

The power of music and memory is infinite, and it helps us bridge the gaps in time and space.



A little bit about me.

I have two music degrees. I studied music performance in my undergraduate studies. After graduation, I traveled to a couple of countries, did some backpacking, and spent two gap years in New Zealand and Australia. After that, I went back to China (where I was born and raised) and became a music teacher and taught in an elementary school and a middle school.

Then I went back to school for a master's degree in music in Hong Kong. This time, I started to look into the relationship between music and dementia. You might ask me, "Why dementia? Why not other diseases?" The reason I chose dementia was because of my grandmother, who spent a lot of time with me when I was a child, and we eventually developed a very deep relationship. Unfortunately, she suffered from dementia and passed away. Studying people living with dementia is like a calling to me. Being able to help people like my grandmother is the most rewarding thing that I have ever done.

After I had received my master's degree, I decided to dedicate my career to academia. I was very lucky to connect with my amazing advisor, Dr. Jennie Gubner, who inspired me to do ethnographic research. That's why I ended up in the States and doing my PhD degree.

MY NAME IS GABBY WEN. I'M A PHD CANDIDATE IN THE APPLIED INTERCULTURAL ARTS RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA. I STUDY PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA BY USING PERSON-CENTERED MUSIC AND VIRTUAL REALITY TO COLLABORATE WITH THEM ON STORYTELLING TO PROMOTE THEIR WELL-BEING. I ALSO MINOR IN GERONTOLOGY.

I'M AN ARTIST, A FILMMAKER, AND A SOCIALLY ENGAGED RESEARCHER WHO ADVANCES HUMAN RIGHTS AND PROMOTES THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR OLDER ADULTS, ESPECIALLY FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA.

Barbershop Singing



SCAN ME

I explored the vibrant community of the Tucson Barbershop eXperience chorus through the personal stories of two members, Robert Standfast and Frank Hartline. Combining music, aging, and community service, this project offered a heartfelt glimpse into how barbershop singing enriches lives, fosters friendships, and supports wellness among older adults.



Echoes of Memories: Collaborative Storytelling through Person-Centered Music and Virtual Reality with Older Adults Living with Dementia (2024)



Feasibility of a Virtual Reality Intervention to Reduce Loneliness and Psychosocial Distress Among Older Black Church Members (2024)

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Creating a Personalized Experience with Music and Virtual Reality for People Living with Dementia at a Memory Care Facility (2023)



Intergenerational and Intercultural Encounter through Virtual Reality and Personalized Music (2022)



WHAT IS SPECIAL ABOUT MY RESEARCH?

To complement the current research methods in dementia care, such as Reminiscence Therapy, Music & Memory®, Creative Care, and Positive Approach, the larger significance of my work lies in adding a layer of technology that provides a more immersive, personalized, and multisensory experience, ensuring that individuals living with dementia can actively participate in shaping their own care experience. While conventional dementia care approaches often involve individuals as recipients of practice and observation, my work repositions them as active creators and collaborators in the caregiving process. By co-designing immersive experiences that cater to their memories and preferences, my research offers a compassionate and innovative model that can be adapted for caregiving in a variety of settings, including adult day clubs, memory care facilities, and home care contexts.

CREATED BY GABBY ZHIYU WEN
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MY HOBBIES



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO STUDY DEMENTIA?

55 MILLION PEOPLE CURRENTLY LIVING WITH DEMENTIA IN THE WORLD

THIS NUMBER MIGHT REACH 139 MILLION BY 2050

SO FAR, THERE IS NO CURE FOR DEMENTIA

TREATMENTS EXIST THAT CAN HELP MANAGE SYMPTOMS AND IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE, THEY DO NOT STOP OR REVERSE THE PROGRESSION OF THE DISEASE

What's Next?

- My future research objectives include: 1) using VR and personalized music to aid trauma recovery in older adults, 2) employing VR as a tool to help those with cognitive impairments experience daily activities for emotional fulfillment, and 3) exploring multisensory approaches in dementia care to enhance cognitive engagement and well-being.
- Since I have done my doctoral dissertation research in August. I'm currently analyzing and writing my dissertation. I'm also searching for suitable postdoc and faculty positions and sending out my application.
- If everything goes well, I will be graduating in May 2025.

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