



INTRODUCTION

- Shared site intergenerational programs (SSIPs) serve old and young generations at a single location simultaneously. Common SSIPs include adult day services or nursing homes with child care centers. Such programs help meet the care needs of families with dependent old and young relatives, and participants can experience benefits of cross-age contact that include generational empathy, positive affect, and enhanced well-being.
- Effective staff collaboration is essential to the success and sustainability of SSIPs. Without effective collaboration, cross-age contact diminishes or positive outcomes on child and elderly participants dissipate. Research suggests that staff require significant IG cross-training to support positive IG contact and community development.
- Social organization research associates community qualities with day-to-day well-being. Conceptualized as a type of community, we turned to the social organization literature for ideas on how to enhance participant experiences and build a sense of community among participants and staff at a single SSIP.
- Mancini, Martin, & Bowen's (2003) model of community capacity, which indicates shared responsibility and collective competence and that depends on interdependence of informal and formal networks, informed the present project.
- We implemented a Community Capacity Project at Virginia Tech's SSIP, which includes an Adult Day Services (ADS) and Child Development Center (CDC). The community capacity building project consisted of: (a) building infrastructure, (b) staff cross-training, and (c) increased levels of intergenerational programming. We utilized a multi-method, multi-informant approach to assessing the outcome of the program. The current paper presents our findings from the staff focus group interviews.

METHODS

Evaluation methods of the Community Capacity project included attitudinal surveys completed by staff and student teachers/assistants, planning/evaluation information on each scheduled IG opportunity, & focus group interviews conducted with staff and student teachers/assistants. The current presentation addresses the focus group data.

Procedures

We conducted focus group interviews twice, 4 & 8 months after starting the Community Capacity project, with each of three groups: (1) ADS & CDC staff, (2) CDC graduate/undergraduate students, and (3) ADS graduate/undergraduate students. Focus groups were conducted separately to encourage openness and ensure confidentiality. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and names were changed to ensure confidentiality.

Analysis

Four investigators read the interviews using open-coding procedures. Investigators discussed commonalities & areas of dissent until codes were refined. Fourteen codes emerged; each fell under one of four themes related to Mancini and colleagues' (2003) community capacity model: (a) support (presence/absence) for implementing IG programming, (b) interaction among informal network members (i.e., clients), (c) interactions among formal and informal network members (e.g. parents and teachers), and (d) sense of IG community. Using Atlas.ti, researchers coded interviews, which were then recoded by a second investigator. Finally, Atlas ti was used to explore quotes belonging to each code. The current presentation focuses on formal network members' experiences with and attitudes towards implementing intergenerational programming.

RESULTS

Within the emergent themes, five codes specific to formal network members and pertaining to: (a) support for IG programming and (b) sense of community were identified. They are described below with exemplary quotes from the interviews.

Support for IG Programming

Authority support for IG programming and research from formal network community members. Included presence/absence of support, resources provided or withheld (e.g. time), SSIP infrastructure, and interpersonal collaboration.

For example, one respondent alluded to resources created with the new infrastructure:

[CDC administrators] were willing to give the teachers some support in their planning, or, if the teachers weren't willing to [facilitate IG programming], they [had an administrator partner with an ADS staff member to facilitate IG programming].

Care/curricular philosophy, included similarities or discrepancies in program philosophies and efforts to identify common values.

An ADS Graduate Assistant commented, when asked about program similarities:

I think the [CDC] embraces [a personhood approach] as well. ...it's not just adults that deserve dignity and respect, but children [do] as well. And, so I think that our philosophies parallel one another in that way.

Training & orientation codes referred to respondents' need for more understanding of the other program's philosophies, practices, schedules, and clients as well as training on communicating and interacting with clients.

Mentoring/supervision, included infrastructure for mentoring support of IG facilitators and presence/absence of supportive feedback from staff/faculty

RESULTS

Personal values and predisposing characteristics that reflect presence or absence of support for IG programming based on experiences & attitudes.

Penelope, an ADS staff member, reflected other's sentiment during the 2nd interview as she discussed how the IG program had opened her eyes:

[IG] helps me see how much children are capable of & destroys stereotypes about children, that they aren't as capable. When I see them interacting with the adults it helps me understand more what they CAN do.

Sense of Community

Codes under this theme addressed feeling part of or separate from the community and change over time in the sense of community.

At the second interview, a long-time staff member commented:

There's definitely a relationship with [the other program] now...even little things like borrowing something. At one time, people [from the other program] never came in. It was really very separate between [programs].

CONCLUSIONS

- While previous SSIP research focused on characteristics of children/seniors and the contact setting and content, we expanded the focus of SSIPs to include staff.
- Our community capacity project enhanced sense of comfort & community among critical stakeholders, program staff.
- Cross-training, authority support, and increased programming were critical factors contributing to staff knowledge of each other's programs and clients.
- Findings suggest that the SSIP would benefit further from more expansive cross-training and support from administrators and a tradition of IG contact.
- Cross-training enhances staff abilities to support positive IG contact, and cross-training should be ongoing. We must consider the intensity and frequency of training as well as the infrastructure that supports training and its outcomes. We must expand our view of SSIP's to support a mutually beneficial program that supports children, elders, and staff.
- We continue to expand cross-training, programming, staff mentoring, and IG infrastructure to build intergenerational community capacity. Affiliated faculty collaborate on IG scale development and research effects of the SSIP on a range of community members.
- Building community requires close collaboration from a network of members. Respondents described successes and shortfalls in our community building efforts. One respondent described the journey of building community:

I see myself as climbing a mountain because [IG programming] has been a challenging semester... And, I can see the goal on top of that mountain and I will eventually get there, and I am thinking that more progress will be made next semester, as it has gotten a little bit better.

COMMUNITY CAPACITY PROJECT

Three main components comprised the Community Capacity Project, which focused on building infrastructure to enhance and sustain the intergenerational (IG) community.

- **Infrastructure development:** Administrators met regularly to develop a shared mission statement, discuss care philosophies, and coordinate IG program & staff scheduling.
- **Cross-training:** Teachers & staff received training about program philosophies, clients, & fostering positive IG contact. We created a site-specific IG training manual.
- **Weekly programming** facilitated by ADS & CDC partners. Previous IG programming was tied to research and was the purview of a single program. We increased contact so each of the 5 classes had at least one weekly IG opportunity. Partners from CDC & ADS co-planned, facilitated, and evaluated each session.