

A Review of Intergenerational Music Program Research & Descriptive Articles from 1980 to 2016

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Background & Purpose

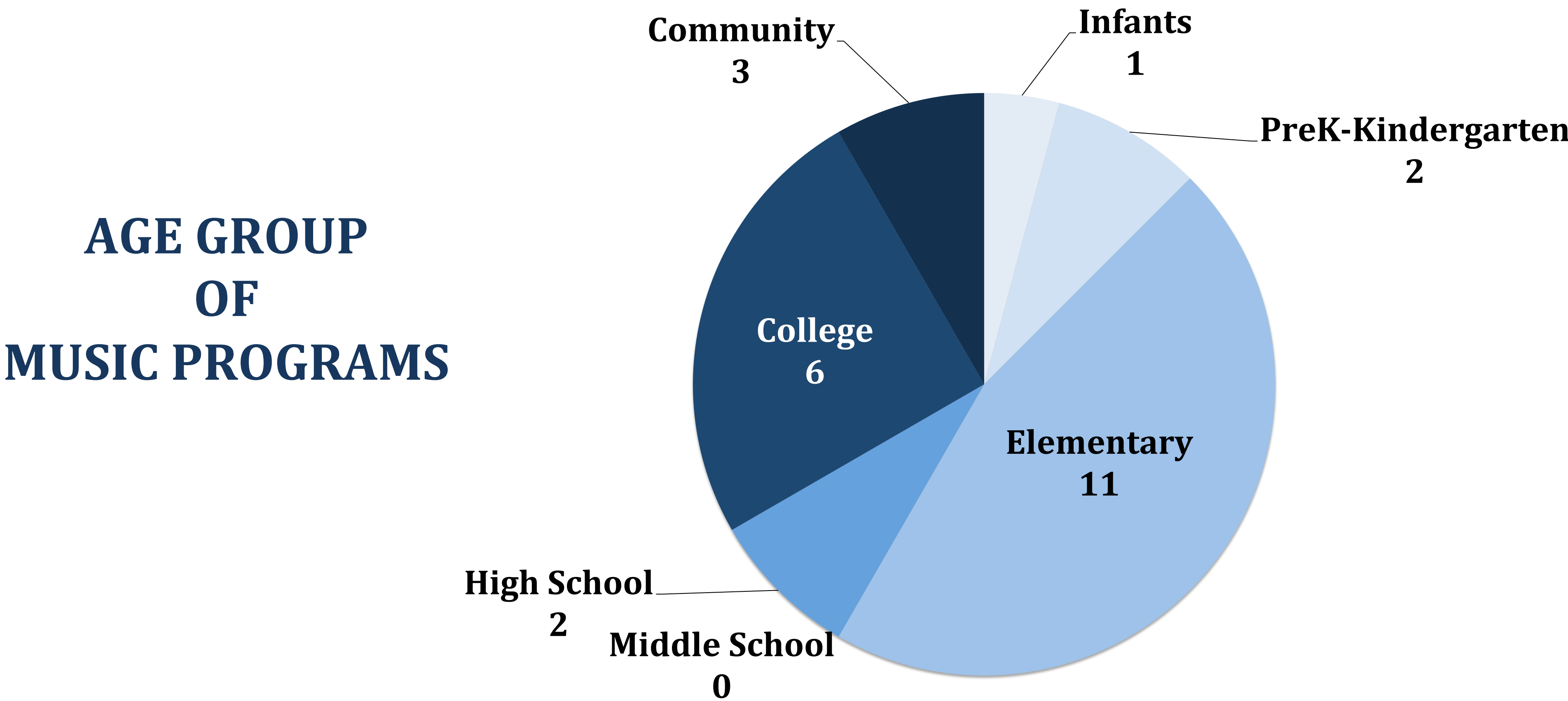
In 1981, the National Council on Aging emphasized the need to create strategies toward fostering knowledgeable and empathetic members of society among all generations. Music-based intergenerational programs in the United States gained traction in the 1980s and expanded to Canada, United Kingdom, and Israel in the 1990s. Research studies and descriptive publications are categorized by age group and music activity to reveal trends related to intergenerational music programs. The results from selected publications highlighting the various benefits of intergenerational music programs are included.

Method

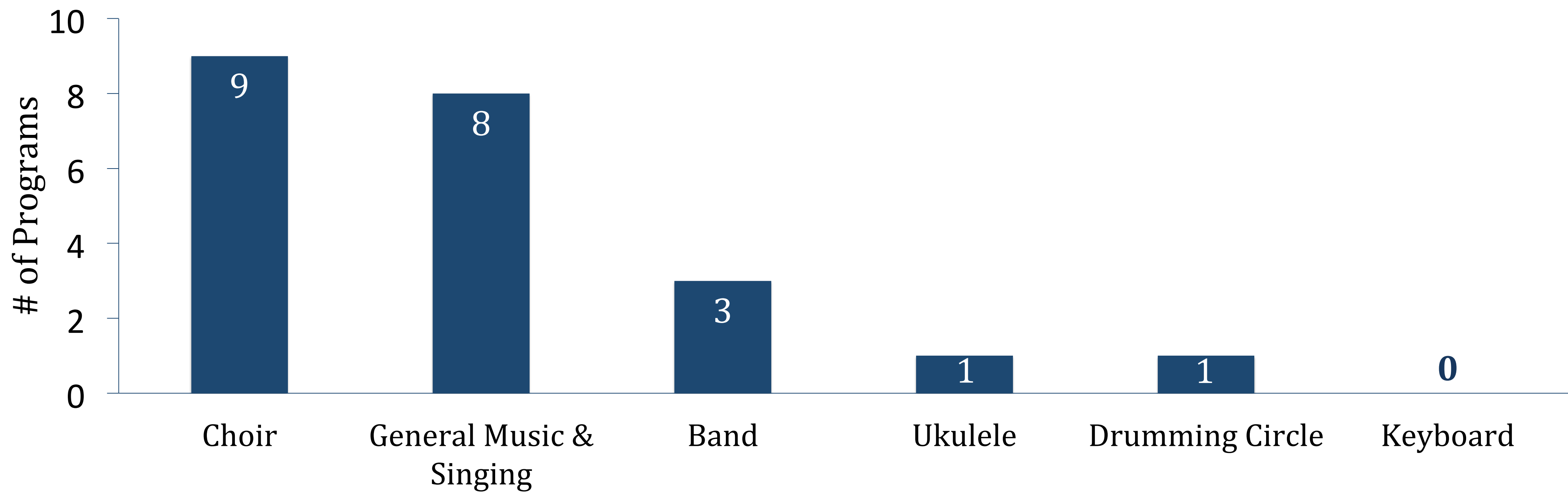
Relevant publications involving well older adults were identified using the PsycINFO and ERIC databases and the following international peer-reviewed journals: *International Journal of Community Music*, *Journal of Research in Music Education*, *Journal of Music Therapy*, *International Journal of the Arts in Society*, *Educational Gerontology*, *Music Educators Journal*, *Educational Leadership*, *Early Child Development and Care*, *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, and *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*. Search terms used were: intergenerational, intergenerational music, intergenerational choir, music-based intergenerational programs, and intergenerational learning. Reference lists of articles and dissertations that matched the topic were also examined. Articles were categorized based on the following age group parameters: Elementary= 1st- 6th, Middle School= 7th- 9th, High School= 10th- 12th. In the categorization of type of music activity, *General Music & Singing* is defined as music activities including singing, movement, and use of percussion instruments.

Results

Twenty research and descriptive articles (including two case studies) were identified through the search process. Three dissertations were included. Results by decade: 1980-1989= 3; 1990-1999= 3; 2000-2009= 7; 2010-2016= 10. Results by type: Descriptive= 13; Experimental= 10. Several research studies involved different age groups and types of music activity. Therefore, the numbers in the figures reflect an overlap of age group and music activity in the articles and dissertations cited. The figures represent intergenerational group studies and programs only.



TYPE OF MUSIC ACTIVITY



Highlights from Intergenerational Music Programs

ATTITUDE

- After 10 weeks, older adults viewed 4th graders significantly more positively in domains of goodness, positiveness, and maturity (Belgrave, 2011).
- Attitudes between teenagers and older adults as well as college students and older adults became more positive after participating in an intergenerational choir program (Darrow et al., 1994; Bowers, 1998).
- “For me, the respect I gained for the maturity of most of the college students was a significant positive event” (Adult participant, Conway & Hodgman, 2008, p. 231).

WELL-BEING

- While posttest measurements of self-esteem and generativity (interest in contributing to the next generation) in older adults were not significant, the adults reported an “increase in their feelings of usefulness towards the child participants” (Belgrave, 2011, p. 504).
- Adults described the intergenerational experience as a “renewing of life” (Cusicanqui & Salmon, 2005, p. 207).
- “The best thing about singing and playing music with older people was seeing the old people happy” (Child participant, Varvarigou et al., 2011, p. 211).

SOCIAL INTERACTION

- Initial feelings of apprehension is common, but the musical and social connections led to respect and understanding between generations (Friedman, 1988; Conway & Hodgman, 2008).
- 4th graders discovered commonalities with the older adults through pen pal letters, developed meaningful relationships with them, and actively wanted to stay in contact with the older adults after the program (Bales et al., 2000).
- Children commented that they “no longer fear growing old,” and “can now talk to older people, even just to be friendly and say hi” (Friedman, 1988, p. 55).
- Undergraduate music students gained comfort working with adult learners in performing ensembles (VanWeelden & Whipple, 2004; Lane, 2012).

Reference
List



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