Developing Global Models for Gerontology and Geriatric Education

Margaret A. Perkinson, PhD
2013 GSA Post-Conference Forum
Advancing an Agenda for Global Aging & Health
Overview

• Two global models for gerontological education
• Background on Guatemala
• NAPA-OT Field School in Antigua, Guatemala
• Participatory Action Research with residents of C. Vieja
Two Models for Global Aging Education

**NAPA-OT Field School**

- **Participants/ Learners**
  - Anthropology & OT faculty and students
- **Goals**
  - Experience first-hand different cultural context
  - Integrate and apply anthro & OT concepts, methods, and practice within a Guatemalan hogar (residential care facility)
  - Enact future roles in gerontology within that context
  - Sensitize to impact of culture on experience of aging & elder care

**Participatory Action Research**

- **Participants / Learners**
  - Local community members/advocates for older adults
- **Goals**
  - Research *with* the community, not *on* the community
  - Develop a local research team by teaching research methods/skills and involving them as partners in our study of aging in Guatemala
  - Raise consciousness of challenges and resources of aged villagers
  - Use research findings to improve practice and policy
  - Develop sustainable gero research
Guatemala Population Pyramids
2010 & 2050

Haub & Gribble 2011. Population Reference Bureau
Aging in Guatemala: Window of Opportunity

• National health priorities: prenatal care, reproductive health, infectious and parasitic diseases

• Brief window of opportunity to lay the groundwork now for future needs of older adults
NAPA-OT Field School in Antigua, Guatemala
NAPA-OT Field School in Antigua, Guatemala

• Only field school based in the American Anthropological Association

• Faculty from USC, U of Arizona, Oxford, U North Carolina-Chapel Hill, UC Berkeley, Emory

• Students from USA, Australia, Japan, Netherlands, Ghana
Field School Curriculum

• Orientation
• Spanish language training
• Weekly seminars and guest lectures
• Three areas of fieldwork
  – Gerontology: Casa Maria (residential care)
  – Early Childhood: Hermano Pedro
  – Disability Studies: Transitions-Independent Living Ctr
• Field trips: Local health care settings, home-based clinics, curandero
Daily Life in Antigua
Living with Host Family
Gero Team Field Trip
Lake Panajachel
Casa Maria: Residential Care Facility for Older Guatemalans
Casa Maria: Residential Care Facility for Older Guatemalans
Privately- run, founded 1995

Building One
Approximately 15 residents

Building Two
Approximately 45 residents

The sleeping areas are dormitory style and separated by gender with individual beds for each resident.
Casa Maria Staff

12 nursing assistants; 13 others (cook, housekeeping, maintenance, administration)
Casa Maria Residents

- 65 Residents; 30 men
- Age Range: 48-95; average=78
- Most have no family or absent family
- Diverse life experiences: Travelers, boxer, English speakers, dancers, teachers, ex-mayor
Gerontological Research: Interviews & Assessments
Ethnography: Social Dynamics

- Social networks and friendship patterns
- Helping behaviors
- Kinship relationships: sisters
- Romantic relationships
Ethnography:
Social Roles

• Quasi-staff roles
• Community go-between
Gerontological Practice: Group Activities

Used research to inform practice
Developed and led occupation-based groups
Group Activities: Food Preparation
More Exercise
Individual Therapy

Feeding, positioning, functional mobility
One-on-One Therapies
Adaptations
Provided In-Service Training for Staff

- Managing aggression and agitation
- Performing safe transfers
Joint Seminars w/ Rehab Department, Universidad de San Carlos
Part of the Community
Research & Practice Morph to.....
End Results!
Participatory Action Research/
Community-Engaged Research

• Research **with** the community vs. **on** the community
• Addresses a topic of importance to the community
• Collaborative research partnership approach
Toward Transformative Action

• Information gathered informs action to address community-defined issues (Wallerstein, 1999)
Dual Role of PAR

• To collect information on a relevant topic and use that information to inform change

• To develop research skills of co-participants; co-learning and capacity-building
Fr. Walter: Initial Stage in Developing a Partnership

- Interview with Fr. Walter
- Learning the parish organization and needs
- Writing the research proposal/Introduction to Fr. Walter’s system
- Passing the test and his additional recommendations for participant observation
- Our first meeting with our research team
- Fr. Walter’s public stamp of approval
PhotoVoice Methodology

• Initial orientation and informed consent
• Provide training in:
  – Research ethics
  – Photography
  – PhotoVoice methodology
  – Conduct a “practice run”
Data collection – take pictures
Each researcher selects best 4 pictures
Individual discussion/interview of the photos
Focus group discussions of photos
Transcribe and analyze for reoccurring themes/patterns
Dissemination
Reflect and Discuss
Graduation!
Advocacy Stage

• Photo Exhibits
• Next steps: Follow-up group session to discuss what to do with our data
• Sustainability of project: Research team’s plans to continue using PhotoVoice
The Ultimate Connections