Background

• Ageism and school-age children’s negative attitudes toward aging are associated with a variety of negative effects on older adults including an increased risk for loneliness and social isolation
• Loneliness and social isolation among older adults are associated with negative physical and mental health outcomes
• Interventions which combine intergenerational activities with education about aging result in the largest positive effects on attitudes toward ageism and social isolation
• A community-based organization providing intergenerational activities for older adults at risk for social isolation had an existing program, but no evaluation had been conducted

Purpose

• Evaluate the attitudes toward aging among youth participants prior to participating in intergenerational activities at a community organization
• Assess older adult participants’ perspectives about their experience participating in intergenerational activities
• Perceived impact from participation in intergenerational activities
• Individual items scored on a 4-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree; 4=strongly agree)
• Surveys scored (<8=very negative; 9-16=negative; 17-24=neutral; 25-32=neutral positive; 33-40=positive; 41-48=very positive)

Theoretical Model

The Positive Education about Aging and Contact Experiences (PEACE) model for reducing ageism among younger people has been found to reduce ageism attitudes

Methods

Timeline

• The intergenerational programming occurred from November 2019 to March 2020

Measures

Children’s attitudes towards aging:

• 12-item “Age Attitudes” survey developed by the community organization: 6 positive and 6 negative items about aging and older adults
• Individual items scored on a 4-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree; 4=strongly agree)
• Surveys scored (<8=very negative; 9-16=negative; 17-24=neutral; 25-32=neutral positive; 33-40=positive; 41-48=very positive)

Older adults’ perceptions:

• Open ended telephone interviews
• Favorite aspects of the intergenerational activities
• Perceived impact from participation in intergenerational activities
• Suggestions for future intergenerational programming

Program content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Group Activity</th>
<th>Small Group Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Board games</td>
<td>Historic moment experienced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bingo</td>
<td>Holiday traditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Poster art project</td>
<td>Favorite summer activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Board games</td>
<td>Favorite summer activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mural art project</td>
<td>Meaning of community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bingo</td>
<td>Favorite music</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

Youth Attitudes Toward Aging Scores (n=98)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>Very Negative</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Somewhat Negative</th>
<th>Somewhat Positive</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Very Positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• 96% of children held positive attitudes toward older adults before participating in intergenerational activities

Limitations:

Due to COVID-19, we were unable to access students to conduct post-surveys. The interviews with adults (n=8) were adapted to telephone calls which may have reduced response rate (20%)

Qualitative data from telephone surveys

Themes that emerged from telephone interviews with the older adults included:
• Mutual benefits
  “I feel useful because] the children asked questions, and I could answer.”
• Appreciation for interacting with the youth
  “[My favorite part is] listening to the children talk and interacting with one another. The children were all non-judgmental and respectful.”
• Recommendations for future interactions
  “I would like to go on field trips with the children or even help them with their schoolwork or projects.”

Conclusions

• The children were found to overwhelmingly positive about aging and older adults
• Older adults found the intergenerational activities to be beneficial
• Future intergenerational activities could include bringing older adults into school activities or settings