

# **IMPACT OF MEN'S SHED ON SOCIAL PARTICIPATION AND HEALTH OUTCOMES**

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# Why this topic?

- Original research on an effective community-based model
- Close relatives and friends could benefit
- Personal understanding of common health related factors

# Objectives

- To explore the concept of Men's Shed organizations
- To determine the purpose and benefits of the study
- To review the methods behind the study
- To observe the positive results and categories of the study
- To discuss limitations of the study
- To visualize future work and implications to occupational therapy practice

# Introduction

- Older men face a number of health challenges when compared to women
- There are several factors that may relate to these challenges
- Men lack social connections as they age



# What is a Men's Shed?

- Promising community-based organization for addressing health factors
- Typically attract older men
- Allows men to engage in meaningful occupations
- Originated in Australia and quickly moved throughout Europe and other countries



# Why a Men's Shed?

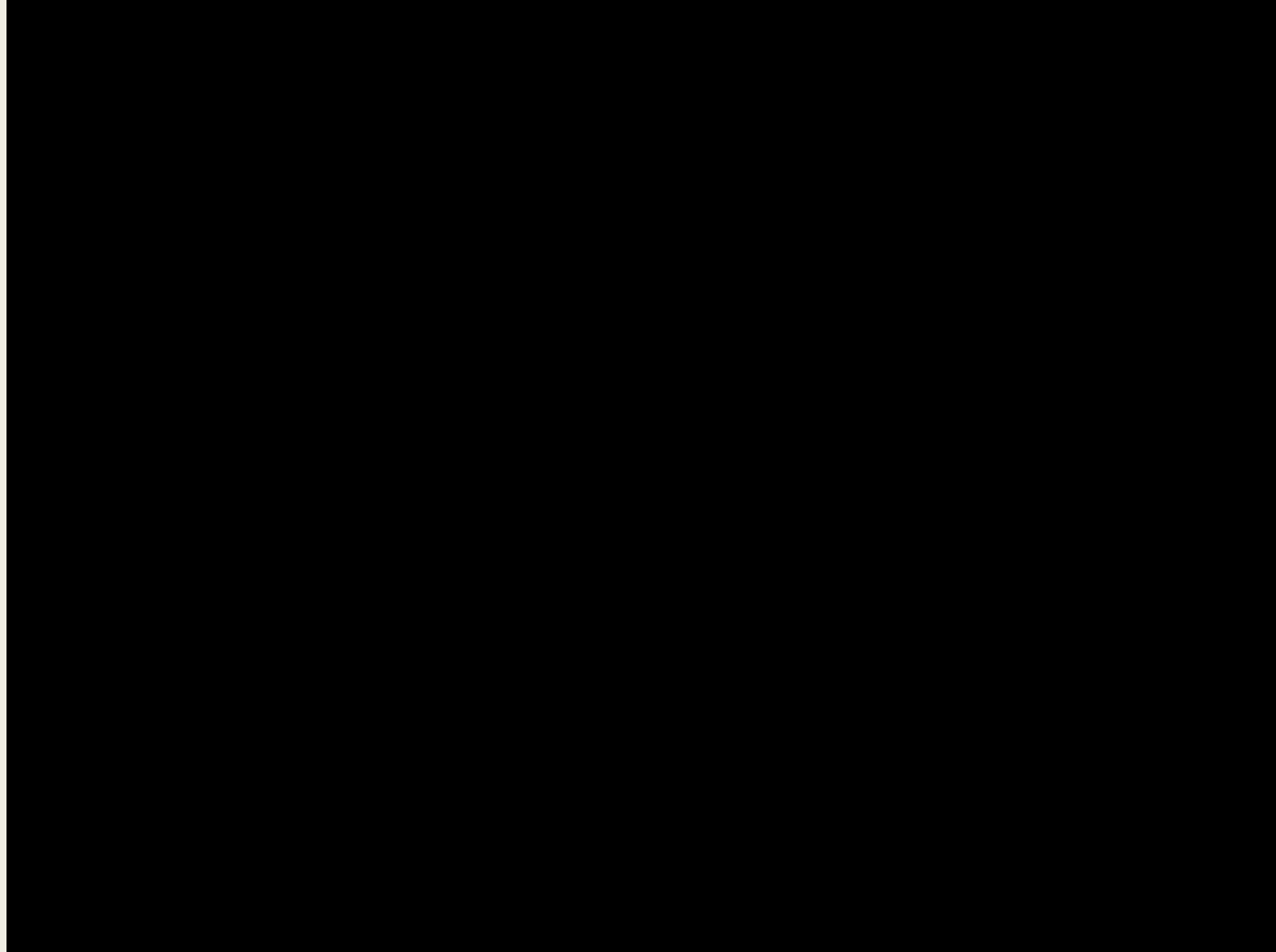
- Provides a sense of purpose and autonomy, connects men of all ages, transcends class and other social differences, and can become the primary source of activity
- Not designed as a place to get away from others
- Most men are facing similar issues related to significant life changes
- Safe and reliable



(Ballinger, Glenda, & Verrinder, 2009; Hayes & Williamson, 2007; Golding et al., 2007)

# North Belfast Men's Shed

[Link to Video](#)





# Ireland & Northern Ireland

- North Belfast Men's Shed
- Republic of Ireland (Southern Ireland) and Northern Ireland (U.K.) are different countries
- Cross-community





# Study Goals

- Explore the specific factors associated with Men's Sheds that indirectly promote health and well-being
- How can the safe environment, camaraderie, and social acceptance within the shed promote positive health behaviors and improved social participation?

# Methods

- Approved by the Human Subject Institutional Review Board
- Cross-sectional qualitative study targeting men over the age of 40
- Director of shed assisted with recruitment
- Participants were given informed consent and purpose of study to determine acceptance



# Methods

- A pre-mediated set of semi-structured questions was used
- Interviews were completed by three WMU students
- Questions focused on reasons for joining, specific activities, feelings of connectedness, relationships with other members, and the overall impact of shed participation

# Methods

- Demographic information was manually recorded and more in-depth questions were voice recorded
- Interviews were transcribed to discover common themes
- The grounded theory was used to analyze data which lead to a thematic analysis of five categories

# Results

- 11 men primarily over the age of 60 (avg. age was 65)
- Marital status varied
- Attendance rates varied from 2-5 times per week and the average time of attending was 18 months
- Occupations included construction, machinery, baking, welding, council work, journalism, and tattooing
- All were retired or unemployed

# Results

- Thematic analysis results in five categories:  
Socialization, motivation related to self-care, self-worth and purpose, companionship, and enjoyment
- Each category displays positive results due to attending the Men's shed



# Thematic Analysis

- Socialization
- Motivation for Self-Care
- Self-worth and Purpose
- Companionship
- Enjoyment

# *Socialization*



- Majority of the men conveyed feelings of loneliness or social isolation prior to the shed
- Lack of socialization prior to the shed
- Substantial improvements

*“Men **do not talk** about their life or problems with other men like women do, so this place is a wonderful organization to **truly open up** to others.”*

*“I feel that I am **better at socializing** now. I was an alcoholic and did not want anything to do with others – now I am a member of a church, and I enjoy talking about my problems and helping others.”*

# *Motivation for Self-Care*

- Indirectly motivated to live a healthier lifestyle
- May be tied to social participation, variety of activities, camaraderie, or other factors
- Significant source of motivation to better their lives



*“I have **lost a lot of weight** since I started attending the shed. I exercise with a few men from the shed.”*

*“...just coming to the shed and using my hands again. It allows me to **stay active** both mentally and physically.”*

*“[Men’s Shed] opened me up to a lot of new activities. It’s a **significant portion of my time** since retirement. I have two other very close friends at the shed now. It made me want to continue staying active.”*

# *Self-worth and Purpose*



- Common life changes often result in loss of self-worth or purpose for older adults
- Can likely lead to depression
- The Men's Shed appeared to provide a meaningful role in the members in increasing their self-worth and purpose



*“...truly gave me something to live for.”*

*“[Men’s Shed] brought me back to life. I am able to enjoy life again. I was not in a happy place in life before coming here.”*

*“It gave me a sense of well-being and self-worth. It made me realize there is a **whole new world** out there when you are retired.”*

# *Companionship*



- Social bonds are an essential component of health, especially for older adults
- Men are at a higher risk of isolation and depression
- The shed offers men a chance to create and foster relationships

*“It assisted me in **developing social skills and coping skills** with others. [We] are able to discuss problems with the men at the shed.”*

*“[Men’s Shed] emphasizes the importance of being a member of a friendly community. It has allowed me to meet such a wide range of individuals.”*

*“...allowed me to **feel connected** with others. I have friends in the shed and talk with a few out of the shed as well. I go on walks with other members. It gets me out of the house to talk to other people.”*

# *Enjoyment*

- “Craic”: an Irish slang-term
- All men developed new hobbies or regained interest in familiar occupations



*“[Men’s Shed] provides good laughs with others and craic. I enjoy engaging in different activities with others.”*

*“...very helpful in meeting new people from different backgrounds. I see a lot of other men having fun and engaging in healthy conversations together while also participating in activities.”*

# Discussion

- This study focused on the benefits received from attending the Men's Shed, related to social participation and overall health
- All the participants reported some positive benefit as a result of attending
- The results of this study are consistent with other studies (Moylan et al., 2015)



# Limitations

- Cross-sectional
- Generalizations to other shed participants are difficult to the small sample size
- Conducted with a sample from the United Kingdom and may not apply to United States populations

# Future Directions

- Understudied concept, especially in the United States
- United States has demonstrated consistent struggles with health factors related to social and mental health conditions, as well as substance abuse
- Men in the United States could specifically benefit
- Increasing rates of loneliness in the US, which frequently leads to depression
- Could be a safe and reliable outlet to provide connectiveness and a source for help

# Implications to OT Practice

- Provide a safe space for older adults to engage in meaningful occupations
- Find a common ground
- Present an open line of communication to discuss important health factors

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**Questions?**