CultureCase

An intergenerational music and dance project that improved wellbeing

This research was conducted by **Lindsay K. Jenkins, Rachel Farrer** and **Imogen Jane Aujla** at the **University of Bedfordshire** and **Coventry University**

Summary

This paper describes an intergenerational music and dance project that put professional artists together with older adults experiencing dementia. Through observation and a series of focus group discussions the researchers were able to see how the devised music and dance improved all five aspects of the "PERMA model" of psychological wellbeing: positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning and achievement/accomplishment.

Hear and Now was an intergenerational arts and health project led by the Philharmonia Orchestra, Orchestras Live and the University of Bedfordshire

Over four weeks, groups of participants (including older adults, young people, carers, partners and artists) collaborated to devise a music and dance piece. Seven rehearsal days, held over four weekends, culminated in a public performance at the university theatre.

The findings of the study come from focus groups and observations

Seven focus groups took place midway and at the end of the project. 65 people participated in the 2019 Hear and Now project, 27 of whom participated in the focus groups. The focus group discussion prompted the participants to report

benefits in their positive emotional state (happiness, inspiration, pride and excitement related to ‘participation in the project as a whole, positive interactions with others, performing, potential future collaborations and acts of altruism’). People ‘described feelings that illustrated their engagement and absorption in artistic activities, such as excitement about taking part, feeling free, being focused and experiencing a sense of ‘flow’'. They talked about ‘support, positive relationships and making new connections’. The experience was meaningful and ‘allowed participants to feel part of a greater whole. Some found the project gave them purpose and placed value on their personal contributions.’ People took pride in their work and achievements, developing skills and confidence while shedding inhibitions. In addition to improved psychological wellbeing people said their health was generally improved by participating in the project.

Keywords

focus group **music** **observation** **health** **UK** **dance** **dementia**

Title	Understanding the impact of an intergenerational arts and health project: a study into the psychological well-being of participants, carers and artists
Author(s)	Jenkins, L. K., Farrer, R. & Aujla, I. J
Publication date	2021
Source	Public Health, Vol. 194, pp. 121-126
Link	**https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2021.02.029**
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By **Culture.Case** | | **Health and wellbeing impacts of arts and culture** |

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