Mutuality in learning: older adults and BS nursing students’ experiences of partnering in student education

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The joys of Minnesota!
Graduating students generally do not choose to work with older adults as a career option (Stevens, 2011; Stone and Haragab, 2010)

Student nurses hold positive views of older adults (Holroyd et al., 2009; Troutman Flood & Clark, 2006)

Students often deterred from working with older adults by negative experiences during practice placements (Nolan et al., 2006; Robinson & Cubit, 2007)

Need for innovative placements that capture students’ interest (Shelman, 2006)

Service learning projects seem to have positive benefits but little evidence of systematic evaluation (Barba & Gender, 2006; Fusner & Staib, 2004; Marek, Rantz, & Porter, 2004)
The course: Caring for the Older Adult

Discussion topics include:
● Experiences of ageing  ● Relationships
● Illness management ● Active ageing
● Anticipating the future

Theory covers active ageing, Illness management and end of life

Practicum introduces each student to a community dwelling older adult

Students make five visits and maintain a reflective journal

Students work with older adults to develop health promotion projects

16 week program
Research questions

- How does a practicum, involving sequential visits with an older adult contribute to nursing students’ understanding of experiences of ageing?

- What processes are involved in this learning experience?

- What are the benefits and costs to the participants?
Evaluation methods

- Broadly constructivist, emergent
- Analysis of 80 reflective journals completed by students
- Focus group interviews with older adult participants (n = 3 with total of 19 participants)
- Interviews with older adult participants (n = 24)
- Interviews with students (n = 32)
- Modified Framework analysis (Ritchie and Spencer 1995)
- Comparison and integration of findings from different data sets
Findings:

Four themes spanning datasets:

- becoming aware *(being challenged, being transformed)*
- making connections *(with knowledge, with each other)*
- seeing the unique person *(recognizing complexity and individuality)*
- valuing intergenerational relationships *(reciprocity, potential for generativity)*
# Themes and datasets: examples of sub-themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Journals</th>
<th>Student Interviews</th>
<th>Older adult interviews</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Becoming aware</strong></td>
<td>Being challenged (in relation to stereotypes of ageing)</td>
<td>Being challenged (in relation to stereotypes of ageing)</td>
<td>Understanding the younger generation in today’s society</td>
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<td><strong>Making connections</strong></td>
<td>Making links to literature, seeing the relevance of theory</td>
<td>Putting the pieces together (classroom, literature and knowledge about older adult)</td>
<td>Putting the pieces together (experiences, knowledge, and information provided by student)</td>
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<td><strong>Seeing the unique person</strong></td>
<td>Appreciating the complexity of ageing</td>
<td>Appreciating the complexity of ageing</td>
<td>My life is interesting to the student</td>
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<td><strong>Valuing intergenerational relationships</strong></td>
<td>Recognizing the validity of the older person’s wisdom</td>
<td>Recognizing the validity of the older person’s wisdom</td>
<td>Recognizing the value of their experiences to the student</td>
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Valuing intergenerational relationships: sub-themes

- Having fun
- Developing mutual respect and admiration
- Experiencing reciprocity
- Recognizing the potential for generativity
Generativity

- A need to nurture and guide younger people and contribute to the next generation (Erikson 1997)
- …dynamic… interaction between generations…evolves across the lifespan (Kessler and Staudinger (2007)
- associated with successful ageing, psychological well-being and life satisfaction Hebblethwaite and Norris (2011)
- Requires that the older person is recognized as an expert… mutual respect ensures maximum benefit (Cheng 2009)
- Little systematic research on intergenerational relationships outside the family (Hebblethwaite & Norris, 2011)

...Interactions between older people and nursing students may carry a unique psychological potential
‘It seems like this lady has life all figured out! I’m definitely hoping to carry some of her wisdom with me as I continue with my nursing career and my life.’ (Journal entry)

‘They have a lot more wisdom, and they tell their stories about their history and their past…. They have experienced more of life.’ (Student)

‘We had some good talks. I showed her the cards they gave me at the clinic, because she is a student. I don’t know everything, but that’s my part that I can offer.’ (Older adult)
Intergenerativity

‘….the meaningful fusion of ideas and emotions that emerge from conversations and experiences shared between the generations.’

‘learning between’

(George et al, p. 391)’
‘Meeting and talking with her (*older adult*) was one of the most incredible experiences… I feel as though it was meant for both of us to meet and for me to have the opportunity to learn and grow as an individual from this remarkable woman.’ (*Journal entry*)

‘You get talking, and anything you talk about, it all has little trees and roots coming out and you get to talking about things that you wouldn’t even have thought about and sometimes you just slide into a subject that really benefits you and you don’t really realize it until after they’ve gone.’ (*Older adult*)
A (fledgling) model of intergenerativity in the context of a focused undergraduate course in gerontological nursing

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<tr>
<th>COLLABORATION +</th>
<th>GENERATIVITY →</th>
<th>RECIPROCITY →</th>
<th>INTERGENERATIVITY</th>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>A need to nurture and guide younger people and contribute to the next generation</td>
<td>Mutual understanding and benefit</td>
<td>Understanding own experiences in a new and enhanced way</td>
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<td>Structure</td>
<td>Older adults recognizing that they have something to offer</td>
<td>Respect and admiration</td>
<td>Creation of new knowledge about experiences of ageing</td>
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<td>Working together to achieve goals</td>
<td>Revised perspectives</td>
<td>Students start to experience their own potential for generativity</td>
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Next steps

- Analyse journal content relating to specific topics and experiences of ageing
- Involve older adults who are living in a nursing home to allow comparison of experiences
- Continue to explore the relevance of the concept of intergenerativity within this context
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