

Sharing Older Adults' Wisdom and Legacy through Digital Storytelling



David Kaufman* and Simone Hausknecht

Faculty of Education and Department of Gerontology, Simon Fraser University, Canada

Submission: February 09, 2018; **Published:** February 15, 2018

***Corresponding author:** David Kaufman, Faculty of Education & Department of Gerontology, Simon Fraser University, Canada, Tel: 1-604-773-7809, Email: dkaufman@sfu.ca

Mini Review

Life stories told by older adults are a unique form of communication used to share wisdom acquired through the lifespan or to leave a legacy for family, friends and others. Wisdom has been defined as 'The quality of having experience, knowledge, and good judgement; the quality of being wise.' and 'the body of knowledge and experience that develops within a specified society or period' [1]. These definitions imply that one develops wisdom as one ages but this is not always the case in western culture that venerates youth more than old age. Yet in many cultures, wisdom is associated with old age and respected Huffington Post [2]. For example, in Greek culture, old age is honoured and celebrated and respect for elders is central to the family. In Korea, elders also are highly respected and in India, they are the head of the family. Finally, in many First Nations communities, elders are respected for their wisdom and life experiences and are expected to pass down their learning's to younger members of the community. For older adults, storytelling can be a valuable method to reflect upon life experiences and the lessons learned throughout their lives, i.e., the wisdom acquired. Moreover, a written story or a recording can serve as a legacy Birren, Deutchman [3]. Despite its dictionary definition, i.e., 'a gift or bequest of property, legacy can be considered as being as broad as the imprint of a life [4]. Older adults often express an interest in sharing their life experiences with their family and others. Their stories may be considered as a life legacy, so that older adults' family and other individuals might better understand them or learn through their life experiences Birren, Dutchman [3]. Older adults may feel that leaving a legacy is a way to keep their "presence" alive, even after death [5].

Digital Storytelling

Digital media provides a way to store, preserve, and share the digital legacies of older adults [6]. Digital storytelling extends the ancient practice of telling stories by using technology to combine text, images, music, narration, sound effects, and videos [7]. Storytellers create a narrative about their personal experience in the form of an easily shared compact multimedia artefact. The creative process used in digital storytelling could

provide older adults with the means to capture and reflect on memories and lived experiences. Furthermore, digital stories may allow older adults to reach a large audience as they can be heard, viewed, and shared easily [8-10]. Digital stories can be shared publicly by uploading them to the Internet, saving them on a digital media device such as a flash drive, or showing them to others in public events.

Well-being of Older Adults

In recent years, there has been increased interest in the importance of the social and psychological well-being of older adults [11,12]. The act of sharing stories may bring various benefits to social and psychological well-being [3]. Suggest that sharing autobiographical narratives can have several positive effects for older adults such as increased self-esteem, a stronger identity, and finding increased meaning in their lives. A review by [13]. On reminiscence research, a process of recalling events in a persons' life, found that reminiscing had a moderate effect on life-satisfaction and well-being. In another example, Meléndez Moral et al. [14] conducted research on integrative reminiscence. In this style of reminiscence participants recall events and try to integrate past and present to form meaning. The results showed that reminiscence led to increased self-esteem, life satisfaction, and psychological well-being and reduced depression. Previous studies have shown that a lack of communication and social connection to others can contribute to isolation and loneliness which in turn can result in problems such as depression and cognitive decline for older adults [15,16]. It is important to provide opportunities where older adults can share their experiences, make connections, and build relationships with others in positive and supportive social environment. In leisure activities, designing for group interactions may help with such issues as reducing loneliness, increasing self-esteem through life-long learning opportunities, and increasing a feeling of social connectedness [17].

Digital Storytelling Course

We have been offering a ten-week digital storytelling course in venues such as community centres, senior centres, libraries,

museums, and independent living facilities. The course is intended to give participants an opportunity to explore their life stories and create a digital artefact, so they can easily share a piece of wisdom or a legacy story from their life with course participants and others. The process requires participants to reflect on their past and choose a short story that represents a moment, event, or person in their life. This has some similarities to autobiographical narrative work and reminiscence research. The shared experience during the course of designing and digitizing personal stories may enhance well-being through increased social connectedness and self-understanding. The creation of digital stories is not done in isolation, but stories are created collaboratively and then shared with others at the conclusion in a "sharing our stories" event within the community. Thus far, we have collected more than 100 digital stories and have conducted research on the benefits of these courses in press [18]. Our experience thus far has been encouraging. The benefits can be summarized by a quote from two of our participants, who stated: "I think that's what it is and you look at people and you meet them the first day and we're all strangers, but then, by the end of the time you, you know, these little bits about that person, that ah, it, it's personal." (Female, late 60s). "I want to write something for my family, for my grandkids 'cause I don't get to see them very much. And they don't know a lot about my side of my family, so I really wanted something to, really lasting memories." (Female, 70s). We plan to continue offering the course and conducting research on its' impacts on participants. We have already offered the course to older adults with mild dementia, a First Nations community in northern Canada, and we are now planning courses for caregivers and intergenerational teams [19].

References

1. (2018) Oxford living dictionaries.
2. Huffington Post (2017).
3. Birren JE, Deutchman DE (1991) *Guiding Autobiography Groups for Older Adults: Exploring the Fabric of Life*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland, USA.
4. Newhouse M (2010) Legacy: A powerful rite of passage. *Social Work Today* 10(3): 6.
5. Wallace J, Wright PC, Mc Carthy J, Green DP, Thomas J (2013) A design led inquiry into personhood in dementia. In Conference Proceedings CHI 2013: Changing Perspectives, Paris, France.
6. Sherlock A (2013) Larger than life: digital resurrection and the re-enchantment of society. *The Information Society* 29(3): 164-176.
7. Rule L (2010) Digital storytelling: Never has storytelling been so easy or so powerful. *Knowledge. Quest* 38(4): 56.
8. Chung, SK (2007) Art education technology: Digital storytelling. *Art Education*, 60(2): 17-22.
9. Lambert J (2010) *Digital storytelling cookbook*. Berkeley, California, USA.
10. Opperman M (2008) Digital storytelling and American studies: critical trajectories from the emotional to the epistemological. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 7(2): 171-86.
11. Agosto DE (2013) If I Had Three Wishes: The educational and social/emotional benefits of oral storytelling. *Storytelling, Self, Society* 9(1): 53-76.
12. Fang Y, Anson KC, Wong A, Fung HH, Wu J (2017) Information and communicative technology use enhances psychological well-being of older adults: the roles of age, social connectedness, and frailty status. *Aging and Mental Health* 4: 1-9.
13. Bohlmeijer E, Roemer M, Cuijpers P, Smit F (2007) The effects of reminiscence on psychological well-being in older adults: A meta-analysis. *Aging and Mental Health* 11(3): 291-300.
14. Meléndez Moral JC, Fortuna Terrero FB, Sales Galán A, Mayordomo Rodríguez T (2015) Effect of integrative reminiscence therapy on depression, well-being, integrity, self-esteem, and life satisfaction in older adults. *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 10(3): 240-247.
15. Rook KS (1990) Social relationships as a source of companionship: Implications for older adults psychological well-being. In BR Sarason, IG Sarason RP, Gregory (eds.), *Social Support: An Interactional View*, John Wiley. New York, USA. pp. 219-250.
16. Cacioppo JT, Patrick W (2008) *Loneliness: Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection*. WW Norton & Company, Inc, New York, USA.
17. Cattan M, White M, Bond J, Lear month A (2005) Preventing social isolation and loneliness among older people: A systematic review of health promotion interventions. *Ageing & Society* 25(1): 41-67.
18. Hausknecht S, Vanchu Orosco M, Kaufman D (2016) Sharing life stories: Design and evaluation of a digital storytelling workshop for older adults. In *Computer Supported Education: 8th International Conference, CSEDU Rome, Italy*.
19. Forsman AK, Nyqvist F, Schierenbeck I, Gustafson Y, Wahlbeck K (2012) Structural and cognitive social capital and depression among older adults in two Nordic regions. *Aging & mental health* 16(6): 771-779.



This work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License

Your next submission with Juniper Publishers will reach you the below assets

- Quality Editorial service
- Swift Peer Review
- Reprints availability
- E-prints Service
- Manuscript Podcast for convenient understanding
- Global attainment for your research
- Manuscript accessibility in different formats
(Pdf, E-pub, Full Text, Audio)
- Unceasing customer service

Track the below URL for one-step submission
<https://juniperpublishers.com/online-submission.php>