
From Memories to Healthspan: Rethinking Healthy Ageing
Through Reminiscence and Innovation



Asia Reminiscence Forum

Memory & Cognitive Health Community Programme

Community Healthy Ageing Through Reminiscence: Practices & Exploration in China



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Session 1: Asian Perspectives on Reminiscence and Ageing

Prof. Du Peng

- Former vice-president of Renmin University of China, the dean of School of Population and Health, the director and professor of the Institute of Gerontology.
- Vice-president, China Society of Gerontology and Geriatrics.
- Board member of HelpAge International(2008-2016) and board member of United Nations International Institute on Ageing (since 2008).
- The chair of International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics Asia/Oceania Region from 2009 to 2013.

Research interests are population ageing and ageing policies.

Publications include The Process of Population Ageing in China, Social Gerontology, The Value of Older Persons, China's 20 Years in Ageing Society: Achievements, Challenges and Prospects, etc.

国务院关于实施健康中国行动的意见（与老年心理健康相关部分）

国发〔2019〕13号

5.实施心理健康促进行动。心理健康是健康的重要组成部分。通过心理健康教育、咨询、治疗、危机干预等方式，引导公众科学缓解压力，正确认识和应对常见精神障碍及心理行为问题。健全社会心理服务网络，加强心理健康人才培养。建立精神卫生综合管理机制，完善精神障碍社区康复服务。到2022年和2030年，居民心理健康素养水平提升到20%和30%，心理相关疾病发生的上升趋势减缓。

10.实施老年健康促进行动。老年人健康快乐是社会文明进步的重要标志。面向老年人普及膳食营养、体育锻炼、定期体检、健康管理、心理健康以及合理用药等知识。健全老年健康服务体系，完善居家和社区养老政策，推进医养结合，探索长期护理保险制度，打造老年宜居环境，实现健康老龄化。到2022年和2030年，65至74岁老年人失能发生率有所下降，65岁及以上人群老年期痴呆患病率增速下降。

1 Reminiscence for Healthy Ageing

1.1 Definition of Reminiscence

■ **Reminiscence refers to the spontaneous or intentional process of retrieving episodes personally lived in the past.**

- Reminiscence can be regarded as a spontaneous phenomenon emerging in different settings, which forms part of many social and family events, providing people with the opportunity to relate episodes and tell their life history.
- Reminiscence can be used as a therapeutic intervention in different fields, especially for older adults, such as a prevention strategy for cognitive disorder or a way to promote mental health.

1 Reminiscence for Healthy Ageing

1.2 Benefit of Reminiscence

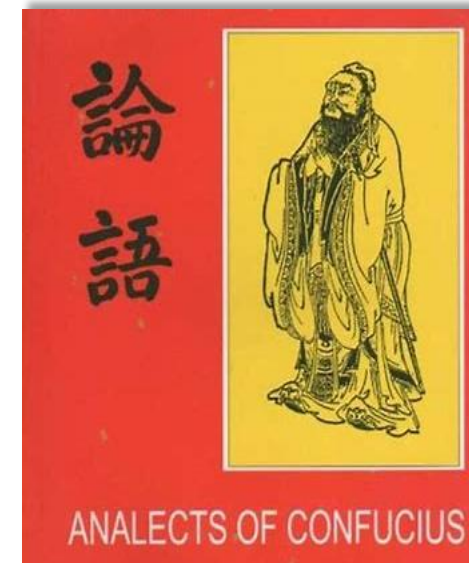
- **Understand reminiscence as a central task of adaptation to ageing and as promoting healthy ageing for older adults :**
 - **As a spontaneous phenomenon:** It is an important process in old age supported by the socioemotional selectivity theory, which promotes a sense of personal identity across the life cycle and allows a person to cope with change and loss.
 - **As a therapeutic intervention:** It has therapeutic potential in the reduction of depressive symptoms and dementia risk, and in the promotion of health, social engagement and psychological well-being of older adults.

2 Understanding Reminiscence in China

2.1 Historical Origins

- The importance of reminiscence in Chinese culture can be traced back thousands of years, largely influenced by Confucian philosophy.

- Valuing History — 慎终追远，民德归厚矣。
- Honoring Experience — 温故而知新，可以为师矣。
- Emphasizing Introspection — 吾日三省吾身：为人谋而不忠乎？与朋友交而不信乎？传不习乎？



2 Understanding Reminiscence in China

2.2 Cultural Adaptability

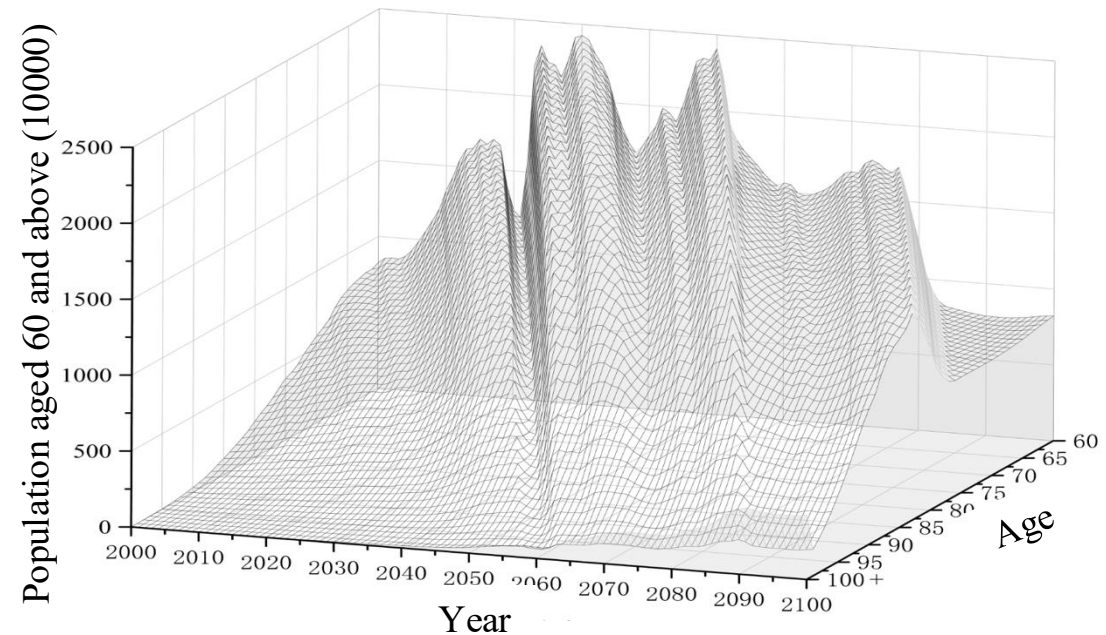
- **Reminiscence demonstrates strong adaptability to China, particularly in terms of cultural patterns and values—such as family-oriented culture and collectivist values.**
 - In China, reminiscence is more about human connection – the sharing of stories, the validation of experiences.
 - Chinese people respect the value of older adults' memories; meanwhile, older adults are willing to participate in reminiscence activities to share their stories and experiences.

2 Understanding Reminiscence in China

2.3 Social Needs

■ In China, the application and development of reminiscence aligns with social needs.

- As China's population ageing continues to accelerate, a growing number of older adults are seeking mental health services and cognitive interventions .



Data Source: World Population Prospects 2024

3 The Status of Reminiscence Work in China

3.1 Policy Support

■ Chinese government has announced goals and initiatives aimed at promoting Healthy Ageing.

➤ **The 14th Five-Year Plan for Healthy Aging “十四五” 健康老龄化规划**

① Psychological Care Campaign for the Elderly 老年心理关爱行动

② Alzheimer's Disease Prevention and Control Campaign for the Elderly 老年痴呆防治促进行动

➤ China's healthcare system and social services continue to evolve and improve, and awareness regarding the older adults' cognitive and mental health issues grows—creating a favorable environment for the promotion of reminiscence work.

3 The Status of Reminiscence Work in China

3.2 Research Development

- **Since reminiscence therapy was introduced to China nearly 20 years ago, its research has continued to expand and innovate.**
 - **Interdisciplinary collaboration:** Including nursing, psychology, social work, traditional Chinese medicine, computer science, and more.
 - **Diverse intervention formats:** Including structured / unstructured models, group / individual settings, and technology-enabled new formats.
 - **Expanded research scopes:** Extending beyond cognitive improvement for Alzheimer's disease patients to encompass psychological intervention and end-of-life care for the older adults.

3 The Status of Reminiscence Work in China

3.3 Practical Application

■ In China, reminiscence work has diverse forms and is widely applied to promote healthy aging.

① Facilitating **Reminiscence-based Intervention** for older adults :

- As a cost-effective activity that is relatively easy to implement, has minimal side effects, and support healthy ageing, reminiscence-based intervention is highly suitable for promotion among older adults in communities, elderly care homes, rehabilitation center and more.
- Reminiscence-based intervention typically focus on themes such as traditional culture, historical periods, life reviews, and use tangible prompts (historical items, letters, diaries, old photos, videos, songs) to evoke past memories and stimulate conversations.



3 The Status of Reminiscence Work in China

3.3 Practical Application

② Compiling various forms of **Life Story Books** for older adults :



Memoirs



Life Photo Albums



Digital Storytelling (Meipian, 美篇)

- Furthermore, in China, the compilation of Life Story Books for older adults is also evolving into a new business format that promotes the **Silver Economy**.

3 The Status of Reminiscence Work in China

3.3 Practical Application

■ The advancement of technology has given rise to various digital reminiscence-based projects.

- ① Using **VR** to document immersive life story books for older adults—improving the social interactions between them and their caregivers.



➤ Hangzhou's **Life Story Museum** (时光档案馆) project for centenarians

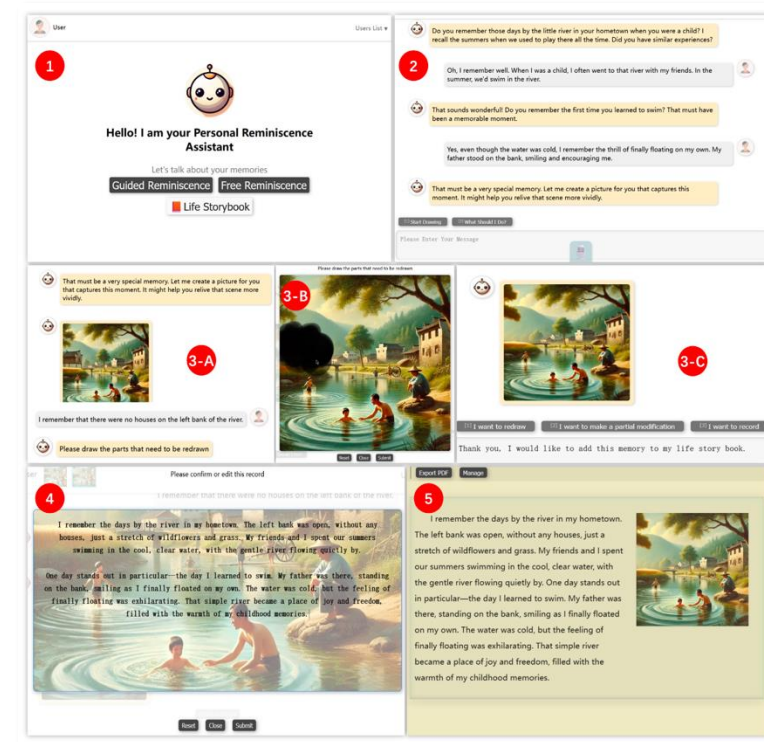
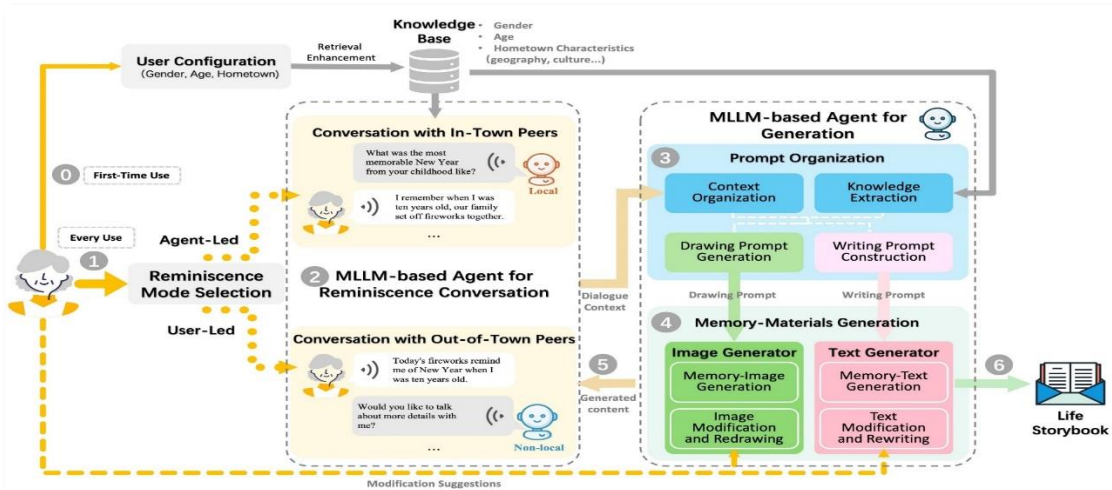
3 The Status of Reminiscence Work in China

3.3 Practical Application

- ② Customizing MLLM to better address the specific reminiscence needs of older adults and create a more effective and engaging reminiscence process.

➤ RemiHaven :

An MLLM-based personalized reminiscence-based intervention system for older drifters



Xuchen, Zhang, et al. RemiHaven: Integrating “In-Town” and “Out-of-Town” Peers to Provide Personalized Reminiscence-Based Intervention for Older Drifters. CHI 2025.

4 Future Exploration of Reminiscence in China

■ Develop Chinese-Style Reminiscence

- Develop reminiscence to match Chinese needs
- Convey the traditional Chinese culture and ancient philosophy

■ Drive Technological Innovation

- Integrate reminiscence techniques with advanced technology(VR/AR/AI) to facilitate the digital transformation and improve efficacy

■ Prioritize Family Engagement

- Utilize the unique advantages of family to enhance reminiscence impact

4 Future Exploration of Reminiscence in China



Asia Reminiscence Forum

Memory & Cognitive Health Community Programme

■ Advance Research Development

- Enhance the breadth of research scope and the flexibility of methods
- Strengthen interdisciplinary research
- Promote reminiscence application and building research centers

■ Strengthen Global Collaboration

- Facilitate international sharing and exchange of research findings

■ Diversify Reminiscence Values

- Use reminiscence to boost healthy aging, facilitate intergenerational experience sharing and support reminiscence-based economic activities

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Thank You

For more information, please
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