

Teaching for Wisdom in an Intergenerational High-School-English Class

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Although the psychological benefits of intergenerational learning environments have been well documented, no study has yet investigated wisdom as an outcome of intergenerational classroom engagement. In this study, Elders between the age 60–89 were recruited to participate in a high-school English classroom. We hypothesized that participating in an intergenerational high-school classroom would benefit both Elders and Students by fostering the conditions for both groups to develop greater psychological wisdom. Our findings indicate that both Elders and Students actively engaged the five dimensions of wisdom identified by Webster (2003, 2007) during their time in the intergenerational class. Further, we find that while Students and Elders both demonstrated aspects of wisdom, they understood the concept of wisdom in strikingly different ways.

This article explores the hypothesis that participating in an intergenerational classroom environment will benefit both Elders and Students by fostering the conditions for both groups to develop greater psychological wisdom throughout their lives. (We use the term Elder as a counterpoint to Student. Although according to Hooyman and Kiyak (2008), the preferred term is “older adults” and “younger adults,” given the educational context of our study, we feel it is appropriate to use the terms Elder and Student.) Although the benefits of intergenerational learning environments are clearly established, no study has yet directly targeted wisdom as an outcome of intergenerational classroom engagement. (A November 13, 2014 search of Ovid databases (Medline, Embase, PsycINFO, and Social Work Abstracts) and Proquest databases (ERIC, IBSS, MLA, Worldwide Political Science Abstracts) using the search criteria *Wisdom and Intergeneration and Classroom* generated no articles in which the psychological construct of wisdom is an outcome measure of intergenerational classroom engagement.) We will begin by reviewing the benefits of intergenerational education and existing intergenerational programs that promote elements of wisdom, and we will then report the findings of our present study, which explores teaching for wisdom in an intergenerational high-school English class.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Benefits of Intergenerational Education

According to the UNESCO institute for education's 2001 report, innovative intergenerational education programs are emerging at an unprecedented rate internationally and have been shown to be an excellent way to (a) promote Student learning and personal growth, (b) enhance feelings of wellbeing in older adults, and (c) benefit the community as a whole (Kaplan, 2001). Indeed, the educational and psychological benefits of intergenerational engagement for children and older adults have been well-documented (Meier & Invernizzi, 2001; Zuccherro, 2010). A review of the United Kingdom's intergenerational literature program noted three outcomes of intergenerational interaction for older adults: greater health and well-being, less isolation, and a renewed sense of worth (Springate, Atkinson, & Martin, 2008). Similarly, Kessler and Staudinger (2007) found that intergenerational interaction leads to greater positive feelings and to greater life satisfaction. For young people, intergenerational exchanges have been shown to enhance confidence and self esteem (Kaplan, Kusano, Tsuji, & Hisamichi, 1998) and other social skills such as increased cooperation, communication, tolerance, concern, and respect for the limitations of others (Rossberg-Gempton, von Dickinson, & Poole 1999).

Intergenerational Programs that Promote Wisdom

Although it is often said that wisdom comes from experience (Staudinger & Glück, 2011), perhaps it is better said that wisdom comes from broadening our perspective—which can be the result of direct experience, but most often occurs in conversation with others who have different backgrounds and life experiences, what George, Whitehouse, and Whitehouse (2011) call *intergenerativity*. In fact, even imagining that we are discussing with others (Staudinger & Baltes, 1996) or taking the perspective of another toward our own experience (Grossman & Kross, in press) has been shown to improve wisdom, as does simply contemplating and reflecting on our own life story and those of others (Randall, 2011, 2013). Likewise, reading literary fiction and history have been suggested as a way to improve people's empathy and understanding of those with different experiences than their own by providing a simulation of experience that gives access to other characters and settings and their responses to those circumstances (Oatley, 1999; Mar & Oatley, 2008; Sternberg, 2001; Sternberg, Rayner, & Zhang, 2013). These data suggest that providing a forum in which Elders and Students with different life experiences can openly discuss literary fiction would promote wisdom development for both groups.

Additionally, a recent study by Zuccherro (2010) found that simply discussing books with Elders within a gerontology course was beneficial for Students' understanding of the text. Intergenerational discussion helps to develop wisdom because it requires the class to do more than simply reminisce, it also requires them to reflect on the significance of that reminiscence (Ferrari, Weststrate, & Petro, 2013; Randall, 2011, 2013; Staudinger, 2001; Weststrate, 2011). These findings are echoed by The Experience Corps, an intergenerational school-based, volunteer program in which older adults mentor and tutor elementary school Students (Parisi et al., 2009).

Finally, the social qualities intergenerational exchanges promote in Students are strongly associated with psychological theories of wisdom put forward by Webster (Webster, 2007;

Webster, Taylor, & Bates, 2011); Brown (Brown, 2004; Brown & Greene, 2006); and others. Additionally, intergenerational experiences have been shown to influence how Elders view themselves and their lives (Kleyman, 2000), helping them to achieve gerotranscendence also associated with wisdom (Erikson & Erikson, 1997; Tornstam, 1997). Indeed, George, Whitehouse, and Whitehouse (2011) found that their intergenerational charter school in Cleveland Ohio has helped promote the well-being and wisdom of both Elders and Students since its founding in 2000, even in Elders with mild dementia.

In sum: Intergenerational learning opportunities, especially those that center around reflecting on life experiences, have been shown to benefit both Elders and Students. We believe that the transfer of psychological wisdom is one of the benefits of intergenerational education.

The Current Study

Plausible as this all sounds, the idea that an intergenerational literary class could help both Elders and high-school Students to develop wisdom has yet to be tested empirically (Mar, Peskin, & Fong, 2010). Preliminary results of a teaching for wisdom study we have recently completed, showed that high-school Students have difficulty understanding complex literary material because they lack the necessary life experience (Ferrari et al., 2011). Based on these data, we predict that high-school Students' understanding of advanced literary material might be improved by talking with Elders about their lives and shared experiences, and that this engagement will help both groups to develop greater wisdom.

To test these hypotheses, we developed and tested a three-week intergenerational teaching for wisdom program in a high-school-English classroom. Specifically, 10 Elders were brought into a high-school English class for three weeks to discuss *Angela's Ashes*, a 1998 memoir by Frank McCourt. This memoir is part of the standard grade 12 curriculum and involves intergenerational themes about what is most important in life. A high-school-English teacher led Elders and high-school Students in class discussions about the book. Both groups completed reflections about how the themes in the book influenced their understanding of their own lives.

METHODS

Participants

Thirteen adolescent participants ($M = 18$ years, $SD = .27$ years) were recruited from their high-school-English class in the north of Toronto. Ten Elders, between the ages of 60–89 ($M = 72$ years, $SD = 7.6$ years), living in the community, and volunteering at a seniors health care facility in the north of Toronto were recruited. The Elder population was primarily Canadian; however, one participant was born in France and another in England. All participants were cognitively intact, able to tolerate travel to/from the high-school setting, and willing to commit to 1–1.5 hours of classroom participation per week, and follow up homework. Although exclusively Jewish, Elder religiousness as assessed by a 10-point scale (0, *Not at all religious*; 10, *Very religious*) ranged from 0 to 9 with a mean of 4.2.

The Student population was more diverse with representatives from South Korea, Ukraine, Moldova, Bulgaria, England, and Albania in addition to Canadian Students. The Student

population was also more religiously diverse, with Christianity, Judaism, and Islam all represented. Student religiousness was lower than the Elders, on average, with scores ranging from 0–7 and a mean of 1.84. Both Elders and Students reported greater spirituality than religiousness as assessed by a 10-point spirituality scale (0, *Not at all spiritual*; 10, *Very spiritual*) with means of 5.1 for Elders and 3.4 for Students.

Instruments

Students and Elders completed two questionnaires before beginning the intergenerational classroom and after completing the study: (a) the Self-Assessed Wisdom Scale (SAWS) (Webster, 2003, 2007); and (b) the Temporal Satisfaction with Life Scale (TSWL) (Pavot, Diener, & Suh, 1998). Pretest measures were administered at the beginning of the first class meeting, and posttest measures were administered three weeks later at the end of the final class in order to assess change in Elder and Student wisdom scores over the course of the study.

Procedure

The class met for 1.5 hours once a week for three weeks to discuss *Angela's Ashes*. Before arriving, Elders and Students were asked to write an autobiographical essay and to state their expectations for the intergenerational classroom. During the three weeks, all participants kept a journal and were asked to record any thoughts about the program, as well as complete three formal assignments: A reflection on week 1, a reflection on week 2, and an autobiographical episode that might be part of a memoir. During consent procedure, participants were told that they were participating in a study about intergenerational learning and wisdom.

Coding

Elder and Student reflections and assignments were coded for wisdom, based on the five SAWS dimensions (Webster, 2007): Critical Life Experience, Emotional Regulation, Reminiscence and Reflectiveness, Openness, and Humor (Webster, 2007). Though Webster's theory provides detailed subdimensions for each of these categories, we chose instead to take a grounded theory approach to our coding (Glaser & Strauss 1967), allowing our own subdimensions to emerge within these five broad categories based on participants' own understanding of them. This approach allowed us to maintain the SAWS structure while still capturing codes that are unique to the intergenerational classroom experience. Codes specific to the intergenerational classroom dynamic that were not related to the SAWS also emerged from the data and were thematically coded. This two-part coding scheme allowed researchers to capture both demonstrated wisdom and participant's experience of intergenerational learning. Excerpts from our coding manuals are included as part of the analysis below.

Data were coded first by lesson segment and then by participant group in order to get a sense of similarities and differences between these populations. This qualitative coding of class work allowed us to access the ways Elders and Students demonstrate wisdom in addition to the above self-report wisdom measures. Intercoder reliability was established between two graduate

Students with a Kappa value of .75 or higher for each code. All questions and disagreements were addressed through conversation and amendment to the coding manual.

RESULTS

Statistical Analysis

Statistical comparison of Student wisdom and Elder wisdom using the SAWS inventory reveals no significant difference between Elders and Students overall wisdom scores. However, comparison of pretest to posttest SAWS scores indicate significant decreases in Elders estimation of their own critical life experiences ($t(9) = 2.85, p = .019, r^2 = .47$). and humor ($t(9) = 2.55, p = .031, r^2 = .42$). Elders also showed increased past-life satisfaction at posttest ($t(9) = -2.63, p = .027, r^2 = .43$) as measured by the TSWL; no repeated-measure effects were detected for Students.

Beyond this statistical analysis of the SAWS results, a qualitative analysis of Elder and Student demonstrated wisdom reveals dramatic differences between Elders and Students. In particular, personal reflections and class assignments reveal important differences in the way Elders and Students conceptualize wisdom and knowledge not captured by the SAWS inventory. Finally, our qualitative coding indicates generational differences in demonstrated wisdom for all five of Webster's SAWS dimensions.

Qualitative Analysis

Elders and Students were asked to reflect on the difference between knowledge and wisdom as a homework assignment. Their responses demonstrate similar conceptions of knowledge, but strikingly different understandings of wisdom.

Wisdom vs. Knowledge

Knowledge

Overwhelmingly, Elders and Students agree that knowledge is comprised of "facts one learns." As Margaret, an Elder and English-born editor says: "Knowledge is a collection of facts, ideas, and information." Elder Kayla agrees that knowledge is comprised of "dates, facts, demonstrable things, learned things." Likewise for Students like Cassie, knowledge includes "numeracy skills, historical facts, or even the process by which a car's transmission can be fixed."

There is also consensus between Elders and Students regarding how one gains knowledge. Alisa, an Elder born and raised in Montreal says simply, "Knowledge is acquired through learning"; 18-year-old Annabelle essentially agrees, saying that you get knowledge by being "taught by a teacher with facts in their brains." She adds, "A person who is knowledgeable is usually a professor of some sort, usually with a masters in some science course and PhD. Why? Because professors are all usually just full of facts and so they are very knowledgeable."

This chorus of agreement from Elders and Students about the nature of knowledge as a collection of epistemic claims about the world derived through explicit instruction seems to encompass most learned factual information. What it excludes, however, are lessons learned from life experience. As Annabelle says, “Knowledge does not take into account the experience of a person and the lessons learned from them.” Learning through experience is the domain of wisdom. While both Students and Elders agree that life experience is an important part of wisdom, they understand the fundamental nature of wisdom differently.

Elder Wisdom

For Elders, wisdom is a process of integration and interpretation of knowledge in light of life experiences. As Elder Kayla says, “Wisdom is the integration of experiences and learning within one’s life.” She explains: “Wisdom is subjective. Two people may learn the same facts and have similar experiences, but the wisdom that comes out of it may be different.” An even more subtle distinction between factual knowledge and wisdom is drawn out by Margaret, age 76, who says, “Facts and experience and learning hopefully add up to some kind of wisdom, which enables one to make sense.” Audrey, an Elder who enjoys travelling agrees: wisdom is “Knowing what to do with your knowledge.” These reflections demonstrate that, for seniors, wisdom is an active practice of integrating facts and experience. As Adam, the oldest Elder in our study at age 89 says: wisdom is the holistic negotiation of “how you live your life in view of what you have experienced.”

Student Wisdom

Students have a much less richly-developed understanding of wisdom, representing wisdom through a series of metaphors. The most prevalent is wisdom-as-an-object-of-value. Students employ this metaphor insisting that wisdom must be “cultivated,” “accumulated,” and “stored” within people. As Josh, a Student in the Army Reserve says, “Studying *Angela’s Ashes* with Elders makes accumulating wisdom easier.” Cassie, Josh, and Jessica add that reflecting on experience is the mechanism by which Wisdom is “cultivated,” “gained,” or “obtained.” Once a quantity of wisdom exists, it is stored in the body as Jessica says: “Leo Tolstoy is a writer who I believe is full of wisdom.”

The second dominant metaphor used by Students to explain wisdom is wisdom-as-a veiled-mystery. In this view, certain experiences allow wisdom-seekers the opportunity to see a bit more about wisdom’s true nature. As 18-year-old Josh says: “Wisdom is easier to glimpse when we study ideas and literature in intergenerational forums.” He explains, “I find that studying ideas with a diverse group of people actively discussing them helps to illuminate wisdom more than if the same ideas were solitarily pondered.”

These two metaphors: Wisdom-as-a-valuable-object and wisdom-as-a-veiled-mystery’ are strikingly different than the understanding of wisdom put forward by the Elders, who see the exercise of wisdom as a life-guiding practice of integration and interpretation. Whether this difference is developmental or generational is impossible to determine from our cross-sectional study; however, as we will show next, this conceptual difference regarding the way Elders and Students understand nature of wisdom translates into differences in demonstrated wisdom between Elders and Students along all five of Webster’s SAWS dimensions.

Demonstrated Wisdom

Webster (2003, 2007; Webster et al., 2011) proposes five dimensions understood to be necessary but not sufficient conditions for wisdom: (a) Reminiscence and Reflectiveness, (b) Openness, (c) Critical Life Experience, (d) Emotional Regulation, and (e) Humor. Wise people are able to integrate these five dimensions into a holistic world-view that has the emergent property of wisdom (Webster, 2007). Although statistical analysis of responses to the SAWS inventory completed by Elders and Students suggests no significant generational differences in wisdom, qualitative coding of Students' course work and class reflections reveal important differences in how they demonstrate wisdom on each of these five dimensions, and in how they understand these dimensions.

Reminiscence and Reflectiveness

Bates and colleagues (Baltes & Smith, 1990; Baltes & Staudinger, 1993, 2000; Staudinger, 2001) argue that critically reflecting on one's own past, present, and future life is essential for wisdom. Webster adds that reminiscence and reflectiveness are dynamic and interdependent processes that enhance both personal strengths and weaknesses. Table 1 shows the coding scheme we used for reminiscence, with examples from our data.

There are many more instances of reminiscence for Elders than for Students (Elders = 35, Students = 16) (Elders $M = 3.18$, Students $M = 1.77$), particularly autobiographical reminiscence (Elders = 11, Students 3) (Elders $M = 1.0$, Students $M = .33$). Francis, now 81, remembered a time growing up in Montreal in the 1940s when a child set his dog to attack her because she was Jewish. The event is still so salient to her that she says, "Until this day when I think of it I can still hear my scream." The class reflection assignments seemed to provoke this type of self-transcendent reminiscence in Elders. Mark, now 62, opens a reflection assignment saying this: "Even as I write these words, my thoughts are quite a whirl with recollections of some of those days." Elders are particularly adept at projecting themselves along their own autobiographical timeline.

TABLE 1
Demonstrated Reminiscence in Elders and Students

Reminiscence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Autobiographical Reminiscence Mental travel within one's own life story (both into the past and projected into the future) 	<i>"Even as I write these words, my thoughts are quite a whirl with recollections of some of those days."</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Past and Future Generations Imagining the experience of someone in the future 	<i>"I love to hear what the Students have to say; makes me feel very good about the future."</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Generation Gap Reflecting on changes in Education, Society and Values 	<i>"There was no telephones, no cars, no cell phones, not even proper cement roads but dirt country roads. This really resonated in my head because it's so different from today."</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Learning from Personal Experience Learning from one's own experiences ● Learning from Vicarious Experience Learning from accounts of experiences 	<i>"As we get older, we see things differently-we call it experience." "I liked that many of the seniors could provide lots of insight about the characters and experiences that we (the younger generations) don't have."</i>

Adam demonstrates his temporal understanding of himself and his experiences saying this: “Between Frank’s school and today’s school there is some sort of scale, of a continuum. The thought occurs to me that I have a story to tell that might put a late 1960s dot on the graph between those two points . . .” Students seem to be less adept at mentally projecting themselves backwards and forwards across their own life course.

While Elders are more likely to learn from reflecting back on their own personal experiences, Students were more likely to report learning from hearing other’s experiences (Elders = 9, Students = 22) (Elders $M = .81$, Students $M = 2.4$) Heather, an 18-year-old Student, wrote that hearing Elder’s stories made events from history feel more urgent: “History has always been a subject of interest for me, but hearing it from real life people made it that much more hard-hitting. We learn about WWII and the holocaust in school, but putting a face to the stories was a different learning experience entirely.” She continues, “There is definitely a generational difference in the stories we shared, but hearing it in first person sort of lessened the distance between us.” As Josh said when reflecting on the nature of wisdom, “I find that studying ideas with a diverse group of people and actively discussing them helps to illuminate wisdom more than if the same ideas were solitarily pondered.” This process can also give Students perspective on their own circumstance, as Tomas reflects: “Hearing the struggles the seniors has to go through made me more sure about myself and the challenges I’m currently facing in my life.” In many ways, Students’ willingness to learn from others’ experiences signals another of Webster’s five wisdom dimensions: Openness.

Openness

Openness to alternative ideas, according to Webster (2003), allows wise people to optimize efficient performance and allows the acquisition of new skill sets that can help solve future problems; by contrast, people who are unyielding and resist conflicting opinions are unwise. Table 2 shows the coding scheme we used to code our transcripts for openness, with examples from our data.

Both Elders and Students demonstrated openness throughout the course of their time together in the classroom (Elders = 29, Students = 41) (Elders $M = 2.63$, Students $M = 4.55$). The inter-generational classroom environment stimulated both Students and Elders to actively re-examine their own values and beliefs (Elders = 11, Students = 23) (Elders $M = 2.20$, Students $M = 3.29$). As Cassie, a self-described “young, White, first-generation Canadian queer, feminist girl” says, “This week really made me ‘check’ my assumptions around elderly people. My expectations of

TABLE 2
Demonstrated Openness in Elders and Students

Openness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Learning from Shared Experience-Learning from the discovery of shared experience ● Self Reflection-Thinking critically about one’s self (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities for improvement) 	<p>“The universality of experience simply put can bring us all closer. We can understand one another. Talk to one another, Listen and respect on another.”</p> <p>“I have always thought of myself as a do-gooder person. I derive satisfaction by enhancing the lives of others. I was tremendously surprised, this morning at the very real likelihood of also being enhanced myself.”</p>
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the seniors was clearly rooted in the systemization/essentialization of seniors. The group is engaged, and the dialogue is stimulating.” Annabelle, a Student who enjoys working with special needs children, was surprised at her own willingness to open up to the seniors: “I did notice in this class that during the course of the study I opened up and revealed a lot about myself that I didn’t really think I would.” The seniors also demonstrated a willingness to reexamine themselves and to be changed by the experience of the intergenerational classroom. Mark, age 62, remarks, “I have always thought of myself as a do-gooder person. I derive satisfaction by enhancing the lives of others. I was tremendously surprised this morning at the very real likelihood of also being enhanced myself.”

Additionally, both Elders and Students report learning from the discovery of shared experiences (Elders = 7, Students = 4) (Elders $M = .64$, Students $M = .44$) As 70-year-old Sophia remarked: “I think that the sharing of memories made us realize that although we are years apart, the feelings we experience are not so different. I think we have learned to appreciate the other generation more.” Annabelle, age 18 agrees: “I found it interesting that though we have such an age gap between all of us, we still think the same way.” Following a show-and-tell exercise, both the Elders and Students commented on the similar themes that emerged in discussion. Josh, age 18, notes: “There was a unifying element to most of our class’s show-and-tell pieces.” Margie, an Elder who shared with the class what she had learned from the death of her husband, expands on this idea: “Similar themes resonate, i.e., love and the importance of a family member. Magical thinking—comforting memories. These were topics common to both Students and seniors”; she continues, “The universality of experience, simply put, can bring us all closer. We can understand one another. Talk to one another. Listen to and respect one another.”

Critical Life Experience

Wisdom, Webster (2003, p. 14) maintains, “Emerges during the exigencies of life, the rough and tumble of every day existence.” Drawing on Kramer (1990), he argues that wisdom is not a matter of age or quantity of experience but rather the quality of those experiences, the way they are managed, and the lessons learned from them. Table 3 shows the coding scheme we used to code our transcripts for critical life experience and provides examples from our data.

Our analysis reveals that both Elders and Students are able to draw lessons from critical life experiences (Elders = 29, Students = 18) (Elders $M = 2.63$, Students $M = 2.0$). Cassie, a

TABLE 3
Demonstrated Critical Life Experience in Elders and Students

Critical Life Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Factual Lessons: Propositional, Gaining knowledge about the world ● Procedural Lessons: Strategic knowledge ● Life Guiding Principles: Abstract generalizable principal to organize propositions-that change you as a person-action guiding 	<p>“Sometimes adults do not know everything.”</p> <p>“Its really not the adversity or the obstacles or all the terrible things that can happen in life, but how a person copes with them.”</p> <p>“What matters more than what you say is what the other fellow hears.”</p>
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high-school senior who felt the intergenerational classroom was a safe sharing space, writes: “As horrifying/embarrassing/pathetic as being vulnerable can feel, vulnerability is honesty, and it makes me feel most alive. Communicating my truths and feelings is my preferred form of self-care (most of the time).” This sentiment is similar to that of Margaret, age 78, who simply says this: “The good life is worth living for itself.”

Despite the capacity of both groups to learn from life experience, Elders are more likely than Students to extrapolate life guiding principles from their experience (Elders = 13, Students = 5) (Elders $M = 1.8$, Students $M = .56$) such as “take the chance when it arises” (Sophia 70) or “what I learned from this event is that it is important to stand up for your rights.” (Francis, 81). By contrast, Students were more likely to draw a direct lesson from something they had done in the past, saying that they would do it again in the future. (Elders = 3, Students = 9) (Elders $M = .27$, Students $M = 1.0$). As Annabelle says, “Like don’t wait for the day before the test to study and don’t drink 5 cups of coffee while pulling an all-nighter to study”.

This finding is consistent with past research. Bluck and Glück’s (2004) Wisdom-of-Experience study found that older adults reported having gained a life philosophy from important life events while adolescents were more likely to draw a direct lesson and less likely to generalize to a life philosophy. This greater ability of Elders to use knowledge in specific cases is characteristic of adults and seniors tested in Germany (Glück, Bluck, Baron, & McAdams, 2005). Further adult development is often characterized by postformal reasoning and case-based reasoning that integrates cognition and affect (Labouvie-Vief, 1990), something considered essential to wisdom as far back as Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* (Aristotle & Apostle, 1984).

Emotional Regulation

Over the past 30 years, wisdom researchers have acknowledged that affective regulation and emotional sensitivity play key roles in wisdom. (Ardelt, 1997; Ardel & Ferrari, 2014; Clayton & Birren, 1980; Holiday & Chandler, 1986; Kramer, 1990; Orwoll & Perlmutter, 1990). Webster (2003, p. 14) agrees that “Recognizing, embracing and employing emotions in a constructive way is a benchmark of wisdom.” Table 4 shows the coding scheme we used to code our transcripts for emotional regulation and provides examples from our data.

Both Elders and Students are able to distinguish among subtle mixed emotions (Elders = 29, Students = 11) (Elders $M = 2.63$, Students $M = 1.22$): Reflections on the show and tell activity

TABLE 4
Demonstrated Emotional Regulation in Elders and Students

Emotional Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Emotional Homeostasis-Acceptance of positive and negative 	<p><i>“John’s last journey, our last, is pivotal in my life. Acceptance of the inevitable without rancor or regret taught family and friends not to fear death.”</i></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Emotional Knowledge-Noticing and commenting on emotional experience 	<p><i>“I am a little jealous of Frank.”</i></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Group Characteristics-Incoming expectations about other group and outgoing impressions of other group 	<p><i>“My fear that they will think that I am an unruly hooligan has not yet been appeased.”</i></p>

were particularly steeped in emotions. As Margie, age 73, says, “The story of ‘The Gold Necklace’ touched me deeply as the young woman presenting showed a depth of experience, I feel, that is rarely exposed in a group. Her narrative was poignantly expressed with compassion (and) acknowledgement of her own pain and hopes.” Cassie, age 18, is clearly adept at distinguishing between subtle emotions in herself and others. She reflects, “There is an odd sort of pleasure in being able to witness another person in a state of reflection. Even when stories evoke sadness or disappointment or humiliation, it is powerful to be part of another person’s experience of sharing—or purging.”

Despite the shared ability to distinguish between mixed emotions, Students are more concerned about their ability to confront conflicting opinions, as demonstrated by their nervous anticipation of the presence of the Elders in their classroom. (Elders = 0, Students = 15) (Elders $M = 0$, Students $M = 1.66$) As Cassie says, “I am concerned that my politics might conflict with those of some of the new-comers and I will not feel comfortable enough with the group to contribute to the discussion/express my thoughts and experience in relation to the book.” Annabelle echoes this sentiment, commenting, “Some of the things the seniors say I disagree with and sometimes I tell them I disagree but I am afraid they will think I am disrespectful. I’ve always been taught never to argue with your Elders, so I am at war with myself.”

Both Elders and Students demonstrate the ability to maintain emotional homeostasis with regard to everyday issues; however, accepting and being open to both positive and negative states during moments of dramatic life change seems to be a skill born from necessity and is more likely to be found in those with more life experience. Joanna, age 75, demonstrates this ability as she tells the story of being reunited with her remaining family in Europe after the second world war: “Then my cousin Paulette and her husband Leon rush in and fall all over us, they are so happy to see us. I look around at the remains of my family and thank G-d (G-d notation is preserved from original journal reflection.) we are alive and together.” Margie poignantly recalls the end of her husband’s life, showing the ability to integrate positive and negative emotions: “Death, a very natural event took my husband more than a decade ago. It feels like forever ago and yesterday. Thankfully there was warning. Thankfully, because we had time to talk openly and bravely. John’s (last journey, our last, is pivotal in my life) acceptance of the inevitable without rancor or regret taught family and friends not to fear death . . . Thanks honey. Deep breath. Smile.”

But Elders are not the only ones whose life experience allows them to acknowledge the good and the bad in life, as Bulgarian Student Gloria demonstrates with the story of her recovery from serious childhood illness.

As months passed by I got stronger and better. I gained weight and was able to digest soups and popsicles and my mom started letting me go to school. That part of my life sticks with me every single day. Every day I return to the hospital I am reminded by the feeling of weakness and loss. My mom told me recently, years later, that the doctor said if I hadn’t gone to the ER on that particular day I wouldn’t have made it. I can’t seem to grasp that as a concept yet but I’m terribly worried by how relaxed I felt that day. I constantly wonder if that’s what death will feel like. I hope so but for now I take yet another breath.

As this quote suggests, wisdom is not a matter of age but rather stems from managing difficult life experiences. As Webster (2003, p.14) argues, “It is not accumulated general experience per se that leads to wisdom, but in contrast, experiences that are difficult, morally challenging, and

TABLE 5
Demonstrated Humor in Elders and Students

Humor	• Irony	<i>“I’ve also learned that walking around my neighborhood at night during the winter is much safer than in the summer (gangs don’t like the cold in my area it seems).”</i>
	• Self Effacing Humor	<i>“I later went on to make a career in computer software development. It is sobering to realize that, in today’s world, I am best described as a “Model-T mechanic.”</i>

require (or perhaps enable) some degree of profundity.” This finding is consistent with Hartman (2000) and Mansfield, McLean, and Lilgendahl (2010), who found that successfully negotiating stressful life events promotes wisdom development.

Humor

Webster (2003, p. 15) adds a systematic investigation of humor to previous wisdom research, insisting that “just as not all types of experience contribute to wisdom, not all types of humor contribute to wisdom: sarcasm, teasing, and caustic humor may have their place, but they are not the province of wisdom.” Table 5 shows the coding scheme we used to code our transcripts for humor and provides examples from our data.

The quotes in Table 5 provide some evidence of humor in Student and Elder reflections; but because humor has an element of interpersonal spontaneity, it was not well represented in our written data. More humor was probably present in classroom banter and social interactions than in written class reflection assignments.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Discussion

Our qualitative findings show both Elders and Students are actively engaging the dimensions of wisdom identified by Webster, although they tend to demonstrate each dimension in slightly different ways.

There are many more instances of reflection for Elders than for Students, particularly autobiographical reflection, indicating that Elders are more adept at mentally projecting themselves backwards and forwards across their life course. While Elders are more likely to learn from reflecting back on their own personal experiences, Students were more likely to report learning from hearing other’s experiences. Both Elders and Students demonstrated openness throughout their time together in the classroom. Our data show that the intergenerational environment stimulates both Students and Elders to actively reexamine their own values and beliefs. Additionally, both Elders and Students report learning from the discovery of shared intergenerational experiences. Both Elders and Students are able to draw lessons from critical life experiences, however Elders are more likely than Students to extrapolate life-guiding principles; by contrast, Students were more likely to state how something they had done in the past influenced what they would do again in the future. Our analysis of emotional regulation in Elders and Students reveals

that both groups are able to distinguish among subtle mixed emotions. However, Students are more concerned about their ability to confront conflicting opinions, as is demonstrated by their nervous anticipation of the presence of the Elders in their classroom. We also see examples of humor, although too few to make any systematic analysis.

Thus, we find that both Elders and Students are actively engaging Webster's five wisdom dimensions, but tend to demonstrate them in slightly different ways. Taken together, these findings show that discussion-based intergenerational classrooms are an excellent environment for stimulating wisdom development in both Elders and Students, and that qualitative analysis of class assignments are an important supplement to self-report questionnaire assessments of these wisdom dimensions.

Implications for Educational Policy

Our intergenerational wisdom study shows the potential benefits of implementing intergenerational educational programming on a larger scale, especially in classrooms that allow for group discussion and personal interaction among Students of different ages. It also supports the UNESCO Institute for Education's (Kaplan, 2001) argument for an educational paradigm shift towards intergenerational integration by providing data that show how intergenerational classroom environments can help promote the development of wisdom in both Elders and Students.

Programs that promote psychological wisdom have been shown to increase life satisfaction over and above physical health, financial well-being, and physical environment (Bergsma & Ardel, 2012; Ardel, 1997; Baltes, Smith, & Staudinger, 1992; Bianchi, 1994; Clayton, 1982; Hartman, 2000). This suggests that there could be significant psychological benefits for all those involved in intergenerational programming. Indeed, both Elders and Students in our study spontaneously report psychological benefits of the intergenerational classroom experience. As 18-year-old Cassie says, "Being around people of age who have maintained a lust for learning—even the sort of learning that happens within a high-school classroom!—makes me feel hopeful. Elder Joanna agrees saying, "I am finding this whole experience quite exciting, interesting, fun and am learning quite a bit from it."

With these benefits in mind, it is important to prioritize government funds towards integrating health care and education, a synergy that would save resources and promote psychological well-being within the whole community. This call to action is echoed by Strom and Strom's 2012 proposal *A paradigm for intergenerational learning* and Sánchez and Kaplan's (2014) *Intergenerational learning in higher education: Making the case for multigenerational classrooms*. These authors argue that multigenerational classrooms can help students become more aware of themselves and their generation and to gain understanding of other generations, broaden their perspective in "social, psychological, and temporal dimensions" of class-material and, with the right classroom dynamics, to experience new "possibilities of intergenerational interaction and cooperation."

Our participants clearly demonstrate their interest in future interactive intergenerational programming. As Elder Francis says, "I cannot help but think that this was a wonderful experience for both groups. Hopefully this kind of project will be done again in the future." Student Jessica bitterly laments missing a few classes with the Elders due to sickness saying "I am glad I was part of this, I just wish I could make up for the days I have missed. I will always remember this

class and the wonderful people I met in it. It was truly an amazing experience and I will miss them all dearly.”

The education policies of most high schools strive to develop knowledge and expertise; however, intergenerational classrooms broaden Students’ perspective, allowing both Elders and Students to benefit immensely from the kind of social interaction considered essential to teaching for wisdom.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Limitations

Low power due to our small sample size ($N = 23$) and the short duration of the teaching for wisdom intervention may have contributed to the lack of observed differences between Elder and Student wisdom as measured by Webster’s SAWS. Our results may also be culturally and generationally specific, limiting their generalizability. Just as wisdom has been conceived differently in different cultures and at different times, cultures vary in expectations regarding intergenerational exchange. In North America, a relatively egalitarian relationship is presupposed between Students and Elders, where it is considered appropriate for Student opinions to be heard and respected alongside elder opinions (Kaplan, 2001)—an assumption not shared globally (Kaplan et al., 1998). Thus, these findings may be limited to the North American educational context; however, within the contemporary North American context, we believe our findings to be robust and widely applicable.

Future Research

Future research could build on these findings by establishing whether quantitative increases in wisdom result from intergenerational learning environments. This would require a longer intervention and a larger sample size than was possible in the present study. It would also require measurement tools that can capture the differences in how Students and Elders understand the fundamental nature of knowledge and wisdom. Our study shows that Elders and Students are both able to answer self-report questionnaires wisely; however, our analysis of course work reveals striking differences in how Students and Elders demonstrate and conceive of wisdom. Future intergenerational wisdom researchers will be challenged to find a quantitative measurement tool that moves from self-report of wisdom to accessing these behavioral differences.

In sum, a closer integration of senior lifelong learning programs with high-school education is mutually beneficial: Education needs to become a more holistic and personally enriching affair that integrates diverse members of society across generations.

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