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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Intergenerational programming during the pandemic: Transformation during (constantly) changing times

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Abstract

Intergenerational programs have long been employed to reduce ageism and optimize youth and older adult development. Most involve in-person meetings, which COVID-19 arrested. Needs for safety and social contact were amplified during COVID-19, leading to modified programming that engaged generations remotely rather than eliminating it. Our collective case study incorporates four

intergenerational programs in five US states prior to and during COVID-19. Each aims to reduce ageism, incorporating nutrition education, technology skills, or photography programming. Authors present case goals, participants, implementation methods, including responses to COVID-19, outcomes, and lessons learned. Technology afforded opportunities for intergenerational connections; non-technological methods also were employed. Across cases, programmatic foci were maintained through adaptive programming. Community partners' awareness of immediate needs facilitated responsive programming with universities, who leveraged unique resources. While new methods and partnerships will continue post-pandemic, authors concurred that virtual contact cannot fully substitute for in-person relationship-building. Remote programming maintained ties between groups ready to resume shared in-person programming as soon as possible; they now have tested means for responding to routine or novel cancellations of in-person programming. Able to implement in-person and remote intergenerational programming, communities can fight ageism and pursue diverse goals regardless of health, transportation, weather, or other restrictions.

BACKGROUND AND AIMS

From 2019 to 2050, the population of older adults will nearly double from 9% to 16% representing 1.5 billion of the total 9.4 billion global population (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2019). Responding to this population aging involves addressing outdated, ageist stereotypes that are known to be implicit and subconscious (Allen, 2016). Ageism, or prejudicial attitudes, stereotyping, or behaviors towards an individual or group based on their age (Butler, 1969) can be positive (e.g., B. R. Levy, 2001), but most are negative with corresponding impacts on the health of current and future older adults. For example, although older adults are often viewed as vulnerable and in need of care (Berg-Weger & Morley, 2020), health professionals may not respond to older patients' concerns as proactively as they do with younger patients (Ouchida & Lachs, 2015). Even older adults' attitudes about their own aging have been associated with rates of chronic disease and mortality (Allen, 2016). Ageism toward older adults hurts young people, also. Holding ageist attitudes results in their internalization (B. R. Levy, 2009), which contributes to poor health when they become self-relevant. Thus, ageism affects current and future older adults.

Over the past 20 years, age stereotyping and prejudice have become more negative (Ng et al., 2015), with ageist views noticeably heightened during the global COVID-19 pandemic (Spaccatini et al., 2022). Older adults have been disproportionately affected by social isolation (e.g.,

Derrer-Merk et al., 2022) as well-intentioned officials emphasized the frailty of older adults and issued stay-at-home orders specific to older age groups (Hwang et al., 2020). Isolation may have seemed necessary as the risk of older adults becoming severely ill from the COVID-19 virus is greater than the rest of the population, but it further compounded institutional age segregation, which Hagestad and Uhlenberg described as both a source and consequence of ageism (2005). Fortunately, while many older adults experienced increased social isolation during this time (Derrer-Merk et al., 2022), studies in the United States revealed that not all experienced increased loneliness or decreased mental well-being (Sandman, 2020).

Intergenerational programs, those that intentionally link younger and older persons of non-adjacent generations for mutual benefit (Generations United, 2018), have been employed to tackle ageism for decades (e.g., Jarrott et al., 2021). Like a string of falling dominos, age segregation results in ageist stereotypes (Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2005) that lead to avoidance of older adults (Kidwell & Booth, 1977) and eventual self-embodiment of those stereotypes, which can result in poorer health in late life (B. R. Levy, 2009). In an effort to prevent or stop this harmful sequelae, youth and older adult serving organizations, including university educators, integrate intergenerational approaches to service provision (e.g., Butts & Jarrott, 2021; Chamberlain et al., 1994; Lytle et al., 2020). Reflecting the mechanisms by which intergroup contact reduces prejudice and promotes positive attitudes towards a disparate group (Jarrott & Savla, 2016; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008), these programs strive to reduce anxiety and improve knowledge and empathy with regards to the outgroup.

Framed within objectives of achieving developmental goals (Graves & Larkin, 2006), utilizing available resources (Butts & Jarrott, 2021), and responding to community need, an overarching aim of intergenerational programs is to reduce ageism by promoting positive attitudes towards the other age group (Pinazo & Kaplan, 2004). For example, children's participation in frequent intergenerational programming has been associated with enhanced empathy compared to children without facilitated intergenerational contact (Femia et al., 2008). Experience Corps strives to improve the reading scores of children in kindergarten through third grade and enhance generative accomplishment of the older adult volunteers working with the children (Gruenewald et al., 2015). Youth support technological skill development among older adults while the young people gain self-efficacy in the Cyber-Seniors program (Leedahl et al., 2019). Thus, intergenerational programs serve diverse objectives via positive intergenerational contact that also serves to reduce or prevent ageism even if ageism measures are not administered to participants. Some researchers have even associated intergenerational program participation with positive long-term impacts on attitudes towards older adults (Thompson & Weaver, 2016). The intergenerational programs cited here relied exclusively on in-person contact before COVID-19 (Canedo-Garcia et al., 2017).

Among the four U.S. projects in our collective case study, one project involved young children. Primary objectives related to addressing factors associated with food insecurity. An intergenerational approach was chosen to support an ancillary goal of preventing or reducing ageism among the young people as they worked with older adult partners. Other cases in the current analysis involved university students, another commonly targeted group for ageism reduction interventions (Jarrott et al., 2021)

American youth in higher education also have opportunities to join intergenerational programs. Beyond harnessing talents to address community need, experiential learning is designed to enhance student learning and increase interest in work with older adults by connecting subjective experiences with objective course content (Whitbourne et al., 2001). Undergraduate students involved with intergenerational service-learning have demonstrated improved positive attitudes toward older adults (Andreoletti & Howard, 2018; Lytle & Levy, 2019; Martin, 2019), increased

knowledge of aging (Lytle & Levy, 2019; Martin, 2019), a greater appreciation for older generations (Martin, 2019), and more positive ideas about growing older (Kalisch et al., 2013). Such efforts are further enhanced at universities that adopt Age-Friendly University principles (see Montepare & Brown, 2022).

Within the context of higher education, programming intended to reduce ageism via intergenerational contact should be planned to allow students to appreciate the value of aging in their lives and society as a whole. The intergenerational PEACE model (S. R. Levy, 2018) to reduce ageism builds on Allport's intergroup contact hypothesis (1954). Levy specifies two essential conditions of the higher education experience for students studying aging: (a) factual information on aging that incorporates positive role models that challenge ageist stereotypes and (b) "positive contact experiences with older adults that are individualized, provide or promote equal status, are cooperative, involve sharing of personal information, and are sanctioned within the setting" (p. 226). Three cases in our collective case study represent intergenerational service-learning programs using intentional programming, integration with education related to aging, and positive contact with older adults inside and outside of the classroom.

Implementing intergenerational programming amidst the COVID-19 pandemic has required creativity, partnership, and dedication. COVID-19 brought a halt to virtually all in-person intergenerational contact in the U.S., at least temporarily. While the pandemic caused a global and sudden cessation to activities, intergenerational programming is routinely cancelled or postponed due to poor weather or contagious illness, particularly when a vulnerable population is involved (Generations United, 2018). The need for safety precautions and continued intergenerational contact were both amplified globally during the pandemic, leading many to modify or innovate ways to engage generations rather than eliminate contact for extended periods. Some groups transferred programming from in-person to virtual using technology (Generations United, 2020) to connect people across large distances and offer synchronous and asynchronous engagement (Baker et al., 2018). Others found the technological requirements prohibitive (Juris et al., 2021), using low-tech methods to connect. Remote programming offered many programs the opportunity to continue or even expand intergenerational programming.

Collaboration with community partners to adapt in-person intergenerational programming in response to forced physical isolation and emergent need due to COVID-19 ties our projects together even though they were conducted in different states and with varied youth and older adult participants and community partners. Despite serving diverse program goals, each aimed to reduce ageism and promote positive attitudes towards older adults. Using case data from four projects based in five different states (Colorado, Florida, Ohio, Rhode Island, and Virginia), we identified methods to tailor intergenerational programs amidst COVID-19 safety precautions. Broadly, modifications included adapting planned programming for remote delivery and shifting or adding energy to respond to emergent needs identified by community partners while maintaining their programmatic foci and continuing challenging ageism. Programs involved diverse participants engaged in varied programming ranging from food security to arts to technology. In each case, programs responded to the increased need by involving more youth and older persons than in-person programming had or would have permitted; technology facilitated this growth in three of the four cases. What ties these cases together is the authors' and their partners' commitment to reducing ageism and supporting participants' development using strengths-based approaches in which young and older community members serve as resources to each other. Addressing ageism with theory- and evidence-informed integrate programming supports a healthy old age for current and future older adults. Most projects developed strategies they plan to maintain post-pandemic.

METHODS

Our collective case study (Stake, 2003) allowed authors to first examine their individual instrumental case studies before working as a group to organize around the issue of maintaining intergenerational contact in the face of safety precautions that prohibited in-person contact. This method provided a unique opportunity to look for particular, or unique, information of each U.S. program as well as patterns across settings, participant populations, and geographic locations. Findings may generalize to other organizations adhering to safety guidelines while upholding their commitment to reduce ageism and address the needs and opportunities for intergenerational contact.

Following, representatives from each program provide bounded case data (Stake, 2003), including background and particular information on program goals, implementation before and during COVID-19, participants, outcomes, and lessons learned. These details are summarized in Table 1. We identify patterns in how cases maintained intergenerational contact with remote strategies to reduce ageism and support varied goals.

Individual case analyses

Case study 1: Adapting an intergenerational program during a global pandemic

Background

Community-based organizations in Colorado formed a collaborative in 2017 to address ageism and social isolation using intergenerational programs. We utilize a capacity-building approach where organizations are supported by a team of professionals who support program development, implementation, and evaluation. The intergenerational programs operate under contact theory, which posits that providing individuals an opportunity to connect on equal ground to achieve a common goal will reduce prejudice (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998).

One program supported by the collaborative, the Photography and Memory Project, has offered cohorts of undergraduate students and community-based older adults the opportunity to share family photographs and the stories that accompany them. Storytelling through photographs provides a medium where participants can connect, find commonality, break down barriers, and overcome preconceived notions (Flottemesch, 2013). When asked about the strengths of this program and the potential for overcoming conflict between the generations, staff discussed the importance of "exposing similarities rather than differences between generations."

Program implementation

The program occurred in-person March-June 2019 ($n = 33$), in a virtual format from March-June 2020, when organizers pivoted due to COVID-19 ($n = 28$), and remotely again from March-June 2021 ($n = 39$), albeit with more time to prepare for an online format. In 2019, participants met at the local library three times over a 10-week period to share photographs. Students and older adults were partnered and given a prompt (e.g., "If your house was on fire and you could only save one photo, which photo would you choose and why?") to help guide selection of photos and the stories behind them to share with each other. At the end of the program, students and staff compiled these stories and photographs into a published keepsake book that detailed their experiences together.

TABLE 1 Program characteristics

	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4
State	Colorado	Florida	Rhode Island	Ohio and Virginia
Initiative/Program	The Photography and Memory Project	Mentor Up: Ask a student	URI Engaging Generations Cyber-Seniors & related IG initiatives	Food for a Long Life
Program goal(s)	To address issues of social isolation and ageism across all ages	Combat ageism, support positive intergenerational relationships	Promote student professional development and reduce ageism & improve tech skills, social connectedness for older adults	Improve healthy food access, knowledge, consumption
Guiding theory	Contact theory	Positive Education about Aging and Contact Experience (PEACE)	Knowles theory of andragogy, social-cultural learning theory, & Contact theory	Contact theory
Youth participants	University undergraduate students	Undergraduate students	University students	Preschoolers
Older adult participants	Older adults from the local community	AARP Florida members, Westminster Communities residents	Senior center participants	ADS participants
Frequency/Duration	3-4×/quarter (10-week period)	5-weeks	~3-4×/Semester	Monthly/9 months
Content	Sharing personal photographs and life stories	Virtual technology training	Technological apps, programs, and resources	Healthy food and education, social connection
Delivery mode	2019: In-person; 2020 and 2021: virtual	Virtual/Zoom	Mix of in-person & remote	Remote

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4
Outcomes assessed	Ageism (towards both older adults and youth), and connectedness between generations, as well as qualitative prompts to inform program improvement efforts	Ageism, course concept comprehension	For students: perception of older adults and aging and interest in working with older adults For older adults: technology use, digital competence, social isolation, loneliness, quality of life	Capacity building to respond to lifespan needs and maintain intergenerational ties
Lessons learned	While virtual programming has benefits (able to recruit from larger geographical area and flexibility with scheduling and transportation), it has drawbacks (difficulty maintaining engagement and technology access issues).	Positive interactions with older adults contribute to combating age stereotypes, promote connection, and stimulate links to course content	University-community partnerships work & pandemic can be a catalyst to pilot initiatives to meet heightened but long-standing community needs (social isolation for older adults).	Identifying shared needs in crisis may reduce ageism. Maintaining organizational partnerships during COVID-19 increases likelihood of resuming in-person IG contact and continuing to address ageism

In the wake of COVID-19, staff had 2 weeks before programing started to shift to an online format. Staff ensured that participants had the required technology (e.g., computer, internet service) and skills to participate. While the in-person format required participants to meet as a large group at a predetermined time and location, participants now scheduled their online sessions with partners. The third iteration of the program utilized a mix of virtual partner meetings and virtual large group sessions to discuss their photos and the program.

Participants completed surveys at the beginning and end of the program that included quantitative questions about program impact, ageism, and connectedness between generations, as well as qualitative prompts to inform program improvement efforts. For the in-person program, the research staff distributed surveys in-person; for subsequent years with online programs, surveys were adapted for distribution online through Qualtrics. While utilizing an online survey for data collection was less time-intensive for the researchers, it resulted in noticeably lower response rates (Year 1: 100% response, Year 2: 90.3% response, and Year 3 76.5% response).

Participants

The age range of students was 18–38 (mean = 21.47, SD = 3.97). The age range of older adults was 53–96 (mean = 72.04, SD = 8.69). Age ranges did not differ significantly between program years or modalities. Upon reviewing the race/ethnicity of participants, older adults in the program across all 3 years were primarily White, non-Hispanic (between 84.6% and 94.4%). Students came from more racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds during the in-person program (18.75% of students identified as White, non-Hispanic) compared to survey respondents in the online programs (about two-thirds identified as White, non-Hispanic). Most participants identified as women across all three program years. While no income data were collected on participants, the online format may have influenced the type of participants who self-selected to participate in a program that required computers, video call equipment, and internet service, potentially skewing the sample in 2020 and 2021 to include those with more financial resources.

Outcomes and lessons learned

The prevalence of ageist beliefs held by participants decreased, both for students towards older adults, and older adults towards students. Participant comments further demonstrated the program's positive impact on ageism and intergenerational experiences. One older participant in 2019 reflected on the partnership with a student, stating, "…we have so much in common in spite of a 52-year age difference." Another older adult commented, "[The program] helped me understand that some of the young people do care and understand." Students affirmed a reduction in their age biases as evidenced by one student, "[The program] gave me a new level of respect for the elderly." In 2020, data were also collected in a follow-up survey 30 days after the program ended, when participants had discontinued contact. Findings indicated non-significant trends of sustained positive effects on students' attitudes towards older adults. Increased ageist beliefs about students held by older adults demonstrates the importance of ongoing interaction between the generations to reinforce more positive and accurate age-related beliefs. Findings indicated no significant difference outcomes for in-person compared to online formats.

Levels of connectedness between participants from different generations were also assessed. Participants reported on a scale of 1–4 how much they connected with someone from a different generation, with higher scores indicating greater connection. Students and older adults reported genuine connections with an individual of another generation in both program modalities; however, the extent to which the felt connected with another was significantly lower in both online iterations for older adults, mean in 2020 = 3.25 (SD = .83) and 2021 = 3.33 (SD = .47) compared

to the in-person program, mean in 2019 = 3.70 (SD = .48), $p < .05$. Conversely, students reported no significant difference in connection between in-person and online modalities, mean in online programs in 2020 = 3.60 (SD = .49), and 2021 = 3.12 (SD = .76); mean for in-person program in 2019 = 3.64 (SD = .50). Finally, online participants reported a preference for in-person connections. One older adult commented on the virtual format "[I]…wish[ed] we had just a bit more time together, but with COVID restrictions I understand it was hard to allow."

Given the positive feedback from participants and staff, the collaborative plans to expand the program, thereby increasing the number of participants who may experience a reduction in ageism through program participation. While some participants preferred the in-person format, the potential benefits of the virtual format became apparent. Virtual programming during the pandemic allowed staff to recruit older adults from a larger geographical area. Additionally, the use of technology offered scheduling flexibility and resolved transportation issues that were previously reported. One limitation of the virtual format related to accessibility, as participants needed access to video conference technology and internet service. Another challenge with the virtual format was maintaining engagement throughout the program. Noted in the first virtual offering, staff increased the number of sessions from four to seven over the 10-week period and offered group meetings during the second iteration. This approach improved retention and engagement but the added demand on staff strained capacity. Future iterations will work to keep participant engagement up and minimize the demands on staff. Fortunately, given evaluation data that indicate positive impacts on reducing ageism and promoting connections, the collaborative and program staff remain committed to the Photography and Memory Project. Current initiatives include: (a) exploring ways to offer a mix of virtual and in-person meetings, including gallery showings of photos and books; (b) developing toolkits to ease and expand implementation; (c) identifying resources for technology and in-person meetings; and (d) funding technical support to reduce staff strain.

Case study 2: Keeping intergenerational programming alive during the pandemic through collaboration & technology

Background

Our public university in New England joined the Age-Friendly University network in 2018, to share our strengths and capitalize on growing interest in intergenerational programming and learning. We have many connections to healthcare and community-based partners working with and on behalf of older adults across the state. Our university offers an intergenerational Engaging Generations Cyber-Seniors Program that connects students with older adults to assist the older population in learning to use technological devices and programs to enhance their lives. This program, which utilizes a partnership-based approach, has operated since 2016 as a predominantly in-person model. Interns and service learners from across campus are often placed at senior centers or other organizations offering education or service options for older adults (Leedahl et al., 2019). Overall intergenerational programming at our university is guided by the social exchange theory (Wan & Antonucci, 2016), which posits that relationships between individuals are often guided by the pursuit of rewards and benefits and the avoidance of costs and difficulties. Because this program offers mutual benefits to both generations (i.e., older participants learn technology; younger participants gain professional experience and course credit), we have designed the program to tap into people's desires for reciprocity and, ideally, their desires to learn from and about those with diverse perspectives from their own (Wan & Antonucci, 2016). Our program,

from a learning and development standpoint, is also guided by Knowles theory of andragogy (1980), sociocultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978), and contact theory (Allport, 1954), placing emphasis on the importance of drawing on personal experience and knowledge, providing social interaction personally tailored to people's interests and capabilities, and building trust and confidence across generations.

Rhode Island also has a dedicated Age-Friendly coalition formed in 2016 that includes community and state agencies, healthcare and social service providers, individuals of all ages, advocacy and faith-based organizations, businesses, academic institutions, and municipal leaders committed to healthy aging. Coalition members share a common interest in improving the lives of older adults, fostering cross sector opportunities to work together to deliver Age-Friendly impact, sharing best practices, and joining forces to advocate at the State and local level (Gangji, 2021). The Cyber-Seniors program and Age-Friendly coalition became critical resources to each other during COVID-19.

Program goals

Pre-pandemic, the objectives of the university Cyber-Seniors program were: (1) promote civic engagement and service-learning for university students, (2) help prepare health and human service professionals for careers in an aging society, and (3) improve social connectedness and enhance technology skills for older adults in Rhode Island. The Age-Friendly coalition's mission is to create partnerships, catalyst change, and building community that supports and empowers Rhode Islanders as they age. Importantly both groups were indirectly working to address ageism within the state with the university focused on reducing ageism among future health and human service professionals and the coalition focused on empowering older adults through effective partnerships and initiatives that reduce and combat ageism within the state.

Program implementation

When the lockdown occurred in March 2020, traditional modes of in-person intergenerational programming were prohibited, bringing standard Cyber-Seniors programming to a halt. Key program features included training students and then placing them at community sites to offer in-person, one-on-one or small group appointments to answer technology questions and share ideas. Having researched and witnessed the negative effects of social isolation for older adults, starting March 26, 2020 the Age-Friendly coalition convened a weekly workgroup focused on social isolation to understand the new landscape and work collectively at reducing social isolation among older adults by pooling knowledge, resources, and abilities. The weekly workgroup meetings consisted of scheduled speakers to help members learn what organizations and groups were doing across the state, updates from members on ongoing or upcoming activities/initiatives, and discussion around joint program ideas or additional partners to contact to aid with various ideas.

Attending to emerging priorities, one of the first activities involved partnering with the 2020 Census outreach committee to utilize students and other volunteers to call older adults in towns that typically had low Census response rates. The goal was to increase responses in historically undercounted communities, including older adults. Student callers encouraged older adults and their families to complete the Census and simultaneously notified them of available resources they might need due to COVID-19. In the end, 11,500 intergenerational, phone-based wellness checks to older adults were completed between July and October 2020, which contributed to the State's surprising success showing population growth and thus retaining all Congressional seats.

The social isolation workgroup grew over time, adding members as the pandemic persisted and risk of social isolation worsened. Members met virtually, which enabled a broader coalition base. The Census project was an early success, and we decided that this partnership-based approach could be used to reduce the harmful effects of social isolation. The workgroup focused on social isolation as it related to critical concerns of food acquisition, behavioral health needs, and digital inclusion (Juris et al., 2021).

A large emphasis of the public university and the workgroup related to digital inclusion of older adults. The university's efforts in this area positioned it to lead multiple efforts. Many older adults are affected by structural inequities that limit access to technology (Dassieu & Nadia, 2021). Technology can help lower older adults' social isolation and loneliness (Chen & Shultz, 2016). In Rhode Island, a Pew Research Center (Anderson & Perrin, 2017) study estimated that 41% of those 65 and older were not broadband users and 27% were not internet users. Our goal was to alleviate social isolation in the at-risk older adult population and combat COVID-exacerbated ageism (Buffel et al., 2020) by offering this programming to support older adults' continued learning, growth, and meaningful connections.

Participants

Prior to the pandemic, we often worked with five to eight organizations and included approximately 10 students who conducted in-person sessions with older adults. However, from May 2020 through August 2021, our university worked with 21 organizations across the state (12 in Summer 2020, 14 in Fall 2020, 19 in Spring 2021, and 14 in Summer 2021), offering technological support and assistance to older adults (many brand-new technology users) using mostly phone or Zoom-based assistance. The Rhode Island Office of Healthy Aging funded our university to implement and evaluate a pilot program that provides iPads, internet connection through Hotspots (if needed) for 1 year, and technology support to diverse older adults from communities hardest hit by COVID-19. To this end, we partnered with five community organizations to recruit and support 200 English- and Spanish-speaking older adults 50 years of age and older (age range: 53–95). University students provide technology training through individualized phone calls, and weekly Zoom meetings that share technology and community resource information while also creating community with participants. Older participants are required to meet their assigned student mentor regularly for 2–3 months and complete pre/post surveys and an interview to keep the iPads and retain internet connection through the year. Funding from Blue Cross Blue Shield allowed us to create robust interprofessional training opportunities for students from different majors. We now include 20–60 students each semester, and students can satisfy requirements of various classes or programs—helping via phone, Zoom, or in-person (adhering to COVID-19 protocols) from 1 to 20 or more hours per week throughout the semester. They also complete pre/post surveys, online modules, training with faculty, and reflection papers to build professional skills and positive relationships with older adults to work towards addressing social justice and combating ageism. As of September 2021, 165 older adults (40% non-White; 24% Spanish-speaking) joined programming.

Outcomes & lessons learned

Preliminary analysis from Spring 2021 ($n = 38$) indicated significant improvements in older adult participants' technology use, digital competency, quality of life, and social isolation. This research project is ongoing, and investigators have received additional funding to implement the program state-wide. Continuing program operation beyond Spring 2021 allowed us to analyze the experiences of 139 people who completed the program and associated surveys before, during, and after COVID-19 adaptations. With the survey students completed the Attitudes towards Aging

Psychology Growth Sub-Scale and responded to prompts: "Older adults are: ____" (with five adjectives), and "Has your perception of older adults and aging changed after volunteering? If so, how?" In a recent manuscript (Leedahl et al., 2020), we compared experiences of student participants during the pandemic to those of pre-pandemic students. From Spring 2020 to Fall 2021, 139 students participated in the program. The student participation has been as follows: Spring 2020 (seven students); Summer 2020 (12 students); Fall 2020 (40 students); Spring 2021 (30 students); Summer 2021 (17 students); and Fall 2021 (27 students).

Our long-term plan for the Cyber-Seniors program is to continue offering the iPad program with internet connections to community organizations across the state and continue to offer a mix of phone, Zoom, and in-person intergenerational program options to help address needs and address transportation barriers (for older adults and students).

The social isolation workgroup continues its work; from March 2020 through March 2021, 92 partner organizations attended the 37 workgroup Zoom calls, with an average of 29 participants each week, and the calls continue. The workgroup plans to continue meeting long-term; however, recent staffing changes are requiring the Age-Friendly coalition to re-structure and formulate new plans. The social isolation workgroup will be incorporated into the new plan.

Case study 3: Intergenerational service-learning during COVID-19

Background

Mentor Up intergenerational experiential learning stems from the idea that humans of all ages have a desire to be social, and social integration remains important in old age. The pandemic brought increased attention to the social isolation of older adults who were vulnerable to contracting COVID-19. The use of the term "Boomer Remover" in reference to COVID-19 deaths among older adults (Meisner, 2021) highlights negative attitudes toward this population increasing the social "distance" between generations. Loss of social activities and meaningful connections, perhaps due to this literal and metaphorical distancing, can result in subjective loneliness for older adults (Seifert & Hassler, 2020). This is not a new phenomenon. Pre-pandemic, loneliness impacted many in the US with 6%–15% of people aged 65 and older reporting feeling lonely frequently and reports as high as 50% for individuals aged 80 and older (Gerst-Emerson & Jayawardhana, 2015). Intergenerational programming encourages social contact and may reduce ageism. To that end, the positive education about aging and contact experiences (PEACE) model (S. R. Levy, 2018) informed program design of this Florida program. The PEACE model considers ageism a societal issue and highlights several integral features intended to reduce ageism, including accurate information about aging to dispel negative perceptions of older adults, positive older role models, and individualized and positive contact with older adults that includes conversation and sharing (S. R. Levy, 2018).

Program goals

We designed the virtual program to combat ageism through individualized technology training and positive intergenerational relationships. The pre-pandemic goals of the program did not require modification because social connectedness and ageism were consistently salient issues for older adults pre- to post-pandemic; rather, it was the program implementation that necessitated adaptations to meet the needs of our community in 2021. These modifications had to meet strict CDC and college guidelines related to COVID-19 safety, which did not permit students to engage in in-person programming with the outside community nor were guests allowed on

campus. These mandates reflected the state of Florida at the time of program planning with vaccines not widely available and daily average cases topping over 15,000 (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2022). The program, traditionally offered in-person at a local Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) from February to May in 2017, 2018, and 2019, shifted to a virtual pilot program in 2021 during the pandemic.

Program implementation

In Florida, our local AARP office received feedback late in 2020 that members attending virtual programming were unsatisfied with their social contact since quarantine. Responding to this need for social connectedness, we tied an intergenerational technology training program to a gerontology course at our small, private liberal arts college, which belongs to the Age-Friendly University Global Network. During the "pandemic pivot" we partnered with AARP to re-think the in-person *Mentor Up* program and offer a pilot version on Zoom. Our local AARP office had found that, although older community members could use a Zoom link to join a meeting, they lacked knowledge of lesser-known platform features (e.g., scheduling a meeting, sharing their screen, changing backgrounds, and using emojis). To enhance user competence and meet program goals, we collaborated with community partners, AARP and a multi-campus retirement community, to offer from March 2021 to May 2021 five one-hour virtual Zoom technology training sessions led by students. Key program features included having a technology training centered approach, engaging students in positive connections with older adults through conversation and sharing, and encouraging community. The program was offered to AARP members across the state and open to three retirement communities in our county. The faculty member (Shovali) worked with community partners to schedule the sessions, which participants registered for using an online platform, Cvent, managed by our local AARP office. Students were expected to participate in all sessions, which were held during class time.

To successfully engage students in this intergenerational service-learning project we introduced Mentor Up with our community partner, AARP. We viewed the engaging Cyber-Seniors (Rusnak & Cassaday, 2014) documentary upon which the Mentor Up program is modeled. Next, we explained how to structure sessions while attending to adult learners' needs for internet training (Shedletsky, 2006). Students also learned to monitor their pace of presenting information and offer to repeat information. We discussed the importance of avoiding ageist language and attitudes that students or older participants themselves commonly exhibit. Finally, we worked with students in groups to establish learning objectives (Howard, 1993), brainstorm potential barriers, and define what success means to them. We recognized overlapping themes across the groups and committed to helping each other overcome difficulties. Student goals for the program were to help participants become a community online, gain experience working with older adults, and build connections and friendships with participants.

Program participants

Sixteen undergraduate students enrolled in an elective introduction to gerontology service-learning course served as "mentors" in the program to older adult "mentees." A total of 31 older adults participated over the 5-week Mentor Up program in Spring of 2021. Participants were either AARP Florida members or resided in one of three Westminster Communities (i.e., independent living, assisted living, memory care and skilled nursing) in Pinellas County in Florida. Demographic data were not collected, although students were traditionally aged and older participants were at least 50 or older.

Outcomes and lessons learned

The results of the virtual pilot Mentor Up achieved some indicators of success, with several lessons learned. Promptly at the start of each session all participants and students were invited into the main Zoom room followed by welcoming remarks from the AARP Community Outreach Director, Retirement Community Regional Director of Lifelong Learning, and professor. Next, break-out rooms were opened with one older participant and at least two students. Across all sessions, participants asked questions about features of their smartphones, social media, navigating Zoom, or their smart televisions. Having more than one student in a breakout room helped maximize assistance with expansive technology knowledge across students. This practice also supported student goals to help each other. Once sessions concluded after 45 min, we invited all participants back into the main room where they shared their newfound Zoom backgrounds and emojis or what they learned during the session. Once older participants logged off, we debriefed with students.

Through this process we identified elements essential to program facilitation. First, no matter whether in-person or virtual, preparation helps students clarify their roles, ease concerns, and build positive attitudes toward older adults. Preparation tied to course objectives helped students identify their own ageist beliefs, in turn allowing for positive interactions. Students were required to complete reflection papers following each session from March to May 2021, providing information about their session activities, an analysis of their experiences, and three connections to class material. It was clear from these reflections that students did not just serve as mentors or older adults mentees. Learning was mutual and, as in other intergenerational service-learning projects (Lokon et al., 2012; Martin, 2019; McGowan & Blankenship, 1994), connection and respect toward older adults were formed. Student reflections could be categorized as combatting age stereotypes, connection and relationship building, and linking to course content. For example, one student reflected "I have identified areas to 'un-do' some of my ageist presumptions and will continue to work to foster a more open, person-centered approach [in my interactions with older adults.]" Another student highlighted the connection and relationships she built with her mentee, reflecting that "It was really nice to relate to someone from the older generation because in the past I always saw them as very distinct and different from [me]. Instead, I just saw her as a really nice, fun person that I would love to talk to again." Another student highlighted a specific change in ageist ideas about older adults reflecting course content about elderspeak "I will work in the future to speak as 'normal' as possible to every [older adult]. I will treat them as they deserve to be treated, as people… I feel that is my biggest takeaway, to treat all [older adults] as people just like you and me."

Logistically, consideration must be given to communication barriers. When students were in one room while meeting with older adults virtually, they wore masks in compliance with university guidelines for public spaces on campus. The older participants had difficulty hearing the students; thus, students were subsequently asked to join from their dorm rooms, where they were not required to wear masks. Connecting with students from their personal spaces reduced distractions and noise, which had been a problem for hearing-impaired persons when the group met in-person pre-COVID-19. The most significant challenge involved the impact of historical timing on participation. Launching the pilot in spring 2021, 1 year after the start of the pandemic, we received feedback that residents of the partner retirement community were fatigued from virtual programming. Although this may have impacted rates of attendance (i.e., average of six participants attending each session virtually compared to 22 in person), we believe that this also meant that we reached those most in need of help. Although we may return to primarily in-person Mentor Up in the future, we find value in offering the program virtually. Virtual programming enables

participation by some who found in-person attendance difficult. Given increased experience with virtual platforms that older adults, and younger adults, now have, there is the possibility of reaching people across the state if we adjust for virtual attendance in the future. Considering current uncertainties of the pandemic, we encourage others to not avoid intergenerational programming because of its complexities, but to embrace and learn from experiences.

Case study 4: Responding to Intergenerational food security and nutrition education needs with remote programming

Background

Drawing from theory and evidence that intergenerational programs can reduce ageism and address a range of other community needs, we applied intergenerational strategies to improve healthy food knowledge, access, and consumption among older adults and preschool children living in communities characterized by low healthy food access. This condition exists where persons consistently lack sufficient, safe, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food for healthy lives (USDA, 2019). Low access to healthy food contributes to poor nutrition and health, including chronic diseases (Flores & Amiri, 2019). Both children and older adults are at heightened risk of experiencing low healthy food access.

We chose an intergenerational approach for multiple reasons. First, it reflects authors' and partners' values for a strengths-based approach that views youth and older adults as a resource to each other. Second, children and older persons who are food insecure are more likely to live in multigenerational households (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2014) so an intergenerational approach offered opportunities for efficiency. Third, non-familial intergenerational contact offers young people an opportunity to learn about the diversity of old age; engaging older adult participants as models and mentors offered the children opportunities to build positive images of older persons, thereby preventing or reducing ageism. Tenets of intergroup contact theory (Pettigrew, 1998) guided programming as participants worked toward a common goal through cooperation, friendship, and equal group status.

Program goals

Having identified low healthy food access in the community, we sought to address factors associated with food insecurity and poor nutrition using community-based participatory research (CBPR) methods and evidence-based intergenerational practices. Food for a Long Life (FFLL) goals included improving youth and older adult participants' healthy food knowledge, access, and consumption. We anticipated that programming would improve nutrition and support positive intergenerational relationships associated with reduced ageism.

Program implementation

FFLL, a 5-year project that operated from September 2016 to August 2021, was implemented at four sites (two preschools and two adult day service centers) within communities of two states (Ohio and Virginia) identified as lacking access to healthy food. FFLL utilized a CBPR approach (Israel et al., 2003), an iterative method relying on communication among partners to study and respond to identified concerns. Importantly, CBPR draws on community strengths to build capacity to respond to community needs and opportunities. FFLL's community partners included county Extension educators, preschools, adult day programs, participants and their families, and area food pantries. In-person single- and inter-generational nutrition programming was

delivered bi-weekly until COVID-19 forced center closures. FFLL re-oriented programming to address heightened food insecurity and social isolation. The intergenerational ties between unrelated youth and older adults became remote when centers closed and need for food increased.

With county Extension educators, FFLL responded to increasing need for healthy food access by modifying and initiating partnerships to expand food pantry services for several hundred area families. In Ohio, food was delivered monthly to adult day service participants at the greatest risk of poor nutrition in May, June, and July 2020. When childcare centers re-opened, FFLL sponsored monthly food bags to center families and staff from January-June 2021. In Virginia, FFLL helped a food pantry serve a growing number of area families on a weekly basis from October 2020 to August 2021. These Cooperative Extension team members integrated nutrition education demonstrations during pantry pick up, providing demonstrations and resources outside, while masked and socially distant from families picking up pantry orders.

Educational and social programming continued, albeit in new ways. Single-generation nutrition education resumed in Virginia when the childcare center site reopened in the fall of 2020. FFLL sponsored training for preschool teachers at this school to learn to implement SNAP-Ed approved pre-K curriculum *Together, We Inspire Smart Eating* (WISE; Whiteside-Mansell & Swindle, 2017). While adult day service programs remained closed through spring 2021, efforts were made to connect youth and older adults remotely. In Ohio, phone calls and deliveries of care packages were made by university students to older adults from May 2020 to May 2021 to address the social dimension of good nutrition. In Virginia, preschool children shared messages (e.g., drawings or voice recordings) with adult day service participants, who received monthly nutrition and activity care packages.

Although FFLL programming continued to operate in support of program goals, some project objectives could not be met due to COVID-19 limitations. First, center closures and programming shifts prohibited collection of data gathered pre-COVID-19, which limited knowledge of the project's impact on healthy food access and consumption. Additionally, in-person, multi-generational programming was prohibited by COVID-19.

Program participants

With a CBPR approach, program participants included those considered to be a member of the community. In the case of FFLL, this encompassed youth and older adult participants and staff at the program sites, along with community partners supporting FFLL initiatives. Following is a description of participants in FFLL intergenerational programming during COVID-19.

Considering first the site affiliates involved with programming, 25 Virginia preschool students (ages 2–5 years old) received WISE nutrition education after returning to their preschool in autumn of 2020. They shared messages of care and encouragement with 120 Virginia PACE adult day services participants in 6 monthly nutrition and activity care packages. Responding to community needs, we expanded our reach beyond the four sites to include other community families experiencing low healthy food access. FFLL worked with community partners to provide 6 monthly food deliveries to 275 young children's and staff members' families affiliated with the Ohio childcare site. In Virginia, we collaborated with a food pantry operated by the church that also operated our partner childcare site; from October 2020 to August 2021 the pantry provided groceries to 47 families weekly. Finally, mini-grants were awarded in 2021 to support nutrition projects serving youth and older adults in the Ohio and Virginia communities where FFLL sites were located.

Though COVID-19 closures precluded most of our data collection plans, we were able to conduct annual interviews with community partners. In summer 2021, we interviewed X FFLL

affiliates of the Ohio and Virginia sites. The community partners were interviewed regarding their experience of the COVID-19 adapted programming. While we have described output from FFLL's COVID-19 response, the following reflects partner feedback from the annual interviews.

Outcomes and lessons learned

Using stakeholder feedback to provide sustainable programming by strengthening existing and creating new partnerships. The observation of one staff member that "it takes time [for the children and older adults] to develop these relationships and get used to [working together]" also applies to organizations. Consistent partnerships took time to develop and strengthen, with partners joining at different points in the study as need and opportunity arose. These partnerships were key to success as the Extension staff noted: "the relationship building was a big piece in our partnerships, building that relationship and that trust…[For example,] having the same consistent person at [the Virginia adult day services] was very helpful." Stakeholders were committed to these relationships, finding that they could help their primary audience by working to help their intergenerational partners as well. To illustrate, a FFLL representative described "we knew who to go to and that they were in support of [FFLL] and they were trusting of us and willing to work with us. I think that was the biggest piece of success…we saw a big change then."

FFLL staff helped partners remain connected during COVID-19, serving as a liaison who connected social capital and maintained organizational relationships. These ties allowed young and older participants to keep each other in mind, such as the children's contributions to the monthly packages delivered to home-bound older adults. One adult day services staff member described the boost that remote contact offered, "I think just mentally and emotionally [the packages] picked [the older adults] up a little bit to know that someone was thinking about them, because it was a tough year on everyone… especially on them when [the adult day services] closed."

Remote intergenerational contact during COVID-19 may make it easier for children, older adults, and program staff to return to in-person programming when it is safe and feasible to do so. One FFLL staff member from Virginia indicated: "the staff have genuinely missed and are asking for [intergenerational programming] to come back and 'when can that happen' and 'how can we be a part of it,' … [the adult day services staff] just wanting the little ones to come back, and they see that difference that it makes with [the older adults]." Another Virginia respondent described the value of resuming intergenerational programming as soon as possible: "it gave those kids a life experience to have that relationship that they may not ever have, and I think that was a huge success." In Ohio, another respondent working with adult day services participants after the center opened but while intergenerational programming remained prohibited described objectives to expand programming: "I feel really uncomfortable that these older adults are all age-segregated and I would love to bring in more people like … teenagers to be around older adults because…I want them to feel *seen* and *heard*." COVID-19 may have limited the opportunity for in-person intergenerational, but it highlighted the value of those relationships.

FFLL also formed new partnerships in response to COVID-19. An Extension partner described the impetus to partner with a local food pantry: "we don't have a choice'…we've gotta figure this out; the kids still need to eat." And FFLL stakeholders maintained their focus on nutrition by working with the food pantry to provide more food to a growing number of families while also offering nutrition education demonstrations and resources. By re-directing grant funds intended for in-person programming to support community mini-grants in Ohio and Virginia, FFLL worked with community partners to support project goals and respond to emergent intergenerational community needs. The community organizations used FFLL support to enhance

program sustainability. For example, the church-affiliated pantry was able to leverage the FFLL partnership to secure additional grant funding to make capital improvements to the pantry. In these ways, FFLL supported project goals, including sustainability of partnerships, uniting community strengths in a time of great need.

Key lessons included the importance of constant communication, flexibility, and sustainability. Central to the CBPR process, constant communication among project partners allowed for an efficient and effective pivot. In particular, steady communication by county Extension agents allowed partners who were identified earlier in the project to re-emerge as their expertise matched the shifting community needs.

By trusting in the CBPR process, FFLL operated within the constraints of COVID-19 while remaining flexible. As the pandemic evolved, community leaders anticipated that staff would need flexibility, and they avoided overwhelming staff with new, virtual programming. Through patience and flexibility, FFLL identified immediate community needs; meeting these needs required creativity and collaboration to deliver physical items rather than virtual intergenerational programming. Key community stakeholders were essential to comprehension of how to best meet community needs.

Moving forward, community sites plan to maintain several components of the FFLL intergenerational program after the funding period. Equipped with intergenerational experience and training, county Extension agents aim to infuse intergenerational elements into other Extension programming. For example, the preschool site that offered single-generation WISE nutrition education and supported the older adults' recreation activity packages would like to share in-person programming when permissible. The CBPR approach supported adaptive programming and evaluation while continuing to advance project goals, including enhancing the sustainability of an intergenerational food pantry and nutrition programming delivery after the grant ends. FFLL introduced intergenerational strategies to combat complex community issues and cultivated motivation for future intergenerational efforts beyond grant funding.

DISCUSSION

Conducting this collective case study, we investigated the phenomenon of facilitated anti-ageist intergenerational programming when in-person contact proved impossible. COVID-19 was the external force that arrested in-person intergenerational contact for participants in these U.S. cases, but authors are acquainted with other reasons, both routine and irregular, for cancelling in-person intergenerational programming. Insight to the phenomenon of responsive intergenerational programming supports our work and that of other practitioners planning intergenerational programs that might partially or exclusively adopt virtual contact. Several themes in the case data emerged. Overarching these is a theme of resilience; partnerships between youth- and older-adult serving organizations and universities possess phenomenal potential to leverage each partner's unique connections and shared commitments to achieve project goals while adapting to powerful contextual forces. Regarding adapted program implementation, themes demonstrate the centrality of community partners, the dynamic nature of long-term community partnerships, unique university resources, and the importance of preparing for virtual programming. Results from our case studies indicate the potential for partners to employ remote programming, often by incorporating technology, that meets shifting community priorities while furthering the projects' overarching goal of reducing ageism. Based in the U.S., findings from our collective case may hold relevance

internationally in communities with capacity to incorporate technological strategies to build and maintain intergenerational ties.

Collective case themes

Community partners are barometers sensitive to the circumstances of their focal populations, which allows them to forecast need and opportunity. Across the four cases, community agencies quickly tuned into the needs of focal populations during evolving COVID-19 circumstances. For example, Rhode Island programming maintained its focus on older adult social isolation via intergenerational contact while responding to the emergent need to promote 2020 Census completion. Food for a Long Life (FFLL) maintained its focus on food security, shifting its program delivery method to focus on deliveries of food and activities when care programs closed. Existing relationships with the authors allowed partners to coordinate solutions that were responsive to community members', students', and staff's needs and resources.

Community partners move in and out of the nexus of intergenerational programs. Authors describe working closely with organizations that had been peripheral to intergenerational program operations. Because faculty at the Florida college had worked with their local AARP and retirement community for years, AARP contacted them first to mobilize students to respond to emerging needs. Similarly, the Rhode Island university leveraged existing partnerships to establish new partnerships and processes. Maintaining connections with central and marginal partners enables quick mobilization of resources when new opportunities or threats arise.

Universities possess technologies and resources to respond to urgent needs, including those of underserved populations. For most community partners, virtual programming represented uncharted territory; universities had technology expertise and, in some cases, material resources to support agencies' shift to a new mode of program delivery. Not only that, but universities provided students to help staff some programs, thereby achieving mutual benefit. University students' familiarity with digital technology made them an ideal resource to community partners in Florida and Rhode Island who were working to bring older adults online to reduce social isolation and share other resources.

The landscape of service delivery shifted suddenly and dramatically in 2020. Despite demand for rapid response, partners maintain the importance of preparing staff, students, and older adults for programming. Iterative program modifications reflect stakeholder input. In making these adjustments, partners draw on the strengths of their youth and older adult participants by giving them meaningful roles. For example, youth in Virginia maintained contact with older adult partners by sharing art and voice recordings with older adults unable to attend in person programming. In Colorado, participants shifted from in-person to online pairs to online groups to maintain program participation. Without thoughtful and responsive modifications to planned programming, staff, students, volunteers, or other participants may have been overwhelmed, leaving resources unutilized or underutilized and long-term relationships damaged (Juris et al., 2021). Planning programming to focus on areas of growth for the older population (e.g., sharing photographs and reflection) is key for students to gain positive experience working with older adults that may result in reduced ageist attitudes.

Finally, authors agree that remote contact cannot be the sole means of connecting younger and older persons once in-person contact is permissible. While remote contact can reduce barriers like transportation or noise, community and research partners agree that relationship development, a primary goal of intergenerational programs, is limited by fully remote programming.

In multiple cases, exchanges became more transactional than relational during the COVID-19 pivot, such as the delivery of nutrition resources to Virginia participants and Florida students responding to older adults' technology questions. Alternative programming or delivery methods sustained relationships and allowed the groups to concentrate on other goals that became primary due to COVID-19. In each case, we recommend that in-person exchange be facilitated at least partially throughout programming to help address social isolation issues and help students gain interpersonal communications skills through intergenerational relationships.

Influence of context and historical period of data collection on identified themes

Context and history compelled significant changes to our cases' planned programming. In turn, participation, methods of data collection, and associated response rates were affected. With the closure of FFLL sites, routine survey administration ceased, but the number of persons served in 2020 increased over the previous year as programming shifted to food pantry and recreational activities distribution. In the Cyber-Seniors program, community partners secured grant funding that enabled increased participation among students and older adults. Participants in the virtual Photography and Memory Project completed Qualtrics program evaluations at a lower rate compared to the method of in-person program evaluation used with earlier cohorts.

University Institutional Review Boards worked to support investigators modifying protocols as some approved methods became irrelevant and other methods became primary considering program changes. Colorado and Rhode Island projects had only a few weeks to pivot their approach and evaluation protocols to exclusively online delivery. Their universities Institutional Review Board supported this transition, responding quickly to modifications and collaborating with the team to maintain the safety and privacy of participants for programming and research conducted online.

Intersectionality

Age and other characteristics intersected in the four cases. In Rhode Island and Florida, the intersection of age with income and lower technology expertise spurred programming, which aimed for inclusion of older adults from disadvantaged communities. In Colorado, the intersection of age and socioeconomics may have impacted who participated, as technology was required of but not provided to participants. In Virginia and Ohio, age (both young and old) intersected with high need and lower resources of families and the programs serving them, which prohibited high-tech virtual initiatives. Attending to these factors, authors adopted practices to recruit and retain participants, such as recruiting University of Rhode Island student mentors who were persons of color and/or Spanish-speaking. Such efforts helped participants see themselves in their intergenerational partners. Aligning intergenerational programs with intersecting characteristics may have been especially useful during the COVID-19 pandemic where needs related to food security and social isolation were great and frequently shared across generations. Case studies presented here can serve as examples for future outreach addressing social isolation and food insecurity within the most vulnerable older adult communities.

Limitations

Our cases were not selected in advance, which precluded shared data collection efforts that would have enhanced organization (Stake, 2003). Collective case studies may find patterns that generalize across other cases. For example, had our individual cases been identified early on, we might have adopted a shared evaluation tool addressing change in ageism, an overarching goal of the four cases. However, variability among cases (e.g., participants, content, and duration) may limit generalizability, even if an assessment tool had been shared. Encapsulating four individual cases with sufficient detail proved challenging; investigators are currently preparing scholarly products based on their singular cases, which will allow for thick description beyond the current paper's scope (e.g., Juris et al., 2021).

Besides variability across cases, adaptations of program implementation wrought by COVID-19 likely affected impact on ageism and other project goals. Achieving or maintaining the tenets of successful intergenerational contact (Pettigrew, 1998) and learning experiences (S. R. Levy, 2018) may have proven harder, for example if they reduced the frequency of contact or found a group status imbalance when older participants relied on youth for their technological expertise. Data from the Photography and Memory Project offers the clearest indication that the connections promoted to reduce ageism could be established in a virtual format but were not as effective as the in-person modality.

CONCLUSION

Intergenerational programs, which serve varied goals with an overarching aim to reduce ageism, should incorporate plans for remote alternative programming when in-person contact cannot occur. This may require funds for technology, broadband access, and technology training if virtual programming will substitute for in-person contact. Program, state, and national policy can help. For example, CARES Act funds provided in response to COVID-19 were used to expand broad band coverage, and Title IIIB funds from the Older Americans Act were used to purchase iPads for seniors to support social connection. The FFLL project sites lacked the infrastructure to facilitate virtual intergenerational contact, which some care programs offered during COVID-19. They also lacked organizational policy to support such contact, and members' concerns about participant safety informed the decision to support remote but not virtual intergenerational contact. These examples illustrate how organizations can utilize federal and local policy to adapt or build intergenerational programming with capacity for remote contact.

Programs exploring complete reliance on virtual contact should consider the balance of benefits and challenges with special attention to whether identified goals can be achieved. Besides investing in technology, universities and programs should invest in their partnerships to ensure long-term health and nimbleness, delivering crucial services to meet public health concerns that disproportionately impact older adult. As noted in other papers in this special issue (e.g., Okun & Ayalon, 2022; Sutter et al., 2022), when partners engage through a shared sense of responsibility, they can support the development of youth, older adults, and broader society with a strengths-based approach that reduces ageism.

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Amy DelPo oversees library service for people age 50+ across Denver library branches. She has spearheaded a positive aging approach at Denver Public Library, viewing age as a gift. She supports the many older adults who have time and emotional space to engage in lifelong learning, creative endeavors, and community connections. She also recognizes and addresses the real challenges people face as they age, including social isolation, homelessness, financial insecurity, dementia, and declining health. Amy has expertise in both childhood development and adult development. She also has expertise in dementia and memory loss and the developmental stages of aging.

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Caroline Gangji, MHA, MBA is the Executive Director of the Village Common of Rhode Island. Previously, she served as the Acting Executive Director at Age-Friendly RI, where she worked on issues important to Rhode Islanders as we age. She hosts the weekly Age-Friendly Rhode Island Radio Hour, which focuses on issues affecting our aging population and enabling Rhode Islanders to live an independent and meaningful life as we age

Leslie Hasche: Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Associate Professor Leslie Hasche focuses on clinical social work practice related to aging and mental health. Her research aims to understand how community-based services may best promote older adults' mental health, independence, safety, quality of life and overall wellness. She enjoys integrating her research and previous mental health practice experience into teaching theory-based and contemporary issue courses related to social work, aging, and intergenerational justice. In 2015, the Association for Gerontology Education in Social Work recognized Hasche's early career accomplishments with the Faculty Achievement Award.

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Roddy MacInnes has been teaching photography in the School of Art and Art History at the University of Denver since 2001. He considers himself to be an autobiographical photographer, and in that capacity has been documenting his life through photography for over five decades. MacInnes received an MFA in photography from the University of Colorado at Boulder, and

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Andrew Steward, LCSW, is a PhD Candidate at the University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work. His research focuses on activities to reduce internalized ageism and the intersectionality of ageism with other social justice issues. Andrew currently provides evaluation consultancy support for two Denver area non-profits: Boomers Leading Change and the LinkAGES intergenerational collaborative. Andrew has experience in clinical social work, community development, and is a Certified Music Practitioner.

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Anne Walker is a doctoral candidate and graduate teaching instructor in the department of Communication Studies at the University of Denver. Her research interests center on the overlapping of art, communication, and storytelling across difference. In the spring of 2021, she designed and taught a special topics course focused on intergenerational communication. This interdisciplinary community-engaged course connected college students with older adults through the exchanging of meaningful photographs. She is currently researching the impact of COVID-19 on bereavement experiences of older women.

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