and now beyond user experience to ‘emotional, eco-friendly, embodied experiences … context, constructivism and culture’ (Rogers 2009, p. 2), HCI and design researchers require new methodologies to guide both the success of their suggested products and the decision of which research questions
are most worthwhile to pursue in the first place. Rogers (2009) makes an eloquent argument for exploring as fully as possible the ethical dimensions of technologies that can become integrated into people’s daily lives and by consequence into their sense of self and relationship to others. She argues for a rich, transdisciplinary mixture of methods to develop deeply contextualised user experiences (p. 17) designed ‘not in terms of time and errors, but in terms of the weighing up of the various moral, personal and social impacts on the various parties who will be affected by the proposed technology’ (p. 15).

Similar concerns about the limitations of traditional HCI methodologies are seen in Erik Stolterman’s compelling argument for rigorous yet ‘designerly’ methods such as sketching and working iteratively on multiple design alternatives at once (2008, p. 61), in Tracee Vetting Wolf et al.’s description of the ‘praxis’ of ‘creative design’ that begins with ‘a non-linear process of intent and discovery’ (2006, p. 524, emphasis in the original); and in Johan Redström’s caution to design for contexts rather than for users per se, lest designers over-constrain the actions and attitudes of the people who come to use their products (2006).

A key approach that enables this boundary-pushing is design-oriented research, which Daniel Fälman (2003) argues ‘should have truth or knowledge of some sort as its main contribution, specifically such knowledge that would not have been attainable if design—the bringing forth of the research prototype—were not a vital part of the research process’ (p. 231).14 The methodology in design-oriented research is neither art nor science but ‘an unfolding activity which demands deep involvement from the designer’ (pp. 231-32). However, this critically important activity ‘tends to become concealed under conservative covers of theory dependence, fieldwork data, user testing, and rigorous evaluations’ (p. 231). This happens in the struggle for researchers to establish the validity and relevance of their work, whether in reference to the natural sciences, as in first-wave HCI, or to the social sciences, as in second-wave HCI and design-oriented research itself (Fallman 2007, p. 3). Fälman argues that design-oriented research should be valued for the quality of knowledge that is produced through the design process, particularly ‘exploring possibilities outside of current paradigms’ (Fallman 2007, p. 4). He does not exclude the potential for other traditions, theories, and

14 It can be argued, as Fälman does, that design is the foundational field and HCI merely one of the disciplines that it can address (2003, p. 225). I take instead his position that HCI is inherently oriented towards design, though that orientation requires investigation (2007). I do not wish my arguments about methodologies to weigh in on the question of whether design or HCI is the dominant field. For this thesis, I am framing design-oriented research as a methodological approach for researching human-computer interaction.
methodologies to contribute to the research process, which is especially important when exploring such complex experiences as those involving identity, social relationships, autobiographical memory, and performance.

Design-oriented research is a valuable HCI methodology for the purposes of this thesis, particularly given that much of the research into media sharing, reminiscence, and autobiographical memory follows the principles of this methodology (for example, ten Bhömer et al. 2010; Taylor et al. 2011). However, it is insufficient. It allows for, but does not provide all the tools for, research into performative experiences with technology. It does not hold the answers to the argument set out by Ron Wakkary, Thecla Schiphorst, and Jim Budd (2004) that HCI researchers ‘find ourselves stretching the limits of methodological structures that enable us to explore, build, communicate, and prototype experience’ (p. 1709). They point out that ‘performance, theatre, dance, architecture, conceptual design, industrial design, and visual art each contain rich knowledge and rigorous methodologies for constructing experience’ (p. 1709). A major contribution of this thesis is the incorporation of performance methodologies into the design process; it is also worth noting the contribution that can be made by conceiving of design as a performance method.

Experience design provides surprisingly few methods for approaching the research questions of this thesis, but it gives researchers a necessary orientation away from the designed product towards the experiences catalysed by that product. Experience design originates from the concept of user experience (UX) conceived in the 1980s by Don Norman, Jim Miller, and Austin Henderson (1995) in their attempt to focus multiple divisions at Apple Computer on the single goal of pleasing the user. Both UX and experience design have developed in spite of a lack of a widely accepted common framework, model, or foundational theories (Kuutti 2010). Jodi Forlizzi (2010) defines it as ‘the practice of designing products, services, events, and environments with a focus on the quality of the user experience and culturally relevant solutions, rather than a focus on increasing and improving functionality of the design’ (p. 60). Experience design is not simply product design with the added ‘spice’ of emotion, but a complex task of creating meaning that might be at odds with the desire to give users (consumers) a pleasant experience with a new technology (Blythe et al. 2009, p. 124). This task is all the more

15 For important but not universally employed frameworks of user experience, see Forlizzi & Ford 2000; Forlizzi & Battarbee 2004; Battarbee & Koskinen 2005.
challenging because experiences are always jointly created by the ‘experiencer’ (Forlizzi & Battarbee 2004, p. 263; in performance see also Nelson 2010), and therefore experiences are subject to less control than a product is.

Benford and Giannachi (2011) reflect this challenge in their methodology of mixed reality performance. Although they do not frame mixed reality performance within the field of experience design, their work is devoted to ‘articulat[ing] design strategies for creating future experiences’ (p. 13), particularly ‘the experience of real audiences’ (p. 11). Acknowledging that ‘research in the wild’ extends far beyond lab studies of individual products (p. 8), they and their colleagues gradually developed a methodology for developing ‘compelling and tourable new experiences’ with technology (p. 8). Their methodology has three major components. First, it is ‘led by artistic practice’ and prioritises taking ‘risks’ (p. 10). Second, it uses ‘quick and dirty ethnographies’ that are ‘informed by sensitising concepts, which provide lenses through which to attack the challenge of analyzing a novel application’ (p. 11). Finally, it derives generalisable theories, frameworks, platforms, and tools from these studies (p. 11). This highly inclusive and adaptable methodology emphasises unpredictable individual agency in a performative interaction and provides a compelling model for the design of experiences based on performance.

Most or all mixed reality performances are far more technologically complex and public-facing than the intermedial autobiographical performance studied here. It would certainly be possible to think in terms of trajectories, hybrid spaces, orchestration, and the like (Benford & Giannachi 2011) for this thesis, but these tools might not provide a sufficiently close examination of the workings of identity and performance in small, private groups. Similarly, experience design and design-oriented research offer useful ways of orienting researchers to a research topic as open-ended and interdisciplinary as the one pursued by this thesis, but they do not offer a tested methodology or set of methods to address the research questions at hand.

**PERFORMANCE CONTEXT: REFLEXIVITY, UNPREDICTABILITY, PRACTICE, AND POLITICS**

For the most part, performance research avoids the positivist or postpositivist methodologies of first-wave UX and actively seeks the transdisciplinary approach advocated by Rogers (2009). As Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson (2011) state in their introduction to *Research Methods in Theatre and Performance*, ‘creative approaches to
research practices offer an implicit challenge to outmoded perceptions that the terms ‘method’ and ‘methodology’ imply an attempt to capture, codify and categorise knowledge (p. 1). Although some researchers use methods long established in HCI such as interviews and surveys (for example, audience research methods in Reason 2004), others push the boundaries of what constitutes knowledge in performance studies, and therefore how that knowledge might be pursued. Some readily accepted performance methodologies, such as postcolonial theory or scenography (Kershaw & Nicholson 2011), would leave many HCI researchers scratching their heads. Is postcolonial theory therefore a performance methodology, and would an HCI researcher recognise useful methods within it?

A way of unpicking performance studies methodologies is to find common themes among them. Kershaw and Nicholson (2011) identify two themes that reflect concerns of design-oriented research: reflexivity and unpredictability. Reflexive methodologies require researchers to account for the results of their own choices in their research process. They can then use their research as a space for reflection on the paradoxes and contradictions that may emerge (p. 5), and therefore question their own choices (p. 8). Kershaw and Nicholson describe reflexivity not as a methodology in itself but as ‘a methodological key that can unpick the conundrums which plague the discipline of methods in theatre and performance research’ (p. 6). The closely related concept of unpredictability refers to the fact that much performance research cannot be counted on to unfold as planned, and some of what is presented as research (or even performance) is a post-hoc construction. This is not a flaw, but rather a source of potentially ‘fruitful failures’ (p. 9). Fischer-Lichte (1997) agrees that while a research output might be linear, the process of engaging in performance research is circular, intuitive, and provisional, shaping the questions that it answers (pp. 10-11). These ‘methodological keys’ provide a powerful orientation to the research process but few practical methods relevant to this thesis.

One of these few performance methods is identified by Thecla Schiporst in her foreword to Susan Broadhurst and Josephine Machon’s book of essays on Identity, Performance and Technology (2012), which examines the ethical, social, and political implications of technological performance involving personal identity. This method is

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16 Design is more likely than HCI to include elements of reflexivity and unpredictability in its methodologies; see Cockton 2008 for a challenge to traditional HCI principles along these lines.
the practice of making the familiar strange again, so that people (audiences and performers alike) become aware of their own agency in choosing how to perceive their worlds (Schiphorst 2012, p. xiv). Augusto Boal referred to this practice as ‘de-mechanization’ (Boal quoted in Schiphorst 2012, p. xv), while Allan Kaprow refers to something very similar with his ‘experienced insights’ to everyday activities that have been made unusual (Cull 2011, p. 86). Fischer-Lichte (2008a) sees it as the aim of performance to induce a transformation in the spectator ‘which alienates them from their everyday life…. Such a state can be experienced as a pleasure as well as a torment’ (p. 80). Experiencing the familiar from a new perspective can be central to autobiographical performance and Live Art practices revolving around the everyday (see Chapter 2).

Applied theatre presents another methodological stance with implications for the work of this project. This refers to performances created and performed for a particular purpose or specific audience, such as performances created for dementia sufferers to explore their own memories. Jenny Hughes, Jenny Kidd, and Catherine McNamara (2011) propose an applied theatre methodology ‘that privileges notions of practice’ and ‘support[s] the creative, social and political aims of projects’ (p. 188). Their methodology exemplifies the reflexivity noted by Kershaw and Nicholson (2011). As Hughes et al explain, their ‘way of working challenges notions of method and methodology as epistemologically secure, finite, discrete sets of procedures fit for the purpose of discovering certain, measurable findings’ (2011, p. 188). When neither the method nor the goal of research is reliably fixed, the research process becomes an iterative practice with no hierarchy between theory and practice. Their applied theatre methodology ‘is intimately embedded in creative practice and that, rather than posing answers to clearly defined questions, develops articulations of experience that may not be accounted for by habitual and institutionally bound framings of those experiences’ (p. 194). Their methodology foregrounds an active, creative, reflexive ‘doing’ that can challenge established methods and propose types of knowledge that were unpredicted at the project’s outset.

Hughes et al’s (2011) perspective on applied theatre methodology aligns well with design-oriented research in three ways. Its focus on practice mirrors the necessity of ‘the bringing forth of the research prototype’ in the generation of knowledge (Fällman 2003, p. 231). Second, its challenge to the fixity of methods and to the goal of ‘discovering certain, measurable findings’ (Hughes et al 2011, p. 188) parallels Fällman’s rejection of claims to ‘a structured and linear process of moving from the abstract to the concrete’ (2003, p. 229). Third, the centrality of creative practice in applied theatre research as theorised by Hughes et al (2011) results in an aspiration to seek knowledge through
articulations of experience’ that do not respond to ‘clearly defined questions’ (2011, p. 194). This aspiration is shared by Fällman, who sees design-oriented research as an ‘unfolding’ or ‘gestalt’ instead of ‘a process of first setting up and then solving problems’ (2003, p. 230). Furthermore, some of the methods employed in applied theatre research are also commonly found in design-oriented research, such as ‘focus groups, qualitative interviews, questionnaires, participant-observation, creative exercises and video recordings’ (Hughes et al 2011, p. 195). Applied theatre is also important in the context of design-oriented research because it is one of the very few types of performance that is created and/or performed by non-professionals. Clearly, the value of a performance involving elderly people with dementia exploring their own memories does not hinge on their acting skills, but rather on whether they felt themselves to have ‘the opportunity to be artists in their own right, to discover their own creativity in form and content’ (Oddey 1994, p. 164). There is no higher set of criteria for the participants in applied theatre to meet, as either devisers or performers.

Underlying all of the performance methodologies discussed here is an explicit or implicit political stance. For example, Schiphorst identifies the potential political results of making the familiar strange again, a practice that can contribute ‘to the design and development of our social digital identities and technologies of production’ (2012, p. xvi). Such political aims form a common perspective for many performance researchers (for example, Dolan 2005; Heddon 2008; Chatzichristodoulou 2011; Broadhurst & Machon 2012). As Kershaw and Nicholson (2011) explain:

Research methods in theatre/performance studies … at best are not concerned with legitimating the cultural authority of the researcher or the research. Rather, they are about the engaged social-environmental production of systems and the cultural production of flexible research ecologies wherein tacit understandings, inferred practices and theoretical assumptions can be made explicit and can, in turn, be queried and contested. (p. 2)

This expectation that methodology might attempt to subvert authority or contest assumptions is familiar to many performance researchers, but perhaps less familiar to HCI researchers. The significant exception is recent work by Jeffrey Bardzell and

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colleagues on critical design (Bardzell & Bardzell 2013a; Bardzell & Bardzell 2013b; Bardzell et al 2012). Critical design is based on foundational research by Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby (Dunne 1999) but critiques their work, particularly their lack of attention to methods of conducting or even identifying critical design practice (Bardzell & Bardzell 2013b, pp. 3299-3300). Jeffrey and Shaowen Bardzell (2013b) explain critical design as:

> a design research practice that foregrounds the ethical positioning of designers; this practice is suspicious of the potential for hidden ideologies that can harm the public; it optimistically seeks out, tries out, and disseminates new design values; it seeks to cultivate critical awareness in designers and consumers alike in, by means of, and through designs; it views this activity as democratically participatory.

(p. 3300)

In other words, critical design is driven by a ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’ (2013b, p. 3301, a phrase borrowed from Noël Carroll) that aligns closely with the emancipatory political and ethical aims of much performance studies research. Performance methodologies can therefore contribute important methodological perspectives of reflexivity, unpredictability, and an implicitly political engagement with the wider world to discussions of critical design. Making the familiar strange again and working closely with non-professional performers are two specific methods that further those aims and can be clearly understood in the context of design-oriented research and experience design. This thesis actively seeks to challenge emerging norms of digital media sharing, not necessarily because I, as the researcher, have decided that they are bad, but because I see value in questioning assumptions behind this rapidly evolving ‘social practice by which images, audience, and subject come together for both individual and group self-understanding and relationships’ (Van House 2009, p. 1084).

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18 Dunne and Raby (1999) assert that critical design cannot be art. Bardzell and Bardzell (2013b) critique this stance without fundamentally challenging Dunne and Raby’s assumption that art and everyday life are separate domains. Inasmuch as this thesis defines experiences with its design as ‘performances’ that are not entirely on the ‘conversation’ side of Wilson’s performance continuum (2006, p. 9), it could be argued that my outputs do not qualify as critical design. However, I contest that there is no clear separation between the domains, and that the work of this thesis is in any case at no risk of being ‘absorbed into the social practices of the artworld’ (Bardzell & Bardzell 2013b, p. 3304).
THE METHODOLOGY OF PERFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE DESIGN

The experience of co-located digital media sharing is explicitly performative. Therefore, the methods of both HCI and performance studies should be brought to bear on the topic, and the resulting performances should be analysed from the perspectives of both fields. The literature review made clear that no existing designs or prototypes for digital media sharing made sufficient use of performance studies and practices, while no existing performances explored digital media sharing as a process for devising and performing autobiographical material (at least those reported in the literature or performed within the temporal and geographical limits of this thesis). The logical conclusion was to create a set of practices through which users would create a performance from their personal digital media, following established theories for guidance and addressing as many of the gaps identified in the literature as possible.

![Ped Methodology](image)

**Figure 3.1 PED Methodology.**

This endeavour required not only a new design but also a new methodology (see Figure 3.1) that could capitalise on the orientation of both fields to practice, leading to the creation of a unique design/performance that could be studied using the lenses of both fields. This methodology incorporates performance theory and practice into the user research process of assessing current practices in light of future possibilities, creating
prototypes, and analysing those prototypes in use (Frohlich 2004, p. 9). This results in a number of significant alterations to existing design methods. Finding a way to articulate and design for properties of performance required the adoption of the method known as ‘performance analysis’ into the design cycle. Analysing the results required the creation of a hybrid method of analysis, which I have termed ‘coded performance analysis’. The complete methodology describes the basic approach to PED (Spence et al. 2013b). The process consists of selecting a line of enquiry, performance analyses, design exploration, and analysis.

The first step is the selection of a line of enquiry. This differs from establishing a fixed research question at the outset, especially one that seeks a simple answer to a closed question. Such aims are not well served by a method in which ‘exploring possibilities outside of current paradigms’ (Fallman 2007, p. 197). Fällman’s design-oriented research is in this way very similar to the ‘reflexivity’ and ‘unpredictability’ identified by Kershaw and Nicholson (2011), which allow for research questions to emerge through open-ended and inclusive investigations. Both fields, then, are well represented in this first step of the PED methodology.

For this thesis, I began with a frustration over what I perceived to be a failure to account for audiences in performative interactions with personal digital media. This quickly led to the identification of autobiographical performance and co-located digital media sharing as mutually supportive avenues for exploring the effects of audience on performance. My line of enquiry was also shaped by questions suggested by McCarthy and Wright (2004) for determining the quality of an engagement with technology:

Do the technologies connect or fragment experience and life?

Do the technologies help to enrich our experience of what we already value, or do they impoverish it?

Do the technologies facilitate unfolding potential, critical perception, and engagement?

Speciﬁcally, does the Internet increase the potential for new relationships and new forms of communicating, or does it inhibit relating?…

Does the introduction of new technologies respect the stories we tell ourselves about what is important while also allowing us to create new stories? (p. 66)
My aim was to explore how performative interactions with personal digital media might be designed to connect, enrich, facilitate, increase potential, respect the past, and create the new. The results of the first step of the PED methodology for this thesis are charted in the literature review and culminate in the research questions (Chapter 2)—which indeed shifted focus as the project progressed.

The second step is performance analyses conducted on several ‘cultural’ performances (Wilson 2006, p. 9) chosen for their potential to illuminate the line of enquiry, for example through techniques, thematic concerns, or devising practices. Performance analysis, a common method in performance studies, offers a systematic approach to understanding the meaning, structure, and effects of a performance (McAuley 1998). There is no single agreed method for performance analysis, but most approaches began with semiotics (for example, States 1985; McAuley 1998, p. 1; Pavis 2003, p. 24; Fischer-Lichte 2008a, p. 69; Rozik 2010). Many of these have over time incorporated phenomenology (for example, Pavis as described in Rozik 2010, p. 5; States 1985; Fischer-Lichte 1997; Fischer-Lichte 2008a, p. 69). Using this combination of approaches, performance analysis does not aspire to the postpositivist aim of quantifying, defining, or standardising a performance, but rather to explore the meanings, emotions, and ‘poetic’ (Langellier & Peterson 2004, p. 54) aspects of perceiving a performance. Performance analysis takes each performance event on its own terms, allowing the analyst to be both rigorous and open-minded, detailed and holistic, in understanding the situated, contextualised ‘how’ of how a particular person communicates his or her lived experience to an audience (Fischer-Lichte 2008b, pp. 70-71). The analyses are necessarily subjective, and no two analysts would arrive at precisely the same conclusions. However, a rigorous and evidence-based performance analysis can provide a unique insight into the meanings, emotions, and potentially transformational insights that are made ‘special’ (Dissanayake 2003) through performance.

Performance analysis could be seen in HCI terms as a form of interaction criticism (Bardzell et al 2010) undertaking the inductive analysis of performance data. The analysis of these data addresses intangible or holistic concepts such as rhythmic and energetic relationships and their emotional effects on the spectator. Performance analysis could also be understood as addressing what Harold G. Nelson and Erik Stolterman (2012) might agree to call the ‘ultimate particular’ (p. 31) of one performance (perhaps witnessed in multiple iterations), experienced by one unabashedly subjective audience member in one unique spatio-temporal, social, and intrapersonal context. Their ‘ultimate particular is a singular and unique composition or assembly’ from which universal
abstractions cannot be made, although ‘patterns of accurate descriptions, and explanations, through controlled observation’ can provide the basis for valid guidelines and theories (p. 31). Through methods including performance analysis, the PED methodology seeks to create both guidelines for design and implications for performance.

After selecting the performance of digital media sharing as my line of enquiry, I analysed four autobiographical performances in an attempt to uncover common approaches, concerns, and practices that might inform or inspire the design process (see Chapter 4). These were Third Angel’s *Cape Wrath* (performed in three versions in 2011, 2012, and 2013); Third Angel’s *Class of ’76* (2000), Tom Marshman’s *Legs 11* (2011), and Claire Morgan’s *Editor* (2012). The two Third Angel pieces were primarily the work of group member Alex Kelly. All were performed in the UK. As a result of these analyses, I identified four properties of autobiographical performance: self-making, ‘heightened attention’, situatedness, and the ‘aesthetics of the event’. These properties drove the design process.

The third step of the PED methodology is the **design exploration**. It begins with the generation of design ideas inspired by the findings of the performance analyses. These ideas are developed, reshaped, abandoned, and renewed with one overriding driver: an image of the performance that would be likely to result from their implementation. One result is a map of the ‘design space’ (Gaver 2012) that emerges from the application of what Erik Stolterman (2008) refers to as ‘a designerly way of thinking’ (p. 55, emphasis in the original) or a ‘designerly approach’ (p. 61) to analyses of performance. An effective way of mapping this design space is through the creation of a design workbook, which Gaver (2011) defines as a methodological tool for allowing ideas to develop over time, among multiple members of a design team, or out of a productive juxtaposition (p. 1551). Because the PED methodology draws primarily from Fällman’s view that the creation of a prototype is ‘a vital part of the research process’ (2003, p. 231), it does not use the design process as the sole research method, as Gaver argues (2012). However, Gaver’s tools for conceptualising and mapping a design space are extremely useful in such a novel and open-ended activity.

The second result of this step of the PED methodology is the **prototype**. As Ernest Edmonds (2010) points out, ‘[o]bservation, in some sense, of an interactive system in action is the only way to understand it’ (p. 260). In other words, the ‘ultimate particular’ (Nelson & Stolterman 2012, p. 31) is not the designed artefact but each individual
performance engendered by its use. Therefore, one of the design ideas must be developed to the point that it can be experienced or performed by users. Fällman critiques the expectations that many HCI research place on a prototype, which is the tendency noted by Stephanie Houde and Charles Hill (1997) to focus on its level of fidelity rather than the attributes of the design being prototyped (discussed in Fällman 2003, p. 230). Houde and Hill (1997) propose a triangular model with vertices representing the role, look and feel, and implementation that a prototype would strive to convey (p. 369). Any prototype will emphasise one or more of these functions. A prototype intended to prompt performance would most likely excel at conveying the role the prototype would play in the user’s experience. Houde and Hill demonstrate that even paper storyboards can be convincing prototypes when role is the key concern (p. 372). As Fällman notes, the only significant requirement of a prototype is that it be ‘the means to get at knowledge’ (Fallman 2007, p. 197).

The design exploration step can be understood as a parallel to processes of devising individual performances or performance practices. The ideas generated may vary in terms of feasibility, degree of development, and potential to respond to the project’s research question. For example, in a diary of her creative process in developing six proposed or commissioned works involving autobiographical material, Bobby Baker says that ‘[o]ne idea and image lead to another, and at one point … I am so excited that I nearly ride under a bus’ (2001, p. 37). Less than three weeks later, she sees three elderly women talking to each other on a street corner. That familiar, ordinary sight is made strange for Baker, who then has the idea of ‘stationing three old ladies on the corner of every street in a given area…. There’s a lot missing to the idea and the pragmatics are somewhat daunting. Never mind!’ (p. 38). Three weeks after that, Baker is ‘[c]ompletely stuck. Can’t get on…’ (p. 38). Her creative process is highly unpredictable, and much if not all of her work has the broadly political aim of getting ‘her audience to question social and political assumptions about social roles and identity categories’ (Harris & Aston 2007, p. 109). As with the process of generating design ideas to map a design space and create a prototype, less compelling ideas are discarded and one is selected for development and eventual use in situ.

The four performances that I analysed formed the inspiration for a number of design ideas for digital media sharing. Twelve of the initial ideas were written up as short proposals and compiled into a design workbook. By studying the interplay among these ideas, I was able to identify a significant gap in the emerging design space. I then turned my attention to filling this gap. The resulting design was altered and refined until it could
be expected to address the research questions of this thesis. The design that was prototyped is *Collect Yourselves!*, a two-phase technological intervention enabling non-professionals to create a digital media sharing event that demonstrates the same properties identified in analyses of autobiographical performances. This design exploration process is detailed in Chapter 5.

The fourth and final step of the PED methodology is analysis of the prototype in use. Three methods of analysis are combined in this step: thematic analysis, interaction analysis, and a novel method called ‘coded performance analysis’. The first two are commonly used in HCI, while the third applies HCI methods to the performance analysis method used in step two. Data for these analyses are taken from notes and video records of the performances, the photos and text uploaded for performance, and responses to questionnaires and interviews conducted immediately following each performance.

**THEMATIC ANALYSIS**

Thematic analysis is an accepted practice within HCI\(^\text{19}\) that allows investigation of subjective accounts of the performance experiences, from both the participants’ perspectives and from the researcher’s. Thematic analysis allows access to participants’ subjective accounts of their experiences that do not find outward expression during performance. This method of analysis also allows the researcher to work with participants’ reflections on phase(s) of performance concealed from the audience, such as the devising phase.

Thematic analysis begins with a process of creating ‘codes’ that describe elements of interest in a data set. Codes may compose ‘a list of themes, a complex model with themes, indicators, and qualifications that are causally related; or something in between these two forms’ (Boyatzis 1998, p. vii). Data collection methods for the thematic analysis employ qualitative techniques drawn from ethnography: direct observation, questionnaires, and interviews.\(^\text{20}\) According to Richard E. Boyatzis, codes can be taken

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\(^{19}\) For example, 77 papers featuring thematic analysis have been published in CHI proceedings as of May 2014, many of them by researchers cited in this thesis.

\(^{20}\) In some HCI research, these techniques can be implemented in a somewhat rationalist, positivist manner, looking to gather what must be assumed to be pre-existing, non-contextualised pieces of data. In contrast, thematic analysis approaches these data in a way that takes into account the ephemerality of human performance, situated in a particular place and time, associated with feelings, memories and evocations that can never be comprehensively specified or recreated (McCarthy & Wright 2004).
from theory or be derived from the data (compare grounded theory as developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in the 1960s). The codes are subjected to an iterative process of categorising, grouping, splitting, and rejecting until the ones that remain describe all of the relevant data.

For this thesis, major themes were taken from the properties of performance identified in the second step of the PED methodology, and specific codes were created by identifying behaviours in performance that contributed to those themes. At the same time, contradictory, unexpected, and emerging behaviours were actively sought out. This combination of inductive and deductive analysis allowed for a targeted and yet holistic analysis. The coding scheme was revised and restructured over multiple viewings of the video records, which triggered memories of the original performance events; codes were renamed, combined, and discarded as patterns emerged. The final coding scheme includes multiple detectable behaviours for each of the four properties of autobiographical performance, as well as for two categories that apply directly to interaction analysis and thematic analysis (see Table 3.1). All interview and questionnaire data were then coded using these themes, to relate participants’ subjective accounts of their experiences to phenomena in performance.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Self-making</strong></th>
<th><strong>Situatedness</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• explaining devising phase choices</td>
<td>• connection to another’s story</td>
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<tr>
<td>• impression management</td>
<td>• connection to own previous story</td>
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<td>• judgement</td>
<td>• connection within prompt</td>
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<tr>
<td>• photo justification</td>
<td>• conversation or direct address</td>
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<tr>
<td>• self-disclosure</td>
<td>• establishing rules</td>
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<tr>
<td>• self-discovery</td>
<td>• explaining devising phase choices</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• patterns (intros, outros, timing data)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• reference to present company (prompt 2A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• reference to online sharing</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Heightened attention</strong></th>
<th><strong>Conspicuousness</strong></th>
<th><strong>Aesthetics of event</strong></th>
<th><strong>Collapsing dichotomies</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intensity of appearance</strong></td>
<td>• limitations of photo</td>
<td>• ethical – other-making</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• acting</td>
<td>• media not shared online</td>
<td>• political – imposing opinions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• gestures</td>
<td>• representation dissonance</td>
<td>• social – source for conversation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• high energy levels from audience</td>
<td>• role of CY! bringing media to awareness</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• high energy levels from performer</td>
<td>• temporal dissonance</td>
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<td>• laughter</td>
<td><strong>Liminality and transformation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• performance vs. talk or media</td>
<td>• connection</td>
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<td>• voice</td>
<td>• intimacy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• risk</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• stories or details never or rarely told</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• unflattering information</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Deviation and surprise</strong></th>
<th><strong>Autopoiesis and emergence</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• ambiguity</td>
<td>• element emerging for performer during event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• deviations</td>
<td>• interruptions in main part of story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• event structure</td>
<td>• interruptions near start or end of story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• mistakes</td>
<td>• reaction to audience response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• surprise created by performer</td>
<td>• reference to technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• surprise expressed by performer</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Table 3.1 Final coding scheme.
INTERACTION ANALYSIS

Each performance of the design for this thesis is subjected to a modified form of Interaction Analysis, a development from Conversation Analysis, delineated by Brigitte Jordan and Austin Henderson (1995). Interaction Analysis takes as a foundational assumption that interactions are to be construed as social (p. 41). Therefore, relevant data are neither visual texts of the photos nor transcript texts of the stories told around them, but data relating to the mechanics of complex social interactions. These data, which include non-verbal elements, are best ‘captured’ using video in addition to field notes in an effort to minimise the ‘retrospective representation’ that introduces an additional and unwelcome layer of secondary interpretation and obscures the complexities of the lived experience (pp. 51-52). Therefore, the data collection method for this analysis technique consists of between two and four audio-video records of each performance, taken from multiple angles.

At the heart of interaction analysis is an evidence-based focus on how a situated interaction emerges and what implications that interaction might have for the people involved. It is an inductive process, ‘to the largest extent possible, free from predetermined analytic categories’ (Jordan & Henderson 1995, pp. 7-8). This freedom helps researchers avoid the temptation of simply seeking evidence of what they wish to find and instead to see the complexities, contradictions, and failures in each interaction.

Interaction analysis gathers and makes sense of fine-grained empirical data such as turn-taking and the way that interactants position themselves physically (Jordan & Henderson 1995). Drawing on the work of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991), Jordan and Henderson also point out the importance of artefacts in interaction, especially issues of ownership and of the display of nonmaterial objects (1995, p. 46) such as projected photographs. Key terms in Interaction Analysis include ‘participation structures’, which refer to ways in which participants indicate engagement with each other and/or toward an object of shared focus; ‘trouble’, which refers to any interruption in the ordinary flow of an interaction; and ‘repair’, the various verbal, physical, and social means of correcting interactions that have experienced ‘trouble’ (1995, pp. 37-38). To respond to these topics of interest, I gathered the following data:

- time spent on each story, averaged by group, person, and story, with standard deviations
- story order, including the number of prompts answered per group
• whether stories became longer or shorter as the performance progressed
• time spent on each photo, averaged by group, person, and story, with standard deviations
• number of photos per prompt
• lengths of transitions, averaged by group, with standard deviations
• patterns for turn-taking (following seating order, display order, or other)
• patterns for which prompt to choose (following the previously selected prompt or not)

A full interaction analysis is an extraordinarily intensive procedure, involving a number of researchers going through the video material together, recording their own comments for review and analysis, and returning to the field to test emerging hypotheses. This level of intensity is clearly inappropriate for this project, primarily for practical reasons (for example, the fundamentally solitary nature of PhD research). However, this approach still provides a framework that is well established within HCI (for example, Salovaara et al 2006; Tatar et al 2008; Tholander et al 2008) and suitable for understanding multi-user interactions. Its main weaknesses for the purposes of this thesis lie in its emphasis on identifying specific causes of interactional phenomena, and its lack of strategies or categories for addressing the deeply subjective, emotional, and potentially transformational ‘special world’ (Pearson 1998, p. 39) of performance. It is therefore a useful component, but only one component, of an analytic strategy for PED.

**Coded performance analysis**

This third analytic method is a hybrid of thematic analysis and performance analysis called ‘coded performance analysis’. The coded videos of each use of the designed system are re-examined holistically as full performances in their own right, with specific behaviours and emergent phenomena already noted. Coded performance analysis can thus address aspects of performance that interaction analysis is not equipped to investigate, such as the processes of ‘making special’ (Dissanayake 2003) at work in performances that land on the right side of the performance continuum (Wilson 2006, p. 9). For example, ‘heightened attention’ might be indicated by audience members leaning forward in their seats, which is easy to code for, but it might also be indicated by a tension in the air, an intensity of the gaze, or an unusual tone of voice, which cannot be
coded to any particular word or gesture. Performance provides a language and an attunement to the ephemeral that can, of course, be productively analysed in its own right through performance analysis—but that can also be coded as in thematic analysis. This coded performance analysis can then be applied to directly observed phenomena (performances) as well as subjective data such as questionnaires and interviews. Coded performance analyses are also very similar in structure and content to the performance analyses performed in step 2 of the PED methodology, which allows for comparison between the performances that served as inspiration and those that emerged as the result of a design process.

The power of this analytic method is its ability to incorporate subjective experiences and ‘aesthetic’ (Fischer-Lichte 2008b) concerns into a holistic analysis of a complete performance event. However, it became clear in my use of coded performance analysis for this thesis that this method elides the position of researcher-as-spectator with the position(s) of audience members. Therefore, it would be easy to conflate the researcher’s interpretations of audience reactions with the researcher’s own reactions to the performances being studied. This phenomenon puts the validity of any conclusions at risk, because it would be easy to assume that unverbalised audience reactions such as laughter or lack of attention are caused by what the researcher perceives in watching the performance. Although the researcher takes the position of spectator of the recorded performance, and may even have attended the live performance as I did, his or her position as researcher will at least subtly differ from those of the participant-audience members. There is also every reason to believe that the researcher’s reactions could be very different from the reactions of other audience members (Heddon et al 2012, p. 128). To minimise risks to the validity of coded performance analysis, researchers should diligently differentiate between their own reactions and observable data about participants’ reactions. For example, I refrained from commenting on moments that I found funny when no one in the audience laughed or smiled, and I framed discussions of the effects of various performance elements in terms of what was likely to have been experienced by at least some audience members based on my observations of their behaviour or on their subsequent comments in interviews or on questionnaires. Such a direct engagement with the challenges posed by coded performance analysis is in line

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21 In the case of this research, the difference was stark, as I watched the unfolding performance without the obligation of performing in turn. Although I avoided overt participation in the ‘autopoietic feedback loop’ (Fischer-Lichte 2008b, p. 165) by positioning myself outside the audience’s line of sight, avoiding eye contact with the performers, and remaining still, my presence was noted (see Chapters 6 and 7).
with influential perspectives in ethnography that aim to account for possible effects of the researcher’s presence on the interactions being observed (for example, Coffey 1999). I believe that a conscientious approach to the complexities of coded performance analysis can turn the risks in this method into worthwhile rewards.

**DISCUSSION**

The approach to methodology in this thesis goes beyond the importing of performance methods into HCI, or HCI methods into performance. It identifies similar methodological perspectives in both fields and draws together complementary methods based on practice. The purpose of PED methodology is to expand the researcher’s view beyond mechanistic evaluations of interaction, or the investigation of performance as a purely artistic effort, towards an inclusive and holistic perspective on the ‘nonrepresentable’ that carries cognitive, emotional, and ‘aesthetic’ meaning (Pavis 2003, p. 24). This inclusivity is particularly important for performative interactions that take place outside of prevailing norms for the physical, institutional, and temporal presentation of performance, and where attention to the subjective experience of performers and audience members contributes to an understanding of the performance event.

The PED methodology contributes to both HCI and performance studies, in part through the development of the hybrid method of coded performance analysis, and in part through exposing methods of one field to the other. For example, I believe that performance methodologies can offer a new way for designers to think through their processes and ultimately better understand the theories and frameworks to be derived from them. Conversely, design practices can contribute a new way of approaching the devising or composing of performance, perhaps in the context of current areas of interest such as scenography (Kershaw & Nicholson 2011) or dramaturgy (Trencsényi & Cochrane 2014). Design-oriented research might also provide a more productive way of examining the use of digital technology in performance, which existing perspectives can fail to see (as argued by Salter 2010, for example).

Additionally, methods from one field can be used to corroborate (or question) findings from the other. For example, performance analyses can be used as an independent means of corroborating HCI conclusions such as Van House’s finding that co-located photo sharing enables people to enact identity (‘self-making’ in performance) and relationships (intimacy, connection, and risk between performer and audience), and that co-present viewing is a dynamic, improvisational construction of a contingent, situated interaction.
between story-teller and audience’ (2009, p. 1073, my emphasis). Similarly, HCI findings can corroborate performance theories. For example, the findings of Balabanović et al. (2000) that people invariably narrate when presenting digital photos or other mementoes to co-present audiences (p. 570) can help to explain the tendency for autobiographical performances to include narration, usually in a relaxed and conversational style, even in performances otherwise marked by poetic or multimodal approaches.

Overall, the PED methodology is valuable for its ability to accommodate overlapping, key concerns of both HCI and performance studies. Its approach brings together the political, ethical, and artistic concerns of much performance practice with design-led concerns to understand novel interactions. The analysis of a performance created through the PED methodology opens up interaction to discussion on multiple levels, accounting for phenomena as detailed as the standard deviation in time spent negotiating between turns to those as nebulous as the energy exchange between performer and audience member. In this methodology, performance values of reflexivity and unpredictability are brought together with what Stolterman refers to as being ‘prepared-for-action but not guided-in-action’ (2008, p. 61), allowing for research methods, and even research questions, to shift as the exploration unfolds.
Part II: Approaching intermedial autobiographical performance

Chapter 4: Performance analyses

Chapter 5: Design exploration
Chapter 4.
Performance analyses

INTRODUCTION

The first step of the Performative Experience Design (PED) methodology is the selection of a line of enquiry, as established in Chapter 2. The line of inquiry for this thesis is described by its primary research question: How can intermedial autobiographical performance advance the understanding of interactions among people and their personal digital media? Part II begins to answer this question. Chapter 4 offers insights into autobiographical performance, particularly autobiographical performances that involve personal and/or digital media. These inform the design process described in Chapter 5, the end result of which will be a fuller understanding of how people interact with their personal digital media through the lens of intermedial autobiographical performance.

This chapter describes the result of the first step of the PED methodology, which is the selection of performances to analyse. It also describes the entirety of the second step, which consists of four performance analyses. These are the key tool for addressing the second subsidiary research question of this thesis:

How can theories and practices relevant to autobiographical performance contribute to an understanding of the synchronous, co-located sharing of personal digital media?

The findings of the four analyses are then drawn together to establish the properties of autobiographical performance that can inform digital media sharing. The chapter concludes with a summary of what the findings contribute to the design process.

SELECTION OF PERFORMANCES TO ANALYSE

I initially took a very inclusive view of what constitutes autobiographical performance. In addition to Kitchen Show, Bubbling Tom, and the four performances that I eventually chose, I attended or investigated thirteen performances during the design exploration:

- Daniel Gosling 10.1.00>>1+1?(@?):?+&+...>> 30.1.00 (2000)

• Blast Theory *Rider Spoke* (2007)


• Simon Pope *Waterlog* (2008)

• Polarbear *Old Me* (2011)

• Robert Wilson *The Life and Death of Marina Abramović* (2011)

• Marcia Farquhar’s Artsadmin weekender (2012)

• Third Angel and mala voadora *Story Map* (2012)

• Martin Figura *Whistle* (2012)


• Chris Thorpe and Hannah Jane Walker *The Oh F*ck Moment* (2012)

• ‘Hugh Hughes’ *Stories from an Invisible Town* (2012)

Gosling’s two works used hitchhiking as a methodology for acquiring experiences which he then shared. Gosling also framed his encounters with the drivers who gave him lifts as performances, although according to his ‘manifesto of engagement’ he never announced his artistic intentions to them (Merriman 2001, p. 340). His work entitled 10.1.00>>1+1?(@?):?+&+...>> 30.1.00 involved three public performances of the stories he had gathered, each at a different motorway service station, and documented in the text ‘10.01.00 >> 30.01.00 >> >>’ (Gosling 2003). *Transformer* used the same methodology to create a website featuring still photographs, videos, sound, and text, all presented from Gosling’s point of view as he hitchhiked Norway for nine days without sleeping.

22 Available at danielgosling.com/transformer/index2.html, accessed 11 October 2014.
Polarbear’s *Old Me*²³ used anecdotes, poetry, music, and projected images to tell the story of his move from Birmingham to pursue family life as a spoken word artist in London. His small, often blurry or distorted digital media were projected against various surfaces, including a brick wall, leading them to evoke rather than detail the images associated with his performance. Martin Figura’s *Whistle*²⁴ made far greater use of clearly indexical photographs to accompany his live performance of his autobiographical poetry.

Two of the works, presented as autobiography, were fictional in the sense that the performer’s actual name and identity did not match the name and identity of the person portrayed on stage. (It is impossible to know the degree to which the performances might have been ‘true’.) *I Could’ve Been Better*²⁵ told the story of an awkward man learning to swim as though from the performer’s own experience. *Stories from an Invisible Town*²⁶ went a step further, presenting the performer ‘Hugh Hughes’ as a real person in its publicity and web presence, though ‘Hugh Hughes’ is a fiction performed by Hoipolloi artistic director Shôn Dale-Jones. This performance has an accompanying website, www.invisibletownstories.co.uk, populated with Hugh’s stories.

*The Life and Death of Marina Abramović*²⁷ was a ‘biography’ initiated by and involving its subject. Abramović handed over complete control of the creative process to director Robert Wilson. The process of devising a performance based on her most ‘tragic, painful, and emotional stories’ was difficult but ‘liberating’ for Abramović, who performed the role of her own mother in this ensemble, multimodal piece (Abramović 2011). The *Waterlog* exhibitions²⁸ combined the ‘biography’ of a tree with the experiences of individual artists through a densely layered exploration of memory. The devising process involved participants committing to memory a painting of a specific tree, which had since been destroyed, then walking to the place where the tree had lived and recollecting the image. Audiences experienced the audio of these recollections played just out of

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²⁴ Information at www.martinfigura.co.uk/whistle/, accessed 11 October 2014.
reach of their associated paintings; all but one of the paintings were covered in black fabric.

Hayley Newman’s work blurs the boundary between fact and fiction; *Connotations - Performance Images 1994-1998* also blurred performance with its documentation (for a discussion of ‘performance documentation’ see Auslander 2006). Her ‘performance’ was an exhibition of photographic documentation of five years’ worth of performance art. However, the actions in the photos were created solely to be documented, so although the artist did perform those actions, the stories of their timing, context, and audience reception were fictional (Newman 2004; Jalving 2005).

Three of the works solicited stories from audience members. Blast Theory’s *Rider Spoke* set its participants out on bicycles at night, prompting them to tell personal stories and using WiFi technology to embed recordings of these stories in the secret places they were told. *Story Map* involved audience members suggesting stories that they knew to be untrue or inauthentic pertaining to every country in the world. *The Oh F*ck Moment set its two performers among their audience members around a conference table, sharing stories of sudden regret and disaster, and occasionally inviting the audience to contribute their own stories. Finally, Marcia Farquhar’s *Artsadmin weekender* brought together performance artists and scholars (including me) from across the UK to explore, create, and present works of autobiographical performance art.

After exploring some of the fringes of autobiographical practice, such as Gosling’s website, Newman’s performative documents or Pope’s exhibition, I decided to analyse staged performances. This decision was based on a desire to focus on live performance techniques and practices as they are most directly and obviously used, before attempting to discern such practices in other contexts. I also chose not to problematise the frisson between fact and fiction any further than necessary, so I rejected overtly fictional or biographical performances. The spoken element of Figura’s work was overtly poetic, and

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32 Information at www.artsadmin.co.uk/events/3031, accessed 11 October 2014.
33 It was through participation in this event that I met Claire Murphy-Morgan, with whom I created the two-person autobiographical performance Recalibrate, performed 5 June 2014 at ARC, Stockton-on-Tees. Information at would-benunsandcowboys.com.
he altered many of his photos to include fanciful drawings, which made his work seem unnecessarily distant from more quotidian practices. Finally, I made the somewhat counter-intuitive decision to analyse performances that did not actively solicit stories from their audiences during performance. This decision was taken purely for reasons of scope: to fully explore mechanisms for soliciting stories, I would want to make use of the extensive literature on participatory art, which would expand the research question far beyond intermedial autobiographical performance. Therefore, I chose to focus on the following four performances:

- Third Angel *Class of ’76* (2000)
- Tom Marshman *Legs 11* (2011)
- Claire Morgan *Editor* (2012)

These four performances address all of the most exciting elements of the original long list. *Class of ’76* struggled with the conflict between truth and fiction, both intentional and unintentional, in the context of autobiography. *Cape Wrath* used a methodology similar to Gosling’s peripatetic ‘manifesto of engagement’ (Merriman 2001, p. 340) and involved multiple layers of memory as reported by multiple people over a period of decades. *Legs 11* used both indexical and abstract digital media to represent the performer’s past actions, accomplishments, and experiences. *Editor* explored the darkest feelings of shame and regret using a combination of poetic devices and conversational storytelling. Additionally, each performance made very different use of analogue or digital media. Taken together, they represent a thought-provoking set of practices representative of twenty-first century autobiographical performance in the UK.

All of the performers whose work is analysed here are well established as creators of live performance, particularly work dealing with autobiography and/or digital media. Alexander Kelly, based in Sheffield, has been working continuously since 1995 as part of the group Third Angel in live performance, installation, film, and other media. Third Angel have performed across the UK and in several European countries. They receive regular funding through the Arts Council England, Yorkshire, as well as ad-hoc funding from other national sources. Tom Marshman is based in Bristol and has made performances, films, and installations for over a decade. He has won support for his work from Arts Council England, has won several national awards, and has performed at
numerous high-profile venues and festivals. He also leads projects that create performances out of stories gathered from members of local communities. Claire Morgan is a founder member of Monkfish Productions in Gateshead, an organisation that creates multimedia spoken word performances and facilitates poetry performances in schools. Performing in her own right, Morgan has been supported by ARC, Stockton, and has performed at The Albany, London, among other venues.

One important comment must be made before moving on to the analyses. I aimed to include performances by both men and women and was open to performances dealing with any age, race, nationality, sexual orientation, religion, and the like. Given Heddon’s comments about the dominance of women in autobiographical performance (2008, p. 22), I expected to struggle to find suitable male performers, but my experience was exactly the opposite. Somewhat less surprisingly, though just as regrettably, I found a dearth of non-white performers. While I am not insensitive to these imbalances, I have chosen to prioritise a diversity of relevant performance practices over a representative diversity of performer demographics.

The rest of this chapter is devoted to analyses of Class of ’76, Cape Wrath, Legs ’11, and Editor. The purpose of these analyses is to arrive at properties of autobiographical performance that can be used to drive the design process. The chapter moves on to a discussion of these properties as they relate to the performance theories identified in Chapter 2, and it concludes with an overview of how they will inform the design process described in Chapter 5.


*Class of ’76* (2000) was a solo autobiographical performance created by Third Angel for Small Acts at the Millennium, the same commission to which Bubbling Tom responded. The work went through three different iterations. In 1999, Third Angel co-founder Alex Kelly used his class photograph from 1976 as the trigger for a mostly fictitious accounting of what his classmates had gone on to do for the rest of the century. Attaching blatant fictions to the identities of real people troubled Kelly and prompted him to recreate the performance the following year, this time interviewing his old classmates to discover their real stories. He performed the piece at the Chuckery Infant School in Walsall, in the room in which the photograph had been taken. Knowing that at least some of his old classmates would be in the audience but unsure what they looked like after nearly a quarter century, Kelly was particularly conscious of the effects his words might
have. This awareness led to the third, touring version of *Class of ’76*, first performed at the Site Gallery in Sheffield in 2001. It was a self-reflexive piece, partly a lecture about the making of the earlier versions and partly a modified restaging of the Walsall performance.

*Class of ’76* (2000) involved the class photo from 1976; the physical presence of the performer, who had been one of the children in the photograph; the location of the performance, which was the exact room in which the class photo had been taken; and the possibility that other students might be present in the audience, hearing their stories told in public. Kelly projected his class photo against the wall behind him but simultaneously lit that wall so that the projection could not be seen. One by one, he held up blank pieces of card, allowing each one to catch a projected face. In this way he reconstructed the entire projected photograph during the course of the performance. The projection invoked the lost moments of childhood that, like performance, ‘become [themselves] through disappearance’ (Phelan 1993, p. 146). Kelly did more than tell the stories of the children in that photograph; he triangulated those stories by performing them alongside the child’s photograph and his adult self. The gaps between adult and child, self and other, worked in much the same way as Bobby Baker’s tendency to withhold critical facts about her experience: as Heddon describes, they ‘perform spaces in which I, in the role of spectator, can bring myself into (the) “play” as I fill in her gaps with my own stories’ (2008, p. 164).

The photo gave evidence of a vanished reality that created a temporal and representational dissonance between the faces of children conjured from thin air and the adult Kelly who could claim a connection to them. The audience sat in the old school hall, steeped in the past and surrounded by ephemeral traces of long-gone children. Yet Kelly’s physical presence in combination with these traces created a dissonance that located the audience firmly in the present moment. The photo alongside Kelly’s physical presence ‘highlight[ed] the potential slippage between how they [the students, including Kelly] really were and how they [were] being represented’ (Govan *et al* 2007, p. 63). Audience members did not passively receive Kelly’s stories: many audience members asked Kelly after the performance whether the stories they had just heard were ‘true’

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34 Fourteen or 15 of Kelly’s classmates attended (personal communication), though little if anything has been documented about their responses. All personal communications regarding this performance took place via Skype on 22 November, 2011.
(Govan et al 2007, p. 64), indicating their engagement in deciding how they should relate to the performance.

As his audience listened to Kelly’s stories performed in the context of this temporal and representational dissonance, they found themselves remembering similar stories from their own lives and feeling compelled to share them in the question and answer session following the performance (such stories are known as ‘response stories’ in Norrick 2000, pp. 112-15; compare Heddon 2002b; Heddon & Kelly 2010). For example, one audience member was eager to ‘relate to a story about a school bully’ despite the fact that this audience member had never met the bully in Kelly’s class (Govan et al 2007, p. 65). Govan et al (2007) locate this point of access between Kelly’s experiences and the experiences of each of these unknown audience members in the presentation of ‘authentic detail from the performer’s experience’ (p. 65). I would argue first that the authenticity of the details themselves cannot be a requirement for accessing personal memories from the audience, as their authenticity cannot be known with any certainty. I suggest instead it is the dissonance created between Kelly’s ‘authentic’ photograph and the adult Kelly on stage that stimulates memory and imagination so powerfully. Kelly’s intermedial conjuring of long-grown six-year-olds was a critical element in the forging of this connection between himself and his audience members. Moreover, as Kelly had the foresight to understand, autobiographical performances entail a range of ethical issues and have the potential to create real and lasting impacts.

All autobiography involves biography, as others are named, referred to, or implicated in the performer’s stories (Heddon 2008, p. 127). However, Kelly’s photograph implicated his classmates even more firmly through evidence of their existence in that school hall 25 years previously. Kelly’s presence in that photograph also implied a privileged connection to those children that could lend his stories additional weight. However, Kelly actively disavowed any special access to truth. Anything that Kelly himself remembered, he claimed as his own memory, while the results of his interviews were presented as ‘collective’ in a way that prevented him from negating, arguing with, or distancing himself from memories held by others in his group (personal communication). Additionally, he told his audience that ‘you might know differently’ (Third Angel, 2003, quoted in Govan et al 2007, p. 64), opening a space for the audience to challenge any story they heard. Kelly did not exclude himself from this statement. He went so far as to recount an episode of bullying and to apologise on behalf of the entire class without trying to explain away his or anyone else’s role in that bullying (personal communication). Through his careful attention to his responsibilities as a performer of
non-fictional and personal material, Kelly highlighted the ethics of autobiographical performance. This can be understood as a collapse of the dichotomy between the ‘aesthetic’ sphere, in which he had every license to fictionalise, and the ‘social’ sphere, in which he could expect retribution for misrepresenting himself or others (Fischer-Lichte 2008b, pp. 169-174). This attention to ethics further intensified his audience’s attention to the present moment of performance. For example, classmates who attended the performance found themselves gently, jointly, but unquestionably accused in public of contributing to an atmosphere of bullying. Members of the audience who were not Kelly’s classmates would likely perceive themselves either agreeing or disagreeing with Kelly’s approach, imagining how they would feel to be accused in that way. Neither personal involvement nor ignorance could excuse Kelly or his audience from involvement in the stories he told.

Like *Bubbling Tom*, *Class of ’76* (2000) was performed exactly where a photograph had been taken long ago, and that photo became part of the process of generating the performance. *Class of ’76* was the first performance in which Kelly explicitly named and described people whom he might expect to find sitting in his audience (personal communication). It might have been reasonable for Kelly to expect a similar level of audience contribution as Pearson received. However, Pearson encouraged his audiences to think of themselves as people on a ‘guided tour’, and in turn they engaged with Pearson verbally. Kelly’s performance, on the other hand, used traditional theatre-style seating and a projector whose position needed to be calibrated in order for Kelly’s raised cards to catch the images correctly. These social and technological elements constrained free movement. Despite some audience members’ close connection to the people and content of the show, Kelly’s audiences only spoke out during question and answer sessions that took place after the performance.

Because *Class of ’76* projected an analogue photo, the performance does not strictly qualify as a ‘digital performance’. However, using the concept of intermediality to investigate ‘the concrete effects of being definitively multiple and interrelational’ (Nelson 2010, p. 17) and the ‘sensibility’ of immersing audiences in a world that includes a variety of sensory stimuli (Lavender 2013, p. 9), *Class of ’76* can be read as a powerful work of intermedial performance. Kelly’s images were plucked from thin air and presented to the audience as a source of temporal and representational dissonance that helped the performance ‘to comment on this historical moment of the mediation of the personal’ (2008, p. 163, emphasis in the original). Sarah Gorman examines theatre from around the time of *Class of ’76* that asks ‘what it means to live in a “digital age”’.
(2008, p. 264), using Andy Lavender’s observations of the shift towards multimedia as her starting point (Lavender 1999, cited in Gorman 2008, p. 263). She identifies Third Angel as one of several groups of performers whose work ‘could be understood to negotiate a re-evaluation of authenticity, mediatization and simulation as part of their pursuit of “reality” in a digital age’ (2008, p. 297). Class of ’76 did not offer any answers about ‘reality’. Rather, it deliberately raised questions for the audience based on Kelly’s relationship to the earlier version of himself in his photo, his relationship to the classmates whose childhood photos seem to emerge from thin air, and his relationship to the physical space he shared with his audience.


The germ of *Cape Wrath* was an online record of the journey on which the performance is based, when in 2011 Third Angel member Alex Kelly retraced the steps of his grandfather’s 1988 trip to Cape Wrath, the most north-westerly point in the UK. I experienced that journey via social media, then saw a live performance of *Cape Wrath* on Monday, 9 April, 2012, at the Gate Theatre in London. Finally, I saw a revised version at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe on Saturday, 17 August, 2013, in a minivan parked outside St. Stephen’s Church.

*Cape Wrath* (2011)

Third Angel works in a variety of media, and Alex Kelly is an enthusiastic user of several social media platforms. *Cape Wrath* began as a Storify project (see Figure 4.1), an online collection of tweets (postings to the social networking site Twitter) and Instagram photos (digital photographs taken with a smartphone, then processed and archived through the Instagram smartphone application). In this ‘proto-performance’ (Schechner 2006, p. 225), Kelly retraced his grandfather’s trip to Cape Wrath as closely as he could, using nearly the same transportation methods and staying in the same hostel. Kelly experimented with video before deciding to document his travels via Twitter and Instagram and to plan a live performance. He felt that only through his live presence on stage would he be able to create a compelling experience for the audience. To increase this sense of presence, he planned to use still photographs sparingly and only one video, arranged in such a way that would help bring the personality of his grandfather, Henry

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Ratcliffe, to life, while letting the audience experience the journey in their imaginations (personal communication).\textsuperscript{36}

Digital media were embedded in Kelly’s re-experience of his grandfather’s journey. His decision to use photographs and tweets altered not only the performances he made but also the very nature of the experience that his performances were born from. Thus Kelly’s digital media must be understood not only as elements to be perceived by the audience but as integral parts of the devising process, and even as integral parts of Kelly’s own life experience. Cape Wrath was intermedial in the sense of ‘how–singularly and collectively–intermedial performances may have elicited a new cultural way of seeing, feeling and being in the contemporary world’ (Nelson 2010, p. 18) before Kelly ever decided to perform it.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure4_1.png}
\caption{Screenshot of a section of the original Storify project.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{36} Kelly spoke with me via Skype on 22 November, 2011.
Cape Wrath (2012)\textsuperscript{37}

*Cape Wrath* was performed as a work in progress in a 70-seat black box studio at the Gate Theatre. That night, the studio was full. The stage was empty except for a small table, chair, and a projector screen at the back. The performance consisted of Kelly telling the story of his grandfather’s trip to Cape Wrath as his grandfather had told it to him more than twenty years previously, interleaved with the story of Kelly’s retracing of that journey and memories of other family members relating to that trip.

Sixteen photos of Kelly’s journey were projected during the performance, each accompanying the relevant part of Kelly’s story. Kelly appeared in none of them. They did not offer ‘proof’ of his journey in the manner of holiday snapshots, but rather implied his presence as the creator and documenter of his own experience. Many were quotidian: a shot of the bus departures board, of his porridge, or of the view from his hostel window. In terms of holiday snapshots, these photos might not have been deemed worthy of sharing, though they reflect a tendency for digital photography to include ‘more images of daily life and not just special events’ (Van House 2011, p. 127). However, in terms of performance, they offered a means for the audience to imagine themselves into Kelly’s place, and from there into his grandfather’s place. Photos taken from Kelly’s own point of view, accompanied by the multi-layered story of the journey, heightened his audience’s attention to the everyday details of his experience and helped them to discover his journey in much the same way as he had discovered it himself.

\textsuperscript{37} A version of a short part of this section was originally published in Spence *et al* 2012.
Kelly used a variety of techniques besides storytelling to engage his audience, most of which drew attention to the shared time and place of this particular performance. Audience members were handed programmes with an A5 photocopy of a puzzle stapled to each (see Figure 4.2). No one that I could see wrote on the paper until Kelly invited us to, explaining that the puzzle was his grandfather’s favourite and would provide an insight into his grandfather’s mind. Kelly monitored our progress, offered hints, and eventually explained the answer. Later in the performance, Kelly produced a bottle of Famous Grouse, his grandfather’s favourite, and poured himself a drink. His grimace when tasting it underscored the difference between his grandfather’s experience and Kelly’s own. Then, near the end of the performance, Kelly stood up and gestured to the suit he was wearing. Ratcliffe had given it to the 19-year-old Kelly to wear in a play. At the time, Kelly said, he had needed to pad it out, but the extra padding was not required

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38 Spoiler alert: the answer to the first row is P,P,P,P,P; to the second, U,U,U,U,U; to the third, N,N,N,N,N; to the fourth, C,C,C,C,C; to the fifth H,H,H,H,H.
by the 40-something Kelly on stage. These physical elements are best understood alongside the digital rather than in contrast to them. The Famous Grouse that Kelly drank was not the same liquid that he or his grandfather had drunk on their journeys; the suit was the same, but the 19-year-old Kelly who first wore it was as absent as his deceased grandfather. The whisky, the suit, and the digital photographs all evoked ephemeral but powerful connections to Kelly’s pasts and present as they co-existed on stage.

As in *Class of ’76*, Kelly was careful to acknowledge the fallibility of his memory. This heightened the audience’s attention to the details of his stories, as Kelly made it clear that inconsistencies were possible. However, Kelly also shared with his audience a moment of self-discovery. While physically recreating his grandfather’s journey, he realised that some parts of his grandfather’s account were not true. For example, Ratcliffe had described getting a lift from a postman in a place where no roads exist. Kelly described the experience of consulting his mother, who was unable to resolve the conflict. With these acts of self-disclosure, Kelly invited his audience into an intimate connection with him and his family. His audience was now privy to the fact that his grandfather had harboured at least one secret. This position allowed audience members to join Kelly, his (deceased) grandfather, and his (absent) mother in the ethical process of negotiating competing claims to the ‘truth’ (Heddon 2008, p. 124).

The lies were not the only potentially uncomfortable self-disclosures of the performance. For example, Kelly forgot to pack either waterproof trousers or teabags, a situation that he found extremely distressing. He was forced to buy a pair of trousers, which were far too small for him, while fellow travellers at his hostel gave him several teabags. Then, when he arrived at Cape Wrath, he admitted to rushing around trying to see everything before remembering that his grandfather had simply sat at the edge of the cliff, thinking about his life. Kelly then tried to duplicate his grandfather’s experience, but was so afraid of being blown over the edge of the cliff that he retreated to the teahouse. Only after he left did he realise that the couple running the teahouse were the same people who served tea to his grandfather. The telling of embarrassing stories is common in conversation (Norrick 2000, p. 143), and therefore these anecdotes did not seem unusual or contrived. However, as deeply personal admissions of thoughtlessness and regret, they made Kelly somewhat vulnerable to his audience. By including embarrassing stories in his performance, Kelly helped establish a sense of intimacy with his audience.
For the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, *Cape Wrath* was rewritten and re-‘staged’ in a minibus parked outside of St. Stephen’s church (see Figure 4.3). Although this performance took place after my design process was complete, it reinforces many of the findings of the earlier version and presents a number of interesting variations. The small space amplified the physicality of Kelly’s gestures, such as the pouring of the Famous Grouse: in fact, Kelly asked my husband to hold his glass while he poured a shot from a hip flask. Kelly further emphasised the close quarters by adding more physicality and participation to this version. For example, he moved around the van often, distributed full-size maps of Cape Wrath for his audience to use, instructed them how to refold the maps correctly, and passed around a bar of his grandfather’s favourite chocolate to share. Every movement that Kelly or his audience made emphasised the audience’s connections and responsibilities to each other and to the performer. Every gesture and shift of gaze was made more intense; every object was made more conspicuous; every deviation from the norms of theatrical performance (or of travelling on a minibus) was a surprise. In other words, the physicality of the performance functioned to heighten attention in all of the ways described by Fischer-Lichte (2008b) and explained in the discussion at the end of this chapter. The spoken content of the performance changed subtly, as well, to emphasise social connection. Kelly now named the people in his anecdotes and described the act of introducing himself to each one: ‘She said her name was Sandy, and I said my name was Alex…. He said his name was Alan, and I said my name was Alex’. At the very end of the performance, Kelly said, ‘That’s us, then. I wonder if we could tell each other our names.’ We all said our names in turn. Kelly replied, ‘And my name is Alex’.
The 2013 version also abandoned all digital media displays. Kelly told me after the performance that until very late in the devising process, he had used a tiny projector inside the minibus, until he asked himself why he would invite people into a minibus and then treat them as if they were in a theatre. However, this lack of digital media during the performance does not ‘disqualify’ the 2013 performance of Cape Wrath as an intermedial performance. Cape Wrath would not have existed as a performance if not for Kelly’s use of digital media from the outset, forcing him to think of his journey as a narrative as it unfolded (personal communication). The effect of digital media technology on the creation of the show was also reflected in this version: Kelly explained again how he began his time at Cape Wrath rushing around, but this time he specified that he was rushing around trying to take a lot of photographs. He stopped when he realised that he was ‘documenting the experience, but not having the experience’. I argue that in spite of the fact that digital media were not displayed during this performance, they were essential to Kelly’s creative experience. Therefore, even this performance was intermedial, particularly in the perception of an audience member who is similarly steeped in personal digital media technology (see Boenisch 2006), perhaps one who saw the story unfold on Twitter. Cape Wrath in all its incarnations uses performance to engage with ‘a new cultural way of seeing, feeling and being in the contemporary world’ (Nelson 2010, p. 18), especially as it contrasts with Kelly’s grandfather’s experience of simply sitting at the edge of a cliff and thinking about his life.

39 Kelly spoke with me in person on 17 August, 2013.
**LEGS 11 (2011)**

*Legs 11* was a work in progress created and performed by Tom Marshman, which I saw at Riverside Studios on 22 October, 2011. Studio 3 at Riverside Studios is a black box space seating 156 that was between one-third and half full. The stage was empty except for a microphone on a stand on either side of the stage and a projection screen at the back. The theme of Marshman’s one-man performance was the journey his legs had taken him on, from happy childhood memories of strength and power, through the pain of varicose vein surgery, to proudly making the finals of a stocking company’s competition for the best legs in the nation. Marshman’s performance employed videos, projected photographs, songs, a dance set to music, a conceptual dance, audience participation, anecdotes, and exposition.

![Figure 4.4](image-url) **Figure 4.4** *Legs 11*: Tom Marshman. Photo courtesy of Battersea Arts Centre Digital Archive, used with permission.

Marshman made three overt references to the shared time and space of his performance. The most obvious were two participatory elements. For one, he retrieved a large and cumbersomely wired video camera and asked the spectators in the front row to kick their legs in the style of a can-can dance. Those not in the front row had no opportunity to join in. Marshman walked along the front row, apparently making a recording of these kicks, but the video feed was not projected, and the audience saw no evidence of any recording.
This section of the performance was not integrated with what happened before or after, and the video was not referred to in any way after the event. Marshman’s final act on stage involved three contraptions, at least a metre long, made of bendable plastic straws connected at odd angles, meant to resemble his now-vanished varicose veins. He also produced three small bottles of red wine, to represent blood. As he struggled to place the straw devices under his tights and insert the bottom of each straw into a bottle of wine, he asked for three volunteers from the audience to drink through the straws and thereby reconstruct his vanished disfigurement. It took some cajoling to get three people to participate. In both cases, audience members were simply asked to enact Marshman’s preconceived plan. This lukewarm reception indicates that participation per se is not a guarantee of audience engagement.\footnote{Participation is a contested issue in performance studies (for example, Bishop 2012; Fensham 2012). I do not aim to enter into any debates on the use of participation, but merely to point out this example of physical participation failing to lead to increased affective engagement.}

The more powerful reference to shared time and space came, paradoxically, from a video. The performance began with a moment’s silence in the darkened studio followed by a short black-and-white film projected onto the rear of the unoccupied stage. On screen was an image of a dancer’s legs executing geometrically precise moves, copied perhaps two dozen times in precise rows and columns. The effect was like a monochrome kaleidoscope, each pose creating a different, crystalline arrangement. The soundtrack was Marshman narrating memories including swimming in the sea as a child. Then Marshman mused on where his legs had taken him—here, to this studio—and where his audience’s legs had taken them—also here, to this same studio, to form the unique audience for this show. The video shared all of the elements of a digital story except for personal photos (Lambert 2002, p. 59). However, its power lay in its positioning within the live performance event. From the outset, Marshman implicated each audience member in his own life story and acknowledged his position in theirs, making audience members conscious of their contribution to Marshman’s performance and priming them to engage actively with it.

Marshman’s multimodal performance was marked throughout by ‘deviation and surprise’ (Fischer-Lichte 2008b, p. 166). For example, early on he shifted abruptly between an overblown, camp dance to a personal, conversational monologue delivered directly to the audience, and then to a conceptual dance (the ‘dance up the seam of a stocking’, which involved walking a straight line from inside a sleeping bag). One of the ‘protoselves’
(Barclay 1994) that Marshman created was of a performance artist willing to confront his audience with action as well as storytelling, which generated curiosity and the ‘kinaesthetic empathy’ that Matthew Reason argues leads audiences to experience a ‘perceptual and imaginative doing’ (2010, p. 20). His rapid shifts between highly ‘cultural’, ‘formal’, and ‘conscious’ modes and those that at least seem to be more ‘conversational’ and ‘informal’ (Wilson 2006, p. 9) not only created ‘deviation and surprise’, but also intensified his audience’s attention to the physicality of his performance and the visceral experiences that motivated his stories. Some of his stories could be seen as embarrassing or even harrowing, such as one about an episode of cruel treatment and humiliation at a sleepover party, or his explanations of the painful and disfiguring medical condition that he had finally had surgery to correct. The audience was aware that the painful or embarrassing experiences expressed through his ‘poetic’ manipulations (Langellier & Peterson 2004, p. 54, discussed further in the following analysis) lay within the man telling these calm, conversational stories. This contrast intensified (Fischer-Lichte 2008b, pp. 164-68) Marshman’s physical presence as he spoke.

Contrast was also at work in Marshman’s use of digital media, which began with the carefully crafted introductory video and continued with a variety of videos and still images. These had the appearance of being personal, or, in light of ‘shifting notions of privacy and ownership’ (Van House 2011, p. 128) surrounding digital media, of having being appropriated for personal reasons. For example, Marshman projected two photographs of his ankles and legs taken before surgery. The flat lighting and a stark white backdrop suggested they might have been taken by Marshman’s doctors for their own purposes and only later shared with Marshman. While they were being projected, Marshman described his surgery in an easy, conversational manner, a performance of the ‘everyday’ in comparison to his stylised dances. Similarly, Marshman screened a section of a television programme in which he featured as a patient, asking the show’s doctor for advice on his varicose veins. Another was a professionally produced video for the Pretty Polly company, which had run a nationwide competition looking for a (presumed female) model to represent their tights and stockings. Marshman entered this competition and reached the finals, which were recorded for Pretty Polly’s marketing purposes; Marshman then used Pretty Polly’s video in his own performance, for his own purposes. Marshman also displayed the photograph he submitted for the Pretty Polly competition, first on its own and then in the context of the web page of his competition entry. Finally, Marshman showed an amateur video taken by friends in which he ran a half-marathon with a pair of artificial legs propped over his shoulders, as a publicity stunt to gain favour
with Pretty Polly. The contrast in style between the starkly clinical or marketing-driven images and Marshman’s very personal and matter-of-fact storytelling style added dissonant perspectives to Marshman’s story and invited his audiences to imagine themselves into the times and places he described.

One might interpret Marshman’s photos of his diseased legs as an example of the ‘digital double’, which Dixon (2007) describes as having the potential to ‘reflect upon the changing nature and understanding of the body and self, spirit, technology, and theater’ (p. 244). Marshman certainly explored body and self using digital representations. However, Dixon’s notion of the digital double cannot be easily applied. One type of digital double, the ‘double as reflection’ (p. 245), addresses Marshman’s themes of body and self, but for Dixon it should do so ‘as a digital image that mirrors the identical visual form and real-time movement of the performer or interactive user’ (p. 246). Marshman’s media failed this test. Dixon’s second type of digital double, the ‘double as alter-ego’, is a ‘shadow double … an alternate, and invariably darker embodiment’ (p. 250). While Marshman’s diseased legs could be seen as a ‘darker embodiment’ of his healthy self, his playful and triumphant representations as a Pretty Polly finalist could not. Neither can his digital images be construed as ‘spiritual emanation’ (p. 253) or ‘manipulable mannequin’ (p. 259), Dixon’s two remaining categories. Examples of digital doubling chosen by Dixon also depend on interactive technological manipulations during the performance, such as live motion capture (p. 260), or the ‘careful rehearsal’ required to play opposite a recording (p. 246). Marshman’s digital representations did not call for manipulation or skill. Some other operation was at work.

This other operation comes from the fact that Marshman’s media were grounded in the practices of everyday life, including vernacular practices of photowork (Kirk et al 2006) and the easy transfer of digital images from one ‘owner’ and context to another (Van House 2011, p. 128). These practices stand in contrast to the ‘digital artistic aspiration’ (Dixon 2007, p. 254) that Dixon sees in performances using digital images of the performer. Marshman did not use these media (aside from the initial film) for their visual aesthetics but instead to provide a visual trace of his experience as it appeared from another perspective. In combination with Marshman’s presence, this trace created a representational dissonance.

The closest description of this dissonance is ‘contiguity’ as defined by Batchen (2001) in his work relating to reminiscence. Contiguity is based on Barthes’s ‘having-been-there’ of an analogue photograph created by light reflecting off of the object onto the
photographic plate (1977, p. 44). For Batchen, this not only refers to the photographed object’s visual representation but also provides a ‘carnal’ or empathic connection between the object and the viewer (Batchen 2001, p. 21). Contiguity is the ‘magic’ force that offers ‘the possibility of a direct emotional empathy across an otherwise insurmountable abyss of space and time’ (p. 21). Contiguity is defined in work relating to reminiscence, but it cannot be limited strictly to reminiscence. The viewer cannot know, remember, or take the subject position of every object in every photograph she owns; the ‘direct emotional empathy’ must be in some way a potential supplement to the limits of subjectivity and human memory. It is also clear that photographs can offer ‘direct emotional empathy’ for those not present at the taking of the photograph, through acts of memory and imagination (Kuhn 2010; Frohlich et al 2013). The reaction of Marshman’s audience to the photos of his legs is evidence of this empathy at work, outside the bounds of personal reminiscence (see Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5  Marshman and one of his projected photos.41

Furthermore, Batchen presents his analysis as part of an argument differentiating analogue from digital photography. He posits that digital photography robs people of this sense of physical connection: ‘it is precisely a capacity for visual contiguity [sic] that is

41 Still from promotional video accessed 24 June 2014 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wkfZWqOCpqg.
now under threat as the photographic image is irresistibly transformed into a continuous flow of data’ (2001, p. 22). Finally, Batchen suggests that the image must not only be analogue, it must be perceived as analogue, to have contiguity: ‘[c]ontiguity depends on the knowledge of that difference [between analogue and digital]… If we don’t bring that knowledge, then there is no contiguity effect’ (p. 23). Clearly, Batchen’s theory addresses a common phenomenon, that of using a photograph to connect immediately, viscerally, and empathetically to a past experience, which is reconstructed rather than retrieved through varying degrees of personal recollection and imagination. However, this phenomenon has not stopped since the advent of digital photography (Van House 2011; Sarvas & Frohlich 2011). Contiguity is an important basis for understanding how Marshman’s digital media created a sense of connection in his audience, but if the photos were not announced and believed to be analogue, where did this contiguity come from?

I argue that contiguity comes from the relationship between the photo, whether digital or analogue, and the live presence of the performer. The relation between photograph and physical presence is argued in Batchen’s later book, *Forget Me Not: Photography and Remembrance* (2004). Batchen describes the historical practice of keeping a loved one’s lock of hair together with their photographic portrait. People engaging in this practice tended to overlook the physicality of the photograph (and therefore the contiguity effect that Batchen originally posited), and saw instead ‘a sort of window’ to the person photographed. Batchen wonders, ‘Could the addition of a tactile portion of the human body to a photograph be an effort to bridge the distance, temporal and otherwise, between viewer and person viewed as well as between likeness and subject?’ (p. 74). He suggests that it can, and that the mechanism for this action is presence. ‘Truth to presence is joined by the actual presence of a part of the body being signified’ (p. 75). I suggest that the physical body of the performer functions in much the same way as the lock of hair, using presence to create not Dixon’s ‘digital double’ but a ‘doubled indexicality’ (Batchen 2004, p. 75). The ‘doubled indexicality’ serves to reinforce the presence of what is actually absent—in this case, Marshman’s varicose veins—and to transform Barthes’s ‘*studium* of mere resemblance ... into the *punctum* of the subject-as-ghost’ (Batchen 2004, p. 76, emphasis in the original). In other words, it is the physical presence of the performer that permits the full measure of the audience’s sense of connection to the performer. Fischer-Lichte can also be read as supporting at least part of this argument; her analysis of Frank Castorf’s production of *The Idiot* (2002) argues that the use of video to interrupt a live performance ‘brought about the apotheosis of the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators’ (2008b, p. 73), causing in the audience an experience of ‘transcendence’ (p. 73). The intriguing dissonance between the performer
and his representation heightens the audience’s attention to both image and performer
and contributes to the sense of connection that the audience can make to the performer
through acts of memory and imagination.

‘Doubled indexicality’ also bridges the gap between analogue and digital. The presence
of the performer frees the image from the burden of physical manifestation. In fact,
Batchen writes of ‘a desire for pure opticality’ (2004, p. 73) which is even better served
by digital than by analogue photography. These ephemeral, projected images of
Marshman’s legs, released from any ‘haptic purchase on history’ (Batchen 2001, p. 23)
that they might have had as analogue photographs, represented a medical condition that
had since vanished. Thus in this case, digital photographs underscore rather than
contradict Phelan’s assertion that ‘[p]erformance’s only life is in the present’ (1993, p.
146). ‘Doubled indexicality’ can connect audiences to the past alongside the present, and
the distant alongside the immediate.

**EDITOR (2012)**

*Editor* was a one-woman autobiographical performance written and performed by Claire
Morgan42, accompanied live by Newcastle guitarist Tom Hollingworth and using the pre-
recorded soundscapes of Teesside artist Michael Hann. *Editor* converted its performance
space into a rubbish dump (see Figure 4.6). I saw *Editor* on 28 March, 2012, in Studio 3
of ARC in Stockton-on-Tees, and then again on 14 March, 2013, in the Studio at the
Albany Theatre in Deptford, London. It remained remarkably consistent across the two
performances, one year and many hundreds of miles apart from each other.

ARC’s Studio 3 has a seating capacity of 80 and the Albany’s Studio holds 50, but in
both cases the space was laid out for approximately 30 people using mismatched chairs,
including an old bathtub, in uneven rows. A huge pile of trash bags loomed upstage, and
bits of junk covered the stage and seating area. By making the seating area reflect the
stage set, Morgan created a sense that she and her audience occupied a shared space, an
effect enhanced when Morgan suddenly burst into song and walked through the
audience, singing in full voice. Although the performance made no use of overtly
participatory methods, Morgan ensured that her audience was fully aware that they had
physically entered her world for the duration of her performance.

42 She was known as Claire Morgan when *Editor* was first performed. She has since changed her
name by deed poll to Claire Murphy-Morgan.
Figure 4.6 Claire Morgan with rubbish from the set of *Editor*. Photo courtesy of Chris Bishop, used with permission.

*Editor* used poetry and conversational prose, some props contextualised within the rubbish-tip set, and two forms of music to construct an autobiographical performance. The focus was the theft of Morgan’s personal journal, including some of the traumatic life experiences it recorded. Morgan’s autobiographical storytelling disclosed disturbing and very personal information about disastrous relationships, surgery, infertility, assault, death, shame, and loss. Morgan used a number of extra-conversational techniques beyond simple storytelling to explore the emotional depths of these situations. The most frequent technique was to shift the object of her address from the audience to a different ‘you’, such as the point at which she addressed a (very real and bloody) ox heart as her ex-lover Bernard. The shifts of ‘you’ from one referent to another were often accompanied by changes in her tone of voice, gaze, and gesture, with the most conversational, direct, and intimate mode of address reserved for the most straightforward content. In the context of ‘performing narrative’, these manipulations are sometimes referred to as ‘poetics’, the consequent shifts as ‘theatrical devices’, and the effects of these shifts as ‘dramatization’ (Langellier & Peterson 2004, p. 54). In Michael Wilson’s terms, Morgan’s manipulations moved the performance as a whole towards the ‘cultural performance’ end of a spectrum whose other extreme is ‘conversation’ (2006, p. 9). I would not dispute these terms, but I argue against the implications that ‘dramatization’ makes a performance ‘special’ (Dissanayake 2003), and a lack of ‘dramatization’ (or the conscious dramatization of conversational speech) would make a performance less ‘special’. In *Editor*, as in other autobiographical performances, it is the
relationship between the ‘theatrical’ and the ‘conversational’ that has an emotional impact. For example, Morgan often passed very harsh judgement on herself. After tossing ‘Bernard’ to the floor, she spoke directly to the audience: ‘I know I’m disposable like the rest…. How arrogant was I to believe my pain had a point?’ After a similarly ‘theatrical’ moment of climbing to the top of the rubbish tip like a soldier and describing the bloody scene she imagines in front of her—a scene representing emergency surgery that left her unlikely to ever have children—she again spoke calmly to the audience: ‘I entertain the notion … that I’m a failed being in a physical context’. She delivered these and other judgements with shame and self-loathing, spoken as though in intimate conversation. By directing her gaze and speech intently at her audience during these dark disclosures, Morgan took the risk of fully admitting the somewhat extravagant dramatisation of her pain as part of her experience and identity. In other words, by presenting herself to the audience without hiding behind the poetics of representation, Morgan made herself vulnerable to her audience not just for the ‘assumption of accountability … for the way in which communication is carried out’ (Bauman 1975, p. 293), but for embracing an identity that encompasses such negative aspects. In turn, the audience had the opportunity to respond with empathy to Morgan’s show of vulnerability.

Behind this self-disclosure lay a process of self-discovery. Creating Editor allowed Morgan to ‘take a step back and evaluate what had happened’ (personal communication). Her description echoes Bauman’s argument about the ‘reflexivity’ of performance, which ‘is an especially potent and heightened means of taking the role of the other and of looking back at oneself from that perspective’ (1992, pp. 47-48). For Morgan, this was not always an easy or pleasant experience. Morgan called her experience of turning memories into a public performance ‘terrifying’, though she sometimes surprised herself with new insights. She finds this self-discovery is ‘always a great thing if it happens’ (personal communication). The examination of her own experience through ‘an artistic process’ was for Morgan ‘the fundamental difference between sitting down and having a cup of tea and a chat with somebody and actually recreating something’. Editor was therefore not simply the revelation of information that Morgan knew she possessed, but a part of a creative practice that shifted Morgan’s view of her own identity.

43 Morgan spoke with me in person on 12 April, 2014.
Part of Morgan’s approach to *Editor* was to explore digital media in unusual ways. The only digital element of her performance was the incorporation of a digital soundscape that aimed to represent Morgan’s personal experience of the karaoke venues on Gateshead High Street. That location was an important part of the memories she explored in *Editor*, and her experience of it was always fragmentary, as each pub would be playing a different song as she walked down the street. This fragmentation evoked her state of mind when her notebook was stolen, and therefore made ‘a canvas for … the work to hang on’ (personal communication). The soundscape came on whenever Morgan moved away from conversational, direct address to her audience and into more poetic, ambiguous, or metaphoric territory. When the soundscapes stopped, Morgan would often return quite suddenly to a calm and conversational way of speaking and a way of gazing at her audience that indicated she was fully aware of them again, not lost in the fragmented world of her memories.

Although Morgan used no digital images in *Editor*, the climax of the performance hinged on her interaction with her own personal media, specifically a single analogue photo of herself taken when she was six, standing naked in the shower. However, Morgan did not show the photo. After a performance full of discordant pain, rage, and shame, Morgan shifted once more to direct, conversational address. Speaking softly and tenderly, she described the photo and said that she wanted to keep it as a map to her own femaleness ‘before the shame’. Her description was detailed enough for the audience to imagine their way into the disappointment, pain, and shame that this six-year-old would eventually experience. Morgan quietly pleaded to be allowed to remember the time ‘when my little body and self were a single blank page. My blank page’. With no projection of the actual photo to create dissonance between the young Morgan represented through photography and the adult Morgan standing on stage, audience members could perceive the innocent six-year-old still present in the adult performer willing to expose such painful memories for public consumption, and to accept the gaze of each audience member afterwards.

Heddon discusses Lisa Kron’s use of blank slides in *2.5 Minute Ride* in terms of the ‘relationship between the stage world and the viewer’s imagination’, through which Kron’s audience imagined the photos Kron described based on their own experiences (2008, p. 83). I believe that Morgan engaged her audiences in a similar way, through their memories and imaginations. However, I argue that the photo played another important role: by invoking this photo rather than projecting it, Morgan brought the reality of her own mediatised experience into the space of performance. This section of
her performance is not important for the lack of the photo being described, but for its ‘making special’ (Dissanayake 2003) of the ‘routinely intermedial’ (Lavender 2013, p. 9) experience of everyday life and the devising practices that create autobiographical performance. These closing moments of the show brought me to tears both times, and I was not alone in my reaction (personal communication). Morgan accomplished this feat by inviting her audience into an intimate connection through which we might all experience the possibility of transformation, from shame and self-loathing to acceptance.

**DISCUSSION**

The findings of the performance analyses are summarised as follows:

*Class of '76* was deeply concerned with the ethics of presenting information that could be perceived as ‘the truth’ of a collectively experienced set of events. Kelly made an effort to represent the lives of his classmates fairly and accurately, but took pains to emphasise the impossibility of achieving any ultimate truth (for example, the discussion of *Bubbling Tom* in Heddon 2008, p. 98), especially any truth implied by his class photo. Kelly’s use of the projected photo created a dissonance that engaged the memories and imaginations of his audience members and contributed to the sense of connection that his audience felt with Kelly, as evidenced by many people’s desire to find out which stories were ‘true’ (Govan *et al* 2007, p. 64) and to share ‘response stories’ (Norrick 2000, pp. 112-15).

*Cape Wrath* was intermedial from its inception; the use of social media in its devising process made questions of ‘the concrete effects of being definitively multiple and interrelational’ (Nelson 2010, p. 17) central even to the version of the show that contained no digital media whatsoever. The overall feel of the performance was intimate and conversational, including the use of embarrassing anecdotes and quotidian snapshots. The images used in the 2012 version contributed to a sense of connection between Kelly and his audience as they could adopt his point of view to imagine themselves more fully into his journey. Ethical concerns about the fallibility of memory during devising led to a self-discovery that Kelly later disclosed to his audience. Physicality was key, not in an effort to reconstruct the past but rather to heighten attention to the shared time and space of the current moment of performance.

*Legs 11* used a number of performance modes as well as digital images and video in combination with very straightforward, direct, and intimate storytelling. The sharp shifts
between styles intensified the audience’s attention to the physicality of the performer and to the structure of the performance as a whole. Marshman’s careful use of language and imagery in a pre-recorded video drew his audience’s attention to the shared time and space of performance. To support his autobiographical stories, Marshman used not only his own personal photos and videos but also those featuring him made by others for their own purposes. The representational dissonance between these images and the man on stage created a ‘doubled indexicality’ that heightened attention to the digital object in oscillation with the live performer.

*Editor* drew attention to processes of self-discovery during devising that benefitted the performance. ‘Dramatization’ (Langellier & Peterson 2004, p. 54) was critical, but only to the extent that Morgan claimed the extremes of the shame revealed through that ‘dramatization’ in subsequent moments of conversational direct address to the audience. There was a palpable sense of risk whenever Morgan abandoned her theatrical devices and assumed the ‘protoself’ (Barclay 1994) that more closely resembled the Claire Morgan who had experienced such shame. Her digital soundscape was based on her memories, though that place was never identified in performance. She also used a personal photo in devising, but built the climax of her performance around its absence. As Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink and Sigrid Merx point out, ‘[a] performance might qualify as … digital without actually staging the … technologies in performance’ (Nibbelink & Merx 2010, p. 221). As with the ‘dramatized’ elements of Morgan’s performance, the affective power of her absent image lay in the sense of intimate address she created with her audience.

The practices and concerns revealed in these performance analyses might be categorised according to a number of frameworks, such as the ‘five core elements’ of performance (Chatzichristodoulou & Zerihan 2009, p. 2), Salter’s performance epistemology (2010, p. xxiii), or Heddon’s four key topics of autobiographical performance: politics, history, place, and ethics (2008). However, the findings did not sit neatly within any of these frameworks. This is particularly the case given my intention to apply the findings to the process of designing an interactive digital media sharing experience. I therefore offer my own framework of the properties as a response to the subsidiary research question that drove these analyses:

How can theories and practices relevant to autobiographical performance contribute to an understanding of the synchronous, co-located sharing of personal digital media?
The properties of autobiographical performance, explained below, are intended to open the phenomenon of autobiographical performance to exploration by HCI researchers. They might also provide a fruitful means for performance researchers to approach autobiographical performance that are not well described by Heddon’s key topics. The properties address the interactions between the performer and his or her audience members; between the performer and his or her digital media; and between audience members and the performer’s digital media. All of these relationships work together to constitute autobiographical performance.

**Self-making**

The term ‘self’ is used with the understanding that self-making is a relational process never under the complete control of the performer (Butler 2002; McCarthy & Wright 2004, p. 106), and that the self that is made is a partial and shifting set of ‘protoselves’ (Barclay 1994) formed in part by the act of creating performance (Kuhn 2007; Andres *et al* 2010; Holland & Kensinger 2010). Self-making is a constitutive element of autobiographical performance, where the performer also devises the performance, and where the performer’s lived experience forms the material of the performance. The live presence of the performer is a necessary element of autobiographical performance, although as *Legs 11* demonstrates, the performer need not be on stage for every moment of the performance. The performer discloses selected elements of his or her experience and in at least some cases also undertakes a process of self-discovery, such as Kelly’s realisation of the instability of his grandfather’s story or Morgan’s ‘terrifying’ process of self-discovery in the year following the theft of her notebook. This implicit, often hidden practice of devising in advance of the performance event is critical to autobiographical performance. This is not to say that improvised autobiographical performance would be impossible, but that it is not a strategy in use in any of the performance I observed. Strategies for self-making range from decisions on the content of stories and the modes of performance (decided during devising), to techniques of interacting with the audience and the performer’s style of speaking and moving.

**Heightened Attention**

Self-making takes place in every mundane interpersonal interaction. How a person speaks and moves, for example, creates an impression, or rather a variety of impressions, among different ‘audience members’. Moreover, the theoretical position informing this thesis claims that performance is not ontologically separate from everyday life (Dewey 2005; McCarthy & Wright 2004; Langellier & Peterson 2004; Fischer-Lichte 2008b). If
performance and ordinary communication lie on a continuum, the first question is how the fundamentally quotidian practices of self-making can come to have so much emotional power in performance. The answer indicated by these analyses lies in the act of taking notice of the details of ordinary life. As Fischer-Lichte (2008b) says, ‘[a]esthetic experience is not just created by exceptional events but also by perceiving the ordinary’ (p. 179). Performance holds up the ordinary to attention ‘and gives license to the audience to regard the act of expression and the performer with special intensity’ (Bauman 1975, p. 293). Practices such as performing alongside an old photograph bring the details of both the photo and the live performer into focus. However, ‘representation dissonance’ or ‘doubled indexicality’ do not fully cover how autobiographical performance, which relies so heavily on the basic human act of telling stories about one’s life experiences, is made ‘special’ (Dissanayake 2003). To make sense of the different ways in which these performances are made ‘special’, I use Fischer-Lichte’s three categories of ‘heightened attention’ (2008b, pp. 165-166). Her term refers to the processes by which performers move their audiences to invest their attention in the actions and interactions unfolding in front of them. These can result in ‘an extraordinary state of permanently heightened attention’ (p. 168) through which performance effects the emotions and attitudes of its audiences.

Fischer-Lichte (2008b) divides heightened attention into three categories. ‘Conspicuousness’ refers to the attention paid to objects (p. 166). Dewey (2005) refers to much the same process in his description of the functions of art:

Art throws off the covers that hide the expressiveness of experienced things; it quickens us from the slackness of routine and enables us to forget ourselves by finding ourselves in the delight of experiencing the world about us in its varied qualities and forms. (p. 108)

Because the autobiographical performances discussed in this chapter tended to involve relatively few objects, those objects that are used carry a weight of potential meaning. Bearing in mind that selectivity and context are two key approaches to designing technology for autobiographical memory and reminiscence, ‘conspicuousness’ becomes an intriguing lens through which to view performative interactions. While Fischer-Lichte denies a place for digital media in constituting the performance event (2008b, p. 100), I understand her objection to refer to fully mediatised or telematic performances that would remove human subjects from the stage. I argue instead, based on the analyses in this chapter, that digital media or projections of analogue media are as much ‘objects’ in
this sense as any physical prop. The examples discussed in this thesis indicate that digital media can not only become conspicuous, but they can do so in a way that contributes to the heightened attention of the live performance event.

The second category of ‘heightened attention’ is ‘intensity of appearance’, which refers to the attention paid to physically present performers (2008b, p. 165). Fischer-Lichte discusses ‘intensity of appearance’ in terms of three types of presence (2012), which involve distinctions that are not obviously applicable to a digital media sharing event, where exceptional acting talent is not to be expected. However, several of the practices observed in these performance analyses directly contributed to a heightened attention to the performer’s physical presence, such as Kelly’s repetition of the phrase, ‘and my name is Alex’. I find this category useful for understanding techniques of heightening attention to a physically present performer, regardless of which type of presence he or she exemplifies.

Finally, the category of ‘deviation and surprise’ refers to attention paid to the structure of the performance as a temporally bound event. Objects and people in performance are not static; the performance itself is an unfolding, multisensory, temporally bound event. For example, Editor repeatedly created intensely ‘dramatized’ (Langellier & Peterson 2004, p. 54) sections, each one followed by a sudden return to a calm, conversational direct address with the audience. This pattern created a structure for the emergent performance event, against which Morgan’s sudden bout of singing from the audience’s seating area formed a ‘deviation’ or ‘surprise’ that drew attention not only to itself but to the previously established pattern. Most importantly, this category points towards the fact that all four of the performances analysed here comprised multiple stories, modes, and/or sections. Performers made no effort to tell a single, unified story. Each told a multiplicity of stories that built on each other over time. This observation is foundational to any proposed media-sharing experience: unlike a traditional digital story (Lambert 2002), performance can incorporate many disparate narrative elements. When Fischer-Lichte’s three categories of heightened attention are modified to include digital or projected media and exclude distinctions between types of presence, they provide a language for productively discussing the ways in which autobiographical material is made ‘special’ (Dissanayake 2003) through performance.
SITUATEDNESS

Autobiographical performance attends to the shared time and space of performance as well as to the past experiences of the performer. There is no single method of doing so: *Class of ’76* (2000) was set in a very particular room; *Cape Wrath* had Kelly coaching his audiences through his grandfather’s favourite puzzle; Marshman pondered the routes that his audience members’ legs had taken to bring them to the theatre on that night; and Morgan used rubbish to connect the seating area with the stage. While *Class of ’76* establishes that the particulars of a certain location might be important to performance, the fact that it toured successfully indicates that such details are not necessary. Bobby Baker found a similar result when she toured *Kitchen Show* in different reconstructions of her home kitchen in theatre spaces in various countries (Iball 2007, p. 185). It could also be argued that *Class of ’76* (2000) did not make as powerful use of its location as it might have.

Site-specificity and site-responsiveness are important areas of interest in performance studies (for example, Pearson & Shanks 2001; Hill & Paris 2006), and within autobiographical performance, ‘autotopography’ provides a compelling theoretical lens (for example, Heddon 2002a; Heddon 2008).44 However, in three of the performances analysed in this chapter, the specific location was not the focus. Rather, the focus was on the spatiotemporal and perhaps personal connection between performer and audience members, wherever that connection happened to take place. In the midst of performing his or her own experience, the performer noticed the audience as a group of individuals. I use the term ‘situatedness’ to refer to this attention to the shared time and space of performance without calling undue attention to the particulars of a given location. This is not to say that such particulars might not be important: the Walsall school hall for *Class of ’76* undoubtedly made an impact on Kelly’s audience, as did Baker’s own kitchen in the original performances of *Kitchen Show*. When such particulars are used in performance, they can be explored as an element of ‘situatedness’. The focus on the shared time and space of performance regardless of the unique location of the performance event was a surprising finding, but one that is helpful regarding the focus of this thesis on digital media sharing. As media technology becomes increasingly mobile and ubiquitous, the need to conduct media sharing in a specific location might place an undue burden on groups who would enjoy or benefit from the sharing event (although of course the reverse could also be true, and specific locations could open a range of

44 The term is also used with a different meaning in HCI: see Petrelli *et al* (2008).
possibilities for media sharing—a potential area of future research). Attention to the people involved in a media sharing performance, rather than attention to the specifics of a unique location, would be likely to suit the affordances of existing personal digital media technology.

**AESTHETICS OF THE EVENT**

Imagine an ordinary conversation between two friends in which one shares an anecdote about her experience. She has told this story before, which occasioned a self-discovery. She discloses this information in her retelling. She refers to a photo, makes her friend laugh at her figures of speech, and creates surprise with a sudden exclamation. In the middle of the story, she comments on the colour of her friend’s shirt. This scenario fulfils all the themes above, yet none of them describe the emotional impact a performance can have on an audience member.

Bauman (1992) offers the possibility of identifying ‘cultural performances’ by the institutional framework in which they are set. Cultural performances are ‘scheduled’, ‘temporally’ and ‘spatially bounded’, ‘programmed … with a structured scenario or program of activity’, open to the public, and ‘heightened’ by virtue of the fact that they represent the pinnacle of aesthetic accomplishment available within the community (p. 46). The end result of these conditions is an event that is ‘available for the enhancement of experience through the present enjoyment of the intrinsic qualities of the performative display’ (p. 46). I argue that Bauman’s observations about institutional conditions for performance, while useful for pointing towards those events that a culture would deem to be ‘performance’, do not begin to describe the ‘enhancement of experience’ that he identifies. It is an as yet unstated assumption of this thesis that institutional markers cannot be required for the creation of the emotional experience of watching or performing in the ‘enhancement of experience’ known as performance. It may be difficult to imagine why people would devote an hour of their time to Alex Kelly or Tom Marshman or Claire Morgan without the infrastructure that Bauman refers to, but this thesis is set up to explore what would happen if they did: whether something of performance can be created in the absence of at least most of Bauman’s conditions. In other words, I believe that everyday conversational interaction can use strategies of performance to enhance experience, or in Benjamin’s terms ‘achieve an amplitude’ of experience (2006, p. 366), that expands the boundaries of the quotidian. Again, I turn to Fischer-Lichte (2008b) for a starting point from which to explore what made these four autobiographical performances anything more memorable than a series of informational
anecdotes about a complete stranger. Fischer-Lichte’s relevant topic is the ‘aesthetics of the event’, which has three categories: ‘collapsing dichotomies’; ‘liminality and transformation’; and ‘autopoiesis and emergence’ (p. 163).

Fischer-Lichte (2008b) identifies different types of ‘collapsing dichotomies’ in performance, particularly performances outside of mainstream theatre since the 1960s. Many of these erase the borderlines between politics and the aesthetic, or the social and the aesthetic (an observation also made in Heddon 2008, p. 23). Most importantly for autobiographical performance, and in line with Heddon’s key topic, is the collapse of the dichotomy between the social and the aesthetic, which leads to the negotiation of an ethical relationship between performer and audience member, and at times among audience members (see also Heddon 2008). This can be seen most clearly in Kelly’s efforts to deal fairly and honestly with his classmates from 1976. The collapse of dichotomies further underscores the notion that what makes a performance ‘aesthetic’ or extraordinary cannot be found by placing it in opposition to social interaction, but by exploring the points at which they converge.

‘Autopoiesis and emergence’ are key to Fischer-Lichte’s argument (2008b) that performance cannot be compared to any art object. For her, the aesthetics of performance must lie wholly within the self-perpetuating and unfolding event, without ignoring the human and non-human materials that make the event possible. Autopoiesis and emergence do not seem to occupy a privileged space within autobiographical performance, yet they are fundamental to all performance. Most importantly for the purposes of this thesis, autopoiesis and emergence indicate that performance incorporates all of the events that take place within the audience’s (and performers’) perception, not only those elements that have been scripted in advance. This includes such dramatic events as a spotlight crashing onto the stage (p. 165), or the struggle to fold a large map in a small minivan in Cape Wrath (2013).

As explained in Chapter 2, the category of this framework that best describes the potentially powerful experience of performance is Fischer-Lichte’s ‘liminality and transformation’ (2008b, p. 174-180), as modified by Bauman’s ‘special intensity’ (1975, p. 293) and Dissanayake’s ‘making special’ (2003). The findings of these analyses indicate that ‘liminality and transformation’ can describe the aim or highest aspiration of autobiographical performance. I do not intend to imply a conscious intent on the part of the performers, or to claim that liminality correlates to ‘success’. Rather, I see in these performances that all the other themes—self-making, all three types of ‘heightened
attention’, situatedness, ‘collapsing dichotomies’, and ‘autopoiesis and emergence’—can result directly or indirectly in a liminal state in which the audience member is temporarily transformed by emotional insight and a sense of connection with the performer. The potential for ‘liminality and transformation’ came about at moments of empathy, intimacy, or connection, such as Kelly’s gently voiced regret over forgetting to ask the Cape Wrath tea shop owners about his grandfather.

CONCLUSION

These, then, are the four properties of autobiographical performance as revealed through the performance analyses in this chapter: self-making, heightened awareness (composed of ‘conspicuousness’, ‘intensity of appearance’, and ‘deviation and surprise’), situatedness, and the ‘aesthetics of the event’ (composed of ‘collapsing dichotomies’, ‘autopoiesis and emergence’, and ‘liminality and transformation’). The ones most closely connected to everyday experience—self-making and situatedness—are named and described based solely on these analyses, as contextualised by the relevant performance literature. Those properties that distinguish everyday experience from a more ‘cultural’ or ‘intense’ performance (Wilson 2006, p. 9) are identified using Fischer-Lichte’s frameworks as a way into discussion. All four properties will form the starting point for the design process described in the following chapter. The designs created through that process aim to create mechanisms or opportunities for users to engage with the properties of autobiographical performance.

Intermediality is not presented as a property of autobiographical performance, but rather as a perspective or lens through which to understand a performer’s use of (or reference to) personal media, whether analogue or digital. In other words, intermediality provides an approach to technology as part of a fabric of ‘relationships, necessary interdependencies, and mutually co-relating entities’ that create ‘a new cultural way of seeing, feeling and being in the contemporary world’ (Nelson 2010, pp. 17-18). This is primarily because of the purpose of these analyses, which is to inform the design of a technology for co-located digital media sharing. From an HCI perspective, the technology would automatically be the prime area of interest, whereas these analyses allowed for an exploration of how media are integrated, perhaps even subsumed, into the broader concern of developing a performance. The four properties presented here have addressed these explorations; they do not require the addition of a separate category dedicated to the technology per se. These four properties name the concerns in current autobiographical performance practice, while the perspective of intermediality indicates
the intention of this thesis to move ‘beyond the tired dichotomies of digital versus analog, real versus virtual, or networked versus local’ (Salter 2010, pp. xxxiii-xxiv) to approach an identity-forming, intensified, situated, ethical, and potentially transformational encounter between performers and audiences.
INTRODUCTION

This chapter responds to the first subsidiary research question of this thesis: How can HCI research into digital media sharing, autobiographical memory, and reminiscence contribute to an understanding of intermedial autobiographical performance? The response begins with the third step of the Performative Experience Design (PED) methodology, which is to engage in a process of design exploration, driven by the specific properties of autobiographical performance identified in Chapter 4. This process resulted in a map of the design space and a prototype ready to be analysed in use, but it was a more complicated and lengthy effort than originally anticipated (see Figure 5.1). The PED methodology does not extend to this level of detail, so I do not intend to imply that other researchers should aim for these three steps.

Figure 5.1 The three steps of the design process for this thesis.

Step 1, the initial design process, generated a number of possible design directions. The dozen most interesting comprise the design workbook and formed the basis for the description of the design space. It was anticipated that one of these designs would be selected for prototyping. However, a careful examination of the design space indicated that none of the designs addressed all or even most of the properties of performance.
Therefore, Step 2 began with an entirely new design effort, this one focused on addressing the gaps highlighted in the design space mapping. This step resulted in a design that addressed all of the properties of performance, but that would be unworkable in practice. This necessitated Step 3, which focused on achieving the same aims as the previous design, but in an elegant and practical way. Step 3 resulted in the design that was prototyped and analysed in use (Chapters 6 and 7). This chapter describes each of the three steps in turn and concludes with a discussion of how the design exploration began to respond to the subsidiary research question at the heart of this chapter.

**STEP 1: INITIAL DESIGN PROCESS**

The properties of self-making, ‘heightened attention’, situatedness, and the ‘aesthetics of the event’ guided my thoughts throughout the design process, but I stayed closest to the examples of the performances analysed in Chapter 4 in the initial stages. In fact, it was difficult at first to imagine how these examples could inspire anything besides another performance, which would run the risk of sidestepping HCI altogether and providing a one-sided response to the primary research question. In order to apply performance properties to an interaction that was not a mainly ‘cultural performance’ (Wilson 2006, p. 9), I began by considering those examples in relation to a number of contexts. The first category of contexts was the ‘purpose’, which will be explained shortly. The second was the different media streams that might be used: photo, video, audio, text, GPS, and ‘other’. Third was a long list of possible scenarios in which groups of people, known to each other or not, might come together to share digital media. Fourth was ‘inspiration’, referring to the eleven performances under consideration at the time. I interpreted these inspirations holistically, meaning that I allowed myself to use any image, recollection, or broader concept that sprang to mind when thinking of the performance. The fifth and by far largest category was a list of individual insights, practices, or questions raised by performances, both individual examples and performance styles, covered in the literature review and performance analyses. In contrast to the holistic inspirations from the fourth context, these were practical questions that would drive the ideation process in a particular direction. I wrote each of these items on cards (using the backs of business

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45 Biodata as an input and haptics as an output were considered at the beginning, primarily to balance a tendency to privilege the visual in considering digital media. These were eventually excluded because, although they were certainly personal and digital, they would require a layer of visualisation in order to render them any recognisable form of media. Similarly, I aimed to actively consider designs that did not rely on screens for display. In this way, even if I ended up with a design based on the display of visual media on a screen, it would not be for lack of consideration of alternatives.
cards from my previous employment as a user experience architect), divided the cards into these categories, and drew a card from each category at random to start generating ideas (see Figure 5.2). The contents of these cards can be found in Appendix B.

Figure 5.2  A sample combination of cards used in the initial design process.

This card technique is a modified example of the ‘insight combination’ method described by Jon Kolko (2010). For him, design is a process of synthesis, or ‘an abductive sensemaking process’ (p. 19) similar to induction but allowing for insights from outside the problem space. Where many designers in both industry and academia gloss over the step between the beginning of the design process and the birth of potential prototypes, Kolko uses a discussion of synthesis to reveal something of the ‘informal’, ‘implicit’, but ‘critical’ early stages of design (pp. 16-17). Synthesis methods are therefore ‘the keys for relating research to design—synthesis methods are the ways in which ethnographic insights lead to new, innovative, appropriate, or compelling ideas’ (p. 17). Kolko describes three methods: reframing, concept mapping, and insight combination. Insight combination pairs insights from gathered data—in this case, theories and practices of autobiographical performance—with design patterns in the ‘core domain’—digital media sharing; I paired gathered data from relevant fields in HCI with design patterns in the

46 Like Kolko, Pelle Ehn points to Charles Sanders Peirce’s treatment of ‘abduction’ as key to design logic (Ehn 1988, p. 213).
core domain of performance. The fact that this thesis is framed as interaction design lends more weight to the former, while the fact that its uses are received and analysed as performances gives weight to the latter. I did not perform the one-to-one mapping of insight to pattern advocated by Kolko because that stage is most applicable to clearly defined problems in need of a solution rather than the fundamentally exploratory (and non-commercial) purpose of this thesis. Instead, I allowed the combinations and permutations to multiply until I had a broad set of ideas from which I could begin to understand what intermedial autobiographical performance might be.

The use of these cards launched the process of ‘creative design’ (Wolf et al 2006, p. 521) and ‘design exploration’ (Fällman 2008, pp. 7-8), and led to a number of germinal ideas. Some were impractical, given the limitations of the materials and technologies available to me for prototyping. However, I tried not to constrain myself in this early stage, in the hopes that an overly optimistic idea could be adapted at a later point. Instead I kept generating ideas and paid attention as they ‘talked back’ to me (Fällman 2003, p. 230) through recurring motifs and tendencies towards particular approaches. I interpret this process in light of Wolf et al’s argument that creative design explores an uncharted design space at the same time as it generates practical solutions (2006, p. 521). Fällman draws the same conclusion, that ‘design is just as much about finding a problem as it is about developing a solution’ (2003, p. 229). In this way I aimed to develop a rich description of the problem space along with a design for prototyping.

The category of ‘purpose’ mentioned above arose from the example of Class of ’76. The fact that some of Kelly’s classmates had attended his performance of their stories in their old school hall at the Chuckery Infant School raised the question of what might happen when audiences for an autobiographical performance had their own personal knowledge about the subject matter. While the behaviour of Kelly’s classmates was indistinguishable from that of members of the public during the performance, Pearson’s audiences for Bubbling Tom challenged, questioned, and joined in. Design could almost certainly be used to favour one set of behaviours over another. The design process could be targeted at the most common performer-audience relationship, in which most audience members are strangers to the performer, who presents all information as if to the public. However, it could also be targeted at audiences that contain personal friends.

of the performer and who have some knowledge of the experiences she describes. It could even be targeted at groups of people who all know each other and all know the content of each other’s stories. How would these different purposes affect the performance of autobiographical stories around personal digital media?

The HCI literature provided a productive groundwork for conceptualising these purposes and their potential effects. As observed by Frohlich (2004), a key purpose of telling a story to people who were not at the original event is to share the experience, while a key purpose of telling a story with people who were there is to establish facts (p. 145). These different purposes suggest that interventions suitable for one might not be suitable for the other.

Using Frohlich’s diamond framework as a guide (Figure 3.5 in Frohlich 2004, p. 44), I constructed a model that distinguishes between reminiscence and storytelling based on audiences and goals. Reminiscing talk in its purest form involves only people who were present in the photo that acts as the trigger (Figure 5.3). Parts of this conversation may take the form of one or more stories. The goal of the group is to spend time fleshing out their memory to the extent that is possible or desirable. The end point for the reminiscing process is the starting point for the telling of a story to people who were not present at the event in question (Figure 5.4). In the purest form of that case, the teller attempts to describe the event and thereby make some sort of point which could include sharing wisdom, displaying status, education, or conveying a feeling or experience (Frohlich et al 2002). The process of discovering memories associated with a trigger can prompt a person to tell a story, which in itself can bring on new or more detailed memories (Frohlich & Fennell 2006) and lead to a mixing of the two forms (Figure 5.5). Based on this reasoning, one of the first design decisions to be made should be the primary purpose of a media sharing design: reminiscing, storytelling, or an intermingling of the two. More importantly, any design would need an intended purpose in order to exert a conscious influence on such behaviours.

48 According to Wilson (2006), storytellers sometimes acknowledge friends in their audiences, though for the most part, the storytellers discussed in Wilson’s text do not work with primarily autobiographical material.

49 The following model is explained more fully in a paper presented at the workshop ‘Bridging practices, theories, and technologies to support reminiscence’ at CHI 2011, Vancouver, Canada, 8 May 2011.
Figure 5.3  Reminiscing talk, leading to fleshed-out memory.

Figure 5.4  Storytelling, leading to a point.

Figure 5.5  Mixed-audience reminiscing and storytelling.

The initial design process generated any number of tangential ideas that would have done little to illuminate the research questions of this project, while the final prototype would be a single artefact that cannot possibly address all of the options that emerged through the design process. In between lay design ideas that addressed the properties of performance in a number of contexts. These ideas describe the design space of
intermedial autobiographical performance, or in other words, they help to describe the ‘problem’ as well as the ‘solution’ (Wolf et al 2006; Fällman 2008) to the question of how intermedial autobiographical performance could advance the understanding of interactions among people and their personal digital media.

I understand the problem-setting goals described by Wolf et al (2006) and Fällman (2008) to be coterminal with the articulation of the project’s ‘design space’ as discussed by Bill Gaver (2011) in the context of design workbooks. Gaver, whose work is nothing if not ‘creative design’, sees the role of workbooks in the design process as involving not just the description of a design space but its creation: through the multiplicity of design ideas they contain they implicitly suggest important issues, approaches and options that might be considered in designing for a given situation, and in their provisional nature show those ideas, approaches and options in the making and still malleable to change. (p. 1551)

The design workbook functions as ‘a fulcrum in the transition from initial background research to the generation of designs to be developed’ (p. 1552), a process that ‘emerge[d] slowly over time’ (p. 1551), in my case from June through December 2011. For my design workbook, dated 9 March 2012, I selected twelve designs that captured the broadest scope of the design space for intermedial autobiographical performance (see Appendix A). Each design is described along with its media stream, purpose, inspiration, and delivery method (for example, projection or mobile phone). All twelve are described very briefly in the following paragraph.

The designs range from subtle and passive to interactionally complex. For example, Echo extrapolates the predominant colours and shapes from several consecutive photos and presents these as a shifting, suggestive backdrop for storytelling (Figures 5.6 and 5.7). Making History, on the other hand, asks groups to remember specific photos in as much detail as possible and challenge each other over dubious recollections (Figure 5.7). Some designs allow for individual use, such as two of the three versions of Four Words. This is an application that displays four photos at a time alongside text or audio annotations made at the time of capture. Individuals can reminisce over this enhanced set of memory triggers, while groups can use the same interface for sharing their different perspectives on a jointly experienced event. Other designs that can work for individuals include Rain Down, which reveals photos as though they are rained onto the screen one drop at a time, creating ambiguity and stretching the time it takes to recognise content (Figure 5.8). Map
Mat and Map Mat Plus place individuals or groups in an immersive environment, displaying up to five different views of the location in which a photo was taken to support reminiscence (Figure 5.8), while Punctuation and Punctuation Recorder track the time spent on each photo in a session of storytelling or reminiscing. Tracing the Experience takes embodiment a step further, using gestural feedback to annotate and browse for photos (Figure 5.9). Story Slider matches metadata on time and location of capture to create a slider interface that reflects the time between capture of each image: a slower journey between two photos is made evident by a slow transition between those photos on the slider (Figure 5.9). Holotopography is primarily designed for individuals, who choose up to eight locations to contextualise the actual physical location represented in their photo. For example, a photo taken at the top of Mount Snowdon might use Mount Everest and Mount Kilimanjaro as context.

Figure 5.6  Early sketch for Echo.
Together, these designs formed the outlines of the previously uncharted design space (Wolf et al 2006, p. 526; Fällman 2003, p. 229) for intermedial autobiographical performance. Gaver (2011) uses the metaphor of the design space for its ability to ‘affect
designers’ perceptions of possibility’ (p. 1554). The design possibilities for intermedial autobiographical performance at first seemed endless, and would no doubt have been different had I selected different performances to analyse. However, the reliance on the particulars of unique performance practices is very much in line with the nature of design to attend to ‘the unique, the particular, or even the ultimate particular’ (Stolterman 2008, p. 59, emphasis in the original), and of ‘each design research activity [to have] its own purpose and intended outcome’ (Fällman & Stolterman 2010, p. 268). The design space I describe here is not an irrefutable or universally generalisable territory, but an indicative mapping of a ‘territory’ (Gaver 2011, p. 1554) that may prove useful in further research.

The design space charted by the design workbook highlighted the following issues as important to consider in any design for intermedial autobiographical performance: the relationship between performers and audience members; the relationships among audience members; time spent dwelling with one’s personal digital media; tolerance or active encouragement of ambiguous or conflicting memories; display mechanisms that allow for viewing over extended periods of time; rules or guidelines beyond the technological interface that govern interaction; making the ordinary ‘strange’; engagement with a small selection of media items; metadata as a selection tool; the promotion of storytelling, reminiscence, or conversation; the use of imagination as well as memory; juxtaposition of the real with the imaginary; textual prompts to trigger memory or reaction; transparent, responsive technology; embodied interaction; dynamic attention to co-located others; the primacy of present-moment decisions and interactions. Examples of all of these can be found in the design workbook (Appendix A). Rather than elaborating on each in turn, I will discuss the ways in which the design process progressed within this space.

In short, the design process progressed because I realised the large gap between the promises of this design space and the potential for these designs to fulfil those promises. This gap can be seen clearly by plotting the designs in the workbook against the properties of autobiographical performance that they were meant to operationalise (see Figure 5.10).
Figure 5.10 Design space in terms of the properties of autobiographical performance.

Most of the workbook designs interpret ‘performance’ loosely, aligning more with the performativity of self-representation than a sustained engagement with performance practice. Most notably, none of them substantially address any of the categories of the ‘aesthetics of the event’ besides autopoiesis and emergence, which as noted in the previous chapter could describe virtually any conversational encounter. There is no indication that any of the designs would achieve ‘liminality and transformation’ among their users. The question of how to design for such properties remained unanswered.

It is worth noting that the experiment of turning storytelling with digital media into a representational, theatrical performance has been attempted. Barrie Stephenson, who has a long track record with the BBC and private groups as a digital storytelling facilitator, worked with young people in York, England, to create short stage plays based on their own digital stories.\(^{50}\) The stagings maintained a substantial amount of the direct address used in digital story voiceovers, but they also used the full range of acting and scenographic techniques that signal a traditional work of the ‘theatre of dramas’ (Lehmann 2006, p. 21). The digital photos that must have composed the original digital

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\(^{50}\) These performances were created as part of the Tall Stories workshop at the Riding Lights Summer Theatre School in 2011. Mr Stephenson kindly allowed me to view video recordings of two of the performances, which have not been made available to the public.
stories were entirely absent from performance. These amateur performances lacked the power of the performances analysed in Chapter 4. Clearly, digital storytelling cannot be relied upon to create a link between digital media sharing and a compelling performance.

The workbook designs also raised the question of how to motivate non-professionals to engage in performance practices. Mechanisms for engagement on the part of the performer are not addressed in the performance analyses simply because professional performers do not tend to expose their motivations to perform. One easy solution would have been to sidestep the issue entirely and design only for professional performers. However, that would have raised an even thornier issue. Put in Kolko’s terms (2010), if I were to combine insights from the gathered data on autobiographical performance with design patterns from autobiographical performance, I would be inserting design into an otherwise robust artistic process. As one goal of this research is to investigate theories and practices of autobiographical performance to understand synchronous, co-located digital media sharing (the second subsidiary research question), the target user group must be those whose digital media sharing would otherwise lack an overtly performative engagement: in other words, non-professional users. By the same token, an HCI-driven approach to intermedial autobiographical performance (the first subsidiary research question) should not require professional performers to use it, as if it were merely a product to be tested. Therefore, motivation became a central concern for the design.

The most promising idea to emerge from the initial stage of the design process was the use of questions or prompts, seen in Tracing the Experience and Holotopography. The term ‘prompt’ is used to describe one of the ways in which Heddon contributed to Alex Kelly’s devising process for The Lad Lit Project (2005), the second in Kelly’s autobiographical trilogy that began with Class of ’76 and ended with Cape Wrath. Heddon and Kelly explain that Heddon’s ‘questions were clearly aimed at prompting Alex [Kelly] to look from other directions; Dee [Heddon] was seeking his blind spots’ (Heddon & Kelly 2010, p. 219). Both Tracing the Experience and Holotopography prompted users to engage with their memories and imaginations in specific ways while looking back on their photos. Tracing the Experience prompted users to convey their feelings about the moment they took a photo at the point of capture, while Holotopography prompted them to contextualise their previously taken photos with related content. While the idea of prompting seemed sound, neither Tracing the

51 Professor Heddon publishes under the names Dee and Deirdre.
Experience nor Holotopography was fully embedded in a durational performance event or in the ‘aesthetics of the event’. Therefore, I embarked on a new design that would give participants the time and focus to engage fully with a period of imaginative reminiscing and reflecting, and later with a period of intensive interpersonal performance.

**STEP 2: THE REUNION SUITCASE GAME**

The second phase of the design process, which took place between January and August 2012, was the development of the Reunion Suitcase Game (see Figure 5.11), a ‘game/performance/experience’ that provides a structure for people at a reunion to combine elements of their fragmented online and offline identities in a performance for their co-present friends and family. It was envisioned as an online service that extracts selections of a person’s Facebook timeline, Twitter stream, Flickr account, locally stored photo collection, audio, video, blog or forum posts, comments, game characters, leaderboards, etc. Participants interact with the service in three distinct phases. In the first phase, before the reunion, participants are prompted to select and arrange six of the online items retrieved by the system. In the second phase, during the reunion, their future audience draws ten cards with further questions to help shape the performance. This phase is not unlike a group devising process. In the third and final phase, participants perform their stories for each other. These performances are both recorded and scored. Participants gain points for incorporating the questions from phase two; audience members (who will also likely take a turn performing) gain points for contributing helpfully to the performer’s story.

![Figure 5.11 Sketch of the Reunion Suitcase Game.](image-url)
The Reunion Suitcase Game is a step change forward from earlier concepts for a number of reasons. First, it meets the two requirements established at the end of the initial stage of the design process: it uses prompts to engage participants in a process of thoughtful and imaginative selection, not unlike a solo devising process; and it creates a separate time and space for a dedicated performance event. The benefits of creating multiple separate phases became immediately apparent. Without an opportunity to plan the upcoming performance, performers must improvise whatever they say and do, and extra-conversational improvisation is a set of skills that must be learned (Johnstone 1999). Short of forcing all participants to become adept at improvisational theatre, there would be little latitude for incorporating inspirations from professional performance. I became acutely aware of the need for a devising process after seeing Editor in March of 2012. Morgan’s performance was about the loss of documentation and the subsequent, contradictory needs to recover what was lost and to admit that one can never fully re-inhabit the past. A design without a devising phase would be analogous to attempting to fully re-inhabit the past (telling a personal story triggered by a personal media artefact) without attending carefully to the present-day activities of remembering, re-judging, and perhaps coming to very different conclusions from those held at the time the media artefact was captured. Any successful design for intermedial autobiographical performance should offer a space and a ‘time between’ for the performer to re-orient herself to her digital media in anticipation of the performance she was preparing to give (Spence et al 2012).

The Reunion Suitcase Game also builds motivation into the experience by situating the performance at a reunion, where participants would be naturally inclined to catch up with old friends. It then incorporates rules drawn from game mechanics to structure the event, shifting participants away from their ‘natural’ urge to tell simplistic or conversational ‘photo-driven’ stories (Balabanović et al 2000, p. 570) towards more complex and thoughtful stories. It is not difficult to establish a connection between games and performance. Play lies firmly in the remit of performance, according to both Goldberg and Schechner, who refers to performance as ‘[r]itualized behavior conditioned/permeated by play’ (1988, p. 85). Then, according to Roger Caillois (2006), play that is given ‘conventions, techniques, and utensils’ becomes a game (p. 141). These ‘conventions, techniques, and utensils’ are widely used in performances such as Day of

52 I am deeply indebted to Professor Annika Waern and Dr Ernest Adams for long conversations devoted to clearing up some of my misconceptions about game studies.
the Figurines (2006) or I’d Hide You (2012) by Blast Theory.\textsuperscript{53} The risk for the Reunion Suitcase Game was that too many game mechanics or an emphasis on winning might detract from the ‘heightened attention’ or ‘aesthetics of the event’ that the design process aimed to incorporate. This concern seems to have been well founded, as Misha Myers \textit{et al} (2014) reported an inversely proportional relationship between an emphasis on winning a board game and a sense of empathy for the people represented in the game in their evaluations of Bumper Crop. However, the promises of game and play as mechanisms for engagement far outweighed the risks, so the Reunion Suitcase Game used rules as well as prompts to guide and encourage participants.

Finally, the Reunion Suitcase Game represents a first step towards recognising personal digital media not simply as artefacts or memory triggers but as integral elements of the performer’s sense of self—and, where relevant, integral to the shared sense of identity of a group of friends or family members. Andy Lavender (2013) argues that intermediality is headed towards the immersion of the spectator—fully embodied, not limited to viewing—into events that are ‘routinely intermedial’ (p. 9) regardless of how much of the performance uses digital technology. I argue that another aspect of this immersive intermediality is attention to the ways in which digital technology have infused not only performance technologies but the everyday lives of those people who create and constitute contemporary performance events, both as performers and as audiences, spectators, or ‘immersants’ (Lavender 2013, p. 9). In other words, immersion happens not just in the moment of performance in terms of perceiving a digital display or sound, but through perceiving a performance of lived experience steeped in digital media. Therefore, a design for intermedial autobiographical performance should consider the aspects of participants’ lives that are profoundly shaped by digital technologies. This design does so baldly, by making all of the traces of a participant’s online life available for use along with any locally held personal digital media archives. This seemed to be a way in, at last, to some of Fischer-Lichte’s categories of ‘heightened attention’ and the ‘aesthetics of the event’: ‘conspicuousness’ of the (digital media) object, an ‘intensity of appearance’ for the performer who is made so aware of the materiality of her digital presence, and perhaps a liminal space during the live performance of this digital materiality.

\textsuperscript{53} These quotations and examples appeared in Spence \textit{et al} 2013a, pp. 103-04.
No matter how much this design improved on earlier design ideas, though, it proved unworkable in the end. The requirements for building a system that would automatically trawl participants’ full range of online presences were far beyond the scope of my abilities, and it would be too much to ask participants to collect this much material themselves. It would also be unwieldy to send each participant a physical suitcase with computer, screen, and speakers, as envisioned. It was decided that a working prototype would need to be much simpler and more elegant, ideally web-based, while maintaining the ideas of a prompt-driven devising phase, game-like motivations and structures, and immersion in the routinely intermedial.

**STEP 3: **COLLECT YOURSELVES!

The third step of the design process was the design and prototyping of Collect Yourselves!, finalised in mid-August 2012 and built between September 2012 and January 2013. Collect Yourselves! is a browser-based application for small groups to use in creating autobiographical performances with and for each other. It consists of three stages, of which the first two were implemented: devising, performing, and remixing. Its participants do not need experience in theatrical performance; it is the application that, ideally, guides their interaction beyond everyday conversation and into the ‘risky and dangerous’ encounter of ‘performing narrative’ (Langellier & Peterson 2004, p. 3). In some instances, the participants are strangers to each other, while other instances are designed as social events or reunions among friends. This decision was taken in direct response to the insights derived from the reminiscing and storytelling framework (see Figures 5.3, 5.4, and 5.5). Groups of strangers would tend towards storytelling, while groups of friends could engage in reminiscence or mixed-audience reminiscing and storytelling. In all cases, participants know in advance which context they will be performing in, and if performing among friends, exactly who will be present.

In the first phase, ‘devising’, individual participants log onto a website that offers instructions and a drag-and-drop mechanism for uploading digital photographs (see Figure 5.12). Participants engage with their personal digital media archives guided by a series of carefully worded prompts. They upload one or more photographs in response to each prompt; one prompt gives the option of uploading no image at all. (Other media types were welcome in principle, but only the mechanisms for uploading and displaying photos were developed for the initial iteration.) Participants can also include text associated with a prompt, if they choose, as a reminder or scaffold for what they intend to say or do. The photos are stored along with information on the participant, the prompt
with which the photo should be associated, and any text. Participants can spend as much or as little time in this part of the process as they wish.

Figure 5.12 Storyboard of the interface for the devising phase of Collect Yourselves!

A key differentiator between previous media sharing devices and Collect Yourselves! is this devising phase. Collect Yourselves! involves participants in the moment of performance, as Rider Spoke did when asking participants to deposit their stories in secret city spaces, or when 4Photos dinner party guests found their Facebook photos displayed on the centrepiece, or when the audience for humanaquarium found themselves altering an unfolding performance by touching the ‘aquarium’. Unlike those examples, though, Collect Yourselves! engages participants in the process of deciding the form and content of their performance, long before the performance itself takes place. Participants can reflect on any self-discoveries and shape their own self-disclosures, under the guidance of the prompts and the affordances of the system. This engagement in the devising process creates a technologically mediated encounter that is not constrained to impromptu responses demanded in the immediate moment of performance. In this, Collect Yourselves! goes beyond the performativity of offhand reactions and closer to the full potential of performance.
Figure 5.13 Storyboard for the performance phase of Collect Yourselves!

In the second phase, ‘performance’, five to seven participants come together in the same physical location to perform the stories behind their photos for each other. The photos are projected against a wall within the performance space. There is an interface to control the projection, of course (Figure 5.13). At least as important, though, is the performance experience as seen from multiple perspectives: performers engaged with their stories, photos, memories, and audiences; and audience members, who have no contact with the interface until it is their turn to perform. Therefore, the entire process of creating a Collect Yourselves! performance was mapped from four perspectives: the performer, the interface, the audience members, and the ‘path’ through the stories in the event as a whole (Figure 5.14). Furthermore, the process was ‘scored’ on a layout resembling a conductor’s score, indicating what the anticipated state would be for each human participant, each major function of the system, and different aspects of the performance (Figure 5.15). Aside from the performer, interface, and controls, the score accommodated two spectators, to allow for divergent responses to a performer’s story; bystanders such as the researcher; a recording function that was not implemented; the ‘performance’ (by which I refer to the ‘autopoietic feedback loop’ or self-generating energy exchange between performers and audiences, see Fischer-Lichte 2008, p. 165); the ‘context’ (by which I refer to the categories of ‘heightened attention’); and the ‘path’, again referring to the sequence of stories.
In the ‘performance’ phase, *Collect Yourselves!* makes minimal use of rules, which are largely implicit and conventional. Participants cannot respond to more than one prompt consecutively, and they cannot return to a prompt once they have finished with it. There

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**Figure 5.14** Sample sketch of multiple elements and perspectives on the system in use.

**Figure 5.15** Sample sketch of the ‘conductor’s score’ of a *Collect Yourselves!* performance.
is a time limit set for the entire group to perform the stories behind their prompts (40 minutes for five people, 45 minutes for seven), but each individual can decide for herself how long to spend on any prompt, and can select prompts in any order. The group is free to determine how their shared performance will unfold, employing what Bill Gaver, Jacob Beaver, and Steve Benford (2003) refer to as ‘ambiguity of context’ (pp. 236-237). The ambiguity of the system does not reside in the technology itself but in what assumptions and preferences different participants bring to it. As Gaver, Beaver, and Benford note, tactical ambiguity is more common in art than in product design (p. 236); this is one more gentle way in which Collect Yourselves! aims to nudge its users towards performance.

Performers must stand towards the front of the room, near their projected image. However, a performer can position herself to draw attention to her own physicality and performance techniques, or she can allow the projected image to capture most of the audience’s attention. In either case, Collect Yourselves! can be interpreted according to Salter’s extension of Myron Krueger’s ‘responsive environments’, which ‘challeng[e] purely screen-based interaction that denied the existence of the participant’s body’ (2010, p. xxxix). Furthermore, individual turns can include only one photo, multiple photos, or none at all, depending on the prompt. Exchanges between individual performers can be marked by lengthy conversation or brisk silence, or anything in between. A large timer projected alongside the performer’s photos counts down the time each participant spends performing.

A third phase, ‘documentation’, was envisioned but not implemented. It would involve recording the performance. The time code of this recording would be linked to every action recorded by the system such as the beginning and end of each turn, the times at which one photo is minimised and another maximised, etc. Participants would be given access to the video, all of the digital media artefacts used in the session, and a customised suite of editing functionality. They could then compile a custom video and/or slideshow for their own archives or to share with others, depending on the wishes of the other participants. This phase proved to be beyond my technical abilities, and its focus on documentation was determined to be unnecessary to the central aim of the research. It will therefore be excluded from further discussions.
BUILDING THE PROTOTYPE
Although I do not claim to be a coder or programmer, I built Collect Yourselves! myself. I was assisted by several friends, primarily Stephen Taylor, a professional programmer who advised me on structuring the application and helped me through the trickiest parts of the build. The process took almost four months, from September 2012 to January 2013. Collect Yourselves! uses HTML5, JavaScript, CSS, PHP, MySQL, and Ajax (see Figure 5.16). The final product was not entirely stable, as some participants had trouble uploading their images. The performance phase also relied on the local WiFi access that failed in the first two performances, despite rigorous testing. However, I feel justified in aligning my work with the generous terms of Fällman’s design-oriented research prototypes, which ‘if implemented … may be unstable and lack some expected functionality’ as long as ‘they are the means to get at knowledge’ (Fallman 2007, p. 197). The build was stable and functional enough to generate the knowledge I sought.

Figure 5.16 Architecture diagram of Collect Yourselves!
I found a number of benefits to the process of building the prototype myself beyond the acquisition of skills, primarily a deep understanding of the trade-offs inherent in any decision. For example, the suggestion to build the performance grid as a page with all of the images loaded but hidden meant that the group would have to wait a moment between logging in and beginning the performance, but transitions would be relatively quick and smooth. When the technology failed at the beginning of a session, I was able to code a workaround and keep the session on track.
The devising phase consists of a registration screen, where participants can select a username and password. Once registered, they see the instructions for this phase and links to the five prompts (Figure 5.17). These instructions were written with the research context in mind; the system is not set up for public use. Clicking on a prompt leads to a page onto which participants can drag and drop as many photos as they like (Figure 5.18). They are also invited, though not required, to upload text accompanying any prompt. One prompt, number five, gives them the option of uploading nothing and instead deleting their selected photo from their archives. The application is hosted online. All registration information, images, and text are uploaded into databases for later use in the performance phase (see Appendix C for the functional specification).

![Image of the Collect Yourselves! application](image)

**Figure 5.17 Introductory screen for the devising phase.**

The performance phase of the application cannot be accessed until all members of the group are present. Each must enter his or her username and password on the same iPad to access the performance interface (referred to as ‘Play game!’ in Figure 5.18). The number of participants is coded into the application, which suited the nature of the research being conducted: all participation was scheduled well in advance of the event. This hard-coding caused a problem when one participant backed out of Stranger Group 1 at the last minute, and again when multiple participants in Stranger Group 2 forgot their passwords; however, workarounds were easy enough to implement. Each implementation of *Collect Yourselves!* is hosted from a separate page with its own image database, which makes it easy to manage changes and to preserve participant privacy. When all participants log in on the iPad, the performance is ready to commence.
Figure 5.18 Prompt 1.

The performance phase can be run online using the hosting service that handles the uploads in the devising phase. However, this places the performance phase at the mercy of the local internet connection. To minimise the risk of any interruption to this connection, a local copy of the application, databases, and image collection was made, and each performance was run on a web server hosted on a standalone computer with a local network. *Collect Yourselves!* was designed to be controlled by an iPad using a local Wi-Fi access point supplied by this standalone computer. The iPad was intended to provide an easy touchscreen interface, with no need for scrolling, minimising cognitive loads and sources of stress for performers. While the size and layout of the application were optimised for an iPad screen in portrait mode, the application can be run by any internet-connected computer. (This proved to be a wise choice, as two successive failures with the local network led to the abandoning of the iPad interface altogether: this is discussed further in Chapter 7).

When the performers log in, they see the main ‘grid’ screen on their controlling device (the iPad in theory, and the laptop in practice) and simultaneously projected onto the wall.
in front of the audience. This screen displays basic instructions above a grid of image thumbnails (Figure 5.19). The grid is five columns wide, one for each prompt, and five to seven rows long, depending on the number of participants. Each square in the grid is a thumbnail of the first image uploaded by each person for each prompt. Participants decide among themselves who will go first. That person stands at the front of the space and clicks the thumbnail of the prompt they wish to begin with. Clicking the thumbnail starts the timer countdown and displays all the photos uploaded by that participant for that prompt (Figure 5.20). Clicking an image enlarges it to full size. The performer can switch among photos freely. It is worth noting that even the simple technological intervention of projecting an image in live performance is ‘relatively unexplored’, according to Salter (2010, p. 366). Clicking ‘Finish turn’ pauses the countdown timer and returns the application to the grid view. The prompt that this performer has just responded to is now blank, which prevents a performer from returning to a prompt she has already performed. Participants decide amongst themselves who will perform next. That performer comes to the front and chooses from any of her remaining prompts; there is no need to go in order. Clicking that thumbnail re-starts the timer from where it had paused and displays that performer’s photos for the prompt she has selected. The performance continues until the timer runs out or all prompts have been answered and the grid is completely blank; the aim is to get through all the stories in that time.
Figure 5.19 Performance grid. The first column is for user names (sample data shown).
The most important element of the Collect Yourselves! design was the least technical: the wording of the prompts, which pointed people towards specific and somewhat unusual means of engaging with their personal digital media. By engaging people in an active process of selecting particular media in the context of an upcoming performance event,
the prompts created an intermedial devising process. The rationale was inspired in part by Kaprow’s notion of attention:

I scratch itches without noticing … and now that I intentionally notice that I [scratch itches in public], the whole action looms large. It’s a little strange, and my conversation about politics loses interest as itching and scratching shine brighter. In other words, attention alters what is attended. Playing with everyday life often is just paying attention to what is conventionally hidden. (2007, p. 161)

The strategy behind the crafting of the prompts was to nudge participants towards a deeper process of introspection than is offered by existing media sharing technologies, such as the unguided process of sharing ‘often informal and transitory’ images of one’s day (Van House 2009, p. 1081) or the ‘considered, purposeful’—and, I would argue, unchallenged—representation of the self online (Van House 2011, p. 131). In Collect Yourselves!, the devising process is the primary guide to the choice of media, rather than the affordances of the technology at hand.

Prompt 1: A regular day

Where were you six months ago today at 2:05 p.m.? (If 2:05 p.m. six months ago was just a normal day and you can’t remember anything in particular about it, try to imagine what it must have been like in as much detail as you can.) Find the photograph that is closest in time to that point. Describe the difference between your life in that picture and your life today. If you like, find some other photos that help make your point, too.

This prompt aimed to take participants farther back in time than online photo sharing sites tend to afford: Facebook is organised to display most recent posts first, including photos, and Van House found that half of Flickr photo views occur in the first two days an image is posted (2009, p. 1075). It also randomised the choice of photos to a certain extent, as the one closest in time to six months ago might be one that the participant would never choose to share, possibly because it is as forgettable as some of the snapshots in Cape Wrath (2012). However, the choice is always left to the discretion of the participant. Because photos are not selected automatically from a publicly accessible source (for example, 4Photos), participants can always ignore the image that would technically respond best to the prompt and opt for an alternate.
Prompt 2A (for Friend Groups): I was just thinking about you

Think back over the time since you’ve all seen each other last. Try to remember a moment during this time when you thought about one of your friends (one who is part of the group that’s having the reunion). Do you remember where you were, what you were doing, or what happened to make you remember your friend? Find the photo that most closely represents that moment or situation for you, and get ready to tell the story. (It’s OK if the connection to the photo is loose or odd.) If you have any additional pictures that help you make your point, drop them, too.

This prompt specifically addresses the reminiscence and storytelling frameworks illustrated in Figures 5.3, 5.4, and 5.5. The prompt for Friend Groups asks participants to probe their memories rather than their archives to think of a time when one of their co-present friends came to mind. By finding a photo and story associated with this memory, participants in the devising phase reminisce about their own experience in the context of the friends they will be performing with. As one of their friends will be the subject of that memory, photo, and/or story, the live performance will create an opportunity for reminiscence among some or all of the group. At the same time, the story will maintain a fundamentally ‘storytelling’ structure by which the performer relates a story that only she can know, that is, the moment when a thought of her friend crossed her mind. The intention with this prompt is to encourage reminiscence without allowing the story to collapse into overlapping turns of ‘collaborative question-answering’ (Frohlich 2004, p. 145).

Prompt 2B (Stranger Groups): Memorable?

Think of the most memorable photo in your digital archive. Picture it in your mind’s eye in as much detail as you can. Can you remember the photo taken immediately before it? Or the one immediately after? Find and upload all three photos and be ready to tell their stories. Be sure to write down what you were able to remember.

As with the second prompt for Friend Groups, this prompt asks participants to probe their memories before consulting their archives. Groups of strangers cannot reflect on existing relationships with each other, so this prompt asks participants to reflect on relationships among their photos. It also invites participants to spend time dwelling on their memories of these images in detail rather than picking the first photo that fulfils the prompt’s criteria.
Prompt 3: Whisper

Find a picture of you or taken by you that isn’t on any social networking site. One that you’re maybe even a little bit embarrassed about. You will explain it to your friends at the reunion – in a whisper. If you have any other pictures that help your story, drop them, too.

This prompt encourages participants to disclose something embarrassing about themselves that may disturb the ‘carefully curated’ representation of self (Van House 2011, p. 131), or what one participant refers to as making ‘another me, because I just portray … the highlights’ (Conor, Stranger Group 2). This prompt was inspired by the embarrassing or even disturbing stories in all four performances analysed in Chapter 4. Again, Collect Yourselves! does not threaten the participant’s control over her own performance. An ‘embarrassing’ story can be as mild or as extreme as the participant wishes. The requirement to avoid photos that have been shared on a social networking site is another effort to nudge people towards a more thoughtful and exploratory interaction with their archives in the hopes that they will surprise themselves with a fresh insight or a new meaning for an older photo (Van House 2009, p. 1082) whose meaning has not been fixed by its reception by others on a social networking site.

Prompt 4: Lie

Find a picture that you would like to show. Invent a story behind the picture. Exaggerate, embellish, or outright lie. Your goal will be to make everyone playing the game laugh out loud at least once during this turn.

Although memory and imagination are imbricated in personal storytelling, most of the prompts focus on accuracy or detail of memory. This prompt aims to emphasise imagination and explore the blurred boundaries between fact and fiction suggested by Class of ’76. Because each story must be tethered in some way to the participant’s personal photo, there will be some element of ‘truth’ in it, which the participant can embellish or subvert as she chooses. The goal of provoking laughter is intended to make the instruction to ‘lie’ somewhat less threatening to participants while providing them with a (socially acceptable) motivation for engaging fully with the prompt.

Prompt 5: Forget

Find a picture you had forgotten all about. Try to remember what was going through your mind at the time it was taken. Now either keep it, upload it, and use
your turn to describe why it’s important enough to keep – or delete it completely from all your devices and backups, upload nothing, and use your turn to describe what it looked like. Drag and drop your picture here – or not. If you don't upload your picture, be sure to write a few words.

Morgan’s evocation of her childhood photo in Editor and Kelly’s decision to forego the projector in Cape Wrath (2013) inspired this prompt, as did the observation that the serendipitous discovery of forgotten photographs tends to be a very pleasurable experience (Petrelli et al 2008, p. 58; Peesapati et al 2010; Van House 2011, p. 130; Cosley et al 2012; Frohlich et al 2013). Participants are motivated to engage fully with this prompt because of the stakes: they are being asked to consider permanently deleting an element of their personal digital archive, purely for the sake of performance. While they have full control over whether to do so, and indeed whether to lie about their choice, they must still envision the effects of this small transformation.

The nomenclature for Collect Yourselves! posed a problem throughout the design exploration, as a balance had to be struck in guiding participants towards thinking in terms of ‘game’, ‘performance’, or ‘story’. References such as ‘storytelling’ (Figure 5.17), ‘play game!’ (Figure 5.17 and 5.18), and ‘perform your stories’ (Figure 5.19) are not a sign of inconsistency but rather an attempt to draw on commonly held expectations of what a game, performance, and story will demand of their participants where appropriate. Collect Yourselves! is a game without a winner, a performance without a stage, and a story without an overarching narrative. The aim of Collect Yourselves! is to combine these elements to prompt the co-creation of a uniquely structured media sharing performance that its participants can feel is made ‘special’ (Dissanayake 2003).

DISCUSSION

The three steps of this design exploration brought new knowledge to bear on the first subsidiary research question of this thesis: How can HCI research into digital media sharing, autobiographical memory, and reminiscence contribute to an understanding of intermedial autobiographical performance? The first step could be well characterised in terms of creative design’s ‘non-linear process of intent and discovery’ (Wolf et al 2006, p. 524) driven by the properties of autobiographical performance identified through the performance analyses in Chapter 4 in ‘combination’ with existing knowledge in the arguably ‘core domain’ of digital media sharing (Kolko 2010, p. 17). The resulting design workbook indicates any number of approaches to the co-located sharing of
personal digital media, but none that directly address the ‘making special’ (Dissanayake 2003) that performance can offer. In the second step, the Reunion Suitcase Game, several such approaches were developed: the division into separate devising and performance phases; the carefully limited use of rules drawn from game mechanics; and the use of prompts to trigger particular types of engagement with personal digital media. As the design from this second step was not feasible for use by groups, a third step was needed. This step produced the design that was taken forward for prototyping. Collect Yourselves! uses the approaches developed in the second step and expands on concepts from the design workbook, such as the embodied interactions in Tracing the Experience, the temporally extended encounters with digital media in Rain Down, and the mixture of fact and fiction in Making History. It also builds on insights on storytelling and reminiscence prompted by Class of ’76 and Bubbling Tom and illuminated through engagement with the HCI literature on digital media sharing.

The process of creating Collect Yourselves! revealed some of the potential of digital media sharing involving performance, and of performance involving personal digital media. The design process revealed that theories and practices of autobiographical performance can, indeed, provide inspiration for novel media sharing designs, and that HCI research into digital media sharing can inform the understanding of intermedial autobiographical performance. The design space has emerged as one that emphasises the ways that people present their identities to themselves and others, when those presentations are made in relation to personal digital media. Therefore, the focus is not on technology per se, but on how technology can be used to afford, prompt, or challenge perceptions and presentations of the self in relation to others. Memory and imagination are key; ambiguity, conflict, and ‘making strange’ (Pearson 2003, p. 175) are to be encouraged over efficient photowork practices. Interactions in both the devising and performances phases must allow time for participants to discover new perspectives or simply to notice details that were previously ignored. The ‘user experience’ must be embodied and dynamic, with the interface as transparent as possible.

The four properties of autobiographical performance identified in Chapter 4 are self-making, ‘heightened attention’, situatedness, and the ‘aesthetics of the event’. Each of these properties was translated into a corresponding design goal, which if met would manifest that property in performance. Table 5.1 maps the connections between each property of autobiographical performance and its design goal, along with the specific features designed to meet that goal and the data that would indicate whether the goal has been met. This is a very detailed and apparently deterministic perspective on both
‘creative design’ (Wolf et al 2006) and performance. It is not intended to imply a direct causal relationship between property, design goal, feature, and data point: this would mean that intermedial autobiographical performance is merely a problem to be solved (for example, ‘engineering design’ discussed in Wolf et al 2006), and that human behaviour around digital media sharing is easily manipulable. It is, however, intended to indicate what Stolterman (2008) would call a rigorous approach to designing for the ‘complex’ (p. 59) interactions that make up intermedial autobiographical performance. This mapping of properties to goals, features, and data makes my ‘judgments visible and open for critique’ (p. 62).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Properties of autobiographical performance</th>
<th>Design goals, separated by focus</th>
<th>Features intended to meet those goals</th>
<th>To be analysed through these data</th>
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<td>• prompt wording</td>
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<td>through personal digital</td>
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<td>• questionnaire q. 4, 5, 6</td>
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<td>• other participants</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• story view layout</td>
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<td>• connections between stories</td>
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<td>• (intended) ease of</td>
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<td>• physical proximity of</td>
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<td>• questionnaire q. 1, 7</td>
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<td>• prompts open to</td>
<td>• story content</td>
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<td>interpretation</td>
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<td>PERFORMANCE PHASE:</td>
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<td>• seated audience</td>
<td>(L&amp;T)</td>
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<td>• large projection</td>
<td>• prompts 1, 2, 3, 5 (L&amp;T)</td>
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<td>• prompts removed</td>
<td>• interview q. 3 (L&amp;T)</td>
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<td>• timer</td>
<td>• questionnaire q. 1, 6, 8, 9</td>
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<td>• interview q. 2 (A&amp;E)</td>
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Table 5.1 Properties of autobiographical performance and design goals.

All five prompts are written to provoke self-disclosure and possibly self-discovery. The fact that the application can be accessed from any location any number of times before the performance means that participants can devote as much time and energy to this process as they like, and to explore various sources of personal digital media such as
forgotten external hard drives or discs stored at a parent’s house. These alternative choices shape the processes of self-making as participants decide what to reveal and what to conceal in a co-located encounter with others.

‘Heightened attention’ is divided into the categories of ‘conspicuousness’, ‘intensity of appearance’, and ‘deviation and surprise’ (Fischer-Lichte 2008b). By asking participants to spend time remembering and thinking about their digital media, those photos become more conspicuous to performers during the devising phase. During performance, these details and possible dissonances should make the same media conspicuous to audience members, as well. The requirement to stand while performing, and the use of the term ‘perform’, should encourage participants to increase the ‘intensity’ and perhaps even the ‘risk’ in their storytelling (Wilson 2006, p. 9). Audience members, who will also be facing this pressure, should respond by recognising the ‘intensity of appearance’ of the performers. ‘Deviation and surprise’ are made possible because all participants will be aware that they are responding to the same prompts as everyone else, and so by the end of the devising phase will have some idea of the types of performances they might see. The time limit will also draw attention to the need for balance in terms of time spent holding the floor, which will make any deviations very noticeable.

The unique situated nature of each performance is woven into the process of devising as well as the process of performing, as participants know who they will be performing for (or in the case of groups of strangers, they know that they will be performing for people they do not know) as well as when and where that performance will take place. The requirement to stand while performing, which contributes to the intensity of the performer’s appearance, also shapes situatedness by altering the relationships among the participants. When a participant begins a turn, she takes on the ‘assumption of accountability’ (Bauman 1975, p. 293) to the people who have suddenly become her ‘audience’ and cannot interrupt her story as easily as they would in the free flow conversation. The use of a projector also contributes to situatedness, as performers are freed from the need to manage other people’s use of their personal devices, and audiences can see all of the images without having to devote energy and attention to negotiating access to a shared screen. This is all accomplished without requiring a particular location, stage, or set.

Like ‘heightened attention’, the ‘aesthetics of the event’ is made up of three categories: ‘collapsing dichotomies’, ‘autopoiesis and emergence’, and ‘liminality and transformation’ (Fischer-Lichte 2008b). The collapsing of dichotomies between the
social and the aesthetic should be achieved by the fact that the participants will all take the role of performer in turn. This should highlight their accountability to each other for both their ‘act[s] of expression’ (Bauman 1975, p. 293) and whatever real-world implications those expressions might have. ‘Autopoiesis and emergence’ will be achieved because each use of the system will be a temporally extended event created by people whose roles are constantly in flux, and whose media are hidden until the moment of performance. A state of ‘liminality’ induced by performance ‘may well cause a change in the perception of reality, self, and others’ (Fischer-Lichte 2008a, p. 80) for performers and audience members. Liminality can be understood in the context of the purposes or aspirations of performance as described by various practitioners and theorists: heightened attention (Bauman 1975; Fischer-Lichte 2008b), empathy (storyteller Liz Weir quoted in Wilson 2006, p. 197; Dolan 2005), and the possibility of a positive, if temporary, transformation (Phelan 2004; Fischer-Lichte 2008b). This design aims to achieve liminal and potentially transformative states in its participants through the interplay of all of the other properties of autobiographical performance—self-making, heightening attention, situatedness, collapsing dichotomies, and autopoiesis and emergence.

Finally, this design adopts the perspectives of intermedial performance described in Chapter 4. It brings intermediality into the heart of the devising process by prompting participants to engage thoughtfully and emotionally with their digital media. Prompts one (regular day), four (lie), and five (forgotten) can be read as a ‘making strange’ (Pearson 2003, p. 175) of personal photos that can trigger an extraordinary way of encountering and interpreting these everyday artefacts (for ‘making strange’ as a concept within HCI, see Loke & Robertson 2013). Intermediality is directly addressed by the prompts, which are written to engage participants with their digital media not merely as artefacts but as potentially meaningful traces of their lives, encoded and archived in ways very different from the shoeboxes of printed photos common to analogue photography (Sarvas & Frohlich 2011, p. 97). The design also engages directly with the ‘digitalness’ of digital media by allowing access from any computer with web access, bringing personal digital media into a shared space of performance without the need for physical photos or even individual mechanisms for storage and display such as smartphones or laptops.

*Collect Yourselves!* is designed to create a performance rather than a purely conversational media sharing event, though it is designed for non-professional performers. It makes sparing use of some techniques of traditional, dramatic theatre familiar to audiences in the UK and similar cultures. For example, it requires participants to stand near their projected digital images while speaking, rather than losing themselves
amongst their audience. However, as the use of theatrical techniques would not guarantee a liminal or transformational experience, much less an enjoyable one, no attempt is made to burden (or empower) performers with more than a bare minimum of these practices. The design attempts to create a balance of rules and prompts, spread across two separate phases and divided into friend groups and stranger groups, accessed by a portable application that can accept media from nearly any source. From this balance, it is hoped that an emotionally moving performance can emerge. A change to any one of these elements would result in a change to the user’s experience, and most likely, to the emerging performance.

The aims of Collect Yourselves! are reflected in the observation that performance ‘is not a stable state or position…. [T]he time of performance is encountered in a flow of tenses, as past, present and future; or memory, attention and expectation’ (Giannachi et al 2012, pp. 13-14, emphasis in the original). Collect Yourselves! is designed to guide participants through interaction not only with a device, and not only with other participants, but with themselves: through the traces of their past reflected in their personal digital media, with their current practices of photowork, and with their future selves as they imagine them into being during performance. Performance provides a means for people to perform the supremely human act of ‘making special’ (Dissanayake 2003) to an exceptionally intangible object: the digital media artefact, accompanied by a story that lasts only as long as it is remembered. It is the intention of this design to make at least a few of those photos and their stories especially memorable. The next step is to analyse the design in use.
Part III: Intermedial autobiographical performance in action

Chapter 6: Friend Group performances

Chapter 7: Stranger Group performances

Chapter 8: Answering the research question
Chapter 6.
Friend Group performances

INTRODUCTION

Part III discusses how the fourth step of the PED methodology, ‘analysis’ (see Figure 3.1), was applied to the primary research question of this thesis: How can intermedial autobiographical performance advance the understanding of interactions among people and their personal digital media? The working definition of intermedial autobiographical performance posited in the discussion of Chapter 2 is ‘the live, co-located performance of stories from the performer’s own life using both oral storytelling and the display of the performer’s personal digital media’. The properties of autobiographical performance that drove the design process are self-making, ‘heightened attention’, situatedness, and the ‘aesthetics of the event’. The three chapters in Part III analyse Collect Yourselves! as it was implemented on four separate occasions: two with groups of friends (Chapter 6) and two with groups of strangers (Chapter 7). Chapter 8 answers the primary research question, discusses the findings from all of the performances in terms of how they address the properties of autobiographical performance, and draws implications for design and performance.

Chapter 6 begins by detailing the recruitment methods and procedures for studying Collect Yourselves! in use. These procedures apply to all of the studies discussed in Part III. The next section of this chapter describes a brief baseline study conducted on four friends who had not seen each other for several months. This study offers a working example of unprompted and free-flowing conversation that might include digital media sharing. This section is followed by detailed analyses of the two Collect Yourselves! performances created by groups of friends. The analysis for each performance is divided into four parts: thematic analysis of the devising phase, interaction analysis of the performance phase, coded performance analysis of the performance phase, and thematic analysis of the ‘reflection phase’. The reflection phase is not an element of the Collect Yourselves! design, but rather refers to the time following each Collect Yourselves! performance in which participants reflected on their experiences by responding to questionnaires and a group interview (described in Chapter 3). The interaction analyses are divided according to the relevant foci for analysis identified by Jordan and Henderson (1995): structure of the event, turn timing (‘the temporal organisation of activity’), turn-
taking, participation structures, trouble and repair, the spatial organisation of activity, and artefacts and documents. The chapter concludes with a summary of findings.

**RECRUITMENT**

The effects of audiences on conversational storytelling (Bavelas et al 2000) have been discussed in Chapter 2, and insights into reminiscence and storytelling based on audience composition played a key role in the design of *Collect Yourselves!* (see Figures 5.3, 5.4, and 5.5). Therefore, *Collect Yourselves!* was performed by groups that would likely exhibit different media sharing behaviours: two groups of friends and two groups of strangers. Friend Groups would be able though not required to reminisce; Stranger Groups would most likely engage only in storytelling. This required two different recruitment methods. For Friend Groups, I recruited one person who in turn recruited several of his or her friends. For Stranger Groups, I recruited individuals who were all strangers to each other. Because I was interested in everyday practices of photowork, I did not stipulate any minimum level of proficiency or particular types of devices, though I would have excluded any potential participant who never used digital photography in any way. Both types of recruitment used personal communication, generally via email or in person, with my own personal and professional networks.

I also used these recruitment methods to create two control sessions, one for each audience type. The control for the Friend Groups was a reunion of four middle-aged friends from university who had not seen each other in several months, and the control for the Stranger Groups was a gathering of four people who had never met. The rationale and procedures for the Control Groups are explained in their respective discussions.

In total, 32 participants created four *Collect Yourselves!* performances and two control sessions (see Table 6.1). These resulted in approximately eight hours of video records from a primary camera, transcribed for ease of analysis, along with approximately sixteen hours of video shot from alternate angles; questionnaires and interview data from each participant; 139 uploaded photos; 81 uploaded text annotations, and my notes taken during the four performance events.

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54 This is an oversimplification; slight deviations from this standard will be noted where relevant.
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<thead>
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<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Totals</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
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<td>Stranger</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>1 male</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>2 male</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stranger</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>2 male</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>2 male</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5 female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1 Overview of study participants.

Although the study participants reflected a wide range of ages and nationalities, there was little variety in race or socioeconomic status, and only eleven of the participants were male. The fact that the Friend Control Group was all male and the Stranger Control Group all female was wholly unintentional. While a detailed content or conversation analysis of the stories told might reveal patterns based on gendered approaches to conversational storytelling, content was never the focus of this thesis, and the performances that informed the design do not indicate notable biases regarding any of the properties of autobiographical performance. Langellier and Peterson (2004, pp. 86-94) alert researchers to differences in dynamics between men and women in performing narrative within families, but no such differences were noticeable in these groups, even between long-term romantic partners Isobel and Quentin. Most importantly, there is nothing in the coded performance analyses to indicate that gender would invalidate the findings pertaining to the performance of personal digital media. However, a study focusing on potential gender or cultural differences in intermedial autobiographical performance could be explored in future research.

**COLLECT YOURSELVES! PROCEDURE**

Each participant was sent an email with a link to a Collect Yourselves! website dedicated to their group. They could register themselves and answer the prompts at their leisure over as many sessions as they wished. However, the performance could only be accessed by having all participants log in at the same time. Therefore, no one saw the layout or specific instructions for the performance phase, or each other’s photos, until it was time to begin. This decision was taken to ensure the security of the personal photos and to prevent participants from ‘rehearsing’ their performances.

For the performance phase, each group of participants and I agreed on a mutually convenient time, date, and private location. Each location was different, due to
constraints imposed by the participants or by the university. As Wilson points out, a change in the performance space can change the nature of the performance (2006, p. 77). However, the ubiquity of personal digital media, reflected in the web-based design of the application, implies that a digital media sharing system might not be best served by rigid requirements regarding location. To maintain some consistency while remaining flexible, the same basic layout was used in each location. Participants were seated in a rough semicircle, depending on the room size and furniture, with the projector pointing away from them and the laptop near the projector. In this way everyone could see the projected digital media and the performer, as well as each other: lights were never fully dimmed but kept at a high enough level that people could manoeuvre around the room and interact with each other. Also, the slightly theatrical arrangement of seated audience and standing performer facing them would “contribute to a formality which means that the story is being served by its presentation. It's more heightened than one might have in a pub, for example” (storyteller Daniel Morden quoted in Wilson 2006, p. 169). Above all, the place and time needed to be as congenial as possible so that participants would feel comfortable sharing details of their lives.

The interface to Collect Yourselves! in the performance phase was intended to be an iPad in portrait mode, with the performance grid and story layout occupying the entire available surface. However, the local network failed for the first two sessions (despite being thoroughly checked earlier each day), necessitating the use of the laptop. The layout of the system on the laptop screen made scrolling necessary, and many participants were unfamiliar with Apple’s two-finger trackpad scroll. This caused a number of problems for some participants. Despite these issues, I decided to use the laptop for the final two sessions in order to compare like with like: I did not want the (presumed) ease of use of the iPad interface to cloud participants’ judgement of the system overall.

After explaining the project and obtaining informed consent, I handed out printouts of a sample performance grid and story layout (see Figures 5.19 and 5.20, respectively). I used these to explain the interface and the rules, which were also displayed on the performance grid:

Your whole group has 40 minutes [45 minutes for groups of seven] to perform your stories for each other. Choose among yourselves who will go first. You can’t tell more than one story in a row, and you should try to tell all your stories. The
timer will count down while you’re performing and pause while you’re deciding who goes next. Click on a picture to start telling that story.

The controls were the thumbnails in the performance grid (click to get to that story page), the thumbnails on a story page (click to enlarge), the ‘finish turn’ button (click to finish turn), and the ‘pause’ button (which would pause the timer in case of any interruptions or problems during a turn). I also pointed out that performers should stand in the vicinity of the projection while performing. For the most part, participants understood these rules and controls right away. I remained in the room but intentionally busied myself taking notes and monitoring camera equipment so as to avoid insinuating myself into the audience or positioning myself as arbiter of any negotiations.

Each performance was observed and recorded on video for further examination. After the performance, participants were given a ten-minute break, and the recording equipment was left running to capture their conversations. (Some participants left the room for various reasons, so the data from these conversations is not comprehensive.) The aim of this capture was to discover which elements of performance, if any, triggered further conversation. The conversations were transcribed and analysed along with the rest of the data. After the break, participants were asked to fill out individual questionnaires. Then they were interviewed in the style of a focus group, allowing for individual responses but not requiring each participant to answer each question separately. Other sources of data include the photos and text uploaded by each participant. The information sheets, consent forms, questionnaire and interview schedule can be found in Appendices D through I, including a consent form specific to each participant’s unique collection of photos (Appendix G). All photos reproduced in this thesis are used with the participant’s explicit consent.

The only intended difference between Friend Groups and Stranger Groups was the content of prompt two. For Friend Groups the topic was ‘thinking of you’ and the prompt asked for at least one photo. For Stranger Groups the topic was ‘the most memorable photo in [their] digital archive’ plus the ones taken immediately before and after it, so the prompt asked for at least three photos. One consequence of this change of prompt wording was the number of photos uploaded: at least four for Friend Groups, but at least six for Stranger Groups (with the option of uploading nothing for prompt five). Therefore, it is important not to jump to the conclusion that Friend Groups were more reluctant to share photos than Stranger Groups were.
FRIEND CONTROL GROUP

‘Is that your house? All of that?’ —Bruce

In this control study, four middle-aged men who have been good friends since their university days met at the Ye Olde George Inn pub in East Meon, Hampshire, on the evening of Friday, 9 November, 2012. They had not seen each other in several months. No instructions were given, other than to bring their smartphones with personal photos loaded on them (which they would have done in any case). The reunion took place in a pub where they drank beer, ate dinner, and chatted for an hour and a half (one hour, 32 minutes, 40 seconds).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>M/F</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Occupational status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bruce</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Forties</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Employed full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phil</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Forties</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Employed full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvey</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Forties</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Employed full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Forties</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Employed full-time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2  Friend Control Group: participants.

This conversation was ‘polyphonic’, as Norrick describes, ‘designed for and co-determined by the current audience’ (2000, p. 12). There were only two stories marked by nearly exclusive telling of a single event by a single person, each lasting between two and three minutes. The rest of the conversation tended to shift quickly and fluidly. Despite the large discrepancy in time spent holding the floor (see Table 6.3), the conversation was animated and amicable. The four men clearly used the conversation to establish rapport (Norrick 2000, p. 126). Their frequent co-narration helped in ‘ratifying group membership’ (p. 154) or, as Harvey put it, ‘cementing the social glue between us’.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Total time holding floor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bruce</td>
<td>36:53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phil</td>
<td>15:16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvey</td>
<td>10:09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>20:38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>82:56</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.3  **Friend Control Group: total timings.**

Photographs were the only digital media shared, and this only occurred twice. George took out his phone to show photos of the house he was considering buying. He moved his phone for all three to see, but soon Bruce leaned over to swipe from one photo to the next. After a moment Bruce took the phone from George and controlled the rest of the photo sharing himself, with George occasionally leaning over to swipe to another photo. After two minutes of this, Bruce leaned back in his seat to continue looking at George’s photos while the other three chatted about a new topic. After 43 seconds of solo browsing, Bruce handed the phone back to George and the four-way conversation resumed. Half an hour later, Harvey took out his phone to show photos of a place he had been describing. It was a pub that he and Phil had gone to together, without Bruce or George. Harvey kept control of his phone and showed the pub photo to each of the three in turn, while Phil took control of the conversation, describing the beer he and Harvey had drunk there. This photo-sharing session lasted less than one minute. The physical constraints of sharing photos on a phone among four people seated around a rectangular table strained their ability to maintain the storytelling ‘control centre’ (Crabtree et al 2004, p. 400); a larger group would doubtless have posed even more challenges.
This group reminisced on four occasions, for less than 30 seconds each time. Every call to reminisce caused all four to pay attention and engage intently with the memory being recalled. On one occasion, Harvey recounted his attempts to stop the bleeding from a deep cut on Bruce’s forehead sustained during a drunken mishap decades before. Harvey spoke loudly and gestured as if holding the cut again, and all four laughed loudly. The stories and reminiscences provided the only instances of ‘heightened attention’ in the entire session, and there was virtually no trace of the ‘aesthetics of the event’ as described by Fischer-Lichte (2008b). The participants were clearly pleased by their re-connection, but they did not report any particular emotional effect or sense of connection from sharing digital media.

Such a small and informal study was never intended to draw any hard conclusions about the nature of unprompted digital media sharing in conversation, and the analyses that follow are not founded on any rigorous comparisons between this control group and the Collect Yourselves! studies. However, this small study confirms some basic assumptions made during the design process: face-to-face conversation is the primary focus of a social interaction among friends, while digital media tend to be shared for practical purposes, providing images from the recent past to illustrate a topic of discussion. Thus in the analyses that follow, if Collect Yourselves! has no effect on the experience of friends coming together to share their photos, one might expect to find a certain amount of self-making and situatedness, a very limited amount of ‘heightened attention’, and no behaviours that indicate any of Fischer-Lichte’s categories of the ‘aesthetics of the event’. One might also expect to see one or more participants dominate the interaction. These are all conditions that Collect Yourselves! set out to challenge.
FRIEND GROUP 1: FIVE FRIENDS

This *Collect Yourselves!* session took place on Wednesday, 19 June, 2013 from 10:30 am to noon in Roots Café Bar on the University of Surrey campus. Often unused during the day, Roots was private, spacious, bright, and airy. The projector and controller were set up at one end of the room to create a smaller, more intimate area within the larger space (see Figure 6.2).

![Figure 6.2 Friend Group 1: seating arrangements.](image)

Hugh was my contact person, who set up the session with four friends of his whom I had never met. All five studied together at the university and have been good friends for at least two or three years. All owned smartphones and were in the habit of taking digital photos, and all used social networking sites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>M/F</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Occupational status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hugh</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Late twenties</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Graduate student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Late twenties</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Graduate student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Late twenties</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Graduate student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fay</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Late twenties</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Graduate student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xiu</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Late twenties</td>
<td>Taiwanese living in UK &lt; 10 years</td>
<td>Graduate student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 6.4 Friend Group 1: participants.*
DEVISING PHASE — THEMATIC ANALYSIS

‘I’d like to know what you’re made of’ —Fay

When asked to describe their experience of the devising phase, three described it as enjoyable or ‘good fun’, while two found the process to be ‘tricky’ and ‘quite difficult’. Those who expressed only enjoyment focused on the act of reminiscence that the devising process required, while those who found it challenging focused on the effort it took to find photographs that accurately responded to each prompt. ‘Would probably have used different photos if the task had been more general,’ wrote one participant, a comment that reinforces the critical role of the prompts in the devising process.

Two participants had told some of their stories before; a third had never told them as ‘stories’ before but had discussed the ‘content’ of some in conversation. This raises the question of where people draw the line between what they consider to be conversation and what ‘counts’ as a story. Balabanović, Chu, and Wolff (2000) note that media sharing that is prompted by the appearance of a photo rather than the desire to tell a particular story tends to be limited to identifying information such as ‘this is my wife’ (p. 570). However, some of the Collect Yourselves! prompts, particularly prompts one (regular day) and five (forgotten), ask participants to share media based on the characteristics of the photo, regardless of what story might or might not be associated with it. Such information might be felt not to ‘count’ as a story: in fact, Hugh specifically noted that he had never before told his stories based on photo descriptions. In spite of this restriction, there was often no obvious difference between ‘photo-driven’ and ‘story-driven’ stories (p. 570) in terms of length; ‘tellability’, or worthiness of being told (Sacks 1995, p. 776); or engagement with the properties of autobiographical performance. This phenomenon will be treated more fully in the discussion at the end of this chapter, in light of findings from the Friend Group 2.

When asked the difference between the experience of Collect Yourselves! and an unconstrained chat with the same friends, the first and predominant answer was structure, particularly the structure provided by the prompts. ‘I think I found the prompts quite difficult, but actually they were really thought-provoking, because it’s not necessarily a photo that I would think, “Oh, I’m going to go and share that with somebody”’ (Grace). Fay confirmed the findings of Van House (2011), saying that without the prompts, she would have selected much more recent photos, ‘only … prompted by what other people had been talking about’. Fay found herself not only intrigued by her self-reflective
process but curious about her friends: she phrased it as wondering, ‘I’d like to know what you’re made of’. No one disagreed with these observations.

This group had two clear favourite prompts, prompt four (lie) and prompt five (forgotten), though these were the most challenging to find photos and stories for. These perhaps more than any others were the prompts that took participants out of their normal media sharing habits and pushed them to use their memories and imaginations. Fay thought the ‘creativity’ and ‘flexibility’ of devising prompt four (lie) was ‘great’ in spite of her frustrations with it: ‘I’ve finally managed to find a photo that looked entertaining, but it was difficult to find a story to go with it, whereas now I’m sat here seeing other people do it and going, “Oh, I should have done that”, or “That would have fit better”’. Echoing Peesapati et al. and Cosley et al. (2010; 2012), Wendy and Hugh pointed out that they rarely reminisce over digital photos, but they appreciated the nudge from prompt five (forgotten) to be reminded of ‘past good memories’ (Xiu). Surprisingly, Wendy noted that the performance involved ‘a lot more stories than we would have done in normal conversation’, and again the rest of the group seemed to agree. Overall, this group found some challenge in the devising process but enjoyed the challenging elements in performance.

**PERFORMANCE PHASE — INTERACTION ANALYSIS**

‘*That whole time I was thinking, Wendy would think this is so funny!*’—Grace

**Structure:** At first, all five looked at each other in response to the question of who would go first, but it quickly became clear that Hugh should do so. This is likely due to his role in organising the event. He began with prompt two (thinking of you).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prompt order</th>
<th>Percentage of prompts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prompts followed suit</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unprovoked change of order</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reverted to previous order</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 6.5 Friend Group 1: story order.**

The story order was the most conservative of any group. 88% of the stories either ‘followed suit’, meaning that when possible the participant taking the stage responded to the same prompt as the person before her, or immediately reverted to the previously
established order of prompts (see Table 6.5). There were no errors in the story order. Transitions were very smooth, quick, and mostly silent.

Part of the ‘structure’ of an interaction is the way that it is segmented. While participants took five ‘rounds’ of turns to answer the five prompts, these ‘rounds’ did not correlate to the emergent structure of the performance. By observing behavioural markers of the attention and energy levels of both performer and audience members, such as gaze, tone of voice, and body language, I identified three main rhythmic ‘waves’ in this performance. Each started low, peaked just above the midline, and ended equally low. The first lasted six turns (ending with Hugh’s second turn); the second was a steeper wave, starting and ending at similar levels but peaking much higher over four turns (ending on Xiu’s second turn); and the third was a very shallow wave hovering very close to the midline, revealing few high points but an extraordinary capacity for the performers to maintain each other’s interest. These waves will be discussed in more detail in the performance analysis.

**Turn timing:** This group was the only one to finish all its stories with time to spare (see Table 6.6). They distributed their time more fairly than any group except Stranger Group 1 (see Table 8.1 for a comparison among all groups). This fact was reflected in Xiu’s comment about the difference between Collect Yourselves! and a regular conversation. Xiu, who was by far the quietest person both in performance and during the coffee break, noted that ‘we had almost equal time to share each other’s stories, because in normal chatting, usually just one person keeps talking about his or her stories’. The structure of Collect Yourselves! invited participants to balance the time spent by more and less talkative members of their group, even though this was not part of any explicit instruction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Session plan</th>
<th>Session outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total storytelling time (mm:ss)</td>
<td>40:00</td>
<td>34:04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of stories completed</td>
<td>25 stories</td>
<td>25 stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean time per person per prompt (mm:ss)</td>
<td>1:36</td>
<td>1:22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean transition time (mm:ss)</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>0:15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 6.6**  **Friend Group 1: turn timings.**
Note: Discrepancies between total and mean storytelling times stem from variations in counting methods.
This group spent the most time on prompt five (forgotten), which was one of their two favourite prompts, and for prompt two (thinking of you) three participants spoke to multiple photos. This could account for the amount of time spent on these two prompts (see Table 6.7). Although many enjoyed prompt four (lie) the most, they spent the second-least amount of time on it. In fact, Fay, who found prompt four to be particularly challenging, spent much more time on it than the others, while Grace, who thought it was ‘great’, sped through it. The combination of challenge and enjoyment in prompt four (lie) seems to have led to a wide range of responses in terms of content, time, and their subjective experiences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prompt</th>
<th>Mean time (mm:ss)</th>
<th>Ranking (longest=1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (regular day)</td>
<td>1:13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (memorable)</td>
<td>1:26</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (embarrassing)</td>
<td>1:21</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (lie)</td>
<td>1:20</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (forgotten)</td>
<td>1:29</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.7  Friend Group 1: mean time per prompt (longest in bold).

**Turn-taking:** Coincidentally, Hugh was seated at the far left of the group. After his first story, the others took turns according to the seating arrangement. This was arranged by unspoken consensus. There were no deviations.

**Participation structures:** Because participation at a high level is ordered by the *Collect Yourselves!* structure, it is more the manner than the fact of their participation that is potentially interesting. In this group, the audience maintained consistent eye contact and receptive body language throughout the performance with only a few lapses, as when Xiu occasionally bit her nails or Fay looked down at the floor. Hugh was particularly animated in his expression of interest in the ongoing performance, offering frequent ‘generic responses’ (Bavelas et al 2000, p. 942) such as nods, laughs, and sounds of recognition. Performers varied in their manner of participating. For example, Hugh seemed very nervous during his first prompt (prompt one, regular day), so his focus on his projected image could be read as a reluctance to engage with his audience. In contrast, Wendy’s attention seemed captivated by her family photos, which could be read as a reverie that drew her audience’s attention to what they imagined she might be.
thinking of. In most cases, though, audiences and performers engaged with each other with full attention.

**Trouble and repair:** There were no interruptions and only two mistakes. Hugh misread prompt one (regular day) and replied as though it had asked for a photo from 12 months previous instead of six. He incorporated this error into his story by announcing it in a self-deprecating way. Xiu, on the other hand, misread prompt two (thinking of you) and told a story about a different group of friends. If she noticed the discrepancy, she did not mention it, and neither did anyone else, though it resulted in a sharp drop in energy and attention (discussed further in the coded performance analysis). There were only three mentions of technical issues: one of Hugh reminding himself to click the ‘Finish Turn’ button, and two referring to photos whose details were difficult to see when projected.

**Spatial organisation of activity:** There was plenty of room for participants to move to and from the performance space (see Figure 6.3). Participants sat close enough to hear each other easily and see the projected images without significant problems. The controller for this session was a laptop on the low table holding the projector. Participants needed to crouch down or lean over to start and stop their turns and to change between images within a story. One participant in a low-cut dress found this arrangement to be a bit problematic, but otherwise the physicality of the performance was unremarkable.

![Figure 6.3  Friend Group 1 performance space.](image)
**Artefacts and documents:** During the performance, 35 photos were projected for the 25 stories (see Table 6.8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Total photos uploaded*</th>
<th>Mean photos per prompt</th>
<th>Number prompts for which text uploaded</th>
<th>Mean words per text upload</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hugh</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fay</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xiu</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.8  **Friend Group 1: photos and text uploaded.**

*Some participants may have intended to upload more photos than indicated.

Three participants included text with some or all of their prompts. Fay’s and Wendy’s text referred indexically to their photos, but there was some discrepancy between Xiu’s text and the stories she told. Her prompt one (regular day) caption mentioned that the photo was taken ‘right before the Chinese New Year’. She did not mention that fact in her story, but went into detail about her feelings of low status and stress at the time the photo was taken. In contrast, her prompt two (thinking of you) caption said, ‘I feel sad and lonely’, but the majority of her story was a funny description of partying with her flatmates. Finally, the caption for her prompt four (lie) caption was pure fiction, whereas her performance went on to reveal the embarrassing event behind the fiction. These discrepancies seem to indicate that performance can bring out the disclosure of different perspectives on the self, or ‘protoselves’ (Barclay 1994) that differ from the ‘self’ who wrote the text during the devising process. Norrick (2000) notices something similar in his studies of conversational narrative: ‘I tend to see tellers caught up in a dynamic context and in their own performance, tellers who tailor a basic story to fit the current thematic needs of the interaction’ (p. 69). Here he refers to the act of constructing stories to reflect emerging concerns rather than retrieving a personal memory, intact, for retelling. The fact that Xiu’s additional information about stress came after four sequential stories with stress as their theme would seem to suggest that not only
conversation but also digital media sharing performance can be shaped by the performance context.55

**PERFORMANCE PHASE — CODED PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS**

*‘It should be embarrassing...’ — Hugh*

In many ways, this was a performance of efficiency. These five friends interacted easily with each other and with the technology, allowing the audience’s attention to remain on the performer. The rhythm of the performance was marked by three ‘waves’ of attention often (though not always) having Grace at the high point and Xiu or Hugh at the low point. Against such a seamless backdrop, the details of autobiographical performance were often easy to detect.

**Self-making**

Overall, the selves that were made in this performance reinforced each other and underscored their identities as each other’s friends. However, this did not preclude some strong claims to particular traits or markers of identity. For example, Wendy revealed herself to be an extremely family-oriented person, which might not have been obvious from looking only at her photographs. Her photo for prompt one (regular day) showed a Christmas cake on a countertop, but her performance revealed that she had taken over the responsibility for making the family Christmas cake from her grandmother, who had passed away. Wendy’s prompt five (forgotten) was a photo of her nan and other family members enjoying themselves on a disastrous holiday. Finally, her prompt four (lie) located her ‘sat with my dad and my nan just sat around the table’ to tell the story of the chairs her father has accidentally destroyed over the years, a detail which was not germane to the story. Wendy’s performed stories left no doubt about the importance of her family in her life, an impression that was not made by the photos alone.

Self-making emerged not only through content but through physical manner and ‘the grain of the voice’ (Pearson 2003, p. 175). Hugh rose to the challenge of going first in a nervous and self-deprecating way that contributed strongly to the overall impression he gave. He spoke quickly and mumbled often, and his story was hardly ‘tellable’ (Sacks 1995): he identified a photo of himself at a regular university barbecue that his friends

55 Norrick’s ‘different cognitive strategies in written and oral production of narrative’ (2000, p. 102) might also be at work here, though this would require dedicated study.
were familiar with and said how ‘really cool’ those barbecues were, with a self-deprecating arm-pumping gesture. He did not elaborate and seemed loath to display seriousness or commitment to his performance. Hugh’s reluctance recalls Paul Heritage’s experience of leading a staged reading of Romeo and Juliet in a Brazilian young offenders prison (2002). Heritage identifies investment in the performance as ‘the greatest risk’ for the performers: ‘To be serious about this work would in itself expose them to potential ridicule’ (p. 178). While this session among friends was of course nowhere near as hostile as a gathering of inmates, Hugh seemed painfully aware of being ‘marked as subject to evaluation’ by his audience (Bauman 1975, p. 293). In a subsequent story, Hugh self-deprecatingly explained that he had misunderstood the prompt. This admission won him understanding laughter, and he went on to draw a connection between his story and others told by his friends: all of them were getting deeper into their studies and feeling a sharply increased level of stress. However, he seemed to shy away from the approval this admission garnered by delivering his funniest comments in a hurried mumble. Consequently, his audience had no opportunity to respond to his comment about feeling more ‘institutionalised’ by his university, or to a potentially hilarious joke. However, by his third turn, he evidently felt confident enough to undertake a notably risky and powerful performance (discussed in the context of ‘heightened attention’, below).

Prompt four (lie) caused some participants to struggle. Hugh first asked me if he really needed to lie, then told his story facing the screen rather than his audience, and followed it up with an explanation of the real provenance of the photograph. Fay and Xiu also seemed somewhat uncomfortable with performing fiction. Fay stalled at first, then asked me directly whether she was supposed to lie, and finally commenced her story with a distracted manner and convoluted language. Partway through her story, where the content indicated that she had almost certainly shifted to ‘the truth’ about her photo, her tone became more relaxed and direct, and her speech became much more fluid. Xiu seemed unconcerned by lying, but hers was too preposterous to be taken seriously. Still, she also abandoned her lie to explain the facts behind the photo. Grace and Wendy did not acknowledge their lies in so many words, but the stories they told were so full of disasters that they could hardly be taken seriously. From their reluctance and struggle to perform, the lie indicated something transgressive or threatening to the senses of self being made in performance, despite the fact that it was this group’s favourite prompt.
**Heightened attention**

Grace was arguably the most engaging performer, forging an intense sense of connection with her audience by increasing her ‘intensity of appearance’ using high energy levels, laughter, and modulations of her gaze and voice. Grace established strong eye contact with her audience, leaning forward slightly when she speaking to them. The impression this gave was of an intense energy. Similarly, she peered intently at her photos when she looked at them, leading her audience to search for the *punctum* (Barthes 1981, p. 27) that generated such intensity for her. The effects of her gaze were most noticeable during prompt five (forgotten). She looked mostly at the projection when describing it and the reason she had forgotten it, which was simple: out of respect for her current long-term boyfriend, she had destroyed all photos of her first boyfriend. Her ‘forgotten’ photo was one of her that she realised had been taken by this first boyfriend. At first she spoke to the projected photo, as if she were talking to herself. When she explained her reason for keeping it, though, she turned to look intently at her audience:

I think it’s important to keep it because it reminded me that actually we had a really good time … he was the first person I had a relationship that I really felt a connection with, and I think it’s important to maintain some evidence of the people and the memories that you have those connections with, so I think I was justified in my reasons for keeping hold of that and I will always keep hold of that, I think, because it represents a good time in my life even though it ended in a little bit of disaster. (Grace)

Grace turned this intensity on a single audience member in prompt two (thinking of you). Her two photos for this prompt were from a conference that she had attended with a friend not participating in this session. Grace selected these photos because the entire conference had made her think of Wendy. Grace made strong eye contact with Wendy whenever referring to a previous conference that they had attended together, and Wendy reciprocated. For example, Grace said that ‘Danielle and I went out to the pub both nights’ and shot Wendy a look. Wendy immediately dissolved into giggles. The rest of the audience made no response until Grace explained that she and Danielle had ended up ‘the worse for wear’. The fact that Wendy was able to intuit Grace’s meaning in advance amplified the intensity of Grace’s words and instilled curiosity in the other audience members, as seen in the quizzical looks on their faces. This connection with Wendy did not detract from Grace’s connection with the others in the room because Grace did not deviate from her story into unnecessary details of these shared memories. Reminiscence with one audience member occurred simultaneously with storytelling for the rest. This
combination of reminiscence and storytelling heightened the audience’s attention to Grace’s story and to their relationships with each other.

The dissonance between Grace’s extremely quotidian photos and the intensity with which she described her thoughts of Wendy during prompt two (thinking of you) created a dissonance that added to the ‘conspicuousness’ of the photos. For example, the image relating to the night out with Danielle was of the generic-looking hotel room in which she stayed during the conference (see Figure 6.4). No human appeared in the photo (except for Grace’s shadowy reflection in the glass of a framed picture), but Wendy permeated the performance: ‘I was saying Wendy would really, really like it … we thought that Wendy would have loved it … thinking Wendy would love them … again Wendy would have found it hilarious and probably would have been worse than us … that whole time I was thinking, Wendy would think this is so funny, so I can’t wait for the next conference’.

Figure 6.4 Grace’s hotel room.

Grace transitioned to her second photo for prompt two (thinking of you) by naming another thing about the conference that Wendy would have loved: the rabbits that appeared ‘everywhere’ in the grass outside the hotel room (see Figure 6.5). The rabbits were barely visible in the projected photo, but they were not necessary to the photo’s function as a record of Grace’s thoughts about Wendy back when the photo was taken,
offered as evidence of Grace’s connection to her friend. I argue that the photos were all the more compelling because the audience was confronted with further dissonance, between Grace’s assumption that everyone could see the rabbits and their near-invisibility in the projected photo, and between the impersonal images and the deeply personal connection they represented in Grace’s performance. Grace’s photos therefore created ‘conspicuousness’ on multiple levels, which created a sense of connection that could be felt by at least some of her audience, despite the fact that photos did not portray the real subject of Grace’s performance.

![Figure 6.5 The rabbits outside Grace’s hotel room.](image)

**Situatedness**

Fay chose to perform her prompt two (thinking of you) immediately after Grace. As she moved to the ‘stage’ area, she said, ‘I’m trying to figure out which one to do next, and I suppose it’s going to have to be the same one as Grace, because Wendy seems to come
up’. Wendy jumped back in her chair in surprise, and the audience’s curiosity was piqued. Fay’s first photo was perhaps a bit disappointing given this set-up, as it was a group graduation photo in which individual faces could not be distinguished. Her delivery, though, served to increase anticipation: ‘And then I thought, what is Wendy going to look like? Because every time I see Wendy … she’s changed her hair’. Fay followed with four different photos of Wendy sporting four different haircuts. Fay’s audience was completely engaged, Wendy most of all, with the other audience members looking from projected photo to Wendy and back again to compare the differences between Wendy in the flesh and the various representations of her past. Fay enjoyed the most energetic audience response of the entire performance, despite the fact that she was not a particularly dynamic or moving performer. Instead, she used the ‘conspicuousness’ of the five digital objects representing Wendy’s past appearance, along with the surprise coincidence of her and Grace’s choice of topic, to draw attention to the shared experience of this performance.

The importance of this sense of connection between Grace’s and Fay’s stories, between Grace and Wendy, between Fay and Wendy, and among the entire group of friends, is highlighted by the sharp drop in intensity when Xiu followed Fay with her own prompt two (thinking of you). For unknown reasons, Xiu interpreted the wording of prompt two differently from anyone else and spoke about friends from her earlier studies. She spoke clearly and engagingly, and her story included humorous elements such as barking like a dog, but she received little engagement from her audience. The ‘heightened attention’ and situatedness that Grace, Fay, and their audience had built was immediately erased. In fact, beyond a reference to the stress of studying for a PhD which she knew the other participants would share, she made no reference to her relationships with these friends. In contrast to Fay’s and Grace’s active efforts to build connections, Xiu’s lack of reference to the situatedness of their shared experience of creating this performance was striking, though Xiu engaged in self-disclosure just as the others did.

At one point, all five participants converged on a single theme: stress. Their manner did not seem to be stressed, and their chosen photographs did not represent stress in any overt way, but each performer made the effort to connect to Grace’s comment about the ‘meltdown’ she now felt in contrast to the carefree holiday photo she showed for prompt one (regular day). Each subsequent performer built on this theme. For example, the first words following Grace’s story about the ‘meltdown’ were Fay’s: ‘Following on from the stress, exactly six months ago one of the girls in my group had her viva … it was a little bit scary’. Then Xiu described how ‘stressed’ she felt six months previously, and Hugh
described his feelings on taking the photo he showed next: ‘I came across the lake party and thought, Jesus, who are all these people who have all this time and no cares in the world?’ The word ‘stress’ did not come up again, but in this sequence of five stories, it formed a tight bond among these friends in the shared time and space of the performance.

**Aesthetics of the event**

This was in many ways a homogenous and conservative group, judging by their manner of speech and dress. Hugh delivered perhaps the riskiest and most insightful part of the entire performance with his story for prompt three (embarrassing) about the photo he took of a nearly naked man dancing on the street in Soho, London (see Figure 6.6). While he selected this photo in response to the prompt about being embarrassed, he made the point that ‘it should be embarrassing…’, implying that for him, it was not. By saying it *should* be embarrassing, though, he admitted that others might find it odd or even shameful.

This guy, it was really nice. Usually when you see kind of naked women, it’s a bit kind of unpleasant atmosphere, it’s a kind of unpleasant image, but this was really cool. This guy was just gyrating away and actually, I was thinking to myself, my girlfriend was saying this, it’s good to see actually the beauty of the male body on show, because we always have the beauty of the female body on show, and I thought, yeah, actually, you know, actually I appreciate this … he’s a really beautiful man, and he had really good moves…. It was really a nice image to take a photo of because he was really laid back, and it made me think it was a really nice, it felt a really liberated place … my girlfriend thought I was more into it than her and I was the last one to leave. (Hugh)

Hugh’s audience, who laughed at the first sight of his photo and again from time to time throughout the story, met his very sincere and reflective comments with impassive faces. It is unlikely that a group of relatively young friends in a university setting would suddenly reject one of their number for appreciating a homoerotic performance. However, Hugh’s comments were not met with appreciative nods or murmurs of assent, as so many other stories were. Still, Hugh forged on, disclosing an opinion that is to some degree outside the mainstream. This sincere investment in his potentially unpopular story demonstrates ‘the sort of risk that we always seek…. It is in that investment that we see the real consequences of the performance’ (Heritage 2002, p. 178). Perhaps more importantly, Hugh’s opinion is one that had not occurred to him before he took this
photo, and he had never shared it with anyone else (aside from his girlfriend, who was present at the time the photo was taken) before this performance.

![Figure 6.6 Hugh’s nearly naked man in Soho, London.](image)

Hugh also told a story (prompt five, forgotten) that included a detail which was unnecessary to the logic of the story but involved a slightly risky self-disclosure. He explained how he had once shared a flat with another man for several months, a flat so small that they also shared the one double bed. Hugh made it clear that it was not a romantic relationship, and his manner was in no way suggestive or teasing. He simply made known a detail that many people might find odd or perhaps even distasteful in the context of the larger story about lamenting the loss of a friendship. The risks Hugh took invited his audience into a liminal space, where their attitudes towards Hugh and even possibly their relationships could be altered. By accepting heterosexual Hugh’s admiration for a male stripper and willingness to share a bed with another man for months on end, his audience allowed a more complex and less predictable Hugh to emerge. In so doing, they also opened themselves to transformation: they became people
who took such revelations in their stride, or they became people who resisted unexpected and possibly uncomfortable information about a friend. I do not attach any value judgements to Hugh’s stories, and I do not intend to imply that I know precisely what his friends’ reactions were. Judging by their lack of positive ‘generic responses’ (Bavelas et al 2000, p. 942), though, it seems likely that they subscribed at least in part to the mainstream view that heterosexual men are not ‘supposed to’ enjoy looking at or sleeping in the same bed with other men. The ethical implications and space for transformation would have been far greater had Hugh’s self-disclosures been more extreme. However, I see some small degree of those implications and potential for transformation in the small, but not insignificant, risks that Hugh took in voluntarily revealing unexpected experiences to a coolly receptive audience.

Figure 6.7 Fay’s embarrassing photo.

Other, subtler moments of intimacy and risk occurred as well. For example, Fay’s prompt three (embarrassing) simply showed a somewhat younger version of Fay between two friends at a party (see Figure 6.7). Other than the fact that they seem a bit drunk, there was nothing embarrassing about this photo to the casual observer. Throughout the performance, Fay had established herself as competent, generous, and able to laugh at herself. After explaining the photo, she looked directly at her audience and then back to the projected photo. ‘I don’t know why I found this one embarrassing,’ she said quietly, and turned to look again at her audience. Her gaze was suddenly intense, and she appeared vulnerable. This performance of her fallibility contained the full force of her
embarrassment. Her audience members all leaned forward, caught up in this flash of intimacy. Although Fay did not offer any significant conclusions, as Grace did when explaining why she kept her forgotten photo, her act of wondering out loud generated a palpable shift in the dynamics of the performance, which could not have come from the photo on its own.

**REFLECTION PHASE — THEMATIC ANALYSIS**

‘You are literally getting a snapshot of their lives’ — Grace

The descriptions of the overall experience were all positive: ‘interesting’, ‘liberating’ and ‘fun!’. Participants found *Collect Yourselves!* to offer a ‘different perspective’ on friends they already knew well, and appreciated the way in which a lot of catching up could be done quickly. One participant originally wrote, ‘It’s great as I used photos to share life experiences’, then crossed out the ‘I’ and wrote ‘we’. This comment is a performative reflection of the dual nature of the *Collect Yourselves!* experience, sending participants into memories of their own lived experience as well as bringing them into a shared space of disclosure, discovery, and connection.

Participants also found the performance to be a ‘personal’ and ‘private’ experience compared to their experience of online social networks. Four of the five identified at least one photo they would not share online. For example, Hugh would not share his photo of a nearly naked man: ‘although it signifies a good moment for me, that is not entirely clear from the photograph on its own’. Whether referring to a photograph or the story associated with it, most people wished to control the way in which others perceived them. They felt that the *Collect Yourselves!* performance was fully under their control, while a photo or video distributed online would not be.

Hugh admitted to feeling nervous, a feeling that was evident in his manner of performance. As he put it, ‘I guess you want to give the stories the best telling and do them justice and make them enjoyable and relevant’. This description speaks not only of pressure but of a desire for connection. He saw his performances not just as an opportunity to put himself on display but as an opportunity to forge connections between himself and his friends. This idea was echoed by another participant, who described feeling the ‘connection develop as you all share things about your lives’. None of the participants in this group besides Hugh expressed nervousness or pressure, but instead found it ‘therapeutic/relaxing’, ‘comfortable’, and ‘fun’. Hugh commented that the performance felt like giving an academic presentation, and the others agreed. This
reflects the situatedness of the performance: rather than trying to conform to an external idea of how a ‘real’ performer is supposed to act, these participants brought their own skill sets, habits, and expectations to the performance. While the aesthetic of the academic presentation is perhaps not as charming as one might hope for, it did give them a familiar mechanism for approaching performance.

Two participants responded to the question about the feeling of performance with their pleasure in re-living happy memories. One specifically described the pleasure of experiencing memories while telling stories, indicating that reminiscence is not experienced exclusively in the devising phase. Reminiscence also constituted part of the experience of watching other people perform, about which they were unanimously positive, calling it ‘relaxed’, ‘enjoyable’, ‘enraptured!’ , ‘interested’, ‘engaged’, and ‘vivid’. One participant described herself as ‘privileged’ to listen to stories: ‘some aspects are quite intimate—you are literally getting a snapshot of their lives—their family/friends/values/fears etc.’ The feeling of engagement in the performance phase of Collect Yourselves! was overwhelmingly positive. Participants spoke in terms of their connections to the other people in their group as well as with their own happy memories; the technology itself was transparent to their sensation of connection through performance.

**FRIEND GROUP 2: SEVEN FRIENDS**

![Friend Group 2: seating arrangements.](image)
This session took place from 8:00 pm on Wednesday, 19 June, 2013, in the cosy living room of Isobel’s and Quentin’s home in Cambridge, UK (see Figure 6.8). The couch was set under the staircase, contributing to a sense of being enclosed and protected. Low lighting, designed to help make the projected images more visible, contributed to a sense of relaxation and informality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>M/F</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Occupational status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isobel</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Thirties</td>
<td>Spanish living in UK &lt; 5 years</td>
<td>Graduate student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Thirties</td>
<td>French living in UK &gt; 5 years</td>
<td>Employed full–time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zita</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Twenties</td>
<td>Spanish living in UK &lt; 5 years</td>
<td>Employed full–time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vivian</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Thirties</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Employed part–time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Thirties</td>
<td>French living in UK &gt; 5 years</td>
<td>Employed full–time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quentin</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Thirties</td>
<td>French living in UK &lt; 5 years</td>
<td>Employed full–time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pablo</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Thirties</td>
<td>Spanish living in UK &lt; 5 years</td>
<td>Employed full–time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.9  **Friend Group 2: participants.**

Isobel was the hostess for the evening and my contact person for the group. It was a somewhat mixed group in the sense that only Isobel and Quentin, who are romantic partners, were good friends with each participant. All participants were friends with at least three others in the group, and the friendships overlapped: there were no isolated sub-groups who knew each other but not the others. The three native Spanish speakers would occasionally make comments to each other or check that they were using the correct term in English, as did the three native French speakers. Otherwise, the session was conducted in English. While the transcriptions reveal flaws in the English spoken by non-native speakers, there were rarely any failures of communication, and these were quickly and easily rectified.

56 Before the beginning of the session, the friendship patterns looked like this: Anne knew Isobel, Quentin, Barbara, Pablo; Vivian very slightly; not Zita. Barbara knew Isobel, Quentin, Anne; Vivian casually; not Zita or Pablo. Vivian knew Isobel, Quentin, Pablo; Anne very slightly; Barbara casually; not Zita. Zita knew Isobel, Quentin, Pablo; not Anne, Barbara, Vivian. Pablo knew Isobel, Quentin, Anne, Vivian, Zita; not Barbara.
DEVISING PHASE — THEMATIC ANALYSIS

‘Socialising the social network’ — Quentin

Some participants found the devising phase to be ‘surprising’, challenging, or frustrating. Two had a small number of photos available to them on the computers they used; Pablo later explained that most of his photos were ‘at home’ in Spain, so he had asked his mother to send him some. This belies the rhetoric of connectivity and easy access surrounding digital media. Another participant wished for access to older, analogue photos, and everyone was fascinated by Pablo’s and Quentin’s photos of themselves as children. Once an older photo had been scanned, there was no difference between it and the digital photos that the instructions had asked for in the unfolding of the performance. This group overwhelmingly wanted ease of access regardless of the means of capture: no one mentioned any concerns about the physicality of analogue photos or the ephemerality of digital photos. In performance, the ontologies of digital and analogue media slipped away; only the devising process was affected.

One participant found the wording of the prompts to be confusing and therefore frustrating. On the other hand, two found the devising phase experience to be ‘nice’ or ‘interesting’, and one observed that she felt ‘more self confidence and trying to get closer [to] the question’. Six participants had either never told any of their stories before, or had previously told only parts of one of their stories. Isobel was the only one who had told parts or all of her stories before. One participant volunteered that ‘it was a pleasure to tell the story’ that he had never told before.

As with Friend Group 1, the immediate response to the question of how Collect Yourselves! differed from an ordinary chat was the structure provided by both phases. However, the discussion quickly turned to the intimacy generated by the photos and stories chosen during the devising phase.

When we get together … we just talk about what we like, what we’ve seen, the thought of the moment, political stuff, but you don’t necessarily share personal stories. At least I think it’s nice to share a bit more. But you wouldn’t do it if there’s no structure to help you do it. (Barbara)

It would be easy to assume that these friends would be used to sharing intensely personal information with each other from time to time, and would therefore perceive Collect Yourselves! as a more impersonal or artificial type of interaction. However, the opposite
seems to be the case. They all agreed that *Collect Yourselves!* created an experience marked by very high levels of intimacy and self-disclosure. Barbara expressed an evangelical attitude about this highly personal form of sharing: ‘I think people would like this. I think they would probably feel uncomfortable at first, but I think this is needed’.

Some participants drew parallels between *Collect Yourselves!* and the norms of sharing on social networking sites, as well. Vivian noted that ‘people chat anonymously about very personal things but not as much among friends’. Her observation implies the possibility that the more people become accustomed to intimate conversations with strangers or people known only online, the less likely they are to do so amongst friends in person. Quentin also noted a difference between norms of sharing intimate details online and of sharing in live interaction. He saw *Collect Yourselves!* as ‘a way to bring that social network quality that usually you use in a more isolated way, on Facebook. Socialising the social network’. Isobel immediately added, ‘in real life’. For these participants and those who agreed with their comments, the devising phase contributed to the intimacy that contrasted not only with regular conversation but also with communications through social networking sites.

Prompt four (lie) was the overwhelming favourite of this group in spite of the fact that it was also ‘the most challenging’ (Barbara). Only Anne and Vivian expressed a dislike for it. Isobel connected the fictionalising demanded by the prompt and the self-making aspect of autobiography:

> I was more excited about hearing the lies people created because it’s half-true, half-lie, so it’s the perfect combination of experience and creativity, because you have to invent. And what you invent says a lot about who you are, and what you did and didn’t do. (Isobel)

Isobel’s comment is an indication of the blurring of memory (fact) and imagination (fiction) in autobiographical performance, though in all cases, the performer is responsible for her performance. Other descriptions of prompt four (lie) include ‘exciting’, ‘funny’, ‘creative’, ‘intriguing’, and ‘more of a performance’ (Vivian). Other nominations for favourite prompt were prompt one (regular day), ‘because it was personal’ (Vivian), and prompt three (embarrassing).
PERFORMANCE PHASE — INTERACTION ANALYSIS

‘It’s good to know why I keep some picture of these moments’ —Pablo

Structure: There was a brief pause, after which Isobel said, ‘So I go, no? It has to be by order?’ I pointed out that she did not need to go first, but no one competed with her, so she began. As with Friends Group 1, the person responsible for convening the group of friends took the first turn.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prompt order</th>
<th>Percentage of prompts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prompts followed suit</td>
<td>68.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unprovoked change of order</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reverted to previous order</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.10 Friend Group 2: story order.

As with Friend Group 1, few participants chose to answer a prompt that would violate the established order (see Table 7.4). This was by far the most ‘chatty’ performance, marked by a great deal of conversation during transitions: only eight out of 34 transitions were marked by silence or near silence on the part of the performer. These conversations rarely posed problems; exceptions are described below. Transitions sped up throughout the performance as the participants became accustomed to moving through the space and using the interface. Contrary to Friend Group 1, there were no obvious ‘waves’ of intensity in this performance. Isobel, who began each round, was the most animated performer, and Pablo, who ended each round, was often the least dynamic. However, after his first two rounds, Pablo started to perform as entertainingly as anyone else, and Isobel’s animation did not always mark a point of intensity.

Turn timing: This group nearly completed all 35 of their stories in the 45 minutes allotted (see Table 6.11). Pablo had just begun the final story when the timer ran out. He completed the story without the on-screen image, and they all asked me to project it again as soon as the performance officially finished.
Table 6.11  Friend Group 2: turn timings.
Note: Discrepancies between total and mean storytelling times stem from variations in counting methods.

This group spent by far the most time on prompt two (thinking of you) and the least on prompt one (regular day), stating in interviews that they found the idea of their lives six months ago as not very interesting. Prompt five (forgotten), which occupied the most time for Friend Group 1, came in third for this group. As with Friend Group 1, although prompt four (lie) was their favourite, many participants sped through it.

Table 6.12  Friend Group 2: mean time per prompt (longest in **bold**).

**Turn-taking:** Performers took their turns in the order that their names appeared on screen: Isobel, Anne, Quentin, Barbara, Vivian, Zita, and Pablo. After Isobel’s first turn, she suggested that the person sitting to her right, Barbara, go next. Barbara replied that it was Anne’s turn. When Isobel protested that Anne had just taken a bite of cake, Anne offered to leave the rest of her cake for later, and proceeded to perform. Isobel seemed to want turns to follow the seating order, while Barbara seemed to want the turns to follow the order of the names on screen. When Anne finished, Quentin—whose name appeared third on screen—explicitly checked with the rest of the group that there was no need to go in seating order. This was the only extended negotiation around turn-taking or any other structural element of the performance. The turn order established in the first round was maintained throughout the session without error.
Participation structures: Audience members signalled their participation through numerous interruptions, conversations, and direct address during performance as well as during transitions. Performers in turn signalled their participation by responding to these without losing the thread of their story or abandoning their performance until the end. The interruptions were not rude or distracting, but rather indicated strong interest in the performer’s story or photo. Despite this tendency towards conversation, the performance did not splinter into subgroups or launch simultaneous conversations from audience members’ own ‘personal views’ as some participants in Crabtree, Rodden, and Mariani’s studies did (2004, pp. 399-400). This could be in part because photos were projected on the wall rather than passed from the ‘control centre’ (which in this case would be the performer) to ‘outlying positions’ (in this case, the various audience members) (p. 400).

The two brief times when the performance split into multiple points of focus occurred when audience members looked at the laptop screen instead of the projection. Barbara, seeking a more detailed view of a projected photo, looked closely at the laptop screen from her ‘outlying position’ in the audience and then immediately began the only interaction that threatened to compete with an ongoing performance. However, the rest of the audience stayed focused on the ‘control centre’ of the projected image and the performance did not splinter. Similarly, Zita’s habit of looking at the laptop screen rather than the projection led Isobel to look at the screen, as well, when she tried to discern the fine detail of one of Zita’s images (see Figure 6.9). The performance might have splintered in the way that Crabtree, Rodden, and Mariani (2004) describe had it not been for the overriding interest of all audience members in discerning what was in Zita’s photo. It is therefore likely that projecting individual photos in sequence was important to the establishment of a single thread of performance, even when that performance was marked by conversation.
The other notable marker of participation was Pablo’s shift from diffidence to confidence. He had a very shy and low-key manner, and usually kept his drink in his hand while performing as though he did not intend to stay at the front of the room for long or engage in anything more taxing than simple conversation. However, at the end of his second turn (prompt two, thinking of you), he paused at what would have been a natural stopping point for his story and then went on to explain the meaning of that photo:

I mean not just a particular moment, it was just a coincidence that Vivian is here…. It’s good to know why I keep some picture of these moments. (Pablo)

I understood Pablo to mean that he found the picture significant not just for the particular moment it depicts but for its relationship to the current moment of performance. The thought did not occur to him in the moment; he had already uploaded the phrase ‘why I keep some picture of these moments’. However, his continuation after the pause indicated a willingness to participate more fully than necessary (and, as described below, more fully than intended). Subtle revelations like these maintained the audience’s interest and signalled a level of participation at least as strong as the antics of more animated performers such as Isobel (see Figure 6.10).
Trouble and repair: Very few of the interruptions in this performance could be classed as ‘trouble’. At one point, some audience members chatted while Anne was getting ready to begin prompt two (thinking of you). Anne stood silently waiting for them to finish, indicating by her body language that she was ready to begin but showing no signs of frustration or impatience. The speakers noticed her before long and stopped speaking immediately. Barbara displayed a similar politeness. Despite the fact that she was perhaps the chattiest audience member, she was silent after three of her five turns, which prevented her stories from sparking conversations that might detract from the next performer’s turn. Other than several instances of missing photos, there were no significant technical problems.

Spatial organisation of activity: Everyone performed from the space between Isobel’s seat and the projection except Pablo, who performed from near his seat, and Zita, who stayed crouched in front of the laptop most of the time she performed. As noted above, this orientation seems to have contributed to a near collapse of the ‘performance frame’ (Bauman 1975, p. 297).
Artefacts and documents: 35 photos were projected for the 35 prompts. Only two prompts had multiple photos per prompt, but some participants indicated that they had attempted to upload multiples and were surprised to see only one available during performance. One participant, Anne, chose to upload nothing for prompt three (embarrassing) as well as prompt five (forgotten).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Total photos uploaded*</th>
<th>Mean photos per prompt</th>
<th>Number prompts for which text uploaded</th>
<th>Mean words per text upload</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isobel</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zita</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vivian</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>70.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quentin</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pablo</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.13  Friend Group 2: photos and text uploaded.
*Some participants may have intended to upload more photos than indicated.

Anne wrote extensive captions; Zita wrote none. The rest wrote at least one word for at least three of their prompts. Isobel’s performances consistently engaged far more in self-disclosure than her texts did, particularly as the self-disclosure related to relationships with people in the audience. For example, her prompt one (regular day) caption states that she does yoga, while her body language and word choice conveyed the relationships around her practice.

What do I do in the morning when I wake up? I call my dear Fred, which is what we call him, he is the second man of my life here. My yoga teacher, Fred. (Isobel)

Relationships between her and Fred, and her and her partner Quentin, were all jokingly raised and explained. Barbara asked if the photo was of Quentin, and Quentin replied in the negative: ‘I am the first [man of her life]’. Similarly, Isobel’s text for prompt five

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57 I was aware of this potential problem and had notified them that they could email me their photos as a backup measure, but they did not all take me up on this offer.
(forgotten) states that she likes to remember Los Angeles because she doesn’t like the cold in England, but her performance was notable for her reminiscence about the friend whose car she and Quentin were posing with in the photo. This friend had died very young, and the entire audience was immediately curious about his story.

The other notable discrepancy between text and performance was Anne’s tendency to reveal embarrassing information only in performance. Her caption for prompt one (regular day) states that she got a new job, while the performance revealed that she had already applied for it and had been turned down before trying again. Her performance for prompt two (thinking of you) also revealed something potentially embarrassing for both herself and Barbara: she had gone to Barbara’s house only to find Barbara out of town, an event left out of the text.

**PERFORMANCE PHASE — CODED PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS**

*You have the same eyes* — Barbara to Vivian

This performance was extremely relaxed, conversational, and congenial. Participants were consistently very engaged with each other’s stories and with the process as a whole. Even the shyest participants warmed to the task. Connections were made and underscored throughout the performance.

Isobel started with prompt one (regular day) ‘because it is the most boring, I think,’ and failed to expand her photograph. The audience seemed tense until Barbara asked her to expand the photo. Isobel then noticed and fixed the problem, and immediately afterwards the audience became animated and engaged. The photo was of Isobel doing a handstand, supported by her yoga teacher, lying flat on his back with his arms and legs outstretched (see Figure 6.11). Barbara exclaimed, ‘Oh my God, I took that picture!’ Isobel stretched the truth playfully, stating that she does such spectacular feats everyday. Her tone of voice and exaggerated wave of the arm made it clear that she was joking. Barbara asked Isobel some questions, which helped to set the tone for the performance: a friendly, non-competitive exchange that would maintain the performer’s right to her turn while allowing space for contributions and questions from the audience.
Self-making occurred not only through simple self-disclosure but also through passing judgement on one’s own choices and the choices of others, such as Isobel’s ‘boring’ prompt one (regular day). Later, her partner Quentin’s hair became a topic of her prompt five (forgotten). She chose a photo of herself and Quentin from several years previous for other reasons, but in performance realised how different the two of them looked. In this case, temporal dissonance led to self-discovery and then judgement. She described her own past look as ‘so different’ but Quentin’s as ‘so hot’. The implication was that she would like to see Quentin revert to his previous, shorter style. Isobel also interjected at the beginning of Quentin’s prompt three (embarrassing), saying that while the photo of Quentin with a bad haircut might not be embarrassing for Quentin, it was embarrassing for her. This was clearly intended and taken as a joke, but the fact remains that Isobel felt free to pass judgement on her partner’s appearance during his performance. Her own self-making was entwined with the representation of another person in the audience,
speaking not only of her attitudes about herself but of her attitudes towards her partner and how she would want their relationship to be perceived.

In turn, Quentin’s prompt four (lie) wove a connection to Isobel into the fabric of his story. He showed a photo of a live concert, with the bass player facing away from the audience. Quentin suavely explained that he used to be a professional bass player and pointed ‘himself’ out in the projected photo. He continued by saying, ‘after I met Isobel I thought it was better to find a real job, stay home and we could get something together.’ While the preposterousness of this statement could conceivably be read as an ironic comment on his choice to settle down with Isobel, it was delivered and received as a sincere comment. Even had Quentin been a rock star, he would have given it all up for Isobel. Quentin’s reserved manner did not aim to impress his audience stylistically; therefore, there was no indication that his stated devotion to Isobel within his lie was an exaggeration.

Unlike Friend Group 1, no one seemed uncomfortable with performing their prompt four (lie), though Barbara started her story by saying that she hadn’t been able to think of a good one. Isobel followed up her lie with an explanation of the kernel of truth behind it, though within that explanation she reverted to the lie. Quentin’s lie was preposterous, but he never broke the illusion. Vivian’s, Pablo’s, and Anne’s lies were almost as preposterous, but they also maintained the illusion. In fact, it was long after Anne had finished her deadpan story of spending nine days on a Chinese boat without a translator that Vivian exclaimed in surprise, ‘Oh, that was the lie!’ Vivian in turn created a well-received lie about a party where all of the guests wore pink, floppy hats, presented as though the party was just out of view of the photo she displayed—a photo of a classical sculpture in a museum (see Figure 6.12). This group not only enjoyed the challenge of coming up with a lie, as described above, but for the most part they carried their lies off with aplomb. While of course all of the stories and all seven ‘protoselves’ (Barclay 1994) created through performance were unique, self-making tended toward convergence in that they all defined themselves in relation to each other at least once during the performance, and they expressed support for each other’s views and experiences.
**Heightened attention**

Several of the performances in this group stood out for the tangents that the stories take compared to what seemed most obvious about the photos, a phenomenon coded as ‘representation dissonance’ that contributed to the ‘conspicuousness’ of the digital media. For example, Vivian’s prompt one (regular day) was a photo of her brother and young daughter captioned in part: ‘We went along to a Christmas party at the local children’s centre. Here’s a picture of my brother and Frances’. The photo showed a very young girl holding a stuffed rabbit and sitting on a rocking horse, with a man looking at her fondly. What Vivian chose to talk about, though, was the frog backpack that her brother gave to her daughter for Christmas. Vivian also made the ‘clip-clop’ horse noise that her brother taught to her daughter, and that her daughter now makes every time she sees a horse. Vivian used the performance to convey precisely those things that neither a photograph nor a caption can do effectively, which is to explain the enacted, embodied connections between two absent people, while giving us insight into Vivian’s own feelings about the facts she was explaining. What was simply a photo of a cute child became the touchstone for a performance of Vivian’s family relationships.

Another example is Zita’s prompt two (thinking of you), a photograph that most of the audience had a difficult time deciphering. It showed grilled spring onions, ‘a traditional
meal from Catalonia’ that Zita had chosen while thinking of Isobel (see Figure 6.13). Her performance, however, punctuated by several over-the-shoulder glances back at Isobel, made it clear that Zita was ‘more jealous of you than thinking of you’. Zita had missed a large family gathering for the first time, while Isobel had been back home with her own family at the same time. The onions served as a springboard for a story whose real point was homesickness. Then, on Isobel’s prompting, the mood changed to joking around about the ‘sexual way’ that people might eat the onions. Zita’s performance ranged from pathos to comedy in the space of just over a minute, primarily due to the dissonance between the emotions in the story and the photo of onions.

Figure 6.13 Zita’s Catalan onions, making her jealous of Isobel.

Anne’s response to prompt five (forgotten) used a lack of digital media to intensify her appearance. Anne found a photo that she had truly forgotten about and did not care about, so she did not upload it, and it seems that she actually did delete it. It was a photo of a ‘very, very cute’ bird that she had seen in Australia and assumed that she would never see again. The real subject of the performance, though, was Anne’s surprise at
having taken such a photo and her recreation of that surprise for her audience, plus the ensuing judgement that the photo ‘was not interesting’. As she explained, ‘I went through the different pictures, and at a certain point I just saw one and thought, what’s that?’ The way she crinkled her nose and turned her head indicated mild disgust at herself for having done something so silly as to take a picture of a bird simply because she would never see it again. The dissonance between the cute bird each audience member was imagining and the blank space that Anne preferred intensified Anne’s appearance, not in its physicality per se but for how her personality might be discerned through it. Anne used a similar technique for prompt two (thinking of you). Her story described a park that she did not have a photo of, so she showed one that ‘has not been taken in the same season, but this is the kind of place where I imagined Barbara, Isobel and other people I did not know yet would spend part of the afternoon together’. For Anne, this was a photographic record of her imagination that also served as a vehicle for her audience to approach Anne’s memories through the exercise of their own imaginations. This intermingling of imagination with memory is frequently used in autobiography (Bruner 1994; Pearson & Shanks 2001; Govan et al 2007; Heddon 2008, pp. 83, 99) and, I argue, serves to heighten the audience’s attention to the performer as they imagine her to be.

Temporal dissonances played a particularly large role in this performance, partly because Pablo, Quentin, and Zita had few personal photos to hand and scanned in older, analogue photos instead. In Pablo’s case, his audience was charmed by seeing photos of him as a very young boy in contrast to the grown man performing in front of them. Quentin, though, made use of a much more recent photo to play more intricately with performance and temporal dissonance. His photo for prompt three (embarrassing) showed him making an angry face (see Figure 6.14). He began his story saying that he ‘was really happy to go on vacation’, whereupon Barbara interrupted, saying, ‘You don’t look very happy there.’ There was laughter all around, which Quentin incorporated into his performance. ‘I will explain why,’ he said, and continued with a story of a disastrous holiday. Nothing about his story could have been inferred from the photo until he described getting a bad haircut. A quick glance confirmed that the haircut in the photo was very different from the one Quentin was currently sporting. Quentin finished his story by saying, ‘Robert asked me to express everything you think about Portugal’. Immediately, the photo became a piece of performance documentation (Auslander 2006). It was a photo of a performance event: Quentin’s performance of his feelings during his rained-out Portuguese holiday. The Quentin of the present moment did not attempt to recreate this facial expression, but rather clenched his fists in the air to either side of his head, re-performing his past feelings in a different way and doubling, not simply repeating, the expression of those
feelings. The audience could now see Quentin’s frustration at his appearance and at his miserable holiday, multiply performed and displayed. This technique heightened his audience’s attention to his appearance and garnered a long, loud, appreciative laugh.

Figure 6.14 Quentin pulling a face at his bad haircut and worse holiday.

Barbara followed Quentin’s performance with a similar one of her own. Her photo for prompt three (embarrassing) was taken when her boyfriend asked her to show him how she would act if she were facing a dinosaur. She responded by opening her mouth very wide, and he took the photo that she now projected for her audience. Barbara did not attempt to re-enact her photo, either, but acted out the reaction of the shocked little boy who saw her at the moment the photo was taken. Barbara gave the impression that the reason she did not re-enact the photo was her true embarrassment about the size of her mouth when she opens it wide, in contrast to Quentin’s nonchalance about his bad haircut, but the effect was the same. The digital media brought a slice of the past into the present moment, where the performer amplified its effect by adding further layers of detail and parallel re-enactments that complemented rather than duplicated the media.

**Situatedness**

Participants made use of the spaces between stories to solidify connections among themselves. For example, Barbara asked Isobel about her yoga teacher and why he had not attended an event the previous Saturday; Isobel asked Vivian ‘Is that the brother I knew?’ at the end of Vivian’s prompt one (regular day); Isobel interjected ‘I took it’
when Quentin showed photo of himself in nothing but swimming trunks for prompt one (regular day); again, Isobel interjected ‘I was the groupie,’ this time in Quentin’s prompt four (lie); and Barbara commented that ‘you have the same eyes’ to Vivian in response to Vivian’s emotional disclosure of seeing her mother as a ‘vulnerable old lady’. A more complex connection was made late in the performance, after Barbara told her prompt four (lie) about her brother’s pig, which she said her brother had adopted like a child. When Barbara was ending her turn, Anne said, ‘I’m sure Pablo understands,’ referring to Pablo’s recent story about the pet rabbit that his family had cooked and eaten. Pablo took up this joke: ‘Yeah, this is the kind of family I want’. These brief interruptions and transitions did not detract from any performer’s ability to get his or her story across. Instead, they helped to cement the relationships among the performers, giving the performance a greater sense of cohesion.

Anne also reflected the situatedness of the performance by playing with the system. She knew from experience with prompt five (forgotten) that she could fulfil the requirements of the performance without uploading a photo, so she used her tactics from prompt five on prompt three (embarrassing). Rather than find a photo that she was not actually embarrassed about, or revealing something she would rather not reveal, Anne made creative use of the explicit and implicit rules in Collect Yourselves! She acted within the norms and expectations of the group, gamely offering a description of a photo she would be truly embarrassed by, without violating her own boundaries or going to extreme lengths to acquire a copy of the photo from her mother in France. There is also every chance that the photo her audience imagined was more embarrassing than the actual photo she described. In either case, like storyteller Michael Parent, she ‘invite[d her audience] to make their own visuals, to make their own meaning’ (Parent cited in Wilson 2006, p. 187). In refusing to show a photo, Anne successfully negotiated her personal boundaries, her own limited digital archives, the technological system, and the expectations of her fellow participants.

Aesthetics of the event
Zita embodied a combination of confidence and vulnerability that made even the least ‘tellable’ (Sacks 1995) of her stories carry a slight amount of risk. She spoke quite softly and struggled more than the others with her English. She did not stand to perform but remained crouched near the laptop as though ready to stop at any moment. This also prevented her from making full use of her body, as for example Isobel often did by shifting her weight or striking a pose. However, Zita’s stories nearly always contained an element of emotion or self-disclosure that not everyone would care to admit to. The
onion photo led her to disclose her jealous homesickness (prompt two, thinking of you, described above); the photo of herself and the young boy she looks after led her to disclose her sadness over leaving her nannying job (prompt one, regular day). Prompts three (embarrassing) and five (forgotten) revealed her in oddly sexualised poses, in contradiction to her demure manner. These nuggets of emotion or self-disclosure were not embedded in a long story or hidden under layers of mannerisms, but spoken calmly and simply. Unlike Isobel, who sometimes joked about her feelings, Zita could not hide behind extravagant exaggerations or use the excuse that she was only kidding. Whatever sorrows or desires she revealed, she took the risk of revealing them directly.

Pablo’s stories were sometimes not the most ‘tellable’ (Sacks 1995), either: his prompt two (thinking of you) recounted a Guy Fawkes fireworks display with Isobel, Quentin, and Vivian, while his prompt one (regular day) was a description of an office car park in the snow. In these instances, he revealed very little emotion, and therefore left little room for his audience to engage with him through either memory or imagination. His performance came alive in prompt five (forgotten), a photo of him as a small boy with his pet rabbit (see Figure 6.15). Just as placidly as before, he explained that his mother later cooked the rabbit and fed it to the family. This captured the audience’s attention and they began asking questions about the experience. Pablo replied very directly: ‘I think I cried, I really cried.’ Like Zita, Pablo had not constructed a ‘persona’ to hide behind as a professional storyteller might have (storyteller Claire Mulholland cited in Wilson 2006, p. 175). Therefore, his admission rang utterly true, and the audience empathised strongly. Isobel pushed the issue further, asking if his family had forced him to eat the rabbit. ‘Yeah, probably they did,’ Pablo replied. ‘What you can expect, 200 people living in that town, you kill the rabbit, it’s just the rabbit or you.’ Pablo had now hit his stride, eliciting gales of laughter from the audience on top of a moment of self-disclosure and intimacy. It was precisely Pablo’s and Zita’s lack of ‘theatricality’ in terms of a ‘highly conscious approach to an audience’ (Petersen 2005, p. 212) that enabled them to establish a strong emotional connection with their audience.
The moment where I as an audience member, or more accurately a bystander (Benford et al 2006), felt most keenly caught up in this performance was during Barbara’s extended story for prompt two (thinking of you) about a day spent with Anne and another friend of theirs, Denis. The photo is a faux-antique snapshot of Anne standing in the middle of a field, far in the distance. Barbara described the walk they took and offered what could have been the conclusion to a short but satisfactory story: ‘I really enjoyed this afternoon with Anne and Denis … because first of all it was good exercise and good company and good fun.’ The ‘first of all’ indicated her intention to continue, which she did by taking the story in a very personal direction. ‘I think the fields and all that reminded me of my childhood growing up in the countryside, and I just felt really at home in those fields’. At this point Barbara gave a quick gasp mixed with a laugh as though overwhelmed with emotion. She continued:
This particular moment, I don’t know, I really liked this vision of Anne in the field. I thought it was so poetic, almost like a fairy tale, I don’t know, I’m really glad I captured that moment. She was so pretty there, I don’t know, it was just really—perfect. It was a perfect kind of moment, yeah. (Barbara)

Anne giggled at the mention of her looking ‘poetic’, indicating pleasure and perhaps embarrassment. Barbara, meanwhile, indicated by her manner and gaze that she was entirely sincere in this description, and even paused before ‘perfect’ and gestured as though searching for exactly the right word (see Figure 6.16). Towards the end of this story, she became very quiet, and her audience matched that quietness, as though aware that any sign of disapproval could cause Barbara to feel rejected or ridiculed. Finally, after she finished, an audience member softly and gently asked a follow-up question. Everyone laughed in relief, and Barbara’s response came with a shift in tone that indicated the risky moment of intimate self-disclosure had passed. For me, though, this performance was condensed into Barbara’s quick gasp of a laugh as she tried to perform the beauty of a perfect, fairy-tale moment, that to anyone not present that night would be nothing more meaningful than a snapshot of a far-off woman standing in the grass.

Figure 6.16 Barbara trying to convey the ‘perfect kind of moment’.
REFLECTION PHASE — THEMATIC ANALYSIS

‘This was a live experience ... it should stay that way’ —Barbara

The experience of using Collect Yourselves! was reported to be positive across the board. Two participants reflected on the value of the system to forge connections among both friends and friends of friends: among friends it ‘deepened the bond we have’, and with the others it ‘made me meet new people who can become new friends’. By the end of the session, all participants felt that they knew everyone in the room. Descriptions included ‘fun and intimidating’, ‘fun and touching’, ‘exciting’, ‘interesting’, ‘pleasant’, and ‘such a great experience’. Anne liked the ‘straight path’ structure of Collect Yourselves!, which served both to guide topics and to prevent a single story from going on for too long.

As with Friend Group 1, the quietest members of this group appreciated that Collect Yourselves! balanced the contributions of shy and talkative individuals. One of these was Pablo, who noted that the structure removes the ‘leader who is driving the conversation’ in regular conversation, giving quieter or shyer participants the chance to speak and ‘to do the best’. This opinion was shared by the dominant performer of this group, Isobel, who volunteered the comment that ‘it’s really good to hear the ones who are more shy’.

Zita revealed the strategies she imagined most people would use for choosing a story order. ‘I was interested in why most of us except for Isobel chose the embarrassing one third,’ she said. Her explanation was that ‘obviously’ no one would choose to perform prompt three (embarrassing) first, but that equally no one would want to leave it for last in case time ran out. This comment did not spur a longer conversation, but it does reveal the conscious though unstated decision-making processes at work for at least one participant.

Only one participant would be happy to share any of the photos from this session online. Most would refuse to post their ‘embarrassing’ photo (prompt three). Some would not share their lie (prompt four) or forgotten photo (prompt five), either. One would not show any of them, in an effort to manage the ‘meaning’ behind the photos and not to appear ‘egocentric’. As with Friend Group 1, almost all participants experienced an implicit level of control in this live experience that they do not find online.

The feeling of performing tended to include a mix of pleasure and challenge, not unlike the feeling of taking part in the devising phase. Two participants described feeling ‘nervous’, one of being ‘a bit embarrassed’, and one of being ‘uncomfortable, but it was
still fun as we weren’t asked to talk about serious matter[s]’. This participant identified ‘social pressure’ as the cause of his or her discomfort: ‘Was it funny? Did I make a good choice of picture?’ Half of these participants noted that feelings of nerves or discomfort passed with time. Pablo experienced perhaps the clearest sensation of ‘liminality and transformation’ reported in the interviews and questionnaires. He spoke the least of all participants in this group and preferred listening to performing. However, he surprised himself when the timer ran out during his final story: he discovered not only that his audience wanted him to continue his story, but that he wanted to continue his performance.

All participants felt positive about being audience members for each other, although one participant admitted that she did not find all the stories to be interesting. Other responses include ‘interested’, ‘amused’, ‘a funny and quick way to know’ both friends and strangers, and ‘curious about the others’ choices’. Anne noted the importance of sharing time and space with performers, rather than simply looking at their photos or hearing their stories:

I think we can learn a lot about people by how they react, rather than through biographical stories. But I think they are quite complementary. It’s true there is one face we very often don’t see. (Anne)

This interest in seeing the ‘one face we very often don’t see’ describes the importance of live performance in a dynamic, reciprocal environment where the audience can challenge the performer to see their reaction. Vivian described the experience of being an audience member in different terms but arrived at a similar conclusion. She called it ‘empathetic’ and said that ‘it’s more intimate as an experience than a usual drinks party or a Facebook browse’. Intimacy is also implicated in participants’ attitudes towards sharing the video record of their performances to others. All would be reluctant to show the full video or would refuse outright, primarily because it is too ‘private’ or ‘personal’ to be shared. Interestingly, though, two participants cite the liveness of the performance experience as a reason not to share a video of the performance online. Barbara admits that she might show an edited version to friends but would not be inclined to do so because she ‘like[s] that this was a live experience and felt it should stay that way’. Similarly, Vivian would refuse to share any version of the video because the value ‘was in an the moment [of] experience’, and the performance would not ‘be as entertaining as a video as it was as an experience’. In my interpretation, these responses raise the issue of liveness, not in pursuit of its ontology, but as a key component of the phenomenological experience of
self-disclosure, risk, and intimacy. Live and recorded versions of a performance do not have to be posited as hopelessly irreconcilable in order for an individual to prefer one type of experience over another. For at least these two participants, their personal digital media have been bound up in an ephemeral, intimate experience that they wish to preserve only in memory.

DISCUSSION

This chapter analysed a ‘baseline’ group of friends who came together for an unstructured conversation. Each had a smartphone with personal photos on it, but these were brought out only twice. The conversation was marked by a large discrepancy between the most and least talkative participants, fluid and overlapping conversation, very few instances of media sharing, and very few of the properties of autobiographical performance. This unstructured and unprompted conversation provided an example of what Collect Yourselves! was attempting to change.

The chapter went on to analyse two performances of Collect Yourselves! as used by two groups of friends. These analyses reveal part of the response to the primary research question of this thesis: How can intermedial autobiographical performance advance the understanding of interactions among people and their personal digital media? In comparison to the Friend Control Group, the Collect Yourselves! performances elicited a much more even distribution of time spent speaking; much greater and richer engagement with digital media; multiple instances of self-disclosure and self-discovery; several moments of connection, intimacy, vulnerability, and risk; and behaviours that contribute to all categories of ‘heightened attention’ and the ‘aesthetics of the event’ (Fischer-Lichte 2008b). Friends performing with Collect Yourselves! found themselves learning more about each other and feeling more intimately connected than they had imagined, primarily through meeting the challenge of a two-phase performance experience. This discussion draws together the findings of both Friend Groups.

DEVISING PHASE

For Friend Groups, devising tended to be seen as both challenging and rewarding. In fact, the prompt singled out as the ‘best’ by each group (prompt four, lie) was also the most challenging. This challenge was central to the creation of extra-conversational moments in performance where risks could be taken and intimacies forged. By pushing participants to examine their personal digital media from slightly unusual perspectives, the devising phase encouraged the creation of new stories or newly framed tellings of old
stories. This novelty made self-discovery possible and promoted the emergence of unexpected feelings or revelations during performance.

‘Performed photos’ emerged as a new category in both Friend Groups, sitting at a crossroads between the ‘photo-driven’ and the ‘story-driven’ (Balabanović et al. 2000, p. 570). The new stories were ‘photo-driven’ in terms of the motivation for telling them, but performers almost always provided significant description and narrative instead of the simple identifiers noted by Balabanović, Chu, and Wolff (2000, p. 570), and usually performed them using at least one behaviour that indicated ‘heightened attention’ or the ‘aesthetics of the event’. ‘Performed photos’ include Grace’s touching self-discovery about the importance of holding onto traces of past relationships, Isobel’s self-disclosure about her deceased friend that captured her audience’s attention so strongly, and Pablo’s story of being fed his pet rabbit for dinner. It appears that the devising process, perhaps in combination with the increased pressure to ‘perform’ in an extra-conversational scenario, contributed to the emergence of this category of ‘performed photos’ that is at the heart of what Quentin calls ‘socialising the social network’, as it demonstrates the potential for even the most forgettable of digital media to become meaningful and ‘tellable’ (Sacks 1995) through practices of performance.

Finally, comments made during the performance and in the subsequent interviews revealed that personal digital media archives might be overwhelmingly large and unwieldy for many, but not for all. Even relatively young people who are very comfortable with digital technologies can find themselves with only a few personal photos to hand, or might not be in the habit of taking many photos. Attitudes towards social networking were similarly variable, despite the fact that all participants used social networking sites to some degree.

**Performance Phase**

The Friend Groups were very structured and conventional. The convener of the group went first, and the others followed in order either of seating or of names on screen. They mostly followed suit from one prompt to the next, though never neatly in rounds. They got through all of their stories with very little ‘trouble’: any interruptions were smoothly handled, and transitions went off without a hitch. Each group had a very distinct performance style, as well: Friend Group 1 were efficient and streamlined, like a well-oiled presentation machine, while Friend Group 2 were extremely animated and engaged with each other’s performances. This ‘group-making’, like self-making, emerged through
the complex relationships among the participants, the technology, and the unique situation of each performance. The tendency to cohere might also have reflected the tendency of both groups to spend a great deal of time on the most overtly group-oriented prompt (prompt two, thinking of you).

Self-making was evidenced by self-disclosure, self-discovery, and the manner of performance. ‘Heightened attention’ was influenced most dramatically by ‘performed photos’ and ‘doubled indexicality’, an example of the dissonance that tended to heighten attention of both the ‘conspicuousness’ of the digital media object and the intensity of the performer’s appearance (or in the case of Wendy’s many hairstyles, the audience member’s appearance) in oscillation. Instances of ‘doubled indexicality’ not only added a temporally disjunct layer of representation to the performance, but they also opened a space for the performer to discover something about himself. For example, Pablo explained during his performance of prompt three (embarrassing) that he was not as embarrassed as he had thought he would be when he selected the photo (see Figure 6.17).

![Figure 6.17 Pablo then and now.](image)

Situatedness was not found in every story told within a performance, and in fact some performers in the Friend Groups made only the scantest reference to the time, place, or audience members of the performance (Xiu made two; Hugh made three; and Barbara, Pablo, and Vivian each made five). However, references to others in the room were fairly
common, both as topics of performance in prompt two (thinking of you) or as asides between performers and audience members (in Friend Group 2). While these might not cause the sharp spikes of ‘heightened attention’ that ‘doubled indexicality’ can, a sudden departure from such references can cause a plunge in energy, as when Xiu followed two stories about Wendy with her own prompt two (thinking of you) devoted to a separate group of people.

In terms of the ‘aesthetics of the event’, the most important elements to emerge from both Friend Groups were risk and intimacy, which describe behaviours or conditions that can lead to moments of ‘liminality and transformation’ where participants experience a transition from one emotional or attitudinal state to another. The most compelling moments of both performances came when performers took a risk and shared a personal experience or attitude that might have met with lack of interest or disapproval. Examples included the cool reception to Hugh’s story about the nearly naked man in Soho, or the catch in Barbara’s voice when her emotions almost overwhelmed her story of Anne in the field. These shared intimacies provided powerful moments in which both performer and audience member could find her feelings or beliefs challenged. One concern I had during the design process was that the devising phase would lead to a forced or artificial storytelling experience that would not compare favourably to the possibilities for intimate disclosure in conversation. This concern seems to have been utterly misplaced. According to participants and in line with observation of the performances, Collect Yourselves! seems to have provided an opportunity for more intimacy and risk than in ordinary conversation, and intimacy and risk provided the opportunity for moments of liminality and transformation.

**REFLECTION PHASE**

The felt experience of creating a Collect Yourselves! performance was positive for all participants. By ‘connection’ I refer to the fact that ‘the experience of sharing images and stories, especially face-to-face, enacts the relationships between owner and viewer’ (Van House 2009, p. 1083, emphasis in the original). ‘Connection’ is the present-moment sensation of that experience whereby relationships are enacted and therefore in some way altered (for the most part, strengthened). Many would be reluctant to share a video of the event online or would refuse outright, often citing the ephemerality and ‘event’-ness of the performance as the key reasons. I understand this reluctance to indicate that it was more important for these participants to forge connections than to share information. The digital media artefacts served the performance, rather than the other way around, while
performance provided a way for people to share intimate stories with friends that they might otherwise, paradoxically, share only with anonymous others online (Vivian).

The feeling of performing was described in similar terms to the feeling of the devising phase. Responses ranged from relaxing to uncomfortable, but as with the devising phase, there was room for participants to surprise themselves, as when Pablo realised how much he was enjoying himself when the timer ran out. The shyest and quietest members of each group also appreciated the increased opportunity to speak, which in the case of these Friend Groups was borne out in the statistics as well as in their sensations. As mentioned in Chapter 2, this thesis refers to ‘audiences’ rather than ‘spectators’ in an effort to focus on interaction rather than the intrapersonal act of perception implied by spectatorship. I therefore use the term ‘audiencing’ to refer to the act of contributing to a performance event by attending to someone else’s storytelling and digital media. Audiencing is based on the act of perceiving the performance, but it also alludes to the contribution that audience members make to the overall performance event (Bavelas et al 2000) through the ‘autopoietic feedback loop’ (Fischer-Lichte 2008b, p. 165). The feeling of ‘audiencing’ in Friend Groups was uniformly positive and noted for its intimacy. Reminiscence was involved in both the devising and the performance phases and was linked to positive responses to the challenge of the devising phase.

Chapter 7 will analyse two ‘strangers’ groups, and Chapter 8 will explore the implications for both design and performance of all four groups taken together. Chapter 8 will therefore address not only design goals but also the project’s overarching research question: How can intermedial autobiographical performance advance the understanding of interactions among people and their personal digital media?
Chapter 7.

Stranger Group performances

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings of the Stranger Groups. It begins with a brief description of a baseline study conducted on a group of four people who had never met. They showed each other photos on their personal devices (smartphones, a digital camera, and a laptop). After a short break, they played a board game. The aim of the first activity was to see how strangers might get to know each other using digital media sharing without the structure, rules, or prompts of Collect Yourselves! The aim of the second was to note any difference between unstructured digital media sharing and its opposite: a structured, rule-bound game that prompted participants to engage in reminiscence.

The chapter then analyses the two Collect Yourselves! performances created by groups of strangers, including their interview and questionnaire data. As before, the analysis is divided in four parts: thematic analysis of the devising phase, interaction analysis of the performance phase, coded performance analysis of the performance phase, and thematic analysis of the ‘reflection phase’ (which refers to the questionnaire and interview data gathered from participants immediately following their performance). The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings from these Stranger Group performances.

The research question at the centre of these analyses is the same as for the Friend Groups: How can intermedial autobiographical performance advance the understanding of interactions among people and their personal digital media? This question is answered in full in Chapter 8.

STRANGER CONTROL GROUP

‘You feel special when you see things like that’ —Nancy

The purpose of this control group was to form a baseline against which interactions with Collect Yourselves! could be compared. It posed a challenge in that strangers do not tend to come together and share stories or photos without some sort of external motivation, and any motivation introduced by the research would invalidate its value as a baseline. Therefore, the Stranger Control Group session was divided into halves, each half
providing a motivation to prompt part of the behaviour of a Collect Yourselves! performance. The first half addressed digital media sharing in the absence of any game-based structures by asking participants to share personal digital media for twenty minutes without any devising phase, rules, or prompts. The second half asked them to reminisce using game-based structures for their actions but without using any personal digital media. This was done by asking participants to spend twenty minutes playing a commercially available board game called Reminiscing, a trivia game that invites personal reminiscence. In this way, it would be possible to observe unstructured media sharing among strangers as well as the types of interactions they engage in during a very structured engagement with personal memories, without using Collect Yourselves! or any similar system. The participants were asked to bring a portable digital device with their own photos on it for the first half of the session, but were otherwise not given any instructions.

As with the Friend Control Group, the Stranger Control Group was not intended to constitute a major component of the work of this thesis. While Collect Yourselves! was designed to nudge participants from ordinary conversational media sharing into the potentially transformational practice of performance, the research questions are not focused on determining the difference between the two conditions. In fact, it has been my contention throughout this thesis that there is no clear dividing line between the two. However, it would be foolish to attempt to establish whether Collect Yourselves! has prompted a move away from ordinary conversational media sharing without at least some observation of what that might look like. A single session with four participants (see Table 7.1) cannot begin to ‘prove’ any generalisable statements about unstructured media sharing practices among strangers, but it can offer relevant and up-to-date examples of the types of behaviours suggested in the relatively sparse literature on such practices (Stelmaszewska et al 2008, p. 146; Lucero et al 2011).

———

58 ‘Reminiscing: 1960s to 2000s’ by Paul Lamond Games. The official description of this game states that it ‘not only challenges your memory of past events, trends, music, clothes, radio, TV and films from the 1960s to the 1990s, but also prompts you to remember thoughts and feelings from your personal past.’
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>M/F</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Occupational status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opal</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Thirties</td>
<td>Australian visiting UK</td>
<td>Employed full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penny</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fifties</td>
<td>American living in UK &gt; 10 years</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fifties</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Employed full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ursula</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Forties</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Employed full-time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 7.1 Stranger Control Group: participants.**

The group came together in a University of Surrey classroom from 18:30 on Wednesday, 21 August, 2013 (see Figure 7.1). Participants introduced themselves and began to chat before the session started, so when they were asked to share digital media, Penny and Ursula were ready with photos that they had already mentioned in conversation. All but one of the digital media artefacts shared were photos; Ursula also shared a video. The shortest story was Penny’s 20-second description of a photo of Thomas Hardy’s house: she simply identified the photo while Ursula prepared a video, then passed her turn to Ursula. The longest was Nancy’s three minute, 16 second sequence of four related stories stemming from a photo of some chalk cliffs.

![Seating Arrangements](image)

**Figure 7.1 Stranger Control Group: seating arrangements.**

It was somewhat difficult to share photos on smartphones or digital cameras, even in such a small group. Tactics varied from holding the device towards the centre of the table, forcing the audience to crowd around it, to passing the device around. On multiple occasions, the person whom the group assumed should go next could not get her media ready to display quickly enough, and attention would turn to another participant. Participants often ignored each other’s stories to begin searching for their own next
image to show. Misunderstandings about turn-taking also led to confusion and the impression of rudeness on the part of the person who could access her media most quickly, which necessitated repair on two occasions. Ursula shared a video that she had made of a ride on her motorcycle, set to music. In line with the findings of Frohlich (2004, p. 102), Ursula's audience felt free to speak while the music played, which interfered with any story she might have intended to tell. She ended the video early, and in her questionnaire revealed that she found the video ‘a bit “egotistical” to share too widely’ despite the fact that others spoke over it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Total time holding floor</th>
<th>Number of stories told</th>
<th>Mean story length (mm:ss)</th>
<th>Normalised standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opal</td>
<td>4:53</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2:24</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penny</td>
<td>1:23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0:38</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ursula</td>
<td>4:13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1:03</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>6:25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2:08</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16:54</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1:31</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.2 Stranger Control Group: total timings.

The average length of a story in this group was shorter than either of the Stranger Groups but longer than either of the Friend Groups. However, there was a huge variation in story lengths: the longest story was almost the longest told in any group, and the shortest story was the shortest told in any group (see Table 7.2). Despite these differences in story length, the session seemed fairly balanced because, when digital media were not being shown, storytelling turned to conversation. Frohlich (2004) describes a similar conversation as one in which ‘the contributions are so equal that it is not appropriate to distinguish between an audience and a presenter’ (Frohlich 2004, p. 153). All participants asked questions, and some told ‘response’ stories (Norrick 2000, p. 112). Thus the overall impression was of a conversation punctuated by storytelling and interrupted by efforts to retrieve and display media.

In contrast to Collect Yourselves! performances, there were no stories about regular days, outstandingly memorable photos, lies, or forgotten images. Two of the stories in this group were embarrassing, though embarrassing tales are common in conversational storytelling (Norrick 2000, p. 143). Penny, Nancy, and Opal showed only photos of places they had been, while Ursula primarily showed photos that reflected her passion for motorcycling. The one example of ‘heightened attention’ or the ‘aesthetics of the event’
came from Nancy. After describing her experience of finding an adder as a child, she said, ‘You feel special when you see things like that’. Nancy was describing a personal sensation that she expected everyone to recognise. This was a disarming piece of self-disclosure embedded into a story that Nancy almost certainly had not planned to tell (as it emerged three topics away from the original photo that she shared). However, it did not entail any particular risk and caused no change to the flow of energy or attention in her audience. Overall, their experience was a positive one, described as ‘fun’ and ‘very enjoyable’ by most and ‘slightly nerve wracking’ by Opal. Opal and Penny both felt some pressure to choose interesting photos, and both criticised some of the stories they heard. They agreed that digital media sharing allowed everyone to contribute and share their experiences, but that some sort of connection between people or stories was necessary to give direction as to which photo to share next.

The second part of the session was a 20-minute session playing a board game called *Reminiscing*, which used dice and books of trivia questions. Each turn included a bonus question meant to encourage reminiscence, but these were usually phrased as closed questions and therefore elicited little beyond a ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Turn-taking was regulated by the game and happened without error. The amount of time spent on a turn depended on how long it took the player to guess the answer, so a comparison of time ‘holding the floor’ is not fair (although in the game as well as the media sharing session, Nancy spoke for the longest time). Each participant played two turns. While there was self-making at play, as there would be in virtually any interpersonal interaction, no one engaged in notable strategies for ‘heightened attention’ or the ‘aesthetics of the event’, and situatedness was limited to negotiating the rules. The participants’ reaction to the game was varied: Ursula and Nancy enjoyed themselves and Opal enjoyed the impersonality of the game, but Penny was extremely bored: ‘We didn’t really know each other well enough to lapse into interesting storytelling’. In the interview, it emerged that while games can provide structure, they also focus participants on winning at the expense of personal connection fostered by conversation.

This baseline study confirmed a number of assumptions in the design process: sharing digital media on personal devices can be awkward even for small groups; conversation can intrude on storytelling and digital media sharing; there can be very large differentials between the most and least talkative participants; an emphasis on winning a game can detract from performance; and there are few opportunities for ‘heightened attention’ or the ‘aesthetics of the event’ in either unstructured digital media sharing or structured games. Their encounters were marked by awkward negotiations for turn-taking, uneven
attention to each other’s contributions, and little, if any, risk or intimacy, although the participants did appreciate the opportunity to find out about each other’s interests quickly through digital media sharing.

**STRANGER GROUP 1: FIVE STRANGERS**

This session took place in Oak Suite 3, a small conference room on the University of Surrey Stag Hill campus (see Figure 7.2), from 19:00 on Monday, 15 April, 2013. It is a small, well-appointed space with bright lighting that contributed to a slight difficulty in seeing some of the projected photos.

![Figure 7.2 Stranger Group 1: seating arrangements.](image)

All participants (see Table 7.3) owned smartphones and were in the habit of taking digital photos. All were familiar with social networking, but two never post to social networking sites, and one commented that she posts photos but not the stories behind them. All seemed concerned with protecting their privacy and managing the impressions they made on others.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>M/F</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Occupational status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leo</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Fifties</td>
<td>Zimbabwean living UK &gt; 20 years</td>
<td>Employed full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marta</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Forties</td>
<td>Australian living in UK &lt; 10 years</td>
<td>Employed full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ravi</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Thirties</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Employed full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ebba</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fifties</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Employed full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanna</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Forties</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Graduate student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 7.3 Stranger Group 1: participants.**

**DEVISING PHASE — THEMATIC ANALYSIS**

*Making ‘connections ... in a far more natural way’ by being ‘self-centred’ —Marta*

Three participants saw the devising phase as a ‘chore’ and found it difficult to choose images to suit the prompt. One ‘could have uploaded photos from CDs to get a better range, but just wanted to finish it quickly!’, while another had a disorganised archive mixing analogue and digital. The two participants who enjoyed the devising phase found it ‘interesting to dig back and decide what to select’ or to ‘think about what others I don’t know would find relevant’. Those who focused on the task of creating a performance found the devising phase to be difficult, while those who got caught up in reminiscence or imagination had a more positive experience.

Most of the stories chosen in the devising phase had never been told before. Marta hesitated to call some of her performances ‘stories’ at all, ‘in the sense that none exactly rate as party pieces!’ What Marta perceived as a non-story is most likely what I refer to as a ‘performed story’, as from the point of view of an audience member, all of Marta’s stories were well fleshed-out and ‘tellable’ (Sacks 1995). The participants in this group did not report ‘intimacy’ as the Friend Groups did, but their response to the question of the difference between *Collect Yourselves!* and a regular chat centred on connection. They spoke of ‘insight into people’, making ‘connections’, and discussing ‘things you wouldn’t share necessarily with a group of people’. They made these connections, counter-intuitively, ‘in a far more natural way’ using *Collect Yourselves!* Chats with strangers force people to ‘search[] for common ground’ and ‘go on longer than you really
want to’ in an effort to find connection points. Instead, Collect Yourselves! put people in a position of being ‘self-centred’, as Marta put it:

Saying, ‘This is what I’m interested in,’ rather than trying to find out what your interests are … made those connections easier, didn’t they?

Joanna referred to a related phenomenon when she called Collect Yourselves! ‘not interactive’. By this she meant the way in which performers could choose when and how to stop their stories without pressure to integrate them into polite conversation. Ebba also appreciated this lack of ‘interactivity’. Collect Yourselves! seems to have succeeded in creating connections among strangers more quickly and easily than through conversation, by means of allowing them to be ‘self-centred’ and ‘non-interactive’—much like the performers analysed in Chapter 4. A more helpful term than ‘self-centred’ might be ‘self-indulgent’. Collect Yourselves! allowed participants to indulge in their own interests and memories, yet it made them aware of the need to share their time ‘on stage’ with other people responding to the same questions. This explains the seeming contradiction between what Marta perceived as ‘self-centredness’ and the participants’ ease of connecting with each other.

The prompt that piqued everyone’s curiosity was prompt four (lie). As soon as the performance finished, Ebba asked ‘whose lie was a lie’, and that topic dominated the conversation for some time. However, the enjoyment that people felt in hearing the lies did not translate to an eagerness to tell a lie. Ebba began the session with her prompt four, but this was a mistake caused by the unexpectedly sensitive trackpad on the controller. Leo performed his prompt four in the second round, while Marta and Ravi waited until the fourth round to perform theirs, and the timer ran out before Joanna could perform hers. Performers also spent the second-least amount of time on this prompt, on average. Therefore, the pleasure associated with listening to the lie was matched by some hesitancy in performance.

**PERFORMANCE PHASE — INTERACTION ANALYSIS**

‘You have that image of yourself, don’t you? And it doesn’t fit my image there’ —Marta

**Structure:** When the time came for them to begin, four participants looked around at each other to determine who would go first. Ebba instead looked at the ceiling, then abruptly announced, ‘Well, shall I go first?’ Before starting her story, Ebba verbalised her efforts to get the rules right: ‘Trying to remember what you told me to do now. Go
for the picture?’ She assumed stricter rules than I had given, nearly starting with prompt one out of what she perceived to be necessity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prompt order</th>
<th>Percentage of prompts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prompts followed suit</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unprovoked change of order</td>
<td>40.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reverted to previous order</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.4  Stranger Group 1: story order.

Only half of the stories followed suit, meaning that when possible the participant taking the stage chose to respond to the same prompt as the person before her only half the time (see Table 7.4). Transitions took some time. This could have been due to the limited physical space for participants to move into and out of the performance area; many people waited for the previous performer to retake her seat before getting up to perform. There were also some problems with the interface, described below. However, the transitions were smooth if not quick, and most were silent.

This performance had peaks and troughs of energy that eventually gave way to a fairly steady level, about midway between the highest and lowest points, after the first 14 turns. The timer ran out on the 22nd story, Leo’s prompt two (memorable). He finished that story with the words, ‘and that brings us to the end’. The untold stories were Marta’s prompt two (memorable), Joanna’s prompt four (lie), and Ravi’s prompt five (forgotten).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Session plan</th>
<th>Session outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total storytelling time (mm:ss)</td>
<td>40:00</td>
<td>40:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of stories completed</td>
<td>25 stories</td>
<td>22 stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean time per person per prompt (mm:ss)</td>
<td>1:36</td>
<td>1:50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean transition time (mm:ss)</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>0:28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.5  Stranger Group 1: turn timings.

Note: Discrepancies between total and mean storytelling times stem from variations in counting methods.

Turn timing: This group failed to complete all its stories (see Table 7.5) but divided their time most fairly of all four groups studied (see Table 8.1).
Like Friend Group 1 and Stranger Group 2, this group spent most time on prompt five (forgotten), tied with prompt one (regular day). Their favourite prompt, prompt four (lie), is the one they spent the second least amount of time on (see Table 7.6), and only Leo uploaded more than one photo for this prompt. This implies a similar sense of challenge as described for this prompt in the Friend Groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prompt</th>
<th>Mean time (mm:ss)</th>
<th>Ranking (longest=1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (regular day)</td>
<td>2:01</td>
<td>1 (tie)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (memorable)</td>
<td>1:35</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (embarrassing)</td>
<td>1:48</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (lie)</td>
<td>1:40</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (forgotten)</td>
<td>2:01</td>
<td>1 (tie)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.6  Stranger Group 1: mean time per prompt (longest in **bold**).

**Turn-taking:** Aside from Ebba’s assertiveness in taking the lead, other negotiations were subtle. This is especially interesting as the order of turn-taking followed neither their seating order nor the order of their names on the screen (Leo, Marta, Ravi, Ebba, Joanna). After Ebba’s first turn, Leo went next, with no detectable verbal or non-verbal negotiation. Next was Joanna, seated opposite Leo. She verbalised the question of who should go after Leo, but she answered her own question by standing up and taking her turn. When Joanna finished, Marta (who sat between Leo and Ravi) looked around to see who should go next. Because she physically moved before Ravi did, she took her turn, leaving Ravi to go last. The second round deviated from this order. After Ebba and Leo, Marta went third in place of Joanna. Joanna made no comment, but moved very quickly when Marta finished, as though anxious to claim her turn. Again, Ravi went fifth. This new order was maintained for the rest of the session. The change in order might have been a mistake brought on by Marta’s assumption that she should go after Leo, given either her position sitting next to him or her name coming after his on the screen.

**Participation structures:** The most notable signals of audience and performer participation were the mismatches between the performer’s energy and the audience’s. Joanna often gave very energetic, even frantic performances, but her audience rarely matched her energy levels. By contrast, most of Marta’s stories were performed in an understated manner that earned a very energetic reception from her audience. Mismatches were also noticeable among audience members. For example, two of Leo’s
stories seemed to captivate Ebba and Joanna but leave Marta and Ravi unimpressed. Ravi's attitude, in particular, gave off signals in terms of body language, gaze, and facial expression that he found Leo to be boring. There was no detectable response from Leo or the others to Ravi’s attitude, but it was very noticeable from the point of view of the performer (captured on video). There were also three prompts during which audience reaction increased significantly after a sustained low: Leo’s prompt three (embarrassing), Ravi’s prompt three, and Marta’s prompt four (lie). Similar variations could be seen in Friend Group 1, but only occasionally, and almost not at all in Friend Group 2. These variations contributed to a somewhat disjointed feel for the performance as a whole. A final point of interest was Ebba’s tendency during transitions to try to share responsibility with her audience. For example, at one point she asked her audience to choose her prompt: ‘OK, who fancies me talking about forget, thinking of you or a whisper?’ Not knowing Ebba or what she might say, her audience had no meaningful way to answer that question, and their silence intensified the feeling of disjointedness.

**Trouble and repair:** As mentioned above, there was one error in turn-taking, which was resolved without any overt repair. In terms of spoken content, there was only one small mistake, which occurred in Leo’s prompt four (lie). First he claimed that his farm was far upriver, but then he stated that he had moored his boat on the coast. There was no noticeable reaction to this discrepancy, and it was not mentioned later during a conversation about the giveaways to Leo’s lie. In terms of interaction, Ravi forgot to click ‘Finish Turn’ after finishing his own prompt four (lie). However, as he returned to his seat, Ebba reminded him, and he returned to take care of this task.

Interruptions, which were such a feature of Friend Group 2, were almost nonexistent in this study. After the first line of Ravi’s prompt one (regular day), in which he implies that he lives in a huge apartment with a spectacular view, Marta asked, ‘Is this a regular day or a lie?’ This interruption was met with laughter around the room. Ravi seemed to take the question as it was almost certainly intended, as a joking encouragement to continue rather than a challenge, and continued with his performance. Joanna, the most talkative and outgoing of the group, interrupted four times. Three of these were ‘attention signals’ rather than interruptions (Norrick 2000, p. 23)—‘ooh’, ‘wow’, and ‘wahaaay’—which did not disrupt the performance. Her only substantial interruption was to respond to Ebba as she was closing her performance of prompt five (forgotten). When Ebba said, ‘I suppose I can say I’ve seen him [Noam Chomsky]’, Joanna added, ‘And taken a picture’. Ebba used Joanna’s interruption as a springboard to further elaborate on her
photo. Joanna’s comment substantiated Ebba’s claim to a connection with the famous philosopher, which Ebba seemed to appreciate.

This session had more than its fair share of technical problems. In addition to the local server problems described in the chapter overview, two of the four cameras malfunctioned, and at least two photos appeared in the wrong orientation. There were also cases of simple user error, such as some participants failing to remember how to enlarge thumbnail images. While these problems complicated several transitions, they do not seem to have seriously harmed the media-sharing or storytelling processes.

**Spatial organisation of activity:** The tables were arranged in the centre of the room such that there was a ‘notch’ at the left front corner (from the perspective of the audience facing the projection). Every participant stood in this notch except for Leo, who often crouched, and Ravi, who stood against the wall nearby. This arrangement allowed performers to face their entire audience and see the projection with a 90- to 135-degree turn of the head, rather than the 180 degree turn required by the other three setups. The room was barely large enough to accommodate the five participants and two researchers, though there was enough space at the front of the room for performers to move about.

**Artefacts and documents:** During the performance, 36 photos were projected. All prompts had at least one multiple-photo response. Joanna wrote very lengthy descriptions for all of her prompts; Leo wrote nothing at all (see Table 7.7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Total photos uploaded*</th>
<th>Mean photos per prompt</th>
<th>Number prompts for which text uploaded</th>
<th>Mean words per text upload</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leo</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marta</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ravi</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ebba</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanna</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>73</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Some participants may have intended to upload more photos than indicated.

Ravi’s few words served merely as captions referring to the photo contents, which also reflected the contents of his stories. However, there were significant discrepancies.
between some of Joanna’s, Marta’s, and Ebba’s text and their performances. For example, Joanna’s prompt one (regular day) was about a day out with her elderly father. The text stated, ‘I was working quite hard at keeping him cheerful’. In performance, she made much of her ‘clowning’ and indicated that she was not sure why she put so much effort into it. Similarly, her text for prompt five (forgotten) went on at length about a rainstorm and referred only elliptically to ‘our unmade patio area’ (see Figure 7.3), while the most compelling part of her performance was her extended description of a huge pile of sand washing from one side of her patio to the other and needing to be shovelled back into place. Her performances revealed greater richness and detail than even her lengthiest written text.

![Figure 7.3 Joanna’s flooded patio, with no sand in sight.](image)

Discrepancies between text and performance could also be seen in Marta’s brief text for prompt three (embarrassing): ‘Taken before I was ready to pose!’ While this was Marta’s topic, the content of her performance was devoted to her deceased nan’s frantic efforts to look good whenever someone got out a camera. The performance revealed Marta’s process of discovering that same impulse within herself. While the text replied to the ‘embarrassing’ part of the prompt, the performance used that embarrassment for self-discovery, self-disclosure, and an opportunity for connection.
PERFORMANCE PHASE — CODED PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

‘All sorts of jolly interesting things and colours and textures and cooked nuts and just tea, magnificent mint tea, apple teas, great place to be. So, that’s that little Istanbul story. So where is the finish turn?’ —Leo

For the most part, this audience was restrained and polite. The participants in this session made an effort to select interesting photos and perform the stories behind them as well as possible. Technical problems were either graciously ignored or resolved as quickly as possible without complaint, leaving performers and audience members free to focus their attention on each other. However, the overall feel of this performance was of five very different people distinguishing themselves from each other.

Self-making

The participants had very different performance styles. Ravi, a university lecturer, took on the physical and vocal mannerisms of a lecturer: he stood against the wall, speaking at 90 degrees to the back of the room as though it were full of students. His delivery was calm and measured, even when his topic was very funny, and he revealed a willingness to poke fun at himself. Ebba, Joanna, and Marta spoke at an angle to the projection, facing the midpoint between those sitting on the right side of the room and those sitting along the back wall. They turned to face the projection fairly often and walked up to or gestured towards it. Ebba’s voice was her most notable characteristic. Her pace was as measured as Ravi’s and her manner was reserved, but her tone was sharp and sardonic, lending everything she said an element of cutting humour. Joanna, as mentioned above, was ebullient, sometimes nearly manic. Marta was neat, smart, and self-contained; her timing was excellent, and she rarely seemed at a loss for words. Leo’s every topic was something that he appreciated or admired. He used the word ‘wonderful’ frequently, giving him the impression of being an uncommonly kind and gentle person (see Figures 7.4 and 7.5). At no point did the five performers converge in content or manner.
The choices of digital media played an important role in establishing connections between performers and audience members. While both Ebba and Marta have partners and children, all but one of Marta’s photos were of her children. Ebba mentioned her daughter in performance but showed no photos of her. In fact, her photos included no people at all except a crowd gathered to hear Noam Chomsky give a lecture. I might have expected to feel more connected to Marta through her personal photos of her family than to Ebba. However, while the strongest connection I felt to a performer’s family was to Marta’s, this happened during her story for prompt five (forgotten) which involved no images of people at all. The photo was an impersonal shot of a pink child’s suitcase (see Figure 7.6). The story was of Marta’s thwarted attempt to sell her young daughter’s beloved Trunki suitcase on eBay. The photo was evidence of Marta’s dislike of the
Trunki and the lengths she would go to in trying to get rid of it without raising her daughter’s suspicions. Marta’s audience didn’t need to see a photo of Marta’s daughter or the tantrum she threw when she found out about Marta’s treacherous attempt to sell Trunki. After all, the power of the story was not in the daughter’s tantrum but in Marta’s failed attempt to dispose of a piece of pink plastic. The unusual choice of digital photo brought out that angle of Marta’s story and made the entire audience laugh in commiseration with her skilfully structured and well-timed performance.

Figure 7.6  Marta’s photo for prompt five (forgotten) and Joanna laughing at Marta’s story.

Leo’s choices of digital photos further underscore this contradiction between what is represented in the photo and how connected the audience might feel. Like Ebba, Leo selected photos with no people featured in them. However, his selections offered a vivid sense of what he values. His photos for prompt three (embarrassing) were colourful shots taken in a Turkish bazaar; also, he spent far more time in that performance describing the beauty of the bazaar than the embarrassment that was intended to be his topic. Similarly, his photos for prompt four (lie) were beautiful photos of a boat and a door, which he wove into a lie about Zimbabwe’s coastline. Most strikingly, his photos for prompt two (memorable) showed a time-lapse sequence of a blooming amaryllis. While his choices offered nothing for the audience to connect to in terms of the details of Leo’s personal life, they offered a sense of his priorities and attitudes. Leo was clearly a man who values beauty and wonder, and who is not afraid to share his perspective with others.

An important element of self-making for this group was the inclusion of photos and stories about their hobbies. Leo contextualised his amaryllis photos by announcing his love of photography; Ebba’s prompt three (embarrassing) was a photo of a glass
sculpture she had made; Joanna’s prompt one (regular day) was a photo of the university library, which had inspired her to take up painting again; Ravi’s prompts four (lie) and two (memorable) invoked his hobby of cycling; and Marta’s prompt four (lie) revealed her keen interest in Tudor history. It seems very likely that participants answered their prompts in such a way as to include information about themselves that they felt important to share with strangers, such as their main interests outside of work.

This group did not seem perturbed by the instruction to lie in prompt four. Marta’s lie was indistinguishable from the truth in terms of both style and content. Ebba’s lie could easily have been the truth, as well. Only the slightly humorous tone of voice on her last line, reminiscent of a falsely cheery game show host, indicated the falsehood. Ravi’s lie was a true story except that it described a low-profile cycle race he had competed in, while his photo showed the road cycling race at the London Olympics. Leo was the only one to break the spell and admit he was lying, though this only happened while he was having technical problems ending his turn. I suspect that if the technology had worked as expected, he would not have mentioned his lie. The performers seemed to want to establish themselves as competent participants, overriding any concern they might have had about being perceived as good liars.

**Heightened attention**

A fair percentage of this performance was coded under one of the ‘heightened attention’ codes: 60.6% for ‘intensity of appearance’, 29.75% for ‘deviation and surprise’, and 21.6% for ‘conspicuousness’. However, this coding happens at the micro level of phrases, exclamations, gestures, and glances. At the level of the performance as a whole, there was less of a consistent sense of a ‘heightened attention’ among audience members. The performer who most successfully heightened the attention of her audience was Marta, in terms of intensifying her own appearance. Marta used a strategy of repeating the word ‘Trunki’ at key, predictable moments during her prompt five (forgotten), creating suspense and ultimately enticing Leo to say ‘Trunki’ along with her during the ‘punch line’ of her story. This ‘interruption’, which did not seem to cause Marta any trouble or concern, indicated a ‘heightened attention’ to Marta’s performance as well as a connection strong enough for Leo to feel he could contribute to this stranger’s story. For prompt three (embarrassing), she took on the character of her nan, pronouncing the word ‘regime’ in a particular way and primping herself for the camera with frantic cries of ‘My chin! My chin!’ (See Figure 7.7.) These brief moments of emphasis aroused the audience’s attention. Marta’s audience could see the large gap between the primping nan and the somewhat dishevelled and unconcerned Marta in the photograph; at the same
time, they could see a resemblance between Marta’s nan and the stylish, attractive woman in front of them. In contrast, Leo and Joanna struggled to heighten their audience’s attention. Leo’s habit of speaking from a crouch, along with a tendency to repeat himself, made him seem far less comfortable and engaging. Joanna, as described above, had extremely high energy levels and a tendency to repeat and criticise herself. Where Joanna’s energy might have been expected to intensify her appearance, in fact it often pushed her audience away, as seen in the discrepancy between performer and audience energy levels during her stories.

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 7.7** Marta acting out her nan’s habitual reaction to a camera: ‘My chin!’

Ebba’s prompt three (embarrassing) was an interesting example of ‘doubled indexicality’. Her photo depicted a glass sculpture she had made of a cast of her own teeth and put on public display (see Figure 7.8). Thus the Ebba in the present moment of performance stood alongside an image of an ‘artistic’ yet completely faithful representation of a part of her own body. As Ebba explained, ‘the response from people is the embarrassing bit, because they go [dramatic pause, loud gasp]’. When Ebba re-enacted one person’s revulsion, the ‘doubled indexicality’ shifted: the photo no longer represented a cast of Ebba’s teeth, but rather a strange piece of glass sculpture that had triggered a phobic reaction (see Figure 7.8). When Ebba momentarily slipped into another character, her photo slipped as well, oscillating between a representation of the performer in her daily
life and a representation of the performer’s artistic output. As it represented Ebba’s actual teeth, it doubled a part of her own body and heightened attention to her physical self; as it represented Ebba’s art, it became an object, embodying though not doubling an aspect of Ebba’s way of seeing the world.

![Ebba’s glass sculpture of her teeth](image)

Figure 7.8 Ebba’s glass sculpture of her teeth and re-enacting the reaction to it.

**Situatedness**

Joanna made the one overt connection between two performer’s prompts. She transitioned into her prompt three (embarrassing) by saying she had been hoping to get away without sharing her embarrassing photo, but Marta’s choice of prompt three made Joanna feel obliged to reciprocate. This was an odd strategy if Joanna were truly reluctant, because at the time of Joanna’s announcement, she had every reason to hope that the group would not get through all 25 stories. Additionally, two performers connected their current stories to ones they had already told. Marta introduced a photo of her daughter as ‘Jenny, of the Trunki fame’; and Joanna’s prompt five (forgotten) mentioned her father as though her audience would recognise him in the photo, which I assume they did. These three were the only instances of performers acknowledging the continuity of their performance.

There were also very few instances of conversation or direct address. Two of the three came from Marta’s prompt three (embarrassing). She used them in a process of self-disclosure that she shared with her audience. ‘You have that image of yourself, don’t you? And it doesn’t fit my image there’ [indicating the photo of herself]. With these
words, Marta invited her audience into her interior world and imagined her way into theirs. Marta also used ironic humour to reveal her negative judgement of her appearance: ‘That’s me looking very gorgeous, I think you’ll agree’. Again, her choice of words established an assumption of equivalence between herself and her audience members, which considerably heightened their attention to the Marta performing in front of them as well as to the Marta represented in the projected photo.

The only other example of conversation or direct address stands in contrast to Marta’s invitation to connect. Ebba made an offhand comment in the middle of her prompt four (lie): ‘If any of you have ever collected bikes in the past you know that tank badges are really valuable…’ Her manner in saying this line was desultory, with no pauses or eye contact soliciting responses; it was also fairly unlikely that there would be a motorcycle tank badge collector among the four people in her audience. The line therefore came across as a purely rhetorical device, not an invitation for her audience to share a personal experience, as though Ebba were rejecting the possibility of connection with her audience through the act of acknowledging their presence.

Aesthetics of the event

Some individual stories were entertaining, and it was easy to get a sense of people as individuals: Leo as positive, appreciative, and self-effacing; Joanna as concerned with people’s perception of her and her father; Marta as a mother and granddaughter; Ravi as a competitor with a point to every story (see Figure 7.9); and Ebba as a person to be taken seriously in academia, art, and the domestic sphere. However, the performers made little attempt to create risky spaces of emergence, liminality, or transformation. Most of the time, although they contributed energy to an unscripted event, it would be difficult to argue that this energy was any different from that of a regular conversation among people getting to know each other.

Statistics support my assertion. The starkest difference between this performance and the two friends performances was the material coded at ‘risk’, a major contributor to ‘liminality and transformation’, which I will argue is the most critical component of the ‘aesthetics of the event’. Where the two Friend Groups had between 15 and 40% of their performances coded at ‘risk’, Stranger Group 1 had only 8.1% (and Stranger Group 2 had only 6%). The other startling discrepancy was in the material coded at ‘autopoiesis and emergence’, another major component of the ‘aesthetics of the event’: this performance had none at all. Liminality, transformation, autopoiesis, and emergence are all slippery terms that are difficult to substantiate, but in this case, a holistic analysis of
the performance comes to the same conclusions as the more piecemeal practice of coding fragments to individual themes. This was a performance of individuals, by individuals.

Figure 7.9  Ravi’s life message: don’t go to a party dressed as the Michelin Man.

However, this was more than a simple conversation in at least one way: it was a digital media sharing session. The projected photos provided another layer of representation alongside the physically present performer and provided opportunities to establish connections. One example was Marta’s invitation to her audience to join in ‘that image of yourself’. Another was Ebba’s prompt one (regular day), in which she described a somewhat ill-fated trip to a conference in Finland. One of her photos for this prompt was of two gargoyles (see Figure 7.10). She acted out her feelings of frustration by impersonating the strange faces in her photo. This captured her audience’s attention and brought them together in a moment of shared understanding. There were many instances of such connections in this performance, brought on by small changes of voice or gaze, leading to moments of surprise and vulnerability. The combination of projected digital image and performed narrative, in response to a shared set of prompts, allowed for small moments of connection that made this experience more ‘special’ (Dissanayake 2003) than ordinary conversation.
REFLECTION PHASE — THEMATIC ANALYSIS

‘You’re inviting everybody to become part of your mini-world in that picture’ — Ravi

In contrast to their experience of the devising phase, participants in this group found the overall experience to be entirely positive. Three called it ‘interesting’ or ‘enjoyable’, two called it ‘entertaining’, and one called it ‘intriguing’. Joanna described it as ‘sociable … as we spoke about ourselves we got to know each other—warmed up easily’.

Privacy concerns were central to the responses of two participants when asked whether they would share a video of the performance online. One would share the video because ‘online would have some sense of anonymity which would make it seem OK to me’. The other would show it only to her husband ‘because it was an interesting process of people’s interpretations’. The other three would not share the video online because others would lack the personal context necessary to create interest in the content: ‘the interest came from connecting the photos/stories with real people’. Only one person would share something of the performance experience with others: she would ‘put some of the more poignant/emotional examples together against a theme tune and dubbed actors voices’. This type of video would divorce content from context, and the professionalised result would not expose the group so baldly to the scrutiny of others.
Feelings about the performance experience ranged from an outright ‘I enjoyed it’ to the tepid ‘Okay—no strong feelings either way’. No one described performing in negative terms, although three admitted to being nervous or uncomfortable at the beginning; two of these warmed up to it over time. All five felt generally positive about the experience of listening to others’ performances, although Joanna admitted that she was ‘once or twice embarrassed by too long / too much info. Sometimes the point was not so interesting to me.’ Three felt at least as much of a connection to the people as to their stories per se: one noted how ‘the stories and their performers were all really interesting’; one ‘felt the stories gave a real insight into who everyone was’; and one felt ‘entertained and included’. Ravi phrased this in terms of performance:

You’re sort of performing it in a way … . Everyone had a performance, a way of telling the story behind the picture … . You’re inviting everybody to become part of your mini-world in that picture … the smell of the place, the atmosphere, what was going on that day, the weather, the family and people around you, you became part of that setting.

While the interaction analysis and coded performance analysis revealed only subtle indications of performance in this Collect Yourselves! session, the reflection phase demonstrates that the experience felt like a performance. By inviting each other into their ‘mini-worlds’, participants at times experienced connection, insight, and inclusion.
STRAnger group 2: Seven strangers

Figure 7.11 Stranger Group 2: seating arrangements.

This session took place from 19:00 on Monday, 22 April, 2013, in a communal dining area at the University of Surrey. The room had comfortable armchairs, plenty of space (see Figure 7.11), and table lamps that did not wash out the light of the projector. Because the session took place during the evening in the spring holiday period, the room was private and quiet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>M/F</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Occupational status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terese</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Thirties</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Employed full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nora</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Late twenties</td>
<td>Swedish living in UK &gt; 5 years</td>
<td>Graduate student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Zimbabwean living in UK &gt; 5 years</td>
<td>Employed full-time</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>Brazilian living in UK &lt; 5 years</td>
<td>Graduate student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.8 Stranger Group 2: participants.

Terese was acquainted with both Conor and Deacon, but none of the others knew each other. All owned smartphones, though Conor virtually never takes photos on his. These
participants had a wide range of experience with and attitudes towards social networking: two never or rarely post photos to social networking sites, another two never share personal stories on them, another two rarely use social networking sites at all, and one is a regular and enthusiastic user—though even she would not post her prompt three (embarrassing) photo. All spoke fluent English (see Table 7.8).

**DEVISING PHASE — THEMATIC ANALYSIS**

‘Some of it was quite emotional’—Nora

These participants experienced a range of responses to the devising phase. Four people found it positive, but only one had no reservations. A fifth described the process as ‘emotional’, bringing up both positive and negative memories, and said that it required more time than she had to give to it. The other had a negative experience, one because he has almost no digital photos of his own, and one because most of the prompts felt too constraining. Those who found it to be a positive experience focused on the process of reminiscence. One found it ‘interesting, reflective’; another found it ‘annoying’ at first but after a while ‘realised I was enjoying it more and more!’; and one found it ‘hard to think of them at first, but, once I looked into all my photo files, it was so much fun finding all the memories’.

Five participants told stories they had never told before, and a sixth told stories with the same basic topic ‘but not in the same way or setting’. Deacon’s response was typical of the group: ‘I don’t think I would have told the stories … if we didn’t have the pictures to direct us’. He also made explicit reference to the importance of the prompts in arriving at those pictures: ‘I’d say you could tell stories without pictures, but you’d have to be prompted to do it in a similar way. The prompts’. Conor described the prompts as a ‘lack of choice within a choice’, being asked to choose according to different criteria than would apply to ordinary exchanges. He contrasts the devising phase with online social networking:

There’s something about choosing the photos that I found a bit odd … . In social networking sites I find that I only put the bits that I want people to see … . I create another me, because I just portray … everything’s always wonderful in my life, or terrible at a moment, or just the highlights. (Conor)

Conor’s comment indicates that *Collect Yourselves!* was successful for at least some participants in triggering a new way of interacting with their personal digital media. It is
clear from Conor’s comments and others that the prompts were the core of what differentiates Collect Youselves! from an ordinary conversation, or ordinary ways of sharing digital media (that is, asynchronously, using social networking sites). The structure provided by Collect Youselves! kept the participants ‘on script’, as Nora put it, so that they told the stories envisioned during the devising phase rather than responding to topics raised by previous performers. Several people described their inclination to tell a spontaneous story in keeping with the flow of conversation, but the structure of Collect Youselves! disciplined them to tell the more revealing stories unearthed by the devising phase. While the artificiality of the setup made some participants feel slightly uncomfortable, most agreed with Terese that they ‘liked the structure’ and with Conor about the ‘interesting parts of people’s lives that you’d never come across if it wasn’t for having done it this way’. Susan pointed out that she and her friends ‘can spend a whole night, even sitting, talking, chatting, and … I wouldn’t probably get into any of these stories’. Despite the ‘odd’ practices of the devising phase, it led to a rewarding experience.

Most participants said they preferred prompt four (lie) over the others. Another contender was prompt five (forgotten), nominated by Deacon and agreed with particular energy by Nora, whose prompt five (forgotten) was particularly effective in performance. There was also one nomination for prompt one (regular day), though the other participants were not enthusiastic about it. In this group, the amount of time spent per prompt more or less correlated with their preferences: they spent the most time, on average, on prompt five (forgotten), and the second most time on prompt four (lie). However, only three people chose to perform prompt five (forgotten), and only four chose to perform prompt four (lie). This could indicate that, as in Stranger Group 1, some participants found these prompts enjoyable to listen to but challenging to perform.

**PERFORMANCE PHASE — INTERACTION ANALYSIS**

‘It’s not a particularly useful photo, so I’m going to get rid of it.’ — Conor

**Structure:** There was silence for several seconds at the beginning, after which Conor said, ‘Well, I’m very happy to start, although I can’t quite remember what photos are what’. It became clear that he had forgotten the instruction to stand while performing, and that others would most likely follow his lead, so I interrupted by whispering, ‘Stand up’. His reaction was interesting. He said, ‘Oh, I’ve got to stand up. Hello. I’m Conor, this is my story,’ in a much louder and more assertive tone of voice. Clearly, standing
marked a shift for him to a more formal style of performance. He chose to begin with prompt two (memorable).

As with Stranger Group 1, 50% of the stories did not follow suit (see Table 7.9). Transitions were often marked by questions about or problems with the laptop, but not to the point that any conversation threatened to derail the performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prompt order</th>
<th>Percentage of prompts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prompts followed suit</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unprovoked change of order</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reverted to previous order</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.9  Stranger Group 2: story order.

It would be possible to segment this performance into rounds if the only criterion were the performer’s energy level. Each round happened to begin with two very energetic performers, Conor and Nora; then moved on to a less overtly energetic but humorous performer, Deacon; then to Susan’s less energetic performance and, by coincidence, a low point of performer energy from each of the people who took a turn after Susan (Kat in round one, Terese in round two, and Olive in round three); and finally recovered to a midpoint with the two final performers in each round (Terese, Olive, or Kat). However, the performer provides only some of the energy of a performance. As in Stranger Group 1, there was a mismatch between performer and audience energy levels, as well as the change in audience energy levels within a single prompt. Conor, Deacon, and Susan each told a story that began with the audience very unimpressed but gradually built their engagement. Terese, Kat, and Conor each had the opposite experience, starting a story with an excited audience but soon losing their attention. Finally, Susan’s prompt one (regular day) was marked by a sharp reduction of audience attention and engagement, which she ruptured with a single phrase. This example is explored in more detail in the coded performance analysis. Also, as in Stranger Group 1, the final third of the performance ‘settled down’ in the sense that performer and audience energy levels were more consistent and more evenly matched to each other. None of the mismatches listed above took place in the final third of the performance.

**Turn timing:** This group responded to only 20 prompts in the 45 minutes allotted and completed only 19 of them; there were only seven seconds left on the timer for the final prompt. There was a significant discrepancy between the longest and shortest stories told
by this group, which indicated a prioritisation of individual preferences over the group’s goal of finishing all stories on time. A comparison of turn timings among all performances and control groups will be made in Chapter 8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Session plan</th>
<th>Session outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total storytelling time (mm:ss)</td>
<td>45:00</td>
<td>45:40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of stories completed</td>
<td>35 stories</td>
<td>20 stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean time per person per prompt (mm:ss)</td>
<td>1:17</td>
<td>2:17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean transition time (mm:ss)</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>0:28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.10  Stranger Group 2: turn timings.
Note: Discrepancies between total and mean storytelling times stem from variations in counting methods.

As in Friend Group 1 and Stranger Group 1, this group spent the most time on prompt five (forgotten). The prompt that was told most often was prompt one (regular day), which might indicate its popularity, but performers tended not to spend a great deal of time on it. I believe that this is an example of the converse of the challenge felt in the lie. For most people, the ‘regular day’ prompt was fairly easy to answer, and therefore did not merit a particularly intense treatment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prompt</th>
<th>Mean time (mm:ss)</th>
<th>Ranking (longest=1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (regular day)</td>
<td>2:09</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (memorable)</td>
<td>2:11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (embarrassing)</td>
<td>1:53</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (lie)</td>
<td>2:43</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (forgotten)</td>
<td>3:17</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.11  Stranger Group 2: mean time per prompt (longest in bold).

**Turn-taking:** There was no correlation between the order in which participants took their turns and either their seating order or the order of their names on screen (Kat, Conor, Terese, Olive, Nora, Susan, Deacon). Each transition in the first round was marked by a negotiation, usually very brief and non-verbal, and never contested. The
first of these occurred after Conor’s first turn. There was a silence, which Nora eventually broke by saying, ‘I could go next’. After the first round, Conor paused for a moment, then said, ‘I feel like we’re taking turns’. This statement was met with laughter all around. Nora added, ‘It’s been set in stone’.

There were two deviations to this order. Terese and Kat swapped places in the second round, apparently by accident and causing no detectable concern. In the third and final round, participants made an intentional attempt to fit the maximum number of stories into the time remaining. When there were less than two minutes remaining on the timer, neither Kat (whose turn it would have been next according to the original order) nor Terese (who went after Susan in the second round) made a move. After a pause, Olive got up to take her turn, saying, ‘I’ll be ridiculously fast’. In fact, she took 91.5 seconds to go through prompt two (memorable), which was by no means the fastest story told, although she did limit herself to the story behind only one of the three photos she had uploaded. After finishing, Olive asked, ‘Who can do it in seven seconds?’ After a moment, Terese came to the front and attempted to tell her story before the timer stopped, but she had barely started to introduce it before the screen went blank. There were some disappointed moans and laughs from the audience, but no one protested that she should finish her story.

Although ‘this is’ or a variation thereon is the most common ‘formulaic story opener’ (Norrick 2000, p. 48) used by participants in all four groups, Terese used the phrase as more of a comedic strategy than a formulaic story opener to rely on. Her photo for prompt four (lie) was a hilarious image of a middle-aged woman with a maniacal smile, holding the bloody head and entrails of a goose along with a large kitchen knife (see Figure 7.12). Terese began this story with the simple, plaintive line, ‘This is my mum’ (compare Jo Spence’s photographed re-enactment of her mother in the kitchen, reproduced as Figure 3.3 in Frohlich 2004, p. 41). I doubt that a professional comedian could have devised a more apt way of starting a story with that photo, and her audience were beside themselves with laughter. It is also possible that a form of ‘doubled indexicality’ was triggered by this photo, as the audience might have sought family resemblances between Terese and her mother (compare Class of ’76). By contrast, for her prompt four (lie), Susan showed a photo of a man with a shovel and hoe in a back
garden and announced, ‘This is my dad’ (see Figure 7.12). The response was lukewarm at best.\textsuperscript{59}

![Figure 7.12 Terese’s mother with the Christmas goose, and Susan’s father with his ‘gadget’.

**Participation structures:** Nora asked if she was allowed to ask a question of Deacon, after which she and some other audience members used follow-on questions to indicate interest in a story or photo. Laughter and a direct, uninterrupted gaze also signalled attention. Susan seemed to engage far more with her projected photos and her memories than with her audience, a style that sometimes caused very low energy in her audience. Many performers began their stories as they transitioned to the stage area. This was only possible because there was no competition for turn-taking, and most participants seemed unwilling to allow long periods of silence.

**Trouble and repair:** The main cause of trouble in any interaction was the technology. The session started late because some participants were unsure of their login details, and

\textsuperscript{59} Susan also included a number of photos of herself, which might seem to invite ‘doubled indexicality’. However, there was no notable contrast between the Susan in those photos and the Susan performing in the moment. The indexical photos overlapped so neatly with their referent that the effect was lost.
the application was designed to store only encrypted passwords. I quickly found a workaround, but was further stymied by the failure of the local network described in the ‘Collect Yourselves! procedure’ section of Chapter 6. The delays seem to have primed the participants to look out for technical problems. They complained about Macintosh interfaces, the poor visibility of the projected images, the sideways orientation of two photos, the small size of the thumbnail images, the sensitivity of the trackpad, and the two-finger scroll. Deacon in particular made his struggles with the technology part of his ‘protoself’ (Barclay 1994) for this performance by drawing attention to his difficulties. This inflated the role of the technology to the point that it became a sort of eighth performer, or a stupid and malevolent stagehand. The performance was disjointed, but the performers carried on with good humour towards their fellow (human) performers.

Figure 7.13 Most of the audience for Stranger Group 2 (with the author in the background).

**Spatial organisation of activity:** All performers stood slightly to the right of the projected photo near the wall, even those who were seated to the left of the midline. People crouched to make their selections but had room to move about in the ‘stage’ area. The audience were seated in fairly large armchairs, so that even with the chairs touching, the semicircle they formed was quite wide (see Figure 7.13). The size of the space contributed to the sense of giving a performance rather than simply chatting. Although everyone followed the instruction to stand while performing, Kat later stated a preference for performing from her seat as Conor had started to do. She wanted to sit in a circle rather than giving a ‘lecture’, as she put it. Kat was recently arrived from Sweden, where
consensus is the ideal, and was the quietest individual of the group. Aside from Conor and Kat, no one indicated concerns with the physicality of moving through the space.

**Artefacts and documents:** Thirty-one photos were projected during this performance. In addition, Conor and Susan sometimes performed with only small thumbnails of their images projected behind them, and Conor performed the majority of his prompt three (embarrassing) after dismissing his photo.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Total photos uploaded*</th>
<th>Mean photos per prompt</th>
<th>Number prompts for which text uploaded</th>
<th>Mean words per text upload</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terese</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nora</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olive</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deacon</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conor</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kat</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>65</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td><strong>49</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 7.12  Stranger Group 2: photos and text uploaded.*

*Some participants may have intended to upload more photos than indicated.

Some of the performances covered the same content as the corresponding text, but a few revealed processes of self-discovery present only in the moment of performance. For example, when Terese looked through her photos for prompt one (regular day), she noticed that six months previously she had been doing the exact same tasks for her work and had just returned from holiday. This coincidence merited only the word ‘strangely’ in the text she uploaded, but it was key to her story in performance. ‘I was really surprised by that,’ she said, making the point of the story not so much the coincidence but her realisation of the coincidence. Terese did not offer any conclusions, but an audience member might immediately wonder whether she might want to change this pattern. The same sort of potential for change—or opportunity to reaffirm the status quo—that is critical to narrative appears in this glimpse of Terese’s moment of self-discovery. Susan used performance to expand on a point written in her text to such a degree that the entire focus of the story shifted. Susan’s text for prompt one (regular day) described her experience that day as ‘annoying’, but her performance was dominated by
her description and impersonation of the disgusting character who annoyed her so much. In both Terese’s and Susan’s cases, performance did more than expand the number of words that could be conveyed to the audience; it shifted the focus of the performance to something more personal and self-disclosing than anything in the accompanying text.

Deacon, Conor, and Olive were vocal about the role of their personal media archives in their experience of Collect Yourselves! Deacon had gone through the devising phase the morning of the session, so he had fewer digital photos at his disposal than he might have had given access to his home archives. Conor rarely takes photos, leaving all photowork tasks (including capture) to his partner. Both Deacon and Conor observed that they would have selected different images had they been able to. Olive, on the other hand, surprised herself with how many photos she had in a number of compact discs that she had forgotten about. She enjoyed going through them in part because they had not already been pre-selected and curated online. Conor and Terese agreed with her assessment.

**PERFORMANCE PHASE — CODED PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS**

*I took a photo of it so I would never forget the evening. And obviously I forgot the evening* —Nora

This was a performance of extremes. Not only did Deacon tell the longest story, but his shortest story was longer than anyone else’s longest story (in any group) except for Susan’s. Conversely, Kat averaged the lowest amount of time per story in this group (and lower than all but two among all four sessions). Some audience members were visibly bored by the longer stories, while others exclaimed their interest. There was little of the polite efficiency of Stranger Group 1, but rather a sense of individuals finding their own very different ways of communicating with, to, or at each other.

**Self–making**

The performers in this group used very different strategies for self-making. For example, Conor and Nora were very animated in their telling, while Kat and Olive told very short, straightforward stories that could be extremely touching by virtue of their directness. In Kat’s story for prompt one (regular day), she had just moved to Guildford, and she described her feelings as she first saw the view that she later took a photograph of. She concluded by saying, ‘I thought, yeah, yeah, I’m going to be here, and it’s a nice place to be’. She said this with her hands unselfconsciously on her heart, nodding. The depth of that feeling was instantly communicated by her simple statement of trust and acceptance.
Similarly, Olive’s story for prompt one (regular day) was of her and her girlfriend, Laura, taken on Olive’s birthday. It started out as a straightforward description of a holiday photo (see Figure 7.14). Olive revealed that she doesn’t like surprises, but that Laura had ‘tortured’ her for a month with mentions of a birthday treat in store. Then in a higher tone of voice and with a sudden shyness in her body language, Olive said that ‘it was the first time anyone’s done something big like that for my birthday’. There was genuine vulnerability in Olive’s double-sided revelation, first that no one had ever made a romantic effort for her birthday, and second that she would choose to reveal this fact to a group of strangers.

![Figure 7.14 Olive’s holiday photo, which triggered a performance of vulnerability.](image)

Two performers engaged with self-making by performing their privacy and the denial of access to their memories. Kat’s story for prompt three (embarrassing) showed a grinning Kat with her hair wrapped in a plastic bag. She revealed that she had been staying with a friend while doing her ‘first solo performances in Sweden’, and that in preparation they had dyed her hair. She made only a passing reference to the interesting fact that she is an internationally performing musician and said nothing about the performance itself. Referring to her hair, she said, ‘There’s more of those, too, but I’m not gonna show them’. She showed strong boundaries between the self she alluded to and the self she was willing to display.
Susan went even farther in denying her audience access to details about her life, and she did so almost entirely through the manner of her performance. She tended to laugh at whatever memory she was experiencing without communicating the reason for her laughter to her audience. For example, her second photo for prompt five (forgotten) was a group photo of the university rowing club, to which she had belonged briefly. ‘Sometimes I don’t even think it’s true,’ she said, and then laughed, still looking at the photo. ‘But …’ She drifted off and laughed some more. These laughs promised her audience a funny or perhaps poignant resolution to the set-up of having forgotten her time in the rowing club. However, Susan kept her attention on the photo and said only that ‘it was very traumatic to meet up with the English that are into rowing’. Clearly, Susan must have had specific reasons for finding the rowing club ‘traumatic’, which would probably make a funny or revealing story. By engaging more with the photo than with her audience, though, and refusing to share her reasoning, she created an opaque and distant sense of self.

Only four performers told their prompt four (lie), and their methods were as diverse as for every other aspect of the performance. Deacon chose prompt four first and began with this disclaimer:

OK, this story may or may not be 100% actual. In fact there may not be any factual parts in it at all, but I'll leave that to you to decide that as we go along.

Terese also chose prompt four as her first story; she and Deacon were the only two to do so (intentionally) across all four sessions. However, Terese’s lie could have been entirely true, and she presented it as such. Susan also presented her lie as the truth, and in two of her three stories it is impossible to tell what, if anything, was a lie. Conor took this strategy the furthest, showing a photo of himself and his partner in outrageous wigs and makeup while saying in a deadpan voice that performers need to take themselves ‘incredibly seriously’ (see Figure 7.15). His style of performing this ‘moral of the story’ was earnest and sincere, but belied by the preposterous look of his photo (as well as by his previous story about being a comic performer). Conor’s lie was not simply a statement of non-factual material but a joke about the nature of comic performance. These approaches to prompt four (lie) suggest that any concern over being seen as eager to lie or good at lying was trumped by the desire to perform well.
Heightened attention

There was often a mismatch between the energy levels of performer and audience, and sometimes among audience members. In all three of Deacon’s stories, he repeated himself and digressed from his main point. For example, he repeated ‘we were in the south of France’ multiple times at the beginning of prompt four (lie), which did not hinge on his location in any way. Some of his audience members seemed bored by at least the beginnings of his long stories, yet at the end of his prompt four, Terese said, ‘I feel like we need to applaud’. No one applauded, but her words indicated a level of engagement far out of line with the attention paid by some other members of the audience. The most consistently engaging of Deacon’s stories was his prompt one (regular day). In the same calm and long-winded manner, he described a student project that was driving him to distraction. He spoke of how ‘easy-going’ he used to be, ‘but that’s disappearing rapidly, so psychologically I’m changing’. His audience erupted in laughter. The dire diagnoses continued: ‘it’s the process of deterioration in my physical and social and psychological wellbeing that’s occurred … I have taken more to the drink since then, and it hasn’t finished yet … I will become more of a shadow of myself as time progresses’. The
contrast between Deacon’s story and his unruffled manner intensified his appearance and delighted his audience. The contrast was intensified by his choice of photo, a snapshot of an idyllic English river, as placid and traditional as the persona in performance. By refusing to make a spectacle of these dramatic statements, and by setting them against a charming photo, Deacon performed his distress in terms of classic British understatement. His straightforward manner demanded that we take him seriously, yet he did not appear to be a man desperate for intervention. This intensification of appearance moved towards ‘liminality and transformation’ when he connected his story to Conor’s previous references to wigs: ‘I could be coming for one of your wigs soon, one of your spares, don’t throw them away, I may actually need these as a form of disguise at some point’. The contrast between performer and story, and between performer and photo, rescued Deacon’s audience from the boredom that his long-windedness could otherwise instil.

Deacon’s style stood in marked contrast to Conor’s. Conor spoke and moved with enthusiasm and made good eye contact with his audience. However, his efforts to be funny fell flat. His first photo was of a riotous scene centred on himself, perched on stilts. He announced that he had trained to be a clown but had stopped because he wasn’t very funny. This line was delivered with high energy, self-deprecation, and good comic timing, yet he received little response from his audience. His third photo for this prompt was of him with a woman. ‘That was my partner at the time, who is a woman, and I am, uh, incredibly homosexual,’ he said. Despite his high energy and deadpan delivery, Conor got only smiles and a brief chuckle from his audience. His efforts to intensify his own appearance, though skilfully employed, failed to create a strong connection with his audience.

Conor deviated from the norms of performance several times, which could be construed as creating the ‘deviation and surprise’ that constitute ‘heightened attention’. He presented himself as a person who does not remember the purpose of his photos, announces his own failure to be funny, and actively seeks out ways to cheat. However, Conor’s deviations did not draw attention to the structure of the performance, which was

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Deacon’s photo for prompt four (lie) was an underwater snapshot of his daughter in scuba gear, and for prompt five (forgotten) was of a woman on a beach. These contributed neither detail nor contrast to Deacon’s stories. Therefore, they were not made ‘conspicuous’ through performance and did not contribute to ‘heightened attention’.
inconsistent and diverse; instead, they drew attention to his persona, which was strengthened by every deviation from the norm.

**Situatedness**

Each prompt solicited a single story and invited participants to upload one or more photos in support of that one story. However, Susan offered two separate stories for prompt one (regular day) and three separate stories for each of prompts five (forgotten) and four (lie). For nearly half of the photos she displayed, the length of time she spent telling the story for a single photo fell within the average story length—including multiple photos—of the other three sessions. As a result, her turns went on for quite some time. At no point did she give any indication that she realised a difference between her approach and anyone else’s, or that she was taking up more time than others. As mentioned above, she often stared at her photo and laughed to herself as though unaware of the presence of her audience. Responding to prompt one (regular day), Susan said that she had ‘terrible memories’ about the day represented in the photograph and then doubled over with laughter for an extended time. The photo showed a sunny day on a crowded beach, with no sign of anything either terrible or funny. As Susan continued to laugh, her audience joined in. Their curiosity was palpable. As soon as Susan began to explain, though, their laughter stopped. She described an obese black man eating messily and wading into the ocean to defecate. It seemed that no one in her audience felt comfortable laughing at someone for being fat and black, or at the mental image of defecating off a crowded beach. As soon as Susan changed topic, the audience released their tension in a loud laugh. Susan did not respond to the mismatch between her experience of memory and her audience’s experience of imagination. In this way, she failed to acknowledge the situatedness of the emerging performance.

Susan’s next photo within that same prompt gave her an excellent opportunity to reflect another person’s performance in her own. It was a shot of a beautiful view out of an apartment window, and Susan’s performance centred on the feeling she had had at the time, that she would be happy to live in a place with a view like that. This was almost identical to Kat’s performance in the previous round, where she expressed her

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61 Susan displayed a total of eight photos: one for 167.8 seconds, one for 88 seconds, one for 79 seconds, and one for 71 seconds. The other four were displayed for between 47 and 59 seconds each. In comparison, the average time spent on the entire response to a prompt was 81.8 seconds for Friend Group 1, 75.7 seconds for Friend Group 2, and 109.5 seconds for the Stranger Group 1. The average time for Susan’s group was, of course, much longer than the others at 137.0 seconds.
satisfaction with her new home in Guildford (see Figure 7.16; also, both unintentionally reflect Kelly’s photo of the view from his hostel window in *Cape Wrath*). However, Susan made no reference to Kat, her story, or her photograph. Whether her choice was intentional or an oversight, it contributed to the feeling of disconnection that permeated this performance.

![Figure 7.16 Kat’s view from her apartment and Susan’s view from her friend’s apartment.](image)

The most blatant reference to situatedness was also the most substantial violation of the rules governing the performance. Conor decided that his photo for prompt three (embarrassing) would not help him tell his story, so he announced he was ‘going to get rid of it’ and clicked the ‘finish turn’ button. For the next two minutes and seven seconds, he told his story against the backdrop of the *Collect Yourselves!* main page with the timer on pause. His announcement drew a great deal of attention and laughter. In terms of the ‘autopoietic feedback loop’ (Fischer-Lichte 2008b, p. 165), this was by far Conor’s most successful story, as he performed without any of the tension that marked his earlier attempts, and his audience responded with laughter and full attention. Conor drew attention to the situatedness of the performance by refusing to adhere to the rules that made it possible.

**Aesthetics of the event**

There were very few instances of liminal experience or the potential for transformation in this performance. In fact, one of the two examples of risk was not available to most of the audience. I happened to know that Olive suffered from stage fright, despite her appearance as a casual, confident performer. I was therefore amazed when the timer showed only a couple of minutes to go and Olive volunteered to tell a story. Had she stayed quiet, the timer would have run out before her next turn. This points to the possibility that *Collect Yourselves!* might in some instances push people fearful of
performing to experience a completely unexpected pleasure in front of others, because of rather than despite their anxiety. As Pablo discovered with his final story, performance can surprise performers as much as audience members and allow a willing participant to lift herself out of her everyday conceptions of her own limits.

The one clear moment of intimacy and liminality in this performance was Nora’s prompt five (forgotten). The image she projected was odd and intriguing: it looked like a dark, heart-shaped smudge on a white background (see Figure 7.17). Nora’s story follows in full, interspersed with comments on her performance and its reception.

![Figure 7.17 Nora’s tzatziki heart.](image)

So this is the random picture thing, and I really had forgotten that I had this. I was looking through and I thought, did I take a picture of something big and white? It was quite an emotional moment, actually, ’cause it just all came back to me, why I took that photo.

Nora spoke very quickly, not trying to exaggerate the importance of the moment she was reporting on. As a consequence, the admission of emotion felt very genuine and touching.

And I’ll admit that I was very drunk when I took this photo. We were actually at, we had a night back at my place with a few friends, and probably the emotional part is that all of those friends are from Australia and they’ve all left now, a couple of years ago, but we had lots of really good memories made in this one particular
place. We had like bring a dish or whatever, and I had some tzatziki, and I took off the lid of the tzatziki —

She slowed down and re-enacted opening the lid, building suspense.

— and that’s what was —

She pointed to the heart on the projected photo (see Figure 7.18).

So that’s all tzatziki, right? And then I opened the lid, and that moment I was like - [gasps] - this heart, in the tzatziki lid!

The audience laughed, and either Deacon or Conor made a low sound of recognition.

So the tzatziki over the whole lid except for that one spot. I didn’t touch it, it was like that, I’d folded open — I’d dropped it — oh yeah, that’s why, ’cause I dropped it and it went all on the lid, and I opened the lid and I took it out and it was a heart there.

It was clear from her manner that although she had remembered the event during the devising phase, the detail of dropping the tzatziki only came back to her in the moment of performance.

I was completely manic about it for the next couple of hours, like, ‘This is a sign! This is a sign! We have to remember this evening!’

She re-enacted her ‘manic’ address, very briefly, to appreciative laughter.

So I took a photo of it so I would never forget the evening. And obviously I forgot the evening —

The audience erupted in laughter.

— but then the fact that Jocelyn made me look through my photos and I went, ‘Why would I do that?’ And I remembered it, and it really made me just smile and warm and think about the beautiful people that I was with that night.

She seemed on the verge of tears for a fraction of a second, and the warmth of her memories shone through her face.
So, yeah, there it is, my tzatziki heart. You can find love anywhere.

The light-hearted tone of these words indicated that this was the end of Nora’s story. While she was finishing her turn at the laptop, and her audience was still silent, she continued in a conversational and dismissive tone:

It turned into that type of cheesy like, ‘Oh, this is meant to be, guys’.

The fragile moment of vulnerability that Nora created in the intense development of her story dissipated the moment that performance gave way to regular interaction. The situation might have been ‘cheesy’, and it might seem ‘cheesy’ without the context of Nora’s performance and the enigmatic heart captured in her photo. In this intermedial autobiographical performance, though, Nora was able to share the ‘smile and warm’ behind the cheesiness.

![Figure 7.18 Nora pointing to her tzatziki heart.](image)

What made this entire performance come alive was Nora’s open-hearted engagement with the fallibility of her own memory in a way that it seemed her audience could imagine their way into. She did not simply describe an event in the past but continued her process of self-discovery in front of her audience. Nora did not bother to explain how wonderful her friends were or why she liked them so much, because she did not need to. What she did tell her audience, through voice and manner as much as words, was how moved she was to be reminded of this forgotten evening and how it made her feel that ‘you can find love anywhere’. She took a risk by making these admissions to strangers,
which she demonstrated by scaling back her vulnerability when she reverted to conversational speech in the last line. In less than two minutes of performance, Nora created a bridge of intimacy and imaginative connection that brought her audience into a shared space of humour, vulnerability, and appreciation of lost love.

REFLECTION PHASE — THEMATIC ANALYSIS

‘Being able to listen to the “life” of an image is very exciting’ —Kat

Three participants had nothing but positive comments about the overall experience of Collect Yourselves! One described it as both ‘casual’ and ‘a meeting with purpose’; one found it ‘very enjoyable’ such that ‘time went by really fast’; and one thought it ‘surprisingly fun once my first turn was over’. The other four identified negative aspects in a generally positive experience: terms such as ‘friendly’, ‘interesting’, ‘invigorating’, ‘moving’, and ‘funny’ were tempered with the phrases ‘a bit awkward to start with’, ‘slightly embarrassing’, and ‘slightly forced’. These responses reveal the effort, risk, and discomfort involved in taking part in a performance. It is interesting that the one participant who was trained in performance said nothing about these discomforts.

Terese and Conor observed that Collect Yourselves! allowed for more equitable participation than a normal conversation, in which ‘undoubtedly a few people would dominate’ (Terese). It is possible that a conversation among these seven people would have led to greater disparities between the most and least time spent holding the floor. However, in comparison to the other sessions conducted for this thesis, this performance was extremely unbalanced (see Chapter 8 for a full discussion).

Despite the fact that this session was made up of people who did not know each other, all participants perceived the performance as too highly contextualised to share a video of it online. As one participant put it, ‘the act required the relationship between teller and told’. Without ‘the presence of these people’, most felt that a video of the performance could be ‘embarrassing’ or might not be of interest to anyone else. (One felt that ‘the stories and comments were interesting enough to be shared more widely’.) Two participants who would hypothetically share an edited version pointed out that no video could recreate the performance for others. As one put it, ‘it is not the event you share’. Those who would share a video of the performance would limit its distribution to a few friends or would only share it in person so that she could ‘add explanatory footnotes to the video’. The context of live performance was paramount.
Participants had a range of opinions on the feeling of performing. The only wholly positive response was lukewarm, and focused on the pleasures of reminiscence: ‘OK. Made me remember good times’. Three more identified moments of discomfort in a mostly positive experience. One of these was anxious not to bore anyone or overstay her welcome while speaking, while another surprised herself with how little she had to say when her turn came around. Conor admitted he ‘was more interested in finding ways to cheat’. Three people found their experience of performing to be dominated by stage fright due to the unknown audience, though two of these gained confidence as the performance progressed, and one said that performing ‘felt very good’ nonetheless.

The experience of being an audience member was also fraught for three participants, who were critical of some ‘forgettable’ stories. After the session, one participant mentioned to me how tedious she found some of the longest stories. For the most part, though, participants enjoyed being an audience for others, calling it ‘interesting’, ‘awesome’, and ‘very amusing’. One participant made an unsolicited comment drawing comparisons between Collect Yourselves! and social networking sites in the context of audiencing:

I feel that today the sharing of images is so big/intense but the story and life and content behind it is inexistent [sic]—as we share stuff w/ lots of unknown people. Being able to listen to the “life” of an image is very exciting.

While the felt experience of Collect Yourselves! was far from uniform in this session, and not uniformly positive, it offered a way into ‘the “life” of an image’ in a way that conventional conversation or media sharing do not.

**DISCUSSION**

This chapter began with a ‘baseline’ example of a group of strangers who came together, first to share their personal digital media in an unstructured encounter and then to play a structured game involving personal reminiscence. This example indicated what might occur if Collect Yourselves! failed to have an impact on the ways that strangers would come together to share personal digital media. The chapter went on to provide two detailed analyses of Collect Yourselves! performances conducted by people who did not all know each other. These analyses form the beginnings of a response to the primary research question of this thesis: How can intermedial autobiographical performance advance the understanding of interactions among people and their personal digital media?
The Stranger Control Group provided evidence to support several observations in the literature, such as large discrepancies between the contributions of the most and least talkative participants or a tendency for people to tell ‘response’ stories (Norrick 2000, p. 112). It also revealed that the experience can become fragmented as individuals select their next digital media offerings. Most importantly, this group showed almost no indications of any of the categories of ‘heightened attention’ or the ‘aesthetics of the event’.

In contrast, the Collect Yourselves! performances among strangers elicited a much more even distribution of time spent telling stories and complete lack of reciprocal storytelling, as the participants told the stories they had decided to tell during the devising phase. Self-making tended to distinguish one performer from the next, and there was relatively little active acknowledgement of the situatedness of the event. However, there was a certain amount of self-discovery and self-disclosure, which led to levels of insight and connection that surprised many participants. Both performances evidenced several mechanisms for the categories of ‘heightened attention’ and the ‘aesthetics of the event’, including brief moments of liminality and potential transformation. This discussion draws together the findings of both Stranger Groups.

**Devising Phase**

Many participants found the devising phase to be ‘artificial’ or ‘uncomfortable’, but it was this phase that created the opportunity for them to make quick connections and insights into each other’s lives in performance. The prompts pushed participants into being ‘self-centred’ (Marta) and to stay ‘on script’ (Nora) despite everyday, conversational imperatives to focus on others and tell ‘response’ stories (Norrick 2000, p. 112). Surprisingly, the difference between reminiscence and storytelling proved to be key not only to the types of stories told but to participants’ attitude towards the process of devising: those who focused on the reminiscence it afforded found the devising phase to be enjoyable, while those who focused on the task of preparing stories for public consumption found it to be stressful, though many of those who started out with this negative attitude found that the process became more enjoyable as they progressed.

There was ample opportunity for Stranger Groups to engage in ‘photo-driven’ stories (Balabanović et al 2000, p. 570), in which people identify the main features of a photo in simple, non-narrative terms. In addition, the fact that these groups were made of strangers might have encouraged them to limit themselves to identifying unknown people
and places. However, this was not the case. In almost all cases, ‘performed photos’ emerged where ‘photo-driven’ stories might have been expected. Stories for prompts one (regular day), two (memorable), and five (forgotten), which asked users to choose a photo regardless of the ‘tellability’ (Sacks 1995) of the story behind it, were nearly always indistinguishable from the others in terms of narrative, detail, and their engagement with the properties of autobiographical performance. The devising phase, perhaps in combination with a pressure to perform, pushed participants away from the simplistic presentation of ‘photo-driven’ photos in conversational media sharing (Balabanović et al 2000, p. 570) into this new category of ‘performed photos’. Some of these, such as Marta’s Trunki story (prompt five, forgotten) and Nora’s tzatziki heart (prompt five, forgotten) even formed high points of ‘heightened attention’ and ‘liminality and transformation’.

**PERFORMANCE PHASE**

The overall impression of the Stranger Group performances was one of disunity. Stranger Group 1 gave the sense of five performers attempting to distinguish themselves from each other. Stranger Group 2 was disjointed in terms of timing, turn-taking, style, and reception. In both performances, turn-taking was based not on seating order or the order of names on screen but by negotiation, and both performances had at least one deviation. Only half of the performers followed suit with the previous prompt. Neither group succeeded in performing all of their stories, although in both cases there were last-minute attempts to steer the group towards completion. Although the manner of performers’ interactions was always polite, their choices spoke of divergence.

Much of the time, digital media were central to these differences, as evidenced by Marta’s many photos of her children compared to Ebba’s photos of inanimate objects or spaces, or Terese’s hilarious photo of her mother with the disembowelled goose compared to Susan’s photo of her father with his garden gadget. Digital media also seemed to be chosen as much for their reflection of the performer’s interests or values in life as for their strict adherence to the requirements of the prompt. Photos chosen by Stranger Group 1 revolved around hobbies and relationships, while those chosen by Stranger Group 2 often dealt with their work interests. The Stranger Groups were also notable for their ease with prompt four (lie): they seemed more invested in successfully meeting the challenge of the prompt than in establishing themselves as truth-loving people.
Differentiation was easy to detect in the scattered energy of each performance. In the Stranger Groups, high energy levels from performers were sometimes met with very low energy levels from audiences, and vice versa. Energy levels were also sometimes very different among audience members or over time within a single story or prompt. These differences speak of some marked failures to engage audiences. However, there were also some great successes, as with Marta’s attempt to sell her daughter’s Trunki, or Nora’s tzatziki heart. Perhaps the strongest evidence of a performer bringing her audience with her to a point of connection was one of the rare examples of ‘interruption’, in which Leo spoke one of the words of Marta’s prompt five (forgotten) along with her. This ‘interruption’ was like Barbara’s exclamations of support in Friend Group 2. In sum, the strangers’ performances were marked by any number of unexpected contradictions and disjunctions in the ‘autopoietic feedback loop’ (Fischer-Lichte 2008b, p. 165).

‘Heightened attention’ occurred more at the micro level of individual gestures or vocal inflections than at a macro level that would affect the audience’s perception of the performance on a larger scale. Similarly, there were very few examples of heightening attention via ‘conspicuousness’ (of the digital objects) or ‘deviation and surprise’ (relating to the performance as a whole). When employed, representation dissonance was very effective, as in Terese’s prompt four (lie). ‘Doubled indexicality’ was another powerful technique for heightening attention, primarily with Ebba in Stranger Group 1 but also through family resemblances with Terese in Stranger Group 2.

References to the situatedness of the performance event were very uncommon in the Stranger Groups. In fact, the missed opportunities to make connections between stories were almost as prominent as the few opportunities that were taken. The most powerful example of situatedness was Conor’s refusal to play by the rules in his performance of prompt three (embarrassing). Neither Stranger Group made many connections among each other’s stories. However, their stories provided subject matter for conversations during the ten-minute break that immediately followed each performance.

Behaviours indicating categories of the ‘aesthetics of the event’ were few and far between in the Stranger Groups. Low levels of ‘heightened attention’ left little opportunity to create intimacy or risk, which are important to the establishment of a liminal space and the possibility for transformation. In the absence of risk or intimacy, the strongest contributions to liminality came from the few moments of vulnerability or connection. Vulnerability could be seen, for example, in Nora’s re-enactment of her
overwrought reaction to the tzatziki heart and her admission of the powerful emotional response brought on by her ‘cheesy’ memory. Connection could be seen in Marta’s sharing of ‘that image of yourself’ that did not match the image projected behind her. These glimpses of vulnerability and connection, which are weaker versions of risk and intimacy, came about because of the constraints and opportunities of performance provided by the Collect Yourselves! process.

**Reflection Phase**

The felt experience of creating a Collect Yourselves! performance was more positive than negative across the two Stranger Groups, but it was not uniformly enjoyed. Positive responses often came from those who commented from the point of view of an audience member, speaking about the pleasures of hearing other people’s stories; negative responses often reflected the discomforts of having to perform. However, the resulting performances were seen as ‘personal’ (the term used most often in Stranger Group 1) or reliant on the ‘context’ of their fellow performers (the term used most often in Stranger Group 2). It seems from these reflections that Collect Yourselves! succeeded in creating an intensified engagement among strangers through the processes of performance.

The feelings of performing ranged from the very positive to the very negative. In each group, three found performing to be frightening, though in each group two of these three found that they warmed to performing as time went on. The relative balance between the loudest and shyest members of each group was not a consistent concern for strangers; the group with the widest discrepancy between longest and shortest turns (Stranger Group 2) mentioned the positive role that Collect Yourselves! played in making the ratio more equitable, while the most balanced group out of all six (Stranger Group 1) said nothing about the distribution of time. This contradiction could be due to the simple fact that as strangers, these participants had no way of knowing in advance who would have dominated a regular conversation and therefore whether Collect Yourselves! played any role in balancing the equation.

The feeling of audiencing was more positive than the feeling of performing for the Stranger Groups, but it was not without its negative comments. Several participants in Stranger Group 2 and one participant in Stranger Group 1 were critical of badly told stories. Positive comments often revolved around perceptions of skill on the part of other performers: Stranger Group 1 spoke in terms of ‘entertaining’ or ‘insightful’ stories, while Stranger Group 2 spoke in terms of ‘entertaining’ or ‘awesome’ stories. There was
no mention of ‘intimacy’ in the feeling of listening to others’ stories, but some in Stranger Group 1 spoke of becoming part of the performer’s world or making a connection to the person behind the image or story, and Stranger Group 2 spoke of the ‘context’ of live performance among their fellow participants. This sense of connection can also be seen in an unsolicited contrast between audiencing and social networking, in which a member of Stranger Group 2 pointed out that Collect Yourselves! discloses the ‘life of an image’ that social networking sites tend not to reveal.

These reflections conclude the analyses of both Friend and Stranger Groups. The following chapter will draw together the findings from all four Collect Yourselves! performances, leading to guidelines for design and implications for performance.
Chapter 8.
Answering the research question

INTRODUCTION

This chapter answers the overarching research question of this thesis: how can intermedial autobiographical performance advance the understanding of interactions among people and their personal digital media? To do so, it first reviews the degree to which Collect Yourselves! fulfilled its design goals and created unexpected outcomes, all of which point towards a performative interaction with personal digital media unlike those found in existing digital media sharing practices or professional autobiographical performance. From there, I argue that Collect Yourselves! has created the conditions for intermedial autobiographical performance. This argument does not assume that the findings from the previous two chapters will ‘prove’ any ‘facts’ or imply homogeneity among all intermedial autobiographical performances. Rather, drawing from observations of the four Collect Yourselves! performances arising from the unique set of design choices detailed in Chapter 5, I offer a full definition of intermedial autobiographical performance in light of the ways in which it advances the understanding of interactions among people and their personal digital media.

The second and third sections of this chapter provide a list of guidelines for HCI and implications for performance, derived directly from the analyses of Collect Yourselves! The guidelines for HCI set out techniques and means of conceptualising design for performative interactions with personal digital media. The implications for performance reveal theoretical and practical avenues for investigating the use of design and/or personal digital media. These two sections provide details on the specific elements in each field that intermedial autobiographical performance might illuminate, either through further research with Collect Yourselves! or by developing different prototypes designed along similar lines. These guidelines and implications point the way towards the establishment of Performative Experience Design (PED) as an area for future research and practice, an argument that will be made in Chapter 9.
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The experience of using Collect Yourselves! resulted in a number of effects across all four groups:

• participants made an honest effort to fulfil the ‘spirit’ of the requirements of the prompts and of the performance situation, even in the rare instances where they violated the ‘letter’ of those requirements;

• those efforts led many to frustration, challenge, discomfort, and risk;

• many who initially felt uncomfortable came to enjoy the experience;

• the most enjoyable parts were often perceived as the most challenging;

• challenging situations created the space for self-discovery, surprise, connection, and shared intimacy which was stronger and more frequent than would be expected in a corresponding period of regular conversation or media sharing;

• these connections were highly valued, as were the more frequent but less intense insights into other people’s lives;

• these connections would not have been created without the experience of the devising phase;

• the overall experience was improved for those who engaged with reminiscence in either or both phases;

• and all groups envisioned Collect Yourselves! being used by both groups of friends and groups of strangers.

There were also contrasts in use between the two types of groups. The Friend Groups tended to demonstrate more of the following qualities than did the Stranger Groups:

• conventional and unified approaches to the negotiated act of group performance

• coherence in style, tone, and timing

• ‘success’ in performing all stories in the allotted time

• acceptance and enjoyment of each other’s stories
• positivity about the experience as a whole
• self-discovery, intimacy, and risk
• reluctance to be seen as a good liar.

Before conducting these studies, I had imagined that Friend Groups would feel confident enough in their relationships with each other to strike out with individualistic performances, extravagant lies, and outright reminiscence, whereas individuals in Stranger Groups might strive to converge as much as possible. I could not have guessed more wrongly. Friend Groups tended to perform their connections to each other, not just in their responses to prompt two (thinking of you) but in their interactions throughout the performance, in both performer and audience member roles. Stranger Groups, on the other hand, performed their differentiations from each other and were notably less even in their distribution of time and attention. I also would have imagined that groups of friends would have found the artificiality of the performance structure to be a hindrance to intimacy, but again, the opposite proved to be true. Friends tightened their bonds with each other and made discoveries about each other—and themselves—that they might never otherwise have made. Strangers had a similar though less intense experience, connecting with each other because of, not in spite of, the constraints against ordinary conversational interaction.

These general observations indicate that on the whole, the design goals have been met, and Collect Yourselves! created the conditions for intermedial autobiographical performance. However, it is necessary to examine each of the design goals in turn, briefly, to determine whether this is actually the case. The connections between the properties of autobiographical performance, design goals, features, and data are summarised in Table 5.1. Each of the four properties of autobiographical performance had design goals for the devising phase and the performance phase. For self-making, the goals were a guided reminiscence through personal digital archives (devising) and the creation of temporally extended ‘protoselves’ (Barclay 1994) (performance). Fischer-Lichte’s three categories of ‘heightened attention’ were divided between the two phases: ‘conspicuousness’ (devising), and ‘intensity of appearance’ and ‘deviation and surprise’ (performance). Situatedness had the goals of encouraging active selection of media in the context of the upcoming performance (devising) and a latitude to shape story content and presentation in relation to the group (performance). Finally, Fischer-Lichte’s three categories of the ‘aesthetics of the event’ were divided between the two phases:
‘collapsing dichotomies’ (devising), and ‘liminality and transformation’ and ‘autopoiesis and emergence’ (performance).

**Self-making in the devising phase:** The goal was guided reminiscence through personal digital archives as a separate, private experience from the group performance. Reminiscence was strongly linked to a pleasurable experience with the devising phase. Reminiscence was not restricted to devising, either, as some participants reported engaging with reminiscence during the performance phase, a phenomenon which was also strongly linked to enjoyment of the overall experience. Some participants also surprised themselves with moments of self-discovery during the devising phase, which often led to moments of connection and intimacy in performance.

**Self-making in the performance phase:** The goal was the creation of temporally extended ‘protoselves’ (Barclay 1994), meaning that the identities or personas presented by participants would reflect both the multiple perspectives on their pasts emerging from the devising phase and the perspectives emerging from the contextualised moment of performance. However, aside from those stories that reflected such complex temporal structures, self-making strategies on their own did not do much to illuminate the ways in which intermedial autobiographical performance can inform digital media sharing. The reason for this seems to be that the behaviours identified in these performances were indistinguishable from those seen in everyday conversation (see Table 3.1 for specific coded behaviours).

**Heightened attention in the devising phase:** The goal was to create opportunities for performers to make their digital media ‘conspicuous’ (Fischer-Lichte 2008b, p. 168), or singled out for the audience’s attention. The devising phase gave performers time and guidance to select particular media and to reflect on their memories triggered by those media from two perspectives: the current time and place, and the future performance situation as they imagined it would be. Thus the photos became ‘conspicuous’ to the performer first, and through the actions of the performer they might become ‘conspicuous’ to the audience as well. Marta’s ‘Trunki’ story (prompt five, forgotten) is an example (see Figure 7.6): this forgotten photo captured her attention during the devising phase as she tried to remember why she had it; then the memory of her long struggle to rid herself of Trunki made the photo suddenly rich with history; finally, Marta’s skilful storytelling invited her audience to imbue this otherwise forgettable snapshot with their own memories and imagined versions of Marta’s experience. ‘Conspicuousness’ was usually generated through a dissonance, whether temporal or
representational, between the image and story. Images that lacked dissonance, such as Susan’s photo of her dad with his ‘gadget’ (see Figure 7.12), often failed to make an impression. In future research, designs could target these dissonances more directly in the hopes of making more compelling stories with an increased potential for the connection and intimacy that often followed from ‘heightened attention’.

‘Doubled indexicality’ refers to a specific type of dissonance between performer and his or her image that allows audience members to connect emotionally through acts of memory and imagination. While Collect Yourselves! did not hold up ‘doubled indexicality’ as a specific design goal, the phenomenon emerged from the performance analyses as a mechanism for heightening attention that oscillates between ‘conspicuousness’ and ‘intensity of appearance’. Ebba’s prompt three (embarrassing) is an example (see Figure 7.8), where the glass sculpture of her teeth could simultaneously represent a part of her own body (‘intensity of appearance’) and an odd sculpture that revolted some of its viewers (‘conspicuousness’). ‘Doubled indexicality’ heightens attention to the live performer and to her media through highlighting the gap or disparity between the two.

**Heightened attention in the performance phase:** The design aimed to encourage ‘intensity’ of the performer’s appearance by such mechanisms as requiring the performers to stand, and includes such animated behaviours as barking like a dog (Xiu’s prompt two, thinking of you), generating laughter (see Figure 7.6), or gesturing (see Figure 6.10). All performers engaged in behaviours that fell into this category, though it must be admitted that even the most straightforward conversation is likely to include at least some mild or brief examples of ‘intensity of appearance’. Interestingly, some of the most compelling behaviours for intensifying the performer’s appearance were sudden, subtle changes, such as Zita’s glance over her shoulder to indicate her jealousy when Isobel was able to return to Catalonia for a family gathering, or the catch in Barbara’s voice when she tried to explain her ‘perfect kind of moment’ with Anne in the field (see Figure 6.16). The analysis methods were able to detect such shifts, but the design did not aim to encourage them. Future research should investigate such subtleties.

‘Deviation and surprise’ depends on an underlying rhythm or pattern for the performance as a whole, from which a single element can deviate. However, a Collect Yourselves! performance is made up of many individual stories, and performers have no way of knowing what the contributions of the other participants will be. It was therefore difficult to identify deviations or surprises other than those very few that broke the rules, such as
Conor’s decision to tell his story for prompt three (embarrassing) without his photo, which meant that the timer was not running while he performed. With their focus on individual stories, Collect Yourselves! performances were not well equipped to enable an effective use of ‘deviation and surprise’ as a technique for heightening attention.

**Situatedness in the devising phase:** The goal was to create an opportunity for participants to select photos that would suit the prompt and the context of performance, but most of all to reflect what they decided to disclose about themselves, especially if that involved a new insight or point of view. The fact that all participants had gone through the same devising process provided the connection that the Stranger Control Group felt was sorely missing in their unstructured digital media sharing session. It also made some participants curious to hear how others responded to these prompts that they all now had some personal investment in. For many participants, situatedness in the devising phase was indicated most strongly by a sense of challenge that includes but is not limited to a sense of stage fright. Challenge was experienced by participants who struggled to respond to the prompts in a way that they could feel satisfied by in performance, where they knew they would be ‘marked as subjected to evaluation’ (Bauman 1975, p. 293) for their choices. As Dewey puts it, ‘[a] sure thing does not arouse us emotionally’ (2005, p. 69). By the end of the performance, though, most of their struggle and frustration had transformed into a sense of pleasure at the insights and connections that the process had made possible. This was particularly evident in the nearly universal preference for prompt four (lie), despite the fact that many participants hurried through it, stumbled over their performance of it, or when possible skipped it altogether. This was a more powerful, exciting, and promising outcome than I had hoped for.

**Situatedness in the performance phase:** This goal was to give performers the latitude to shape their stories in relation to the group they were performing with, in terms of content and/or presentation. There were several indications that performers altered their stories slightly in performance, such as the overt linkages to ‘stress’ among five consecutive stories in Friend Group 1. There were also several variations between text entered during the devising phase and the resulting performances. These could conceivably indicate the differences between written and spoken storytelling introduced by Norrick (2000, p. 103), but seem more likely to indicate changes in focus occasioned by the emerging performance.
Performers adapted to the unique situation of performance through the structure as well as the content of their performances. Participants shaped their interactions with the technology to suit their priorities: Friend Groups tended to prioritise group cohesion and harmony when negotiating turn-taking and story length, while Stranger Groups tended to prioritise ways of distinguishing themselves from each other, even at the expense of taking their turns in order or allowing their fellow participants the chance to tell all of their stories as intended. However, these differences between Friend Groups and Stranger Groups pale in comparison to the balancing effect that Collect Yourselves! had on all its participants. Stranger Group 1 and the two Friend Groups distributed the time among them far more evenly than either of the Control Groups did (see Table 8.1). Even Stranger Group 2, whose performance was marked by large discrepancies between its two most talkative performers and its two quietest, distributed their time more evenly than the Stranger Control Group did. It is also worth noting that the Friend Control Group compares only the lengths of narratives, not the overall time spent speaking (because, as noted before, the fluid and overlapping conversation made such comparisons nearly impossible to calculate with the analytic tools at hand). In terms of conversation, the Friend Control Group was clearly dominated by one participant, Bruce, and would certainly have fallen to the bottom of the fairness ranking in Table 8.1. Finally, as noted in the discussion of Stranger Group 2, the impression of equality offered by Collect Yourselves! is taken as a positive aspect of the performance experience, whether or not the performance actually achieves balance in comparison to others.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean story length</th>
<th>Normalised standard deviation</th>
<th>Ranking (fairest =1)</th>
<th>Ratio longest to shortest story*</th>
<th>Ranking (fairest=1)</th>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.42</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.27</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.51</td>
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<td>4.10</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.1 Comparison of story lengths in each group with resulting ‘fairness’ rankings. *Friend Control Group, which told only two stories, compares total time holding the floor.
Aesthetics of the event in the devising phase: The goal was to create opportunities for Fischer-Lichte’s ‘collapsing dichotomies’ to emerge. This broad concept was narrowed down to the ethical responsibilities on the part of both performer and audience member as the ‘aesthetic’ and the ‘social’ spheres collapse into each other in performance (Fischer-Lichte 2008b, p. 171; see also Heddon 2008). It was anticipated that ethical choices would be made during the devising phase, but these were difficult to detect. However, ‘collapsing dichotomies’ proved to be a useful lens through which to understand the difference between Friend Groups’ warm attention to each other’s stories and the obvious lack of interest demonstrated by some Stranger Group participants. It was also useful for looking at the tension in Friend Group 2 between unstructured conversation and structured storytelling in terms of the collapsed dichotomy of the aesthetic (story) and the social (conversation). A certain number of interjections and questions can build connections between performers and audience members, while too much conversation could cause participants to abandon the performance frame altogether (Bauman 1975, p. 293). Therefore, participants who were engaged enough in the experience to ask questions and volunteer their own experiences risked derailing the performance, and they might perceive this tension between contributing to the performance and contributing to the conversation. In other words, the collapsing of dichotomies between the aesthetic and the social can cause participants to ‘experience[] themselves as involved and responsible for a situation nobody single-handedly created’ (Fischer-Lichte 2008b, p. 165). However, Collect Yourselves! did not capitalise on Fischer-Lichte’s concept of ‘collapsing dichotomies’ in a generative way: it explained but did not create some of the conditions of performance.

Aesthetics of the event in the performance phase: The goal in this case was to create opportunities for the other two categories of Fischer-Lichte’s ‘aesthetics of the event’ to emerge. As mentioned in Chapter 2, ‘autopoiesis and emergence’ can be found in any self-sustaining and unplanned interaction, not necessarily performances towards the right side of Wilson’s storytelling continuum (2006, p. 9). It was useful for making sense of emergent elements and interactions, but ultimately there was no direct link between this category and any of the elements noted in the coded performance analysis or in the reflection phase as being particularly interesting or moving. What emerged was the strong connection between the most interesting or moving elements and the category of ‘liminality and transformation’. As noted by many participants, the value of Collect Yourselves! performances lay in the connections, intimacies, and insights into each other, as well as insights into their own experiences. In these liminal moments, participants could perceive each other not just through the facts of their experiences or the style of
telling, but through a deeply felt sense of connection established through processes of memory and imagination. These moments did not happen unless the performer took a risk or made herself vulnerable, even slightly, to her audience. Vulnerability and risk tended to arise when performers revealed self-discoveries they had made in the course of devising or performing, or when they ‘heightened attention’ to themselves and/or their media in a way that revealed their ‘protoselves’ (Barclay 1994) in an unaccustomed light. Importantly, the converse does not hold: at no point in these analyses did liminality lead to any of the other themes.

Risk can be seen in Hugh’s prompt three (embarrassing), which implicitly asked his audience’s permission to claim an opinion about the male body that might have resulted in disapproval. Similarly, Nora’s performance of prompt five (forgotten) implicitly asked her audience’s permission to appear ‘cheesy’ in recounting a deeply felt emotion triggered by a blurry photo of a pot of tzatziki. Moreover, by taking risks, Hugh and Nora placed their audiences in a liminal state. For example, one audience member might have listened to Nora’s story about finding ‘a sign!’ in a random shape on the lid of a tzatziki pot and thought fondly of a similar experience in her own life. This would subtly reinforce that person’s view of her own attitudes and form a connection between the two individuals. Another audience member, meanwhile, might have disapproved of Nora’s story and dissociated herself from that aspect of Nora’s life. Then, when Nora dismissed her experience as ‘cheesy’, one might have felt her attitude challenged, while the other might have felt her attitude justified. A situation like this is not likely to present itself in any significant way when the performer shows a photo and tells a story, both of which reinforce each other, and both of which are congruent with the audience member’s own life experience. However, it might present itself when, for example, a straight male performer shows a photo of a nearly naked man and admits to appreciating the experience so much that he took a photo; even his best friend might be surprised at this self-disclosure. Such instantaneous and emotional reactions connect performers and audience members through acts of memory and imagination. Each one is a performative punctum (Barthes 1981, p. 27) that sets the experience of a Collect Yourselves! performance apart from an everyday, undifferentiated experience (Dewey 2005).

The Collect Yourselves! analyses establish that ‘liminality and transformation’ is the most important element of intermedial autobiographical performance, not the overall ‘aesthetics of the event’ that Fischer-Lichte (2008b) subordinates them to. Moreover, the potential for ‘liminality and transformation’ does not necessarily increase the more ‘professional’ or ‘theatrical’ a performance seems. In many instances the opposite is true.
Gestures, manipulations of the voice, and short periods of ‘acting out’ another character are all commonly found in the most quotidian of conversational narratives (Langellier & Peterson 2004), and an increase in these techniques does not necessarily lead to an increase in liminality or transformation. Conversely, the more conversational performances (particularly Friend Group 2), marked by interruption, questioning, and co-telling, had a coherence in terms of energy and attention against which moments of ‘liminality and transformation’ could more easily appear. So, for example, the sudden drop in Isobel’s tone when she mentioned her friend who had passed away was instantly paralleled by an increase of attention from her audience, who could then follow up with questions and entice Isobel to extend her story in this new direction. The subsequent insight into Isobel’s and Quentin’s relationship with this friend generated an empathy among audience members that added a note of sincerity and gravity to all of the reminiscences that followed. This situation corresponds to the most powerful moments in Legs 11 and Editor, which came not from the most ‘artistic’ or ‘theatrical’ elements but in the quiet, personal stories told directly to the audience. In sum, Collect Yourselves! has revealed the limitations of the framework of the ‘aesthetics of the event’ in the context of intermedial autobiographical performance, one that a focus on ‘liminality and transformation’ can address.

The design process for Collect Yourselves! took on a challenge in attempting to embed performance aesthetics into an interactive technology. Perhaps the most important finding from this attempt was that, to the extent that it succeeded in meeting those design goals, it did so indirectly. Connection, intimacy, challenge, risk, and transformation emerged through the devising and performance processes despite the fact that neither the prompts nor the rules directly solicited those feelings or behaviours. Where Collect Yourselves! stands apart from much of the other work in design is that it allows these potent experiences to emerge as the result of an emergent performance event that includes a discrete devising phase. At no point are intimacy or risk presented as goals, and as the analyses have revealed, not all performers engaged with those behaviours. However, the overall positive reaction to the experience, especially those reactions that reflect a sense of challenge or discomfort mixed with the positive feelings, indicate that this oblique approach is successful to at least some degree.

‘ATTENDING’ AND ‘MARKING’ IN PERFORMANCE

One question that has been evoked but not answered through this discussion is whether the performance phase of Collect Yourselves! generated what would be generally
accepted as a performance. As Marta said, her stories were hardly ‘party pieces’, much less something she would expect to see performed on a stage. There was also no clapping in any of the performances, even after Terese commented that she felt Deacon’s audience should clap for him. This reluctance to clap could indicate that they did not perceive their actions as a performance, or it could be due at least in part to the fact that they were all performers as well as audience members. However, I argue that the performances differed from ordinary, purely conversational digital media sharing sessions in a more fundamental way, through two functions that I have termed ‘attending’ and ‘marking’.

‘Attending’ relates to the property of ‘heightened attention’. Audiences shift their attention as the performance progresses and thereby change the ‘energy’ or ‘feeling’ of the performance. These terms might sound too nebulous to work with in design, but they are critical to a person’s experience of the world: an audience member is likely to have a different mental and emotional state at the climax of a Greek tragedy compared to the finale of a big-budget musical comedy. The various design decisions in Collect Yourselves! altered the parameters within which audience members would attend to the unfolding performance. For example, audience members were relieved of the need or opportunity to formulate a story in response to the one they were listening to, knowing that their story choice had been settled in the devising phase. However, simple attention does not necessarily bring with it any sense of emotional connection or insight. Audiences must be willing and able to invest a ‘heightened attention’ to the performance as it unfolds, opening themselves up to the possibility of having their emotions altered and their attitudes challenged.

As the analyses of Collect Yourselves! performances show, ‘heightened attention’ on the part of the audience is necessary but insufficient to create a liminal and potentially transformational performance. The second distinguishing concept, ‘marking’, refers to the vulnerabilities or risks that the performer opens herself up to when interacting with her audience. An experience is ‘marked’ as performance when it displays the potential to achieve emotional insight, connection, or intimacy between performers and audience members. This connection is made possible when the performer discovers or discloses something about herself that makes her vulnerable in front of her audience. For example, Barbara’s quick gasp as she described how ‘perfect’ Anne looked in the field was more than a packet of information or a cause for paying attention. Through her performance, Barbara made herself vulnerable to negative reactions by her friends. Her vulnerability created emotionally risky, insightful, and potentially moving moments of performance.
An experience can be ‘marked’ more or less strongly without implying a hard distinction between aesthetic and non-aesthetic performance. Rather, ‘marking’ and ‘attending’ move a performance along the spectrum towards the ‘cultural’, ‘intense’, ‘risky’, and ‘rewarding’ (Wilson 2006, p. 9), making the event ‘special’ (Dissanayake 2003). In this sense, ‘marking’ is in line with Dewey’s view of aesthetic experience as being ‘demarcated’ from the ordinary events of life by emotion, ideas, and a sense of integration (Dewey 2005, p. 57). Such qualities are difficult to conceptualise within existing HCI frameworks, but are common in performance studies. The term also reflects the ‘marking’ of Bobby Baker’s body with the objects that represent her autobiographical stories and her final action of ‘showing this image to the public’ (Barrett 2007, p. 54), holding her body still as if presenting it to be photographed, or to be viewed as a photograph.

As Steve Benford commented at the CHI 2013 Digital Arts panel question and answer session, HCI looks at moments of interaction at the expense of understanding consumption and production—particularly production—and does not account for value or meaning in experience. One way in which performance can provide the missing focus on value and meaning is to reframe ‘consumption’ and ‘production’ in terms of the ‘attending’ and ‘marking’, respectively, of an interactive event. ‘Attending’ is how one engages with a performance beyond sitting passively. The performance is not ‘consumed’ as one might consume a commodity, or even as one might process the information contained within a media artefact. Rather, an audience member actively engages with the performance through memory and imagination, thereby making it ‘special’ (Dissanayake 2003). ‘Marking’ is how one ‘produces’ a performance rather than an unremarkable fragment of conversation. The performer invests something of the self through self-discovery, self-disclosure, choices of how others are represented, manipulation of energy levels, risk, vulnerability, connection, and intimacy. ‘Attending’ and ‘marking’ work together, as in Fischer-Lichte’s ‘autopoietic feedback loop’ (2008b, p. 165), one feeding off the other as the performance develops. Together, they indicate those moments when interactions with personal digital media become charged with emotion and insight through a vulnerable co-presence. Through the extended, two-phase interaction with their own digital photos guided by the Collect Yourselves! system, participants surprised themselves and others with forgotten or unrealised attitudes, relationships, and memories. By their own accounts, their time spent engaged with each other through the Collect Yourselves! framework was more insightful, connected, intimate, and I would argue potentially transformational than ordinary media sharing or conversation.
Because performance can be understood as attending to and marking everyday practices, such as the taking and sharing of digital photographs, ‘the potential for performance is always present’ (Bauman 1992, p. 44). Anyone can create an intermedial autobiographical performance, given the right triggers and parameters. There is almost certainly no way to design directly for ‘attending’ or ‘marking’. However, this thesis has established that it is possible and desirable to design opportunities for attending, marking, and transformation into a digital media sharing practice that contains and engenders the properties of autobiographical performance.

**INTERMEDIAl AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PERFORMANCE**

Based on the analyses of the *Collect Yourselves!* sessions and the discussion of how the design goals were met, I offer a definition of intermedial autobiographical performance:

Intermedial autobiographical performance is the selection, contextualising, and performance of stories drawn from the performer’s own experience, triggered and supported by engagement with the performer’s own personal digital media, with the aim of achieving a liminal, transformational state among performer and audience members through the emergence of dissonance, intimacy, and risk.

Intermedial autobiographical performance is defined more by its process than by its result. It is possible to imagine an instance of intermedial autobiographical performance with no images displayed at all: this would be an extrapolation of Anne’s decision to delete the photo she found for prompt five (forgotten), her refusal to show an unsatisfactory photo in response to prompt three (embarrassing), or Conor’s aborted display of his own unsatisfactory photo for prompt three (embarrassing). A parallel in professional performance is *Editor*, in which Morgan chose to describe rather than display the photo of herself ‘before the shame’. Another is the 2013 incarnation of *Cape Wrath*, which developed from a series of online media sharing interactions but did not display any of them in the confined quarters of the minibus. Intermedial autobiographical performance engages with technology to ‘attend’ to the self by provoking unconventional and possibly uncomfortable strategies for the selection, contextualisation, and display of personal digital media.

Intermedial autobiographical performance can create dissonance, intimacy, and risk, the results of which can be a closer bonding between friends and an intensified insight into the lives of strangers. These effects are in line with, if not identical to, the aims of performances across a range of traditions: heightened attention (Bauman 1975; Fischer-
Lichte 2008b), empathy (storyteller Liz Weir cited in Wilson 2006, p. 197; Dolan 2005), and the possibility of transformation (Phelan 2004; Fischer-Lichte 2008b). The discovery or re-discovery of stories through unusual encounters with personal digital media led many of the participants to moments of great pleasure. At times, Collect Yourselves! ‘[threw] off the covers that hide the expressiveness of experienced things’ (Dewey 2005, p. 108) and allowed participants to discover and disclose things about themselves in extraordinary ways. Not every story achieved the power identified by the theorists above, but every performance created the conditions by which at least a few participants experienced connection, insight, and sometimes intimacy.

The response to the primary research question of this thesis is that intermedial autobiographical performance reveals both the external structures and the internally felt experiences of a media sharing event as it invites participants into a deeper, more reflective, and potentially transformative relationship with each other, and with their own life experiences, as they are triggered by memory and imagination. Intermedial autobiographical performance frames media sharing as a meeting place, where performers and audiences can come together in a challenging and risky space that brings them to insights about themselves and each other. In this space, it is possible to design parameters within which ‘everyone experiences themselves as involved and responsible for a situation nobody single-handedly created’ (Fischer-Lichte 2008b, p. 165), least of all the designer.

GUIDELINES FOR DESIGN

Interaction designers or experience designers investigating a wide range of areas might benefit from considering the following twelve design guidelines. I believe that they will be useful in framing future research into intermedial autobiographical performance.

Guideline 1: Locate the ‘digital’ in the embodied, contextualised interaction with the user, her archives, her memory, and her imagination as she engages with the technology in question.

This guideline is a very specific instance of McCarthy and Wright’s exhortation to view ‘technology as experience that is open to the sensual, emotional, volitional, and dialogically imaginative aspects of felt experience’ (2004, p. 184). The aspect of Collect Yourselves! that dealt with the role of personal digital media in each participant’s life most directly was the written prompts. As Conor noted, ‘the only digital bit for me was looking for my pictures, and that was useful’. The prompts used an understanding of
emerging practices of photowork and online media sharing to engage participants with their digital media in new ways. It is important to expand the remit of the ‘digital’ in ‘digital technology’ to any part of the user’s experience with their digital media. It is also worth remembering that from the participants’ point of view, there was no difference between digital and analogue photography in performance, only in the availability of images during the devising phase. Therefore, technology should address digital media at the level of access.

**Guideline 2:** Allow for large variations in photowork practices and attitudes towards online social networks.

While on the whole, digital technology has resulted in far more photos being taken than in the days of analogue photography, it does not necessarily follow that all users will have large archives at their disposal. Many *Collect Yourselves!* participants were frustrated by the small number of photos available to them. Designers must take into account restrictions on the media available due to location (for example, work vs. home or temporary residence vs. permanent home), storage format (for example, portable devices, PCs, external hard drives, cloud storage, discs, or social networking sites), and personal photowork practices (for example, relying on others to take photos).

**Guideline 3:** Allow the user to control access to her personal digital media in terms of the unique context of use, which includes both the specific constellation of audience members and the degree to which the user can contextualise those photos through storytelling.

A person’s willingness to share personal digital media is not a simple matter of showing fewer items to strangers and more items to close friends and family. Some participants preferred to share more with strangers because of the lack of personal connection, or were happy about (or resigned to) sharing unflattering photos regardless of audience. However, the majority of participants expressed a desire to control how their photos would be received, and they felt that performance afforded them that control. Personal digital media sharing should be far more responsive to individual scenarios of use than is currently the norm.

**Guideline 4:** Consider the new category of ‘performed photos’ when envisioning how users might want to share personal digital media.
Previous research revealed two main categories of storytelling for media sharing: ‘story-driven’, in which users source photos to support a particular narrative, and ‘photo-driven’, in which users describe a series of photos in often simplistic terms (Balabanović et al 2000, p. 570). Intermedial autobiographical performance has revealed a category of ‘performed photos’, or storytelling around one or more photos that develops a fleshed-out and/or narrativised description of a photo in response to a prompt. These are photos that participants might not consider candidates for sharing in the absence of the prompt, but they can open up performers as well as audiences to previously untold stories that allow for self-discovery, insight, and connection. In other words, it is desirable to design technology that guides users away from their instinctual responses in order to allow fresh insights to emerge. There is a responsibility inherent in this effort, absent in approaches such as serendipity (Leong et al 2011b), to guide users in ultimately beneficial ways — yet the assumption that designers can or should decide what is beneficial, and for whom, is a fraught concept. Still, the responsibility must be taken seriously, as performed photos have many of the same ethical implications identified by Heddon (2008) in autobiographical performance.

**Guideline 5:** Use prompts and rules to shape interactions with personal digital media.

Prompts can engage users in novel ways of experiencing and making sense of their personal digital media. Because prompts are based on language instead of novel technologies, they might seem unexciting or inappropriate for engagement with digital technologies. I argue that they provide a rich means of nudging participants to engage with digital technologies in new ways. Rules function in a similar way, guiding participants towards types of interaction that would not ordinarily be afforded or constrained by digital media technology. Also, as prompts and rules are embedded in the technology being designed, there is no reason that they cannot be combined with functionalities or interfaces that are novel or powerful in their own rights.

**Guideline 6:** Consider multiple phases of a performative experience including one that prepares for the performance and one that reflects on it.

Existing media sharing research views the selection of media objects as a less important part of the experience than the interaction among participants and their media (for example, Balabanović et al 2000; ten Bhömer et al 2010). Alternatively, the selection can be ‘rigged’ to facilitate a particular kind of sharing (for example, Ah Kun & Marsden 2007) or even left to chance (Leong et al 2011b). However, processes of selection can
have enormous repercussions on the later media sharing session, so there is value in pursuing the process of selection as part of the design space for digital media sharing. Similarly, reflections on the experience of sharing are not often valued for their own sake. They might be solicited for the purposes of data collection in HCI studies or, more rarely, in performance studies (for example, Reason 2010). This thesis originally intended a third phase wherein participants would edit and share a video of their performance, a process that would have involved reflection. However, this presented insurmountable technical obstacles and detracted from the core concern of the research, so reflection was taken out of the performance design and relegated to the data collection process. Intermedial autobiographical performance is well suited to incorporate a separate phase of reflection, which would correspond to McCarthy and Wright’s sense-making phases of ‘reflecting’ and ‘appropriating’ (2004, p. 126). This is not without precedent in autobiographical performance, either: *Class of ’76* (2000) included a question-and-answer session after the performance.

**Guideline 7:** Challenge the user, potentially to the point of frustration and discomfort.

The fear of speaking in public is far from uncommon (Hofmann & DiBartolo 2000), and many participants reported feeling fear or nervousness. Why would I intentionally put people into a situation that might make them uncomfortable or even frightened? More importantly, why would people choose to participate in an experience that they knew would make them uncomfortable or even frightened? The answers to the latter question are beyond the scope of this research, but the answer to the former is clear. The challenge to engage with their digital media in unfamiliar ways and then perform for others was an effort that paid off in terms of insight, enjoyment, and connection. In Dewey’s terms, there is no extraordinary or ‘artistic’ expression without some effort, or ‘commotion’ and ‘turmoil’ (2005, p. 69). There is a challenge in undertaking such an effort, especially under the gaze of others. This challenge presents a powerful way into the processes of attending and marking that can create opportunities for emotional connection, insight, and transformation.

**Guideline 8:** Construct opportunities for reminiscence, even fleeting ones, to create enjoyment that can mitigate frustration and discomfort.

Those who found *Collect Yourselves!* to be a challenging experience nevertheless considered it to be positive if they framed it as a process of reminiscence. Reminiscence occurred, as expected, in the devising phase, but also during the performance phase.
Reminiscence as a group process whereby ‘the photographer and [the photograph’s] subject … use the photograph to remember and re-live the event’ (Frohlich 2004, p. 46) was effectively designed out of Collect Yourselves! with the exception of prompt two (thinking of you) in the Friend Groups. However, individuals reminisced on their own in the devising phase and even during the performance, when other people’s stories reminded them of their own experiences. Additionally, prompt two (thinking of you) sometimes triggered extremely short bursts of reminiscing talk, such as Barbara’s exclamation of ‘I took that photo!’, which did the work of maintaining and enacting the group’s relationships (see Van House 2009, p. 1082) without shifting the storytelling event to pure reminiscing talk. This indicates that it is not necessary to design specifically for whole-group reminiscing in order for participants to benefit from this powerful and rewarding activity.

Taken together, guidelines 7 and 8 reflect the model of mixed-audience reminiscence that emerged early in the design process (see Figure 5.5). As participants engaged consciously in reminiscence, their level of comfort with the entire Collect Yourselves! process increased (see Figure 8.1). This increasing ‘comfort’ is represented by the triangle on the left of the diagram, which corresponds to the ‘fleshing out’ of a memory through reminiscence shown in Figure 5.3. On the other hand, several participants found Collect Yourselves! to be a challenging, even frustrating experience, in both the devising and the performance phases. This sense of ‘challenge’, which abated over time in most instances, is represented by the triangle on the right of the Figure 8.1. This triangle corresponds to ‘storytelling’ in Figure 5.4, and it is in fact the performance of story—the need to make a point, to have a ‘tellable’ (Sacks 1995) story and to tell it well (Bauman 1975)—that some users found so intimidating. Those who engaged in reminiscence and keenly felt the challenge of performing their stories for an audience seemed to experience the process with an intensity that was reflected in their performances. For example, Olive reported trepidation as well as a substantial and increasing amount of enjoyment of her processes of reminiscence; her story of her girlfriend’s surprise birthday trip was very touching. Both Hugh and Nora, who told stories full of intimacy and risk, mentioned both their pleasure at reminiscing and their nervousness in meeting the challenge of performance. Designers should explore the range of experiences between comfort and challenge, which manifested itself in this case through the balance of pleasurable reminiscence with nerve-wracking performance.
Guideline 9: Create opportunities for users to take risks or make themselves vulnerable.

Taylor et al (2011) identify risk and vulnerability in the reactions of members of the public who used the humanaquarium interface in view of others:

They were often surprisingly forthcoming and frank in their feedback, describing how the risk-taking aspect of performing an improvisational and unknown piece of work in a public setting made them acutely aware of their relationship to the audience. Participants reported a heightened sense of vulnerability, knowing they were being watched and possibly judged by their peers, but also described feeling creatively empowered knowing that they were contributing to the execution of the performance that was being experienced by the group. (p. 1858)

In terms of design, risk can be defined as creating an opportunity for others to immediately and viscerally reject what one has put on display, while vulnerability can be defined as disclosing information that another person could use maliciously if they wished. Performers take a risk when they expect that their audiences might experience a sudden negative emotional response to what they are about to perform, which might lead to a decrease in the esteem they feel for the performer. Vulnerability is a less imminently threatening situation, as an audience member who witnesses a moment of vulnerability would need to go out of her way to act in a hurtful way. Risk and vulnerability create ‘heightened attention’ to the unfolding performance and can create a liminal space in which both performers and audience members must choose how to react to each other in the emerging performance. Thus, designs that allow for risk and vulnerability can put
participants into an emotionally and ethically charged relationship with each other that can offer insights into the deeply personal aspects of technologically mediated interpersonal interaction.

Guideline 10: Create opportunities for intimacy, or at least connection, among those using the design.

Collect Yourselves! was an artificial situation. None of the participants had chosen to tell all of their chosen stories or share all of their chosen photos before, much less do so in a timed performance. Collect Yourselves! imposed rules that restricted the flow of conversation. Yet Friend Groups commented on how intimate the experience was, and how much of a bond they felt with each other as a result. Stranger Groups commented on the speed and depth of insight they established with each other. Intimacy and connection are laudable goals for designs dealing with groups of people interacting with personal digital media. Counter-intuitively, these goals can be reached by replacing comfortable, private, spontaneous interactions with those informed by the properties of autobiographical performance.

Guideline 11: Create opportunities for temporal and representational dissonance, including doubled indexicality.

Previous research in media sharing has allowed users to offer the most simplistic of descriptions unchallenged, noting that comments such as ‘This is my parents at home’ are related to efforts ‘to preserve memory and aid recall’ (Balabanović et al 2000, p. 570). I do not dispute the value of recalling facts, but I suggest that there is at least as much value in seeking out new contexts in which to remember and recollect past experiences. Neither self nor memory is static, so why pursue media sharing strategies that treat them as if they were? Confronting people with dissonance between their personal digital media and their current perception of self can create space for self-discovery, self-disclosure, and heightened attention in ways that they could not have foreseen otherwise.

Guideline 12: Use performance analysis and coded performance analysis as a means of accessing and analysing elements of interaction that cannot be detected by existing methods.

Methodologically, performance analysis and coded performance analysis provide rigorous yet fluid approaches to interactions and experiences in ways that traditional HCI
methods are ill equipped to work with. The process of moving from the properties identified in the performance analyses in Chapter 4 to the coded performance analyses of Chapters 6 and 7 involved applying the standard method of thematic analysis to the content and the ‘feeling’ or ‘sensibility’ (Lavender 2013, p. 9) of performances in which the digital interactions are not simply ‘over there’ (p. 9), on display, but embedded in the deeply personal performance of identity. Coded performance analysis was therefore able to address interactions far more subtle or ‘aesthetic’ than those detectable by methods such as interaction analysis.

Key to many of these guidelines is the word ‘opportunities’. Reminiscence, risk, intimacy, and dissonance are fragile conditions. Researchers have already noted the danger of engaging too frequently in reminiscence (Frohlich & Fennell 2006, p. 107; Petrelli et al 2008, p. 60; Kuhn 2010, p. 304), while Hugh noted with some sadness that he did not have the opportunity to forget many of his photos as for the most part they were stored on Facebook. Attempting to force a user into risk, intimacy, or dissonance could easily result in refusal or half-hearted compliance. While a full exploration of these potentials is outside the scope of this thesis, I would suggest that this principle aligns with principles of designing for ‘uncomfortable interactions’ (Benford et al 2012) and perhaps ‘seamful design’ (Broll & Benford 2005). These approaches seek to create engaging experiences out of problematic interpersonal or technological situations that others might attempt to design away.

Finally, in response to the last question in the group interviews, participants suggested a number of exciting and sometimes fanciful ideas for how they would share their personal digital media if there were no technological barriers. However, there was very little consensus besides the desire for seamless presentation. Many wanted a direct brain-to-projection connection, ‘teletransport’ to a past event, or other means of immediate access. Some suggested ‘3D masks’, immersive and tangible projections, or gestural interfaces that would make photos more like the experiences they represent. Many expressed the desire to have the technology limit the number of photographs available for sharing, for fear of boring their audiences. Conor even suggested the creation of a ‘flawed technology’ that would prod users to use their imaginations when approaching photos. In all of these cases, the underlying desire was to enhance the quality of the connection between the performer and her audience, making the performer’s past experience more vividly available to selected others. In other words, they sought technological advances that would make it easier to attend to what is personally
meaningful in the digital media they might choose to share in a specific instance of performance.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR PERFORMANCE**

The findings of the *Collect Yourselves!* studies have implications for performance practice and research. These are not as prescriptive as the guidelines for design, as befits the nature of the performance field. However, they provide interesting directions to pursue in the context of intermedial performance, autobiographical performance, or in fact any form of performance that interrogates the performer-audience relationship.

**Implication 1:** Consider using personal digital media in the process of creating a new performance.

Intermedial studies have for several years been moving away from dualistic analyses of digital performance towards a broader, more nuanced, ‘both-and’ analysis of ‘the concrete effects of being definitively multiple and interrelational’ (Nelson 2010, p. 17). This trend aligns with the gradual dissipation of force behind the debate over the ontologies of liveness and mediation in performance (for example, Phelan 1993; Auslander 1999). This ‘both-and’ perspective is furthered by considering the role of personal digital media in devising processes, whether or not the performance is ‘digital’ in its means of presentation. Prompts can provoke new insights and perspectives that can shape the selection and creation of media-rich storytelling performances. They are in themselves barely digital at all, yet they are embedded in the technological and emotional contexts of the performer’s experience.

**Implication 2:** Include ‘doubled indexicality’ and other forms of temporal and representational dissonance as analytic tools for understanding or creating performance that positions a live performer alongside digital or projected images.

One of the ‘concrete effects’ (Nelson 2010, p. 17) of intermedial performance is ‘doubled indexicality’, in which the temporally or representationally dissonant juxtaposition of a live performer and her photo creates ‘heightened attention’, insight, and connection between performer and audience. ‘Doubled indexicality’ extends Dixon’s (2007) theories of ‘digital doubles’ in a way that accounts for personal digital media as an integral part of many people’s lived experience, from which performance can be made. Other forms of temporal or representational dissonance can also serve to heighten attention and provide a space into which the audience member can imagine herself into the performer’s
experience. These include images that the performer describes very differently from how they might appear at first glance, or images that are displayed in a way that inhibits easy identification. Dissonant images do not appear to compete with the live performer but rather enhance the audience’s engagement with both image and performer.

**Implication 3:** Consider ‘performed photos’ as a provocation for autobiographical performance.

While there is no way to assert that the performers analysed in Chapter 4 have never used ‘performed photos’, there is no indication either in their performances or in discussions around them that they have done so. *Collect Yourselves!* has indicated that ‘performed photos’ are a fruitful tactic either to begin using or to develop. ‘Performed photos’ challenge performers to discover new insights and share that information with the audience alongside the media artefact that inspired the insight. Benjamin (2006) is speaking of professional storytelling when he warns that ‘it is half the art of storytelling to keep a story free from explanation as one reproduces it’ (p. 366). However, in intermedial autobiographical performance as in the autobiographical performances analysed in Chapter 4, it seems to be critical to include at least an implication of the reason why a story has been selected. Otherwise, there is no way for Nora’s blurry shot of a tzatziki lid to become an impassioned ode to lost friendship. Digital media in combination with the live performance of a story can then become a vehicle for an audience member ‘to interpret things the way he understands them’ so that ‘the narrative achieves an amplitude that information lacks’ (p. 366). ‘Performed photos’ also form the springboard for prompt four (lie), which was almost universally favoured. This indicates that ‘performed photos’ might be an interesting technique for devising fictional performance, as well.

**Implication 4:** Consider the personal and social risks taken in intermedial autobiographical performance as a generative force.

Risk in performance is sometimes identified as physical risk, as in Bree Hadley’s review of risk in discussions of body art (2010, p. 139) or Fischer-Lichte’s discussion of fairground performers risking serious injury: ‘The mastery of the performers lies precisely in their ability to defy this danger’ (2008b, p. 14). Heritage identifies the risk

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62 This technique was used to good effect in Polarbear’s *Old Me*, one of the performances considered for inclusion in Chapter 4. His projected images were fairly small, often blurry, and sometimes projected against a brick wall.
taken by non-professional performers who invest in or commit to acting in pre-scripted plays, exposing themselves to the potential for ridicule (2002, p. 178). Deirdre Heddon and Adrian Howells (2011) discuss both intimacy and risk in Howells's confessional performances, finding the greatest risk in the silence that focuses the spectator’s attention away from Howells’s use of “‘talking” as a mask’ and towards a ‘bodily, performer/participant exchange’ (p. 10). Bobby Baker frames some of her performances as explorations of ‘risk in intimacy’, which emerge through the ‘very slight’ acts and ‘small gestures’ between herself and her audience members (Baker quoted in Heathfield 1999, p. 102). The risks inherent in intermedial autobiographical performance are as subtle as Baker’s but possess something of the physicality of body artists or fairground performers when dissonance or ‘doubled indexicality’ focuses the audience’s attention on the performer’s presence. Risk in intermedial autobiographical performance culminates in ‘the moment the audience fears most and which it yet feverishly awaits’ (Fischer-Lichte 2008b, p. 14): the moment when the conventional image of a person might be broken, to reveal a vulnerable human being inside, one with whom we might feel a deep connection of empathy and insight. Risk is therefore something to be valued in this type of performance as well as others.

It is worth noting that different audience members might not agree about which parts of an intermedial autobiographical performance involve this subtle type of risk, as Heddon, Iball, and Zerihan (2012) discovered while writing about risk in three different one-on-one performances:

the risks involved with these works were perceptible to one of us, but not to the others, depending on our personal histories, and our positioning in the social field. Moreover, the moments, gestures or symbols that made these works both a reality and a representation of something more for one of us were not registered by others. (p. 128)

Despite the subjectivity of responses to risk, though, it remains a very real phenomenon for audience members who experience it. Moreover, the self-reports of Collect Yourselves! participants indicate that some performers keenly felt the risks they took. Even if not all audience members would agree about Hugh’s risk in sharing the photo of the nearly naked man in Soho, for example, his reported nervousness demonstrates that risk was a very real element of his performance.
**Implication 5:** Consider the potential for personal digital media to contribute to a sense of intimacy in performance.

In *Collect Yourselves!* performances, intimacy is created not by the story, the physical presence of the performer, or the digital media, but by the relationship among them and the audience. Audience members make sense of these interrelated phenomena through imagining their way into the performer’s situation and by remembering their own experiences evoked by the performance. Intimacy is invited when the audience member catches sight of the emotion behind an image in the moment that the performer remembers and relives her experience (Norrick 2000, p. 2), such as Olive’s or Nora’s slight catch in the voice when telling their stories. Personal digital media can contribute to this sense of intimacy by giving audience members a visual cue on which to base their imaginations and from which their own memories might be triggered. As the example of *Editor* shows, a verbal description of a personal photo can accomplish something similar, but *Legs 11, Cape Wrath*, and *Collect Yourselves!* performances indicate that the photos themselves can contribute to the potential for intimacy.

**Implication 6:** Consider using design to enable devising and performance processes without the direct intervention of a practitioner.

Unlike many works of community theatre or participatory art, there is no practitioner leading the creation of a *Collect Yourselves!* performance. The design itself nudges its participants towards the ‘intense’, ‘conscious’, ‘risk[y]’ and ‘reward[ing]’ side of the performance continuum (Wilson 2006, p. 9), making all participants equally responsible for the emerging performance. Of course there is a designer behind the design and an intent behind the prompts that guides the content and focus of the performances, not to mention the physical and logistical setup of the performance sessions; it would be disingenuous to imply that participants create their performances unconstrained. However, the design creates parameters without dictating either how the content is developed or whether the participants will choose to act in accordance with those parameters. The ultimate arbiter of their performance is not a co-present human ‘director’ but only themselves, or each other, in a constant act of negotiation. Design is therefore an

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63 I ‘led’ the performances in my capacity as a researcher, not as a performance practitioner; it would be interesting to know how a completely unmoderated *Collect Yourselves!* performance might unfold.
interesting possibility either for groups of non-professionals or for practitioners who wish to experiment with alternative devising practices.

**Implication 7:** Consider ‘attention’ as a performance practice of particular relevance to contemporary issues of digital media technology in everyday life.

Kaprow’s Activities used instructions to guide participants in the performance of actions drawing from everyday life. His aim, according to Laura Cull (2011), was a felt experience of these actions that “employs feedback devices as a means to draw attention to the ordinarily unattended … and away from the obvious” (pp. 84-86). Intermedial autobiographical performance can achieve a similar aim of heightening participants’ attention to the digital elements of their everyday lives, whether through their photowork or media sharing practices, or as represented through their digital photos. Attention is both a mechanism and a purpose of intermedial autobiographical performance, and can extend the practice of paying attention to digital technology as it is embedding itself into everyday life. It is then possible that by using performance to pay attention to digital media technology in everyday life, insights can emerge into ‘how—singularly and collectively—intermedial performances may have elicited a new cultural way of seeing, feeling and being in the contemporary world’ (Nelson 2010, p. 18).

**Implication 8:** Explore the tension between ubiquitous digital media sharing and the effects of situatedness on the resulting performance.

The situatedness of intermedial autobiographical performance poses an interesting tension. On one hand, personal digital media technologies make intermedial autobiographical performance theoretically possible in almost any time and place. On the other, the social and physical affordances or restrictions of a location can be vitally important (for example, *Kitchen Show*, *Bubbling Tom*). *Collect Yourselves!* resolved this tension by optimising the technology for use in commonly available locations that would not draw attention away from the interactions among performers, audiences, and projected media. The requirements were basic and generic, such as a private space with electricity and controllable lighting. The theatrical techniques used to promote a sense of ‘performing’ over simple conversation were similarly sparing: a seated audience facing a standing performer. Some new designs for intermedial autobiographical performance might demand even less of their location and emphasise the ubiquity of digital media sharing. Others, in contrast, might emphasise the physical location of the performance, the devising process, or both. These approaches might incorporate theatrical strategies such as staging or explore immersive environments (for example, Loke & Robertson...
2013). Each alternative would reveal more about the role of personal digital media in the contextualised performance of identity.

**Implication 9:** Use coded performance analysis as a means of identifying and focusing on particular phenomena of interest.

Performance analysis on its own is a well established method within performance studies, and performance researchers might object to the implication that coded performance analysis, with its codes and statistics, is more rigorous by comparison. However, the experience of developing and using coded performance analysis has demonstrated its effectiveness as a complement to other methods, including performance analysis. Coding for phenomena and behaviours of interest can facilitate the process of comparing multiple performances, systematise the process of refining one’s thoughts through the analytic process, and provoke the iterative consideration of details that might otherwise be overlooked. All of these potential benefits are contained within, and support, the holistic and sensitive approach offered by performance analysis.
Part IV: Performative Experience
Design

Chapter 9: Conclusions and future directions
Chapter 9.

Conclusions and future directions

FROM INTERMEDIAL AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PERFORMANCE …

Part I of this thesis set out the general area of inquiry and an overarching research question: How can intermedial autobiographical performance advance the understanding of interactions among people and their personal digital media? It established areas of interest within HCI and performance studies with similar aims and mutually supportive approaches, then set out a hybrid methodology to structure the approach to the question. Part II began the search for an answer by using performance analyses to inform a design-oriented research project. This resulted in a piece of technology that aimed to create the conditions for non-professional performers to engage with their personal digital media in a way that reflected all of the properties of autobiographical performance. Part III analysed several performances with this technology and concluded with a number of guidelines for design and implications for performance. These provide different facets of a response to the primary research question, concluding with a definition of intermedial autobiographical performance that offers a number of intriguing possibilities for further research that can illuminate topics of current and emerging interest in both fields.

However, while the analyses responded to the research question, the question itself implies an expansive range of potential topics. How might different types of performance advance the understanding of interactions among people and their personal digital media, or indeed digital media of any kind? What types of design might emerge from a process aimed at professional performers, or performances in public spaces? What types of performances might emerge from those designs? Intermedial autobiographical performance is only one of a number of possible forays into the space between experience design and performance studies, where interactions with technology are explicitly performative and performances are created through interactions with technology. This area has been of increasing interest to researchers in both HCI and performance studies (Popat & Palmer 2005; Sheridan & Bryan-Kinns 2008; Salter 2010; Benford & Giannachi 2011; Chatzichristodoulou 2011; Nitsche 2013; Nam & Nitsche 2014; Rust et al 2014). I argue that as the design space for intermedial autobiographical performance is so rich, and the methodology so inclusive, there is no reason not to
explore Performative Experience Design as a field in its own right (Spence et al 2012; Spence et al 2013b; Spence et al 2013a; Rust et al 2014). Part IV sets out the final subsidiary research question for this thesis: How does the juncture between autobiographical performance and digital media sharing point towards a new field of Performative Experience Design? The response to this question begins the vision for PED as its own field. It continues with the contributions that this new field might make to researchers thinking and working in terms of existing HCI frameworks, then offers contributions to those taking a performance studies perspective. Finally, it explores ways in which future work might develop.

… TO PERFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE DESIGN

From the perspective of PED, digital media technology is a contributor to rather than a mediator of the connections among performers, audience members, and the memories and flights of imagination sparked by digital media. The interaction among humans is primary. As the example of Collect Yourselves! has established, technology for digital media sharing does not need to be ‘used’ (compare Redström 2006); instead, participants can spend time dwelling with it, incorporating the perspectives it offers into their everyday lives. Digital media can be not only displayed but also performed, contributing to the presence of the performer through ‘conspicuousness’, context, dissonance, or ‘doubled indexicality’. New ways of interacting with personal digital media, such as ‘performed photos’, can help to expand concepts of what users find personally significant and why, and can then inspire new ideas for design and performance. Marc Davis’s deceptively simple observation that ‘experiences are not data’ (2003, p. 46) leads to the conclusion that any design approach based on the simple transmission of experience from one person to another, whether or not technologically mediated, fails to stand up to rigorous scrutiny (p. 48). PED aims to create a time and space for an individual to inhabit her memories and imagination as triggered by digital media, then use the specific context of performance to create connections with other people through the details, tangents, and insights that cannot be represented in digital form.

Because it does not focus primarily on the display technology, PED can work on multiple temporal levels. Performers can re-inhabit past experiences as well as past interpretations of those experiences, then re-interpret, re-imagine, and reflect on them while devising, and perhaps experience a new insight in the moment of performance. Meanwhile, audiences can be reminded of their own past experiences and re-interpret them in a different way from the unique situation of that time, space, and context. By creating
engagement through memory, imagination, and a present-moment encounter with other human beings, PED can extend a user’s experience into multiple points in the past; through the ever-shifting and contingent present moment of performance; and into the future, as it is partially determined by the discoveries, disclosures, and negotiations occasioned by the performance event. The interactions with technology are reflexive and reflective of people’s investment in their digital media and how selected artefacts inform their sense of self, both individually and in the context of the performing group.

PED opens researchers to a way of conceptualising, designing for, and performing a type of interaction that has emerged as computing technology has become increasingly personal and media-rich. However, PED is not necessarily limited to interactions with personal digital media. There is no immediately obvious reason to believe that the properties of ‘attending’ and ‘marking’ that describe how individuals engage with performance would apply solely to intermedial autobiographical performance or digital media sharing. I suggest that these concepts should be tested in a variety of other interactive contexts. The mechanisms for ‘attending’ or ‘marking’ in intermedial autobiographical performance are likely to be different from those to be discovered in other types of performance, but all such mechanisms have the potential to inform the design of performative experiences with technology. These could include interactions with digital media that do not belong to or have personal significance for the user; interactions with personal devices such as smartphones, in which users have invested a measure of identity or personal connection; pervasive computing scenarios in which the user’s interactions with technology are masked or automated; public performances involving bystanders, audience members, and participants; or asynchronous, distributed performances in applications ranging from telematic performance to online social media. I share the opinion of Heddon, Iball, and Zerihan (2012):

> While we would not wish to deny the differences that the sharing of time and space make to the phenomenological experience of an encounter between people, nor do we wish to presume it uncritically — or presume a total lack of intimacy in the virtual. Both forms share a potentially paradoxical promise of sociality through performances of “self”. (p. 121)

As argued in Chapter 2, I believe that it is unwise to assume that properties of performance can be created in the context of asynchronous and/or distributed interactions, but that is all the more reason to investigate their potential.
At a fundamental level, PED is the setting of technological and social parameters to create opportunities for performative experiences with interactive technologies. A user might take on the role of a performer or audience member, perhaps become an ‘orchestrator’ (Benford & Giannachi 2011) or ‘bystander’ (Benford et al 2006), or shift between roles. These opportunities move people out of their everyday, conversational comfort zone and into the risky space of ‘making special’ (Dissanayake 2003) by holding themselves up for evaluation by others (Bauman 1975), creating ‘protoselves’ (Barclay 1994) suitable for the unique context of each performance. Challenge, risk, and vulnerability are key to Collect Yourselves! and, I suspect, to PED as a whole. This focus puts PED at odds with much of interaction design and experience design, which tends to extend rather than subvert the usability goals of efficiency, effectiveness, and satisfaction (ISO 1998). However, it aligns well with the aims of critical design to motivate designers to challenge ‘hidden ideologies’ and promote ‘new design values’ that encourage ‘critical awareness’ without forcing a particular response (Bardzell & Bardzell 2013b, p. 3300).

PED also pushes forward third-wave HCI from felt experience, affect, and aesthetics to a fully performance-based and transformative engagement with others based on unconventional interactions with personal digital media. Given the experimental or oppositional nature of much of the presentational performance and Live Art that forms the background of PED, it is not surprising that PED poses less of a challenge to the status quo in performance studies. However, it does contribute a new way of conceptualising both the devising and the creation of intermedial performance, which focuses less on the technology used ‘on stage’ and more on emerging ways of ‘seeing, feeling, and being in the contemporary world’ (Nelson 2010, p. 18) as it is increasingly saturated with digital media.

**PED’S CONTRIBUTIONS TO HCI**

PED contributes a new area of research interest to HCI that extends the most recent calls to action for the critical and ethical exploration of technology as it is experienced emotionally, aesthetically, and performatively (Bardzell & Bardzell 2013b; Wright et al 2008; Bardzell et al 2010). These explorations might lead to what Benford et al (2012) describe as ‘uncomfortable interactions’, which ‘cause a degree of suffering to the user’ (p. 2005). Especially in light of the challenge identified by several Collect Yourselves! participants, I would not be surprised to discover that further research in PED would violate some of the common assumptions in the field of HCI, particularly experience design. User experience, as a development of usability, was originally conceived in business terms (Blythe et al 2009, p. 120) and arguably retains its close connection to the
goals of capturing market share. Kari Kuutti offers an almost tongue-in-cheek definition of user experience: ‘something that can be measured and used in predicting how well does a product sell’ (2010, p. 717). As an extension of third-wave design (Bødker 2006) and critical design (Bardzell & Bardzell 2013b), combined with the largely emancipatory aims of performance theory (for example, Dolan 2005; Fischer-Lichte 2008b), PED rejects the restrictions that such market-oriented perspectives can impose. By guiding users into—and through—an experience that some may initially find challenging to the point of discomfort, PED can open users to new and ultimately very rewarding experiences that a business-oriented project might never have uncovered.

PED might also provide a positive response to the ethical questions raised by Blythe et al (2006) in their CHI workshop on experience design:

Is there a danger that the focus on experience in HCI will lead to its commodification? Should the HCI and design community take a stronger and more critical reflective stance on technological interventions into private, social, and urban space? (p. 1693).

Just as design processes should not be dominated by business concerns in terms of providing efficiently bland products, they should not be dominated by business concerns of commercialising the private sphere. If design is seen merely as a tool for arriving at generalisable, prescriptive rules for creating products that people wish to consume based on their efficiency, effectiveness, and satisfaction, it has a short road ahead of it. PED offers a methodology for exploring emotionally and socially meaningful experiences with technology, which may or may not coincide with ‘how well does a product sell’ (Kuutti 2010, p. 717). The nature of the understanding being sought through design is not a globally valid rule regarding a particular variable but a deeper investigation into intra- and interpersonal relationships, mediated and contextualised through technology. These more open-ended investigations, grounded in values such as empathy and transformation, can give design researchers a position from which to take Blythe et al’s ‘more critical reflective stance’ (2006, p. 1693).

Methodologically, PED represents a significant engagement with performance studies as both resource and deliverable for the design process. Performance analysis gives researchers a proven approach for identifying and discussing what might be perceived as vague phenomena of interest, such as ‘heightened attention’ or ‘liminality’. Coded performance analysis allows for an additional, rigorous investigation of behaviours
connected to these phenomena, both deductively (searching for evidence of them) and inductively (searching for potentially contradictory or emergent evidence). Most importantly, the PED methodology maintains focus on what Bardzell, Bolter, and Löwgren (2010) identify as ‘the key to a performance studies approach’ to design: ‘the acknowledgement that interaction occurs between or among people (performer and audience), not just between user and application’ (p. 35). Given the immense variety of types of performance that could be investigated as part of the PED process, only a tiny fraction of which have been explored in this thesis, the scope for PED is truly substantial.

One final way of identifying the contributions of PED to HCI is through holding up this vision of PED to Yvonne Rogers’s (2009) call for the development of HCI ‘in the age of ubiquitous computing’. Her first point is to look at context rather than users; as PED focuses primarily on multiple users interacting with each other using technology as the trigger, I would argue that it prioritises ‘context’. Her second point is to ‘mix’ and ‘even mash’ foreign methods ‘in order to probe and analyze the wider and sometimes elusive set of concerns’ (p. 17) that in PED might include performance, intimacy, risk, and ‘making special’ (Dissanayake 2003). Her third point calls for transdisciplinarity (Rogers 2009, p. 17), which is satisfied by establishing PED as its own area of research drawing equally from HCI and performance studies. Her fourth and final point is that the output of future research should take the form of ‘insights into how to develop engaging user experiences and human augmentation that, importantly, explore the whole gamut of human values that are impinged upon’ (p. 18). By stepping outside the strict remit of HCI and aligning with performance studies, PED provides one response to this vision for the development of the field.

PED’S CONTRIBUTIONS TO PERFORMANCE

PED incorporates design as a devising practice by which intermedial performance can be created and understood. It is simultaneously a concrete set of actions and a conceptual framework for examining intermedial performance. As mentioned in Chapter 3, applied theatre ‘is intimately embedded in creative practice and that, rather than posing answers to clearly defined questions, develops articulations of experience that may not be accounted for by habitual and institutionally bound framings of those experiences’

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64 Portions of this section were presented in a paper titled ‘Collect Yourselves!: Research through design in intermedial autobiographical performance’, delivered to the Intermediality Working Group at the IFTR/FIRT conference, held 22-26 July 2013 in Barcelona.
(Hughes et al 2011, p. 194). The remarks of Hughes et al about the inclusive, participatory practice of applied theatre also pertain to PED, a similarly inclusive performance practice that offers a starting point from which to explore interactions with and experiences of emerging technologies. By bringing design to the forefront, performance researchers can engage directly with digital technology as it informs the creative process at any stage, from conceptualisations and ‘proto-performances’ (Schechner 2006, p. 225) through to the emergent interactions among performers and audience members to which digital media can in some way contribute.

PED also contributes to the ongoing shift in perspective among many performance researchers interested in digital technology. The focus of much recent work moves away from ‘formalist analysis focusing on technology per se’ (Chatzichristodoulou & Zerihan 2009, p. 1), rejects an ‘artificial but continually propagated tension between the technical and the human’ (Salter 2010, p. xiv), and ‘recants rationalist notions of technology by (re)claiming our (multiple) technical relationships to ourselves’ (Schiphorst 2012, p. xi). PED reflects this new focus by attending to processes of memory, imagination, intimacy, risk, and transformation in performative interactions with technology. Interaction or experience design becomes the processual mechanism by which these and similar phenomena can be studied and perhaps enhanced, rather than the source of a product (such as a technological element on a stage) to be examined for its effects on performance. The latter perspective implies that performance is a neutral phenomenon to which technology can be added; the former deals directly with technology as it is situated at the core of much current interpersonal interaction. PED addresses this point of convergence between the evolving third-wave interests of HCI and design research and the trend in performance studies towards an intermedial embrace of technology.

With its potential to investigate emerging norms of interaction, PED opens a new way for experimenting with practices of everyday life through performance. Personal digital media and other commonplace interactions with technology are under-examined and under-theorised within performance studies. Collect Yourselves! has already indicated potential for expanding concepts of autobiographical performance and storytelling through the lens of digital media sharing, using ‘performed photos’ and ‘doubled indexicality’ as two starting points. Further research driven by PED can contribute more in these areas. By pursuing the subtlest engagements with the most quotidian of digital media technology, researchers might better understand intermedial performance, both as an artistic endeavour and as a reflection of emerging norms of everyday life.
PED can also inform research into affect in performance. Affect is increasingly important in this field, particularly in the context of performance technology. As one of the ‘five core elements’ of performance as identified by Chatzichristodoulou and Zerihan (2009), affect is at the heart of how ‘artists employ technologies in order to research new dramaturgies and methodologies for the creation of more e/affective experiences for, and encounters with, their audiences’ (pp. 1-2). However, the contributions to their section on ‘affect’ take disembodied, internet-based performance as their point of departure. A similar approach is taken in the contributions to Identity, Performance and Technology (Broadhurst & Machon 2012). With its basis in experience design, PED can direct the efforts of performance researchers into studying the energetic and emotional connections among co-located performers and audiences. This aligns with Lavender’s observation that intermediality research has become concerned primarily with the affect, actions, and affordances created by intermedial performance (2013, p. 6). A focus on affect also informs the framework of ‘attending’ and ‘marking’, which this thesis has presented as a performance-based alternative to the ‘consumption’ and ‘production’ of a media artefact. ‘Attending’ and ‘marking’ provide a means of conceptualising digital media within performance in a way that allows researchers to manipulate and investigate affective engagement with intermedial performance.

Finally, PED extends performance to non-professional performers. It is certainly not the first field to do so: participatory art is well established, as are applied theatre, reminiscence theatre, and others. However, PED allows non-performers to create performance without the direct guidance or vision of a performance professional. Of course, guidance and vision are embedded within the technology being deployed, and the designer in PED must shoulder a great deal of responsibility for the behaviours that her choices are enabling or restricting. Still, there is something appealing in an era of do-it-yourself maker culture, with an app for everything, to bring the properties of liminal and potentially transformational performance into everyday life.

**DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE WORK**

The previous sections of this chapter have outlined my vision for PED and the contributions it could make in terms of existing concerns in the fields of HCI and performance studies. I now present specific directions for future research framed within PED.
The first of these is to focus more on the relationship between performance, games, and play. Game mechanics are discussed in Chapter 5, and game and play were central to structuring and framing the media sharing experience. In *Collect Yourselves!*, the verb ‘play’ was often ambiguous, implying both playing a game and playing on a stage. The more the directions emphasised game mechanics and the language of games, the less likely participants would be to perceive themselves as giving a performance for each other (as evidenced in the Stranger Control Group comments about wanting to win the board game). However, the more they emphasised the ‘performance’ implication of the word ‘play’, the more likely participants would be to think in terms of a traditional, Western, theatrical play. In an effort to maintain a focus on performance, the decision was taken to downplay the game-like structures and interactions in *Collect Yourselves!* However, having established that most participants perceived the experience predominantly as performance, it would be interesting to increase the use of game and play in a system for personal digital media sharing. Certainly the work of Blast Theory has established the power for such game-performance hybrids; PED could help to structure such a hybrid using personal digital media, perhaps in a public space. This would allow for a far richer exploration of multiple roles and role-swapping, among other things.

Another area that could have been explored further is audience response. With the framework of ‘attending’ and ‘marking’, and the switching of roles between performer and audience member, this work could have made a contribution to audience research (for example, Reason 2010). This field has grown enormously over the past several years, and the key works on the subject agree that spectatorship is an active process even in non-participatory performance (for example, Kennedy 2009; Fensham 2009; Oddey & White 2009; Ginters 2010; Rancière 2011; Boenisch 2012; Fensham 2012; Lavender 2012). It would be interesting to develop methods that could more accurately pinpoint individual spectator reactions as people shift in and out of performance, and in reaction to various types of performance and digital media.

One issue inherent in *Collect Yourselves!* is the fact that a single performance is made up of dozens of discrete stories, each one a mini-performance in itself. The way that individual stories were performed had an effect on subsequent stories, particularly in Friend Groups, and each group performance was analysed as holistically as possible. However, the practice of coding for particular behaviours lent itself to discussion of individual stories and their performers. This was especially true of Stranger Groups, which were less cohesive than Friend Groups. An interesting challenge for PED would
be to refine the methodology, perhaps from a perspective that combines the media studies concept of bricolage (Deuze 2006) with postmodern performance techniques of fragmentation and collage (for example, Auslander 2004), in a way that could directly address the relationship between the group performance and its composite elements.

While it has been critically important to use presentational performance rather than mimetic theatre to develop the concept of PED, the response of *Collect Yourselves!* participants to prompt four (lie) indicates that there are interesting tensions at work in the creation of a ‘lie’ or fiction based on one’s own personal digital media. This area of research could explore different methods of creating fictional stories for intermedial performance. With a clear distinction between the presentation of ‘the self’ or ‘protoselves’ (Barclay 1994) in performance and the representation of a fictional world—paradoxically predicated on the fact that there is no clear distinction to be made between fact and fiction, memory and imagination—it should be possible to pursue research into performative interactions that lean towards the fictional. One possible instigation for such research could be the performance of digital media that has been altered, mashed up, or created without physical referent.

Finally, in this interdisciplinary work, there were limited opportunities for exploring PED using alternative frameworks. I believe that using ‘dramaturgy’ as a framework in place of ‘devising’ might open a number of new vistas for PED. Very recent work on ‘new dramaturgy’ defines it as ‘the inner flow of a dynamic system’ emerging in part from new media and from ‘changing relationships with both space and audiences’ (Trencsényi & Cochrane 2014, p. xi). According to this definition, new dramaturgy is ‘post-mimetic’, ‘intercultural’, and ‘process-conscious’ (p. xii), including everything from devising practices to scenography (Lotker & Gough 2013) to spectatorship, with a particular emphasis on the felt experience of both performers and audience members (Trencsényi & Cochrane 2014). Not only are these ideas very much in line with PED, but new perspectives on dramaturgy were highlighted as a key concern of the Intermediality Working Group at IFTR/FIRT 2013. Dramaturgy as a framework might offer a greater depth and breadth of perspectives than even the vast array of devising processes can provide.

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65 IFTR/FIRT, held 22-26 July 2013 in Barcelona.
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

A few friends sit down around the dinner table, and a new version 4Photos begins its responsive display of their personal photos. This version is one that the guests have interacted with before, from the privacy of their homes. They have carefully selected the photos to be displayed, knowing that their friends will have answered the same prompts themselves. They cannot wait to see what intimacies and tall tales lie in store.

Two performers step into the humanaquarium box. However, they do not begin to sing or play. They tell stories. Bystanders wander past. The performers refer directly to them and catch their attention. The bystanders can choose to walk away; the people in the box cannot control them or even impinge on their personal space. Some walk away, but some are intrigued. The performers touch the screen in front of them, and images appear. Bystanders have become audience members (Reeves et al 2005) and stay to listen. Then they realise that the screen responds to their touch, as well, inviting them to tell stories of their own. Audience members become performers (2005), and the performance goes on.

A performer invites her audience into her kitchen. In this intimate setting, she performs some actions that draw her audience closer to her, and some that create a distance, even a disturbance. She shares anecdotes and observations based on her everyday life and the experiences that probably most of her audience share with her, at least in part. One of her actions is to pull her smartphone out of her pocket and show a photo to her audience. Perhaps she tweets her experience of performing as it happens, or makes a video of her audience watching her. This is, after all, her home.

Another performer invites his audience to his hometown. He knows many of the faces around him, but not all. His aunts and uncles who still live there will have an opinion or two about the stories he is about to tell, and he wants their input. That is why he disseminated the link to a browser-based application along with all publicity for his show, and at the point of sale for tickets. Many of the people in his audience have contributed memories, fantasies, photos, drawings, screenshots, audio files, and video clips prompted by questions in his application. He is going to perform a joint excursion to a hometown—everyone’s hometown—through a collective act of memory and imagination.

Dinner guests, bystanders, home cooks, tour guides. We are all performers.


Appendix A: Design workbook

RAIN DOWN

You’re sent your photos to the cloud and now you want to see them. The cloud will rain your pictures down on you. Drops fall in a gentle rain, with sound, each drop the colour of the bit of photo they constitute. As individual drops charter into puddles, your pictures emerge. The rain falls on tarmac at night, illuminated by streetlights. After all the photos in a grouping (such as an event or face in iPhoto) have been raised down, the rain cesses up, the clouds disperse, and the picture puddles evaporate.

This basic version supports individual reminiscence on a personal device. At high speed (lots of large drops), it could function as a viewer, but it is intended for slower speeds to support reminiscing. Further versions can have rain falling on the roof of a tall building at night, illuminated by the lights of nearby skyscrapers, or on a grassy field, illuminated by the moon peaking out from between clouds.

To share photos, several people have the application on their individual smartphones or iPads. They create a shared space and designate a group of pictures to share. Each person has her own cloud that rains down her photographs into a puddle on the ground, visible to everyone in this group. Each person’s puddle shows one or two photos at a time, as older photos are dispersed and overlaid with new photos. Puddles form next to each other, so that it might be difficult to distinguish at first where one person’s photo ends and another one begins.

Friends tilt their smartphones or iPads up to see the clouds and back down to see the puddles. When someone wants to copy another person’s picture to their own archive, they touch the puddle. In a more immersive version, the user would bring a sponge to the puddle, soak up the photo, and wring out the sponge over their bucket.

Sound includes occasional thunder and lightning as people’s clouds push against each other.

Games can be developed on the back of this basic functionality. Players can race to see who correctly identifies a photo first – touching the photo causes the rain to pause, and touching it again causes a mini-cloudburst to reveal the full photo. The one who guesses correctly or calls the person’s bluff drag the photo to his own bucket or cloud for a point. Alternatively, the game could be one of resolving arguments about dates, times, and locations. When in the course of viewing and sharing the photos someone expresses doubt or disagreement about facts, she can touch the picture to pause, touch again to reveal the photo metadata, and close the metadata to continue the rainstorms.

The main functions of Rain Down are to introduce ambiguity and to stretch out time. These two goals have been achieved in a similar project by Tsui Leung, as I discovered after coming up with this design.

Media stream: Photographs
Inspiration: Alex Kelly
Purpose: Reminiscence
Delivery: iPad, smartphone, PC

Anyynchronous/far-off-located use can be supported with clouds that use social networking feeds as their source.
Making History

Virtually all theatrical performances are devised for an audience full of strangers. When the audience has a connection to the performer and the performance, anything can happen. Making History aligns the common phenomenon of explaining past experiences with the idea of ‘making strange’ at the intersection of performance and everyday life.

Making History is designed for a group of people reminiscing over photographs or other artifacts from a shared experience. The experience can be either a specific one, such as a holiday, or a more nebulous one, such as a lifelong relationship with a family member.

One person in the group selects a single picture and asks another person in the group to describe their personal, first-person recollection of the event. This might include facts and figures, such as the time or context of the photo, or what was happening just outside the frame. It might also include thoughts or feelings known only to the person speaking.

The person who asked then gets to challenge anything she has heard. She can offer a competing version or facts, contradict facts, and supply information not known to the first speaker.

The rest of the group keeps score by noting how many elements of each story strike them as new, unusual, or unknown - and believable. Each of these elements counts as a point. If a listener doesn’t believe something she hears, she can ask for clarification before making up her mind. Half points are allowed.

Fact-checking and examination of photograph metadata are allowed in principle, but individual group members may not fact-check until the end of the round.

If more than one person notes the same element, each point is counted, e.g., three points for three people who think that a particular detail is both new (unknown to them or forgotten) and believable.

The winner of the challenge is the person with the highest score.

The speaker is encouraged to search her mind for as much detail as possible in the hopes of gaining points. At the same time, the potential to gain points by inserting false details makes the familiar strange. The loose rules allow for different groups to play for different purposes. They can play competitively by actively trying to lie, or they can use the game as a means to uncompetitive reminiscing.

Disputes as to the truth or accuracy of any statement are settled as each group sees fit. Results can be recorded, or not.
Four Words (Text) is a smartphone application with the phone’s camera functionality embedded. In gathering mode, the photographer keys in a word or phrase, maximum four words or 25 characters, the moment after taking a photo. This phrase is saved as metadata associated with the photo but is not immediately visible on the phone. The identity of the camera’s owner is also saved in metadata.

Four Words can be used by an individual, using the text as a means of annotating photographs with spontaneous, freewheel ideas and emotions. When entering a new annotation, the application will suggest previously used terms with an auto-complete function, but there is no requirement to adhere to this or any list of terms.

The application has a mode for browsing photos taken within it, much like the camera on an iPhone, or Instagram. The purpose of this browse mode is to quickly locate particular photographs or text annotations. They are arranged in chronological order and can be grouped. The photographer can toggle between viewing the photographs, viewing the text annotations, and viewing a randomised mix of the two. Selecting a photograph will display it alongside a small icon for switching the view to the associated text, and back again. Selecting a text annotation will display it alongside a small icon for switching the view to the associated photograph, and back again.

The main functionality of Four Words lies in its display mode. The display can be viewed solely on the smartphone or iPad but is much easier to see on a large screen or as a projection. The display is driven by the application on the smartphone, which acts as a controller, though the display can also be driven through a web interface.

The first step of the display process is for the photographer to select a group or range of photographs to display. This can be done by selecting start and end photographs in the chronological listing used by the browse mode. Alternatively, the photographer can search for particular words or phrases and display only the associated photographs.

Media stream: Photographs, text
Inspiration: Mike Pearson, Daniel Geiling
Purpose: Reminiscence
Delivery: Smartphone or iPad, large screen or projector

Four photographs from the selected group or range are selected at random and displayed, scrolling slowly around (through remaining mostly right-side-up for ease of understanding). At the same time, the words or phrases associated with those images will onto the viewing surface. These are not arranged in the same order as the photos.
FOUR WORDS (AUDIO)

Four Words (audio) is a smartphone application with the phone’s camera functionality embedded. In gathering mode, the photographer says a word or phrase (or records any sound), for a maximum four seconds, the moment after taking a photo. This phrase is saved as a file associated with the photograph. The name of the camera’s owner is also saved in metadata.

At the same time, the audio files associated with these images are played in random order with a moment’s silence between them. Touching a photograph on the smartphone or web controller brings that item front and centre, enlarges it, and plays the associated audio on a loop. Touching again makes the sound stop, and that photograph fades from the screen. If the annotation for all four photographs play through without any action on the part of the controller, the screen clears and the next four photographs appear. The display continues until the entire group of photographs has been shown.

Four Words can be used by an individual, using audio as a means of annotating photographs with spontaneous, freestyle ideas and emotions.

The application has a mode for browsing photos taken within it, much like the camera on an iPhone, or Instagram. The purpose of this browse mode is to quickly locate particular photographs. They are arranged in chronological order and can be grouped. Selecting a photograph will display it alongside a small icon for playing back its annotation.

The main functionality of Four Words lies in its display mode. This can be done solely on the smartphone or on an iPad, on a large screen, or as a projection. The display is driven by the application on the smartphone, which acts as a controller, though the display can also be driven through a web interface.

The first step of the display process is for the photographer to select a group or range of photographs to display. This can be done by selecting start and end photographs in the chronological listing used by the browse mode.

Four photographs from the selected group or range are selected at random and displayed, existing slowly around (through rotating mostly right side-up for ease of understanding). This display also appears on the smartphone or web controller.

Media stream: Photographs, audio

Inspiration: Mike Pearson, Daniel Gooling

Purpose: Reminiscence

Delivery: Smartphone or iPad, large screen or projector, sound
FOUR WORDS (GROUP)

Four Words (group) is a smartphone application with the phone’s camera functionality embedded. It is designed for group use. People at an event or on a trip together log in on their individual phones and establish a group event or trip. The pictures they take through this application are visible to each other (as with Mobipho).

In gathering mode, the photographer takes a picture, which appears on the phones of the rest of his group. Each person can select a picture and key in or speak a short phrase, as in the text and audio versions described above. In a later release, each person’s Twitter account can be linked, allowing them to attach a tweet rather than keying in new text. Photos and annotations are identified by their creator.

After the trip, the adventures ensue. Once their phones and annotations are uploaded to the cloud, one or more of them controls the display with either their smartphone or a web interface.

In display mode, pictures taken through the application are displayed on a large screen or via a projector. The photos are projected onto the wall in descending order of the number of annotations associated with each, e.g., the first photo to be displayed might be one with six annotations, then one with five annotations, then two photos with two annotations each.

Each photo with its textual and/or audio annotations remains on display for a set amount of time tied to the number of annotated annotations. This enables casual conversation and allows the images and annotations to fade into the background as people's attention wanders.

Clicking the photo on a smartphone will hold the current display on screen. Touching it again will cause the display to fade and move on to the next photograph. Shaking the phone or flicking the image to the left will go back to the previous photograph.

It is also possible to select photos for display. The application can show only those taken by one individual. Alternatively, a user can search for a particular word or phrase in the annotations and show those annotations along with their corresponding photographs.

Media stream: Text, photographs, audio
Inspiration: Mike Pearson, Daniel Gosling, Nimrat Patel
Purpose: Reminiscence
Delivery: Smartphone, large screen or projector, sound
Echoes are the nonlinear snippets of sensation that appear to us and bring us back holistically to an event, person, situation, or moment. Echoes move forward and backward in time from the original event and intertwine with those before and after it. We interpret echoes differently in different contexts.

Echoes wash over us and are gone. Or they intensify. Or they bring their friends. They take the initiative, and we passively receive. They might prompt us to investigate our own memories or others', but they might not.

The Echo software automatically takes all of the photographs of a designated event, orders them chronologically, and extrapolates their predominant colours and shapes. It overlaps several pictures, so that the effect is of the cumulative dominant colours (and possibly patterns) of perhaps five or six shots at a time. The effect is much like a photograph being softly pixelated so that the details are lost.

For example, a trip from central Bucharest through dry fields to verdant hillsides and culminating in an event for 800 people wearing orange t-shirts would show a gradual shift colour from concrete grey through beige and tan to dark greens and browns and finally vibrant orange.

The display might show the composite colours of the first five photographs in the event for two seconds. Then it would transition to showing the composite colours of the second through the ninth photographs in the event. Then the third through the seventh, and so on.

There is no work for the user besides dragging the pictures into Echo and letting it run. Basic functions such as speed are controllable through preferences, but the application is not intended for active fine control.

Media stream: Photographs, video, audio
Inspiration: Daniel Gooling
Purpose: Storytelling
Delivery: Projector

Touching an image brings up a slideshow of the individual photographs used in that composite, allowing the audience to investigate the sources of the echoes.

Similar processes could be applied to video and audio, removing the impact of specific, understandable and therefore cognitively demanding human voices, retaining a soft echo of their predominant tones.

As echoes represent the nonlinear, evocative, and non-narrative, the Echo application would not compete with the creative voice of a speaker creating a coherent narrative and would therefore support storytelling.
MAP MAT, MAP MAT PLUS

Map Mat:
Imagine showing photographs using a projector. The wall behind you is the surface onto which your images are projected.

Now imagine standing on a large, low Microsoft Table. Under your feet is essentially a glass mat onto which images can be projected. Alternatively, this effect could be approximated by projecting an image onto the floor at an oblique angle, correcting for the distortion of the angle.

The application running your projector for your photographs also runs the projector for this mat. It reads the GPS metadata associated with each of your photographs. When you display a photograph, the mat displays the satellite view of the location from which the photograph was taken. You and your audience are transported to the scene and can investigate routes, views, and the places just outside of camera range.

Map Mat Plus:
The two-level experience of showing photographs along with satellite imagery can be expanded to a five-level experience (with additional projectors controlled through the same application).

- If the photograph was taken in a place covered by Street View, that view will be simultaneously projected on the wall to the left of the storyteller.
- If the photograph was taken in a place that has publicly available photos, those will be simultaneously projected as a slideshow to the right of the storyteller.
- If the photograph was taken in a place with linked historical photos, they will appear as a slideshow on the ceiling.

Media stream: Photographs, GPS
Inspiration: Mike Pearson, Alex Kelly
Purpose: Media sharing
Delivery: Projector mat, projector(s)
This is a map created by Kris Darby to accompany a walking performance of 25 key locations in his life. His technique of putting geographically distant places into proximity with each other is similar to my aim. http://remapthemap.files.wordpress.com/2010/11/2502.png

HOLOTOPOGRAPHY

Holography is an application on an iPad, smartphone, or PC that creates a storylining map for an event documented by digital photographs.

This map contextualizes the event with the locations associated with that event: physical, imaginary, real, and lost, as well as the place where the story is being told.

The locations represented on this map are drawn with soft edges instead of sharp demarcations, like liquid blending from one element to the next. The purpose is not to locate actual locations or to delineate one location from another, but to show the mutual influence of the real and the virtual on the lived experience.

The first step in creating the map is to identify the event and its photographs.

The next step is to respond to prompts for the various locations:

- Photo locations (taken from GPS metadata, or on-screen or overridden by hand)
- Current storylining location (automatically retrieved from input device where possible, but can be entered or overridden by hand)
- History location (like Mount Everest for someone who has climbed Snowdonia)
- Lost location (like a childhood home that has since been moved)
- Planning location (like your sister's kitchen table, where you planned your trip to Nepal)
- Ally locations (like the homes of the friends you went to Greece with)
- Virtual ally locations (like online forums whose advice you used to plan your trip)
- Resource locations (like the online store that supplied your gear)
- Previous storylining locations

The map is created automatically. It contains labelled areas corresponding to all of the identified locations. Locations are not rigidly defined and there are no blank spaces left on the map for locations without information (e.g., a new map will have no previous storylining location). Similarly, some maps might have far more locations than others. Each map might look very different from another.

Additionally, storytellers can resize, reposition, and change the colour of the locations on their map. They can also add subtitles and insert thumbnail images.

Media stream: Photographs

Inspiration: Mike Pearson, Joe Hodson

Purpose: Storylining, media sharing

Delivery: iPad, smartphone, or PC; projector or large screen
TRACING THE EXPERIENCE

Tracing the Experience is a performative exercise, a method for reflection, an aesthetic exercise, or a novel graphical interface for retrieving archived media based on user-generated metadata.

It is a smartphone application with the phone’s camera function embedded, like Instagram. Immediately after you take a picture through the application, a pentagon appears. Each vertex of the pentagon has a prompt or question next to it.

To respond to the prompts, you trace the shape of your answer in the air, using the hand that holds the smartphone. The further your hand is from your shoulder, the closer to the edge of the circle your response will be.

For example, holding your arm at full length directly overhead indicates a 100% response (a strong ‘yes’ to the question at the top of the pentagon i.e., you are very excited). Holding your right hand over your heart indicates perhaps a 10% response (a strong ‘no’ to the upper left question i.e., no you do not want to look for something else).

In this example, the photographer is about 67% contented, eager to look for more along the lines of what she has just photographed; halfway agreeing that there is something important hidden here; only 35% interested in looking for something different; and only 33% excited.

(Validation is required on first use so that people with long arms are not perceived as more enthusiastic than people with short arms.)

Within the application, photographs can be browsed with the smartphone held in landscape orientation. Each photograph is displayed with its graph alongside.

Prompts are written in advance, and a group is generated at random for each photograph taken. If

Prompts are also used for search and browse. Holding your hand out to the upper right about 2/3 of the length of your arm will bring up the photographs associated with the graph overlaid. Prompts can be set to apply to any prompt in that location or to a specific prompt. Full five-point gestures can also be used for search and browse.

Media stream: Photographs
Inspiration: Marimba Abramovic
Purpose: Reminiscence, storytelling, photography (capture)
Delivery: Smartphone

you are not happy with that set of prompts, you can scroll backwards or forwards through the prompts as you would scroll through photographs.

Prompts can also be used to generate particular performative experiences. They might be written by performers or artists to solicit various reflections, responses, movements, or states of mind. Users can also create their own sets of prompts and share prompts (and photographs) in an online community, which could be integrated with existing photography communities such as Flickr.
Punctuation uses hand gestures to give a sense of temporality and duration to photographs based on actual storytelling performances, modified over time.

Punctuation is an application that works with the photographs in your smartphone, iPad, or PC. As you flick through the photographs of an event within Punctuation, using common gestures, the application keeps track of the amount of time spent on each one.

Photographs can also be grouped together. A different gesture groups the current photo with the one(s) immediately before it. Tapping a grouped photo will expand it so that you can take a closer look. Shaking the phone will undo a grouping, and another gesture will remove a photograph from the stream (but not from the device’s memory).

The application remembers the amount of time spent on each photograph or group of photographs.

It also remembers the groupings, expansions, and deletions.

The next time you show these pictures through Punctuation, they will be displayed at the same rate and in the same grouping that you established in your first storytelling session. If you have moved back and forth between photographs, the application will remember the total time spent on each photo but will not store the back-and-forth movement.

These timings can always be overridden during subsequent storytelling sessions. Flicking to advance to the next photograph restarts the "times" from that point, and flicking to return to the previous photograph once the stream has advanced will allow you to stay on that photograph indefinitely. During subsequent sessions, groupings can also be changed, expansions can be added, and photographs can be deleted.

Each time Punctuation is used, the latest set of timings, groupings, expansions, and deletions is saved, and the previous set is overridden.

The application can be expanded to include Twitter feeds, Facebook updates, Instagram creations, etc. It can also be expanded to include photographs taken by others. The storyteller can opt to show the photo-stream as thumbnails along the bottom of the screen or on her smartphone to help monitor and control the flow of information.

Punctuation could be implemented without a smartphone, using gesture controls and a Kinect- or Wii-like device.
PUNCTUATION RECORDER

Using Punctuation as a basis, the Punctuation Recorder takes audio or video recordings of the storytelling session using the device’s internal audio and/or video recording capabilities.

External input devices can be used instead as desired, e.g., a video camera set up on a tripod to capture group interaction around an iPad.

A new recording begins each time a new photograph or group of photographs appears on screen. In this way, an entire storytelling session can be replayed with a seamless audio or video record of the event, or individual anecdotes relating to a single photograph can be selected.

Flicking back and forth quickly between photographs can lead to multiple story recordings that are not worth seeing. These can be selected and deleted just as photos can be selected and deleted.

To facilitate the management of these audio or video files, the optional thumbnail photo stream is enabled.

(To delete a section of the audio or video record during the storytelling session, flick to the next photograph, flick back to the previous photograph, delete the most recent audio or video file, and flick forwards continues with your story.)

Note that in the case of photographs, deleting one from within the Punctuation application removes it from the stream without deleting it permanently from the device’s memory. In the case of the audio or video files created in Punctuation Recorder, deletion is permanent.

The storyteller can replay any of the audio or video files at any time, singly or in a stream. For audio recordings, Punctuation Recorder replays the photo stream using the timings and groupings from that session along with the audio track. For video

Media stream: Photographs
Inspiration: Daniel Gooling, Robert Wilson
Purpose: Storytelling
Delivery: Smartphone; iPad, PC, projector, or large screen
Story Slider is a simple map-based interface connecting the geographical and the temporal.

The first step is to record a trip using GPS data, similar to one of the many applications that record route data for runners or cyclists in training.

The second step is to associate photographs with your route. These are your own photos taken on the trip you have recorded.

Each photograph appears as a thumbnail on the Story Slider map display until it is activated. To activate a photograph, you need to navigate to it.

Story Slider uses two different slider functions for navigation. At the top is a map showing your route. A bar triangle is positioned at the start. Click and drag the bar triangle along your route. When it intersects with a thumbnail, that photograph expands to occupy approximately half the screen (or less if the original size is smaller).

The second slider is marked with the start and end times of your trip. Click and drag the button to advance through the trip. When the button intersects with a time associated with a photograph, that photo expands.

Moving one slider causes the other to move at the proportional rate. I.e., if you run the first half of your physical route much more slowly than the second half, but you drag the bar triangle along the route on the map at an even pace, the time slider will advance more slowly in the first half than in the second half.

If you want to use photographs sourced along your route at a different time or by a different person, you can add them to your route using Google Earth or similar. To do this, the photo's original date and time metadata will be overwritten with the date and time when you passed that point on your route. For this reason, only copies of photographs should be used.

Similarly, you can add a photograph to your route that has missing or incorrect GPS metadata (or correct metadata that you want to force onto your route). Placing a photograph along your route and telling the application to apply the location metadata for that point will overwrite the original information, so again, only copies of photographs should be used.
Appendix B: Ideation cards

Category A: Media streams
- Video
- Text
- Photos
- GPS
- Audio
- Freestyle (other)

Category B: Purposes
- Reminiscing
- Storytelling
- Media sharing (mixed reminiscing and storytelling)

Category C: Inspiration
- Blast Theory Rider Spoke (2007)
- Daniel Gosling 10.1.00>>1+1?(@?):?+&+...>> 30.1.00 (2000)
- Tom Marshman Legs 11 (2011)
- Mike Pearson Bubbling Tom (2000)
- Polarbear Old Me (2011)
- Simon Pope Waterlog (2008)
- Third Angel (Alex Kelly) Cape Wrath (2011)
- Third Angel (Alex Kelly) Class of ’76 (1999, 2000, 2001)
- Robert Wilson/Marina Abramović The Life and Death of Marina Abramović (2011)

Category D: Scenarios
- Alumni
- Birthday
- Christening
- Cycle touring
- Digital storytelling workshop group, organisation
- Graduation
- Family trip
- Memorial/funeral
- Mnemonic communities: family, ethnic group, nation
Mountain climbers (friends)
Mountain rescue teams
Performing ensembles
Political/activist groups
Project due: anniversary (speech or presentation for party)
Project due: birthday (speech or presentation for party)
Project due: memorial (speech or presentation for service)
Project due: travel/adventure (sharing photos of trip)
Project due: wedding (e.g. best man’s speech)
Project due: work or academic achievement (speech or presentation for ceremony)
Reunions
Scuba divers (friends)
Surgical/A&E teams
Survivors of natural disasters
Walking club
Wedding
Winning sports teams

Category E: Insights, practices, questions

No control over where you go or who with Daniel Gosling
Original performance (trip) as a video game, hyperreal Daniel Gosling
Here and now Daniel Gosling
There and then Daniel Gosling
Exhaustion Daniel Gosling
Composites Daniel Gosling
Confessional space during the trip Daniel Gosling
Capturing media as part of ‘being and becoming’ during original performance Daniel Gosling
Diary entries Daniel Gosling
Compare product and experience Daniel Gosling
Audiophotos creating gaps for audience Daniel Gosling
Media capture building detail for reminiscence Daniel Gosling
Moving together as being together Daniel Gosling
Graffiti Daniel Gosling
Production devices Daniel Gosling
Manifesto of engagement (don’t tell people you’re making art) Daniel Gosling
The gaze Hayley Newman
Stage parts of the original performance Hayley Newman
Original viewer and secondary viewer Hayley Newman
Authenticity Hayley Newman
Do we trust the image? Hayley Newman
Noticing what is lost or missing Mike Pearson
How would someone retell your story? Mike Pearson
How do you remember or retell a story of an event? Mike Pearson
Who owns the story? Mike Pearson
Corroboration Mike Pearson
Can you tell if it’s professional or vernacular? Mike Pearson
Reframing story as reminiscence and vice versa through change of audience Mike Pearson
Is it linear or non-linear? Reminiscence theatre
Do you have an agenda or objective? Reminiscence theatre
Setting Reminiscence theatre, Mike Pearson
Withhold Simon Pope
Spread out your story in time Simon Pope
Spread out your story in space Simon Pope
Sociability Simon Pope
Story made of description (what if it weren’t an oxymoron?) Simon Pope
Art as inspiration for story Simon Pope
Seeking out a haunting Simon Pope
How “official” do you want your story to be? Reminiscence theatre
How do you invite audience participation? Or is there an audience? Reminiscence theatre, Simon Pope
Who is empowered? Reminiscence theatre
Lighting Reminiscence theatre
Seating Reminiscence theatre
Gaps to allow for or invite interruptions? Reminiscence theatre
Do we treat the memory or story ironically or sincerely? How? Why? Reminiscence theatre
How and how often is the memory or story rehearsed? Reminiscence theatre
Would you ever write it down? Reminiscence theatre
Who owns the reminiscence? Reminiscence theatre
Is this nostalgia? Reminiscence theatre
Are you reproducing the experience authentically? Reminiscence theatre
Are you representing the experience faithfully through imaginative means? *Reminiscence theatre*

Is it naturalistic or non-naturalistic? *Reminiscence theatre*

Homage (in style or content) *Third Angel*

How much can a reminiscer stretch the collective truth? *Third Angel*

Does it matter how true it is? *Third Angel*

Social negotiation of memory *Third Angel, Mike Pearson*

Do we trust the story? *Third Angel*
Appendix C: *Collect Yourselves!* functional specification

Collect Yourselves

Functional Specification

Jocelyn Spence
Last Updated: 18 October 2012
- CONFIDENTIAL -

Overview

*Collect Yourselves* solicits stories and media from people about to attend a reunion and laces those elements into a unique performance that all the players contribute to on the day.

This spec is not complete.

Research questions

This project’s primary research question is:

- How can intermedial autobiographical performance advance the understanding of interactions among people and their personal digital media?

This question can be broken down into two nested questions and a third that derives from them:

- How can theories and practices of autobiographical performance create novel ways for experience design to create performative engagement in the synchronous, collocated sharing of personal digital media?
- How can design-oriented research drawing on HCI investigations of digital media sharing, autobiographical memory, and reminiscence contribute to novel approaches to devising and understanding intermedial autobiographical performance?
- How does the juncture between autobiographical performance and digital media sharing point towards a new field of Performative Experience Design?

The goal of the design is to bring personal digital media into the live performance of autobiographical material, to see how the media shape the performance and how the performance impacts the experience of the media. This requires a discussion of the nature of the digital in digital media, whether converted from analogue or born digital. This discussion results in the conclusion that for most of the qualities of digital media, they differ from analogue in degree rather than in kind, which leads the design to focus less on any intrinsic qualities of the digital than on patterns of use and expectation. So, more specifically, the goal of the design is to investigate the intersection of the following conditions of digital media and performance.

Digital media are:

- reproducible/sharable,
- usually acquired in overwhelmingly great numbers,
• inaccessible (except through memory) without a physical display mechanism, and
• accessible to human perception via types of metadata which can be manipulated and added to.

Performance is:
• a temporal medium
• designed (intended) to prime its participants, through heightened attention, to create or discover emergent meaning and/or value in its objects and/or conditions,
• using rules and frameworks,
• existing as a self-generating exchange between temporally (and perhaps physically) co-present humans.

The digital media are restricted to personal media, and the performances to autobiographical performance, to maximise the overlap between the two fields and focus on issues of memory, affect, and identity.

Scenarios

The first scenario describes the likely situation in the initial user test. The second describes the direction it might go in if it were to be fully fleshed out and funded. We’re creating the system that works for scenario 1, not scenario 2.

Scenario 1: Christmastime family reunion.

The Smiths haven’t seen their cousins the Joneses since last Christmas. Everyone is getting together on Boxing Day for leftovers. Fred and Ginger Smith will play Collect Yourselves with Fred’s cousin Ron Jones and his wife Hermione, and Ginger’s sister Susan Abbott and Susan’s partner Ingrid Costello. Fred and Ginger are friends of mine, so I’ll be setting up the system on their behalf.

Scenario 2: Class reunion.

North Shore High School Class of 1988 is having their 25th reunion. They host 100 former students, many of whom bring partners, a few of whom have kids tagging along, meaning 180 people in a hotel ballroom. The reunion organisers have arranged for a large screen and controller at each 8-top table, and have set aside 90 minutes after dinner for everyone to play. [Envisioned elements that apply to this scenario are presented in square brackets.]

Structure

The system is divided into three parts: devising, performance, and documentation. Only the first two will be implemented

Devising
Performers create the ‘script’ or parameters of their part of the performance. It is designed for the individuals who will be reuniting and performing to engage reflectively with their media and their memories in deciding what they aim to reveal about themselves during the performance. In this way, the devising is based in individual reminiscence and questions of both individual and group identity.

Participants are given a set of prompts to which they respond by uploading photos created in the past few years. (The capacity for sound files and videos will be implemented in future versions.) The prompts are designed to anticipate the large volume of digital material that participants are likely to have from this time period and to provide a new way for participants to navigate through their collections.

The prompts will encourage participants to think about aspects of their experience that are often poorly represented in personal photography/videographic, but rich material for live performance. The first three will ask participants to imagine a situation and then find a photograph to suit, while the last three will take advantage of any serendipitous connections or discoveries the participants might make in the process of answering the first three. [Ideally, any piece of media selected would be annotated within their own archiving system as being singled out for this performance as well as being uploaded.]

**Performance**

This section constitutes the actual event of performance, where all participants come together to negotiate the sequence of anecdotes, descriptions and revelations that will form their group performance. The performance event is structured through rules and a framework that will ideally guide participants toward emergent meaning(s) and an enhanced value placed on the media objects used.

The goal presented to participants at the outset of the performance is to create, as a group, a performance in which they discover who they are, as a group, at this point in time (and space). One shorthand for this would be ‘getting behind the status update’.

As a group, the participants will have a fixed amount of performance time, 20 minutes in the initial test. A timer runs whenever one performs, controlled by the performer. Participants take turns performing. When the 20 minutes are up, the performance is complete. [Ideally, the performance would finish by displaying graphical representations of performance statistics: how long each person performed for, how many pieces of media were used per performer, how many people responded to each prompt, etc.]

The system structure, along with the content of the prompts, focuses the participants primarily on storytelling rather than reminiscence. This should minimise the potential conflict between the special accord given to the performer’s turn and the tendency in reminiscence for many participants to contribute a number of short turns.

**Documentation**

The post-performance experience will be explored conceptually in the study, not implemented. It is envisioned that participants will be able to return to both the video and the individual digital media elements. The video should be editable and bookmarkable. [Ideally, the participants would be able to remix
the digital media elements against the video as well. The digital media elements and the video (or videos, in the case of multiple edited highlights) would have metadata identifying them as part of the performance event for that time and place.

## High-level Use Case

### Devising—each individual participant

1. [Orchestrator sets up number of participants and sends invitations, which participants receive by email and contain link to site]
2. [Allow input of participant name]
3. System displays prompts, in order
4. Participant uploads an image in response to each prompt (fifth prompt photo is optional)
5. (System creates image thumbnails)
6. Participant may upload videos, further photos, audio, and/or text
7. (Create video thumbnails)
8. System stores and identifies uploaded items by participant name and prompt number

### Performance—group

9. System displays participant names
10. First participant selects participant name
11. System displays selected participant name and participant’s unanswered prompts (with key photo or video thumbnail)
12. Participant selects unanswered prompt
13. System displays timer, start button, prompt, user-generated text (if used), mechanism to reveal (first) photo or video (or blank, see prompt 5), display audio icon (if used), mechanism to end performance
14. Participant starts timer and speaks when ready
15. System begins recording performance
16. If audio has been uploaded, it begins playing automatically
17. System displays timer counting down, stop button, prompt, user-generated text (if available), mechanism to reveal (first) photo or video, mechanism to end performance
18. System displays photo(s) and/or video thumbnail as indicated
19. Participant can play and pause video (which should automatically pause any audio)
20. Participant stops timer, which pauses but does not reset
21. System ends any audio or video playback when turn ends
22. System ends video recording when turn ends
23. System displays participant names
24. Group selects participant for next turn, maximum two turns in a row for one participant (so after two turns, current participant’s name should be greyed out)
25. Participant selects prompt to answer (and all answered prompts should be greyed out)
26. REPEAT 13-25 UNTIL TIME EXPIRES (or all prompts are answered, or participant ends performance)
27. System displays a slide show of all media items in the order they were played, with corresponding participant names, prompts, and any user-generated text onscreen as well (15 seconds per photo, videos on auto-play, audio overlaying any associated photos)
28. System allows users to scroll through and pause this display at will. Slide show resumes after 120 seconds of inactivity.

Documentation—each individual participant

29. [Orchestrator emails participants with link to video and media items]
30. System displays slide show as above
31. System displays 20-minute video as captured during performance
32. [System allows participants to play media items according to participant name or prompt number]
33. System allows participants to download individual media items
34. [System allows editing and flagging of video recordings]
35. [System creates a visualisation of the performance that can be archived with other photos and links to the full video]
36. [System adds metadata to all files used or created in the performance that links to visualisation and full video]
Interface Elements

Devising

During the devising phase, the interface will consist of a display of the prompts along with the functionality to upload media objects and to identify those objects as belonging to the named participant. The prompts will be displayed in order, encouraging participants to answer them in order, though they should be able to move back and forth through the prompts and amend their uploads at will.

Performance

• During the performance, the following interactions will be possible:
• Timer: display time elapsed/remaining, start/restart (to stop the clock between performers), and stop (manually or automatically when time runs out).
• Media object: conceal and reveal photos, move between photos, play audio, pause audio, play video, pause video. Display of photo or video controls projection.
• Select from current participant’s prompts, with performed prompts greyed out.
• Select from other participants’ names (participants with no remaining prompts are greyed out).

Documentation

Post-performance, the following interactions will be possible:
• View recording of full performance.
• Download individual media elements used in or uploaded for the performance, perhaps with a watermark from the performance, giving date and location of reunion along with participant names.

Open Issues

1. Recording device.
   a. Small video camera mounted perpendicular to performer-screen, capturing backs of spectators’ heads. Pros: easy, not challenging to view. Con: entrenches theoretical perspectives that the project either isn’t trying to support, or is actively trying to subvert.
   b. Fish-eye video camera mounted between performer and spectators. Pros: in line with theory, could capture a lot of faces. Cons: challenging, easy to miss outliers and screen.
   c. Individual video cameras. Pros: everyone gets to see her own view, easy to make sense of. Cons: unwieldy in practice, unwieldy amounts of data, unwieldy to get into system.
   d. Individual still cameras. Pros: evocative, easy to capture, easy to use later. Cons: no way to capture stories.
e. **One camera**, possibly a GoPro or similar, mounted high and pointing diagonally down toward performer to capture a bit of the audience as well. Pros: mostly in line with theory; GoPro can capture almost as much as fish eye. Cons: expense (though not a deal-breaker).

f. Multiple cameras, one each on performer, audience, and screen.

2. **Story flow.** I’d like the system to interrupt the stories from time to time, challenging the performer by expressing doubt, demanding movement, etc. But this would need to be randomised, and that seems to risk alienating the performer.

3. **Trimming of stories in documentation.** I want participants to be able to mark sections of video as highlights (with the full videos of each story kept separate and accessible).

4. [Further development of the documentation phase. The screen would be share by time- and location-stamped video annotations layered on the video alongside separate instances of the media items as they were used in performance.]

5. **Input device during performance.**
   a. **Tablet.** Pros: intuitive, more like a game, less like a PC. Cons: physically awkward to turn screen, no hover states, too small for sharing among more than a few people.
   b. **Mouse and keyboard.** Pros: probably easiest to implement. Cons: aesthetic and cultural connotations of having a computer on the table during a social event.
   d. **Projection (for display, not input).** Pros: very ‘theatrical’, large enough. Cons: hard to see detail, hard to control for brightness, requires an adequate projection surface.
   e. **Wii remotes.** Pros: could be very trendy and pleasurable to use. Cons: could be very hard to do, with unclear benefits beyond escaping the PC aesthetic.
   f. **Current envisionment:** website controlled by iPad (see Tablet above) to manipulate game and control projector (see above).

6. **Starting the performance.** The setup will include some sort of designated ‘stage’ area to mark the switch to performance. This needs to take place in physical space and implies a human ‘orchestrator’ whose functions are otherwise fully contained within the system. To the degree that participants shouldn’t be turning to this person for direction or validation, the system should be seen to be sufficient. However, behind the scenes, the role of this person in creating a physical space for performance needs thought.

### Technical Notes

1. The prompts can be delivered very simply, via email, with responses uploaded to the system.
2. The system will not be required to do the following:
   a. Select which participant goes first.
   b. Select which prompt each participant will answer.
   c. Dictate rules on whether and how interruptions might be allowed.
   d. Monitor or time any interruptions.
Prompts

Devising, for people to answer individually, in advance

The prompts will be contextualised by the email inviting them to participate (which itself will be preceded by the ethics procedure, consent forms, etc). The email will invite participants to the website, where they will find an overall goal for the game and specific prompts.

On the website they will find the overall goal of the experience, which is to answer the question: At your reunion – on that day – in that place – with those people – all together, who are you?

1. A regular day. Where were you six months ago today at 2:05 p.m.? Find the photograph or video clip (20 seconds maximum) that is closest in time to that point. Describe the difference between your life at 2:05 p.m. six months ago and your life in that picture. (If 2:05 p.m. six months ago was just a normal day and you can’t remember anything in particular about it, try to imagine what it must have been like in as much detail as you can.)

Upload your picture or video clip here.

If you have any additional pictures that help you make your point, upload them, too.

Is there a song or other audio file that goes along with what you’re going to say, upload it.

If you want to write a few words to remind you what you’re going to talk about, enter them here.

2. I was just thinking about you. Think back over the time since you’ve all seen each other last. Try to remember a moment during this time when you thought about one of your friends (one who is part of the group that’s having the reunion). Do you remember where you were, what you were doing, or what happened to make you remember your friend? Find the photo that most closely represents that moment or situation for you, and get ready to tell the story. (It’s OK if the connection to the photo is loose or odd.)

Upload your picture here.

If you want to use a video instead of pictures, edit your video down to 20 seconds maximum (shorter is fine) and upload it here.

If you have any additional pictures that help you make your point, upload them, too.

Is there a song or other audio file that goes along with what you’re going to say, upload it.

If you want to write a few words to remind you what you’re going to talk about, enter them here.

3. Whisper. Find a picture of you or taken by you that isn’t on any social networking site. One that you’re a little bit embarrassed about. You will explain the embarrassing bit to your friends at the reunion – in a whisper.

Upload your picture here.

If you have any other pictures that help you make your point, upload them, too.

If you want to use a video instead of pictures, edit your video down to 20 seconds maximum (shorter is fine), take out or turn down the audio track, and upload it here.
If you want to write a few words to remind you what you’re going to whisper about, enter them here.

4. Lie. Find a picture that you would like to show. Invent a story behind the picture. Exaggerate, embellish, or outright lie. Your goal will be to make everyone playing the game laugh out loud at least once during this turn.

Upload your picture here.

Try to find a song or other audio file that will make people laugh when they hear it along with your story and your picture(s). Upload it here.

If you want to use a video instead of pictures, edit your video down to 20 seconds maximum (shorter is fine) and upload it here.

If you have any additional pictures that help you make your point, upload them, too.

If you want to write a few words to remind you what you’re going to talk about, enter them here.

5. Forget. Find a picture you had forgotten all about. Try to remember what was going through your mind at the time it was taken. Now either keep it, upload it, and use your turn to describe why it’s important enough to keep – or delete it completely, upload nothing, and use your turn to describe what it looked like.

Upload your picture here – or not.

If you want to use a video instead of a picture, edit your video down to 20 seconds maximum (shorter is fine) and upload it here.

Is there a song or other audio file that goes along with what you’re going to say, upload it.

If you want to write a few words to remind you what you’re going to talk about, enter them here.

**Prompts as displayed during game play**

1. A regular day. This is (more or less) where I was six months ago today at 2:05 p.m. Display any text entered. <Reveal (first) photo or video.>

2. I was just thinking about you. I found myself thinking about you. Display any text entered. <Reveal (first) photo or video.>

3. Whisper. I’m not going to shout this out – come closer so I can whisper. Display any text entered. <Reveal (first) photo or video.>

4. Lie. You’ll never believe it. Display any text entered. <Reveal (first) photo or video.>

5. Forget. I’d forgotten all about this one. Display any text entered. <Reveal photo or blank.>
Appendix D: Master script for Collect Yourselves!

```php
<?php
/*
Title: Master script for Collect Yourselves!
Author: sjt@5jt.com stronglanguage.us@gmail.com
*/

// BGN BGN BGN BGN BGN BGN BGN BGN BGN BGN BGN BGN BGN BGN BGN BGN BGN

// function libraries
require('lib-initialise.php');  // database
require('lib/modules.php');    // main engines

$bgn = microtime(TRUE);
$LOG = "script began ".(date('G:i:s', $bgn))."\n";
define('NOCACHE',TRUE);  // true while debugging
$ERRORS = '';
error_reporting(E_ERROR | E_PARSE);

// analyse query string
.....................................................
if ( $_SERVER['QUERY_STRING'] ) {
parsesr($_SERVER['QUERY_STRING'],$vars);
$LOG.= var_export($vars,TRUE)."\n";
} else {
    $vars = array();
    $LOG.= "empty query string\n";
}

// report session variables
// compose standard modules or read from cache
................................
if(isset($_SESSION['html'])){  //if isset bit and the close bracket is new, might go horribly wrong
    if( NOCACHE | !$_SESSION['html']['banner'] ) {
        $_SESSION['html']['banner'] = modBanner();
        $_SESSION['html']['colphn'] = modColophon();
        $_SESSION['html']['nav'] = modNav();
        $LOG.= "regenerated static HTML\n";
    } else {
        $LOG.= "static HTML from cache\n";
    }
    $mods = $_SESSION['html'];
}

//that if isset bit and the close bracket is new, might go horribly wrong
if( !$DBH = connectDatabase() ) {
$rslt = '<span class="error">Sorry, we have a server problem.
Please try later.</span>';
} else {
    $LOG.= "initial username ".$_SESSION['username']."\n";
    $vars['pg'] = array_key_exists('pg',$vars) ? $vars['pg'] : '';  
    if( $vars['pg'] === 'register' ) {
        $rslt = modLogOrReg('register','');
    } elseif(  
        (strlen($_SESSION['username']) 
        and ($vars['pg'] !== 'play') 
        and ($vars['pg'] !== 'playnow')
    ) { 
```
$rslt = modLogOrReg('login',$vars['pg']); $mods['nav'] = '';
}
else {
    switch($vars['pg']) {
        case 'homepage': $rslt = modHomePage(); break;
        case 'upload1': $rslt = modUpload1(); break;
        case 'upload2': $rslt = modUpload2(); break;
        case 'upload3': $rslt = modUpload3(); break;
        case 'upload4': $rslt = modUpload4(); break;
        case 'upload5': $rslt = modUpload5(); break;
        case 'play': $rslt = modPlay(); break;
        case 'playnow':
            if ( $rslt = modPlayNow() ) {
                $mods['nav'] = ''; $html['lhs'] = '';
            } else {
                $rslt = modPlay();
            }
            break;
        default: $rslt = modHomePage(); break;
    }
}

$LOG.= "final username ".'$_SESSION['username'].'"\n";
$LOG.= 'last server error 
'.'var_export($_SESSION['last_error'],TRUE)."\n";
$LOG.= 'players 
'.'var_export($_SESSION['players'],TRUE)."\n";

$mods['login'] = modLogInPanel($_SESSION['username'],$vars['pg']);
$mods['gamectl'] = $vars['pg'] === 'playnow'? modGameCtl($vars['pg']) : '';
$mods['result'] = $rslt;
$mods['errors'] = modErrors($ERRORS);

// group the modules
..........................................................
$html['top'] = getDivs($mods,array('banner','login'));
$html['lhs'] = getDivs($mods,array('nav'));
$html['main'] = getDivs($mods,array('errors','gamectl','result'));

$html['midl'] = getDivs($html,array('lhs','main'));
$body = divIt('wrap',getDivs($html,array('top','midl')));

$LOG.= "completed in ".(round(microtime(TRUE)-$bgn,4))." secs\n";
//$body.= "<pre id="LOG">{$LOG}</pre>\n";

$out = "";
function divIt($id,$cont)
{
    return strlen($cont) ? "<div id="{$id}" class="group">
{$cont}" : '' ;
}

function getDivs($mods,$keys)
{
    $htm = ''; // NB absent modules ignored
    foreach ($keys as $key) { if( isset($mods[$key]) ) {
    $htm.=divIt($key,$mods[$key]); } }
    return $htm;
}
Appendix E: Information sheet for Friend Groups

Participant Information Sheet

Performatve Experience Design: theory and practice for the performance of digitally augmented autobiographical storytelling

Introduction

My name is Jocelyn Spence, and I would like to ask you to take part in a study for my PhD thesis. Before you decide whether you want to take part, you should read what it is I'm trying to do. Feel free to ask me any questions or to speak with anyone else you like. I have been researching new ways for people to share their digital media (photographs) when they meet up with others.

What is the purpose of the study?

The study will investigate what happens when people share stories and photos using a storytelling website.

Why have I been invited to take part in the study?

You are a member of a group of adult friends or family members who are about to see each other after three months or more apart. All of you own or have access to a digital camera (or smartphone), your own digital photo collection, and Internet access.

Do I have to take part?

No, you do not have to take part in my research. There will be no adverse consequences of any kind for you if you choose not to participate.

What will happen to me if I take part?
This study has two phases. In the Phase 1, you will be asked to log onto a website where you will upload at least four photos. You can do this on your own, at your convenience. Phase 1 will take between ten minutes and an hour to complete, depending entirely on how long you wish to spend on it. In Phase 2, you will meet up with up to half a dozen other people to share your photos and the stories behind them. At the end of Phase 2 I will ask everyone some questions about your experience. Phase 2 will take slightly less than two hours to complete.

What will happen to the information I provide?

As part of the research process, I will make video and audio recordings of all of Phase 2, and a second researcher will take notes. The video and audio will not be shared beyond the university's research group. Transcripts will be anonymised so that you will not be identified in any report or publication. Recordings and transcripts will be held securely for 10 years and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). The anonymised data will be used in the PhD, and findings from the data will be written up for presentations, internal reports, for the PhD thesis, and as papers for publication in academic journals.

At the beginning of Phase 2 I will also ask permission to reprint certain photos that you upload in Phase 1 to illustrate the research process in presentations, internal reports, the PhD thesis, and papers for publication in academic journals. I will only ask for consent to reproduce photos of yourself alone, or ones that do not feature individual people, and I will anonymise (blur out) your face in any photo that is reproduced. You are under no obligation to provide this consent. You are free to take part in the study even if you do not consent to reproducing the photos, and you are free to upload photos of anyone you like – these simply will not be considered for reproduction.

What are the possible disadvantages or risks of taking part?

It is not anticipated that you will experience any disadvantages by taking part in this study. You will not be asked to upload anything that you are not comfortable sharing. All possible precautions are being taken to keep your uploaded photos private and secure. The application was created by me and is hosted on my own
website. The application is not available to the public and is invisible to search engines. After Phase 2 concludes, your photos will be removed from the website completely.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

You will be contributing to valuable research about new media technologies, and I hope that you will have fun using the application. There is no payment involved, but during Phase 2 refreshments will be provided.

**How do I get in touch?**

Any questions, concerns, or complaints about this project should be addressed to Jocelyn Spence by any of the means listed below:

- **By post:** Digital World Research Centre
  
  School of Arts

  University of Surrey

  Guildford GU2 7XH

- **By telephone:** 07707 606 321

- **By email:** j.spence@surrey.ac.uk

If for any reason you want to speak directly to my supervisor, David Frohlich, you can contact him by post at the address above, by telephone at 01483 683 973, or by email at d.frohlich@surrey.ac.uk.

**Who has reviewed the project?**

The study has been reviewed and received a favourable opinion from the University of Surrey Ethics Committee.

*Thank you for taking the time to read this Information Sheet.*
Appendix F: Information sheet for Stranger Groups

Participant Information Sheet

Performative Experience Design: theory and practice for the performance of digitally augmented autobiographical storytelling

Introduction

My name is Jocelyn Spence, and I would like to ask you to take part in a study for my PhD thesis. Before you decide whether you want to take part, you should read what it is I'm trying to do. Feel free to ask me any questions or to speak with anyone else you like. I have been researching new ways for people to share their digital media (photographs) when they meet up with others.

What is the purpose of the study?

The study will investigate what happens when people share stories and photos using a storytelling website.

Why have I been invited to take part in the study?

You own or have access to a digital camera (or smartphone), your own digital photo collection, and Internet access. Additionally, you do not already know the other participants.

Do I have to take part?

No, you do not have to take part in my research. There will be no adverse consequences of any kind for you if you choose not to participate.

What will happen to me if I take part?

This study has two phases. In the Phase 1, you will be asked to log onto a website where you will upload at least four photos. You can do this on your own,
at your convenience. Phase 1 will take between ten minutes and an hour to complete, depending entirely on how long you wish to spend on it. In Phase 2, you will meet up with up to half a dozen other people to share your photos and the stories behind them. At the end of Phase 2 I will ask everyone some questions about your experience. Phase 2 will take slightly less than two hours to complete.

**What will happen to the information I provide?**

As part of the research process, I will make video and audio recordings of all of Phase 2, and a second researcher will take notes. The video and audio will not be shared beyond the university's research group. Transcripts will be anonymised so that you will not be identified in any report or publication. Recordings and transcripts will be held securely for 10 years and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). The anonymised data will be used in the PhD, and findings from the data will be written up for presentations, internal reports, for the PhD thesis, and as papers for publication in academic journals.

At the beginning of Phase 2 I will also ask permission to reprint certain photos that you upload in Phase 1 to illustrate the research process in presentations, internal reports, the PhD thesis, and papers for publication in academic journals. I will only ask for consent to reproduce photos of yourself alone, or ones that do not feature individual people, and I will anonymise (blur out) your face in any photo that is reproduced. You are under no obligation to provide this consent. You are free to take part in the study even if you do not consent to reproducing the photos, and you are free to upload photos of anyone you like – these simply will not be considered for reproduction.

**What are the possible disadvantages or risks of taking part?**

It is not anticipated that you will experience any disadvantages by taking part in this study. You will not be asked to upload anything that you are not comfortable sharing. All possible precautions are being taken to keep your uploaded photos private and secure. The application was created by me and is hosted on my own website. The application is not available to the public and is invisible to search
engines. After Phase 2 concludes, your photos will be removed from the website completely.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

You will be contributing to valuable research about new media technologies, and I hope that you will have fun using the application. There is no payment involved, but during Phase 2 refreshments will be provided.

**How do I get in touch?**

Any questions, concerns, or complaints about this project should be addressed to Jocelyn Spence by any of the means listed below:

By post: Digital World Research Centre

School of Arts

University of Surrey

Guildford GU2 7XH

By telephone: 07707 606 321

By email: j.spence@surrey.ac.uk

If for any reason you want to speak directly to my supervisor, David Frohlich, you can contact him by post at the address above, by telephone at 01483 683 973, or by email at d.frohlich@surrey.ac.uk.

**Who has reviewed the project?**

The study has been reviewed and received a favourable opinion from the University of Surrey Ethics Committee.

*Thank you for taking the time to read this Information Sheet.*
Appendix G: Consent form

Consent Form

• I the undersigned voluntarily agree to take part in the Performative Experience Design study.

• I have read and understood the Information Sheet provided. I have been given a full explanation by the investigators of the nature, purpose, location and likely duration of the study, and of what I will be expected to do. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions on all aspects of the study and have understood the advice and information given as a result.

• I understand that the information I provide and all personal data are held and processed in the strictest confidence, and in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). I agree that the data collected may be shared with other researchers within the context of this study.

• I understand that my participation in this study involves providing copies of the digital photographs, videos, and/or audio that I select for use in this study. I understand that my participation does not automatically grant permission to reproduce these photographs or other media in the dissemination of findings from this research, and I may participate in this research without granting permission to reproduce those media. Permission to reproduce media will be sought separately.

• I understand that I am giving the University of Surrey consent to record me and to use and make available the content of the recorded study activities to individuals involved in this research. All materials will be kept in secure conditions at the University of Surrey and will be preserved as a resource for use in publications including print, audio-visual, or electronic, conferences, symposia, lectures, and seminars related to this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent to use recordings of my study activities in the future.

• I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without needing to justify my decision and without prejudice. I understand that I have the right to withdraw my consent to the University of Surrey for the right to copy, publish, and use information given by me. I also understand that I cannot withdraw my consent to the University of Surrey for the right to copy, publish, and use information given by me up to the point of withdrawal.

• I confirm that I have read and understood the above and freely consent to participating in this study.
Name of volunteer (BLOCK CAPITALS) ........................................................

Signed ........................................................

Date ........................................................

Name of researcher/person taking consent (BLOCK CAPITALS) ........................................................

Signed ........................................................

Date ........................................................
Appendix H: Consent form for photos

Supplementary Consent Form – Photographs Only

• I the undersigned voluntarily agree to allow the photographs indicated below to be reproduced in materials originating from the Performative Experience Design study. I give my permission for the photographs and/or other audiovisual material to be included in dissemination of findings from this research protocol.

• I understand that the information I provide and all personal data are held and processed in the strictest confidence, and in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). I agree that the data collected may be shared with other researchers in the context of this study. I will not seek to restrict the use of the results of the study on the understanding that my anonymity is preserved.

• All materials will be kept in secure conditions at the University of Surrey and will be preserved as a permanent reference resource for use in publications including print, audio-visual, or electronic for the purposes of further research, conferences, symposia, lectures, and seminars.

• I understand that I have the right to withdraw my consent to the University of Surrey for the right to reproduce my photographs without needing to justify my decision and without prejudice. I also understand that I cannot withdraw my consent to the University of Surrey for the right to reproduce my photographs up to the point of withdrawal.

• I confirm that I have been given adequate time to consider my consent.

[Image of photograph]

1. DSC_00371

☐ Yes, I grant permission to use this photo

☐ No, I do not grant permission to use this photo

☐ Yes, I grant permission to use this photo with faces blurred (anonymised)

Name of volunteer (BLOCK CAPITALS) ..........................................................

Signed ..........................................................................................................

Date ............................................................................................................
Name of researcher/person taking consent (BLOCK CAPITALS) ........................................................

Signed .............................................................................................

Date .................................................................................................
Appendix I: Questionnaire

1. How would you describe the experience you just had?

2. Did you share anything here that you would not post to an online social networking site? If so, which one(s)? Why or why not?

3. Did you tell any stories that you’ve told many times in the past? If so, which one(s)?

4. Did you tell any stories that you’ve never, or rarely, told before? If so, which one(s)?

5. How did you feel telling your stories?

6. How did you feel listening to the stories?

7. How would you describe the experience of Phase 1, when you chose the photos you were going to use?

8. If you had a video of the entire performance, would you show it to other people in person? Would you share it online? Why or why not?

9. If you could easily edit the video and the photos to make a short, bespoke video, would you show it to other people in person? Would you share it online? Why or why not?
Appendix J: Interview schedule

1: Is there anything else you would like to say about the experience you just had?

2: In a perfect world with unlimited technology, how would you use digital media like photos, sounds, videos, etc., when you come together with other people in person?

3: How would you describe the difference between the feeling of this experience you just had, and the feeling of just chatting with the same people?

4: What were the best prompts?

5: What context would you use this system in?
THIRD ANGEL CAPE WRATH

Northern Stage at St Stephen’s
9–11, 13–18, 20–24 August

“Consistently innovative... extraordinary performances.” The Times
SATURDAY 22nd OCTOBER 6.00PM

30 CECIL STREET
DAN CANHAM

In 2009 Dan Canham (Kneehigh, DV8, Punchdrunk, Fabulous Beast) made a film in a rotting, dilapidated theatre in Limerick, Ireland. Using that film as source material, this original piece of dance-theatre is an eloquent, heartbreaking elegy for a lost and ruined theatre. A performance of fragments of memories, of wild nights and long-disappeared communities. It evokes the life of a once-mighty building and asks what is left when a theatre closes its doors to the public?

Made with support from Grants for the Arts through Arts Council England, Escalator Performing Arts, Bristol Ferment at Bristol Old Vic and Battersea Arts Centre.

LEGS 11
TOM MARSHMAN

Tom Marshman is mingling with fashionistas, but he can't stop talking about his varicose veins. In this intimate performance, Tom conveys a story of hospital visits, uncharted journeys, broken connections and rejuvenation.

Tom Marshman is a live artist. He is an associate artist of both the Arnolfini (Bristol) and Chisenhale Dance Space (London) and also currently Artist in Residence at the ICIA Bath. Tom has been a practicing performance artist for over ten years. He has created over 20 projects in a wide range of medium including performance, photography, installation, publication and film.

ABOUT SHOW TIME

SHOW TIME returns to Riverside Studios to present a line up of extraordinary artists making contemporary performance work. Opening a new space in London for artists and audiences to come together and experiment. Hosts Present Attempt combine works in development and completed performances to give you two diverse days of theatrical experiments.

SHOW TIME is a self funded, artist-led event which aims to provide a good deal for both artists and audiences. We’re glad you have been able to join us to support the event. Enjoy!