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The Highway of Life: Social Virtual Reality as a Reminiscence Tool

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age and this weakening has important consequences for emotional experiences. Specifically, it is hypothesized that age-related decline in interoceptive awareness and physiological reactivity reduce the ability to use bodily states to guide judgments about emotions. If this hypothesis is valid, then age may moderate the association between explicit measures (based on consciously accessible mental representations of affect) and implicit measures (based on unconscious affective processes such as physiological activation) of affective reactivity. Purpose: To investigate whether age moderates the association between explicit and implicit measures of negative affective reactivity. Methods: A sample of 275 participants (age range=20-78) viewed 25 pictures validated to induce negative emotions. Participants filled in the PANAS assessing explicit affect and the IPANAT assessing implicit affect before and after viewing the pictures. Emotional reactivity was operationalized as residualized gain scores derived from regressions of baseline affect on affect following picture viewing. Results: Age moderated the association between implicit negative affective reactivity and explicit negative affective reactivity ($B=60$). Discussion: The results showed a reduced association between explicit and implicit negative affective reactivity with age. This finding is consistent with the notion of maturational dualism and may indicate that older adults use affective processes that are not represented consciously (e.g., physiological activation) less than young adults when judging their emotional state.

THE HIGHWAY OF LIFE: SOCIAL VIRTUAL REALITY AS A REMINISCENCE TOOL

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A large body of research demonstrates the positive impact that reminiscence activities can have on older adult wellbeing. Within this space, researchers have begun to explore how virtual reality (VR) technology might be used as a reminiscence tool. The immersive characteristics of VR could aid reminiscence by giving the sense of being fully present in a virtual environment that evokes the time being explored in the reminiscence session. However, to date, research into the use of VR as a reminiscence tool has overwhelmingly focussed on static environments that can only be viewed by a single user. This paper reports on a first-of-its-kind research project that used social VR (multiple users co-present in a single virtual environment), and 3D representations of personal artifacts (such as, photographs and recorded anecdotes), to allow a group of older adults to reminisce about their school experiences. Sixteen older adults aged 70-81 participated in a four-month user study, meeting in groups with a facilitator in a social virtual world called the Highway of Life. Results demonstrate how the social experience, tailored environment, and personal artifacts that were features of the social VR environment allowed the older adults to collaboratively reminisce about their school days. We conclude by considering the benefits and challenges associated with using social VR as a reminiscence tool with older adults.

LEARNING FROM LIFE STORIES: RECRUITING NURSING HOME RESIDENTS FOR A LIFE STORY WORK PROGRAM

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Recruiting nursing home (NH) residents to participate in program evaluations is a consistent challenge. This was evident in a federally supported project to improve person-centered care of long-stay NH residents enrolled in Medicaid. Evaluators sought to examine the impact of a life story work intervention using a pre-post study design involving interviews of NH residents and surveys of their family members and staff. Other resident eligibility criteria included willingness to participate in both research and life story interviews, age 60+, a Brief Inventory Mental Status (BIMS) score of 8 or higher, English-speaking, and consent from a legal guardian, if applicable. A total of 16 NHs agreed to participate in the implementation and evaluation of the program, which developed complimentary, individualized life story booklets for residents and a companion summary for staff. Of the homes' combined population of 1,817 residents, 569 met eligibility criteria for the research study. Non-response from legal guardians excluded 37 residents, and 174 residents approached for recruitment declined to have their names released to the researchers. During baseline interviews, 20 residents failed the BIMS, 21 were unavailable, and 79 refused when approached by a research interviewer. Ultimately, 238 resident interviews were completed at baseline. Common themes for refusals included disinterest in participating in life story work, statements that theirs was not a good life worth talking about, and doubts that quality of care would improve. Strategies for addressing such challenges included displaying sample life story materials during recruitment and providing residents additional time to consider participation.

PORTRAYAL OF A CENTENARIAN: EXPLORING ACTOR INSIGHTS ON AGING AND LONGEVITY

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Data for this study originated the Oklahoma 100 Year Life Project. A total $N = 7$ volunteer actors ($n = 5$ women; $n = 2$ men) were recruited to participate as actors to play the role of centenarians in a living history play based on oral historical narratives. Actors participated in preliminary (prior to play performance) and post (after play performance) focus group sessions. Focus group questions addressed four key ideas: (1) Perceptions of aging and human longevity; (2) Loss and decline in aging; (3) Narrative storytelling and; (4) Personal life goal(s). Qualitative content analysis was performed to assess general thematic evidence stemming from actor perspectives. Four predominant themes emerged suggestive of adaptation in actor perceptions about human aging and longevity. These themes included: (1.) Purpose seeking (e.g. "It was interesting to see how much you can get out of life."); (2.) Age-embodiment (e.g., "I really wanted to focus on my facial movements and the way I talked"); (3.) Creative curiosity (e.g., "It takes a little bit of creativity. . . someone who has curiosity"); and (4.) Self-actualization