

“Evaluation and Research on Intergenerational Shared Site Facilities and Programs: What We Know and What We Need to Learn”

Generations United Background Paper: Project SHARE

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About Generations United

Generations United (GU) is the national membership organization focused solely on promoting intergenerational strategies, programs, and public policies. GU represents more than 100 national, state, and local organizations, representing more than 70 million Americans. It is the only national organization advocating for the mutual well-being of children, youth, and older adults. GU serves as a resource for educating policymakers and the public about the economic, social, and personal imperatives of intergenerational cooperation. GU provides a forum for those working with children, youth, and older adults to explore areas of common ground while celebrating the richness of each generation.

About Generations United's Project SHARE

Generations United (GU) believes that resources are better used when they unite rather than separate the generations. GU recognizes the inherent benefits of connecting generations, sharing resources, and strengthening communities through intergenerational shared sites and shared resource programs. With the generous support of the Helen Andrus Benedict Foundation, Generations United established Project SHARE (Sharing Helps All Resources Expand). Project SHARE is a field-building initiative designed to advance policy and practice related to intergenerational shared sites and shared resources. Under its auspices, GU convened a national expert symposium on intergenerational shared sites and shared resources; is publishing and disseminating this monograph, and has been providing training and technical assistance.

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Executive Summary

This paper reviews the evaluation and research literature in the area of intergenerational shared site facilities and programs. After defining the concept of an intergenerational shared site, key dimensions for assessing shared site initiatives are described. Evaluation and research results are presented in the context of the larger literature on intergenerational programs. Findings center around shared site facilities and programs involving older adults typically in long term care facilities and young children in child care programs. Studies and anecdotal reports are presented and analyzed in each of four areas relevant to intergenerational shared site initiatives: program activities, institutional factors, staff training needs, and management practices based on social, demographic and workplace trends. Recommendations focus on: increasing evaluation and research attention on the role of the physical environment in shared site programs; considering the community context for such programs and the need for building community partnerships; attending to program and policy factors that can influence shared site program success; and increasing the scope of evaluation and research studies in this area. The paper concludes with a description of some concrete steps that can help to achieve the recommendations presented.

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Introduction

What are Intergenerational Shared Sites?

Imagine developing a tool for comparing communities in terms of the quality and quantity of intergenerational interaction that takes place within them: an “intergenerational quotient” (IQ). The programs and settings within a community receiving the lowest IQ score would undoubtedly be characterized by age-specific patterns of activity. Expectations for mono-generational activity are likely to be conveyed via the physical environment as well as through social norms, social policies, and priorities. In effect, young people and older adults would have little opportunity to interact with one another in the course of their daily living activities; they would play, learn, and socialize in separate worlds.

In contrast, a community receiving the highest possible IQ score would be a drastically different kind of place. Many community settings – including schools, community centers, hospitals and other care facilities – would be designed to be “elder-friendly” *and* “child-/youth- friendly.” In the development of social and educational programs, as well in the physical design of the community, intergenerational exchange would be considered a high priority objective. Administrators of large service organizations that traditionally serve only one age group would operate with the realization that community resources are better used when serving all generations; prized resources such as transportation vehicles, library resources, and even funding streams would be shared. Another dimension of a prototypical intergenerational community would be the widespread development of settings which are “age-integrated;” such settings are also known as “intergenerational shared sites” (IGSS).

The term “intergenerational shared sites” (IGSS) has been used when referring to “programs in which multiple generations receive ongoing services and/or programming at the same site, and generally interact through planned and/or informal intergenerational activities” (AARP, 1998, p. v).

In reality, we see neither purely mono-generational nor purely intergenerational facilities. Even when a site is categorized as an “Intergenerational Shared Site (IGSS), there is still a good deal of variability in the nature of the intergenerational interactions that take place within facility walls.

In an effort to contribute conceptual focus to the study of IGSS programs, this article will:

- identify some of the key dimensions for assessment of shared site initiatives,
- review and provide commentary on the state of research in this area, and
- provide recommendations for future research in this area

The AARP Intergenerational Shared Site Project is a good starting point insofar as it lays out the range of IGSS program possibilities, and reports upon the most common varieties. Of the 281 IGSS programs identified in the AARP study (1998), they noted 72 distinct program models (combinations of older adult and children/youth services). The most prevalent model was the nursing home/child care center model, with 42 such sites identified in the study. The second most common model was the adult day services center/child care center model with 34 sites identified. Multi-level care facilities with onsite child care were identified in 17 sites.

Key dimensions for assessment of shared site initiatives

The use of two discrete categories for classifying community facilities – that is, they are either “shared site” or “not shared site” – does not tell us much about how the facilities operate or about the meanings that participants and staff ascribe to these settings. Beyond whether a community facility is a “shared site” or not, they vary in terms of philosophy, participant and staff involvement, and in the nature and extent of intergenerational engagement that takes place within them. Describing individual shared site settings in terms of such key variables will provide useful information for conceptualizing these settings and studying their impact on participants.

In assessing shared site programs, it is also important to consider the level of integration of intergenerational exchange ideology into the mission, curriculum, and staff training for each of the participating program components. Here we are referring to the extent to which individuals possess an “intergenerational perspective,” which extends beyond advocacy for any specific age group or intergenerational activity. It includes the degree to which a person thinks about an organization (and their role in it) in terms of the full range of ways in which young people and older adults can interact, support, and provide care for one another. In this context, it is important to determine the level of staff understanding, acceptance, and support for intergenerational exchange objectives. Such objectives could involve, for example, the nature of the communication (e.g., two-way communication) and institutional policies (e.g., involving at least one young person and senior adult on the organization’s board of directors or advisory group). It is also important to determine whether staff and participants of different programs view joint activities and shared space from within a framework of “we” rather than “us and them.”

It is also worth considering the degree to which staff members hold a life span perspective for framing the human development significance of the shared site facility and its intergenerational programs. For example, knowledge in both child development and aging guides important decisions about issues ranging from facility design and layout to appropriate activity selection and effective relationship building among participants.

Beyond considering the access individuals have to persons from other age groups in any particular setting, it is also important to look at how much control people have in navigating their exposure to people in other age groups. In this regard, it is instructive to look at Richard Schultz’s research in a North Carolina nursing home (Schultz, 1976). He exposed two groups of nursing residents to an eight-week program of weekly visits from

undergraduate students; one group of residents had some control over decisions about when the visits would occur and how long they would last and the comparison group did not. He found that after the eight-week period, those residents who were in the control condition were happier, healthier, more active, and were taking fewer medications than those in the comparison group. However, unexpectedly, in a follow-up assessment several months later, those in the control group experienced a greater deterioration in health and positive attitudes toward life than those in the comparison group; they even had a higher mortality rate. The researchers concluded that the negative outcomes were associated with the residents having been given control over their relationships with the students and then having it taken away (Schulz & Hanusa, 1978). This finding reminds us that people's control over their life circumstances and social relationships can be important to their well-being and that in any evaluation of shared site programs, this dimension of control should be considered. It also raises questions about shared site decision making processes and who holds the "power" to plan activities and grant program participants "access" to other age participants.

Evaluation and Research Results

The Context

Compared to the rapidly growing number and variety of intergenerational programs in communities around North America, including shared site programs, the number of documented evaluation and research studies is not keeping pace (Kuehne, 1997; 1999). Thus, the intergenerational program literature generally reveals few evaluation and research studies, particularly in the relatively new area of shared site programs: a comprehensive search of the literature revealed less than one dozen studies that could loosely be considered evaluation or research studies.

The scarce evaluation and research resources available in this area should not surprise us. The context for shared site studies are like those for intergenerational programs more generally. First, shared site programs typically begin with small numbers of participants, which makes statistical analysis difficult at best. The community-based nature of many of the programs often results in research and evaluation studies that are descriptive, or limited in the controls they offer when compared with more traditional "experimental" and "control" group, or pre- and post-test designs. Often, they report results based on anecdotal information gathered from some participants using a variety of methods that range from very informal to quite systematic. The result of such studies is that the findings are necessarily tentative, which then renders the study conclusions weaker than what is needed to make unequivocal recommendations to practitioners, researchers and policy makers.

Just because shared site programs are located in communities does not render them impossible or even necessarily difficult to evaluate or research effectively in order to yield strong results that can speak directly to advancing the field. In fact, in Japan, there is a growing, opposite expectation. Recently, all intergenerational programs receiving funding from the "National Children's Plan" must demonstrate "scientific research on the

effect of intergenerational programs and ... develop measures to evaluate the outcome of such policy and programs” (Sawano, 2000, p. 34).

Intergenerational Shared Site Programs: What Have We Learned?

Despite the weaknesses identified in the existing literature, we do have descriptive and empirical results to report here. Interestingly, all the papers discovered in our search of the literature on shared site programs reported that participants included very young children and older adults, most typically preschool aged children interacting with older adults in long term care facilities. This is an interesting finding in that it is congruent with the AARP survey, completed in 1998, which revealed that the nursing home/child care center model was most common in the universe of shared site programs.

It is not the focus of this paper to define evaluation and research per se; we refer readers elsewhere for this discussion (e.g., Cook & Campbell, 1979; Kuehne, 1997).

Nevertheless, we used the following criteria for considering evaluation and research studies included here:

- systematic documentation of program design and implementation;
- data collection from participants and relevant others;
- clear and replicable analyses of data; and
- conceptual framework substantiating the question of interest, program design and study findings

While not all the studies reported here meet each of these criteria, papers were included if the authors believed that they met some of the criteria and that they would contribute to an enhanced understanding of IGSS programs.

To cast an even broader net, we also included here papers in which intergenerational shared site programs were described, contemplated, and analyzed from a number of perspectives, usually with experience or anecdotal evidence underlying the opinions expressed by authors. We integrated this information into our report on the literature, when appropriate and available, while emphasizing what has been learned from more systematic evaluation and research studies in four key areas of IGSS programming.

Activities Matter: Not All Activities are Appropriate. In an analysis of intergenerational child care programs and their underlying approaches, Travis, Stremmel, and Duprey (1993) describe the difference between the typical emphases in child care and adult day care. In the former, the emphasis is on providing developmentally appropriate learning experiences for groups of children and, in the latter, on “functionally appropriate care plans for each participant” (p. 287). They alert readers to other differences between centers focused on adult day care clients, who range in capability from those who need very little support to those with substantial cognitive and/or physical impairments. Where child care centers typically develop and implement programming for similarly functioning children within a limited age range, the authors argue that adults in adult day care centers are potentially more heterogeneous. This means that programs typically must limit their programming to certain “types” of older

adults, accepting clients with particular profiles of physical, cognitive and other capacities, and develop appropriate programming for the attending participants. For adult day care centers contemplating shared sites with child care programs, the authors appropriately caution readers to consider whether “universal acceptance of intergenerational programs for all types of adult day care participants and young children is prudent” (p. 290). Further, they argue for more research on intergenerational program-based outcomes as they can guide important decisions on the appropriate mix of participants and activities that will result in “mutually beneficial exchanges” (p. 290).

Dellman-Jenkins (1997) focuses on the importance of recognizing the needs and interests of older adults who participate in intergenerational programs. In a related research study, Griff, Lambert, Dellman-Jenkins and Fruit (1996) argue that interactions between older adults and young children in an intergenerational child care setting are more positive when the seniors contribute to planning the activities, not unlike the findings reported by Schultz two decades before. Kocarnik and Ponzetti (1991) agree, stating that many “well-meaning programmers fall into the trap of ‘doing for’ the seniors rather than involving them in activities as individuals of worth and value” (p. 104).

Research evidence supports the need for discerning appropriate program activities along with the older adults potentially involved in the program. For example, Travis, Stremmel, and Kelly-Harrison (1995) describe some of the results from a survey of 36 adult day care center administrators and a stratified random sample of 300 child care center administrators regarding their perceptions of the benefits and problems associated with providing regular intergenerational exchanges in child care settings. While only 24% of the sample of the responding adult day care administrators (n=8) and 10% (n=22) of the child care center administrators were from shared site programs, they found that routine, “family-style” activities that were popular with both older adults and children, including conversation, music, reading and cooking, were among the most appropriate and successful activities for adult day care center adults and preschool aged children.

Bell and Powell (1983) were very likely the first authors to identify a link between the types of activities in intergenerational shared site programs and “levels” of interaction for older adult participants. From their experience with an integrated child care center/nursing home program, they describe how older adults had the option to participate intensively in one-on-one relationships with children or simply observe the program from the periphery, with several options in-between these two extremes of involvement. Further, the seniors in their facility were given the opportunity to discuss and debrief their intergenerational experiences with one another, separate from the children.

Once again, more recent research bears out these early field observations. Through interviews conducted in a study of 13 intergenerational shared site child care programs, Kuehne (1999) heard program staff describe the importance of “real” and “virtual” accessibility for older adults to children and vice versa. This translates into physical design features and activities that permit older adults and children to see each other living their everyday lives, perhaps through large, open play areas, ensuring handicapped

accessibility to one another's facilities, and including appropriate furniture in both older adults' and children's settings. Program staff reported that options for participants' level of involvement must exist as well, though they described the challenges associated with giving young children real program choices that can be honored.

Other research studies also describe the outcomes associated with certain activities in IGSS programs. Foster (1997) provides anecdotal evidence supporting a link between children's regular participation with nursing home residents in a shared site program and their enhanced perceptions of older adults, persons with disabilities and nursing homes more generally. For older adults living in the nursing home, Foster describes the program as resulting in an atmosphere that is more "family-like" and promotes social enrichment and a renewed interest in others. Similarly, Rosenberg (1993) reports on interviews held with 17 parents of preschool program children, 30 elder program participants, and several administrators regarding the design and implementation of an intergenerational program at a private long-term health care facility with onsite child care. The vast majority (14/17) of parents believed the program was beneficial for their children and all children reportedly demonstrated positive behaviors toward the older adults and the program in general. All 30 elders described feelings of enjoyment regarding the children and the program and administrators described the program as enhancing the facility's home-like atmosphere.

Institutions Matter: Implicit and Explicit Factors. The role of institutional variables and administrative leadership in intergenerational shared site programs should not be underestimated. For example, Thang (2001) conducted an intensive ethnographic field study of "Kotoen" in Tokyo, Japan's oldest and most established age-integrated center. This facility combines four different services: a nursery school, a day care program for older adults living in the community, a nursing home for frail and senile seniors, and an old-age home for poor but mobile elders. Thang notes that although the intergenerational activities and exchanges occurring at Kotoen are cast within the ideological framework of working to achieve "fureai" (heart warming contact) across the generations and "daikazoku" (natural interaction resembling a three-generational family), there is an apparent paradox evident to those involved. While the activities are designed with these objectives in mind, they are occurring in the context of a highly regimented, institutionalized environment where both explicit and implicit administrative rules and regulations constrain spontaneity.

We know from the research of Travis and Stremmel (1999), which focused on the views of 226 childcare and adult day care administrators in the US, that there are several factors contributing to the likelihood that such administrators will provide intergenerational activities in their respective or shared sites. Administrators were much more likely to provide intergenerational activities in their sites if they had positive attitudes toward intergenerational exchanges in general. In addition, younger administrators, those with greater current experience with intergenerational exchanges, and those with more meaningful current contact with older adults reported being significantly more likely to provide intergenerational services in their facilities. The researchers recommend education and training of administrators as an important variable in changing

administrators' attitudes and, eventually, behaviors. Issues such as misconceptions about the effects of bringing young children together with older adults and safety concerns related to infection control are examples of administrative concerns that can often be addressed effectively with appropriate training.

Training Matters: A Big Need. The need for training exists among program staff as well as administrators. Several studies emphasize the need for adequately trained staff to develop and implement intergenerational shared site programs. The highest priority need expressed by the administrators in the large study of adult day care and child care administrators was appropriate training for program staff (Stremmel, Travis, Kelly-Harrison & Hensley, 1994). And in their description of the benefits and challenges involved in locating child care programs within long term care facilities, Kocarnik & Ponzetti (1991) argue that program developers need knowledge of life span development, knowledge and skills related to meeting age-appropriate developmental needs, and training in aspects of caregiving that are particular to the age group that is not their specialty. Jarrott and Bruno (2001) completed a process evaluation of their shared site program involving adult day care seniors and children in a child care program. In their study, program administrators identified director and staff training as one of the two top priorities; the other was administrative and line staff "buy-in" to the intergenerational program idea.

Management Practices Matter: Responding to Demographic and Social Trends and Workplace Realities. The role that demographics and sound management principles play in shared site programs involving child care centers is knowledge that Kocarnik and Ponzetti (1991) and Hegeman (1985) identify as critical. The fact that most countries, developed and developing, are aging more rapidly into this century than in the past is by now fairly widely known. The extension of this demographic trend to the increased need for adult day care and long term care services in the future must be considered seriously. These three authors point out that as the number of such facilities for older adults increases, so do the opportunities for onsite child care programs. Reasons for constructing facilities for older adults with onsite child care in mind include the potential advantages of providing onsite child care to facility employees. Relatedly, in the Final Report of the AARP Intergenerational Shared Site Project (1998), Goyer and Zuses describe the different benefits and barriers identified by practitioners working in 281 IGSS programs. Practitioners from nursing home/child care center programs described significantly greater benefit to staff from their participating in the program than did respondents from any other type of shared site program.

Reports from corporate employers like StrideRight indicate that employees are able to work full-time rather than part-time or not at all, for example, when onsite child care is an option (Van Tuyl, 1991). Given that the likely increasing number of older adult care facilities will require staff who are typically women, many with children; this is not a trivial consideration. Further, management principles of employee recruitment and retention come into play when one considers how employees decide where to work and the value of various employee benefits. It is easy to imagine how secure it would feel for employees to see their child(ren) periodically and informally in the hallways of their

workplace visiting with the older adults for whom they also provide care each day (e.g., Hegeman 1985; Kuehne, 1999).

In what was very likely the earliest descriptive survey of long-term care administrators across the US regarding onsite child care, Hegeman (1985) reported that the majority believed that community relations were improved through the positive media coverage resulting from their intergenerational programming. Onsite child care typically added revenue-generating space to long-term care facilities as well, which often report under or unutilized space. Stremmel, Travis, Kelly-Harrison and Hensley (1994) argue that true cost savings involved in intergenerational models of care need to be accurately quantified and described. It is not clear from research of adult day care and child care administrators exactly where the most likely cost savings can be realized and this includes finding the most cost-effective mix of segregated versus integrated activities for young children and older adults in such settings. Chamberlain, Fetterman and Maher (1992) actually describe their intergenerational community care facility and program using an economic framework and discuss the importance of various economic and management issues relevant to IGSS program success.

Finally, the example of the Hope Meadows community in Rantoul, Illinois provides an example of how the demographic and social trends that can drive innovative IGSS initiatives are not limited to the aging of our population. Rather, Hope Meadows was created by Brenda Eheart, a child development scholar from the University of Illinois, who learned from decades of research with foster care children, that 80% of the inmates in the Illinois prison system had once been in foster care. As we began the new millennium, more than 1,000 new children were entering the foster care system each month in Illinois alone. These social trends, combined with a 25% decline in the number of foster parents in a five year period nationally, led her to develop a community in which families, foster children, and older adults live their lives together every day (Freedman, 1999). Families provide adoptive and foster care homes for children with special needs. Seniors receive reduced rent for six hours of volunteer involvement in intergenerational community programming each week. Programming is both formal, often coordinated through an Intergenerational Center, and informal, where “grandparents” provide advice, assistance with home repairs, or play with children. While systematic evaluation results are not yet available on the Hope Meadows project, anecdotal comments are promising: seniors who move to the community report feeling that they have more purpose in their lives than before they arrived; children and families seem to be thriving; and organizers are considering expanding the model to other sites in the US.

Recommendations for Evaluation and Research

The Physical Environment of IGSS Programs: Understanding its role

Most studies of intergenerational programs tend to focus on the intergenerational interactions within them and on their psychosocial and educational benefits for older and younger participants. For example, Newman, Morris & Streetman (1998) advocate use of

the Elder-Child Interaction Analysis (ECIA) instrument, a specially designed instrument to record specific verbal and non-verbal interactions between the children and senior adults. Such tools are valuable aids in the systematic research of intergenerational program phenomena. When speaking of IGSS programs, where there are a host of discernable variables related to the physical environment dimension, additional tools are necessary to explore the complex interplay between environment and behavior. Herein, lays yet another frontier for investigation in the intergenerational arena.

There is a precedent for systematically collecting data on all the behaviors that occur in a particular setting. In this regard, there is utility to the conceptual framework of “behavior settings,” as first noted by Barker and colleagues in the 1960’s as a strategy for analyzing environment-behavior interaction (Barker, 1968). Bounded by space and time parameters, “behavior settings” include both the behavior and the non-psychological objects with which behavior is transacted (e.g., pieces of furniture). Some examples of behavior settings are a drugstore, a garage, and a basketball game. It would make sense to revisit Barker’s work, where he presents in detail a methodology by which to identify and categorize behavior as it occurs in natural settings (Barker, 1968). Such an approach, though time consuming, is likely to yield information about how intergenerational relations evolve over a period of time, complementing the methods which provide “snapshots” of singular intergenerational interactions. Additionally, this framework can be useful for attending to interaction and events occurring throughout an *entire setting*, even when the participants are not engaged in intergenerational interaction.

In the least, we suggest that it is important to address some basic questions about environment-behavior interaction. For example: Are the various spaces within the IGSS facility user friendly for all age groups? Are they conducive to a narrow or a wide range of intergenerational interactions? Are there cues in the environment (e.g., murals, notices, charts of rules and regulations) which suggest certain modes of interactive behavior and discourage others?

To further illustrate the importance of environmental design, we turn to the case of a university-based intergenerational housing project run by the Otofuke Municipal Government in Hokkaido Prefecture, where there was apparently little attention to facility design. In the joint apartment complex, four elderly single women lived with four college-aged women who attend Obihiro-Ootani College (majoring in a “Welfare and Elder’s Bedside Care” study program). In addition to meeting the residents’ housing needs, the intent of this intergenerational shared living facility, called the “Fureai Jyutaku” (“Heart Warming Contact Living Space”), was to enable the participants to learn from and support each other through the various gatherings, celebrations, discussions, and spontaneously organized activities. Yet, there was apparently some tension between residents in the facility. As noted in a report on intergenerational programs in Japan (Aging Integrated Research Center, 1994), some of the senior adult residents had concerns that the young residents might be “noisy and troublesome,” and the young residents feared losing their sense of privacy. This raises the issue of whether in the design of this or any other shared site facility adequate attention is given to accommodating the privacy needs of the participants and providing them with “escape space.”

The Community Context for IGSS Programs: Understanding and Building Community Partnerships

IGSS programs need to be examined in context of their entire setting -- which extends outward from the individual facility to the surrounding community, and then to the overall society of which it is part. Yet, programs often focus inward, and because they are often small, they run the risk of living in a microcosm that is not necessarily well integrated into the larger community.

If we imagine once again a “high intergenerational quotient (IQ)” community, it would be one in which IGSS programs would have effective partnerships with human service agencies, potential participant groups and external evaluators and researchers. From an evaluation and research standpoint, it is certainly important to examine what takes place within the walls of a shared site facility itself. However, it is also important to take a broader view of the functioning of the facility, and examine the relationship between the facility and its surrounding community. This includes investigating the role of community residents in developing, supporting, and sustaining the IGSS program(s). It also involves asking questions about how a facility “fits” into its community spatially, organizationally, and economically. For example, in the design of the facility, what were the assumptions regarding the involvement of community residents and relations with other community organizations? If the IGSS facility and program were intended to address workplace or family caregiving needs, how effectively have they done so, and to what extent have they contributed to community life and community development overall?

If a shared site facility offers (and markets) a particular service for community members, it may be fruitful for investigators to analyze public relations materials. A systematic analysis of such materials, as they are disseminated over a period of time,¹ might yield interesting insights into the underlying (and unfolding) vision and organizational and socio-cultural context of these facilities.

In a “low IQ” community desiring to change, we would likely find mono-generational facilities wishing to develop or implement an IGSS program, but with serious implicit or explicit barriers to success. A profile of such facilities might be those described by Freedman (1999) as “gated communities.” Freedman notes how the residents of retirement communities like Sun City West in Arizona have organized quite effectively to remove themselves from community affairs and responsibilities. In such cases, the surrounding community is relegated to background status; any shared site facility or intergenerational program developed here would not readily enter into the natural stream of resource exchanges with institutions “outside the gates,” an important feature of

¹ This might involve the kind of “historical ethnographic” analysis conducted by Paul Luken and Suzanne Vaughan of the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Arizona State University in their study of the Sun City senior housing development in Arizona. They systematically analyzed historical documents (specific advertisements) to see how the facility was marketed since 1960 as a form of both community and retirement (Luken and Vaughan, 2000).

activating intergenerational program possibilities and enhancing the chances for success. Without inter-agency dialogue and relationship-building, opportunities will be missed for developing any intergenerational programs, let alone shared sites, based on complementary objectives and curricula.

By ignoring (at worst) or under-utilizing (at best) the community context of IGSS facilities and programs, the conceptual framework for creating and studying these facilities and their programs is limited. It is likely to be no more evolved than that used to create predictable, universally similar eating experiences in today's fast food restaurants.

In an effort to develop an integrated model for which retirement communities can simultaneously establish intergenerational programs and strengthen community ties, the second author is working with a group of researchers from Penn State University and administrators from Foxdale Village, a retirement home-continuous care facility in State College, Pennsylvania, to develop an approach known as "intergenerational options mapping." The program development strategy involves a three-step process: (1) spatial identification all local children and youth programs, (2) collection of information about their objectives and activities/curricula, and (3) establishment of inter-agency dialogue aimed at exploring potential intergenerational programmatic links based on complementary objectives and curricula. Such a process could easily lead to an IGSS program at some point in the future, with the added involvement of potential program participants and relevant others.

This model highlights the role of university-based researchers in contributing to the development and sustainability of IGSS programs. Considering the well documented need to increase the quality of research and evaluation in intergenerational programs (e.g., Kuehne, 1998), we recommend establishing community-researcher partnerships where possible, like the one described above. University involvement can enhance the exposure of the program and facility, and can assist with developing new relationships with other local institutions. If university partners assist with systematic and well documented research and evaluation, programs are also better able to demonstrate outcomes and secure ongoing funding that ensures viability long term.

Toward Achieving IGSS Program Success: Understanding More About Important Program and Policy Factors

Undoubtedly, everyone working in the human services broadly has the goal of "success" each time they embark on a new program initiative. Yet, it is interesting that both practitioners and researchers define success variably. This diversity in definition is useful, in that programs can and very likely should have myriad goals and objectives, and thus, the successful accomplishment of those goals and objectives will need to be measured in different ways. While the literature is still "thin" with respect to the roles that program and policy factors play in affecting the success of IGSS programs, however defined, we can easily build on what is already known in at least three areas. For example, even if we consider only the most common IGSS program model, involving

older adults in long term care and preschool children in child care, we still do not know with any certainty the types of intergenerational activities that best lead to what Travis, Stremmel, and Duprey (1993) call “mutually beneficial exchanges” (p. 290). Given that there is some variability in the characteristics of potential program participants in such IGSS programs, particularly for the older adults involved, we will need to include participant diversity in the design of studies addressing this question. Built into such evaluation and research efforts can be questions of outcome as well: what activities with which type(s) of participants yield what outcomes?

Beyond the activities included in IGSS programs, we have seen that the roles played by the participants themselves in designing and implementing IGSS programs can be important to enhancing program success. What we do not know is what types of planning roles are most appropriate for which groups of older adults and how can very young children be given program design involvement that is developmentally appropriate? These questions are very much related to the call by some researchers for more training for IGSS program staff, particularly in the areas of lifespan development theory and the skills and knowledge required to work effectively with young children and older adults. Evaluation and research studies are needed to examine more closely the kinds of training received by staff working in IGSS programs, and determine the right “mix” of knowledge and skills required for successful programs. The key dimensions for assessing IGSS programs described early on in this paper also support the investigation of these questions.

If we take a contextual approach to examining IGSS programs, we know that institutional factors are important to consider. From the literature we have reviewed, shared site facilities often provide important benefits to those both “living” and “working” within them. For example, the benefits to long term care facility staff of having on-site child care for their own children is a workplace benefit that is increasingly considered relevant to measuring IGSS program success. Similarly, we are seeing some arguments in the literature regarding cost savings associated with physical space that is better utilized when IGSS programs are created. What we do not yet know are the circumstances under which optimal cost savings can be realized in various types of IGSS facilities. What is the role of cost savings in convincing mono-generational facility administrators to support IGSS programming? Without management support for the concept, IGSS programs will not be created, certainly not sustained. Questions such as these require further investigation, and Travis and Stremmel (1999) have broken important ground in this area.

Finally, with regard to policy barriers, an unlimited number of evaluation and research questions abound. The AARP (1998) report identified some of the barriers and challenges for IGSS programs, and policy-related issues such as adequate funding, appropriate training, and the need for effective inter-agency partnerships emerged. Interestingly, other researchers and evaluators have corroborated that training and partnership issues should be central in future studies of IGSS programs and these issues have been discussed above. Barriers related to funding have been less emphasized, with the exception of the possibilities for cost-savings just described. We need more documented information on the sources of funding for IGSS programs. Kuehne (1999)

found that a mix of public and private funds was typically used to both build and maintain the 13 IGSS facilities and programs she interviewed. While this funding profile is typical for intergenerational programs more broadly, what is not clear is the extent to which IGSS programs have particular funding issues that are not shared by other intergenerational programs. Further, one could imagine that municipal, state or national policies on building codes, staff ratios and professional standards could also play a role in both the viability and success of IGSS programs.

The Scope of Evaluation and Research on IGSS Programs: Understanding as Much as Possible!

In the overall intergenerational program evaluation and research literature, most studies are “qualitative” in nature and include a range of methods, from ethnography to narrative analysis to textual/archival studies. They provide rich, descriptive information about program activities, individual intergenerational encounters, and sometimes, the context in which the exchanges occur (Ward, 1999). However, there are limitations to what can be generalized from these results, particularly when studies are designed to generate program “profiles” rather than in-depth pieces of research. Of course, “quantitative” comparative studies in which, for example, standard questionnaires or surveys are used, have limitations as well. Although some would argue that they have more scientific rigor than qualitative studies, in reducing the number of variables for analysis, much information about organizational, community, and cultural context is filtered out. Thus, we need all types of studies -- qualitative and quantitative -- in order to build a firm knowledge base about intergenerational program phenomena and inform the development of IGSS programs.

If we are committed to “higher IQ” communities, we should also encourage research approaches that involve researchers and participants as collaborators. One such approach, “participatory action research,” is based on a process through which communities identify priorities for change, collect and analyze relevant information, and act, finding solutions to problems and new approaches to collective issues that promote social and political transformation (Selener, 1997). This research method is well suited to the intergenerational field overall and its advantages are described in more detail elsewhere (Kuehne, 1998/99).

The current evaluation and research literature on IGSS programs is severely limited by the single model typically considered in documented studies. It is, of course, important to build knowledge with regard to IGSS programs involving older adults in long term care facilities and preschool children in child care. We must also, however, focus on other models of IGSS facilities and programs. Without this expanded evaluation and research agenda, we will not have the capacity to learn from one another’s experience across program types. To this end, human service practitioners in all IGSS programs should be encouraged to use their skills and abilities in designing and implementing evaluations (Kuehne, 1996), and consider our earlier recommendation to develop relationships with university- and college-based researchers.

Conclusion

It would appear that for many of the reports on IGSS facilities and programs included in this paper, the focus is on intergenerational interactions and activities. Certainly, we agree with the need to examine the interactions that take place during an intergenerational program or activity. The point that needs greater emphasis, however, is that the program-based interactions take place in multiple contexts: the developmental context of each individual participant's life, a situational context, institutional context, environmental context (within and beyond the facility), and a societal context. By paying close attention to the host of contextual factors operating in any shared site facility, we can gain additional insights into participants' social attitudes and behavior; more readily draw forth a multi-dimensional model for examining how people perceive and experience the IGSS facility and program, and identify the factors that are likely to yield program success, however defined.

Key to making progress in developing the evaluation and research literature is the need for a "community of scholars" interested in IGSS facilities and programs. Once identified, these scholars could collaborate with a consortium of IGSS program practitioners and others to develop a practice-relevant agenda of evaluation and research questions and approaches that are most important to advancing knowledge, program and policy development in this area. We hope that the issues and questions identified in this paper will be useful for informing the development of such an agenda.

Undoubtedly, however, the barrier of funding, already identified by program staff as a priority, would need to be addressed in order for such a collaborative initiative to be possible. Collaborations are not inexpensive, and can be logistically complex; thus, a central organization should ideally take on proposal development and very likely, project coordination as well. In our view, Generations United is well positioned to take on such a leadership and coordinating role.

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