

Hope and Health: Conversations on Intergenerational Learning

Summary of Articles Introduction to Intergenerativity February 17, 2021

The mission of The Intergenerational Schools is to **connect, create, and guide a multigenerational community of lifelong learners and spirited citizens** as we strive for academic excellence.

The readings here embody this mission. The three pieces represent a mix of scholarly research and real-world experiences. Together, they show how connections across generations can be cultivated, fostered, and embraced to promote health, community, and - of course - learning.

As you read, think about your own relationships, and how intergenerational connectedness helps enrich your experiences and life.

“Rosetto”

Introduction to Outliers
by Malcolm Gladwell

“I remember going to Rosetto for the first time, and you'd see three generational family meals, all the bakeries, the people walking up and down the street, sitting on their porches talking to each other...,” Bruhn said. “It was magical.”

This quote comes from Rosetto, a chapter from the book, **Outliers**, by Malcolm Gladwell. This is a fun read exploring the idea of health and intergenerational communities.

The article describes a doctor in the 1950s who uncovered a mystery in a small, rural Pennsylvania town - namely their unexpected good health and lack of any heart disease. As the doctor researched this mystery, he discovered **an**

intergenerational community connected through relationships, support, and families spanning across generations.

We will reflect on the health benefits of multigenerational social bonds as part of broader wellness and explore how to increase opportunities for **intergenerational relationship building** in local organizations, including and especially schools!

Intergenerational Reading Rooms: Lessons Learned from The Intergenerational Schools

Penn State University

by Cathy Whitehouse, Peter Whitehouse, and Mariano Sanchez

The Intergenerational Schools see themselves as communities of lifelong learners. More than just being a school where students, teachers, and parents all interact, **The Intergenerational Schools cultivate purposeful spaces and communities where intergenerational knowledge and experiences can be shared and encouraged.** These experiences reach deeper than education and academics, and also impact the “real life” learnings so critical to development.

This piece explores The Intergenerational Schools and Intergen Reading Rooms - spaces created intentionally to encourage shared reading experiences between students and mentors. Mentors are trained and coached to not only read with students, but to foster dialogue and conversation while exploring the themes contained in the reading material.

Here you'll read how the richness of these interactions creates true intergenerational learning zones that promote and instill a lifelong love of reading and learning.

Wising Up: Designing a Course for the Future: A Report on a New Transdisciplinary and Intergenerational Cours

2020 Journal of Intergenerational Relationships

by Nicholas Brennecke, Farah Almhana, Peter Pesch & Peter Whitehouse (2020)

Wising Up: designing a course for the future is an intergenerational, transdisciplinary course that was offered in Cleveland in the fall 2019. The course was designed to - and encouraged - engagement and participation across elementary school children, college undergraduates, and elders. It

explored how we can learn as individuals and communities to sustain ourselves in an increasingly ecologically and socially challenged future. Its topics ranged from the relationships between brain and mind, to nature and society, and spirited citizenship.

In weaving together a course across generations, Wising Up **celebrates the mission of The Intergenerational Schools to develop life-long learners and spirited citizens**, while fostering the passion and joy of learning so essential to a purposeful life.

For Intergenerativity Series: Etiology of health (significant reduction in death by heart attacks) in a multigenerational community--associated variable of improved health outcomes identified as social bonds.

November 30, 2008

FIRST CHAPTER

‘Outliers’

By MALCOLM GLADWELL

Outlier, noun.

out·li·er

\-,li(-#)r\

1 : something that is situated away from or classed differently from a main or related body

2 : a statistical observation that is markedly different in value from the others of the sample

1. Roseto Valfortore lies one hundred miles southeast of Rome, in the Apennine foothills of the Italian province of Foggia. In the style of medieval villages, the town is organized around a large central square. Facing the square is the Palazzo Marchesale, the palace of the Saggese family, once the great landowner of those parts. An archway to one side leads to a church, the Madonna del Carmine — Our Lady of Mount Carmine. Narrow stone steps run up the hillside, flanked by closely-clustered two-story stone houses with red tile roofs.

For centuries, the paesani of Roseto worked in the marble quarries in the surrounding hills, or cultivated the fields in the terraced valley below, walking four and five miles down the mountain in the morning and then making the long journey back up the hill at night. It was a hard life. The townsfolk were barely literate and desperately poor and without much hope for economic betterment — until word reached Roseto at the end of the nineteenth century of the land of opportunity across the ocean.

In January of 1882, a group of eleven Rosetans — ten men and one boy — set sail for New York. They spent their first night in America sleeping on the floor of a tavern on Mulberry Street, in Manhattan's Little Italy. Then they ventured west, ending up finding jobs in a slate quarry ninety miles west of the city in Bangor, Pennsylvania. The following year, fifteen Rosetans left Italy for America, and several members of that group ended up in Bangor as well, joining their compatriots in the slate quarry. Those immigrants, in turn, sent word back to Roseto about the promise of the New World, and soon one group of Rosetans after another packed up their bags and headed for Pennsylvania, until the initial stream of immigrants became a flood. In 1894 alone, some twelve hundred Rosetans applied for passports to America, leaving entire streets of their old village abandoned.

The Rosetans began buying land on a rocky hillside, connected to Bangor only by a steep, rutted wagon path. They built closely clustered two story stone houses, with slate roofs, on narrow streets running up and down the hillside. They built a church and called it Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and named the main street on which it stood Garibaldi Avenue, after the great hero of Italian unification. In the beginning, they called their town New Italy. But they soon changed it to something that seemed more appropriate, given that in the previous decade almost all of them had come from the same village in Italy. They called it Roseto.

In 1896, a dynamic young priest — Father Pasquale de Nisco — took over at Our Lady of Mount Carmel. De Nisco set up spiritual societies and organized festivals. He encouraged the townsfolk to clear the land, and plant onions, beans, potatoes, melons and fruit trees in the long backyards behind their houses. He gave out seeds and bulbs. The town came to life. The Rosetans began raising pigs in their backyard, and growing grapes for homemade wine. Schools, a park, a convent and a cemetery were built. Small shops and bakeries and restaurants and bars opened along Garibaldi Avenue. More than a dozen factories sprang up, making blouses for the garment trade. Neighboring Bangor was largely Welsh and English, and the next town over was overwhelmingly German, which meant — given the fractious relationships between the English and Germans and Italians, in those years — that Roseto stayed strictly for Rosetans: if you wandered up and down the streets of Roseto in Pennsylvania, in the first few decades after 1900, you would have

heard only Italian spoken, and not just any Italian but the precise southern, Foggian dialect spoken back in the Italian Roseto. Roseto Pennsylvania was its own tiny, self-sufficient world — all but unknown by the society around it — and may well have remained so but for a man named Stewart Wolf.

Wolf was a physician. He studied digestion and the stomach, and taught in the medical school at the University of Oklahoma. He spent summers at a farm he'd bought in Pennsylvania. His house was not far from Roseto — but that, of course, didn't mean much since Roseto was so much in its own world that you could live one town over and never know much about it. "One of the times when we were up there for the summer — this would have been in the late 1950's, I was invited to give a talk at the local medical society," Wolf said, years later, in an interview. "After the talk was over, one of the local doctors invited me to have a beer. And while we were having a drink he said, 'You know, I've been practicing for seventeen years. I get patients from all over, and I rarely find anyone from Roseto under the age of sixty-five with heart disease.'"

Wolf was skeptical. This was the 1950's, years before the advent of cholesterol lowering drugs, and aggressive prevention of heart disease. Heart attacks were an epidemic in the United States. They were the leading cause of death in men under the age of sixty-five. It was impossible to be a doctor, common sense said, and not see heart disease. But Wolf was also a man of deep curiosity. If somebody said that there were no heart attacks in Roseto, he wanted to find out whether that was true.

Wolf approached the mayor of Roseto and told him that his town represented a medical mystery. He enlisted the support of some of his students and colleagues from Oklahoma. They pored over the death certificates from residents of the town, going back as many years as they could. They analyzed physicians' records. They took medical histories, and constructed family genealogies. "We got busy," Wolf said. "We decided to do a preliminary study. We started in 1961. The mayor said — all my sisters are going to help you. He had four sisters. He said, 'You can have the town council room.' I said, 'Where are you going to have council meetings?' He said, 'Well, we'll postpone them for a while.' The ladies would bring us lunch. We had little booths, where we could take blood, do EKGs. We were there for four weeks. Then I talked with

the authorities. They gave us the school for the summer. We invited the entire population of Roseto to be tested."

The results were astonishing. In Roseto, virtually no one under 55 died of a heart attack, or showed any signs of heart disease. For men over 65, the death rate from heart disease in Roseto was roughly half that of the United States as a whole. The death rate from all causes in Roseto, in fact, was something like thirty or thirty-five percent lower than it should have been.

Wolf brought in a friend of his, a sociologist from Oklahoma named John Bruhn, to help him. "I hired medical students and sociology grad students as interviewers, and in Roseto we went house to house and talked to every person aged twenty one and over," Bruhn remembers. This had happened more than fifty years ago but Bruhn still had a sense of amazement in his voice as he remembered what they found. "There was no suicide, no alcoholism, no drug addiction, and very little crime. They didn't have anyone on welfare. Then we looked at peptic ulcers. They didn't have any of those either. These people were dying of old age. That's it."

Wolf's profession had a name for a place like Roseto — a place that lay outside everyday experience, where the normal rules did not apply. Roseto was an outlier.

2. Wolf's first thought was that the Rosetans must have held on to some dietary practices from the old world that left them healthier than other Americans. But he quickly realized that wasn't true. The Rosetans were cooking with lard, instead of the much healthier olive oil they used back in Italy. Pizza in Italy was a thin crust with salt, oil, and perhaps some tomatoes, anchovies or onions. Pizza in Pennsylvania was bread dough plus sausage, pepperoni, salami, ham and sometimes eggs. Sweets like biscotti and taralli used to be reserved for Christmas and Easter; now they were eaten all year round. When Wolf had dieticians analyze the typical Rosetan's eating habits, he found that a whopping 41 percent of their calories came from fat. Nor was this a town where people got up at dawn to do yoga and run a brisk six miles. The Pennsylvanian Rosetans smoked heavily, and many were struggling with obesity.

If it wasn't diet and exercise, then, what about genetics? The Rosetans were a close knit group, from the same region of Italy, and Wolf next thought was whether they were of a particularly hardy stock that protected them from disease. So he tracked down relatives of the Rosetans who were living in other parts of the United States, to see if they shared the same remarkable good health as their cousins in Pennsylvania. They didn't.

He then looked at the region where the Rosetans lived. Was it possible that there was something about living in the foothills of Eastern Pennsylvania that was good for your health? The two closest towns to Roseto were Bangor, which was just down the hill, and Nazareth, a few miles away. These were both about the same size as Roseto, and populated with the same kind of hard-working European immigrants. Wolf combed through both towns' medical records. For men over 65, the death rates from heart disease in Nazareth and Bangor were something like three times that of Roseto. Another dead end.

What Wolf slowly realized was that the secret of Roseto wasn't diet or exercise or genes or the region where Roseto was situated. It had to be the Roseto itself. As Bruhn and Wolf walked around the town, they began to realize why. They looked at how the Rosetans visited each other, stopping to chat with each other in Italian on the street, or cooking for each other in their backyards. They learned about the extended family clans that underlay the town's social structure. They saw how many homes had three generations living under one roof, and how much respect grandparents commanded. They went to Mass at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church and saw the unifying and calming effect of the church. They counted twenty-two separate civic organizations in a town of just under 2000 people. They picked up on the particular egalitarian ethos of the town, that discouraged the wealthy from flaunting their success and helped the unsuccessful obscure their failures.

In transplanting the paesani culture of southern Italy to the hills of eastern Pennsylvania the Rosetans had created a powerful, protective social structure capable of insulating them from the pressures of the modern world. The Rosetans were healthy because of where they were from, because of the world they had created for themselves in their tiny little town in the hills.

"I remember going to Roseto for the first time, and you'd see three generational family meals, all the bakeries, the people walking up and down the street, sitting on their porches talking to each other, the blouse mills where the women worked during the day, while the men worked in the slate quarries," Bruhn said. "It was magical."

When Bruhn and Wolf first presented their findings to the medical community, you can imagine the kind of skepticism they faced. They went to conferences, where their peers were presenting long rows of data, arrayed in complex charts, and referring to this kind of gene or that kind of physiological process, and they talked instead about the mysterious and magical benefits of people stopping to talk to each other on the street and having three generations living under one roof. Living a long life, the conventional wisdom said at the time, depended to a great extent on who we were — that is, our genes. It depended on the decisions people made — on what they chose to eat, and how much they chose to exercise, and how effectively they were treated by the medical system. No one was used to thinking about health in terms of a place.

Wolf and Bruhn had to convince the medical establishment to think about health and heart attacks in an entirely new way: they had to get them to realize that you couldn't understand why someone was healthy if all you did was think about their individual choices or actions in isolation. You had to look beyond the individual. You had to understand what culture they were a part of, and who their friends and families were, and what town in Italy their family came from. You had to appreciate the idea that community — the values of the world we inhabit and the people we surround ourselves with — has a profound effect on who we are. The value of an outlier was that it forced you to look a little harder and dig a little deeper than you normally would to make sense of the world. And if you did, you could learn something from the outlier that could use to help everyone else.

In *Outliers*, I want to do for our understanding of success what Stewart Wolf did for our understanding of health.

(Continues...)

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Intergenerational Reading Rooms: Lessons Learned from The Intergenerational Schools

How can schools become vibrant intergenerational settings? To explore this question, we focus on the Intergenerational Reading Room (IRR) component of The Intergenerational Schools (TIS) model established in Cleveland, Ohio.

Introduction

Everywhere in the world, schools are clear examples of spaces for intergenerational engagement. The fact that formal education is typically organized in facilities where teachers and students (not to mention children's parents) from different generations meet and interact every day under one roof may lead to a belief that the intergenerational nature of the school system can be taken for granted. However, the fact that schools congregate different generations only makes them multi-generational spaces, not inter-generational zones. Here we examine how schools can enhance their intergenerational profile. In this paper, we do so through presenting Intergenerational Reading Rooms (IRR) as approached by The Intergenerational Schools (TIS), in Cleveland, Ohio. IRR are featured as a case of an Intergenerational Contact Zone (ICZ) in Elementary (K-8) schools.

The concept of ICZ refers to the many dimensions of spaces that serve as "focal points for older adults and younger generations to meet, interact, build trust and friendships, and work together to address issues of local concern" (Kaplan & Hoffman, 2015). In the particular case of IRR, the main concern is how 5-12 year old children learn, particularly with regard to their development to become lifelong readers: "We don't want to just teach you to read, we want to teach you to be a reader," says Cathy Whitehouse, Chief Educator at TIS. In this paper we argue that school IRR planned through an ICZ lens are opportunities to raise awareness of how educational spaces can simultaneously function to enhance intergenerational relationships.

Connecting generations of readers

The *Intergenerational Schools* see themselves as communities of lifelong learners: "TIS was founded on the belief that adults and children - of all ages, mixed together, embracing the life cycle - could help each other learn about important values, academics, and 'real stuff.'" (Learning Network Associates, 2009). However, more than just another school devoted to education and learning, TIS considers itself the seed of an intergenerational wisdom center, i.e. a space and community within which generational knowledge, experience, and engagement are able to flow and cross in all directions, both through planned activities and spontaneous and flexible meetings.

According to its founders, at TIS "no other pursuit receives as much attention as reading. Reading is ubiquitous." To this purpose, TIS develops multiple strategies, one of which is the Reading Mentor Program. Through this program over 70 volunteer adult/senior reading mentors commit to at least 2 hours per week with students "for one-on-one reading, sharing stories and building relationships." (TIS, 2015). In the 2013/14 academic year reading mentors spent over 4,000 volunteer hours with students.

"She just needed someone to talk to ... that day we didn't read." - Elizabeth LeVert, senior reading mentor (Learning Network Associates, 2009)

"Can I just sit by your side and read with you?"
Cathy Whitehouse, TIS founder and Chief Educator



PennState Extension

Who are these mentors? They are mostly retired local citizens age 60 and over, "representing a variety of cultural and professional backgrounds from Civil Rights activists to retired FBI agents" (TIS, 2015). What do these mentors actually do? They do not "teach" students to read but they listen to them read, and read to them. Most importantly, they discuss the stories together sharing and comparing perspectives. When does this reading mentoring happen? During class time.

Finally, where does the reading take place? Typically in quiet sitting areas located in the school hallways. These areas are TIS's *Intergenerational Reading Rooms*, the ICZ we would like to focus on.

IRR at TIS

TIS has had two principle homes during its 15 year existence, both old repurposed hospitals. The first was a multi-building merchant marine hospital where the school was eventually located in the main building that was shaped like an anchor. This unusual fluke and shank, spindly structure was a challenge for both classroom size and creating intergenerational spaces. TIS' current home is a boxed-like wing of a more traditionally shaped hospital that was completely gutted and allowed designing classrooms and special spaces for reading and story sharing from the building shell on out.

Regarding IRR the focus on the space was to create niches close to the classrooms so that students and mentors could move back and forth efficiently. Because of the large number of intergenerational pairs doing various kinds of activities the space was designed with comfortable chairs and tables to allow both reading and, as needed, writing and other activities. Moveable panels in some niches allowed subdividing the space. The space has good natural light and is wheel-chair accessible for older mentors with mobility and/or visual challenges. Direct face-to-face interaction minimized hearing impairments. Policies throughout the school including the intergenerational niches encourage quiet, respectful forms of communication. Some IRR spaces contain school mementos like school team trophies but in general decoration was kept to a minimum to avoid distraction.

Spatial dimensions of IRR

IRR are designed to look and function as "living rooms" or "family rooms" rather than as traditional "class rooms". Much attention is paid to the choice of furniture so that there is adequate support for seniors who might have more difficulty getting up and down (firm cushions and arm rests, for example). The spaces are intended to mimic the intimacy of reading together at home, while also meeting the requirements for student safety. Toward that end, the activities must be fully visible at all times, while simultaneously affording opportunities for one-to-one conversation and connection.

Reading mentors (and all mentors) receive training so that they understand what is and isn't part of their role. The goal is to create an equal relationship where the child is a partner. It is this relationship that determines how the reading session will go. The students generally choose the books for their session, and self-determine whether they will read to the mentor or have the mentor read to them. Mentors are highly encouraged to have rich discussions during the session, usually in response to the ideas contained in the reading material. The mentors' role is NOT to teach reading, but instead to instill a love of books.

In respect of mentors' varying physical capabilities, the spaces are handicapped accessible and assistance is available as needed from staff. IRR spaces are located adjacent to areas that are quite active during the school day, yet, they also provide a reasonable level of quiet so that mentors can hear the children even if they have mild hearing loss. Mentors with mild to moderate cognitive or memory difficulties can be accommodated in most cases, although sometimes such mentors are accompanied by an aide or family member.

Principles and practical tips

Drawing upon experiences tied to planning and implementing IRR at TIS, we present a few principles and practical tips for consideration when developing school-based IRR sites:

- Convenient location in areas that are clean, tidy, uncluttered, and homey.
- Components that facilitate and favor interaction, such as choice of sitting arrangements, inviting comfortable furniture, and adequate lighting.
- Availability of books for reading.
- Flexibility for multiple uses - reading, writing, chess, knitting: remember that while reading is the main purpose of IRR, sometimes formal and informal activities and encounters other than those around reading may nurture the intergenerational contact involved.



Figure 1: Flexibility in furniture layout.

- Handicapped accessible.
- Visible location so that IRR can be sort of "lighthouses" exemplifying intergenerational interaction publicly.
- Shared rules for usage.
- Careful scheduling so as to coordinate with literacy instruction: in-classroom activity and activities at IRR must be attuned.

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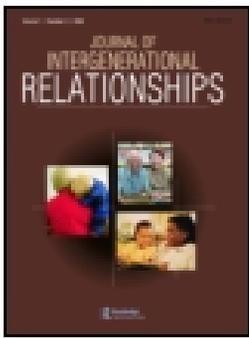
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Wising Up: Designing a Course for the Future: A Report on a New Transdisciplinary and Intergenerational Course

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Wising Up: Designing a Course for the Future: A Report on a New Transdisciplinary and Intergenerational Course

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ABSTRACT

Wising up: designing a course for the future is an intergenerational, transdisciplinary course that was offered in the fall 2019. It was designed using widely participatory processes involving elementary school children, college undergraduates, and elders. Its goal was to explore what we need to learn as individuals and communities to sustain ourselves in an increasing ecologically and socially challenged future. Topics ranged from the relationships between brain and mind, to nature and society, and spirited citizenship. Processes included brief lectures, group discussion, story sharing, relationship building activities, field trips, and journaling. Individual and organizational outcomes included broadening of interests and commitment to transformation.

KEYWORDS

Wisdom; intergenerational learning; transdisciplinarity; future

Brief history

“Wising up: designing a course for the future” is a transdisciplinary, intergenerational course taught for the first time in fall 2019 at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) in coordination with the Cognitive Science Department, Cleveland Brain Health Initiative, Siegal Lifelong Learning Program at CWRU, and community organizations such as Judson Smart Living at the Manor and the Intergenerational Schools. The history of this course began in 2003 with an inaugural university seminar entitled “Wisdom: an introduction” as part of the pilot of the Seminar Approach to General Education and Scholarship (SAGES) program at CWRU. A community charrette was then held in 2017 at the Global Center for Health Innovation to explore the idea of the course and begin the design. Foundational to the course was the idea that wisdom could be viewed as a relationship-based, aspirational process rather than an achievable final state in the here-and-now. The short-hand title of the course, “Wising up,” hinted at the evolutionary nature of the course processes, while maintaining a playful and light hearted intention.

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In addition to the intergenerational interactions among the students of different ages, the course was purposely co-directed in an intergenerational fashion, taught both by a professor of Neurology and a senior resident in Neurology which sprang out of a more traditional professor-resident mentorship.

Goals

The goal of the course was for course co-directors, elementary school children, undergraduates, and community elders to form an intergenerational learning community and to explore together the processes of “wising up.” By this we meant appreciating the blend of cognitive, emotional, and ethical skills necessary to implement practical actions to address the complex, interrelated “wicked” problems in the world such as climate change and social inequity. Humility, imagination, compassion, and commitment were the only stated prerequisites for the course.

Participants

Participants in the course included course co-directors, undergraduates, community elders associated with Judson Smart Living, staff and student members of the Intergenerational Schools, and other community members who served as advisors and arranged sites for field trips.

Activities

The undergraduates and elders participated in five organized sessions, as well as more informal relationship building activities (coffee shop and dinner conversations). The five “formal” sessions were organized around topics that represented different levels of reality of understanding wisdom, and chosen to create different conceptual tensions. For example, the first session was exploring the relationships between the brain (neuroscience) and mind (cognitive science) using the biology and clinical aspects of dementia as a case study. The sessions also included specific topics chosen by the undergraduates but with input from the instructors and the elders. They included Brain/Mind (topic-frontal lobe dementia), Individual/Community (public health and ethics), Nature/Society (climate change activism), Digital/Analogue (artificial intelligence, music, scooters, and internet of things), and Past/Future (spirited citizenship). Students engaged with independently chosen and assigned readings focused on issues relating to creating sustainable futures and understanding complex, wicked problems in the world. Topics included neuroscience, climate change, social factors in health outcomes, and medical ethics among others. Reading categories included textbooks, medical essays, clinical reviews, and original research.

Weekly meetings between course co-directors and undergraduates were held in an informal setting, providing for intergenerational relationship building and mentorship, as well as discussion of interests and readings. Critical thinking was promoted. Students were invited to review articles submitted to medical journals. Course co-directors guided and gave feedback during this process.

Experiential learning in community was emphasized. Several field trips to affiliated organizations occurred. Undergraduates were invited to a local Department of Neurology Grand Rounds to hear a lecture on the future of neuropsychological rehabilitation. A second trip was coordinated with a local Neurologic Institute clinical trials unit to help students better understand the workings of traditional pharmaceutical trial and development. Two field trips were organized to local elder homes, providing students with a better understanding senior living. Undergraduates were paired with elder mentors from the local assisted living community based on common interests, with encouragement to meet at least several times for dialogue on areas of interest.

Structured events at the elder community served as a focal point for the course. As mentioned the sessions centered on the five intergenerational and transdisciplinary tensions: Mind/Brain, Individual/Community, Society/Nature, Digital/Analog, and Past/Future. The sessions were a combination of improvisation and prepared discussion, with room for interactive conversation. Formal presentations, prepared by a course co-director and an undergraduate, served as a primer for learning and conversation. In the session on nature and society one instructor appeared as his metaphorical and transdisciplinary performance character who asks human beings what they can learn about health from trees. In the session on digital technologies each student prepared a demonstration. Together the course co-directors, undergraduates, and elders explored what they wanted to learn and how they could “wise up” as regards these various tensions and potentially plan practical action in their own lives and communities. The capstone experience was the final session (Past/Future), where this class along with participants from the elementary school interacted in an exploration of the topic of “spirited citizenship.”

While engaging in the above activities, undergraduates kept a journal, with an emphasis on thoughtful and critical reflection. Journaling took place in a digital fashion with incorporation of multimedia as appropriate. Journal entries were shared with course co-directors for feedback and pass-fail grading (all passed).

Benefits

As a result of this course, mentorship took place on many levels, including individuals falling into the traditional categories of professor, post-graduate, undergraduate, junior, and senior. This naturally led to the building and strengthening of various personal relationships and a greater appreciation

for local history and culture. The premed and public health oriented undergraduates were exposed to the traditions of clinical and research practice, as well as to innovative intergenerational and transdisciplinary experiences.

Lessons learned

To eliminate the pressures of pre-stated, specific course objectives, course “subjectives” were encouraged. Participants were asked to consider how they could “wise up” as a result of the course and potentially take action in their own lives and their communities. To that aim story sharing and experiential learning were encouraged.

Undergraduates often have difficulty seeing the big picture and making connections across the disciplines. In the case of the undergraduate author, a premed, cognitive science major and participant in the course, the weekly course meetings, along with sessions with elders, proved to be a rare opportunity to bring together wisdom and insight from various disciplines into one course experience. For example, she found herself making connections between this course and her bioethics class as well as her experience as a musician. By the end of the course her focus had shifted from a narrower focus on the neurosciences to a broader interest in public health.

An emeritus professor of astronomy and current resident at the senior residence, was an enthusiastic participant in each of the five sessions held at that site. In the session “Nature/society,” he recounted how he had made several trips to the mountains to use a large telescope for astronomical observations. Interestingly, his most vivid memories of those times were not about the astronomical work, but rather the scent of the Digger Pine trees and the sound of the wind blowing through them. The final session on the topic of “Spirited Citizenship” involved a discussion of career paths and reflection on the next steps. This discussion led the former professor to begin volunteering at a school, where he now enjoys tutoring 7th and 8th grade students in math.

One co-director of the course, who was in the midst of his neurology resident training at the time of the course, was offered. These sessions were an opportunity to spend time with neighbors and gain a renewed perspective of the broader life experience of the community at a time when most trainees at his level develop very specific career interests. This course ultimately influenced Nic’s decision to pursue a neurology practice with an emphasis on generalism, breadth of thought, and sustainable service to his local community.

The course was also very personal for course co-director, as the course took a trajectory similar to that of his own career, starting with a focus on the basic and clinical neurosciences and then shifting to the issues of public health, environmental ethics, digital technologies, and citizenship. In order to explore the relationship between nature and society further he actually enrolled the next semester as a graduate student in anthropology and designed a course of

Multispecies Anthropology (to build on his interest in the relationships between forests and civilization) with field work at a major university in the United Kingdom and in India. The Wising up course also supported a proposal to establish intergenerative, transdisciplinary professors of the future at his university. For all the authors the course broadened horizons and influenced their thinking about career and/or life goals.

Unique features

The course was unique because of the combined intergenerational and transdisciplinary experiential nature. The design process was evolving and participatory. The outcomes were more subjective than objective and involved both individuals and organizations. Storytelling and relationship building were key.