

Applying Short-Form Video to University-heritage Education: A Collective Memory Construction Theory Perspective

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Abstract: Grounded in collective-memory theory, this study investigates how short-form video mediates university-heritage education and generates pedagogical effects. Owing to their fragmentary, visual and interactive affordances, short-form videos have become a key vehicle for the transmission of university heritage. Through a threefold mechanism—symbolic aggregation, emotional evocation and co-creative meaning-making—they reconfigure the construction of historical memory: discrete archival materials are turned into vivid memoryscapes, audiences emotional resonance is awakened and intergenerational dialogue is fostered. Consequently, the conventional cognitive pathway of heritage knowledge is re-oriented, emotional identification is activated and a progressive behavioural chain of “watch-engage-create” is formed. The findings extend collective-memory studies into the digital era and provide actionable insights for cultural education in higher-education institutions.

Keywords: Collective memory; Short-form video; University heritage education; Digital pedagogy; Symbolic interaction

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1. Introduction

Today, as the wave of artificial intelligence sweeps across the globe, the way collective memory is constructed is undergoing a profound mediatized transition ^[1]. The traditional mode of memory transmission, which is mainly based on oral history and written records, is gradually shifting to digital memory forms. Maurice Halbwachs' Collective Memory Construction Theory points out that Collective Memory is not a simple accumulation of individual memories, but the process and result of sharing past events among members of a specific social group, which is maintained through the construction of social frameworks, which constitutes and consolidates the memory. In contemporary society, short-form video is becoming an important carrier of this “social framework”.

The 55th Statistical Report on China's Internet Development released by China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) showed that as of December 2024, the scale of China's Internet users reached 1.108 billion, and the Internet penetration rate reached 78.6% ^[2]. Among them, the scale of online video users was 1.070 billion, an increase of 3.47 million from December 2023, accounting for 96.6% of the overall Internet users. The scale of short-form video users was 1.040 billion, accounting for 93.8% of the overall Internet users. It can be seen that short-form video has become the most

popular new media form among Internet users, and this new media form is reshaping the way of constructing collective memory with the characteristics of fragmentation, visualization and interactivity.

History serves as an invaluable textbook, university history embodies profound historical significance and distinctive spiritual qualities, fostering innate identification, cohesion, and guidance among faculty, students, and alumni. Disseminating this historical culture enhances a sense of belonging and pride within the university community, facilitates the promotion of the institution's founding ethos and scholarly traditions, and elevates its overall influence. With the popularization of mobile networks, especially the arrival of the artificial intelligence era, university history education, as an important part of cultural education in university, is currently facing a serious intergenerational memory break and identity crisis. On the one hand, traditional university history education modes such as university history museum visits and special lectures are difficult to arouse the interest of the digital aboriginal generation and adapt to the acceptance of the contemporary student population; on the other hand, rapid social changes have caused the intergenerational transmission of university history memories to be fractured.

On the basis of Halbwachs' concept of "collective memory", Jan Assmann proposed the concepts of "Communicative Memory" and "Cultural Memory". From the view of "Communicative Memory", after exceeding the upper limit of 80 years, it will enter the state of what Assmann calls "Cultural Memory", that is what Halbwachs calls a state of being detached from social interaction and daily life and becoming a kind of canonized and monumental content. This theoretical framework profoundly reveals the fundamental challenge confronting university history education: with the passing of contemporaries from the institution's founding era, institutional memory is undergoing a paradigm shift from communicative memory to cultural memory. In the absence of an effective memory activation mechanism, university history may be reduced to a static archive record, and its emotional appeal and cultural identity function will inevitably weaken. In this context, exploring the application of short-form video in university heritage education is not only of theoretical innovation value, but also of urgent practical significance.

The purpose of this study is to explore how short-form video can reconstruct the collective memory of university history through its media characteristics, and how the university history memory constructed by short-form video can be transformed into actual nurturing effects. The discussion of these issues will not only help to expand the development of collective memory theory in the digital media era, but also provide innovative ideas for cultural education in university.

2. short-form video as a Medium Mechanism of University History Memory Construction

Under the theoretical framework of Collective Memory Construction Theory, short-form video, with its unique technical characteristics and transmission logic, is increasingly becoming an important medium for the transmission and education of university history. It is not only an information dissemination tool, but also deeply involved in the whole process of encoding, storing, disseminating and reproducing university history memory, reshaping the construction of university history collective memory.

2.1. Carrier dimension: technology-enabled reconstruction of memory symbols and communication innovation

As one of the core memory carriers in the digital era, the technical characteristics of short-form video have fundamentally changed the way of presenting, storing and circulating university history memories. The outstanding time and space compression ability of short-form video can greatly shorten the distance between history and the present. Through digital restoration technology, the dusty historical images can be revitalized to obtain stronger visual impact and emotional infectivity, combined with the interactive application of augmented reality (AR) and other technologies, to build a layered memory space, so that teachers and students can activate the sense of identity of the university history in the immersive experience. For example, Fudan University relies on virtual reality (VR) technology to build a VR university

history museum, digitally presenting the university history content, reproducing the physical scene through technology, and realizing the university history museum's open visit in the cloud, so that the audience can cross time and space, and appreciate the spirit and elegance of Fudan.

Aiming at the acceptance habits of young groups, the traditional elements of university history are decoded and recoded in a youthful way, and through popularization and visualization, the university history content is given a contemporary aesthetic form of expression through the use of networked visual and narrative symbols, injecting it with the flavor of the times, and effectively constructing a bridge between the historical memories and the emotional resonance of the present time. This systematic symbol conversion mechanism makes the university history memory, which might have appeared serious or even "cold", successfully break through the communication barriers, and promotes the transformation of cultural memory from static and institutionalized preservation to dynamic and socialized communication^[3]. For example, when Shandong University celebrated its 120th anniversary in 2021, the official number of Shandong University's Bilibili station released a short-form video titled "Shandong University In The Square World: Shandong University's Special Offering For The 120th Anniversary Of The University", which reproduced the appearance of the buildings of Shandong University's various campuses in the form of modeling, and made it to the Bilibili station's hot list. The video transforms the solemn campus buildings into pixelated, interactive virtual models, accurately reproducing the campus appearance, while injecting a vivid contemporary flavor into the heavy university history in a fun and immersive way, which strongly promotes the dissemination of the memory of Shandong University's history.

2.2. Subject dimension: memory production under multiple synergies and power games

The short-form video platform breaks the traditional pattern of university history memory production dominated by a single school party, forming a more complex multiple subject synergistic network, which is mainly reflected in the coexistence and interaction of professional content produced by the school's publicity department and archives (PGC), user-generated content spontaneously created by faculty members, students and alumni (UGC), and organized user content co-creatively created by faculty members and students under the guidance of the school (OUGC). Northwest Normal University invites students to be the interpreters of the series of micro-videos on ideology and politics "The Glory of 120th Years - I Speak about the School History", which was independently conceived and filmed by the students, and participated by the teachers, students and alumni, and narrates the memories of normal university from the perspective of the students, which broadens the main body of the inheritance of the university history as well as the perspective of dissemination.

Interaction between subjects promotes intergenerational dialog and identity negotiation. In Lanzhou University's "Hundred Scholars Speak about University History" online video themed relay activity, university students, working faculty and staff, retired faculty and staff, alumni and other different identities of "students" actively participate in the narrative, set off a micro-video relay boom, a full range of successive storytelling of university history. Through data collection, while retaining the authority of historical source information, the new generation's perspective is integrated, so that the memory is renewed in the inheritance, while the real-time comments, bullet chat and other interactive functions provided by the short-form video platform build an open "memory checking field", where different user groups supplement, question or amend the official narratives through instant feedback, forming a dynamic negotiation process, a dynamic consultation process is formed.

2.3. Practical Dimension: Ritualized Communication and Participatory Memory Construction

Through activities such as anniversary commemorations and online challenges, short-form video can aggregate individuals' fragmented memories into a collectively meaningful "time capsule." This content is then cyclically pushed during specific institutional milestones like school anniversary celebrations, creating a year-spanning memory loop. Such repeated participation in these rituals not only significantly enhances participants' grasp of university history but also profoundly strengthens their emotional attachment and sense of identity. During Xiamen University's 100th celebration, the university initiated a topic on Weibo and continuously pushed short-form video and graphics on the theme of university history,

significantly expanding the coverage and influence of university history publicity, and the Weibo's open communication space in the comment area also provided a channel for the audience to interact and share stories about the university's history, making the viewing process not a one-way information reception, but a dynamic experience of collaboratively constructing the university history.

Through the development of digital tools, the university encourages teachers, students and alumni to upload old photos and oral histories from their personal collections, and then integrate them into the timeline of the official narrative after review. This kind of participatory archiving allows individual memories and team (such as class) memories to gain institutionalized recognition, which greatly enriches the sources and perspectives of the university's history resources, and enables the university's history to move from the history of the institution to the history of the people. This can greatly enrich the sources and perspectives of university history resources, transforming university history from "the history of the institution" to "the history of the people".

3. Mechanism Construction: The "Triple Mechanism" of Collective Memory Construction through short-form video on University History

3.1. Symbolic Aggregation Mechanism: From Discrete Historical Materials to Memory Maps

Mayer's cognitive theory of multimedia learning points out that the multimodal presentation of audio-visual combination can not only optimize the information processing mode and improve the audience's efficiency of information acquisition, but also enhance the cognitive memory, so as to increase the memory retention rate by 40% ^[4]. short-form video breaks through the limitations of traditional static archives, transforms discrete university history materials into vivid memory maps through multimodal narrative, with the help of various symbolic resources such as image, sound, text and dynamic graphics, digitizes systematic information constructed by the university, and solicited alumni, faculty members and students' personal memories into archive digitalization, historical image restoration, and dynamic scene reconstruction, which transforms static archives into dynamic stories and greatly enhances the feasibility and efficiency of video recreation of historical scenes. Deepens the audience's understanding of the university history and enhances the infectious force of the university history through multi-dimensional sensory stimulation.

short-form video further integrate university history resources through the fusion of diverse narrative frameworks. Official university accounts employ mainstream visual narrative frameworks such as "Struggling Journey," "Eminent Scholars," and "Spiritual Genealogy" to shape the audience's systematic and structured cognition of university history. Meanwhile, user-generated content (UGC) created by faculty, students, and alumni demonstrates innovative styles like "micro-perspective" narration, "trans-temporal-spatial" expression, and "entertainment-oriented" presentation, making historical memory points more recognizable and memorable. These diverse narrative frameworks complement each other, collectively constructing the symbolic mapping of the collective memory of university history.

3.2. Emotional Awakening Mechanism: from Historical Cognition to Value Recognition

Emotional resonance is a key factor in establishing a deep connection between the audience and the content during the communication process. Through multi-dimensional expressions such as scenes, music, copywriting and visual symbols, short-form video can deeply explore the emotional dimension in the university history narrative, transform the abstract spirit of struggle into concrete visual representations, thus enhancing the infectious and persuasive power of the narrative and arousing deep emotional resonance in the audience.

At important points, such as school celebrations, the start of the academic year and Graduation Period, a series of activities are designed to invite students, faculty and alumni to participate widely, and by encouraging students and faculty to provide or create relevant content, combining personal and collective memory, the audience can truly feel the close connection between university history and their own emotions when watching the short-form video. At the same time, with the help of ritualized communication to strengthen memory, teachers and students further deepen their knowledge of

university history, prompting them to move from simple historical cognition to profound value recognition. This process not only enhances the sense of belonging and cohesion of teachers and students, but also effectively improves the retention rate of long-term memory.

3.3. Meaning co-creation mechanism: from one-way transmission to intergenerational dialog

The process of constructing collective memory of university history by short-form video is not a one-way information transmission, but a result of meaning co-creation. The interaction between the university and the faculty, students and alumni makes the source of memory more diversified, and different intergenerational groups jointly construct the collective memory framework of university history by sharing personal memory fragments. The PGC content of the official narrative and the UGC content created by students complement each other to form a fusion of multiple narrative frameworks, and this interaction not only enriches the content of the university history memory, but also promotes dialog and communication between different generations. The short-form video further strengthens the meaning co-creation mechanism of intergenerational dialogue through ritualized communication and spatial anchoring. The application of augmented reality (AR) technology materializes abstract history in a specific space, providing a spatial platform for faculty, students and alumni to participate in and experience university history. This digital spatial anchoring not only enhances the memory effect, but also prompts universities to rethink the functional positioning of the physical university history venues, and transform to the direction of integrating immersive video interactive experience.

4. Generation Mechanism of Parenting Effectiveness

4.1. Cognitive Level: Shared Construction of Memory

The short-form video has revolutionized the cognitive transmission path of university history knowledge, breaking the traditional linear instillation mode and presenting significant distributed cognitive characteristics. Its core lies in deconstructing the grand university history narrative into refined knowledge nodes, and realizing personalized push through intelligent algorithms, effectively improving the memory retention rate of knowledge points. What's more, the real-time interactive function unique to the short-form video platform has given rise to the "crowdsourcing learning" scenario, where users can instantly add details, correct information, exchange views, and participate in the construction of knowledge through comments, bullet chat and other forms of instantaneous viewing, forming a dynamic collaborative cognitive mechanism. VR and other short-form video technologies create an immersive scene, allowing the audience to "enter" the historical scene for personal experience. This operation based "learning by doing" mode strengthens procedural memory, significantly improves the depth of understanding and accuracy of memorization of complex historical events and details, and lays a solid cognitive foundation for the effect of educating people.

4.2. Emotional Level: Embodied Experience of Memory

The nurturing effect of short-form video cannot be separated from its deep activation of emotional identity, and the multimodal presentation of short-form video can effectively stimulate multiple senses and realize in-depth dissemination at the levels of cognition, emotion and action. The integration of heavy historical narratives into modern art forms and the "youthful translation" in line with the aesthetics of young groups can effectively break down the intergenerational barrier and trigger strong emotional resonance among young audiences, and this deep emotional connection is the key to stimulating a sense of identity and belonging.

4.3. Behavioral Level: Practical Continuation of Memory

The final point for short-form video to realize the effect of educating people is that they contribute to the transformation of university history memory from cognition, emotion to practical action. The core mechanism is to build a progressive behavioral chain of "watching-participating-creating". This design can motivate users to gradually change from passive

receivers to active content disseminators and even memory producers, with each level of leap accompanied by a multiplication of users' behavioral viscosity and commitment. A well-designed online and offline behavioral loop is crucial to effectively channel the memory fervor from the virtual space to the physical venue, dramatically increasing the willingness, depth, and duration of on-site visits. In order to ensure lasting behavioral development, exploring an incentive mechanism that quantifies online behaviors such as short-video learning, interaction, and creation into cumulative and circulating digital credentials, and combines them with offline physical interests, is a long-lasting strategy to maintain long-term engagement and form behavioral inertia among alumni and students.

5. Conclusion

From the perspective of Collective Memory Construction Theory, this study deeply explores the application of short-form video in university heritage education and its mechanism of generating educational efficacy, expands the scope of application of Collective Memory Theory in the era of digital media, and reveals the unique mechanism of short-form video as an emerging medium in the dissemination of university history and culture. Through the "triple mechanism" of symbolic aggregation, emotional awakening and meaning co-creation, short-form video reconstructs the Collective Memory Construction Theory, providing a new theoretical framework for the study of Collective Memory Theory in the field of digital communication. In addition, the study also analyzes the nurturing efficacy generation mechanism of short-form video from cognitive, emotional and behavioral levels, enriching the theoretical connotation of the combination of collective memory and cultural nurturing.

This study provides innovative ideas and practical paths for cultural education in university. Through multimodal narrative and interactive functions, short-form video can effectively improve the efficiency and infectiousness of university history and culture dissemination, and enhance teachers' and students' cognition and value recognition of university history. Colleges and universities can use the short-form video platform to carry out diversified university heritage education activities, stimulate the enthusiasm of teachers and students, and promote intergenerational dialogue and memory co-creation.

Although this study has achieved certain results, there is still room for further expansion. Future research can focus on the following directions: first, to explore the long-term influence mechanism of short-form video in university heritage education, and analyze their continuous influence on teachers' and students' values and behavioral patterns; second, to study how to better combine online behaviors and offline rights and interests, and to form a more effective behavioral incentive mechanism, so as to promote the long-term effectiveness of university heritage education; third, to pay attention to the cross-cultural effect of short-form video in the cultural communication of university history and explore its potential application among international students and overseas alumni; the fourth is to combine with artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies to further optimize the production and communication strategy of short-form video, and to enhance the accuracy and influence of the cultural communication of university history.

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