Factors Associated with Selecting Gerontological Social Work as a Career

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Agenda

- Introduction to research
- Review of literature
- Research question(s) /area
- Research approach and design
- Progress to date!
- Reflections

INTRODUCTION
Background

- Changing Demographics
- Low interest
- Mixed attitudes
- Low knowledge

INTRODUCTION
Problem Area!

- Studies provide inconclusive results
- Focus on deficit
- Recruitment to profession

Review of Literature

- The Aging Population

- Student Attitude Toward, and/or Knowledge About Older Persons

- Interest in Practice Area of Aging as a Career

The Aging Population

- International, national and provincial implications

- Fastest growing population group in Canada today

- Increase in median age

- Differences between west and east

- Oldest age group (over 80)

- Mixed focus on healthy aging versus a deficit orientation

Student Attitude Toward, and/or Knowledge About Older Persons

- Ageism

- Numerous studies! (1978 >)

- Primarily quantitative – convenience samples; variety of tools

- One qualitative study (1996)

- 4 Canadian (2 Canadian social work)

- Results indicate mixed attitudes and lack of knowledge

Interest in Practice Area of Aging as a Career

- Historical evidence of lack of interest in social work services and education aimed at needs of older persons

- Primarily quantitative studies focusing on level of disinterest in this practice area (1978-2004)

- Convenience samples

- One unpublished Canadian Social Work Masters thesis

- In 2003-2004 a few qualitative studies emerged supported through Hartford Institute in US

Summary of Literature in Area supports proposed research

- Demographics

- Mixed attitudes; lack of knowledge

- Low interest

- Dependency on quantitative research methods

- Lack of Canadian, social work research

Research Questions/Area
(Note: In Classic Grounded Theory – question emerges in beginning stages of research)

Why do you, as a social work student, want to work with older adults when you graduate?

Research Questions/Area

- **Describe yourself as a person interested in working with older adults.**

- **What do you believe are the factors which have impacted on your decision to work with older adults?**

- **Why does working with older persons interest you?**

- **(Additional questions will be pursued as they emerge.)**

Research Questions/Area

- **Gender:**
- **Age:**
- **Educational background:**
- **Marital Status:**
- **Children:**
- **Family of Origin:**

Classic Grounded Theory

- Developed by Glaser and Strauss (1960's)

- Several approaches to grounded theory

- "A set of integrated conceptual hypothesis systematically generated to produce an inductive theory about a substantive area"

Research Approach and Design (Data Collection and Analysis)

- Data collection and analysis occur simultaneously

- In-depth interviews (purposeful sampling and theoretical sampling)

- As data is collected and transcribed it is analyzed line by line using open coding

- Instances of events, processes or occurrences are grouped together into categories eventually with properties/sub-properties

Research Approach and Design (Data Collection and Analysis)

- A core category emerges when it is mentioned many times and connected to other categories
- Constant comparative method is the heart of the process
- Development of theory and categories
- Writing of the theory

Research Approach and Design (Population Selection)

- Non probability purposeful sampling

- Theoretical sampling

- Invitation to participate through posters, e-mail, faculty in gerontology/health courses, and web site

Research Approach and Design (Scientific Rigour)

- In classic grounded theory rigour is based on detailed elements of the strategies used for collecting, analyzing, and presenting data when generating theory

- Emerging data must fit, work, be relevant and modifiable as well as embrace parsimony and scope.

Research Approach and Design (Scientific Rigour)

1. Rigorous methods for doing fieldwork in order to provide data that are systematically analyzed;

2. A credible researcher; and

3. A philosophical belief in the value of qualitative research

PROGRESS TO DATE!

- Ethics Application approved by the University of Calgary and Memorial University

- Invitation to participate circulated through e-mail at U of C and Memorial

PROGRESS TO DATE!

- Interviewed 8 female students in Calgary (1 BSW and 7 MSW students)

- Interviewed 2 female BSW students in NL

- 6 (4 female and 2 male) additional are students willing to be interviewed

- Transcribed all interviews so far using field notes and commenced ongoing analysis

REFLECTIONS TO DATE!

- Number of students who have volunteered appear to mirror level of interest as indicated through previous research.

- At U of C the majority of students were MSW – at MUN are BSW

- # of males reflect general composition of programs

REFLECTIONS TO DATE!

- Core category has not solidified.

- Several themes are beginning to emerge.

- Beginning to hear similarities between interviewees stories.

REFLECTIONS TO DATE!
Very tentative!!!

- Impact of early life experiences

- Exposure to positive role models

- Education (coursework, practicum)

- Job opportunities

- Sense of social justice

Where to from here?

- More interviews
- Ongoing analysis
- Categories
- Core Category
- Writing

Where to from here?

- A theory to help us understand why some students want to work with older persons

- Theory to be used in recruitment, admission and training of students

- Cross-disciplinary implications