

Fighting Ageism through Intergenerational Activities, a Transformative Experience

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Abstract

Older adults are the fastest-growing population in the world. There is already a higher demand for professionals to serve this population. Therefore, it is important to prepare young adults to work with the aging cohort. However, ageism impedes people's ability to be interested and interact with older adults. Ageism is more prevalent among younger generations, but intergenerational relationships may reduce ageist beliefs. This qualitative study explored the perceptions of college students who participated in an intergenerational program. It was found that intergenerational relationships are an opportunity for transformative experiences to occur. Young adults questioned previous ageist beliefs and became more knowledgeable and appreciative of late adulthood. Educators should promote intergenerational relationships so future professionals are better qualified to work with the aging population.

Keywords: Ageism, intergenerational relationships, transformative learning, older adults, college students.

Introduction

The trend in the world population is changing. The proportion of young people has decreased and the older population is increasing. An older person refers to the age of 60 or 65 years, to the end of life, depending on the region and country. Late adulthood is the fastest-growing cohort in the world (Jarrot, 2011; United Nations, 2018). Therefore, there will be a higher demand for services for old people that professionals may not be prepared to meet. There is already an insufficient number of competent caring professionals able to serve the needs of this diverse group (Turner, Brown, & Jarrott, 2017; Zuccherro, Iwasaki, Lewis, et al., 2014). Ageist attitudes, or ageism which is the prejudice against people based on age (Butler, 1969) may negatively influence the decision of professionals to work with older adults. Additionally, factors like knowledge about aging and contact with older people also contribute to ageism (Cooney, et al., 2020; Marques et al., 2020).

This article explores how ageism can be questioned and transformed if young adults have the opportunity to interact with older adults. I hope to make some educators reflect on the importance of ageism. Based on this, I also invite educators to incorporate intergenerational practices within their formal and/or informal adult education programs.

Ageism Among Young Adults

Ageism, as are other "isms" (racism, sexism, etc.), is based on the prejudice that some groups are better or deserve more privileges than others, but it primarily refers to age. Regarding older adults, ageism entails the assumption that youth is better than old age (Clark & Griffin, 2008; North & Fiske, 2012; Yon, et al., 2010). Some stereotypes denigrate senior people, categorizing them as dependent, antiquated, asexual, and/or unhappy (Campos, et al., 2012). People fight becoming old because ageism is ingrained in the culture. Movies, songs, literature, and mass media tend to depict older people as something negative.

Old age is associated with death as well as cognitive and physical decline, increasing the negative stereotype of old age. These stereotypes contribute to ageist terms and jokes, lower employment opportunities, and mistreatment in different settings (health care facilities, departmental stores, restaurants, etc.), among others. Society constantly perpetrates a negative image of old age. Age serves as

a social organizing principle that offers different identities and power to people in relation to one another, being condescending with young people and alienating the oldest (Calasanti, 2020). Furthermore, older adults may face the greatest disparities in old age because intersections of other oppressions (sexism, classism, racism) shape their life. Advantages and disadvantages are carried and exacerbated at old age (Calasanti, 2020).

Due to ageism, professionals or family members may treat older adults in a deprecatory way (Smith et al., 2017). Among health care professionals, ageism is linked with reduced access to healthcare services and lower quality service (Schroyen, et al., 2018; Wilson, et al., 2017). Age discrimination is experienced in many countries. In Europe, age discrimination is experienced more often than discrimination based on sex or race (Smith et al., 2017).

Additionally, ageism has been found in all age groups (O'Connor & McFadden, 2012; Smith et al., 2017). People may hold ageist beliefs without noticing it. Implicit prejudices are culturally learned associations that people may not be aware of. The Revera Report on Ageism (2012) stated that age discrimination toward older people comes primarily from the younger population. Moreover, Yon et al. (2010) found that young adults who have ageist views have a higher proclivity to elder abuse than middle-aged adults.

For the majority of undergraduate students, knowledge about the aging population is usually very limited (Chippendale, 2013). Additionally, students pursuing bachelor's degrees are likely to have less cooperative contact with older adults than people of other ages (King & Lauder, 2016). This lack of knowledge and exposure may create distance and students may act based on media, prejudices, or stereotypes without noticing it. Conversely, undergraduates who take courses on aging exhibit fewer ageist behaviors, more positive aging attitudes, and are more likely to be interested in careers in geriatrics (Barnett & Adams, 2018; Chippendale, 2013).

Attitudes significantly influence people's practices, positively and negatively. Ageism, like racism, sexism, or ableism should not be tolerated because it results in discrimination against a group of people (Palmore, 2015). Therefore, it is important to challenge and reduce young adults' negative beliefs about late adulthood and increase awareness of the reality of aging.

Through exposure, young adults increase their ability to work with older adults and are likely to become a competent workforce for the aging population (Caspar, et al., 2019; Lokon, et al., 2012; Zuccherro et al., 2014). Consequently, there is a need to prepare college graduates and the younger generations for success in an aging society.

Intergenerational Relationships and the Transformative Learning Theory

This study uses the Transformative Learning Theory as the theoretical framework. A premise from this theory is that there are many predispositions that individuals use to interpret their experiences, which include distortions, prejudices, stereotypes, and unquestioned or unexamined beliefs that can be transformed by learning experiences (Cranton, 2006; Cranton & Roy, 2003; Mezirow, 1996, 2012; Taylor, 2007, 2008). Transformative learning implies a change in a frame of reference. People's frames of reference are defined by their habits of mind and points of view (Merriam, et al., 2007). Transformative learning occurs when a person responds to an alternative habit of mind by reconsidering and revising prior belief systems (Cranton, 2006).

A habit of mind is a way of seeing the world based on our background, experience, culture, and personality, which are determined by our personal stories and are interrelated. Habits of mind start with meaning schemes, which are immediate points of view, attitudes, and judgments, but after time, they become a habit of mind. Every day we assess our schemes or points of view, and when we find them unjustified, we create new ones or transform them (Andersen & Tisdell, 2016). A transformation occurs when an individual encounters an alternative perspective, and prior habits of mind are called into question (Cranton, 2006; Mezirow, 1991).

There are some ideal conditions for transformation: information and arguments, freedom and openness to alternative points of view, empathy, awareness of the context of ideas, the equal opportunity to participate in different roles of discourse, and willingness to validate or accept new perspectives

(Cranton, 2006; Mezirow, 1991; Taylor, 2008). Furthermore, the transformation of frames of reference occurs through critical reflection. It could be while learning, when solving problems, or while reflecting about points of view.

The aforementioned studies show that young adults can have ageist ideas, which may be their habits of mind. Ageism is acquired from the social world, and individuals cannot easily stand outside of it to look at its norms and expectations. People tend to be unaware of the social codes in which power and privilege are distributed (Cranton, 2006; Mezirow, 1991; Taylor, 1997). Intergenerational programs may question ageist beliefs. Intergenerational activities allow both generations, young and older adults, to have direct contact, which has been shown to effectively reduce ageism (Meshel & McGlynn, 2004; Penick, et al., 2014).

Intergenerational activities also teach about social justice. Young adults are confronted with the aging reality and they can observe the hardships and disparities that elders encounter as well as the positive characteristics that they have. Interaction challenges the misconceptions and stereotypes about aging. It is important to include social justice education because it provides opportunities to transform oppressive social structures and creates opportunities for a more egalitarian society (Aguilera-Hermida, 2014).

Based on the Transformative Learning Theory, dialogue is “the essential medium through which transformation is promoted and developed” (Taylor, 2008, p. 9). One may expect that young adults who participate in intergenerational activities have the opportunity to experience a transformative experience, but transformation requires effort and critical thinking. It requires consciousness, it cannot be automatic. Reflection of the experience may question previous beliefs.

This study aims to explore the perceptions and experiences of a group of young adults who participated in an intergenerational program and how this interaction affected their meaning schemes and habits of mind related to aging. This study addresses the following questions:

1. Do young adults hold ageist beliefs?
2. How do intergenerational programs affect young participants' beliefs about aging?
3. Is there any transformation of habits of mind among younger adults?
4. Can intergenerational activities promote more inclusive meaning schemes?

Study Context and Methodology

This qualitative study follows a basic qualitative research design (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and it is informed by the action research method. The overall objective is to understand how young adults made sense of their intergenerational experience and if they experienced a transformation in their habits of mind (Patton, 2002; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The action research methodology emphasizes to analyze the phenomena through the eyes of the participants, which are involved in the research process to some extent. Participants act as co-researchers with a feeling of ownership that motivates people to participate in the project (Glassman, et al., 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Data were collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews and journals. Six college students participated in a research class with the primary researcher. They helped to promote the intergenerational program around campus, posting flyers, and inviting other students. In this study, these six students are considered the research team. The research program was called “Fun through the Ages”. Students voluntarily visited a Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) and participated in intergenerational activities with some of the residents over the course of six weeks. The intergenerational activities that students could join were: transporting an elder to his/her activity and staying with them, sharing a meal, and one on one activities where a resident and a student spent time together (card games, reading, chatting, etc.).

After promotion, 32 students voluntarily visited the retirement community, but only those who participated in at least three intergenerational activities were interviewed. There were four students who visited the facility more than three times. The final interviewees were ten college students (six who were

part of the research team, and four more) and five elders (Table 1). This study mainly presents the students' perceptions.

Even though six students were part of the research class, they were encouraged to go to the retirement community as any other student: voluntarily, when they wanted, if they wanted, and do the activities that they preferred. They knew they were insider observers and were encouraged to write a weekly journal. Reflective writing allows people to capture the experience, record an event, explore feelings, and make sense of what they know (Gardner & Alegre, 2019). After the six weeks of the project, the research team interviewed their peers so they could speak freely without pressure from the authority of a professor. The interviews were between 30 to 60 minutes each. The lead researcher interviewed the older participants. The interview guide had questions like "What did you like least/best about this experience?" "What do you think overall about the activities with the older adult/young adult?" "Would you recommend this type of activities?" "Do you have any other comments that would help us to know what intergenerational activities are good and what are not so good?" as well as additional comments in general (staff, organization, type of people, etc.) among others.

Table 1

Younger and Older Research Participants

Pseudonym	Degree	Sex	Pseudonym	Retirement Community Section	Sex
Tom	Undergraduate HDFS	Male	Tali	Personal Care	Female
Lara	Graduate Clinical Psychology	Female	Robert	Independent Living	Male
Melanie	Undergraduate Cybersecurity	Female	Nancy	Independent living	Female
Natalie	Graduate Community Psychology	Female	Andrea	Personal Care	Male
Rachel	Undergraduate HDFS	Female	Bailey	Personal Care	Female
Stanley	Undergraduate, Engineering	Male			
Cecilia	Undergraduate, Psychology	Female			
Jane	Undergraduate, HDFS	Female			

Ethical approval was given by The Pennsylvania State University and informed consent was obtained for all the participants. Also, they were informed that they could withdraw from the study (intergenerational activities) at any time without any retaliatory action or any implication.

For the data analysis, all the interviews were transcribed using pseudonyms. Materials were given to the lead investigator who listened, read, and reread through the data before the team started coding. After that, the data was coded using Dedoose software, which is a web-based software. The research team had access only during the time they were coding the transcriptions and they did not know the original names of the participants. The coding was done together in a lab room in different sessions, so there was clarity and consistency about the codes. All the excerpts were analyzed in light of the research questions and the findings were categorized into the themes that emerged. Quotes from the elders are included to compare the young adults' beliefs, but it is not the intention of this article to present the residents' experience.

Findings and Discussion

This qualitative study is presenting the results in light of the Transformative Learning Theory and including the themes that emerged from the data. There were four major themes: habits of mind based on

stereotypical beliefs: a barrier between generations; intergenerational activities promote a broader understanding of aging; and transformative experiences and social responsibility.

Habits of Mind based on Stereotypical Beliefs: A Barrier between Generations

As the literature has previously reported, young adults have distorted and negative views of older adults (Clark & Griffin, 2008; Yon et al., 2010), and our results confirm these findings. Participants came to the retirement community with previous misconceptions, and these young adults were not aware of their negative preconceptions. For example, Rachel mentioned, “I visited a senior who very much still had her humor, which you do not really find at that age in a retirement home.” The young adult stated her perception thinking that older adults who live in a facility do not have a sense of humor. Ageist habits of mind can originate from lack of knowledge or isolated individual incidents and they can become long-lasting stereotypes (Smith et al., 2017).

In addition, participants assumed that residents were socially isolated. Stanley said, “I know the residents are lonely because they do not have a choice, for the most part, of being there and are not very social.” Students thought that older adults are lonely, but none of the elders who were interviewed reported loneliness. In this regard, Andrea, a resident, said, “No, they [her family] don’t allow me to be alone. My one son lives in [a nearby town], my daughter lives very close, my other son lives 5 miles from here. I’m never lonely because they visit me too much.” In fact, most of the interviewed residents had frequent visits from their families. Even though one older adult did not have family members, she still did not recall feeling lonely. This information does not affirm that all the residents receive visitors. There may be other residents who need visitors or feel lonely, but students expressed assumptions based on their previous stereotypical beliefs about older adults living in facilities, rather than through their interaction.

These stereotypical beliefs, which are the frame of reference of some young adults, may prevent intergenerational interactions or perpetuate distance between generations (Smith et al., 2017). A representation of this is clear in Alyssa’s quote: “I know someone in my sorority is afraid of old people because she thinks that they’re mean.” As the transformative learning theory states, previous assumptions act as a filter for interpreting the meaning of the experience (Merriam, et al., 2007).

These examples of implicit ageism may contribute to avoid seniors, mistreat them, or simply ignoring and making them invisible in society. Furthermore, these ageist beliefs, if not questioned, will accompany young adults through their professional life and will impact the way they treat and serve older adults, no matter their major. Ageism is embedded in the culture (Calasanti, 2020; Barnett & Adams, 2018; Zuccherro, et al., 2014). Palmore (2015) called ageism a social disease “which is spread from person to person and from generation to generation” (p. 874). But it is not only learned; it is also influenced by the level of knowledge that we have about older adults and by our developmental experiences, as we will review in the following section.

The Developmental Stage Affects the Mental Schemes About Older Adults

Students formed assumptions based on their developmental stage and saw things through their own lenses. Habits of mind are based on people’s backgrounds, experiences, and culture, and through them, people interpret the world (Merriam, et al., 2007). Young adults assumed that elders felt the same way that they would be feeling if they were in the resident’s situation. A student expressed sadness about the routine that older adults experience. Cecilia said,

You see all of them at once and that could be like... well... yeah... like, depressing because they live there, and that’s their house, and you see most of them, just, they eat, they watch TV, they go to some activities. Like... it’s very like... even if you are not sick, but you live there, it will make you depressed.

For college students, new activities and things to do are exciting. They are discovering the world and finding their way into it. However, young adults may not understand that routine and predictability offer security to elders, especially at this stage where cognitive functions may be compromised.

Older adults expressed contentment and satisfaction with their lives. Bailey mentioned that she was happy with her life in the retirement community. She enjoyed the activities, was properly treated, and said she did not need anything else. Based on this, we can contrast the young adults' point of view and the reality that residents face. There is a prejudice that emerges from the developmental stage from where young adults are interpreting reality. An individual's developmental stage is part of a person's frame of reference and affects their interpretations, the way they create mental schemes, and consequently, their behaviors.

Intergenerational Activities Promotes a Broader Understanding of Aging

During the intergenerational activities, students developed a new perspective about aging that questioned their previous beliefs. Jane said, "just getting to know someone who you think is so different from you but ends up not being so different is really great." Unlike the stereotype of incapability, young adults observed that many elders may be facing physical difficulties, but have other capabilities. A student said,

People might have a judgment that seniors do not understand, but they do, they understand ... We think that they're not capable anymore of learning new things. They do learn and some of them have, like, Facebook and email! They might not be as fast anymore, but they're still the same, so I think that was something I realized through talking to them.

The quote shows her reflective process. Now, this young adult will treat elders as capable of learning because she saw it, and she may talk about it with other people. As observed in previous literature (Penick et al., 2014; Turner et al., 2017, Zuchero et al, 2014), through exposure, students increased their understanding of aging and had a new frame of reference that may help to reduce ageism.

It Is Not About Age: Elders Are Like Any Other Cohort

Participants realized that behaviors and attitudes cannot be blamed on age. People have different personalities and based on that, they have different behaviors. Alyssa said, "Some of them really do want your time and attention and some of them don't but... that's how it is with people our age too. Some people want your attention and some people don't... they're just... they're just humans." Young adults observed that elders are like any other cohort and that age should not divide generations.

Participants found the interaction with older adults enjoyable enough to consider them as friends. Natalie said, "As the project comes to a close, it is wonderful to recognize the new connections and friendships that have been made throughout the process." Also, in one of her journals, Elizabeth said, "I can't wait to do that again next week and find my friend!"

Young adults saw older couples kissing and changed their perception about the aging stage, realizing that elders love and express their feelings. Rachel said, "I am in a relationship now, and I feel like the older couples are more affectionate than my boyfriend and I even are!" Young adults were surprised, as their expectations were different from what they saw. Participants developed a different view of seniors, as loving beings, who express their level of commitment and affection to their significant other. This is a new mental scheme that young adults gained through the intergenerational activities.

Elders as Role Models and Informal Teachers

Students perceived residents as role models that they can learn from. The conversations went into different topics and were informative for young adults. Some participants saw elders as people full of qualities. Natalie said, "Nancy is the kind of person I hope to be as I age. Her security, independence, and the way she carries herself is a real example of someone I would like to see myself grow into." Indirectly, elders were teaching young adults that being old can be beautiful and positive. Because the student saw those qualities directly, she was clear that she wanted to follow that path.

Even though young adults did not verbally express the experience as transformative, they were questioning their thoughts. A resident told a student that he may die at the facility, and so he always

makes his days worth of living. The student, reflecting about any circumstances or challenges she enjoyed, said “that stayed with me a lot.”

Furthermore, many students were impressed that residents handle their challenges with humor. In this regard Lara said,

She [a resident] is quite inspiring She always tells me that the key to life is to have fun, which is why she is always joking around and never takes anything seriously I do believe this does make a big difference in life because some things are really not worth stressing over. Attitude is everything.

Through dialogue and meaningful interactions, young adults were acquiring new meaning schemes (Taylor, 2008). As previous literature has stated, young adults were inspired by the levels of knowledge demonstrated by their older counterparts (Borrero, 2015). Some students developed an increased appreciation of older adults and a more positive mindset towards aging.

Reflections About Future

The intergenerational interaction taught students to relate to the aging process, not only as a distant concept but also as something they may experience in their own life. This relatable experience may help young adults to think and act in a friendlier way toward the aging cohort. Cecilia explained that before this experience, she had a strong relationship with her grandparents, but she used to see them just as family members without realizing their age and their needs. For her, other older adults were people that did not have many things in common with her. After visiting the retirement community, she said her perception of older people changed. She said, “Now I don’t see them as seniors, I see them all as grandparents.” It seems that the student can relate better to the senior population than before. She created an alternative meaning scheme that she can use to relate to them.

The intergenerational experiences promoted empathy towards their own family, translating what they are feeling and thinking into their personal reality. Rachel said,

There was that one senior who said ... her grandkids don’t come see her and it makes her sad. So, it made me reflect on my home life because I am 3 hours away from my grandparents and of course they’re not older yet, they are low 60s, but still, I am their grandchild and I should be talking to them.... It forced me to realize that there is no excuse for not reaching out every once in a while, and having a conversation with them.

She also said,

The one senior who couldn’t go to the bathroom made me think about if that’s going to happen to me when I get older.... So, it’s something that no matter what, if I liked it or not, I’m going to be there eventually. I’m going to have to go through those things that they did, because you are always going to reach a point where your body can’t do what you can do now, and it’s going to deteriorate.

This new mindset can lead to endless positive pathways for the future. Students may show more empathy and be more inclusive of older adults. As Zuccherro et al. (2014) mentioned, “self-reflection is an important aspect of increasing student awareness of cultural issues and the potential development of empathy toward clients and their situations” (p. 956). Through the study, we cannot guarantee a transformation of habits of mind, but students were able to observe and point out a new view, not only for residents in the retirement community but also for their own families. Are they going to act upon it? We do not know. But it is worth it to try. As adult educators, we can include opportunities for students to interact with older adults. It is about social justice, inclusion, and transformation (Holst, 2010).

Social Responsibility and Transformative Experiences

Through the intergenerational experience, some students reflected on the aging population and how it is perceived in society. The following quote shows how a student was creating an alternative perspective. She said,

People act like they [older adults] are just this whole other species that don't have anything in common, and they were once our age too, so it was nice going and talking to them and it made me feel better knowing and going out and having a conversation with someone who's not my age.... I think that this is something that our society needs and I think that as our generation, we need to focus more on the older population because soon they are going to outnumber us, and people need to stop thinking that this is such a weird topic.

Young adults recognized that people may have a distorted vision of older adults. Students created a new mental concept about older adults and may experience a change in their frame of reference based on the exchange of information and arguments, openness to express thoughts, equal opportunity to participate in a dialogue, and disposition to observe and hear new perspectives.

Moreover, through intergenerational activities, young adults learned about professionalism and the proper way to treat the aging population. While observing some of the retirement community employees, they set standards that they would like to achieve as professionals. Regarding the activities coordinator, Rachel said,

She was just so comfortable with [the residents] and you could tell that they enjoyed talking to her too. Their faces would light up when they would see her, so I would start thinking "oh maybe I'll get to that level."

Through her involvement, a student reflected on social responsibilities and her level of civic engagement increased. By understanding the needs and challenges that older adults face, she wanted to give back to the community, not only for older adults but also for those who are vulnerable. Cecilia said,

It made me realize a lot of things, because talking with them and actually learning about them and caring about them, it made me want to contribute more to society, like there are people who struggle, so to be maybe nicer, to connect more, to give more and different things. Just to be more aware and I'm not being like in my own bubble.

Intergenerational activities not only help to overcome ageist ideas, but it can also be a venue to create a more knowledgeable and integrated society. Lara stated, "I think it's something everyone should do once just because it will give you a different view on seniors."

The intergenerational experience transformed the way that students think about aging. Natalie said, "Overall one of the greatest lessons from this is that I think too often we forget to think about aging." To talk about aging and ageism is to talk about oppression, regardless of the setting (Calasanti, 2020).

Educators should include intergenerational projects and/or experiences as part of their programs, and educate for critical, nondogmatic students who pursue the idea that unity is necessary to build a just social order. These experiences promote a more democratic, participatory, inclusive, and cooperative society. Adult education should remain relevant and committed to advancing social justice (Holst, 2010). Young adults can transform their ageist perspectives through being exposed to a new and more accurate reality of the aging population. Ageism is especially important because the population is aging and because it is the only "ism" that the majority of us may experience, just by getting old.

Conclusion

This study explored the perceptions and experiences of college students who participated in an intergenerational program at a retirement community. As mentioned in the previous literature (Yon et al., 2010), young adults presented ageist thoughts and attitudes that could be a barrier for interaction between older and younger populations. People are not always willing to interact with those who are different from themselves (Chan & Lai, 2015). Usually, the health industry and the media portray late adulthood as an undesirable state marked by physical and cognitive decline, which favor youth over aging (Calasanti, 2020; Gullette, 2011; Marques et al., 2020). However, during intergenerational activities, young adults questioned their previous schemes and transformed their thoughts into a more inclusive and comprehensive point of view of the older generation. This happened once the participants took the time to get to know each other and broke the barrier between their beliefs and reality.

Through interaction and constant visits, students had the opportunity to experience transformations. Intergenerational activities allowed young adults to bring attention to an overlooked minority via one's own reflection. Once individuals hear or experience something, they cannot "unhear" it and this could be a transformation.

Moreover, the intergenerational interaction allowed young adults to see the aging stage as something positive and acceptable. Students saw elders as loving beings, with a good sense of humor and a content life. Moreover, young adults reflected on their aging process and thought about the future for them and their family members. Those reflections could lead to a transformation.

As observed in the findings of this study, mental schemes are shaped by the developmental stage an individual is in and affects the way older adults are viewed, and consequently treated. Young adults will become professionals who will decide activities, programs, policies, and even laws within their fields. If they are not exposed to the aging population, they may not understand late adulthood and proceed based on biases and stereotypes. Young professionals may make decisions about older adults without taking into consideration the elders' needs and perspectives.

The aging population is growing (Jarrot, 2011; United Nations, 2018) and it is likely that no matter the profession, most young adults will interact and/ or work with older adults in their future. A better image of seniors can help young adults to be more inclusive. Furthermore, early exposure to the aging population as undergraduate students may increase the number of professionals working with older adults. Higher education institutions and educators in formal and informal settings should look for intergenerational opportunities for their students.

Education offers the opportunity to influence those who receive it. We should use this privilege to promote social justice, especially for those who are segregated and/or discriminated against based on race, age, sex, or any other characteristic. It is a challenging endeavor, not easy to achieve, but following humanistic models, we contribute to a better world by pointing out social inequality and reducing social injustices (Aguilera-Hermida, 2014). Whether explicit or not, the values of an adult educator influence what is taught (Boyadjieva & Ilieva-Trichkova, 2017; Holst, 2010). Educators should develop, promote, and expand opportunities within a multigenerational context through service learning or volunteer community-based programs. Through intergenerational experiences, the younger population increases their understanding of late adulthood and decreases ageist ideas.

Implications for Practice

This study reaffirms that intergenerational activities are beneficial for young adults, but also shows that it can promote a more inclusive and respectful view of the aging population. It is imperative for educators to infuse aging-related information and experiences into academic and non-academic settings. Especially, considering that there is a lack of a sufficient number of professionals to attend the growing older adult population (Turner, et al, 2017; Zuccherro et al., 2014). Through intergenerational activities, older adults have the opportunity to offer their skills and talents to the community, transforming them into active visible citizens (Aguilera-Hermida, 2014; Orte et al., 2018). As formational institutions,

universities and colleges should address the need for intergenerational interactions and aging courses as part of students' general education.

Anticipated discomfort may prevent students from interacting with older adults, so while planning intergenerational projects or class activities is important to offer a brief overview of the older population, so the benefits from the experience can be expanded. A positive experience may open up a new less ageist generation of emerging professionals.

Educators who decide to work with both generations, young and older adults, should be careful that intergenerational programs are properly planned, so young learners have a positive experience. If not, the transformation of the young adults' habits of mind may not be experienced and they may reinforce negative ideas of older adults or be discouraged to work with the older population. Providing physical assistance without meaningful involvement, or having just one-time encounters may serve to maintain stereotypes (Penick et al., 2014). Finally, institutional structures and practices are tied to the professionals' values, so it is imperative to include aging as a positive value among young professionals, so older adults do not face the consequences of ageism.

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