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Legacy writing among the elderly:

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ABSTRACT

This article concerns a relatively unknown phenomenon in marketing that has become, however, extremely popular among older adults: legacy writing. While the writing of "ego-documents" has been the subject of many studies in gerontology, sociology and, above all, literature, research in marketing has yet to examine its specific components. The purpose of this article is to identify the concept of legacy writing and propose an initial scale to the academic and managerial community for measuring the motivations underlying this practice. Two sets of data collected with questionnaires (202 and 508 responses) have been used to develop and confirm the validity of a scale consisting in twenty items, divided into six dimensions (*flattering the ego*, *mending the ego*, *being remembered*, *sharing*, *transmitting*, and *bearing witness*). This research offers a contribution to the theoretical corpus on special objects and intergenerational transmission. It demonstrates that the meaning of a special object is not exclusively restricted to symbolic references that may be lost or denatured, but others that are explicit and inscribed at the very core of the object.

KEYWORDS*:*

Legacy writing, elderly, intergenerational transmission, identity

INTRODUCTION

"Would you like to share your experience, let your passions live on a little longer, but have neither the time nor motivation to write? The biography writer is here to help you. He immerses himself in your life and emotions. A story emerges from your memories...The biography writer can help you write a book in your image"[1]. This excerpt from a French website, written by one of the many private biographers on the market, illustrates the current popular interest in memoirs and autobiographies. The trend seems particularly strong among the elderly if we consider the numerous advertisements designed to meet the need for remembrance and transmission published in media targeting seniors. Many older individuals have engaged in mentally constructing a coherent life story. While some do indeed transform these thoughts into action, most believe they will someday write their memoirs, without taking the idea any further. Since writing an autobiography is a long and difficult process, some people need a "ghost writer", while others merely require guidance. The market for so-called "biographical" services is highly diversified, rapidly developing and relatively unstructured. We can deplore numerous cases of abusive practices. For example, certain private writers have no qualms about charging €8,000 to "deliver" a biography, while others offer a similar service for only €2,500[2].

Indeed, from both a managerial and academic standpoint, this is a field that is relatively unknown in marketing research. While the writing of "ego-documents" (biographies, autobiographies, diaries, memoirs, etc.) (Gusdorf, 1991) has been the subject of many studies in gerontology, sociology and, above all, literature, research in marketing has yet to examine its specific components. This study concerns more specifically the experience of aging (Guiot, 2006). Subjective aging and the prospect of a limited future trigger coping mechanisms that can lead to a search for self-continuity and desires for self-preservation and/or extension. While marketing has examined self-extension, self-preservation and intergenerational transmission (Belk, 1988; Wallendorf and Arnould, 1988; Price, Arnould and Curasi, 2000; Curasi, 2006), these studies have mainly focused on the symbolic preservation and transmission of the self through "special or cherished" possessions. However, the significance of the possession transmitted is fragile and may be altered by the person who receives it (Epp and Arnould, 2006). Interestingly, legacy writing offers a way to circumvent the problem of symbolic meanings. Could it be an intergenerational practice aimed at transmitting important

1 Anne Thomas, ecrivain-biographe.com
2 Magazine *Lire*, n°353, March 2007

information to descendants? Or is it a means of identification that consists in highlighting and preserving a life rich in memories, experiences and meaning? More generally speaking, what are the motivations behind legacy writing? These are a few of the many questions raised by this field of investigation.

The purpose of this study is to identify the concept of legacy writing and propose an initial scale to the academic and managerial community for measuring the motivations underlying this practice. We will limit our investigations to the elderly, due to the frequency of the practice at this stage in life. In an initial phase, starting from an interdisciplinary review of the literature, we propose a brief socio-historical approach to the writing of "ego-documents", outlining how the elderly are particularly concerned by these practices and identifying the nature of the different motivations behind legacy writing. In a second phase, we will propose constructing and confirming the validity of a scale in order to measure the motivations of legacy writing by means of a double quantitative study. Finally, we will discuss the contributions, managerial implications and limitations of this study, as well as the avenues for future research it suggests.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

After recapping its socio-historical aspects and defining the concept of legacy writing, we will examine its different internal motivations as identified in the source disciplines.

Socio-historical aspects

"Ego-documents" developed in the 18th century, parallel to the process of "individualization". At that time, the privileged classes, who had access to writing, were less influenced by the dominant ideas of the Church and State and gradually became aware of the singularity of the individual. Little by little, the traditional worldview crumbled, collective obligations became weaker and access to a better education drew the individual into a world of values, standards and conflicting practices. In this "era of the individual", which encouraged everyone to perform as well as possible in every aspect of life while remaining "true to oneself", personal writings developed (Delory-Momberger, 2005). The narrative can help reconcile these multiple lives, by selecting and linking events. Generally, the distinction is made between fragmentary writings (such as a personal diary) and retrospective writing about the self (such as memoirs or autobiographies). In the first case, there is a *search for* *meaning*, which is highly prized among adolescents seeking their true identity, for example, while the second case involves *construction of meaning from personal temporal events* (Pineau and Le Grand, 1993; Carron, 2002). This second approach fits particularly well with the aging process. Indeed, when they reach retirement age, individuals often tend to think about their lives and what they have become (Erikson, 1959; Butler, 1963; Castelnuovo-Tedesco, 1980). This soul searching tends to shed new light on certain events and focus on important facts that the individual will seek to preserve and eventually transmit to others (Guiot, 2006). In addition, a common fear among the elderly is to see memories, experiences and other meanings accumulated over a lifetime dispersed after death (Curasi, 2006; Epp and Arnould, 2006).

The motivations behind legacy writing

Many disciplines are concerned with the practice of legacy writing. Sociology focuses on its role in identity construction (Delory-Momberger, 2005), while gerontology examines its specific influence on coping with aging (Argentin, 2006). The literary research stream devoted to the autobiography as a genre is concerned with analyzing narratives (Lejeune, 1975, 2005). A summary of this interdisciplinary review reveals six generic motivations:

Flattering the ego

The need for recognition is described as one of the pillars of personal writings. The narrative offers an opportunity for the writer to present himself to others (Madelénat, 2008), to highlight a positive career and emphasize the aspects of his life he deems worthy of interest such as his successes, skills, academic or professional achievements, etc. (Rioul, 2003). In the extreme, this approach can be perceived as a form of narcissistic gratification since the facts are selected and biased, offering a self-apology and even citing oneself as “a reference or example” (Miraux, 2005).

Mending the ego

In addition to flattering the author, the narrative can often be a means of evacuating discontentment. We must not overlook the liberating power of story telling, which allows the writer to express bottled up emotions and make a clean breast of things (Zarca, 2009).

Similarly, legacy writing offers the opportunity to refute “wrongful” accusations (Hubier, 2003), to set the record straight, to formulate a correction or denial (May, 1979). Among “illustrious” writers, Rousseau was one of the first, in his time, to use his confessions to justify his conduct.

Being remembered

In the final years of life, legacy writing is a way of accepting the inevitable. Indeed, an in-depth analysis of his own experience allows the individual to portray himself as the hero of a unique and busy life (Tarman, 1988) and to take stock of what he wishes to leave behind, either in terms of a material estate or the experiences of a lifetime (Vercauteren and Hervy, 2003). From this standpoint, the life narrative is intended to outlive its author, as it allows the writer to impart what he wishes to be remembered for (Cristini and Ploton, 2009).

Sharing

In nursing homes for the elderly, legacy writing is highlighted as a means of communication, a vector for exchanges and sharing (Janvier, 2007), as it enables the creation of social ties between residents (Billé, 2006; Ribes *et al.*, 2009), between residents and staff (Ross, 1990; Blanchard, 2006; Trueman and Parker, 2006) and even between residents and their own families (Argentin, 2006). Thus, by evoking his life story, the narrator can try to create a sort of intimacy with his readers.

Transmitting

Legacy writing is also described as a means of transmission that offers an opportunity to “hand on the torch”, to situate one's life in a line of ancestors and present these long lost relatives to younger members of the family. It is also a way of playing a new social role, which was once reserved for “elders”, of preparing the young generation for the future (Billé, 2002).

Bearing witness

Finally, legacy writing can be used to preserve certain information from one generation to another. The difference with the previous function, which is limited to the family circle, lies in the desire to make a broader contribution to the collective memory. Indeed, the narrator can, for example, describe an old-time profession that was lost due to new technologies or become the village historian (Lecarme and Lecarme-Tabone, 1999). Relating events in which one took part or to which one was a privileged witness is a way of representing a collective destiny (Zanone, 2006). Finally, legacy writing allows the narrator to contribute to "universal knowledge", to help tomorrow's sociologists, historians and researchers.

Thus, legacy writing can be considered *a process of constructing meaning from personal temporal events.* The story can focus - or not - on the narrator, be written for contemporaries or for posterity. It stems from deep motivations that we have identified during our review of the literature. Therefore, *flattering the ego* and *bearing witness* are proposed in the literary genre while *mending the ego* is highlighted in both the fields of literature and sociology. Gerontology emphasizes the importance of motivations for *sharing, transmitting* and *being remembered.*

CREATING AND VALIDATING A SCALE FOR MEASURING THE MOTIVATIONS BEHIND LEGACY WRITING

We started by a careful examination of the construct's field that we shall detail later on. This led us to select a mathematical model with reflexive indicators. We then went on to perform a series of steps, inspired by Churchill's paradigm (1979) and the remarks of Rossiter (2002) while adapting them to current analysis tools (structural equations). These are summarized in Table 1 and discussed in the following paragraphs.

<Insérer le Table 1 – The stages involved in constructing and validating the scale >

The nature of the construct

For Rossiter (2002), the definition of a construct is based on three components: the object (legacy writing), the attribute (motivations) and the rater entities (people age 60 or older). In other words, we wanted to measure the motivations of individuals age 60 or over for legacy writing. More specifically, we proposed six latent constructs representing the different dimensions of these motivations (*flattering the ego, mending the ego, being remembered, sharing, transmitting* and *bearing witness*). In order to apprehend these constructs, we linked them to observable manifestations, for example, "*I want to write so people can learn things about me that I am proud of"* for the construct *flattering the ego.*

At this point, the crucial question is the relationship between these latent constructs and the variables measured. Indeed, we must bear in mind that an error in the direction of causality between a manifest variable and a latent construct during measurement model specification leads to an inappropriate purification procedure for the items (Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer, 2001; Jarvis, Mackenzie and Podsakoff, 2003; Crié, 2005). The articles of Jarvis, Mackenzie and Podsakoff (2003) and Podsakoff *et al.* (2003) are at the heart of the "reflexive *vs.* formative" debate. After reading recent contributions published in special issues of *Psychological Methods* (2007; n° 12, 2) and the *Journal of Business Research* (2008; n° 61), we decided to use a reflexive model (where the measured variables are effects of the constructs) for several reasons.

First, in following Howel, Breivik and Wilcox (2007a) and Bagozzi (2007), we estimate, unlike Podsakoff *et al.* (2003), that constructs are not formative or reflexive by nature and the design of a measurement model is more of an epistemological choice on the part of the researcher than a feature of the construct itself. We therefore place our study within a realist perspective (Howell, Breivik and Wilcox, 2007a), in that the mental construct under consideration exists outside its measurements. Furthermore, the use of reflexive indicators is advisable, considering the inherent limitations of formative constructs, formulated in an explicit manner in recent contributions (Diamantopoulos, 2006; Bollen, 2007; Franke, Preacher and Rigdon, 2008; Howel *et al.*, 2007a; Diamantopoulos, Riefler and Roth, 2008). Among these, the fact that the error term does not represent a measurement error, but the surplus meaning of the construct that is not captured by its indicators, is a major drawback since, in practice, it is impossible to detect all the possible causes of a construct (Howel, Breivik and Wilcox, 2007b). The formative measures would also be subject to errors in interpretation (*ibid).*

Secondly, Wilcox, Howell and Breivik (2008) suggest that the same list of items can be conceptualized in a formative or reflexive manner, depending on the instructions the researcher gives to the respondents. If the questions are formulated based on past actions (*"I wrote my autobiography because..."*), the indicators will *a priori* be formative of legacy writing (they are causes). On the other hand, if we evoke future events (*"I would like to write an autobiography in order to…"*), judgment is based on hypothetical actions and the indicators become reflections of the construct (Wilcox, Howell and Breivik, 2008). In the first case, we obtain an "objective" construct, while in the second case the reflexive indicators offer a construct that is subjective in nature, corresponding to the psychological constructs frequently used in studies of consumer behavior (Bollen, 2007).

Creating and validating items

We conducted a qualitative study with eight individuals who had written their life story, and eight others who were thinking of writing one. The qualitative study, which will not be developed here, enabled the emergence of the six motivations identified in the previous sections. We extracted a corpus of 96 verbatims characterizing these six types of motivation. Based on these verbatims and the literature, and taking into consideration the methodological points outlined above, we generated a list of 77 items representing reflections of each motivation.

To ensure face validity and reduce the initial list of items, these were submitted to a panel of five experts, all experienced researchers in consumer behavior and all familiar with the construction/manipulation of measurement scales. Following the procedure recommended by Jolibert and Jourdan (2006), the experts received a definition of the construct and its components. Each was asked to evaluate items as "highly", "sufficiently" or "not very" representative of the dimensions to which they were assigned. The experts also gave their opinion as to the clarity of the propositions. Therefore, certain items were reworded. Only items deemed "highly representative" by a majority were selected, except if they were considered "not very" representative by one of the experts. In the end, 36 items (or 46.75% of the initial number) were selected (see Appendix A1).

Methodology for collecting data

Two data sets were collected. The first set was collected in the summer of 2009 and allowed us to purify indicators of the scale through exploratory principal components analyses using SPSS software. The second was collected in the autumn of the same year and was used for a confirmatory factor analysis with EQS software. The respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with statements listed in random order (Appendix A1) according to a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "completely disagree" to "completely agree". The number of levels was set at five since older respondents are generally not comfortable with more complex response formats (Mezred *et al.*, 2006). The questionnaires were distributed *in situ*, in places where people concerned by the study are most likely to congregate (retirement homes, clubs and associations for retirees, adult education courses, etc.). Considering the personal nature of certain questions, we preferred to use a self-administered questionnaire. In all, 710 useable responses were collected, 202 and 508 for the first and second data sets respectively. All the people questioned were over 60 years old. This threshold age was selected because many specialists in health, psychology and marketing agree that, along with retirement, it marks the beginning of "old age" for most people (Bresay, 2004; Fry, 1990; Guiot, 2006). The average age of the respondents was 71.28 (with a standard deviation of 8.6) for the first data set and 68.80 (with a standard deviation of 6.84) for the second. The two samples were composed, respectively, of 56% and 64% women. Levels of education were quite heterogeneous, indicating the social diversity of the samples (Appendix A2).

Collecting the first data set and purifying the items

After eliminating questionnaires with too much missing data and checking for the absence of outliers (Hair *et al.* 2008), the first data set produced 202 useable responses. Analysis of the correlations matrix of the 36 variables (not provided here) demonstrates that 94% of correlations are significant. Considering the level of intercorrelations, it is not surprising to obtain an MSA score of 0.89. This means that the indicators have something in common and warrant use of a process to reduce information (Kaiser and Rice, 1974). A series of principal components analyses enabled us to identify a set of latent dimensions. Since the components were assumed to be correlated, we used an oblique oblimin rotation of the factor axes to facilitate interpretation. Only the factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were selected. Finally, we deleted the items that did not cluster on any of the axes, or, on the contrary, saturated on several factors in a comparable way.

According to these criteria, 6 PCA were required to obtain a stable solution. At this stage, the 14 remaining items clustered around 4 factors. The items we had generated representing the dimensions *transmitting* and *flattering the ego* disappeared when the scale was purified (Appendix A1). For *transmitting*, the way the items were formulated was called into question. In order to generalize the statements and avoid special cases, we eliminated words pertaining to family life so as not to exclude respondents without children. However, the items formulated this way were too general and did not refer explicitly to values, roots and family history, aspects that are, according to the literature and our qualitative interviews, the ones most commonly transmitted. For the dimension *flattering the ego*, the definition submitted to the experts was questioned, since it insisted on its narcissistic character (*to talk about the things I have done)* rather than "recognition" which also plays a role (*to show sides of myself others may not know*). In light of these comments, we generated new items for these two components (9 in all). These items were validated by three new experts and we added them to the 14 others in order to collect another set of data (Appendix A1).

The second data set and the emergence of the factor structure

The second data set provided 508 useable responses. After checking for the absence of outliers, we again purified the items according to the rules defined in the previous phase. The analysis rendered 6 factors for 20 items. Only the latent roots of the first five factors were greater than 1. The scree test shows a first break after the fifth component (eigenvalue 1.07) and a second one, not quite as sharp, after the sixth (eigenvalue 0.93). We kept the sixth dimension as it is justified from a theoretical standpoint. Indeed, it also emerges in randomly drawn sub-samples. The final result is a scale consisting in 6 dimensions with 3 to 4 items each. The coefficients range from 0.79 for the dimension entitled *sharing* to 0.83 for *bearing witness* (Table 2).

< Insérer Table 2 – Final factor structure of the 20 items>

Validating the factor structure

At this point, our objective was to confirm the factor structure that had emerged through structural equation modeling. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) supposes a normal distribution of the data. Mardia's coefficient (G2, P) shows an absence of multivariate normality. It has a value of 85 (normalized estimate = 32), much greater than the acceptable limit of 3 set by Bentler (2005). In fact, in the area of social sciences, data rarely has a normal distribution. The Satorra and Bentler statistic (1988), available under EQS software as "Robust methods", produces coefficients of significance corrected according to the intensity of non-normality.

The model tested consists in 6 latent constructs that are allowed to covary freely. This produced good indices of fit considering the degree of complexity and the number of observations. For a model with 20 items and 508 observations, the CFI should be greater than 0.92 and the RMSEA under a threshold of 0.07 (Hair et *al.*, 2008). This is the case here: besides an χ^2 of 340 for 155 degrees of freedom ($p = 0.00$), the value of the CFI is 0.95 and that of the RMSEA is 0.05 (confidence interval of 90%: [0.042-0.056]). Considering the high degree of correlations between the constructs, we believed it was important to test alternative models and more specifically the five-factor model that had emerged in the beginning. The indices of fit for the latter are under commonly accepted thresholds and consequently lower than those for the 6-factor model ($\chi^2 = 557$; dof =160 ($p = 0.00$); CFI = 0.90; RMSEA = 0.07). Similarly, several other models were tested, for example the unidimensional model (χ^2 =1194; dof =170 ($p = 0.00$); CFI =0.74; RMSEA = 0.11), but none produced fit indices as satisfactory as the six-dimensional one. Therefore, the six dimension factor structure produced the best results and was finally selected.

Reliability, convergent and discriminant validities of the measurement model

In this phase we will examine the psychometric qualities of the instrument by testing its reliability and convergent and discriminant validities. Face validity has already been confirmed as the items were selected by experts. The nomological validity will be examined in the following section.

Reliability is confirmed when all the indicators measure the same construct in a more or less equal manner. Here this is ensured by the coefficients for Jöreskog's *rhô*, which are all greater than 0.7 (Table 3), a commonly accepted threshold (Fornell and Larker, 1981).

The convergent validity corresponds to the capacity of a measure to provide results close to other measures of the same trait. This is confirmed when: (1) the z-test associated with each factor contribution is greater than 1.96 (a significant link between a latent construct and its indicators) and (2) each indicator shares more variance with its construct than with its error term (Steenkamp and Van Trijp, 1991). In reality, this condition is fulfilled if the average variance extracted (ρ_{vc}) for each dimension is greater than 0.5. All the latent constructs meet these two conditions (Table 3).

<Insérer Table 3 – Evaluation of reliability and convergent validity >

The discriminant validity is ensured when two theoretically different constructs are clearly distinguished empirically. Thus, the correlations between the two constructs must be less than the square root of their ρ_{vc}, which is the case here (Table 4). It should be noted, however, that certain correlations are high, for example between the components of *mending the ego* and *being remembered* (0.70). Nevertheless, the indicators within a single dimension share more variance with each other than with those of another dimension.

<Insérer Table 4 – Evaluation of discriminant validity and correlations between constructs>

Second-order factor analysis and nomological validity

Since the correlations between constructs were all important and significant (from 0.50 and 0.70), we performed an exploratory second-order factor analysis. This caused a single higher order factor to emerge. The confirmatory analysis produced good indices of fit (χ^2 = 381; dof = 164 (p = 0.00); CFI = 0.95; RMSEA = 0.05). The standardized loadings between the first-order constructs and the higher order factor are all significant and greater than 0.7. The model with a single second order factor was therefore accepted (Table 5). This means that the six motivations share a common concept, which would be an overall motivation to write one's life story. From a theoretical standpoint, this appears to fit with a hierarchical conception of motivation (Vallerand, 1997, 2000; Vallerand and Miquelon, 2009). The overall motivation behind legacy writing would be expressed in the form of six contextual motivations (*bearing witness, transmitting,* etc). Once again, we followed Howel, Breivik and Wilcox (2007a) in considering that this global motivation exists independently from its measure. The first order latent constructs, representing the different motivations, therefore constitute reflections of the second order factor.

<Insérer Table 5 – Second-order factor analysis>

As for nomological validity, it is ensured if we can observe, empirically, that an individual with these motivations for legacy writing does intend to write his life story. Indeed, it aims to confirm the definition of the construct by studying the correlations between the construct and other manifestations that are intrinsically attached to it in a quasi tautological way (Jolibert and Jourdan, 2006). The intention of writing one's life story has been operationalized using a single item scale. This is sufficient if the construct is conceptualized in a *concrete* and *unique* manner by the respondent (Rossiter, 2002; Bergkvist and Rossiter, 2008), which is the case of behavioral intentions (Jarvis *et al.*, 2004). With the help of the semi-structured interviews we conducted (not dealt with here), we were able to distinguish different specific stages in commitment to writing a life story: *not interested, interested but does not plan to write a life story, plans to write a life story one day, extremely interested in getting started or already involved in the writing process* These modalities were proposed to the respondents during the quantitative study. In order to avoid an artificial correlation linked to the order in which the questions were administered, two other scales were inserted between the items measuring motivations for legacy writing and the intention to write a life story. In addition, while the scale thus designed is not metric, the data can be estimated within a structural equations model as the modalities reflect an increasing degree of commitment (Byrne, 2006). In such a case, estimation using the maximum likelihood method with Satorra-Bentler's adjusted indices (1988) guarantees reliable results (DiStefano, 2002; Bentler, 2005).

The results obtained indicate a significant correlation between the two constructs ($r = 0.50$; z-test = 10.16), thus confirming the nomological validity of the scale.

Contributions, managerial implications, limitations and perspectives for future research

Contributions

The aim of this study was to identify the concept of legacy writing, define its dimensions and propose a scale for measuring its underlying motivations (Appendix A3). To our knowledge, this is the first theoretical and empirical study on the subject in terms of consumer behavior. Starting from a review of the literature and two quantitative data sets, we created a reliable and valid scale for measuring the motivations behind legacy writing among the elderly. The scale consists in 20 items, divided among six dimensions (*flattering the ego, mending the ego, being remembered, sharing, transmitting* and *bearing witness*).

This scale represents a first step towards understanding the concept of legacy writing. It will help provide an empirical understanding of the relationship between motivations underlying this practice and other variables within the concept's nomological network. Furthermore, this study enriches our understanding of self-extension and self-preservation "tactics" (Price, Arnould and Curasi, 2000) and intergenerational transmission strategies among the elderly (Curasi, Price and Arnould, 2004; Curasi, 2006). Legacy writing, using any media (a book, CD, etc.), thus appears to be a new form of "special object" whose symbolic part is lost for the benefit of a specific function. We should note that "special" or "precious" objects (wedding rings, grandpa's pen, etc.) are "vehicles" for family and individual histories (Curasi, Price and Arnould, 2004; Bergadaà and Urien, 2008) and possess a certain number of functions similar to those we have identified for legacy writing: a form of recognition, a souvenir of important moments in life, an eye witness account of exceptional events, a record of specific skills and abilities (Price, Arnould and Curasi, 2000). It also has a therapeutic value and provides, in particular, a point of reference and stability (Wapner, Dermick and Redondo, 1990). Finally, it can be a means for transmitting individual and family values. When it is offered as a gift or left to a person who is able to preserve its meaning, it constitutes a means of being remembered (Price, Arnould and Curasi, 2000) and is a form of intergenerational transmission (Goldberg, 2009). Yet, while a life story can be considered a special object, it remains quite specific. Transmission of special object is often considered a symbolic transmission of the self. The information transmitted is therefore limited to fleeting memories generated by the object in question once its owner has passed. However, a life story goes much further by offering the transmission of an explicit, more or less faithful and sometimes idealized, summary of the self. The explicit nature of the information contained in a life story enables it to play a major role in the transmission of intergenerational memory and offers a partial remedy to the fragile meaning attached to objects, as emphasized in our introduction (Epp and Arnould, 2006).

Managerial implications

While biographical services remains a niche market, the potential for development is nevertheless real. Indeed, while collecting the second data set (508 individuals), 12.8% of the respondents had already written a life story or were currently writing their memoirs. In addition, more than 50% had already thought about it, but were discouraged by the difficulty of the task, which is undoubtedly why 42% stated they were interested in some form of training (18% in "co-production" services[3]). In this case, marketing can play a fundamental role. If it succeeds in motivating some of the individuals interested in legacy writing to get started, our field will have played an important role in transmission of intergenerational memory. Along these lines, certain anthropologists, while observing growing indifference to rituals surrounding death, predict the creation of a new type of necropolis. *Mnemonic monuments* (Larcher, 1971) would be used to conserve the memory of the deceased rather than their bodies or physical remains. Here there seems to be a potential for new services targeting seniors.

Furthermore, by identifying the different motivations behind legacy writing, service providers will be able to segment their offers since a person who wants, above all, to transmit his family history does not have the same needs or expectations as someone who wants mainly to relate his experience of racism, for example. Fundamentally, training services (workshops, coaching, etc.) are suitable when the process is as important as the result, for example, when the narrative is guided by a desire to *mend the ego* and the writing process is a form of "healing". Conversely, “co-production” services are more suitable when the narrative is more important than the writing process. For example, when the autobiography addresses the needs of a community (*transmitting* and *bearing witness*) the underlying idea is to serve others, by whatever means.

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[3] Private biographers. We use the term “co-production” here because the consumer supplies the raw material (memories) and the service provider contributes his writing skills.

There are obvious ethical questions involved that need to be taken into consideration. We have already pointed out, at the beginning of this article, prices for similar services can vary considerably. It is important to bear in mind that managerial ethics are based on moral values, compliance with laws, codes of business conduct and personal responsibility (Katz and Marshall, 2003; Bergadaà, 2004; Urien and Guiot, 2007). This scale should be used with caution, in an effort to meet the needs of elderly consumers, not to take advantage of them.

Limitations and perspectives for future research

Several limitations can be raised concerning this study. One concerns the external validity of the scale. Its validity was confirmed using a sample of elderly persons. Our results can be considered a first step as the scale must be compared against other representative data for the general population in order to increase its validity. Our second data set was indeed mostly made up of people attending continuing education courses at "*Universités du Temps Libre*", who have a higher level of education than the general French population. We can also question whether the French biographical model can be transferred to other cultures. Each culture has its own representations of the self, with its own concepts for conceiving of and expressing personal, family and cultural experiences. According to Roche (2007), for example, the autobiography exists in North African countries, but often contains a mix of real and fictional events and poetry. From a more general standpoint, an extension of this study internationally, to include other cultures, could examine both the stability of the different motivations behind legacy writing identified here and the types of biographical services available.

In this study we have not examined cohort effects (Meredith and Schewe, 1994; Zemke, Raines and Filipczak, 2000). The socio-historical events that take place during the years when important life choices are made (age 15 to 25) shape the attitudes and behaviors of a given generation (Préel, 2000). Thus, the 1920-1930 cohort, which took part in and survived WW2, does not have the same story to tell and transmit as the 1945-1955 cohort, which grew up in a booming economy (Lalive d'Épinay and Cavalli, 2009). However, we believe that generational differences would not affect motivations, but rather the content of the story itself. This point remains to be clarified.

Furthermore, we did not examine the reasons people prefer written over oral transmission (Martin Sanchez, 2003). Thus, our "functionalist" approach to life stories – and its methodological dimension, which consisted in questioning people about their motivations for writing an autobiography - can be called into question. This approach privileges the conscious and intentional motivations behind legacy writing and does not focus on the meaning individuals attribute to their own behavior. A comprehensive approach to legacy writing therefore offers an interesting avenue for future research.

It would be interesting now to examine other variables that could affect biographical behavior such as feelings of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986), generativity (McAdams and de St. Aubin, 1992; Urien and Kilbourne, 2007, 2011), or even reminiscence (Webster, 1993; Haber, 2006). Price, Arnould and Curasi (2000), as well as Curasi, Price and Arnould (2004), present transmission of special objects as a desire for self-preservation after death, a form of symbolic immortality. However, these authors do not make any distinctions in their presentation of the final moment (Urien, 2003). Yet, there are different attitudes toward personal death that generate either anxiety or acceptance. More specifically, Florian and Kravetz (1983) and Florian and Snowden (1989) present a multidimensional model of fear of personal death (fear of loss of self-fulfillment, fear of self-annihilation, fear of loss of social identity, fear of consequences of death to family and friends, fear of transcendental consequences, fear of punishment in the hereafter). An important research question would concern the impact of the type of attitude towards personal death on the nature and intensity of motivations to write a life story.

Another research topic would consist in comparing the biographical tendencies of different generations. Thus, the same type of approach could be envisaged in order to understand the quest for identity among adolescents through personal diaries and blogs, or to understand social networks such as Facebook. Self-production as a relationship technique (Cardon and Delaunay-Teterel, 2006) is a highly contemporary field of investigation. The field of application for biographical services could also be expanded to, for example, business biographies (d'Almeida and Merran-Ifrah, 2005) or more generally corporate histories, as can be observed in this excerpt from a major regional newspaper[4]: “In a time of crisis, History is a safe investment. As a biographer, Hélène's books are true corporate sagas. In the region, many entrepreneurs use her services.”

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[4] *Ouest-France*, November 2008.

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Appendix A1: Items generated by the authors and selected by the experts

The following table presents the items generated and selected by the experts.

-The number corresponds to the position of the statement on the scale. For example, the item "to tell my family and friends what I would like to be remembered for" within the dimension *being remembered* was administered in the 15th and 8th place, respectively, when collecting the two data sets.
-The mention "E" indicates an item that was eliminated after PCA.
-Items marked with an asterisk (*) were generated and administered during collection of the second data set.

I would like to write my life story…	**1st data set**	**2nd data set**
Being remembered		
so I can highlight the things I would like to be remembered for	30 E	
in order to choose what I would like to leave for posterity	17 E	
because it is important for me to know how my family and friends will remember me after my death	9 E	
to tell my family and friends what I would like to be remembered for	15	8
because I believe leaving something behind is a way to achieve a form of immortality	6 E	
so my family and friends remember me after my death	34	4
because writing about one's life is a way of being remembered	12 E	
so that people will remember what I have done after my death	20	12
Bearing witness		
to help future generations understand how the world has changed	27 E	
to leave a trace of the way we lived, so that future generations can picture our way of life	3	5
to leave a testimonial, because it is a sort of heritage you pass on to future generations	13	9
because I think that expressing our thoughts about society can enable future generations to understand the world in which they will live	29 E	
because leaving behind an account of our times is like a gift for future generations	31 E	
because there are certain things that should be preserved and transmitted from one generation to another	33 E	
to preserve certain aspects of my culture that are disappearing	24	13
because we need make sure some things are not forgotten	4 E	
to record, somewhere, certain things that must not be lost	18	16
Sharing		
to create a certain intimacy with readers	19	6
to broaden my circle of acquaintances	2	10
to create ties with certain people	14	14
because it is important to talk about life's difficulties, to show people who are going through the same things that they are not alone	16 E	
Mending the ego		
to help me clarify a period in my life	7	3
to tell my side of the story concerning certain things that happened in the past	32	7

to tell the truth about certain things that happened in the past	8	11
to justify certain things I did in the past	11	15
to confess to certain things	35 E	
because I want to talk about certain things that are important to me	26 E	
Flattering the ego		
because there are things about my life that are worth knowing	1 E	
to show how I became the person I am today	28 E	
to talk about myself and the things I have done in my life	22 E	
because there are things I have done that should be recognized	36 E	
to talk about the interesting things I have done in my life		2
*to highlight things I have done and am proud of		17
*to highlight things about myself that others are not necessarily aware of		19
*to show people who don't know me who I really am		21 E
*to show how I started out and how I became the person I am today		22 E
Transmitting		
to prevent the younger generation from making the same mistakes as I did	21 E	
to transmit certain essential values to the younger generation	10 E	
to show the younger generation their roots	23 E	
by transmitting my life story and experiences, I am trying to help others	5 E	
because I want the younger generation to understand what one should, or should not, do	25 E	
*to retrace my family history		1 E
*to tell the younger generation about family members who have passed away		18
*to transmit family values		20
*for the younger members of the family who want to know about their roots		23

Appendix A2: Socio-demographic characteristics of the quantitative data

	1st data set 202 individuals	2nd data set 508 individuals
Age		
Average age	71.28	68.80
Standard deviation	8.60	6.84
Minimum	60	60
Maximum	96	94
Gender		
Men	44 %	36 %
Women	56 %	64 %
Level of education		
No diploma	22.8 %	8.7 %
Secondary school certificate (11-13 years)	25.4 %	22.1 %
Vocational degree (High School level)	10.9 %	13 %
Baccalaureate (High School) level	11.4 %	22.7 %
1 to 3 years college	12.4 %	19.7 %
Bachelor degree or higher	17.1 %	13.8 %
Number of children		
No children	3.1 %	12.2 %
1 child	13.9 %	12 %
2 to 4 children	72.7 %	73.8 %
5 or more children	10.3 %	2 %

Appendix A3: Scale of motivations for legacy writing among the elderly

Instructions:
Legacy writing consists in using your memories to write your life story. Please indicate if the following statements concern you or not (*strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree).*

I would like to write my life story…

Being remembered (α= 0.83)
so my family and friends remember me after my death
to tell my family and friends what I would like to be remembered for
so that people will remember what I have done after my death

Bearing witness (α= 0.83)
to leave a trace of the way we lived, so that future generations can picture our way of life
to leave a testimonial, because it is a sort of heritage you pass on to future generations
to preserve certain aspects of my culture that are disappearing
to record, somewhere, certain things that must not be lost

Sharing (α= 0.79)
to create a certain intimacy with readers
to broaden my circle of acquaintances
to create ties with certain people

Mending the ego (α= 0.81)
to help me clarify a period in my life
to tell my side of the story concerning certain things that happened in the past
to tell the truth about certain things that happened in the past
to justify certain things I did in the past

Flattering the ego (α= 0.80)
to talk about the interesting things I have done in my life
to highlight things I have done and am proud of
to highlight things about myself that others are not necessarily aware of

Transmitting (α= 0.81)
to tell the younger generation about family members who have passed away
to transmit family values
for the younger members of the family who want to know about their roots

Table 1 – The stages involved in constructing and validating the measurement scale

Stages performed	Key results
1- Specifying the construct's field	-There are 6 motivations behind legacy writing, identified in the literature and confirmed during a qualitative analysis (not developed here) -These indicators are effects of the construct. Churchill's paradigm is adapted
2- Creating and validating items	- 16 semi-structured interviews (not developed here) - 77 items generated based on the literature and qualitative interviews -36 items selected by a panel of experts (face validity)
3- Collecting the first data set and purifying the items	- 202 responses - 22 items eliminated through 6 PCA (oblique rotation) - The dimensions *transmitting* and *flattering the ego* do not emerge: 9 new items are generated representing these dimensions
4- The second data set and the emergence of the factor structure	- 508 responses - 3 items eliminated through 3 PCA - 20 items cluster around 6 dimensions: *Flattering the ego* (α= 0.80); *mending the ego* (α=0.81); *being remembered* (α=0.83); *sharing* (α= 0.79); *transmitting* (α= 0.81) and *bearing witness* (α= 0.83)
5- Validating the factor structure	- Confirmatory factor analysis - Parameters estimated with ML (Maximum Likelihood)). "Robust" statistics corrected for non-normality -χ^2 = 340; df =155 (p = 0.00); CFI = 0.95; RMSEA = 0.05 - All the alternative models tested produce less satisfactory fit indices - Factor structure confirmed
6- Reliability, convergent and discriminant validities of the measurement model	- All ρ > 0.80 (reliability) -Structural coefficients significantly linked (z-test > 1.96) and ρ_{vc} > 0.5 (convergent validity) -The correlations between the two constructs squared are less than their ρ_{vc} (discriminant validity)
7- Second-order factor analysis and nomological validity	- Existence of a second-order factor (χ^2 = 381; dof =164 (p = 0.00); CFI = 0.95; RMSEA = 0.05); structural coefs > 0.70; representing the "global" motivation for legacy writing -The correlation between this global motivation and the real intention to write a life story is 0.5 (nomological validity)

Table 2 – Final factor structure of the 20 items

		Communality	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
Being remembered (α = 0,83)	so my family and friends remember me after my death	0.72	0.77					
	to tell my family and friends what I would like to be remembered for	0.71	0.69					
	so I will be remembered after my death	0.79	0.82					
Bearing witness (α= 0.83)	to leave a trace of the way we lived, so that future generations can picture our way of life	0.70		0.71				
	to leave a testimonial, because it is a sort of heritage you pass on to future generations	0.74		0.79				
	to preserve certain aspects of my culture that are disappearing	0.63		0.60				
	to record, somewhere, certain things that must not be lost	0.66		0.70				
Sharing (α= 0.79)	to create a certain intimacy with readers	0.65			0.72			
	to broaden my circle of acquaintances	0.73			0.81			
	to create ties with certain people	0.74			0.86			
Mending the ego (α = 0.81)	to help me clarify a period in my life	0.58				0.68		
	to tell my side of the story concerning certain things that happened in the past	0.72				0.75		
	to tell the truth about certain things that happened in the past	0.74				0.81		
	to justify certain things I did in the past	0.67				0.64		
Flattering the ego (α= 0,80)	to talk about the interesting things I have done in my life	0.72					0.82	
	to highlight things I have done and am proud of	0.79					0.75	
	to highlight things about myself that others are not necessarily aware of	0.71					0.58	
Transmitting (α= 0,81)	to tell the younger generation about family members who have passed away	0.74						0.86
	to transmit family values	0.75						0.83
	for the younger members of the family who want to know about their roots	0.76						0.82
	Eigenvalue		8.2	1.74	1.24	1.10	1.07	0.93
	% of variance explained	71 %	41 %	9 %	6 %	5 %	5 %	5 %

Table 3 – Evaluation of reliability and convergent validity

	Reliability	Convergent validity	
Dimensions	ρ	z-tests	ρ_{vc}
Being remembered	0.82	z > 20	0.63
Bearing witness	0.84	z > 16	0.57
Sharing	0.80	z > 16	0.57
Mending the ego	0.82	z > 13	0.53
Flattering the ego	0.81	z > 13	0.59
Transmitting	0.83	z > 16	0.61

Table 4 – Evaluation of discriminant validity and correlations between constructs

	Being remembered	*Bearing witness*	*Sharing*	*Mending the ego*	*Flattering the ego*	*Transmitting*
Being remembered	0.79					
Bearing witness	0.67	0.75				
Sharing	0.62	0.63	0.75			
Mending the ego	0.70	0.56	0.65	0.73		
Flattering the ego	0.69	0.54	0.62	0.69	0.77	
Transmitting	0.58	0.69	0.50	0.55	0.51	0.78
The square roots of ρ_{vc} are represented on the diagonal. The other values correspond to correlations between constructs.						

Table 5 – Second-order factor analysis

First-order factors	***Loadings*** **(standardized)**
Being remembered	0.853
Bearing witness	0.780
Sharing	0.768
Mending the ego	0.813
Flattering the ego	0.779
Transmitting	0.713