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Benefits of an Intergenerational Program on the Health and Wellbeing of Older Adults in a Day Treatment Program

Full Text of Presentation

## **Introduction**

According to the Geriatric Mental Health Foundation (2008), 45–50 percent of adults older than age 65 have experienced depression. Social engagement promotes well-being, in both the elderly and pediatric populations. Intergenerational programming is designed to link members of younger and older generations for mutual benefit (Newman and Smith, 1999). Current research states that as social roles are lost later in life, the opportunity to engage in pro-social, contributory activities are a beneficial way to maintain life satisfaction and psychological well-being (Morrow-Howell, 2010). Intergenerational programming provides opportunities for adults to interact with children, their peers, and materials in a hands-on manner. There is a gap in the current literature that demonstrates the need for an intergenerational program that focuses on promoting well-being while increasing social interactions had by older adults. The purpose of this study is to describe how a 5-week shared-site intergenerational program increases well-being in older adults.

### *Research Questions:*

- Can a shared-site intergenerational program increase emotional well-being in elders participating in respite care?
- Can a shared-site intergenerational program increase interaction between preschool-aged children and elders in respite care?
- Can a shared-site intergenerational program facilitate social engagement in elders and preschool-aged children (from elders perspective)?

## **Methodology**

This study is a mixed-method design that includes both descriptive statistics and a qualitative, phenomenological approach. The participants in the study were asked to participate in a 5-week intergenerational program at a shared-site location (Generations Crossing) in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Each week participants met and were encouraged to engage in meaningful activities such as gardening, exercise, crafting, etc. The Intergenerational Observation Scale (IOS) was used during activities to examine the physical and social environment in the intergenerational setting. Data collected from the Intergenerational Observation Scale was used to determine how well intergenerational programming supported social interaction and positive affects between the two generations. It was our hypothesis that upon completion of this five-week intergenerational program, qualitative and quantitative data analysis would depict that the intergenerational program benefitted the older adults.

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The IOS is an assessment used to capture elements of the physical and environmental aspects of the social environment during intergenerational programming. It can be used to determine how well programming can effect social interaction and positive affect in one or both generations (children/ older adults). Behaviors and affect exhibited is the main focus of the IOS assessment. Five adults were observed for social interaction behaviors and displays of affect.

Surveys were given to each adult staff member after each session to record their assigned participant's affect and if they had noticed any changes throughout the session compared to other days. At the completion of the program, the staff was asked two additional questions referring to their assigned participant's change in affect, alertness, overall participation in activities over the previous five weeks.

Week 1: Partner Yoga

Week 2: Drawing our partner

Week 3: My Partner's favorite things collage

Week 4: Making Valentines

Week 5: Planting seeds with our partner

### **Results and Conclusion**

Data is currently being analyzed and will be complete by March 31, 2016.

Conclusions will be drawn at the completion of the data analysis. Implications for practice and future research will also be drawn at the completion for data analysis.