

“GIVE AND RECEIVE”: THE IMPACT OF AN INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAM ON INSTITUTIONALIZED CHILDREN AND OLD ADULTS

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Intergenerational Programs

- Intergenerational programs (IP) emerged in the United States of America in the 60's, with the purpose of minimizing the effects of geographic distance on family generations.

“aim to increase cooperation or exchange between two generations from the exchange of experiences and knowledge between young and old”

(The National Council on Aging (NCA) 1993, as cited in Sánchez & Torrano, 2013, p. 217).

- The programs differ in their participants type, their goals or specific issue addressed
- Benefits for all participants involved were found, such as:



- ✓ improvement of self-esteem, the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, decrease of school dropout, prevention of risk behaviours (Jones, Herrick, & York, 2004)
- ✓ improvement of well-being the decrease of vulnerability to mental illness, an increased feeling of being useful to society (Sánchez & Torrano, 2013),
- ✓ Increase of social interactions, and decrease feelings of loneliness and isolation (Pinquart, Wenzel, & Sørensen, 2000).
- ✓ Decrease stereotypes regarding other generations. (Schwalbach & Kiernan, 2002)

Our Intergenerational Program

Goals

- Assess the impact of an IP on two generations living in residential houses, away from the family.
- Understand the effects of intergenerational relationships on self-esteem, loneliness, depression, and happiness of institutionalized children and old adults.
- Create significant relationships between these generations, as well as to promote more positive representations of both ages for each group, thus highlighting the value of each age.

Methods

- A mixed sequential method approach

Quantitative

- quasi-experimental pretest–posttest nonequivalent control group design.
- select groups that were as similar as possible, to fairly compare the experimental and the comparison groups.
- In pre and posttest, were assessed the levels of self-esteem, loneliness, depression, and happiness of children and old adults (intervention and control groups).

Qualitative

- focus group method for each group
- open-ended interview at the end of the IP

Participants

Children

- A group of **twelve boys** participated in the present IP:
 - *six boys aged seven to 11 years (Mdn = 11) - intervention group;*
 - *six boys aged six to 11 years (Mdn = 10) - control group.*
- **All participants were institutionalized** due to their family vulnerability and risk.

Older Adults

- The sample of older participants was constituted by **twelve seniors**:
 - *six participants (five females and one male) aged between 75 to 87 (Mdn = 80.5) - intervention group;*
 - *six seniors (five females) aged between 72 to 90 years (Mdn = 87) - control group.*
- **All participants were institutionalized** due to their inability to live alone (mostly because of physical needs).

Quantitative Measures

Children

- Self-esteem,
- Loneliness,
- Depression
- Happiness

Older Adults

- **Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale** (Rosenberg, 1965; portuguese version by Vasconcelos-Raposo, Fernandes, Teixeira, & Bertelli, 2012; $\alpha = .85$).
- **Loneliness Scale** (Asher, Hymel, & Renshaw, 1984)
- **Child Depression Inventory** (Kovacs, 1992; Portuguese version Marujo, 1994)
- **Subjective Happiness Scale** (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999; Portuguese version by Pais-Ribeiro, 2012)

- **Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale** (Rosenberg, 1965; portuguese version by Vasconcelos-Raposo, Fernandes, Teixeira, & Bertelli, 2012; $\alpha = .85$).
- **UCLA Loneliness Scale** (Russell et al., 1988; Neto, 1989)
- **Geriatric Depression Scale** (GDS; Yesavage et al., 1983, Barreto, Leuschner, Santos, & Sobral, 2003)
- **Subjective Happiness Scale** (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999; Portuguese version by Pais-Ribeiro, 2012)

The Program

■ Duration:

- One year
- Monthly meetings of two hours each.

■ Place

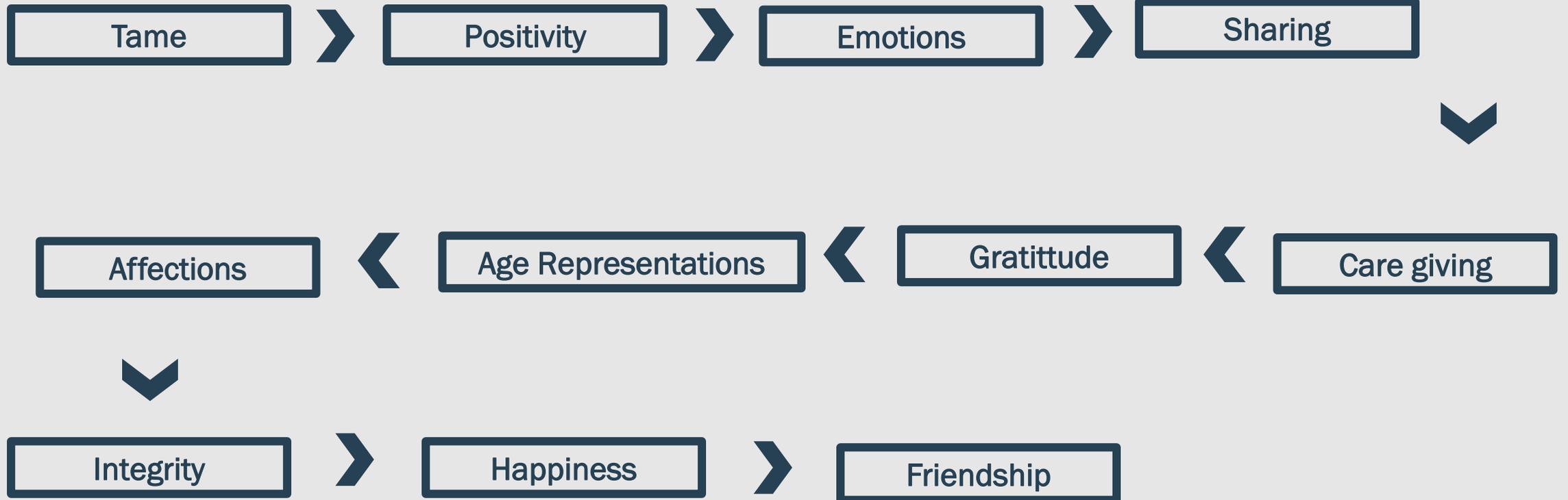
- Most sessions took place in the old adults' institution
- Some sessions were in spaces different from the usual environment of the participants.



Influences:

- The story of *The Little Prince*, by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry was used as a metaphor for the program.
- **Erikson's Psychosocial Theory** was our theoretical model for the development of activities
- The plan of sessions was constantly adjusted according to participants' needs and characteristics

Sessions



Results

Quantitative:

Children

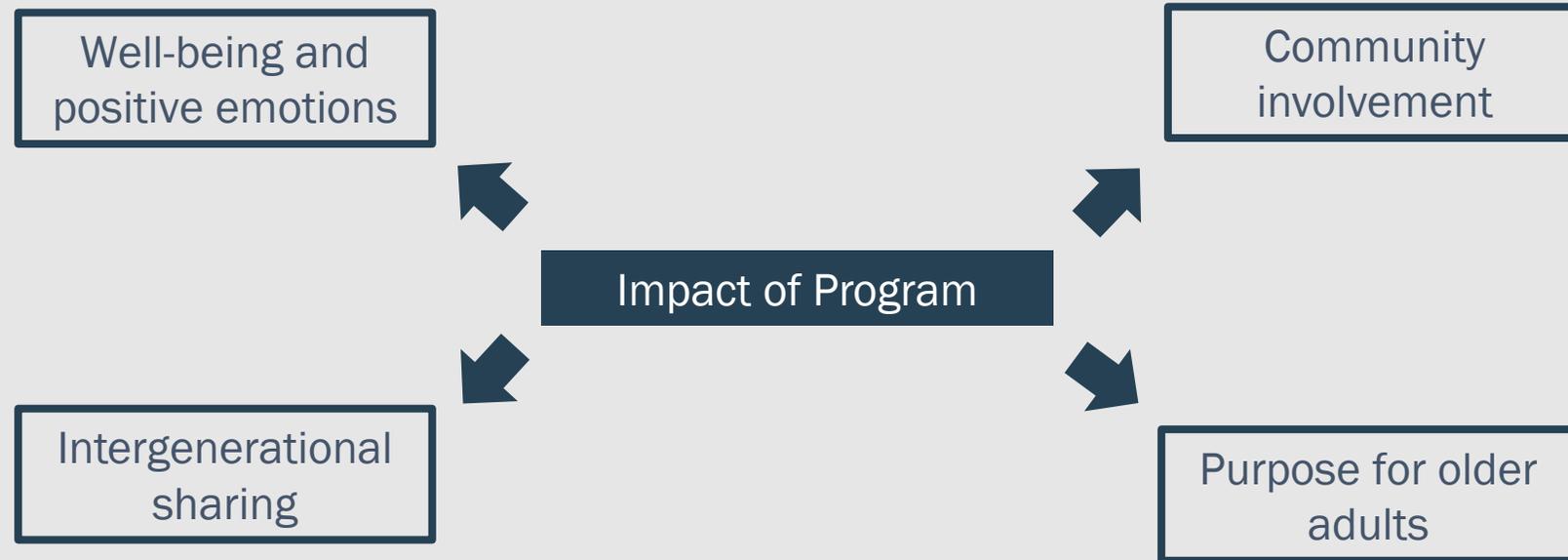
- Results showed no statistically significant differences between children's control and intervention groups
- The most relevant score was obtained for self-esteem, which presented a large effect size [$Z (U) = - 1.509, p = 0.111, r = - 0.477$].

Older Adults

- Statistically significant differences between old adults' control and intervention groups for depression [$Z (U) = - 2.259, p = 0.014, r = - 0.714$].
- Although not statistically significant, loneliness and happiness results are also of relevance, presenting large and medium effect sizes

Qualitative:

- *“How would you describe the impact of this program?”*



- *Which were the main difficulties/challenges that you experienced?*



Discussion

- Our results suggest that the IP implemented had important benefits for all participants, supporting previous research findings
- For old adults, in particular, the main impact of the program was visible through a decrease of loneliness and depression levels, when compared to participants in the control group
- Both generations shared experiences, had pleasure in the activities with each other, and created new relationships, which contributed to increase the social networks of old adults, thus preventing situations of loneliness and isolation
- For the older adults the program increase their sense of purpose and for the children we found a significant improvement of their self-esteem (Kuehne, 2005).
- All staff and professionals involved in this IP agreed that this experience was beneficial for all those who were, directly and indirectly, involved: participants, other children and elderly, professionals, and community

■ LIMITATIONS

- ✓ Sample size and the sampling method
- ✓ Focused to two local institutions and with participants previously selected by other professionals which may have led to biases in the sample
- ✓ The informal examination of the qualitative data may limit the validity of our conclusions and recommendations.

■ FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

- ✓ The results from this program encourage this type of intergenerational intervention (with institutionalized populations)
- ✓ These programs have the power to create social networks, and to foster the well-being of children and old adults.
- ✓ Potential to provide a new awareness and respect across generations,

Conclusion

- This study, alike others in the literature, helps to demonstrate that IP have a positive impact in the lives of participants, as well as in institutions and larger community

"I really enjoyed it! (the program) Very cool!" a child participant

"I thought it was good and I wish to continue.

It was a delight because we were all experiencing together" an old adult participant

"The activities make them happy, and that happiness was also transposed to the institutional community.

The other elders were interested in knowing more about the kids and their stories" a staff member .

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Thank you for your attention!