THE IMPORTANCE OF GERONTOLOGICAL EDUCATION STARTING EARLY: FRAMING THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF THE FUTURE
SESSION 2220 (SYMPOSIUM)

THE IMPORTANCE OF GERONTOLOGICAL EDUCATION STARTING EARLY: FRAMING THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF THE FUTURE
Chair: T. Davis, Rutgers University, Stratford, New Jersey
Co-Chair: C. R. Bennett, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, Baltimore, Maryland

In the United States, population aging is often portrayed as an impending crisis that will greatly impact the institutional foundations of society. While these portrayals are often negative, they have drawn attention to some of the challenges that our society faces and will continue to face. As a result of the increased attention to the needs of the growing population of older adults, there has been considerable growth in gerontology programs and courses in colleges and universities; however, the incorporation of gerontology into kindergarten to grade 12 (K-12) education has lagged behind. In an effort to prepare for the increasing demands of the growing number of older adults, younger students must gain an understanding of the impact of the aging process on their lives, their families and society as a whole. Such early education has the potential to reverse negative stereotypes and increase interest in gerontology from a young age. This symposium features work from scholars in the field of gerontology education who will explore the attitudes and perspectives on aging of students in primary and secondary school in a variety of settings and activities. Furthermore, the symposium will articulate an important and emerging agenda of research for burgeoning scholars in the field of aging by outlining the needs for gerontological knowledge in primary and secondary education. This session will conclude with a dynamic discussion of the current state and future needs for increased efforts in gerontological education among primary and secondary students.

AGING AWARENESS THROUGH INTERGENERATIONAL GERONTOLOGICAL SERVICE LEARNING
C. Brown¹, P.P. Brown², 1. Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia, 2. Winston-Salem State University, Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Prior research demonstrates that children acquire attitudes about older adults from media outlets which often embrace negative stereotypes. Crossed aged research, however, suggests interactions with older adults are critical in the promotion of positive views of aging. To understand how intergenerational interactions affect views of aging, we assessed attitudes of first grade students who participated in an intergenerational service learning project. Students spent time with elders from a local assisted living facility once a month during the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years. The students (N = 48) were verbally assessed using a modified version of Palmore’s Facts on Aging Quiz. The study’s conclusions were similar to prior research indicating children hold negative views of aging based on physical characteristics. Girls demonstrated more ‘aging awareness’, but the children readily considered their family members in making distinctions of the description of aging before making mention of any media outlet.

SHOULD WE CATCH THEM YOUNG? VIEWS OF THE YOUNG ON AGING ANDLESSONS LEARNED
A.E. Sokan, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky

As part of a series of community-based events to commemorate World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, students from kindergarten through 8th grade were invited to submit writing pieces and/or artwork focusing on any of the following themes: “World Elder Abuse Awareness Day”, “What I think /like about older adults” or “What does it mean to be old?” Submissions revealed a range of responses in all media on a continuum of perspectives that included unaware, negative, and positive views as well as indifferent views. A review of the entries received underscores the importance of developing educational and informational interventions and programs to increase awareness and sensitivity to aging, and aging related issues among the young. Such efforts are key to enhancing intergenerational relationships. Additionally, learning through a life course perspective provides information to young children that aids in understanding and preparing for their own eventual aging.

SESSION 2225 (PAPER)

CONSIDERING AND CONCEPTUALIZING AGE AND AGING FOR A YOUNG AUDIENCE
C. R. Bennett, UMBC, Baltimore, Maryland

Conceptualizing chronological age and the process of aging is complex, and difficult to translate to a young audience, particularly those between 5 to 12 years old. While prior research has shown this age group to be receptive to aging knowledge much information comes solely from immediate family experiences or media portrayals, which are too often perpetuated by negative stereotypes. Through limited intergenerational interactions, for example, students may communicate the “older adults” they know as solely their parents or mid-thirties celebrities, as is an ongoing experience by the K-12 Committee of the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE) in executing an annual writing contest. This presentation will detail the challenges in conceptualizing and communicating gerontological knowledge appropriately to a young audience beyond a purely intergenerational approach. Lastly, this presentation will conclude with a discussion of lessons learned when designing gerontological prompts for a young audience.

DEMENTIA 2

NARRATIVE GERONTOLOGY: EXPLORING LIFE STORY WORK WITH PERSONS WITH DEMENTIA IN GERMAN NURSING HOMES
C. Berendonk, 1. University of Alberta, Faculty of Nursing, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, 2. Network Aging Research, Graduate Program Dementia, University of Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Germany, 3. Postdoctoral Fellowship, Robert Bosch Stiftung, Stuttgart, Germany

As humans we are narrative beings. Therefore our biography, the subjective presentation of our personal life, is of great importance. Due to changes of the autobiographical memory and difficulties to express thoughts verbally, it is