A View from the Other Side: Elders’ Reactions to Intergenerational Service-Learning
Heather L. Underwood, BA
Lorraine T. Dorfman, PhD

ABSTRACT. Research on the effects of intergenerational service-learning has more often focused on outcomes for students than on outcomes for elders served by those programs. The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the effects of an intergenerational service-learning program on elders living in a small Midwestern community. Service-learning programs may be of particular value for rural-dwelling elders because of the paucity of health and human services in rural areas and the outmigration of the young to urban locations. University students were involved in friendly visiting, reminiscence, oral history, and recreational activities with 43 elders in four community settings: a congregate meal site, a semi-independent living setting, an assisted living setting, and a nursing home. Age of respondents ranged from 60 to 98, with most being in their 80s and 90s. Elders were asked to discuss positive and negative reactions to the service-learning, what students and elders had contributed to each
other, and suggestions for improvement. Interviews were transcribed and major themes identified using the method of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Major themes that emerged from the content analysis were the benefits of personal interaction and companionship, increased intergenerational understanding, and being able to share life experiences. A large majority of elders thought the project should be continued. Suggestions included better advance preparation of students and elders and more attention to termination issues. Implications for further development of intergenerational programs are discussed.

KEYWORDS. Qualitative research, rural elders, intergenerational service-learning

INTRODUCTION

Intergenerational service-learning programs that link students with older people have received widespread approval for the social and educational benefits that they provide. Research on the effects of intergenerational service-learning, however, has more often focused on outcomes for students than on outcomes for elders served by those programs. As the large “baby boom” generation ages and approaches retirement age, programs connecting the generations are likely to become more common; consequently, research that assesses the outcomes of intergenerational programs among elders becomes imperative in order to advance knowledge in the intergenerational field.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the effects of an intergenerational service-learning program on elders living in a small rural Midwestern community. The overall goal of the project was to involve university students and elders in meaningful interactions in the rural community setting. A significant proportion (approximately one-fourth) of elders in this country currently live in rural environments (United States Census Bureau, 2000). Service-learning programs may be of particular value for those rural-dwelling elders because of the paucity of health and human services in rural areas (Coward, Bull, Kukulka, & Galliher, 1994; Dorfman, 2002; Krout & Coward, 1998) and because
of the outmigration of the young to urban locations, often resulting in reduced social supports (Dorfman, 2002; Krout & Coward, 1998; Stoller & Lee, 1994). Information on the outcomes of service-learning among rural elders can provide valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners who work with rural-dwelling elders, as well as useful information for the development of appropriate intergenerational programs to serve those elders. There is often a tendency to design and deliver rural programs and services based on the dominant urban model, with inadequate attention given to the unique needs and values of rural elders (Coward et al., 1994; Krout, 1998; Murty, 2001).

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

*The Need for Intergenerational Programs with Elders*

Elders, particularly community-dwelling elders with health challenges and elders who reside in nursing homes and other residential care settings, may be at particular risk for inadequate social support and social isolation. Intergenerational programs that link youth and elders can help address some of the issues of inadequate social support and lack of connectedness between the generations (Newman & Smith, 1997). Such intergenerational programs may help compensate for the lack of intergenerational contact often caused by the mobility of many American families today, with grandparents and grandchildren sometimes living great distances apart.

In addition to providing social support for elders, intergenerational programs provide older people with an opportunity to increase their overall activity level, which has been shown to produce positive effects on outcomes ranging from increased life satisfaction (Longino & Kart, 1982) to decreased mortality (Berkman & Syme, 1979). Furthermore, informal social activity, such as the one-on-one activities often fostered by intergenerational programs, is more likely to provide the role supports that reaffirm self-concept and contribute to life satisfaction than do either formal activity or solitary activity (Lemon, Bengston, & Peterson, 1972; Longino & Kart, 1982).

*Elder Outcomes of Intergenerational Service-Learning*

The limited literature documenting outcomes of intergenerational service-learning for elders indicates that elders are generally very positive
about service-learning involving college and university-level students. In fact, one study conducted in a nursing home setting (Newman, Lyons, & Onawola, 1985) found that a full 100% of residents participating in service-learning said they enjoyed the student visits very much. Elders cited reasons such as “I don’t get many visitors” and “I like talking to someone other than sick folk” (p. 63). The Newman et al. study also included a clinical assessment of nursing home residents that assessed physical or mental changes; results revealed that 83% of the elders had either improved or had stable health status by the end of the semester program (27% and 56%). These findings are impressive when considering the physical and/or mental decline often seen among nursing home residents.

Several later studies of university students and nursing home residents participating in service-learning (e.g., Dorfman, Murty, Ingram, & Evans, 2002; Greene, 1998; Roos, 2004) likewise found benefits of service-learning among elders. In the Greene study, almost all residents (94%) said they benefited from the service-learning experience. Almost two-thirds (64%) of residents noted that they benefited from the companionship the students provided. Other benefits for residents included developing a new point of view (38%), the enjoyment of engaging in activity and meeting someone new (27%), and being able to express oneself and be more social (14%). Positive effects of student-elder personal relationships were also reported by both nursing home and semi-independent living residents in a recent study of rural elders (Dorfman et al., 2002). In that study, university students were paired with elders for friendly visiting, reminiscence, and oral history during a semester-long service-learning experience. Similarly, emerging intergenerational friendships were observed between elders and university students in a study conducted in retirement homes in South Africa (Roos, 2004). McCrea and Smith (1997), in a project involving children of various ages and nursing home residents, also found numerous positive outcomes of intergenerational service-learning for elders, including developing new relationships, an enhanced sense of self-worth and self-esteem, recognizing that their life has meaning and importance for others, and getting individual attention from a caring person.

Intergenerational service-learning programs involving community-dwelling elders also have yielded positive outcomes for elders. Bringle and Kremer (1993), in a study of homebound elders and the senior companions who visited them, found that both groups of elders described visits where university students accompanied the senior companions as “satisfying,” “relaxed,” “valuable,” and “comfortable” (p. 413). Additionally, elder clients and their senior companions described the
students themselves in very positive terms including “pleasant,” “cooperative,” “strong,” and “active.” Another study involving frail community-dwelling elders conducted at multiple sites, the Student Assisted Independent Living (SAIL) service-learning project (Pillemer & Schultz, 2002), found that most elders (83%) said that participating in the program had helped to make their lives better or more enjoyable, indicating that a large majority felt they had benefited from the companionship and social interaction provided by students. In fact, when elder respondents were asked to indicate what they liked most about the project, nearly all responded that it was the benefits of social interaction and companionship.

In summary, the studies reviewed above point to a number of common outcomes of intergenerational service-learning among elders. First, all point to the positive value of service-learning in terms of the social benefits elders receive through interacting with students and developing new relationships (Bringle & Kremer, 1993; Dorfman et al., 2002; Greene, 1998; Newman et al., 1985; McCrea & Smith, 1997; Pillemer & Schultz, 2002). Second, a number of studies indicate that service-learning results in elders having more positive attitudes and a better understanding of youth, thus increasing intergenerational understanding (Dorfman et al., 2002; Greene, 1998; Newman et al., 1985). Two studies report that elders benefited by experiencing an increase in physical or mental functioning (McCrea & Smith, 1997; Newman et al., 1985). Additionally, studies cite outcomes such as increased self-esteem among elders (McCrea & Smith, 1997) and improved ability to express feelings (Greene, 1998).

**METHOD**

**Participants**

Interviews were conducted at the end of a semester long service-learning experience with 43 elders living in four rural community settings: a nursing home \((n = 21)\), a semi-independent living site \((n = 10)\), an assisted living facility \((n = 3)\), and a congregate meal site \((n = 9)\). The sites are located in a small town (population 3,332) with a largely underserved rural population approximately 15 miles from the University of Iowa in Iowa City. Elders were paired with students and were involved in friendly visiting, reminiscence, oral history, and recreational activities with their students on a biweekly basis. Four cohorts of students elected
the service-learning option over a three-and-a-half year period. Because of the small community size, the field sites could not accommodate a large number of students each semester. The first three student cohorts were enrolled in an interdisciplinary introductory gerontology class and the fourth student cohort was enrolled in a social work human behavior class. All service-learning students enrolled in the introductory gerontology course were paired with an individual elder; about one-half of the students enrolled in the human behavior class were paired with an elder at the nursing home and the remaining students took part in activities with elders such as playing games, conversation, and helping with the Meals on Wheels program.

Elders at the congregate meal site volunteered to participate in the service-learning project. Elders from the semi-independent living, assisted living, and nursing home sites, who had moderate to severe health impairments, were chosen for participation by the administrator who directed all three residential sites. The selection of elders at those sites was based on their current functional and cognitive status. Age of elders ranged from 60-98, but the majority of these individuals were in their eighties or nineties. A large majority (n = 37) of the elders were female; only six were male.

**Instruments**

Elders were interviewed by project staff upon completion of the service-learning project. The interview schedule consisted of a number of open-ended questions that queried elders about their reactions to the project, what they perceived as the contributions that they and their student had made to the project, and suggestions for the future. The specific questions are given in Table 1. All responses were tape-recorded and transcribed completely for analysis.

**Data Analysis**

Transcriptions were analyzed to identify major themes and categories using the method of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Codes were developed for each theme and category on the basis of the content analysis. When agreement on the themes was reached by the research team (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), two independent coders coded the data. The inter-rater reliability ranged from .87 to .96 for the four student cohorts.
The HyperResearch 2.0 data analysis software program (Research Ware, 1999), which organizes material into categories using predetermined codes, was used to analyze the interviews. Codes and data files were entered into the program and not altered once the analysis had begun. The major findings of the content analysis and excerpts from the tapes illustrating the range and quality of responses are presented below.

**RESULTS**

**Elders’ Reactions to the Service-Learning Project**

Elders were first queried about what they liked and disliked about the project (Questions 1 and 2, Table 1). The largest number of elders ($n = 27$) said they liked the personal interaction with students. Here is how a very elderly (aged 93) female nursing home resident and an 84-year-old woman living semi-independently described the interactions with their students, respectively:

He was a very nice boy. He was very courteous. He seemed to be interested in everything that you said, and he was a good listener.

I thought it was very interesting. I looked forward to it each time. And my girl was a very nice girl. I’ve had a letter from her since. She wants me to write to her . . . I like young people. And so it was really interesting to be able to talk to a young person, you know.
She reminded me more of my granddaughters, you know, and was inquisitive about different things in my life, which they are too.

The benefit of regular interaction for both young and old was clearly communicated by another nursing home resident:

Well, I think it was a good idea from the standpoint of looking ahead for them and it was an easy thing because we did just the things that friends do with each other. That’s one way that you get to know people better if you aren’t standing off, as if one group is here and the other one is there. We were together, that is, with our partner. Just a matter of becoming acquainted with another generation.

In addition to the personal interaction that occurred during service-learning, several elders also liked what they considered good project planning, as did this semi-independent living resident, aged 86:

I was flattered to have been chosen as one of the people. I thought the project was well planned, and I think it turned out very well.

Only about half-a-dozen elders said there were things they disliked about the project (Question 2); however, those responses are very instructive and useful for future project planning. Three elders felt that the project needed to be better organized. One issue was the timing of student visits, as pointed out by this nursing home resident: “The one girl came when it was a little unhandy for me, but then that couldn’t be helped either.” Several elders felt they were not well prepared for the student visits, as conveyed by this 93-year-old woman living in the assisted living facility:

I didn’t know just what the course was that they were taking, or I would have been a little more knowledgeable as to something I could have originated to talk about. That’s why I thought she would have a few leading questions. They didn’t have anything as to what we were to talk about or anything. . . . She was just as quiet the day they had the celebration, when they came to sit with us.

A poignant concern voiced by elders concerned termination of the project at the end of the semester. Although verbalized by only one elder, it may have been on the minds of more, and was also mentioned
frequently by the students. Here is how one elderly nursing home resident described how she felt when the students left:

Actually, I disliked it when they . . . I did get attached to some of the students, and then when they’re gone, they’re gone. I have heard from some of them since. I’m talking about the beginning, the first year. I don’t know if you’re connected with that or not. It ran through this place, the nursing home.

Perception of Elder and Student Contributions

Elders were asked two questions to assess what they saw as the contributions each generation had made to the other as a result of the service-learning experience: “What do you think you contributed to the student with whom you were working?” and “What do you think the student with whom you were working contributed to you?” (Table 1, Questions 3 and 4). Elders most frequently responded ($n = 25$) that what they had contributed to the student was sharing their life experiences. Two women in their early 90s, the former a congregate meal site participant and the latter a semi-independent living facility resident, described their life experiences:

I told her about the olden times, how hard we had to work, and it’s different today than it was then ’cause I was on the farm. And she said, “Oh, my goodness. How could you live so long?” I said work never killed anybody, you know.

I’ll soon be 93, so I can remember a lot of things that she would never know about, and that my children will never know about. Such as when we got our first electric fan, and I thought nothing could be greater than to have an electric fan. Now we couldn’t think that, because we’ve gone on up, and have air conditioning.

Another woman, aged 84, also living semi-independently, hoped that her story might encourage young people to overcome future obstacles in their own lives:

Well, she couldn’t believe some of the things that happened in my life years ago, you know. How we grew up so poor. I think it gave her some encouragement that you can get farther ahead in life. That’s the way I kind of felt she felt, because I told her we started
out with nothing. I was born in a poor family and we had nothing clear through high school. And we didn’t have anything, just what we could put on the table. You know, we went through the Depression and of course the young people today don’t realize what that Depression was.

In addition to talking about sharing their life experiences, three elders said they contributed to their student by fostering intergenerational relationships, as did these two women living in the nursing home and the semi-independent living facility, respectively:

I thoroughly enjoyed the contact with people that age. In my early days I was a school teacher, a high school teacher, and you develop a different kind of interest in the kind of people you are dealing with, as we were with them. I hope it was significant to her. My approach to living and the things that we were doing.

To me, I coulda’ just taken her as my daughter, you know. And I hope she felt that way about me. And I think she did feel real close to me, because she wrote a real nice letter and told me what she was doing now.

In response to Question 4 (Table 1), elders most frequently said \(n = 17\) that what the student contributed to them was the opportunity to learn about young people today, thus facilitating intergenerational understanding. One 87-year-old woman living in the nursing home said simply, “I enjoyed her telling me about her life. I always like to hear about somebody else’s life.” Another nursing home resident, aged 93, shared a very positive view of young people based on her semester experience:

Well, that a lot of the people today are very conscientious and try hard to do what is right. That there’s still a lot of good boys and girls in the world.

Additionally, nine elders said that what the student contributed to them was an opportunity to develop a new relationship. Elders communicated that these new relationships served to make their lives more interesting and helped to reduce feelings of social isolation. Here is what an 84-year-old man and 92-year-old woman, both living semi-independently, had to say about their new relationships:
Well, it entertained us. And took up our time. Here there’s days we get a little bored, and we enjoy people just coming and talking to us.

Oh, when you get old, always young people add a lot to your life. They bring a little zest that you don’t have otherwise. A little warmth, and she was such a nice person.

Even the youngest elder in the study, aged 60, reported such feelings:

I think her attitude and her friendliness and how she treated me. And that was really great; it was really nice. She was really good. I really enjoyed her.

**Suggestions for Future Activities and Improvements**

A final set of questions asked elders what they thought might be done differently, whether they thought the project should be continued in the future, and specific suggestions for next time (Table 1, Questions 5 to 7). Most of the elders (n = 35) said the project should be continued. Elders in all four community settings agreed that the project should be continued and gave reasons for why they felt that way, as illustrated by three elders from the assisted living facility, the semi-independent living facility, and the congregate meal site, respectively:

I think it’s a good idea for the simple reason that most of them that age [the students] have not been around older people with the exception of their own family, and you will deal differently with ones it’s your responsibility to look after. Oh, you never know just why we do things the way we do, but the old people have sort of a character of their own and as a group have lots of things we contribute as we get old.

I think it would be nice. I know [the administrator] asked us that, and we told him we wouldn’t mind doin’ it another year. In fact, I’d kinda’ feel left out if we didn’t get asked again. I thought it was fun, and real interesting. Looked forward to it.

Oh, yes; yes, definitely. Yeah. And that way we get to meet all kids you know, all kinds of new students and they can interview more people and maybe different ones, maybe. I really enjoyed it.
Several elders were more ambivalent about continuing the project, but did not say it should be discontinued. Thus, one nursing home resident commented, “Oh, I can’t say I’m really enthused about it, but it’s okay if they get anything out of it, then I’m agreeable to it.” Another woman, also living in the nursing home, offered this complex and thoughtful reaction:

I would have to say that it depends on how they react to it. Did we fulfill a need that they thought they had? Maybe we were not well enough versed ahead of time. But I do think it probably has merit and it certainly has merit for them becoming acquainted with people of the age group that they’re going to work with. Because you do know that when you get to our age, we become a group unto ourselves and a little different from you, for instance. I’ve been where you were once. You’re coming where I am now. It’s a little bit of growing together if you want to think about it that way. There is not enough of that kind of thing going on. Too many young people think, “Oh, they’re just old.” Not that that’s very deep, but I do have that feeling.

This last response helped identify what some elders felt could be done differently and improved next time (Table 1, Questions 5 and 7). Although only three elders said that things should be done differently and six elders offered specific suggestions for the future, one theme in those responses was that there was a need for better preparation for and information about the project. Here was what one nursing home resident suggested:

If we could be, I don’t know if informed is the right word or not, but a little bit about the entire program. We really, the first time they came to talk with us, I had no notion of what was ahead and I think it would help. We don’t need to know a lot, but just a general outline. “We’re coming to do this” or “We’re coming so many times or about so many times” or “What we’d like to get from you.”

Several elders noted that the students needed to be better prepared for the service-learning, especially in the area of adequate technical expertise if they were conducting oral histories. One woman recounted what happened when a student was not adequately prepared to operate a tape recorder:
And then, make sure that people know how to do the tape recorder, because I know that one girl had trouble when she was interviewing. You know, she had trouble and she thought it was working, and here it didn’t work at all. So she had to redo it, I guess. To make sure you know you can get it the right way and that the tape is working and it’s in right and everything. ‘Cause that sometimes can be a problem.

Elders also suggested that students needed more knowledge about elders and better psychological preparation for working with elders before going into the field. One woman made it clear that her student was woefully unprepared:

Don’t be afraid of us! I mean for her. She acted as if it was very difficult, and I decided that maybe she was just that temperament . . . I just felt, she just didn’t feel really comfortable, you see. And I was a little concerned.

Another recommendation for the future was that the project should be expanded to include more people, because, as one 94-year-old pointed out:

Probably you’ll choose different people here. Get a broader view. I think it would be a good idea, because I think you’ll get a lot of different ideas. You’ll run into different occupations, you know. I think probably most of the people they interviewed, their occupations were mostly farming.

DISCUSSION:
CROSS-CUTTING THEMES AND PATTERNS

The interviews with these elders involved in intergenerational service-learning with university students revealed many different reactions to the service-learning experience and conveyed many different impressions. Yet, despite this diversity, there were the commonalities and themes that appeared time and again throughout the interviews and sometimes in elders’ responses to several different questions. Three overarching themes pervaded the interviews.

Personal Interaction

“They always bring something new, and they’re from the outside world.” Many elders talked about the benefit of personal interaction
with a regular visitor as an important aspect of the intergenerational service-learning experience. The more frail elders, like those living in the nursing home, particularly looked forward to these visits, perhaps because nursing homes do not often offer the degree of personal interaction enjoyed in the community, and because nursing home staff do not always have the time or ability to interact with individual residents on a frequent basis. Additionally, because of several features of rural life such as the outmigration of the young to urban areas in search of job opportunities and cultural advantages (Dorfman, 2002; Krout & Coward, 1998) and the relative lack of and access to health and social services in rural areas (Coward et al., 1994; Dorfman, 2002; Krout & Coward, 1998), rural elders may particularly benefit from the personal and social interaction offered by intergenerational service-learning programs. Personal interaction with new people can develop into new friendships in old age, as noted by Roos (2004). These friendships can involve affection, appreciation, and sharing. “We just loved the kids you gave us. It worked out real well,” said one eighty-two year old woman, expressing delight about the match with her student partner.

Intergenerational Understanding

“We were together, that is, with our partner. Just a matter of becoming acquainted with another generation.” The opportunity for increased intergenerational understanding was a theme that appeared in responses to many of the questions in the interview. What was particularly important was the mutuality, the reciprocally beneficial effects that elders perceived was gained from the project. For these elders, there was an expressed sense of intergenerational connectedness and of bonding with a younger person. The project seemed to benefit the elders by providing them with more knowledge and understanding of the lives of young people; conversely, students benefited by learning more about older adults and their life experiences. As one elder put it, “Maybe she [the student] got a different outlook on an old person.”

Life Experiences

“I talked about the Great Depression, the War, and our ration books that we had. I wish I had some to show her.” Many of the elders talked about sharing their life experiences with students, particularly while engaged in doing the oral histories. It is known that sharing experiences and telling their own life story can help older individuals make meaning
of their lives and maintain a sense of personal identity (Bruner, 1999; Dorfman, Murty, Evans, Ingram, & Power, 2004; Kaufman, 1986; Lubarsky, 1997; Merriam, 1998; Peck, 2001). Reminiscence on the part of elders can likewise help students gain an understanding of the importance of elders’ life experiences and the meaning of important events and experiences in their lives. Many of the elders involved in this project indicated that they had spent a great deal of time with their student in sharing life experiences; furthermore, over half reported that sharing their life experiences was what they had contributed to the student with whom they were paired. Several elders expressed a sense of pride in being able to share their life stories with a younger generation, suggesting that the project may have enhanced elders’ feelings of self-worth. As one put it, “Well, it does make me feel particularly like I might be doing something that is worthwhile instead of just mole-ing away.”

**IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMMING**

The findings of this study confirm previous research concerning the value of intergenerational service-learning programs. The current research, however, extends previous research on service-learning with elders by providing in-depth follow-up interviews with elders living in four community settings in an underserved rural community.

Some aspects of this project suggest future directions for intergenerational programming. For one thing, the study documents the value of intergenerational service-learning in rural communities. Opportunities for involvement in intergenerational service-learning often exist only in more urban areas. Although approximately one-fourth of elders reside in rural areas, many students are unfamiliar with rural communities and the life experiences and needs of rural elders. The rural community as a context for intergenerational programming can provide valuable learning opportunities for students and offers rural elders, who may not have had as many opportunities to relate to students as do urban elders, a way of increasing cross-generational interaction and connectedness.

Second, the results indicate a positive effect of the service-learning experience on the well-being of the elders involved. Recall that the majority of these elders lived in institutional settings, where personal and social interaction may be particularly compromised. The comments made by the elders during the follow-up interviews point to the benefits of personal interaction, intergenerational relationships and understand-
ing, and the opportunity to share life experiences with a young person who is willing to listen. Encouraging more sharing of life experiences through reminiscence and personal narrative can help elders to “story” their lives in a way that helps them achieve the sense of integrity that is developmentally important in later life (Bruner, 1999; Erikson, Erikson, & Kivnick, 1986). On the therapeutic level, reminiscence can be usefully applied in reminiscence therapy with older adults (David-Jones & Beck-Little, 2002). Although several of the elders in this study said they “hadn’t done much and had nothing interesting to tell about their lives,” a self-deprecating attitude that may be characteristic of some older people, the comments they shared about their life experiences indicate otherwise. Interestingly, Greene (1998) also found that half of his nursing home respondents said they doubted they had anything to teach their student companions.

Third, results of the current study suggest several ways of improving intergenerational programming between young and old. Responses from some elders indicated that they would profit from better preparation for the project before it begins. An informational session or two at the inception of the project might prove a valuable means of communicating to elders the goals, main features, and expectations of the project. Perhaps the elders themselves could play an active role in planning and organizing the experience. In this way, elders would not only gain a psychological and social benefit from being a part of the planning process, but they would feel more prepared once the project is underway. Elder responses also indicate that some students need to be better prepared for working with older people, both in terms of knowledge of what elders are like and the challenges that they face, e.g., hearing or memory loss, and in technical expertise such as handling tape recorders used in oral history. Finally, it is clear that termination issues need to be addressed. Although older people have often experienced many losses, several noted how hard it was to say good-bye to their student at the end of the semester. Issues of termination need to be addressed with both students and elders prior to the end of the project. It would be valuable for project administrators and community agency partners to work together to insure that elders are fully informed as to the time-limited nature of the project and also that any negative effects of termination are noticed and promptly addressed.

It should be noted that all of the elders in this study were Caucasians living in one Midwestern rural community; therefore, it is important that future studies assessing elder outcomes of intergenerational service-learning be conducted in other geographical locations and with other racial groups in order to assess the generalizability of the findings. It would
also be valuable to determine whether there are differences by age in the
degree to which intergenerational service-learning programs benefit el-
ders, since most of the participants in this study were in their 80s and 90s.
The accretion of such knowledge will hopefully facilitate the develop-
ment of intergenerational programs that will be most beneficial to the
burgeoning population of elders and that will contribute to the field of
intergenerational programming and practice.

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