Constructing narratives in later life: Autoethnography beyond the academy

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Learning through life experiences as distinct from learning through the academy and courses have become increasingly important themes in later life adult education research and practice. Whilst the dominant discourse for most younger people is still about education and training for students in standardised and accredited courses, there is increasing concern to find ways of giving voice to empower people otherwise excluded, disempowered or missing from mainstream education, learning, research and the community. This paper specifically explores and actively mirrors ways of using techniques developed through academic autoethnography to empower older people to share and make sense of the lives they have lived by exploring some of the unexamined assumptions that govern everyday life, behaviour and decision making including in the many, often very informal contexts well beyond educational institutions, the academy and paid work. In essence, like autoethnography, our paper seeks to identify, interrogate and celebrate ways of revealing and displaying multiple layers of consciousness connecting the personal to the cultural for sharing and celebrating diversity in later life.

Keywords: *later life, autoethnography, learning, wisdom, narratives.*

Introduction

Kirkwood, Bond, May *et al.* (2010:34) suggest that there can be no more important agenda in an apparently interconnected world than to reverse the 'persistent negative stereotyping of older people by society, [who complain of being] … marginalised and 'on the scrapheap of society'. Our paper has three main, optimistic aims. First, it seeks to identify new and old ways of sharing the wisdom and resources of elders across generations. Second, it seeks to help older people validate and share their multiple identities beyond simply 'being old' and in doing so 'preserve their independence and wellbeing' (Kirkwood *et al.*, 2010). Thirdly, it seeks to identify and validate methods of sharing narratives and reverse what Muncey (2010) identifies as a lack of a shared understanding that permeates political, cultural, artistic and scientific practices and leads to unrealistic social practices and misunderstood groups of excluded people.

Our paper seeks to do five things. First, we identify some of the appealing characteristics of authoethnography as applied to learning in later life. Second, we identify areas of likeness and synergy between autoethnography, narrative research, the discourse of research and the act of telling and sharing stories in community contexts. Thirdly, we identify some of the many values of story telling and sharing in later life, emphasising the diverse community contexts where this already takes place. Fourthly, we use parts of our own experiences, for the first author as an older researcher 'beyond paid work', and for the second author as a feminist researcher, to respond personally to a prescient observation by Frank Doolan, an Aboriginal Elder from Dubbo, Australia, that Men's Sheds are 'just a bunch of blokes with stories', and that 'Here in Australia a man can get to a certain age and never get a chance to say to someone, "This is what I did". Sometimes the best you can do for a bloke is say "Pull up a chair brother and tell me where you've been". (Dubbo CMS, 2012:17). Finally, we offer some conclusions and concrete ideas as to what might be learned from autoethnographic approaches to better understand living and learning in later life within and beyond the academy.

Our analysis with its deliberately embedded, brief autoethnographic narratives is framed in the context of a growing recognition in the academic literature that 'learning through life (Schuller & Watson, 2009) as distinct from learning academically and through courses has

become an increasingly important theme in later life adult education research and practice. Whilst the dominant discourse for most younger people concerns education and training for students in standardised and accredited courses, there is increasing concern to find ways of giving voice to empower people otherwise excluded, disempowered or missing from mainstream education, learning research and the community. We seek in our paper to investigate how the theory and methods of autoethnography might be more widely recognised and valued beyond the academy in everyday later life learning practice.

Researchers in 2017 are faced with a wide range of choices about appropriate epistemologies or theories of knowledge, a choice that in turn determines appropriate methods, validity and scope, and alternative ways of distinguishing between justified belief and opinion. Research methods themselves have been and continue to be important as frameworks to develop understandings, as Law (2004:4) claimed when considering the constraints of method. Notwithstanding this, Law warned that the problem is not so much the research methods themselves, but rather the normativities that are subscribed to them in the discourses about method.

> If 'research methods' are allowed to claim methodological hegemony or (even worse) monopoly ... then when we are put into relation with such methods we are being placed, however rebelliously, in a set of constraining normative blinkers. We are being told how we must see and what we must do when we investigate. (p.4)

In this paper we take up Law's warning and attempt to shed some of the constraints around the discourses that shape and constrain research methods. In doing so, we also take up Muncey's (2010:28) challenge and acknowledge the chaotic and messy nature of human experience and a pluralism of both discourse and interpretive methods. For us, autoethnography provides a way to address the constraints and helps us break through the constraining 'blinkers' that Law (2004) acknowledges in his work.

A narrative about our rationale and method

Autoethnography is defined by Spry (2001:710) as 'a self narrative that critiques the situations of self with others in social contexts'. It differs from

a 'normal autobiography' in that it sets out to subvert a dominant discourse. For us as authors of this particular paper who have expectations of a successful peer review, writing a paper in this way involves us 'going out on a limb'. Our challenge in Muncey's (2010:31) words is how to reach our audience/s in order to subvert the dominant discourse.

Unsurprisingly, autoethnographers, as Muncey (2010) notes, have tended to inhabit and sometimes relish the 'edgelands' of academia. Whilst all academic papers are written by real people, until relatively recently it has been conventional other than in some fields such as ethnography (that autoethnography in part sprang from) *not* to use the first person and otherwise 'write oneself out' of the story. This is in spite of the fact that all academics, in this case us writing for an academic adult journal and audience, deliberately choose to study and report on a particular field in a particular site or context from a particular theoretical perspective rather than another. The many normativities: effectively value judgements involved in framing research questions, methods and theoretical frameworks, and choosing which references are relevant or not to a research topic question, are seldom made explicit. Many of these decisions are based more on who we are, 'where we have been' and how we position ourselves, in this case in the field of research and practice of adult and community education. For this reason, later in our paper we deliberately 'come out' as individuals for the first time with ourselves firmly tied to the academic 'mast'.

There is less risk in using this strategy in 2017 than there was two decades ago when autoethnography was a much more marginal methodology. What has made the method more robust and relevant is the increasingly widespread use and understanding of poststructuralism, which acknowledges the critically important role of *context* and the role it plays aside from the narrative *text* itself. While a narrative is a version of events personally experienced by the narrator (and storytelling involves repeated telling or reading), Polkinghorne (1988) holds that the recorded narrative (that we have both used extensively in our own adult education research) is a snapshot in time. In effect the story we choose to write about changes according to the context in which it is retold. In this paper we are putting forward the argument that our stories shape our lives and create our experiences. Polkinghorne (1988) shares this view, when emphasising that individuals on a personal level have a narrative about their lives, which enables them to make decisions about

their lives and circumstances. In a cultural framework, narratives serve to give cohesion to people's lives and provide the means to more widely share beliefs and transmit values.

We argue that the sharing of life histories through everyday conversations, meetings, and social exchanges cause us to critique and learn from the situations of self with others, as in autoethnography (Spry, 2001, cited in Muncey, 2010:31). Indeed narrative enquiries explore lived experiences through rich accounts that can be complex and messy, calling into account those 'dominant narratives that do not match the experience/s of life as lived' (Bathmaker & Hartnett, 2010:4). Like Malec (2012), we hold that reflection and life review across life's many ages and stages are a natural accompaniment to being older, and are part of the essence of learning to be old. In later life, 'Life has been lived and it is natural to want to recognise it in meaning and purpose' (Malec, 2012:201) and indeed as a complete life.

While we use academic autoethnography as a referential starting point in this necessarily academic paper, our aim in the latter part of our paper is to identify the use and usefulness of narrative and story-telling well beyond the academy, particularly in learning from the experience of everyday life, and specifically from learning *through* the experience of later life. Jarvis (1992:199) notes that '[s]urprisingly, everyday life has not been widely studied'. Perhaps this is because everyday experience and knowledges are widely disregarded by the academy, particularly through the prism of scientific inquiry, and relegated to what Foucault (1980:81-84) calls 'subjugated knowledges'.

The explicit connection between autoethnography and learning in later life

Our paper specifically explores some of the 'unexamined assumptions that govern everyday life, behaviour and decision making' (Muncey, 2010:xi) in the many, often very informal contexts well beyond educational institutions, the academy and paid work. In essence, like autoethnography, our paper seeks to identify ways of revealing and displaying 'multiple layers of consciousness connecting the personal to the cultural' (Ellis & Bochner, 2006:739) for sharing and celebrating diversity in later life.

We have been drawn to pen this paper about writing about experience for two main reasons. The first is because of the way we perceive it

mirrors what tends to happen to real people when learning, and also when in later life they increasingly, actively and deliberately reflect on and try and make sense of the life they have lived before they die. The older we are the more our previous learning tends to 'connect up', allowing us access to and desire to actively and critically reflect on a rich range of narratives, experiences and skills, lifelong and lifewide, that we later argue are an integral part of the process of approaching wisdom.

The fundamental problem with learning in contemporary society is that it is more about teaching than learning, and hugely biased because of ageism in policy and funding towards formal and accredited, initial vocational training, primarily for youth and for the paid workforce. In doing so, it almost completely ignores two main challenges and opportunities in later life created by an ageing society, identified by Kirkwood *et al.* (2010:33).

> *The first is how to ensure the greatest numbers of older people maintain the best possible mental capital, and so preserve their independence and wellbeing, both for their own benefit, and also to minimize their need for support as they age. The second challenge is how to ensure that the considerable resource which older people offer (particularly through their mental capital) is recognised and valued by society, and that they have the opportunity to realise the maximum benefit from that, both for themselves and the wider society.*

With increasingly sophisticated medical diagnosis and intervention, the number of older adults in the 'fourth age' of dependence, increasingly limited by disability, reduced mobility, and increased risk of dementia, is growing rapidly in every country in the world. As Hitchcock (2016: Back cover) put it, there is a 'creeping tendency to see the elderly as a "burden" – difficult, hopeless, expensive and homogenous". The widely held government, community and media response to this perceived burden is of a social and economic 'crisis'. The terms *elder* and *wisdom* are seldom considered within this crisis discourse.

What role for wisdom in later life learning?

Wisdom in its simplest terms is the ability to use knowledge and experience to make good decisions and judgments, though this begs

a question that goes back to our earlier concern about normativities: 'How we might know or understand what is good?' Given the protective individual and community value of accumulative, lifelong learning through experience, it is unsurprising that the wisdom of elders based around the understanding of self has tended to be valued by most Indigenous societies, many religions and many writers and philosophers.

Despite deep historical roots in philosophy and religion, Bange and Meeks (2013) noted that empirical studies of wisdom in psychology and gerontology did not begin until the 1970s. Their systematic review of peer-reviewed research into wisdom was undertaken in the context of the widespread belief that wisdom increases with age, of a global trend towards increasing longevity and a growing interest in successful ageing. They identified a considerable overlap of commonly cited subcomponents of wisdom: specifically knowledge of life, pro-social values, self-understanding, acknowledgment of uncertainty, emotional homeostasis, tolerance, openness, spirituality, and sense of humour.

There is now hard evidence that at least some of these components of wisdom improve in later life and that an ability to reflect wisely on one's life is practically as well as ontologically useful. Happe, Winner and Brownell (1998) studied normal ageing and concluded that although performance on tasks with non-mental content may decrease with age, performance on theory of mind tasks remains intact and may even improve over the later adult years.

Ardelt and Jeste (2016:Abstract) noted that old age:

> ... is characterized by many physical and social losses that adversely affect subjective well-being (SWB). Yet, past studies have shown that wisdom tends to be positively related to SWB in old age, particularly under adverse circumstances.

They identified, on the basis of their empirical study, that greater wisdom, '... in particular the reflective wisdom dimension, was positively associated with SWB and buffered the inverse relation between the experience of adverse life events during the previous year and current well-being'. Importantly, they concluded that wisdom 'appears to strengthen older adults' ability to cope with aging-related losses and, therefore, is a valuable psychological resource in old age' (Ardelt & Jeste, 2016:Abstract).

This evidence supports our arguments that there must be other ways of framing and responding to ageing other than invoking crisis. In particular, we suggest likely benefits of acknowledging and sharing the potential value of eldership and wisdom that responds to Kirkwood *et al.*'s previously identified opportunities by encouraging older people to share and tell their stories. Simone de Beauvoir in the *Coming of age* (de Beauvoir, 1970) examined the many myths and realities of life as an older person in the developed world, and presented evidence that despite societies' expectations, the elderly still feel the same passions as their younger counterparts. De Beauvoir (1970) critically asked, 'What should society be?' responding that the way old age is currently framed '… exposes the failure of our entire civilization. … It is the whole system that is at issue and our claim cannot be otherwise than radical – change life itself' (de Beauvoir, 1970, cited in Hitchcock, 2016:131).

There is a perception that academia, including via postmodern theory, has only recently discovered radically new and wiser ways of subverting dominant paradigms and master narratives in order to see the world afresh. Our take on *The Getting of Wisdom* theme that this journal volume seeks more broadly to investigate, is that radical change might sometimes involve going back to past wisdom about learning, not only of and through older people, but to some wise and profound pedagogies and philosophies. As the examples in the paragraph that follows illustrate, some but not all of these wise sayings are Indigenous.

There is a copy of an ancient Chinese calligraphy next to my (Barry Golding's) desk as I write this that says "No end to learning". There is a Maori saying in *Te Reo Maori* (from Aotearoa / New Zealand) that *Ma te ora ka mohio* ('Through life there is learning'). Another Maori saying overtly acknowledges the value of *Ko Ngä Täonga Tuku Iho* ('The transmission of knowledge through generations'). Barry Golding was recently in South Korea, a Confucian society with a traditional (though changing) notion of filial piety, that regards respect for one's parents, elders, and ancestors as virtuous. He was respectfully asked to propose a toast at a conference dinner because he was identified and valued as the oldest person in the room. There is an ancient Chinese proverb that 'Learning which does not advance each day will daily decrease'.

Importantly each of these examples is found well beyond the academy. They also precede and reinforce the relatively recent academic discovery

that lifelong learning matters and has value at any age cross-culturally. The examples also suggest that there is a case and value in being more overtly and universally respectful of the accumulated wisdom of older people.

'Coming out' as researchers

In this section we draw respectively on parts of our own experiences, as an older male researcher beyond full time work (Barry Golding) and a female, feminist researcher (Annette Foley) to 'come out' and talk about 'where we have been'. But first we tease out and take up Muncey's (2011:xv) autoethnographic challenge, exemplified in practice by Dubbo Community Men's Sheds' *A shed load of stories* (Dubbo, 2012) as well as by *Tales the shed* from the Creswick Men's Shed (Creswick, 2007). In doing so we return again to a theme that we (Foley, Golding & Brown, 2008) began to tease out in 2008, and revisited in 2014 (Golding & McDonald, 2014), arguing that one of the most effective ways of reporting on what happens in some research contexts, such as in our research through community Men's Sheds organisations, is to 'let the men speak', in effect to encourage the creation of autoethnographies, with minimal researcher intervention. Muncey (2010) identifies the particular power of such autoethnographies to represent the chaotic and messy nature of human experience, and argues for the use by academics of a pluralism of discursive and interpretive methods.

The two self-published examples (Creswick, 2007; Dubbo, 2012) of collected wisdom and life experiences of 'shedders' (participants in community Men's Sheds) provide an extremely rich resource of wisdom for researchers as well as the wider community. Both are published by Men's Sheds (in rural New South Wales and Victoria respectively), by and about shedders, enabling them to openly tell their stories with disarming honesty. Unburdened by the 'dead hand' of external university research ethics, the men chose to be included, to tell all, *and* to be personally identified along with their Sheds.

For brevity, we will restrict ourselves to an illustration using few brief but powerful extracts from the Dubbo Community Men's Shed collection (Dubbo, 2012), a booklet of 128 pages, with deep and detailed life stories of twelve diverse shedders. The cover notes introduce the context.

> *Told in their own words, and in a spirit of Aboriginal reconciliation, these personal journeys are raw, honest,*

courageous and often funny, proving the old adage that in every life there is a good story to tell.

One Dubbo shedder, also an Aboriginal elder and poet, 'Riverbank', Frank Doolan, accurately observes on the back cover that '"Hey brother, tell me a story", might just be the most life changing thing you can say to a person'. In his own narrative, Frank tells in an understated way about how the young 'local fellas' in Dubbo had tried to push the caravan (that is his home on the riverbank) into the river, smashing all the windows, acutely observing, "It takes a big tough bloke to do that, I guess". In the next breath, Frank generously advocates for Aboriginal reconciliation, having designed the Dubbo Men's Shed's logo of a black and white handshake under a shed roof. The depth and power of these narratives and the embedded wisdom can never be reduced to a statistical correlation between independent and dependent variables.

If we are to be serious in our intent we should both as academics, similarly be able to 'hold up a mirror' to ourselves and briefly say who we are and 'where we have been'. The 'straightjacket' imposed by academic paper conventions typically constrains the use of academic narratives from personal experience. It also requires us, consistent with the standard university ethics approval process, to effectively write and 'trample over', plagiarise and anonymise the stories and data that informants have generously shared in research interviews.

Barry Golding's story

I regard myself as a very accidental, now mostly retired professor. My government *Seniors Card*, I became eligible for in Australia two years ago at age 65, overtly acknowledges me 'as a valued member of the community' and almost patronisingly implores members of the community to ' ... extend every courtesy and assistance'. I was born into an Australian rural landscape and white community whose hundreds of distinct Indigenous Nations and peoples were recently violated and deliberately removed and mostly forgotten. I unhappily endured two years in an elite urban boarding school that had shades of privileged brutality illustrated by the iconic *A Clockwork Orange* film (Kubrick, 1972). These experiences set me on a course to remember, radically return to, study and defend the 'underdog', particularly grassroots communities similar to where I came from and now live in rural Australia, and as a public intellectual, to assist in unmasking the

collective national myth about Australia as a white 'Australia fair'.

My later life passions are to actively redefine myself as an older man beyond paid work, through researching, writing, riding my bicycle and gardening. Each of these I do in an attempt to keep me whole, connected, well and sane in later life. I greatly enjoy learning on my own terms and creating new things as a self-declared activist in community settings. I loathe and fear the increasing formality of school and the marketization of learning in all its forms. Much of my theoretical work in the past two decades (Golding, 2016) has been leveraging off the academy to reach back into the community based around to personally instrumental landmark texts and radical discourses from the 1970s. I have enjoyed grazing beyond the prevailing educational deficit models of the 1990s, through the poverty of education 'market models' since the turn of the century, and more recently into the exciting world of community learning, and most recently into the liberating, larrikin conviviality of community Men's Sheds that tap into my own demographic: older men beyond paid work, finding somewhere to go, something to do and someone to talk with.

I passionately believe in *Learning through life* (Schuller & Watson, 2009). Golding (2014) is a recent example of me returning reflexively to the radical pedagogies of Freire (1970) and the conviviality of Illich (1971). My learning has truly been from the ground up. I discovered people through having children, by far the most radical thing I have done in my life. Cooper *et al.*'s (2010) *Mental capital and wellbeing* and Muncey's (2010) *Creating autoethnographies* are the most impactful texts I have read and cited in the past decade.

Annette Foley's Story

Like Barry I often reflect on how I accidently ended up an Associate Professor in a University in country Victoria. I am not satisfied, however to be defined only as an academic, or as an educator. These are component parts of what defines me but it is not the total story. Part of me wonders how on earth I ended up in the academic role. But if I take the time to dig deeper and reflect on the connections between my past life and the present I can see the links that have brought me to my current life.

I have always been a person interested in social justice matters and gender politics. In my earlier days issues of women's rights would stir my

political passions, as I would try to make a difference to women's lives by volunteering to assist in women's refuges in inner Melbourne or teach women in adult education settings in order to assist them through the power of education. Over the last decade my gender politics have also included interest in equity and access and the tendency for deficit discourses to label some men, women and some youth as disengaged and disadvantaged. This *stuff* deeply concerns me. Rather, for a range of good reasons, including economic rationality, I sense that they have been unable to gather enough capabilities to enable personal agency. I am very influenced by Nussbaum's and Sen's work (for example Nussbaum, 2000; 2003) on capabilities and social justice, and believe that all people irrespective of class, age or gender have the fundamental right to develop the capabilities to live, learn and flourish through developing enough resources for personal agency.

I said I wasn't satisfied to be defined as an academic or educator only; I am a mother, wife, three months ago became a grandmother for the first time and am a lover of the music of Miles Davis and other jazz greats and the poetry of Leonard Cohen. Like the older men whose stories are alluded to in this paper and in our joint research, I am an evolving combination of my lives lived and the total of that.

Our story

Whilst we both have separate, multiple, current and previous identities as parents, partners and workers, we also retain and bring to our academic writing and narratives, values, experiences and important other vestiges, including from childhood, schooling, adolescence, coupling and separating, living in relative poverty and being unemployed, and in Golding's case, recently retiring.

It is possible to accuse us of being self-indulgent in talking about ourselves in this way. Mykhalovskiy (1996:147) provides what Muncey (2010) characterises as an excellent response to such an accusation:

> [F]ar from being a solitary process, writing only for those who produce it, an autoethnography is a social process engaging with a readership. 'a dialogic and collaborative process' with an author prepared to engage with the critical reviewer and the wider social process. The real test of self-indulgence must be: do you, the reader find anything of value in what has been written? (Muncey, 2010:93)

Like Schuller and Watson (2009:23), we both celebrate the ability of very informal settings to help people with little record of success to learn to transform their lives and communities. While we pragmatically inhabit the sometimes-stultifying formality of self-anointed 'higher education', our hearts lie well towards 'lower education' at the bottom of and beyond the hierarchy, within what Foucault (1980:81-84) described as 'subjugated knowledges'. These 'non-serious', 'bottom of the garden' ways of knowing and being such as through Men's Sheds, are conventionally rendered ineligible by the academy because they are neither 'programs' nor professionalised. These rich learning ecosystems are thankfully without customers, clients, students or patients that might make them amenable to simple academic analysis and government manipulation. They are mostly outside of texts and beyond particular disciplines, and their impact is considered invalid unless disciplinary peers, using formally sanctioned methods and theoretical frameworks, have reviewed the relevant research.

Our desire instead is for multiple, situated knowledges, accounting for context and complexity through the stories and accumulated wisdom of human being. This, to us is more important than master narratives in texts, and leads us (and many others) towards autoethnography. We concur with Polkinghorne (1998) that narratives, including our own in this section of the paper, *are* people's identities. In the context of learning in later life, we suggest that the stories people tell shape and construct the narrator's personality and reality as the story is reconstructed throughout the individual's life, and reflected on in the exceptionally important process of making sense of a life lived and inevitably preparing to die.

We both acknowledge (and at times use) the theoretical power of poststructuralism but eschew the practical *cul de sac* and powerlessness the method can encourage if used as the *only* method. We agree with Muncey (2010:49) that 'the research question should direct the method. … . No single method fits all and autoethnography is no exception'. Like Spry (2001), we gravitate as researchers towards autoethnography, narrative and story-telling to subvert and go beyond the master narratives of just one dominant discourse, including poststructuralism.

Autoethnography and wisdom beyond the academy

In the big picture, the reluctance within the positivist and scientific parts of the academy to embrace story telling as a way of making sense of life stands in stark contrast to its widespread everyday use and value for most people, communities and societies, lifelong and lifewide. The Men's Shed autoethnographies from Dubbo (2012) and Creswick (2007) are but two of a multitude of examples of older people in the community spontaneously, individually or together, retelling their own stories. It also happens through all forms of media: books, articles in newspapers and magazines, poems, films, photographs, music, songs, art, plays and poetry. We acknowledge the power and wisdom embedded within some songs: Leonard Cohen and Bob Dylan songs about later life as excellent are recent examples in popular culture. Like Chase (2005:656, cited in Muncey, 2010:133), we '… see songwriting as a form of narrative inquiry', where 'narrative is retrospective meaning making – the shaping or ordering of past experience'.

Having a conversation (yarn/chat/craic) in the street, on a train, over the neighbour's fence, by phone, Skype, Facebook, in the street or over a meal all involve a mutual exchange of ideas, hopes, joys, frustrations, loves and experiences. Within the workplace we routinely schedule and formally record the story of what happens in our meetings and who said what.

Even as researchers in this paper, as well as in our academic presentations, reports, journal articles and books, we regularly tell our stories about 'where we have been' and what wisdom we have gleaned, albeit in a formally structured way and within clearly understood academic rules about evidence, citation, sources and limitations. While we often hide and write in the third person, we do identify our affiliations and bona fides, and always write on the 'shoulders' by referencing other, wiser 'giants' of our respective disciplines.

Conclusions and implications

We have identified both new and old ways of sharing the wisdom and resources of elders across generations. We identify autoethnography beyond the academy as one way to help some older people make sense of their diverse and individual lives and preserve their independence and wellbeing. We call for a reversal of a lack of shared understanding that

permeates political, cultural, artistic and scientific practices and leads us into unrealistic social practices and misunderstood groups of excluded people generally, in the case of this paper, to people increasingly excluded in later life.

Finally, we suggest it would be wise to listen and reflect on the World Health Organisation (2001) conclusion that the greatest health risk to productivity and life satisfaction, including in later life, will be depression, and that its cause is broadly associated with the loss of close and continuing social relations in the context of industrialisation and colonisation (Laslett, 1990). Our fundamental argument is that telling our stories and hearing other people's stories and about 'where they have been' is actually good for all of us.

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