

INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING FOR TRANSFORMING STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES OF OLDER ADULTS



Marleen Thornton PhD, RN

Kathryn Burns, BSN, RN

Lara Street BSN, RN

School of Nursing

Notre Dame of Maryland University

Baltimore, MD



NOTRE DAME OF MARYLAND UNIVERSITY

OBJECTIVES

- To explore the opportunities an intergenerational learning environment can provide.
-
- To discuss the implications for nursing education and nursing practice identified in this project.
- To identify potential methods of using intergenerational learning to improve gerontological nursing.

INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING

- Provides intentional interaction for individuals from different age groups.
- Provides participants with opportunities to communicate, share, and participate in learning activities together.
- Can challenge age-related stereotypes.



CHALLENGES TO NURSING PRACTICE

- Rapidly growing population of older adults and increased need for gerontological nursing expertise.
- Nursing students' often have negative attitudes toward older adults and limited interest in caring for older adults.
- Improving students' perspectives could improve quality of care for older adults and increase interest in gerontological nursing.

PROJECT

- Purpose was to explore the experience of an intergenerational learning environment focused on healthy aging for nursing education students and older adults.



METHODS

- Qualitative inquiry Informed by interpretive description
- Recruitment occurred in a cross-listed course on healthy aging for BSN students and members of a lifelong learning institute on campus.
- Semi-structured focus group interviews
- Inductive approach to analyze narrative transcripts

SAMPLE

- Convenience sample of 10 participants
- 6 BSN students (mean age = 22.1 years)
- 4 Life long learning institute members (mean age= 69.2 years)
- All identified as female

RESULTS

- Analysis illustrated improved nursing students' perspectives on older adults and aging.
- A similar themes was also noted for older adults' perspectives of younger adults.
- Importance of social interaction within an intergenerational learning environment and the need for opportunities to challenge ageist perspectives was also illustrated.

THEME: *I DIDN'T KNOW THAT ABOUT YOU...*

"I was really happy to be in a class with all you young adults because I don't get that much interaction with people your age and it was just really nice to be able to talk to you and find out that you're all smart ladies and you have ambitions...and I've learned that your generation is going to be doing just fine."

-Older adult perspective

"...those two people co-exist but you're seeing them in a separate/different snapshot of time and in a very vulnerable place. And yet know that this other part of them exists now."

-Nursing student perspective



THEME: *I WAS OR WILL BECOME YOU...*

“I can see all of you and you can see me and that makes me realize we are not that different...and someday I hope to be like you.”

-Nursing student perspective

“Our generation has different worries...and I understand [that] you may not understand, but we had your worries too.”

-Older adult perspective



IMPLICATIONS FOR NURSING PRACTICE

- Increased exposure to healthy older adults in personal and professional relationships may:
 - Improve nursing care for older adults, and
 - Increase nursing students' interest in gerontological nursing.

BIG PICTURE ...

- Nursing students' assumptions about older adults and aging were challenged by the intergenerational learning experience.
- Future research should examine:
 - Feasible intergenerational learning experiences that are likely to improve perspectives on older adults and aging.
 - Quantitative measures, examining ageism and perspectives on caring for older adults, in a similar context.

THANK YOU!



*This project was supported by a grant from the Committee for Faculty Research and Development at Notre Dame of Maryland University.

*The presenter has no conflicts of interest.



REFERENCES

- Hovey, S., Dyck, M., Reese, C., & Kim, M. (2017). Nursing students' attitudes toward persons who are aged: An integrative review. *Nurse Education Today*, 49, 145-152.
- Koehler, A., Davies, S., Smith, L., Hooks, T., Schanke, H., Loeffler, A., Carr, C., & Ratslaff, N. (2016). Impact of stand-alone course in gerontological nursing on undergraduate nursing students' perceptions of working with older adults: A quasi-experimental study. *Nurse Education Today*, 46, 17- 23.
- Pstross, M., Corrigan, T., Knopf, R., HeeKyung, S., Talmage, C., Conroy, C., & Fowley, C. (2017). The benefits of intergenerational learning in higher education: Lessons learned from two age friendly university programs. *Innovative Higher Education*, 42 (2), 157-171.
- Thorne, S. (2016). *Interpretive Description*. (2nd Ed.) New York, NY: Routledge
- United States Census Bureau. (2018). Older People Projected to Outnumber Children for the First Time in US History. Retrieved from: <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2018/cb18-41- population-projections.html>

