# Young people's perceptions of older people before and

# after an ethnodrama presentation

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Dissertation (article format) submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Magister Artium in Psychology at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University

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It all starts here ™

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**YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS OF OLDER PEOPLE BEFORE**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my invaluable network of supportive, forgiving, patient, encouraging and loving well wishers, friends and family. I appreciate the support more than you will ever know.

Finally, but first in my heart, my parents and my husband. Thank you for being my rock and my anchor, my counsellors, my voice of reason, my compass when I felt lost, and my life raft!! I would not have been where I am today without you!!

To my mom, Marinda, and my dad, Barry: THANK YOU for your continued moral and financial support throughout my studies. The extensive education I was able to enjoy while growing up has proven invaluable. I appreciate that you motivated me to further my studies and pursue my dream. Thank you for encouraging me every step of the way and believing in me, if anything, I am truly grateful that I can make you proud. Thank you to my mom for her unfailing love, support and encouragement, continuously reminding me of my capabilities and strength, being a best friend that I could turn to at all times. Her kind hearted nature plays a big role in my love for people and animals and thus my interest in Psychology. I dedicate this thesis to my dad, whom I lost to Emphesema before the completion of my thesis. He was my hero and my drill sergeant and taught me to never bend to difficulties. He placed a particularly high emphasis on education throughout my life, for which I am immensely grateful. I doubt that I'll ever be able to fully express my gratitude to him!! This thesis is for you dad, I hope it makes you proud!!

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# SUMMARY

Research has shown that we presently live in an era where birth rates are low and life expectancy is high, drawing the conclusion that older people will be part of young people's lives for longer. Intergenerational relationships refer to the relationship between two or more generations and are crucial for growth within both generations, young and old. There are many stereotypes attached to old age, and it has been found that young people take on these stereotypes through the media and society.

The aim of this study was to explore young people's perceptions of older people before and after an ethnodrama presentation. Programme evaluation which forms part of applied qualitative research was used.

The participants for the research were selected from four schools across Gauteng through convenience sampling, and their ages ranged from ten to sixteen years old. The presentation consisted of an icebreaker and the ethnodrama, which is defined as the dramatisation of researched data. The ethnodrama aimed at generating a better understanding of older people, and refuting negative perceptions associated with older people and aging. It was specifically aimed to tell a story of how older people are living in South-Africa based on previous research. The data, to determine the participants' perceptions of older people, were collected by means of questionnaires containing open-ended questions. The data were obtained before and immediately after the presentation of the ethnodrama.

Thematic analysis was used to transform the data into meaningful information. Findings in this study were not intended to generalize or prove the efficacy of the programme, but to establish how young people perceive older people and whether an ethnodrama presentation had any influence on these perceptions. The findings of the evaluation before the presentation revealed that young people have ambivalent, stereotypical or favourable perceptions of older people. The evaluation directly after the presentation showed a more nuanced description of older people, whereby younger people did not just describe them according to their identities as older people, but also described the relationship between young and old, and expressed an understanding for older people's needs. In conclusion, the ethnodrama seemed to have an impact on younger people's perceptions of older people, although

stereotypical perceptions remained throughout the study.  It is recommended that young people are encouraged to interact with older people from a young age in order to base their perceptions on first-hand accounts of experience gained through these interaction, and possibly dismiss any negative perceptions they may have.

**KEY TERMS: INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS; ETHNODRAMA; STEREOTYPES; AGEISM; QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS; YOUNG PEOPLE; OLDER PEOPLE**

# OPSOMMING

Navorsing het getoon dat ons tans in 'n era leef waar geboortesyfers laag en lewensverwagting hoog is. Dit blyk dus dat ouer mense vir langer deel sal wees van jonger mense se lewens. Intergenerasionele verhoudings verwys na die verhouding tussen twee of meer geslagte en is van kardinale belang vir die groei in beide jonk en oud. Daar is baie stereotipes gekoppel aan ouer persone en is daar gevind dat jong mense hierdie stereotipes deur die media en die samelewing aanneem. Die doel van hierdie studie was om jong mense se persepsies van ouer persone, voor en na 'n etnodrama aanbieding, te verken. Programevaluering, wat deel vorm van kwalitatiewe navorsing, is toegepas. Die deelnemers vir die navorsing is gekies uit vier skole in Gauteng deur 'n gerieflikheidsteekproefneming en hulle ouderdomme het gewissel van tien tot sestien jaar oud. Die aanbieding het bestaan uit 'n ysbreker en die etnodrama. 'n Etnodrama word gedefinieer as die dramatisering van nagevorsde data. Die etnodrama het daarop gemik om beter begrip van ouer persone by jong persone te genereer asook om negatiewe persepsies wat verband hou met ouer persone en veroudering weer te lê. Die fokus van die etnodrama was om 'n storie oor te dra van ouer persone in Suid-Afrika. Die inhoud is gebasseer op vorige navorsing. Die data, om die deelnemers se persepsies van ouer persone te bepaal, is ingesamel deur middel van vraelyste met oop vrae. Die data is voor en onmiddellik na die aanbieding van die etnodrama verkry. Die bevindinge van hierdie studie wou nie veralgemeen of die doeltreffendheid van die program bewys nie, maar wou vas stel wat jong persone se persepsies van ouer persone is en of 'n etnodrama aanbieding 'n invloed op hul persepsies het. Die bevindinge van die evaluering voor die aanbieding het aan die lig gebring dat jong persone ambivalente persepsies van ouer persone het, stereotipiese sowel as gunstige persepsies. Die evaluering direk na die aanbieding het bevindinge van 'n meer genuanseerde beskrywing van die ouer persone bevat.  Die jong persone het ouer persone nie net beskryf volgens hul identiteit as ouer persone nie, maar het ook die verhouding tussen jonk en oud beskryf, en het 'n beter begrip vir ouer persone se behoeftes getoon.

Ten slotte blyk dit dat die etnodrama wel 'n impak op die jonger persone se persepsies van ouer persone gehad het, alhoewel stereotipiese persepsies regdeur die studie teenwoordig was.  Dit word aanbeveel dat jong persone aangemoedig

word om meer interaksie met ouer persone te hê ten einde hul persepsies te basseer op eerstehandse ervarings en moontlik so enige negatiewe persepsies wat hulle mag hê te laat vaar.

**SLEUTELBEGRIPPE: INTERGENERASIONELE VERHOUDINGS; ETNODRAMA; STEREOTIPES; AGEÏSME; KWALITATIEWE DATA-INSAMELING EN -ANALISE; JONG PERSONE; OUER PERSONE**

# PERMISSION TO SUBMIT

**Permission to submit this article for examination purposes**

We, the supervisor and co-supervisor, hereby declare that the input and effort of Mrs

Dunay Nortje in writing this manuscript reflects research done by her on this topic.

We hereby grant permission that she may submit this article for examination in

fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Magister Artium in Psychology.

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**Dr L Wilson** **Prof V Roos**

**Supervisor** **Co-supervisor**

# DECLARATION BY LANGUAGE EDITOR

Hereby I declare that I have language edited and proof read the thesis *Young people's perceptions of older people before and after an ethnodrama presentation* by Dunay Nortje for the degree MA in Psychology.

I am a freelance language practitioner after a career as editor-in-chief at a leading publishing house.

Lambert Daniel Jacobs (BA Hons, MA, BD, MDiv)

November 2013

# DECLARATION BY RESEARCHER

I, Dunay Nortje, declare herewith that the dissertation entitled *Young people's perceptions of older people before and after an ethnodrama presentation,* which I herewith submit to the North-West University: Potchefstroom Campus, is my own work and that all references used or quoted were indicated and acknowledged.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Mrs D Nortje

# PREFACE

- This dissertation is presented in article format as indicated in Rule A.5.4.2.7 of the North-West University's Potchefstroom Campus Yearbook and according to the guidelines set out in the Manual for Postgraduate Studies of the North-West University.

- The dissertation consists of Section A: Background to the study; Section B: The article and Section C: Critical reflection.

- The article comprising this thesis is intended for submission to the *Journal of Psychology in Africa*.

- The referencing style used for Section A and C is in accordance with the APA reference style as set out in the North-West University Referencing Guide. The referencing in Section B was according to the APA (5th edition) reference style as stipulated in the journal guidelines (see Addendum 1).

  A CD accompanies this dissertation, which contains the dialogue of the ethnodrama, as well as the findings of the study in tabular form (themes and subthemes, as well as supportive data from the closed questions).

**SECTION A**

**BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

**1. Introduction and problem statement**

South Africans, as people elsewhere in the world, have a considerably higher life expectancy (Brandt, Haberkern & Szydlik, 2009; Sheng & Settles, 2006). The mortality rate worldwide has decreased, resulting in older people living longer (Brandt et al., 2009; Sheng & Settles, 2006). With older people living longer than before, and the birth rate decreasing, there is an increased number of older people across nations (Simmers, Simmers-Nartker & Simmers-Kobelak, 2009). One of the reasons for this age group's longer life expectancy can be attributed to the accessibility of better personal, medical and physical care (Ashford & LeCroy, 2013). Research has suggested that we have never had the number of older people we have now, and thus we should feel privileged (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2010). The U.S. Census Bureau of 2006 states that on average, 37 million people in the 65+ age group currently live in the United States, and that it is expected this number will increase to 86 million people in the same age group by 2050 (Ashford & LeCroy, 2013). The Statistics South Africa fact sheet of 2011 (South Africa Census Bureau, 2011) states that older people represent 5.3% of our total population.

Because of the longer life expectancy of older people, many older people will share the lives of young people for longer, and also rely on care from the young people for an extended period (Bernal & de la Fuente Annuncibay, 2008; Cowen, 2013). Good relationships between the different generations are therefore important (Geoffrey & Prilleltensky, 2005). The relationship between members of different generations is informed by the perceptions people have of one another. Perceptions are informed by difficulties with interactions and understanding between generations

and can attribute to the fact that people grow up in different times, resulting in varying beliefs, perceptions and values of the world (Spence & Radunovich, 2007). There is evidence suggesting that older people's quality of life could possibly be complicated by age stereotyping (Nelson, 2004; Ng, 1998).

Research findings by Eyetsemitan (2002) suggested that young people's inclination to care for older people is influenced by their perceptions of them, and that older people who are perceived as friendly, may bring about a different tendency for care and interaction than older people who are perceived as grumpy (Eyetsemitan, 2002). Research undertaken by Roos and Sedick (2011) further suggested that older people, for example, experience print media as portraying them in a limited and stereotypical way, and that such portrayal could negatively impact young people's perceptions of and relationships with them. Robinson, Callister, Magoffin and Moore (2007) mention that young people who watch a considerable amount of Disney animated films and have limited exposure to older people, can be influenced by the portrayal of older people in these films, which in turn affects their perceptions and the way in which they interact with older people. Negative perceptions originate from a social phenomenon termed ageism, which could be partially attributed to the fact that young people have limited interaction with older people (Kimuna, Knox & Zusman, 2005; Slevin, 1991). To reduce prejudice and improve intergroup perceptions, the contact hypothesis suggests contact with individuals from an out-group under reasonable circumstances (Bousfield & Hutchison, 2010).

Young people's quality of interaction with older people is undoubtedly influenced by these negative views or stereotypes that are formed (Hummert, Garstka, Shaner & Strahm, 1994), as well as their ability to successfully socialise with older people

(Palmore, 1999). Braithwaite (2002) states that effective efforts outside the family need to be initiated to create an opportunity for young, middle aged and older people to become acquainted enough to build a lasting relationship based on respect, mutual cooperation and to rebuild the concept of human-heartedness. Stereotypes and misperceptions about people have an influence on how they relate and interact with one another (Cuddy & Fiske, 2002; Hazam, 1996). Thomason (2006) implies that young people would most likely never publicly admit that they have a dislike in older people, but that political statements and popular media, among other things, fuel the misperceptions and resultant discrimination upheld by young people. Misperceptions that young people have of older people, may guide communication based on these stereotypes/misperceptions and may limit relational development (Williams & Nussbaum, 2012).

Research has shown that young people view older people generally in a negative light and they prefer to interact with other young adults or middle aged people instead of older people (Levy & Banaji, 2002; Samovar, Porter, McDaniel & Roy, 2012).

## 2. Literature orientation

### *2.1 Young People*

The age group from which the data for this study was gathered, included children between the ages of ten and sixteen years. These ages fall in the developmental stages of middle to late childhood and adolescence as stated by Erikson (1967). It is important to include children in these age categories into this research for various reasons. Isaacs and Bearison (1986) mention that negative stereotypes of older people have already manifested by the time children enter elementary school, and that they affect how children feel and behave towards the

older people. Anderson (1999) substantiates this fact by stating that children in the US as young as four years old demonstrate ageism. Stereotypes are formed through various means, such as direct experience, but the media seems to play an important contributor in shaping, changing or even reinforcing these stereotypes (Robinson et al., 2007). Interventions are thus crucial to change perceptions children hold of older people, and need to be initiated early on in childhood (Pinquart, Wenzel & Sorensen, 2000). Many researchers feel that an adequate intervention to combat ageism, would be education on various age-related topics, since ageism is thought to develop from a lack of understanding (Cottle & Glover, 2007). Gilbert and Ricketts (2008) also mention that a child's self-concept of aging and their own inevitable old age can potentially be impacted by the child's current perception of older people.

### 2.1.1  Middle to Late Childhood (6-12 years old)

During middle to late childhood, children enter a school going age which means less time spent with family and more time spent with new acquaintances. Children also go through important social and personal changes and have to adjust accordingly (Martin & Fabes, 2009). Recent theorists have acknowledged the importance of this stage in building important interpersonal relationships and cognitive skills. Cognitively, children are preparing for the next stage by building upon the skills they learnt in the previous stage, and although they have matured in cognition they still require definite learning opportunities (Rodriquez, 2009).

According to Sullivan (1953) children learn their own position in society, and to respect the role of authority figures such as older adults, teachers and parents. Interpersonal skills in this stage lay the necessary foundations for the challenges that lay ahead in adolescence and later life (Rodriquez, 2009).  Children in this age group

develop cognitively and gain more confidence with regards to own decision making,

yet are influenced by the moral standards of the groups they identify and are

associated with (Acero, Javier & Castro, 2004).

It is thus important for a child in this stage of life to learn and appreciate what

interpersonal relationships have to offer and understand the intentions behind these

relationships (Martin & Fabes, 2009). This acknowledgement and acceptance of

people into their life will open the door to explore relationships with people that do

not necessarily have something in common with the young people. Temperament

and general views on life and others stabilise at this stage although they are still

developing (Hannon, Pooler & Porth, 2009). This leads to the conclusion that this

stage has a primary developmental task of developing the self, which includes the

development of the individual within a wider social context and what they make of

their relationships with others (Hannon et al., 2009; Rodriquez, 2009).

### 2.1.2   Adolescence (12-19+ years old)

This is a life stage that connects childhood and adulthood. This stage

resembles one of more maturity and independence, although still dependent on

wider social conditions such as peers, family, friendships, schooling (Martin & Fabes,

2009; Rodriquez, 2009). The term most often used interchangeably with

adolescence is "puberty". Puberty refers to the time a person becomes sexually

mature; the emotions and physical changes that coincide with these changes

generally happen over a period of time (Martin & Fabes, 2009). Erikson named this

stage "identity vs. identity confusion", a stage where impressions other people have

of them become important and they experiment with various skills, roles and values

(Erikson, 1950; Rodriquez, 2009).

Social changes in this stage of life encompass peer pressure, new affiliations and values, and being socially accepted (Acero et al., 2004). Adolescents spend a reasonable amount of time with peers and place a high emphasis on peer belonging which leads to peer relationships taking on significant importance (Brown, 2004). This is also a stage that exemplifies autonomy and responsibility, a time when relationships between adolescents and especially their family members deteriorate for a brief period, and usually it resumes as puberty/adolescence draws to a close (Acero et al., 2004; Rodriquez, 2009). Rodriquez (2009) suggests that secure attachments be promoted, firstly in the family context, in order to ensure good relationships for the adolescent with other people later on in their lives. Adolescents also gain a more profound recognition of ethical and moral values, as well as a personal identity which derives from newfound responsibilities and roles (Cenameri, 2013).

Physical changes become very apparent in appearance during adolescence. The awareness of physical changes contributes to children in this age group to become somewhat obsessed with their outer appearance, and may contribute to competitiveness and the adolescents comparing themselves to other in the same age group. Physical changes in adolescence such as breast development (in girls), hair growth and deepened voice (in boys) signify psychological changes which differ from person to person, but generally involve development of independence, identity, sex role and social changes in which the most prominent factor, for a while, is peer group relations (Adolescence, 2013).

There are various changes in cognitive development during adolescence which enables young people to make mature decisions through a method of introspection which might not have been within their cognitive capabilities

beforehand (APA, 2002).   Piaget believed that cognitive development in the form of thoughts become more realistic and logical during the ages 11 to 15, yet their social cognition leads them to believe that no one understands them (Rodriquez, 2009). Irrespective of their growing capability for higher-level thinking, the majority of adolescents still require guidance for rational decision making from older adults (APA, 2002).

Significant changes and reorganization of the brain also happens during adolescence as suggested by new finding in neuroscience and developmental psychology (Konrad, Firk & Uhlhaas, 2013). According to these findings the primary developmental tasks during the adolescent years include independence, self control, the establishment and fostering of intimate relationships as well as the development of identity and future perspectives (Konrad, Firk & Uhlhaas, 2013). Hormones during puberty are also believed to contribute to the developmental change of the social brain during adolescence (Goddings, Burnett, Heyes, Bird, Viner & Blakemore, 2012).

Eight developmental tasks for adolescents that stand out as proposed by Havighurst (1951) are: acquiring a more mature value system; achieving emotional independence from parents and other adults; assuming a masculine or feminine membership in the larger community; developing relationships with same sex and opposite sex members of society; preparing for a career; thinking and preparing for marriage; reaching satisfaction with appearance and body image; and endeavour to attain socially responsible behaviours.

Since this research is interested in the perceptions young people have of older people, it is noteworthy to briefly describe older people and the aging process.

## *2.2      Older People*

### *2.2.1  The development stage of older people: Late adulthood: +- 60 years and above*

Erikson (1963) suggested that the final stage of psychosocial development is around age 60 and above. This is a period in life where older people seek to find meaning with regards to the present, past and future, and meaningful relationships with a younger generation could contribute to their sense of worth and satisfaction with life (Spence & Radunovich, 2007).

Ashford and LeCroy (2013) explain the characteristics of late adulthood by sub-stages. Theorists such as Erikson agreed that one stage is not enough to describe late adulthood. These stages can be understood as follow:

- The young old (60-74): Strong bond with friends and family, active, more hobbies or extracurricular activities, further education, volunteering, part or full time employment (need to keep busy or financially), travel, freedom, some involved with grandchildren, for others loss of spouse/friends/family, income, job, meaning in life, independence, decrease in being needed, illness, majority function productively.
- The middle-old (75-84): Generally speaking a high percentage of this age group is still physically and socially involved within the community. Increased physiological changes do however become more prevalent in this age group, such as sensory impairment, involving hearing or vision. Chronic diseases and added stresses of losing loved ones also become more noticeable during this period.

- The old old (85+): This signifies a stage of dependence in most cases; a large number of people in this age group are unemployed and frail. Research shows that more women have survived to this age group than men. People in this age group are very susceptible to diseases such as Alzheimers and dementia, and run a high risk of being excluded from the community, due to them not being able to drive or communicate effectively.

### 2.2.2 Developmental tasks of older people

Whiting and Bradley (2007) mention that Erikson's ego integrity is the main developing task of older people. This suggests that they evaluate their contribution to life as worthy. According to Mahmud (2005) there are various developmental tasks that have to be met in old age. One of these developmental tasks would be to avoid despair and hold on to their integrity. Older people furthermore need to come to terms with the prospect of death and also need to adjust to changes. Another development task would also include letting go of things they do not have power over, such as regrets; overcome frustration and depression. They furthermore need rechanneling energy into new roles and activities, strive towards social interaction and maintain intellectual abilities and vitality. For older people it is also important to foster close relationships with peers and ensure satisfaction with current life circumstances such as housing (Louw, van Ede & Louw, 2004; Mahmud, 2005).

### 2.2.3 Physical development

With aging comes physical decline, not always as a result of the aging process itself. A widely known fact is that physical decline precedes mental decline (Mahmud, 2005). Poor health and exercise throughout life could be a contributor to

physical decline in late adulthood, especially early onset physical decline (Zgourides, 2000). Physical changes happen gradually. Simmers et al. (2009) as well as Mahmud (2005) and Nicholas (2008) mentioned the following:

The skin loses its elasticity and texture, wrinkles appear, age spots, dry and pale skin. Hair loss, change in colour to white/grey, thinning hair, hair growing elsewhere than before such as on the face of a woman. Weight loss because of possible loss of taste and smell, decline in muscle strength and bone density can lead to osteoporosis or greater risk of fractures and breaks. Muscles lose tone and strength which can contribute to fatigue. Decreased functioning of the sensory system constitutes to hearing and visual impairments, as well as a decline in coordination and reaction time causing possible psychological problems arising from a feeling of loss of dependency. Organ systems decrease in functionality, such as heart circulation and lung capacity (causes shortness of breath), as well as loss of kidney and bladder functions. Changes usually occur gradually over an extended period of time.

Actively participating in physical activities, a balanced diet and supportive social context can increase physical and intellectual functioning to a great extent in late adulthood (Newman & Newman, 2009; Zgourides, 2000).

### 2.2.4 Cognitive development

No one individual is the same and mental capacity varies across generations and nations. Older people who make a conscious decision to remain mentally active and consistently learn new things tend to show far less signs of a decreased mental functioning. First to decrease is normally short term memory, diseases such as Alzheimer's disease can cause irreversible memory loss and intellectual functions

deteriorate (Simmers et al., 2009). Problems with memory loss and memory retrieval can occur, ability to reason can be compromised and scores on intelligence tests decline (Mahmud, 2005; Simmers et al., 2009). Although various mental changes occur in this stage of life, with learning, inductive and deductive reasoning slowing down, the majority of fairly healthy adults do not experience any significant mental loss until about age sixty (Mahmud, 2005).

A common fear that arises with aging, is the fear of "losing your mind". Cognitive decline is in fact not an inevitable precursor accompanying aging, and research denies this stereotypic notion (Zgourides, 2000). With regards to a relationship across generations, what older people may lack with regards to memory or other mental capabilities, they will compensate for with wisdom (Zgourides, 2000).

### 2.2.5 Psychosocial development

Having close relationships with friends and family in later life is directly correlated with a sense of satisfaction, fulfilment and happiness. These relationships provide assurance and have shown to protect against premature death, or mental and physical problems (Zgourides, 2000). Social support has been found to play a role in psychosocial functioning in older people and has accounted for 23% of the satisfaction variance with life ratings (Gow, Pattie, Whiteman, Whalley & Deary, 2007). Research has mentioned that general life satisfaction is related to the successful resolution of psychosocial crisis stages (Brown & Lowis, 2003). Erikson (1967) mentioned that an older individual will reach ego integrity when they accept both the past as satisfying and the future (including death) as inevitable. If not, the older person will be filled with despair.

Zgourides (2000) mentions that there are two primary theories that describe the psychosocial aspect of aging in older people:

➢ *Disengagement Theory:* This describes a process through which older people voluntarily withdraw (to a certain extent) socially, for example when they retire. This theory assumes that both society and individuals benefit when older people slow down.

➢ *Activity Theory:* This theory sees an interdependence between successful aging and remaining active. This theory stands in contrast to that of Disengagement theory, although modern day research views them equally. Active aging, which could also be understood as productive or successful aging (Peel, Bartlett & McClure, 2004), helps older people to take control of their health and wellness by providing them with supportive programmes and environments (Milner, 2013). It strives to promote individuals, irrespective of age, health or status, on seven different dimensions of wellness, which include: emotional, physical, professional, social, environmental, cognitive and spiritual (ICAA, 2013). Perceptions of older people become a reality, thus an effective way to change old perceptions is to initiate a new reality (Milner, 2013).

Older people also benefit from interaction with young people, as this grants them the opportunity to participate in socially appropriate and enjoyable activities (Femia, Zarit, Blair, Jarrott & Bruno, 2008). Similar benefits have been documented in other studies, these include an increase in social interaction, community connectedness, life satisfaction and a decrease in social isolation (Seefeldt, Galper, & Denton, 1997; Ward, Los Kamp, & Newman, 1996).

**2.3 Intergenerational Relationships**

Intergenerational relationships refer to any form of interaction between members of two generations within a family or intergroup perspective (Chua, Jung, Lwin & Theng, 2013). Two groups of intergenerational relations are distinguished, the social as well as the familial. According to Eke (2003) and Stone (2008) social refers to people from different generations that share a similar historical period. Familial refers to the bond between generations within a family structure, where both parties are equally eager to be part of the other's life (Uhlenberg, 2000).

Intergenerational relationships offer unlimited opportunities with regards to growth, support, advice, understanding; both can benefit to a great extent from the other (Femia, Zarit, Blair, Jarrott & Bruno, 2008). Brubaker and Brubaker (1999) identified four building blocks to encourage and sustain positive intergenerational relationships, which are: respect, responsibility, reciprocity and resiliency. An example of respect could be understood better when young people ask older people for advice, because they respect and acknowledge their wisdom, or when they help the older person to get into a car or sit on a chair (Brubaker & Brubaker, 1999). Respect shown from an older person towards a younger person, could be when they demonstrate respect for the knowledge of young people or respect for a different way of life.

Responsibility is experienced by young people within a family structure towards their older parents or grandparents as they feel a responsibility to provide care, emotional and physical help (Brubaker & Brubaker, 1999). This could be translated to many young people outside the family structure; when they see an older person crossing the street, they may feel the responsibility to offer help. Reciprocity is described by Brubaker and Brubaker (1999) as "a two-way street" in

the sense that both generations can benefit from the other. If older people positively reinforce the support from young people and vice versa, this is reciprocity. Resiliency is demonstrated by the ability to adapt to change. Within intergenerational relationships this could refer to being aware and becoming accustomed to change, be it expected or unexpected (Brubaker & Brubaker, 1999). Young people may for instance have to cope with an older person falling ill suddenly and providing care accordingly, whereas an older person may have to adapt to a younger person becoming a mother with resultant responsibilities (less time to provide the current extent of care) after becoming emotionally attached.

Good intergenerational relationship is characterised by interdependency (Brubaker & Brubaker, 1999). Research by Short-DeGraff and Diamond (1996) as well as Yamazaki (1994) also found that contact between young and old is rewarding, as they found that older people were happier, more connected and active during interactions with children. According to Blair, Bruno, Femia, Jarrott and Zarit (2008) social interaction with young people, create an environment for older people to participate in socially acceptable and enjoyable activities. Studies by Cai, Giles and Noels (1998) additionally suggest that increased activity between the two generations may positively impact the health of the older people. Other benefits of intergenerational relationships include the following: Counteract feeling of isolation in late adulthood; bridge a gap for young people who aren't fortunate enough to have living grandparents; to give both generations a sense of fulfilment; lay a foundation for each to learn from the other; to help young people acknowledge and accept what awaits them with regards to aging; to reduce any negative stereotypes or fears young people may have about older people; to keep the older person physically,

mentally and emotionally active; to minimise depression and anxiety associated with the fear of being alone in late adulthood (Spence & Radunovich, 2007).

Although there are many benefits listed for good intergenerational relationships, these relationships can also be challenged. Contact between generations is often greatly restricted by spatial and institutional segregation (Jarrott & McCann, 2013) as old age is viewed as a distinct and separate sphere than that occupied by young and middle-aged adults (Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2005). During youth, intergenerational relationships may also be challenged, merely because other relationships are vying for dominance, for example relationships with peers (Levy, Ghisletta, Le Goff, Spini & Widmer, 2005). Many research findings have furthermore revealed the existence of negative perceptions and discriminatory behaviour towards older people (Posthuma & Campion, 2009; Finkelstein & Farrell, 2007). Young people whom have limited contact with older people, are left to base their perceptions of older people and aging on external factors, such as the media. (Jarrott & McCann, 2013).

Within this intergenerational conflict that occurs, opportunities for positive interaction between the members of the different generations are needed (Knapp & Stubblefield, 2000). Mental health, which includes social, spiritual and emotional well-being, is supported by positive intergenerational contact (Davidson & Boals-Gilbert, 2010) and is a very large contributor to fostering a successfully aging population (Izuhara, 2010; Wykle et al., 2005). An increased appreciation towards older people can also be generated among young people, through intergenerational programs which enhance emotional and social development (Kaplan, 1997).

Finally, to fully comprehend intergenerational relationships, it is beneficial to understand some of the theories that seek to explain these relationships. The multi

faceted solidarity theory is renowned as the most well known theory explaining intergenerational relations.

Solidarity as the foundation for intergenerational relations, mentions the core components to be sentiment, behaviour and structure (Bengtson, Giarrusso, Mabry & Silverstein, 2002). When the solidarity theory refers to words such as positive and negative, even the people on the negative continuum may in actual fact be content in their family relations, and function satisfactorily to the person's expectations (Bengtson et al., 2002). Recently, according to Steinbach (2008), the solidarity theory received a lot of critique for being a too normative perspective on intergenerational relations. The concept of intergenerational solidarity is critiqued by Lüscher and Pillemer (1998) that it is too harmonious. Giarrusso, Silverstein, Gans and Bengtson (2005) say that by adding conflict to the solidarity paradigm, it resulted in the solidarity-conflict model that takes into account the negative aspects of things such as intergenerational ambivalence and relationships. Parrott and Bengtson (1999) as well as Clarke, Preston, Raskin and Bengtson (1999) argued that conflict is a normal human phenomenon, and especially in families it shapes how people perceive one another and to what extents they will go to help each other. They further state that families may exhibit both solidarity and conflict, but always to the same degree, in other words, high solidarity will be related to high conflict and low solidarity to low conflict.

The proposed theory of Ambivalence to explain intergenerational relations compliment the Solidarity and Conflict theory (Bengtson et al., 2002). Ambivalence, according to Bengtson et al. (2002), can be described as the opposing feelings or emotions people encounter in intimate social relationships such as the paradox

between being close or being absent/distant, opposite poles of feelings vying for dominance.

Lüscher (2004) defines ambivalence as emotions, feelings, relationships, thoughts and structures that simultaneously contribute to the formation of individual or collective identities and can be understood as permanent or temporarily irreconcilable. Lüscher and Pillemer (1998) state that there are two types of ambivalence: Sociological or structural ambivalence, which refers to where a person stands or is located in the social structure, and psychological or individual ambivalence which refers to feelings a person experiences when they encounter structural ambivalence.

Another theory that aims to explain intergenerational relationships is that of "Contact Hypothesis". Pettigrew (1998) argues that personal, meaningful contact between people creates an opportunity for better understanding of each other and less hostility towards each other. Allport (1979) stipulates that it is however crucial to note the nature of the contact, seeing that contact is most effective when there is shared status, equality, goals and objectives. Contact hypothesis is recognised as one of the most effective methods to improve intergroup relations (Dovidio, Gaertner & Kawakami, 2003).

### 2.3.1 *Perceptions in Intergenerational Relationships*

Bernstein, Clarke-Stewart, Penner and Roy (2010) state that perception incorporates understanding and knowledge of sensations in order to create meaningful interpretations informing the interactions between people. The term "perception" in this text may be understood interchangeably with the terms "attitudes" and "beliefs" (Lyons, 2009). Attitudes could be understood as feelings, knowledge and readiness to act (Soderhamn, Lindencrona, & Gustavsson, 2001). Barret and

Pai (2008) mentioned that attitudes in young people are influenced by, among other things such as visual representations and the media's representations of older people and the extent of contact with older people, which according to Hagestad and Uhlenberg (2005) tends to be limited in our age-segregated society. Beliefs, on the other hand, are shaped by experiences, as negative experiences can shape beliefs, which in turn affect how people behave and assimilate knowledge (Wesley, 2005). Flood and Clark (2009) found that increased knowledge improved beliefs. According to Bandura (1986) the social learning theory mentions that by learning information, a person forms corresponding beliefs. There are findings that show that children or young people hold more negative beliefs about older people's physical and cognitive abilities than to their interpersonal characteristics such as friendliness and kindness (Baltes, 1996; Cuddy & Fiske, 2002).

Lyons (2009) states that attitudes and beliefs may result in the formation of stereotypes, prejudice and ageism. Stereotypes against older people are defined by Levy and Banaji (2002) as views that are held about older people's characteristics and behaviours without consciously being aware of or having control over them. Positive as well as negative stereotypes exist (Barrett & Cantwell, 2007). Steele, Choi and Ambady (2007) mention that stereotypes are over generalised beliefs about a group of people which are indiscriminately attributed to all the individuals in the group. A meta-analysis of 232 studies, lead to the conclusion that individuals have a tendency to hold prejudicial views and stereotypes that contribute to a perceived distinction between young people and older people (Kite, Stockdale, Whitley & Johnson, 2005). As there are various stereotypes associated with aging and the older people, mainly negative ones, the hope is that these stereotypes are reconfigured into more positive ones (Braithwaite, 2002).

When referring to prejudice, de Paula Couto and Wentura (2012) wrote that prejudice is described as an automatic negative evaluation or assimilation brought about by age-related cues including undifferentiated pleasantness or unpleasantness. Schneider (2004) states that people often enter into contact with other people with preconceived ideas and stereotypes, experiencing someone in a different "group" to which a person belongs with more prejudicial views. Ageism is described by Levy and Banaji (2002) as the attitude, feeling or belief in accordance to the perceived chronological age of a person or group. When young people discriminate and hold prejudicial and negative views about older people and old age, it is referred to as ageism, a term defined by Butler (Sadock, Kaplan & Sadock, 2007).

According to Hannon (2004) children's perceptions and stereotypes are developed early in life, thus some of the benefits of the interaction between young and old have the potential to increase mutual understanding, positive attitudes towards each other and to make children aware that they can be useful members of society. Mahmud (2005) states that an unfortunate phenomenon is that older people are generally treated unfavourably and this is a universal finding in American culture at present. An explanation for the aforementioned may be that much of the media now-a-days are found to depict older people in a stereotypical way, although not much of what they portray is based on facts (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2010). An example of this is older people being shown in adverts for funeral cover or wrinkle creams, and hardly ever in adverts for a gym membership or a nice perfume. Young people live in a different era/generation to their peers or older people and may become frustrated with their perceived declining general knowledge, incompetence and dependency (Baltes, 1996).

In the past, older people were often seen as a "problem" of society having to deal with more older people, including high numbers living with poor nutrition and in poverty, being neglected and seeking medical help among others, and the younger generation being put under strain that the burden will fall on them (Taylor & Bressler, 2000; Wykle, Whitehouse & Morris, 2005). Hutchison and Contributors' (2011) Longitudinal Berlin Aging Study has proven to dispute common stereotypes and beliefs regarding older people. Their research, including findings from other studies have found that older people: remain to have life goals; still place the locus of control over their life within themselves, wanting and acknowledging their ability to still take control; live for the past, present and future; do not place a high emphasis on the past as common myths leads to believe; have the ability and willingness to continually educate themselves and learn new things; strive to live as actively as their body (physically) allows them to; are not overly perplexed about their mortality and imminent death.

With age prejudice in mind, research has started to put more emphasis on combating ageism and its negative repercussions (Fiske & North, 2012). Gerontology is the term used to describe the study of old age and gerontologists are particularly interested in finding ways to combat ageism (Zgourides, 2000). With this study, the findings may prove beneficial to gerontologists and pave a way for future research.

## 2.4  Intergenerational programming

The primary objective of intergenerational programmes is to encourage a meaningful intergenerational relationship that will benefit both young and old (Femia et al., 2008). Various interventions have been implemented to promote intergenerational relations (Kaplan, Kusano, Tsuji & Hisamichi, 1998; Wykle et al.,

2005). The interventions varied from volunteering to intergenerational language communication programmes. Weber, Cooper and Hesser (1996) developed a programme by asking children to draw a picture of an old person and then tell a story about the drawing or explain it. They mention that children's understanding of old age is limited and by doing this programme it may expose hidden perceptions children hold. Many programmes involve face to face settings, but Barrett and Pai (2008) have developed and assessed an online programme related to ageism, which involved asking the participants to draw pictures where after they had to analyse it themselves as well as those of their peers.

Koch, Annells and Brown (1999a; 1999b), Koch, Power and Kralik (2005) as well as Koch and Mann (2008) mention that four books containing older people's stories have been published by them over the past ten years, revealing the positive side of aging. Previous researchers have noted the usefulness of encouraging participants to critically analyse and successfully identify their own stereotypes they hold of older people (Altpeter & Marshall, 2003; Dullaert, 1977; Evans, 1981; Fried, 1988). The most widely used technique to measure participants' perceptions about aging, is a pen-and-paper survey, such as the Fact on Aging Quiz by Palmore (1977; 1999). Many programmes also employ methods to place participants in the role of the older person, such as Wight's (1989) attempt to design costumes which had similarities to the appearance and physical limitations of older people. The participants had to wear these costumes and experience the reactions from others. Numerous studies have found that intergenerational programmes can be beneficial in promoting positive attitudes toward older people (Aday, McDuffie & Sims, 1993; Carstensen, Mason & Caldwell, 1982; Glass & Trent, 1980).

Therefore, an ethnodrama as a method of an intergenerational programme requires further discussion.

## 2.5    Ethnodrama

Mienczakowski (2001) states that an ethnodrama strives to perform research findings in a language that can be understood by a wide array of people (audience), speaking *with* the audience instead of *about* or *for* them. Saldana (2011) describes an ethnodrama by saying that it encompasses the quality to bring research to "life", in a fun and interactive way, presented to an audience from which a person proposes to get a response. This research could be collected by means of personal experiences, participant observation, data collected through interviews and questionnaires and then brought to reality through dramatisation thereof (Saldana, 2005). It is a method of an intergenerational programme that strives to bring about greater understanding and meaning to the person(s) it is representative of and presented to (Edwards & Skinner, 2009; Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2010).

Epskamp (1989) says that an ethnodrama strives for social change and finds itself in an extent school of theatre. An ethnodrama is not merely the correct portrayal of data (Barone, 2002), but also the telling of a story and doing well at it (Saldana, 2005).  Turner (1985) was one of the first people to present data in a theatrical manner. He theorised that ethnography can translate participants' experiences more effectively through narrative measures, which he called social drama. It provides the audience and the actors a platform to gain knowledge of themselves and the other, and to share experiences (Moore & Lemmer, 2010), and is being used in schools and by teachers to educate more frequently (Sanchez & Thorpe, 2008). Grbich (2013) states that one of  the strengths of an ethnodrama is

that it often leads to changed views through means of stories that impact an audience and challenge relatively manifested perceptions. Within this study the ethnodrama was utilised to present research data to an audience (young children) in an attempt to portray older people correctly and to strive towards a change in perception. The ethnodrama introduced an element of humor in order to evoke positive emotions among the young people and to convey older people in a favourable manner.  As suggested by Skalski, Tamborini, Glazer and Smith (2009), humor can support a persuasive message, by people being more receptive to a message when it was conveyed with humor.  The ethnodrama included different dimensions of the life world of older people, thus the older people would be perceived as invididuals and not only in terms of their identity as part of the group of older people.  All of this was embarked upon in order to bring about a positive change in young people's perceptions of older people. The research question that guided this research was: *What are the perceptions of young people about older people before and after an ethnodrama?*

### 3.    Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework used in this study was the systems theory. The systems theory investigates people as part of a "system" and not just as individually functioning human beings (Skyttner, 2005). Systems can be understood as individual parts interacting with one another, making up a whole (Laszlo,1972) and enduring over time (Anderson, Carter & Louw, 1999). Von Bertalanffy (1972) describes a system as components that are interrelated with the environment and themselves.

Mele, Pels and Polese (2010) state that the focal point of general systems theory is on the interactions that take place, as well as on the distinction between

open, closed and isolated systems. These systems are described by Mele, Pels and Polese (2010) as follows: Open systems entail the interaction between the external environment and people, information, matter and energy; closed systems encompass exchange between the external environment and energy, but not with information and matter; in isolated systems there is no exchange of elements.

Systems theory proposes that any change in one part of a system will bring about change in another part of the system (Bendix, 1984; Gaff & Bylund, 2010).   Von Bertalanfy's (1968) approach furthermore explains change and growth within a system, are primarily based on linear, cause-and-effect entities. The systems approach measures the effectiveness of a system based on its ability to reach homeostasis, that is a steady state, which will bring out the potential in a system (Buckley, 1967).  In this regard the ethnodrama presentation was used to disturb the homeostasis of the system, in this case young people, in order to bring about change and positive growth within the system, that is the perceptions young people have of older people.    This is supported by the view of Martinelli (2001) that the subsystems within a system reach equilibrium through inter-relationships and interdependence.  Tamas (2000) states that in order to strive towards change within a system, the "steady state" needs to be altered by making a change within the system and hence disturb the homeostasis (Tamas, 2000).

Systems theory is acknowledged as a framework to address various issues relating to human behaviour (Hearn, 1979). The use of an ethnodrama in this study, consisting of a dialogue or story which aimed at communicating, informing and entertaining the participants, could be referred to as a narrative approach. According to Patton and McMahon (1999), narratives or stories are derived from systems theory thinking. The idea to make use of a story in systems theory, in order to

explain the relevance of a certain connectedness or pattern in a person's life, came from Bateson (1979), and is important to constructivist approaches (Patton & McMahon, 2006). Individuals analyse and make sense of the world and their lives through stories, and according to McCleod (1996), the meanings and information on offer within a culture forms a person's identity.

## 4. Structure of the Research Report

This dissertation follows the article format as prescribed by the North-West University. The dissertation contains the following segments:

Section A: Orientation to the research and literature review (APA referencing style).

Section B: Article (APA referencing style).

Section C: Critical reflection.

Section D: Addenda.

The *Journal of Psychology in Africa* has been identified as a potential journal for submission.

## 5. Summary

The literature review was based on a global context as well as in the South African context. The literature that was reviewed showed that older people now live longer and hence make out part of young people's lives for longer and therefore the fostering of positive intergenerational relationships between these two generations is very important. Negative perceptions about older people often exist among young people from an elementary school age, and are said to be influenced by among other things, such as negative representations in the media, learned experiences from parents or society as a whole and limited contact. An ethnodrama is seen as effective and fun method to convey a message and to impact on an audience and challenge beliefs, which would hopefully contribute to a change in social views.

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# Section B

## Young people's perceptions of older people before and

## after an ethnodrama presentation

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**ABSTRACT**

This study aimed to explore young people's perceptions of older people before and after an ethnodrama presentation. Qualitative programme evaluation was applied. The participants, between the ages of ten and sixteen, were selected through convenience sampling. Their perceptions were obtained before (n=53) and directly (n=50) after the presentation of the ethnodrama by means of questionnaires with open-ended questions. Thematic data analysis was used to reduce the data. In the findings before the presentation, ambivalent descriptions were noted, stereotypical as well as favourable.  The findings after the presentation, indicated a nuanced description of older people in terms of their relationships with younger people and an acknowledgement for older people's needs.

**INTRODUCTION**

Across various countries, including South Africa, a lower birth rate and higher life expectancy are experienced (Brandt, Haberkern & Szydlik, 2009; Louw, Van Ede & Louw, 2004; Sheng & Settles, 2006), which means that older people will now form part of younger people's lives for longer and depend on them for care and support (Bernal & de la Fuente Anuncibay, 2008; Cowen, 2013). Unfortunately, it seems that young people often have negative perceptions of older people (Gilbert & Ricketts, 2008). Young people's perceptions of older people are often negative and stereotypical (Schwalbach & Kiernan, 2002). Children begin to develop negative attitudes towards aging and old age at as young as five years old, and  these negative perceptions are well defined and manifested by age eight (Aday, Aday, Arnold & Bendix, 1996; Aday, Sims, McDuffie & Evans, 1996; Hickey, Hickey & Kalish, 1968; Page, Olivas, Driver & Driver, 1981; Rich, Myrick & Campbell, 1983).

The negative perceptions, beliefs and attitudes of children may contribute to ageism and unfair treatment towards older people, according to a Health Service Executive (HSE) (2009) report.

Children are influenced by what they observe, and thus ageist attitudes towards aging overall and older people is a consequence of negative information that they retrieve from the family, society, media and literature (Gilbert & Ricketts, 2008). Kite and Johnson (1988) state that, although there are some positive stereotypes, young people generally present with negative assumptions about their communication with older people who are not related to them. Various studies have found that young people are more likely to hold ageist attitudes than older people (Rupp, Vodanovich & Crede, 2005), and that older people tend to be mostly negatively stereotyped (Gellis, Sherman & Lawrance, 2003; Kite, Stockdale, Whitley & Johnson, 2005; Musaiger & D'Souza, 2009). Ageism refers to people holding prejudicial views or discriminating against people based on their age (Blunk & Williams, 1997; Davidovic, Djordjevic, Erceg, Despotovik & Milosevic, 2007; Schwalbach & Kiernan, 2002).

Intergenerational programmes have been found to meaningfully enhance relationships between young and older people (Fees & Bradshaw, 2003; Slaght & Stampley, 2006), whilst at the same time enhancing the development of social capital and contributing to their mutual well-being (Raynes & Rawlings, 2004). Newman (1997) states that intergenerational programmes are designed to sustain a positive relationship between young and older people who are not necessarily biologically related, in order to encourage exchange of culture, cross-generational bonding and to attain a mutual sense of support and security. The goal of these programmes are to encourage the exposure of young people to older people, and to

eliminate age-segregation (Kuehne,1999; Middlecamp & Gross, 2002; Newman,1997; Smith & Yeager,1999). According to Femia, Zarit, Blair, Jarrott and Bruno (2008), the primary aim of intergenerational programmes is to encourage positive attitudes among young people of older people and aging, and to promote contact between them, which is mutually beneficial to both young and older people. Benefits of effective intergenerational relationships include the creation of enjoyable and acceptable activities when older people interact with younger people. Older people may also experience increased feelings of satisfaction with life, community involvement, belonging, social interaction and lessened feelings of isolation (Seefeldt, Galper & Denton, 1997; Ward, 1997a, 1997b; Ward, Los Kamp & Newman, 1996). Young people may also experience a sense of increased empathy and renewed ability to control their actions and emotions when exposed to people who are distinctively different from them, allowing them the opportunity to take these people's needs into consideration (Davis, Bruce & Gunnar, 2002).

Astington and Jenkins (1995) conclude that exposure to intergenerational programmes in the early years of childhood may hold benefits as children are busy acquiring what people refer to as "theory of mind", which means they develop an understanding that people react on desires and beliefs that may be different from theirs. During adolescence there are also various changes in cognitive development which enables young people to make mature decisions through a method of introspection which might not have been within their cognitive capabilities beforehand (APA, 2002) . New findings in neuroscience and developmental psychology points out important changes that happen in the brain during adolescence, these findings suggest that self control, establishment of intimate relationships, identity development, independence and taking on future perspectives

are the primary developmental tasks in this stage (Konrad, Firk & Uhlhaas, 2013). Astington (1993) wrote that social cognition refers to children's ability to see other people's point of view as well as their ability to get along with other people and lies within the development of theory of mind.

Jarrott and McCann (2013) found that a child's understanding of the aging process, directly impacts their views of their own age and development. Research (Hanks & Ponzetti, 2004) suggests that programmes and methods to bridge the gap between young and old, have been growing in interest. Researchers have found that studies done with first and second graders, consisting of intergenerational activities, showed that the children had a better understanding and more positive perception of older people and the aging process (Laney, Wimsatt, & Moseley, 1999).Various programmes and activities are being implemented to promote intergenerational relationships, this is due to the growing number of older adults and existing negative perceptions (Friedman, 1999).

Although there is extensive research on intergenerational relationships (Hanks & Ponzetti, 2004; Kaplan, Kusano, Tsuji & Hisamichi, 1998; Roos, 2012; Williams & Nussbaum, 2012), research on the perceptions of young people about older people before and after an ethnodrama, is limited. Saldaña (2005) explains that an ethnodrama can be understood as data which is dramatised. The data is first reconstructed in the script, where after it is acted out as a performance (Lieblich, 2006). Selections such as journal entries, newspaper articles, field notes and participant interviews are constructed into a written script, which is then dramatised and referred to as an ethnodrama (Saldaña, 2005). Ethnodrama performances attempt to give an audience a reproduction of the researcher's interpretation of the data or research participants' experiences (Lieblich, 2006). Lieblich (2006) further

states that it is very important to portray actual accounts of the research and to avoid any misrepresentations of the topic or people being portrayed. Whilst ethnodrama strives to be entertaining and aesthetically pleasing, it also has the responsibility to evoke emotions and be intellectually informing (Saldaña, 2005). An ethnodrama, therefore, wishes to elicit change.

Ethnodrama is being used in schools and by educators more often (Sanchez & Thorp, 2008), as it provides the actors and the audience with an opportunity to share experiences and gain knowledge of each other and themselves. Grbich (2013) states that a fundamental concept of an ethnodrama is that it challenges long held beliefs, through use of stories that impact on the audience, and may change social and political views. The research question directing the research, "*What are the perceptions of young people about older people before and after an ethnodrama*?",

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The systems theory was used as theoretical framework for this study. Within the research, participants were seen as holistic systems, where one part of the system directly impacts or influences another part (Skyttner, 2005; Smith-Acuna, 2011). The ethnodrama was used which aimed at changing one part of the system (in this case the perceptions of the young people) which could then influence another part of the system (the behaviour of the young people in relation to older people). This possibility is supported by Skyttner (1996) who regards a system as a set of two or more elements where change in one part of an element has a direct and interdependent effect on the whole.

Within this study an ethnodrama was introduced as a method to positively change the perceptions young people have of older people. Ethnodrama

performances, for the purpose of group learning and professional development, is viewed as a method of critical intervention which operates within various interpretative frameworks, because a system reaches equilibrium through inter-relationships and interdependence (Mienczakowski, 2001). Within this study, the ethnodrama was used as a mode of intervention to disturb the homeostasis of the system in order to bring about a desired change. Homeostasis can be described as a "dynamic balance" or "steady state" within a system, which remains the same over time (Tamas, 2000). To bring about change within a system it is thus necessary to make a change within the system to alter or change this "steady state" and thus disturb the homeostasis (Tamas, 2000). The aim of this study was to explore the perceptions of young people about older people before and after an ethnodrama.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Research approach and design

Qualitative programme evaluation as a form of applied qualitative research was used. Programme evaluation is seen as evaluative research and is described by Trochim (2006) as gaining constructive feedback about a topic through the systemic assessment and acquisition of information.

### Research context and participants

This study formed part of an intergenerational research project of Unisa's community engagement project, I-SET. The overall aim of the I-SET programme was to use Lego blocks to demonstrate how technology could be used to keep older people engaged in their communities as long as possible. Researchers from the North-West University's Psychology subject group were approached by the I-SET organiser to introduce the topic of "Senior solutions" to children attending the I-SET workshop.

The participants for this study were children from both genders and different races, between the ages of ten and sixteen from four schools across Gauteng. The participants in the I-SET project were selected through convenience sampling from the population (Anderson, Sweeney & Williams, 2012). The participants were part of the I-SET programme run by Unisa. Participants participated in two phases. In phase one, 53 young people answered one open-ended questions, before the ethnodrama presentation, and fifty participants reflected their perceptions directly after the ethnodrama presentation. In phase two, 16 young people of the original group who participated in the first phase were located to obtain their perceptions one year after the presentation.

**Data collection method**

Data were collected before and directly after the ethnodrama presentation. The data collected *before* the ethnodrama presentation consisted of a questionnaire with only one open-ended question which was asked. Question 1: What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of older people?

The ethnodrama was then presented and *after* the ethnodrama presentation data was collected from willing young people (n=50) who completed a questionnaire with the following three open-ended qualitative questions, namely:

➢ What is the most important thing that you have learnt in the workshop about older people?

➢ What will you change in your interactions with older people after the workshop?, and

➢ What do you hope older people change in relation to you?

**Research procedure**

The participants' parents/caregivers were informed about the purpose of the research, namely to obtain their children's perceptions of older people before and after the presentation of an ethnodrama. Only after informed consent of the parents/caregivers and assent of the children were obtained, the ethnodrama was presented. The ethnodrama was developed based on research on what changes older people go through, on a physical, emotional and cognitive level (Louw, Van Ede & Louw, 2004; Beck, 2007). Two of the ethnodrama presenters wrote the dialogue of the ethno-drama.

The content of the ethnodrama was to present older people holistically – in terms of their declining physical and cognitive abilities, but also as people who, despite their age, were able to pursue life actively and engage in a respectful manner with members of the younger generation. The older people were presented as having the same emotional and social needs as other people. Four actors, post-graduate students in psychology acted out the dialogue.

**Content of the ethnodrama.**

The ethnodrama comprised of an interplay between two older women. Mavis: From a less fortunate neighborhood (Low economic class – poorly dressed) and Leticia: From a fortunate neighbourhood (High economic class – dress up with her chauffer with her), and two young people referred to as "Young person 1" and "Young person 2". The content of the ethnodrama is set out in table 1.

| Mavis | Hey Leticia. How are you today? I see your lovely driver dropped you off again...." |
|---|---|
| Leticia (laughs) | Hey Mavis. Yes Desmond he is such a good worker really don't know what would I have done without him. You know now that all my children are overseas; I am so depended on him. And after my hip replacement, do you know about my hip replacement?. After my hip replacement I just need him to get around. Nevertheless how are you doing dear? |

| | |
|---|---|
| Mavis | "Well if you ask me Desmond is the perfect guy to depend on...Ooh I'm so excited for today; I have walked with these old legs of mine to Margate and back just to be here today, or at least that's what it feels like." |
| Leticia | "Why didn't you take the taxi?" |
| Mavis | "Oh no my sweetheart the taxis were not driving today. I had to use Mavis' old two legged taxi, and believe me it's not as good as it used to be. When I was young I could walk to this place and back without even breaking a sweat. " |
| Leticia | "Ai you really have a lot of problems with the taxis?" |
| Mavis | "Yes it is because the drivers are all bunch of young kids. The youth today isn't what it used to be. These young children are so difficult and have no pride in their work." |
| Leticia | "Mavis is that your perception of the youth?" |
| Mavis | "Unfortunately yes. The kids in our neighbour have no respect for us older people. Plus my children aren't better either, they left me to take care of all their children while they are of somewhere. It's a difficult task for one old woman to handle you know?" |
| Leticia | Goodness Mavis that's bad, somehow I think your privilege that old Leticia. I hardly have any interaction with younger kids and you know…you know…this is so hard for me. You know all my grandchildren are overseas and I hardly see them." (Cry) |
| Mavis comforts Leaticia | |
| Mavis | "O Leticia but I'm so excited for this project. I'm really excited to learn more about googlie,twetter and all that stuff the people talk about on T.V. How do you think the kids will be like in this project?" |
| Leticia | "I really don't know dear. What worries me that they would think I am not as cool as they would say. And you know what Mavis I really don't understand the language that these kids speak today. And I have no clue how to use cellphones I just use mine to receive and to make calls." |
| Mavis | "Oh my goodness me neither, eish..But I'm willing to try." |
| Leticia | "Thumps Mavis thumps? Only the thumps?  Do you think they will laugh at us if we struggle?" |
| Mavis | "Definitely, or know, or I don't know...Ai sweetheart, but we have to try even if they laugh." |
| Leticia | "Mavis! Mavis do you know about this "Face space" thing? It's like a face and the space. Speaking of cellphones this face space you can use it on a computer or a cellphone. If you on this face space everybody in the whole world, knows where you live, they know what you eat and they even know when you not going to church." |
| Mavis | "Ooh no, that's terrible. |
| Leticia | "I know Mavis I'm telling you, we shouldn't let them bully us into going on such an evil site. We old ladies are better than that." |

| Mavis | "Definitely! But Leticia don't you think this is the ideal opportunity for you to interact with a child, seeing that all your children and grandchildren are so far?" |
|---|---|
| Leticia | "Do you think they would want to have a relationship with me outside the project?" |
| Mavis | "But off course my sweetheart, just look at you. You are a true lady, someone any young adult can look up to and you have so much wisdom to share with these children." |
|  | Young child came to fetch women |
| Young child 1(rude) | "What's up you old tea bags?" |
| Young child 2 | "No man don't you remember what we were taught about how to interact with the older people." |
| Young child 1 | "Ooh sorry…  Hello ladies….." |
| Young child 2 | "Not like that…" |
| Young child 1 | "HELLLLO. HOW ARE YOU TODAY OLD PERSONS?" |
| Mavis | "HELLO LAD!" |
| Young child 2 | "Thank you for coming. Please follow us." |
| Children leave |  |
| Leticia | "Shame he must be deaf." |
| Mavis and Leticia wink at each other, (sharp) |  |

*Table 1: Content of Ethnodrama*

**Process.** The ethnodrama introduced an element of humour to elicit positive emotions amongst the audience. Research indicated that humour can counteract an undesirable or negative response and supports a persuasive message. Skalski, Tamborini, Glazer and Smith (2009) found that people demonstrated less

psychological resistance to a message when it was conveyed with humour. Fredrickson (2003) mentions that heightened contentment is a result of laughing, an emotion she describes as being positive (Frederickson, 1998). Frederickson (1998; 2003) offered a theory on thought-action repertoires in response to positive emotions, mentioning that negative emotions narrow down the response repertoire to certain actions, whereas positive emotions have been believed to broaden response repertoires. The broaden-and-built theory of Frederickson (2004) explains the function of different positive emotions, such as love, joy and interest. The main understanding is that these positive emotions broaden a person's temporary thought-action repertoire, where joy may elicit the need to be playful, interest may elicit the need to experience and explore, and love may urge a person to feel all these emotions within the boundary of close and trusted relationships. The opposite of these broadened mindsets are the narrowed mindsets brought about by negative emotions, urging a person to flee or defend, for instance. Taking these aspects into consideration, positive emotions and broadened mindsets encourage people to interact with their environments and take part in activities, as opposed to fleeing a situation.

**Data analysis**

The data obtained by means of the open-ended questions before the presentation, as well as immediately after the presentation, were analysed by means of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis as an independent qualitative descriptive approach is mainly described as "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006:79).

Schurink, Fouché and De Vos (2011) add that thematic analysis is a means to explore general themes that come to the foreground in the data, and grants a lot of theoretical freedom allowing potentially rich and detailed data to emerge. Braun and Clarke (2006) identified six steps, which were also used during this study, in the process of thematic analysis. Firstly, the researcher familiarised herself with the data by reading through it and ensuring that she understood the content, as well as writing down initial thoughts and ideas. The data consisted of all the completed questionnaires. The next step involved the generating of initial codes through coding meaningful information in the data, from which themes and subthemes emerged. These themes were then reviewed, by reading and re-reading the data and concluding whether they worked in relation to the whole data set. Main themes were then defined and named based on related content; when a theme was identified, all relevant concepts were grouped around it.

The themes were mainly reflective of participants' perceptions of older people, whether these perceptions were positive or negative, and were indicative of whether young people's perceptions of older people could be altered after an ethnodrama presentation.

**TRUSTWORTHINESS**

During the study the researcher used the model of Lincoln and Guba (1985), who describe in detail the four aspects that contribute to trustworthiness (see Table 2).

Table 2: Describing the four aspects that contributed to trustworthiness in this study

| Credibility | Of the most important ways to reach credibility in qualitative research is through thick description (Tracey, 2010). This was achieved by the researcher referring to extensive and concrete accounts of the research detail (Bochner, 2000), and providing essentially rich and thick descriptions of the findings which could be generalized to other settings (Tracy, 2010). Ethnography's depiction of detail is expected to be elaborate and intricate (Tracy, 2010), thus the researcher explained every aspect of the ethnodrama in detail, from the research done to ensure that older people were presented accurately, to the wording of the dialogue and the application thereof. |
|---|---|
| Transferability | The data was described in a dense manner, containing direct quotes from the participants where applicable. Seale (1999) states that detailed, rich descriptions of the research setting lead to transferability by providing the reader with adequate information to make a judgement on the applicability of the findings to other known settings. The researcher furthermore optimised transferability by describing the context, methods and assumptions relevant to the study. Transferability was further achieved through the researcher's acknowledgement of various interpretations of reality, and by being sensitive to possible bias. |
| Dependability | Dependability is synonymous with reliability, which suggests coming to the same findings under different circumstances (Krefting, 1991). Methods to ensure dependability in this study consisted of an audit |

| | trial that was kept on the research process as well as the data collection process. Seale (1999) confirms that dependability can be achieved though auditing, which the researcher(s) did through documenting the data, the methods used and decision making during the research, as well as the outcome. |
|---|---|
| Conformability | The researcher aimed to establish conformability by attaining a degree of neutrality through the fact that the findings were shaped by the participants' views and not through research bias. Prejudices were avoided during the study, focussing on neutrality and objectivity of the research, thus supporting conformability (Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). |

Crystallisation, in opposition to triangulation which assumes that there are only limited angles to a topic, proposes that through immersion in the topic, knowledge about a particular phenomenon will be produced. This can generate a deepened, complex interpretation of the topic (Richardson, 2000). Therefore within this study crystallisation was used through the researcher looking at literature, questionnaires and supervisory information to achieve crystallisation. Crystallisation provided the researcher with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial, understanding of the topic (Ellingson, 2009).

**ETHICAL GUIDELINES**

Ethical approval for research was obtained by Unisa who obtained informed consent from the parents/care givers and assent from the participants.

Assent were obtained from the young people and they were informed that their participation is voluntary and that they may withdraw at any point in time and were fully briefed about what the study entailed. The researcher(s) were sensitive, respectful and aware of the fact that their own values and stereotypical views of older people must not influence the intervention, and to avoid topics that may be stressful, upsetting or intrusive. The researcher(s) ensured, through researching this developmental stage, that their primary role was to make sure that the older people were portrayed in an ethical manner to protect their dignity, rights and welfare. The participants were ensured of confidentiality and anonymity, by telling the participants that they will not be identifiable by the researcher or the reader of the final report or dissertation.

The information of the participants was kept confidential by the current researcher and anonymity was ensured (Szabo & Strang, 1997). The data collected in this study, recordings and transcriptions will be kept for five years at the NWU.

## FINDINGS

The findings will be presented in the chronological order that the data was collected, starting with the data obtained before the etnodrama presentation.

**Findings of evaluation before the presentation**

**Theme 1: General respectful behaviour and attitude.** Young people said that they respect older people by talking to them in a respectful manner: "*Give respect, no ugly words*" (BE5); or by assisting older people: "*We should help and respect them*" (BE14);

or to have a respectful attitude: "*To honour them*" (BE41). From their perspective, they love and care for older people: "[I] *love them and care for them*" (BE9); "*To love them*" (BE18); "*To be sweet and kind to them*" (BE12).

**Theme 2: Putting themselves in the position of the older people.** Participants were able to put themselves in the position of older people because of an awareness of their own ageing. One of these participants said: "*One day I'm going to be old like them, so I should take care of them*" (BE35). The young people realised that the older people were also once younger, as they are now: "*They were also children like us*" (BE15). "*They were once young like us*" (BE17).

The vulnerability of older people was noticed and associated with physical and emotional care: "*They need to be taken cared of*" (BE53). The participants also expressed concern for the older people's emotional well-being and their safety: *"What will happen to them if they live alone*" (BE13); "*Isolation socialization*" (BE1); "*I think about the safety when they live alone*" (BE34).

**Theme 3: Positive emotions.** Positive emotions were associated with older people such as: "*Happy, lovable*" (BE47; BE46). Some of the participants said that they feel their love, care and fondness of them: "*I feel their love and their welcome*" (BE2); "*caring*" (BE33, BE42).

**Theme 4 : Older people have limitations and are incapable.** Many of the participants said that older people have limitations and are incapable. "[They] c*annot use modern technology*" (BE19); "*They are unable to do what young people do*" (BE23). "*They are sick and they can't walk*" (BE4); and they are "p*eople who are dependent on others for half of what they do*" (BE27). In addition, some of the participants perceive older people in relation to physical features associated with old

age. [They have] "*Rincols*" (wrinkles) (BE32); "*People who are old and have wrinkles*" (BE50).

**Findings of evaluation immediately after the presentation**

The perceptions of fifty participants were obtained directly after the presentation of the ethnodrama. This was done through presenting the participants with open-ended qualitative questions consisting of three questions pertaining to young people's perceptions of older people after the ethnodrama presentation.

**Theme 1: Intrapersonal level**

**Raised awareness of older people's physical and emotional needs**. The younger people become aware of the physical and emotional needs of older people: "*That older people always need your help* "(AE5); "*Everyone needs help and we can help them*" (AE14). Older people should be included in a caring community: "*That we must respect old people and make them feel like they belong*" (AE34).

**Ageist perceptions.** Despite the more nuanced manner in which young people perceived older people, some of them were still thinking of older people in terms of their physical challenges. "*That older people struggle with a lot of things*"(AE6); "*They forget what they want. They also don't understand*" (AE10).

Some of the participants mentioned that older people seem to have generalisations about young people which aren't justified, and expressed a desire for them to change in this regard: "*They should just change how they view the youth as all disrespectful and so forth and hang out more with us teens*" (AE33); "*… I would like them to be friendly and not stereotype*" (AE48).

**Theme 2: Interpersonal level**

**Specific behaviour towards older people**. Directly after the ethnodrama, participants mentioned specific behaviour which demonstrated an awareness of specific behaviour that they could apply in relation to older people. It is demonstrated in the following quote:

"*Never laugh at old people*" (AE7);

The younger people referred to talking slower: "*Talk to them at the pace that they can listen to*" (AE45); or to keep their well-being at heart: "*I will show respect, keep them calm so that they are relaxed and not uncomfortable when speaking*" (AE48); They said that they could be more patient and attuned to their needs: *"I will be more patient and generous to them. I will be more respectful and give them what they deserve: Not look down on them*" (AE30). They were also able to express concrete suggestions with what they could do: *"Spending more time with them and helping them more*" (AE13); "*Approach them better and teach them what we know, involve them in what we do*" (AE37). Many of the participants emphasised that respect towards older people is of utter importance: "*That you must respect them and love them"* (AE3). A considerable number of the young participants further implied that they will reach out and give more of themselves or their expertise, such as helping older people and taking the time to teach them things they may not know: "… *help them and I understand that they are slower than young people so we should help them*" (AE11); "*I will teach older people to use technology and bare with them*" (AE7).

To be more compliant towards older people was reported as an intended change by a couple of the participants: "*I will do as they say …"* (AE2); "… *to listen to them when they talk to me*" (AE23); "*I will be more patient with older people*" (AE50).

Some of the young people further indicated that they would show more understanding towards older people: "*Have more understanding about older people*" (AE14); "*To understand their movement and their life*" (AE27).

**Needs in relation to older people.** Interesting though, the participants did not only express a raised awareness, but also how they wished older people would relate to them: "*I wish they could understand more of our generation*" (AE1); "*To have understanding with each other*" (AE27). The younger people expressed specific needs in relation to older people's involvement with them: "*Spend more time with me*" (AE14); "*Tell you more about their past*" (AE23).

**Theme 3. Group Level**

**Similar identities**. The young people became aware of the similarities between them and older people. "*I learned that they are very similar to us as the youth*" (AE33). "*They are normal people like us, but different in worlds*" (AE47). "*They are human beings, they need to be treated with love and care*" (AE32); "*They are human beings and they also want to belong*" (AE35).

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The socialising environment of young people created to a certain extent awareness of older people which informed their expressed perceptions. Interestingly, young people perceived older people, before the presentation of the ethnodrama, in a general respectful manner. The respectful behaviour was specifically related to how young people talk to older people and that they want to assist them or to have an ethical attitude. Something that was particularly interesting in this study is that the young people displayed a natural tendency to take the

perspective of the other generation and in this particular research the participants were able to notice the physical and emotional care needs of older people. Biggs and Lowenstein (2011) emphasise that this ability is important for effective intergenerational relationships. Further research into this tendency could yield interesting findings because if young people have a natural tendency to display generational intelligence at this developmental phase (Biggs & Lowenstein, 2011), research could be conducted to determine how this tendency could be nurtured. In addition; young people expressed positive emotions in relation to older people. According to Lazarus (2006), subjective experiences give an indication of what transpires on the interpersonal level. According to this study, young people have positive emotions about their relational experiences with older people. To no surprise, older people were also perceived in a stereotypical manner when the young people ascribed to group characteristics in a general and indistinctive manner to older people. The negative statements that were identified included negative stereotypical views of older people as older people having limitations and are incapable. The negative perceptions that young people have, can be due to little intergenerational contact or the role that the media plays through negatively portraying older people, specifically through various children's films and programmes (Robinson & Anderson, 2006; Robinson, Callister, Magoffin & Moore, 2007). Millam (2011) emphasises that if children are repeatedly exposed to negative images of older people, portraying them as ill and vulnerable, their negative views about older people and aging may become embedded. Young adolescents hold more negative beliefs about older people's physical and cognitive abilities than about their interpersonal characteristics such as friendliness and kindness (Baltes, 1996; Cuddy & Fiske, 2002).

After introducing the ethnodrama, as in intervention to create a form of cognitive disequilibrium, with the hope that change in one part of a system will bring about change in another part of the system (Bendix, 1984; Gaff & Bylund, 2010), themes related to general respectful behaviour to older people were repeated. The young people were now able to describe the interaction between them and older people from different perspectives: they focused on the interaction with older people from their perspective and expressed and awareness of the possible impact of how they interact with older people; they focussed on older people in terms of their developmental challenges and how they as young people could adjust their manner of interaction to accommodate the needs of older people. This finding could have great significance for intergenerational programmes. Does the specific developmental phase have more potential to implement intergenerational programmes to contribute to a broader interpersonal repertoire for younger people to related to older people? It could be potentially effective if the cognitive development of younger people at this specific developmental life phase is taken into account. The various changes in cognitive development during adolescence enables young people to make mature decisions through a method of introspection which might not have been within their cognitive capabilities beforehand (APA, 2002).

Respect was a repetitive theme. Research highlighted different manifestations of respect (Van der Geest, 1997; 2002), but it is not quite clear what respect in the South African context means in terms of intergenerational relations. This could be a potential fruitful topic for future investigation. Interesting that the younger people drew conclusions on the relational definition between them and older people. They describe a complementary relationship between them with older people leading and the young people following them.

Although the findings could not be generalised it seemed as if one of the characteristics that manifests as stereotypes and prejudice have changed from before to after the presentation. Before the ethnodrama, older people were perceived only in terms of their identities belonging to the group of older people, while after the ethnodrama younger people were able to identify similar identities between them and older people. The older people as the out-group were now perceived as the in-group. In this in-group, younger people were able to express empathy in relation to older people; they recognised older people's physical, emotional and social needs. The younger people were also able to express their needs in relation to older people which people can do if they perceive the relationships as safe. Research by Cummings, Williams and Ellis (2003), Gatz, Popkin, Pino and VandenBos (1984) and Hale (1998), found that frequent contact with an older adult person leads to more positive attitudes towards older adults more generally. Positive attitudes and perceptions were generated when young people increased their contact with older people. Lowenstein and Katz (2012) mention that satisfaction in intergenerational relationships is enhanced when both parties provide something to the relationship. Reciprocity in intergenerational relationships is based on a fair exchange of support, resources and knowledge, which grants people the opportunity to interact with each other, gain new experiences and limit loneliness (Scannell & Roberts, 1994).

The persistence of ageist perceptions after the ethnodrama confirms that interventions should not have a one size fit approach. Spence and Radunovich (2007) mention that circumstances, such as growing up in different eras, could contribute to differing attitudes and beliefs across generations, resulting in difficulties with the generations understanding each other. They also go on to state that young children's negative perceptions of older people increased as they got older, and that

it is crucial to encourage positive relationships from a young age in order to counteract these negative perceptions. If the aim is to change perceptions, the presentation should be made on different levels to accommodate the needs of the individual such as the emotional and behavioural and not only on the cognitive level. This leads us to the recommendations for and limitations of this study.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The findings indicate that negative perceptions and attitudes present early on in life, and thus it is important to find constructive ways to determine the nature and cause of these prejudicial views and find methods to prevent them. Supporting and encouraging young people to interact with older people, grant them the opportunity to dismiss their negative stereotypes and gain increased empathy, also supporting the older person at a time when they feel most isolated and vulnerable. These hold importance for society in general.

Research should additionally aim to be more culturally specific to ascertain whether an ethnodrama is a successful means of changing perceptions of young people across cultures.

By introducing intergenerational programmes in a child's early school years, it may hold many benefits, especially as the young child is in a stage of acquiring "theory of mind", which refers to them gaining a better understanding that people act on desires, beliefs, needs, and intentions that are different from theirs (Astington & Jenkins, 1995).

**LIMITATIONS**

Some of the limitations of this study include that the older people's roles were acted out by young adults. If older people themselves actually played the parts it may have contributed to the authenticity of the ethnodrama.

Another limitation of this study could be that no reference was made to how the older people, referred to in the qualitative open-ended questions, were related (or not) to the younger people.

**CONCLUSION**

Intergenerational programmes have been found to be important in bridging the gap between generations. An ethnodrama, as an example of such a programme, indicated to bring some change in the perceptions that the young participants in this study had of older people. The young people's perceptions were changed from being ambivalent before the presentation to a more nuanced description after the presentation, whereby the young people showed more acknowledgement for older people's needs, they expanded on the relationship between young and old and did not merely describe older people based on their identity as older people. This indicates that an ethnodrama presentation as a method of an intergenerational programme may be fruitful in future interventions to address the relationships between young people and older people.

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**SECTION C**

**CRITICAL REFLECTION**

Previous studies have emphasised the importance of good intergenerational relationships (Davidson & Boals-Gilbert, 2010) in the support of mental health, including emotional, social, and spiritual growth, and how they contribute to the fostering of a successfully aging population (Izuhara, 2010; Wykle, Whitehouse & Morris, 2005). Due to the negative influence of the media and visual representations of older people, younger people's perceptions of older people are negatively influenced (Barret & Pai, 2008), which contributes to formed stereotypes, prejudice and ageism among younger people (Levy & Banaji, 2002; Lyons, 2009). Intergenerational programmes offer young people the opportunity to gain more knowledge about older people and the aging process and thus a chance to dismiss myths, encourage positive perceptions and meaningful relationships (Dellmann-Jenkins, Lambert, Fruit & Dinero, 1986; Jantz, Seefeldt, Galper & Serlock, 1977; Parnell, 1980), discredit negative stereotypes (Beisgen & Kraitchman, 2003) and encourage contact between these two generations (Femia, Zarit, Blair, Jarrott & Bruno, 2008). An ethnodrama, as a method of an intergenerational programme which strives to bring about greater understanding and meaning to the person(s) it is representative of and presented to (Edwards & Skinner, 2009; Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2010), was specifically utilised in this study. The ethnodrama portrayed older people and aging in a positive light in order to dismiss stereotypes and ageist attitudes (Gilbert & Ricketts, 2008). Therefore the aim of this study was to explore the perceptions of young people before and after an ethnodrama presentation.

During the evaluation before the ethnodrama presentation young people demonstrated positive subjective feelings, a positive obligation, and stereotypical views of older people. The finding of positive subjective feelings is supported by previous research (Lee, Carpenter & Meyers, 2007; North & Fiske, 2012). A sense of obligation towards older people has been discussed in previous research findings. Eastern tradition, for example, describes a sense of obligation based on the historical tradition that young people should obey, respect and care for their elder (Ng, 1998; 2002). Giles, Noels, Williams, Ota, Lim, Hung Ng, Ryan and Somera (2003) found that younger people felt a greater need for respect and obligation towards non-family elders, and that this could be attributed to a general norm of being polite to strangers. Stereotypical views, as were found in the evaluation before the ethnodrama presentation have been mentioned in previous research findings (Levy, 2009). Findings in previous research have found that young people describe older people with negative descriptive words such as stubborn and helpless (Pinquart, Wenzel & Sorensen, 2000), and tend to describe physical features of aging (Lynott & Merola, 2007).

During the evaluation directly after the ethnodrama presentation, the majority of participants showed a better understanding of the life world of older people, while a minority indicated a lack of understanding. This finding was supported by research findings conveying a positive outcome among children after an intergenerational programme (Femia et al., 2008). During a six-week intergenerational study conducted by Laney, Wimsatt and Mosely (1999), young people conveyed a more accurate understanding of older people and aging and had a more positive view. Gilbert and Ricketts (2008) further substantiate this finding by stating that positive changes on children's part are generally a result of intergenerational programmes.

Children furthermore conveyed that they are motivated to change in respect to future encounters with older people, such as becoming more involved or lending help and expertise to older people. Findings by Femia et al. (2008) support this by stating that their research found that younger people expressed a greater willingness to help, and have more social acceptance and higher levels of empathy for older people. The young people mentioned that they have a desire for older people to also change in relation to them concerning interpersonal interactions and older people's perceived stereotypes of younger people. The findings are supported by Gudykunst (2004), who mentions that young people would enjoy more support and involvement as opposed to mere stereotyping.

In this study it was found that over a period of time, younger people may present with negative stereotypes, but may at the same time demonstrate positive subjective feelings and positive obligation towards older people.

**CONCLUSION**

Intergenerational programmes strive to bridge the gap between young and old people and to discredit negative stereotypes of older people. An ethnodrama as a method of an intergenerational programme proved to be entertaining and welcomed by the participants as they fall in an age group that potentially need to be entertained in a fun and interactive manner in order to gain their full attention. The research participants were asked about their perceptions of older people, not stipulating whether the older people referred to are related to the participants or from the wider social structure (unrelated). When comparing the data from the evaluation before the presentation with the data from the evaluation after the presentation, it suggests that the ethnodrama was successful in positively changing young people's perceptions of older people.

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**Addendum 1**

**Guideline for the *Journal of Psychology in Africa* (*JPA*)**

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