

# Millennial Nursing Students' Experiences in a Traditional Classroom Setting

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# What the Experts Say About Millennial Students....

## Say it Isn't so....

- Are characterized as being sheltered, special, confident, team oriented, achieving, and pressured, who regard themselves as having high self-esteem and a belief they you are unique.
- Want structure and require frequent, positive reinforcement
- Bring unique characteristics and technological skills to the traditional nursing classroom (this is true!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!)
- Hold different generational attitudes toward education and learning styles as well as different expectations of nursing faculty as compared to previous generations of undergraduate students.

# The “Rub”

- The characteristics and needs of Millennial students create challenges to traditional teaching methods often used in nursing programs.
- Traditional teaching-learning approaches within nursing programs have been noted to be disengaging for current students – “Death by Power Point”; an overloaded curriculum with a limited amount of time to cover required content

# Faculty & Students Generations Apart

- Millennials, individuals between 18-24 years of age
- Average of nursing faculty 57.1 years
- This age gap and generational attitudes toward education and learning have generated much perplexity and consternation among nursing faculty and frustration and disengagement among students

# What is Needed and What Academics Do Not Know

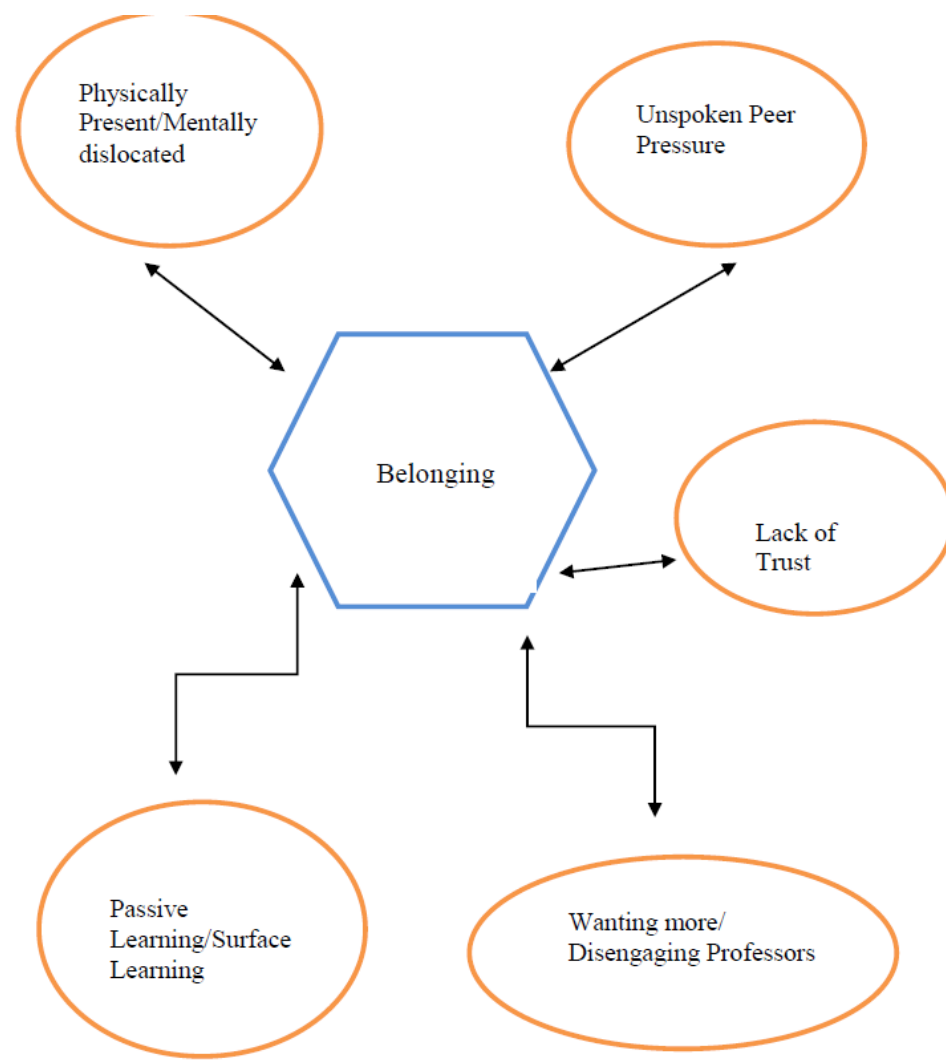
- Teaching that amplifies students' preferred way of learning while aligning with program standards and criteria for student progression in the program.
- While there is an abundance of literature to describe this generation, there is *scant literature* that has examined what these learners seek within a traditional classroom environment to actively engage in meaningful learning.

# The “5 R’s” of Effective Teachers

- 1) **relevance** of information being taught (with minimal lecturing)
- 2) **rationales** for assignments in a course
- 3) a **relaxed** teaching atmosphere and nature of a faculty member to allow informal interaction
- 4) a **rapport** with faculty member to demonstrate interest in students as individuals
- 5) **research-based** methods to input active learning to maintain their attention

# Study Purpose

- The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze the lived experience of millennial undergraduate nursing students in traditional nursing classrooms that include their interactions with nursing faculty.
- Specifically to replicate a study by Toothaker (2014)





# Study Design

- qualitative study; interpretive phenomenology inquiry
- multi-site study at six schools of nursing in Pennsylvania
- 220 undergraduate millennial students participated in the study.
- 8 focus groups conducted; one focus group was conducted with five of the participating schools and three focus groups were conducted at one site

# Sample Characteristics

- majority were female (N = 193; 87.72%); 27 (12.27%) were male
- predominately white (N = 165; 75%) with 55 minority students (25%)
- average age of 20.6 years and a grade point average 3.46

# Data Analysis

- all recorded interview responses were transcribed into an electronic text file and the typed text was compared to the audio recordings
- Text was re-reread while listening to the taped interviews to ensure accuracy of data and to become immersed in the data

# Data Analysis Process

- Immersion
- Understanding
- Abstraction
- Synthesis and Theme Development
- Comparison of Themes
- Illumination and Illustration of Phenomena

# Themes

# Theme 1: Being Physically Present but Mentally Dislocated

- *“If I thought if it was going to be a more productive three hours, then I think I’d try and push it a little farther along, but knowing that it’s going to be like nothing [the lecture], I just kind of check out a little earlier.”*
- *“A lot of the teachers go right off the PowerPoint reading so there are no interactions. They’re literally just reading the words from the slides that you already have so you feel no obligation to pay attention because you can just go back to the PowerPoint because all the information that they say is from the PowerPoint.”*
- *“So if I’m not really there it’s okay, because I have to go home and teach myself the material anyways.”*



# Theme 1: Being Physically Present but Mentally Dislocated

- *“I show up because of the grade, I feel like it’s engrained in our heads, if you don’t show up you’ll fail. “*
- *“3 hours once a week is really difficult ....the first hour or so I’m very focused and I can pay attention but as it goes on, I’m just getting tired. I’m getting overloaded with information and I just start thinking about things that aren’t class-related.”*
- *“....feeling like it [3 hour lecture] literally is never going to end”*

## Theme 2: Disengaging Professors and Wanting More

- *I feel like you can tell when a professor is very genuine about wanting to teach you and wanting you to actually learn and retain the information and if they're not it seems as if kind they're showing up for a paycheck, they go through all the slides and say they did their job.*
- *Some professors talk in circles and they can't explain a concept as clearly as others. When they say it in a way we can understand and like keep moving, get through all the material without us feeling overwhelmed that really makes a difference for me.*
- *If they are reading exactly what's off the PowerPoint and not going deeper and not bringing clinical practice and their experience into it, I'm not benefiting from their teaching. I could just download the PowerPoint, read it, memorize the information and regurgitate it, versus applying it with questions and kind of like discussion and teaching.*



## Subtheme: Lack of Trust

- *I don't like when faculty members are not organized. I like when faculty members have structure and they communicate with their students thoroughly. [When they say] this is what we're going to be doing in the upcoming weeks, or when they say when assignments will be due. I don't like when faculty members just bring up things at the last minute, that really peeves me and I don't appreciate when they're not clear in what they expect from us or what they want.*
- *If they can't answer the question then I'm kind of wondering, like, why am I here, why are you teaching this class?*
- *I don't like it when they say look it up or I'll [faculty member] have to go back into my notes and get back to you on that one. It's like why are you teaching the class... they will not engage anymore...I'm just frustrated that you don't know what we're going to be tested on.*

# Subtheme: Lack of Trust

- *You can tell if they are not looking at the material or if they really know their material very thorough, in-depth, they don't even need the material to look at when they are doing a lecture or they make eye contact with you or when they are talking they are not stuttering or making comments like "oh, uh, I think, err".*

# Theme 3: Surface learning

- *“....they [professors] have to get through so much material so it’s like reviewing the surface and then you have to go home and almost teach yourself and learn all of that information because you’re not going to learn it in that 3-hour time period. So if I’m not really there [mentally engaged] it’s okay, because I have to go home and teach myself the material anyways.”*
- ***“Exams are a knowledge dump”***
- *“at the end of the day we need to pass the exams to move on [progress in the program] so that kind of takes precedent.”*

## Theme 3: Surface learning

- *“Now as I look back to last year’s material ... I can’t remember pharmacology and all the material...there’s so much on the exam and I’m just kind of focusing on the material and once it’s over I’m like okay I can forget about it.”*
- *“They [faculty] just list the drugs, so then you’re just trying to pound these four names into your head and you don’t even know what they’re doing you’re just trying to memorize them so you’ll recognize them on the test.”*
- *College, in general, has turned into being more goal-oriented instead of journey-oriented. So the point of me coming to college and spending heaps and pounds of money, is so that I get that degree. I’m just trying to do what I have to do and why I came here.”*

## Theme 3: Surface learning

- *The information is so dense and overwhelming for that one test there's no way you can remember everything no matter how hard you try*
- *I'm really good at memorizing stuff so before an exam I can memorize 10 packets and nail the exam and then maybe 2-3 weeks later I might forget the material and I think that's really bad on my part..."*
- *You can just kind of load it into your head and then dump it on the paper. With all the difficult classes I have to take, if I can take that out on a couple of them, I'm going to do it.*
- *This is so scary to me, I'm almost going to be a nurse and I can't remember so much stuff.*

# Theme 4: Wanting Respect and Dignity from Professors

- *Multiple times in which I studied ahead and I had specific questions I would email professors and then it would come up to the test day and I still won't have a response from them and I'll go in [into the exam] still not knowing the answer. I was prepared enough to ask in advance so I should get an answer from the professor.*
- *(after emailing a professor), (I see her) in person and asked "did you get my email" and the response I got was "yeah, next to my other hundred emails"*
- *Don't tell us we didn't study, because I personally studied all weekend and just barely passed.*
- *We've had teachers that will question us "why or how don't you know that" and just kind of look at you and this makes people afraid to ask them questions.*
- *One time one of my friends asked a question and she was immediately scolded for asking*
- *They (professors) never want to hear your opinion.*

## Theme 4: Wanting Respect and Dignity from Professors

- *I feel like professors are quite condescending sometimes- not like all professors but a select few in particular are very rude and at one point when we did well on a test, and our professor went off on us and was like I'm writing all the questions next time so they're going to be super hard, which was like kind of punishing us for actually doing well on a test, which doesn't happen very often.*
- *She's extremely condescending and talks at you not to you and I'll ask questions and she'll make faces like "why would you ever even ask something like that" or "how do you not already know this, you're a senior, you're graduating" and like, I can't be scared into learning.*

# Essence of the Phenomenon

## Disenfranchised Learning

- Occurs when the presentation and the delivery of lecture content is disorganized by faculty members who are disengaged in the teaching-learning process.
- Compounded when limited and sometimes negative interactions occur with faculty, which limit millennials' ability to learn, hinder their investment in learning and they simply disengage from learning within the classroom environment.
- How we teach undergraduates students with content-laden, three hour lecture periods is ineffectual and leaves our learners wanting more.



# Additional Findings

- When students ask what will be on an exam it reflects their honest request for some direction in managing their time to study given the enormous amount of content for an exam
- Death by Power point is created by the faculty member not the medium itself
- Three hour class periods are not effective for sustained learning
- Age of a faculty member is not the issue but what matters most is the relevance of information and the professor's engagement in the topic and the students
- Humor helps with engaging with students
- Make the topic real, faculty telling their stories about clinical practice in a dynamic and effective way for students' learning and ability to stay connected during the lecture

# So what does this all mean?

What are relevant characteristics for a faculty to be effective in the classroom:

1. enthusiasm and knowledgeable about the topic
2. organized with a plan for the lecture
3. use the Socratic Method with respect
4. demonstrate their desire to be in the classroom and teach
5. respectful attitude and treatment of students
6. able to use technology
7. **act like decent human beings**

# Implications for Nursing Programs

1. Hire faculty who have teaching skills and enjoy teaching
2. Hold faculty accountable for their behavior and treatment of students
3. Teach and hold faculty accountable of teaching practices that reflect the “5 R’s”
4. Take a “deep dive” into the structure of three hour classes and a content-laden curriculum

# Implications for Nursing Programs

5. Consider that Millennial students are perhaps NOT so different from past generations but more vocal about their needs...
6. Trust that Millennial students ARE hard working, driven ,and care deeply about learning
7. Consideration of the risk in **not** making changes which may be quite costly to future generations of students and their ability to provide high-quality care to patients upon graduation.

# Final Thoughts.....

As teacher-scholars, our teaching practices should reflect what we teach our students about clinical practice – it is both an art and a science. Being an effective academician, sound pedagogy is only half the role; the art of mentoring and caring for students is pedagogy’s equal.

The intersection of effective teaching and the care taken in cultivating young scholars exemplifies a robust education. Likewise, we teach students to embrace the phenomenon of presence with those they care for in the clinical setting. Being present to students, respecting their journey to becoming a professional and being at the “education bedside” aptly applies to teaching practices.

The reality suggested by these study’s findings is that how we teach undergraduates students with content-laden, three hour lecture periods is ineffectual and leaves our learners wanting more.

# Thank You

Reflections, Comments, Feedback, and Discourse are  
Welcomed!

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