

# COMMUNITY BUILDING THROUGH INTERGENERATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

REPORT TO THE NATIONAL YOUTH AFFAIRS RESEARCH SCHEME (NYARS)



Judith MacCallum  
David Palmer  
Peter Wright  
Wendy Cumming-Potvin  
Jeremy Northcote  
Michelle Brooker  
Cameron Tero

# COMMUNITY BUILDING THROUGH INTERGENERATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

REPORT TO THE NATIONAL YOUTH AFFAIRS RESEARCH SCHEME (NYARS)

Judith MacCallum  
David Palmer  
Peter Wright  
Wendy Cumming-Potvin  
Jeremy Northcote  
Michelle Brooker  
Cameron Tero

THE NATIONAL YOUTH AFFAIRS RESEARCH SCHEME (NYARS) was established in 1985 as a co-operative funding arrangement between the Australian, State and Territory Governments to facilitate nationally based research into current social, political and economic factors affecting young people. The Scheme operates under the auspices of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA).

NYARS reports published since the early 1990s are available free-of-charge on the website of the Australian Government Department responsible for youth affairs. At the time this report was published, the website address was:  
<http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/youth-nyars.htm>

Copyright © 2006, National Youth Affairs Research Scheme

ISBN 1 9211302 9 6

This paper was prepared by NYARS and is intended to provide research findings and other information as a basis for discussion. The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of the NYARS Steering Committee; the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA); or individual Australian Government, State or Territory Youth Ministers or Departments responsible for Youth Affairs.

Published by Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) on behalf of NYARS.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

We acknowledge and thank the young people, coordinators and other participants of the programs examined as case studies for their enthusiasm for the research and their willingness to share their thoughts and feelings with us. Also we acknowledge the wide range of people who agreed to participate in focus groups and explore issues surrounding intergenerational exchange with the research team. We thank the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme (NYARS) Steering Committee for their feedback on earlier drafts of the research and the NYARS Research Manager for his ongoing support.

Judith MacCallum

David Palmer

Peter Wright

Wendy Cumming-Potvin

Jeremy Northcote

Michelle Brooker

Cameron Tero

**Murdoch University**

# CONTENTS

---

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>ix</b>
INTRODUCTION	ix
THE RESEARCH	ix
DEFINING INTERGENERATIONAL EXCHANGE	xi
THE CASE STUDIES	xiii
ILLUMINATION FROM THE RESEARCH	xv
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
THE PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH	2
METHODOLOGY	3
<b>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>11</b>
INTRODUCTION	11
THE CONTEXT	11
DEFINING INTERGENERATIONAL PRACTICE	13
THE BENEFITS OF INTERGENERATIONAL PRACTICE AND BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY	17
THE IMPACT OF GENDER AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND	26
<b>CHAPTER THREE: CASE STUDIES</b>	<b>33</b>
STORIES BUILDING COMMUNITY: THE BANKSTOWN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT	35
RADIO HOLIDAY: BIG hART	39
TURNING TO THE OLD PEOPLE AND RETURNING TO COUNTRY: THE YIRIMAN PROJECT AND INTERGENERATIONAL EXCHANGE	46
MENTORING IN SCHOOLS: THE SCHOOL VOLUNTEER PROGRAM	52

<b>CHAPTER FOUR: FROM DEFINITION TO IMPLEMENTATION</b>	<b>61</b>
CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF INTERGENERATIONAL EXCHANGE	61
FEATURES OF SUCCESSFUL INTERGENERATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS	66
THE IMPACT OF GENDER AND CULTURE	71
CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS	74
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS</b>	<b>89</b>
GETTING LOTS OUT OF IT: BUILDING MANY AND VARIED OUTCOMES	90
<b>CHAPTER SIX: UNDERSTANDING PRACTICE</b>	<b>107</b>
DIFFERENT WAYS OF DEVISING INTERGENERATIONAL EXCHANGE MODELS	108
METAPHORS FOR PRACTICE	113
<b>CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>125</b>
CONCEPTUALISATION OF INTERGENERATIONAL EXCHANGE	125
FEATURES OF SUCCESSFUL INTERGENERATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS	129
CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS	130
THE IMPACT OF GENDER AND CULTURE	130
OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS	131
CONTRIBUTIONS TO COMMUNITY BUILDING	135
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>155</b>
RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THE CORRESPONDING RESEARCH COMPONENTS	156
DETAILS OF FOCUS GROUPS AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS	157
LIST OF INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS IDENTIFIED	161

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1:	Understandings of intergenerational practice	xii
Table 2:	Key features of successful programs	xv
Table 3:	Challenges facing intergenerational practice	xvi
Table 4:	Key elements of definitions relating to intergenerational practice	16
Table 5:	Summary of benefits identified in review of literature	25
Table 6:	Case study program features	34
Table 7:	Key elements of definitions as an outcome of the research	65
Table 8:	Summary of features of successful programs identified from the research	70
Table 9:	Summary of challenges to the development of successful programs identified from the research	85
Table 10:	Key elements of definitions relating to intergenerational exchange from the literature review and the research	127
Table 11:	Summary of benefits of intergenerational exchange from the literature review and the research	132

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1:	Brief conceptual overview	3
Figure 2:	Overview of research plan	6
Figure 3:	Intergenerational practice as levels of interaction	109
Figure 4:	Intergenerational practice on a continuum	110
Figure 5:	Intergenerational practice in terms of benefits	110
Figure 6:	Intergenerational practice as cyclic	110
Figure 7:	The Intergenerational Capacity Building Model	112

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

---

## INTRODUCTION

Initiatives designed to support young people's engagement, participation and civic involvement with community have grown in popularity in Australia over the past decade. In part, this is because of the perceived growth in young people's social problems, issues and needs and the fact that these are seen as a reflection of their declining levels of inclusion in civic life, a loss in community, a failure on the part of local associations to encourage social cohesion at the local level and a growing distance between the generations. Intergenerational practice has emerged as one general approach that may help put substance to aspirations for bringing young people into closer contact with others in their community.

The 'Community Building through Intergenerational Exchange Programs' research project was commissioned by the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme (NYARS) to explore the concept of intergenerational exchange as a vehicle for community building, particularly in Australia.

## THE RESEARCH

The specific objectives of the project were to:

- identify a definition of intergenerational programs and relevant associated concepts, briefly exploring each element, particularly as they relate to current approaches to working with young people, in both a policy and program context;



- identify the benefits of intergenerational programs to both the individuals involved and the broader community;
- explore the difficulties that may have arisen in the implementation of intergenerational programs and how these factors may impact on program delivery;
- explore how factors such as gender and/or cultural background may enhance the exchange between generations, particularly Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse communities;
- identify, analyse and discuss the factors that constitute good or best practice intergenerational program model[s]; and
- explore the relationship between intergenerational programs and the potential to foster and develop resilience, enhance social connection and interactions and build both individual and community capacity.

For the purpose of this research, the focus was on intergenerational exchange in the context of activities that operate within organised programs rather than informal activities in which different generations participate as part of their daily lives. Although intergenerational programs may involve children and young people as the younger generation, this research, as part of the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme, focuses on young people 12–25 years of age.

To achieve the research objectives, a combination of qualitative methodologies was employed. These included:

- consultation with NYARS and obtaining ethics clearance;
- review of the international literature related to intergenerational exchange programs;
- consultation with experts, including young people and older people through focus groups and in-depth interviews;
- field visits to selected sites; and
- data analyses and writing.

## DEFINING INTERGENERATIONAL EXCHANGE

Most of the literature demonstrates that the idea of intergenerational exchange is relatively new in Australia. Although the practice of bringing the old and young together for mutual benefit has long been an important element of traditional family processes and part of youth and community practice in this country, the notion of 'intergenerational exchange' is still quite new in Australia. In fact, for most it is a novel or unfamiliar concept. The literature points to the idea as something that has been imported, initially from the United States and most recently from the United Kingdom and Europe. However, intergenerational exchange appears to be on the rise. Indeed at the beginning of this research there was little discussion of intergenerational exchange in the Australian literature. During the course of the project this began to change with Australian researchers beginning to publish work on the practice, and an international conference planned for mid-2006.

The review of literature identified a number of key features of intergenerational exchange as it is understood and applied. In particular, it was established that the notion of intergenerational exchange is most often associated with a relationship of mutually beneficial exchange and cooperation across generational groups. Additionally intergenerational practice occurs on a variety of levels, including intimate or strong attachments between two individuals through to diverse, thinner and bridging relationships involving a complex network of connections.

Literature reviewed also identified a large range of outcomes from intergenerational practice for young people, old people and the broader community. For individuals, these included increases in self worth, less loneliness and isolation, new connections and friendships, academic improvements and more positive perceptions of other generations. For the broader community, benefits include the building of social networks, greater diversity of contact, breaking down of stereotypes, and enhancing of culture in particular communities.

In addition, this research helped build a more nuanced understanding of the notion of intergenerational exchange. The following table represents the research findings in this regard.

**Table 1: Understandings of intergenerational practice**

<b>Intergenerational practice involves exchange between multiple generations:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Purposeful and ongoing exchange of resources and ideas</li><li>• Increasing co-operation or exchange between two or more generations</li><li>• Bringing different generations together for mutual benefit</li><li>• In practice, exchange is multi-generational with a range of involvement of others</li><li>• Exchange can involve mutuality and reciprocity</li></ul>
<b>Intergenerational practice involves engagement and participation at a range of levels:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The concept implies interaction, action and awareness</li><li>• Increasing levels of interaction, engagement and participation are evident alongside mutual learning with negotiated, shared and unanticipated outcomes</li><li>• A range of engagement forms were evident including ‘acting on’, ‘sharing’ and ‘learning with’</li></ul>
<b>Intergenerational practice has a range of intended and unanticipated outcomes:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identifying and harnessing the experiences of each age group to enhance the life experiences of the other</li><li>• Developing understanding of the life experiences of other generations</li><li>• Participating in and making culture</li><li>• Bringing generations together to foster change in skills, behaviour, and attitudes</li></ul>
<b>Intergenerational practice happens in a range of formal and informal spaces:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Schools and educational institutions</li><li>• Voluntary and community groups</li><li>• Indigenous communities</li><li>• Local government</li><li>• Sporting clubs</li><li>• Churches, ethnic and cultural development groups</li></ul>

## THE CASE STUDIES

The research team carried out detailed case study research on four Australian projects. These included: the Bankstown Oral History Project in the inner western suburbs of Sydney, the ‘Radio Holiday’ Project run by Big hART in rural and remote Tasmania, the School Volunteer Program based in Perth, and the Yiriman Project based in the Kimberley region of Western Australia.

The Bankstown Oral History Project, implemented by the Bankstown Youth Development Service (BYDS) has involved three separate oral history projects in Bankstown since 1990. In each project, high school students interviewed people from other generations, most of whom they had never met before. Students were recruited from local schools, and trained in interview and transcription skills. Individual students or pairs of students were matched to a local person, and conducted an interview that touched on different aspects of the person’s life. The stories were written up by the students and published by BYDS. Each publication was then launched at a public function, which was attended by participants, other community members and visitors. The project made a valuable contribution to community building in a variety of ways. These included the interaction between students when preparing for interviews, the engagement between community members of different generations through the interviews, the breaking down of stereotypes, new and renewed contact between neighbours and family members, and the sharing of the stories of participants in publications, theatre and community functions.

In the ‘Radio Holiday’ project, delivered by Big hART, young people have been recruited to inquire into the disappearing ‘shack communities’ of the north-west and western coast of Tasmania. Young people were recruited through schools, community colleges and youth centres. These young people were trained and mentored in interview skills, use of recording equipment and art-based processes in order to collect the stories of older community members in these remote communities. These stories and locations were used as a basis for the development of performance, film, visual art, and a series of radio plays that were then broadcast through ABC radio. In addition, a performance tour of this stage of the project was developed that was performed for the benefit of the shack communities involved and for the ‘Ten days on the Island’ festival. The benefits of the project include capacity building within communities to design and develop future projects that address relevant community issues, opportunities for young people to experiment with different modes of learning, the development of intergenerational understanding between older and younger Tasmanians, and mentoring this particular demographic of young people to develop technical, personal and social skills.

The Yiriman Project started out because Aboriginal elders in the West Kimberley were worrying for their young people. Following long established traditions, they set up an organisation that would help take young people, elders and other members of the community on trips to country. The destination and major activities planned for the trips are the product of a complex set of decisions that reflect a number of contingencies including: who is available to travel, weather conditions, the needs of young people being chosen to participate, local community events, when a place was last visited, the needs of country (e.g. fire management and burning needs) and whether there are opportunities to travel with other groups. Of critical importance at this stage is the direction of the senior people or ‘bosses’ who identify where and when to travel, who should go and the activities to be undertaken. Yiriman arranges its trips to coincide with large cultural events and meetings, and to build in training and development opportunities, and to work together with other organisations. These ‘trips on country’ become a means through which young people share time with their community, build respect for elders, maintain culture and language, learn to care for land, stay healthy and start to take a stake in their future.

The School Volunteer Program Inc. is a non-profit organisation that aims to promote intergenerational exchange between school age young people, from kindergarten to Year 12, and volunteer mentors, who are mainly seniors or retired citizens. The core program involves volunteer mentors interacting with students on a one-on-one basis for at least one school term (ten weeks). Other programs run by SVP include an attendance monitoring program and computer learning program linking students and older people. Over time, the role of volunteer mentors was adapted, with mentors who had originally focused on tutoring in the area of academic difficulties, beginning to support children more broadly in relation to issues such as self-esteem and life skills. The school mentoring program has utilised the abilities of thousands of senior and retired people to guide an equal number of students identified as at-risk of coping with the demands of school.

## ILLUMINATION FROM THE RESEARCH

The key features of successful programs identified through an examination of the focus groups, interviews and case studies are summarised in the following table.

**Table 2: Key features of successful programs**

<b>Opportunities for the development of relationships</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appropriate time for development of relationships and breaking down stereotypical views</li><li>• Activity as a vehicle for relationship development</li><li>• Attention to the nature and quality of relationships, e.g. non-judgemental</li><li>• Development of reciprocity</li></ul>
<b>Availability of a range of support</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Organisational support</li><li>• Broad community support</li></ul>
<b>Opportunities to do a range of things together</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Help break the ice</li><li>• Create a sense of the capabilities of each participant</li><li>• Engage in practical and physical activities</li></ul>
<b>Take account of program specific issues</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide activities relevant to groups who may be reluctant to participate (e.g. males)</li><li>• Explore ways for constraints to open up creative possibilities (e.g. language differences)</li><li>• Awareness that gender and culture may shape the way leadership roles and social relationships are formed</li></ul>

The research also established that the gender and cultural background of participants may enhance or constrain the development of relationships. As noted in the preceding table, awareness of and utilisation of gender and cultural differences can enhance intergenerational exchange and the understanding of each other and learning that can develop.

A number of challenges to those attempting to build successful intergenerational exchange were also identified. The following table represents the research findings in this regard.

**Table 3: Challenges facing intergenerational practice**

<b>Stereotyping and ‘othering’ of the old and young</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ingrained stereotypical views</li> <li>• Insufficient time and opportunity to move beyond ingrained stereotypical views</li> </ul>
<b>Social, personal, historical and economic circumstances</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effects of poverty and experiences of older family members</li> <li>• Multiple disadvantage</li> <li>• Social policy that further constrains activity</li> </ul>
<b>Language differences</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differences in the language of cultural groups</li> <li>• Differences in language use of young and old</li> <li>• Differences in language use of policy makers and participants</li> </ul>
<b>‘Risk management’ culture</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intergenerational exchange involves interaction of groups who may be at risk of each other</li> <li>• Imposed constraints may severely restrict the kinds of activities and levels of engagement</li> </ul>
<b>Specific operational problems (may be specific to a program and shaped by local conditions)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliance on too few people</li> <li>• Initial low levels of confidence and competence of participants</li> <li>• Demands of communicating with and understanding different age groups</li> <li>• Rigid institutional conventions (e.g. school timetables)</li> <li>• Recruiting appropriate participants and maintaining involvement</li> <li>• Tension between the process of relationship building and the expected outcome/product of the activity</li> </ul>
<b>Limits in some ideas about intergenerational exchange</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notions of intergenerational exchange as a panacea for a diverse set of social problems</li> <li>• Acceptance of the inherent value of bringing together different generations</li> <li>* Focus on changing individuals without necessarily changing social systems</li> </ul>

The research examined the benefits of intergenerational exchange and established that the following benefits accrue:

- people spend time with each other, break down barriers and develop new understandings of each other;
- people share experiences and get to build their community;
- people learn about history and build stories in young people;
- Young people are diverted away from trouble;
- people become healthier, more motivated and more resilient, and engage in important 'identity' work;
- People get to work on practical activities that take care of or develop something important to the community;
- people have fun and enjoy themselves; and
- people build very concrete and often highly specialised skills, find work and were given career opportunities.

Analyses of all the available evidence established that there are a number of different ways of thinking about how practitioners can encourage effective intergenerational exchange. The full report presents a more detailed discussion of some of these models and their limits. In addition, the research established a series of metaphors taken from the case studies that help understand 'best practice'.

In particular, the research establishes that effective intergenerational practice prompts outcomes that are a little like the act of burning a bush fire, the act of walking, the act of caravanning and the act of throwing a pebble into the still waters of a pond. At one and the same time, intergenerational exchange is like the metaphor of the bush fire that creates a mosaic of growth and regeneration. It creates the conditions that can help clean up, heal and restore the state of community relationships as well as cultivate the seeds of growth. Similarly, effective intergenerational exchange can provide an enormous stimulant for communities to 'take steps' or 'go along together', like the act of walking which sets in motion a great many things including learning, talking, socialising, working and exercising. Likewise, good intergenerational exchange is a little like caravanning with participants enjoying both the safety and intimacy of living in close proximity to others at the same time as the chance to meet and build contacts. In a similar fashion, intergenerational exchange encourages the building of bridging networks similar to the process of 'surfing' cyberspace a little like those who enter the virtual community of the internet with its liminal and temporal spaces that immediately extend social networks. Finally, the benefits and consequences of intergenerational exchange could be likened to



the impact produced when one drops a rock in a pond producing a ripple effect that extends well beyond the original encounter and participants.

Finally, the research found general evidence that the most effective intergenerational exchange programs are those that combine opportunities for and support both bonding and bridging forms of social capital. Like other work concerned with the conditions that build resilience in young people, this research established that intergenerational exchange helps encourage strong and substantive bonds between individuals. These kinds of connections give rise to people's ability to feel secure, confident and able to 'bounce back'. At the same time, the research established that intergenerational exchange, particularly where it occurs within the context of community associations, encourages those involved to build elaborate networks of interconnection. These social connections may well be thinner but are particularly important in creating the loose ties necessary to negotiate the complex web of social relations in contemporary Australia. In addition, the effect of creating these loose ties have far reaching and unintended consequences well beyond the control and imagination of those who carry out such work.

CHAPTER ONE:

# INTRODUCTION

---

Initiatives designed to support young people's engagement, participation and civic involvement with community have grown in popularity in Australia over the past decade. This is coincident with an increased emphasis on communitarian aspirations such as building community, promoting civics and encouraging social capital (Bessant, 1997; Botsman & Latham, 2001; Brennan, 1998; Harris, 1999). In this new policy environment, young people's social problems, issues and needs are largely seen as a reflection of their declining levels of inclusion in civic life, a loss in community, a failure on the part of local associations to encourage social cohesion at the local level and a growing distance between the generations. According to those advancing this style of social policy, something has gone awfully wrong with the social fabric, community participation is dropping and different generations are becoming cut off from each other. The answer is often seen to be in interventions that develop social capital, build community capacity, encourage partnerships, support community enterprise, and strengthen democratic and civic participation. Precisely what this means, or how it might be achieved in youth practice settings, is not clear.

Intergenerational practice has emerged as one general approach that may help put substance to aspirations for bringing young people into closer contact with others in their community. Although as yet not a significant part of the Australian policy landscape, the field of intergenerational practice has gained considerable support in the United States and is growing rapidly in Europe.

## THE PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The ‘Community Building through Intergenerational Exchange Programs’ research project was commissioned by the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme (NYARS) to explore the concept of intergenerational exchange as a vehicle for community building in the Australian context. Program development based on the notion of intergenerational exchange has been identified as having potential to support a number of the key priorities of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). These include the active participation of young people in economic and social life, and the promotion of positive achievements and image of young people in the context of intergenerational activities. Thus, the research involved the identification and examination of theoretical, policy and program concepts relevant to the development of intergenerational exchange in Australia.

The specific objectives of the project were to:

- identify a definition of intergenerational programs and relevant associated concepts, briefly exploring each element, particularly as they relate to current approaches to working with young people, in both a policy and program context;
- identify the benefits of intergenerational programs to both the individuals involved and the broader community;
- explore the difficulties that may have arisen in the implementation of intergenerational programs and how these factors may impact on program delivery;
- explore how factors such as gender and/or cultural background may enhance the exchange between generations, particularly Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse communities;
- identify, analyse and discuss the factors that constitute good practice intergenerational program model[s]; and
- explore the relationship between intergenerational programs and the potential to foster and develop resilience, enhance social connection and interactions and build both individual and community capacity.

In short, this research explores youth programs designed to increase engagement between young people and others in their communities. Figure 1 gives a brief conceptual overview of the initial assumptions of the research.

## Stakeholders

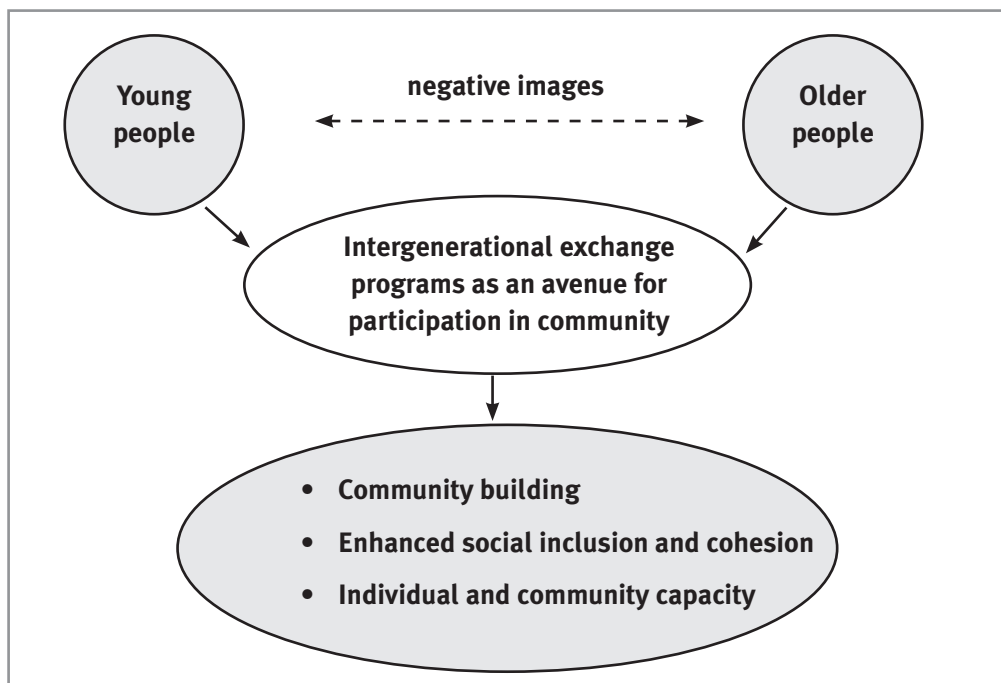
There are a number of different groups who will benefit from this research. As well as the formal policy stakeholders (MCEETYA Ministers; Australian, State, Territory and Local Government agencies; and community and government youth services), the research will inform and encourage those developing policy and programs related to young people and the aged, those concerned with ways to enhance social inclusion and community participation, as well as participants in the burgeoning field of intergenerational exchange.

## METHODOLOGY

### Methodological issues

Four important issues needed to be addressed in devising the methodology for this project: what constitutes an intergenerational exchange program and what generations can be counted as participants and in what contexts; how to achieve access and equity in generating data in the research; how to engage participants in the research, especially the target groups of young people and older people; and how to develop appropriate model[s] of good practice that take account of the variety and uniqueness of different programs and the diverse groups of people involved.

**Figure 1: Brief conceptual overview**



## **Definitions of intergenerational programs**

There are many activities or programs that could be classified as intergenerational or multigenerational exchange programs. One issue relates to the definition of ‘program’ for the purposes of this research, while another relates to the characteristics of participants and the nature and outcomes of the activities. For the purpose of this research, the focus is on activities that operate within organised programs rather than informal activities in which different generations participate as part of their daily lives.

There is some conjecture as to which generations are recognised as participants, or whether or not activities involving members of the one family should be included. Some of these issues relate to the origins of the programs. For example, programs designed to enhance positive ageing, usually assume the older participants are over 60 years of age (Granville & Ellis, 1999), and programs aimed at developing family cohesion, focus on different generations within family groups (deVaus & Qu, 1997). Those programs based in schools and other educational institutions generally have a wider view of intergenerational activities that encompasses families and members of the community of all ages.

Although intergenerational programs may involve children and young people as the younger generation, this research, as part of the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme, focuses on young people 12–25 years of age. The characteristics of the ‘other’ generation are explored as part of this research together with discussion of the various definitions of intergenerational exchange.

## **Ethical issues in research**

The project needed to be mindful of the ethical issues involved in any research that involves people, such as the privacy and dignity of participants, and the confidentiality and anonymity of data generated. Murdoch University Human Ethics Research Committee administers strict guidelines that include gaining informed consent from all participants, working through issues of privacy, confidentiality, anonymity and potential disadvantage or harm to the participants. These guidelines are in concert with the NYARS Code of Ethics.

Particular issues of access and equity arise in a number of ways in this project. For example, methodological procedures were needed to ensure the inclusion of programs in remote and rural locations, and programs inclusive of young people from a range of racial, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. This was important at all stages of the research, from the initial identification of policy and program concepts, and expert informants, to the selection of programs for in-depth study. Sensitivity was also needed in approaching young people for their perspectives.

### **Participatory techniques to engage participation of young people**

Studying youth participation in intergenerational initiatives is also a challenge, because it can be difficult to engage young people in meaningful ways in the research process. Young people may have difficulty understanding what it is that researchers are after or the relevance of the research. They may also have trouble articulating their experiences or engaging in research exchanges that are dominated by ‘talk’ or discussions (Bessant, Sercombe & Watts, 1998). Techniques needed to be developed that enabled young people to participate in the research. In some ways this research process resembled the intergenerational exchange we were researching.

### **Good or best practice models**

Another issue is the means of determining what constitutes ‘good’ or ‘best’ practice in intergenerational programs in terms of achieving outcomes for young people that meet the policy priorities. The research needed to take account of the range of programs identified, particular issues raised in the review of literature, the viewpoint of both young people and older people situated in different positions in programs (e.g. designer/developer, coordinator, participant), and the different components of programs of this nature (e.g. resources, processes and outcomes).

## **Research plan**

To achieve the research objectives, a combination of qualitative methodologies was employed. The process of inquiry involved five components:

- consultation with NYARS Research Manager, and obtaining ethics clearance;
- review of the international literature related to intergenerational exchange programs;
- consultation with experts, including young people and older people through focus groups and in-depth interviews;
- field visits to selected sites; and
- data analyses and writing.

Several of these components, such as the literature review, consultation and data analyses, were returned to periodically to enhance the reflective and analytical research process. In addition, multiple research components informed each research question, as shown in Table A in the Appendix.

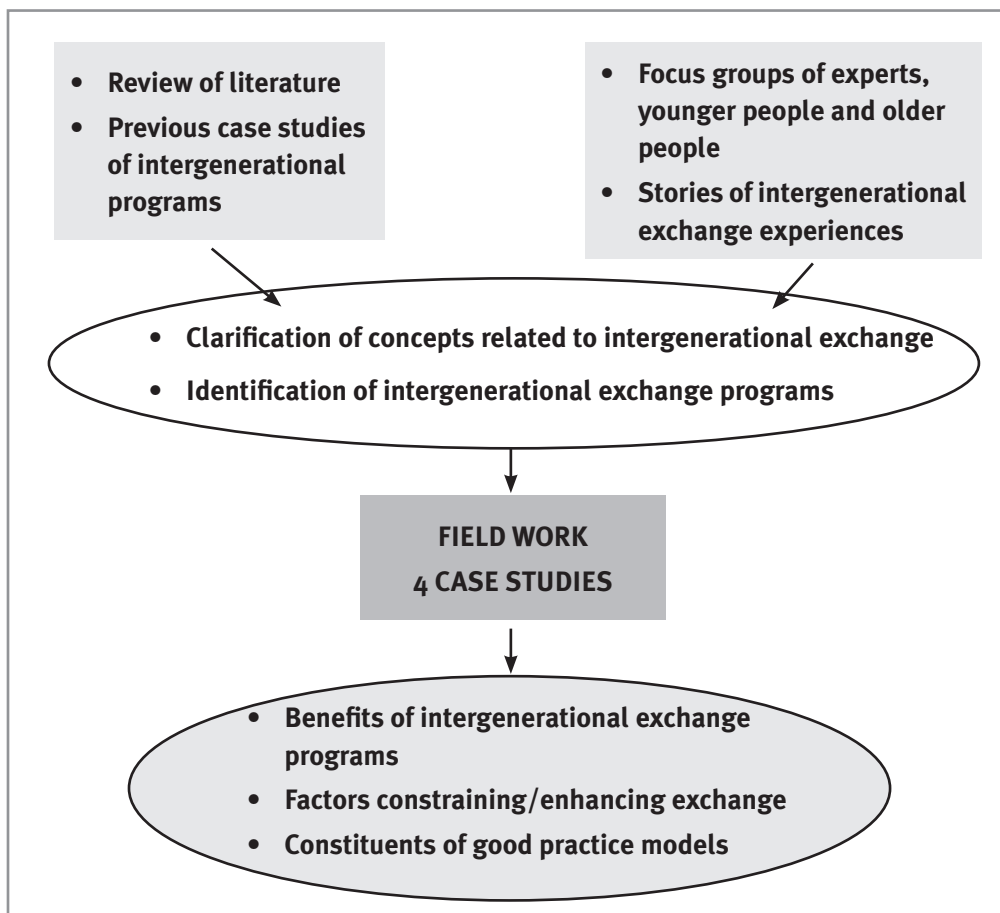
## Consultation and ethics

The Murdoch Research Team consulted with the NYARS Committee through the NYARS Research Manager at relevant points in the research project to gain feedback on the processes and outcomes of the research. After the initial consultation, ethics approval was obtained from Murdoch University's Human Ethics Committee.

## Literature review

The review of literature aimed to identify issues for consideration, identify and gather information about intergenerational exchange concepts and programs, and research findings related to the outcomes of these programs, especially in relation to community building. Journals, research reports, websites, youth research and email lists, and other relevant sources of information on intergenerational concepts and programs were accessed for this purpose.

**Figure 2: Overview of research plan**



### **Consultation with experts**

In order to obtain the perspectives of experts, practitioners and young people, focus groups were organised. Expert focus groups have been used by social researchers to gain access to knowledge and experience about matters that may not be available to the novice or take considerable time for individuals to gain. Experts are selected precisely because they are familiar with the research topic and have a depth of knowledge others may not possess (Sercombe, Omaji, Drew, Cooper & Love, 2002). A purposive sampling technique, often referred to as snowballing, was used to identify these experts. The technique of snowballing is designed to uncover a broad range of experts in a particular field, especially those who cut across various sub-groups. The snowball began with a diverse group of original informants (from key national and state groups, young people and independent academics), who were each asked to name five people they consider to be experts in the field, then each of the named people invited to name five people, continuing the snowballing until several hundred names had been generated. From these names those people, who had been named frequently and were from a range of sectors, were selected as experts. See the Appendix for details of the expert focus groups and interviews.

The inquiry process focused around four basic areas of interest: (1) What is intergenerational exchange? (2) Why do it? (3) What are the ingredients for success? (4) What are the barriers to success? These four broad areas were then elaborated with subsequent sub-questions drawing on the literature review and the research plan, and building on preceding focus groups and interviews. Mindful of the focus on elaborating and further understanding intergenerational exchange in an Australian context, these questions were framed to draw explicitly on the voices and lived experience of the members of the expert focus groups, hence using Australian experience to inform and contextualise this inquiry.

### **Preliminary data analysis**

The data from the literature review and focus groups were analysed in order to clarify the concepts related to intergenerational exchange, to identify gaps in the data and to identify possible program types for fieldwork.

### **Field work**

Drawing on this analysis, the consultation and discussion process, and the research team's knowledge of programs, four research sites were selected. These formed the basis for in-depth case studies of four programs across three Australian states, Western Australia, New South Wales and Tasmania. The fieldwork was based on a transactional model, that assumes the importance of understanding people and programs in context through data gathered in direct contact with the program and



its participants (Patton, 2002). Limited ethnographic study of these four sites also allowed the research team to gain a richer and more detailed understanding of the complexity of intergenerational practice as it occurs in a natural environment. The purpose of the field visits was to encourage narratives of intergenerational participation and to explore why particular initiatives work or do not work. It also allowed the team to extend their consultations beyond the experts, further strengthening the research methodology.

A range of people associated with each program were asked to participate in the case study allowing information to be gathered from different perspectives. These people included the developer/designer(s), coordinator, sponsor, and young people and older people who have been, or are currently participating in the program. As the programs and the people associated with them would differ, advice was sought from the coordinator of each program. At this point, issues of confidentiality and methods of data collection were raised and negotiated. Different methods (such as individual face-to-face interviews, focus group interviews, telephone interviews, participant observation, personal stories on tape or depicted in a creative form) helped the team build a detailed understanding of the programs in action.

As the views of the young people and older people are crucial to the study, every effort was made to successfully negotiate ways of assisting them to participate in the research. Questions asked of the participants focused around five broad areas:

- How did you come to participate?
- How did you benefit from participation?
- What changes came from your participation?
- What difficulties or challenges have you encountered?
- What improvements could be made?

These questions were adapted to guide interviews and data collection at each site.

## Data analyses and writing

Analyses of the data from the literature review, focus groups and case studies focused on identifying themes, perspectives of different informants, and the commonalities and differences associated with them.

Detailed analyses of the case study data further enabled the key features of good practice in intergenerational exchange programs to be enunciated and critiqued. In addition, the research team interrogated the relationships between the identified good practice model(s) and the potential of each to understand, foster and develop community building. In particular, the relationship to key concepts such as resilience, social connection and cohesion, community and individual capacity were examined.

## Structure of the report

The report is structured to reflect the research objectives. Chapter Two offers a background to the study of intergenerational practice, principally by reviewing the international literature. It offers a preliminary discussion by examining research concerned with definitions of intergenerational exchange, its perceived effects, ingredients for successful practice, barriers confronting practitioners, the impact of factors such as gender and cultural background, and the relationship between community building and this kind of work with young people. This is followed by a description of the case studies in Chapter Three. This serves to help the reader get a more detailed sense of the kinds of projects that have come to be described as intergenerational exchange. Chapter Four then turns our attention to the insights gained from the primary research. Based on interviews undertaken, focus group discussion and detailed case study field work, this chapter examines how people conceptualise intergenerational exchange, how they plan to implement it successfully, the impact of such things as gender and culture, and the range of challenges confronting those who seek to encourage contact between the young and other generations. Again drawing on the primary research, Chapter Five provides an analysis of the many and varied outcomes that emerge from this kind of work. In this way, the chapter provides an elaborate discussion of the potential benefits of intergenerational exchange. Chapter Six provides an overview of the key themes that have emerged from the study. In particular, this chapter examines how we might better think about the practice of intergenerational exchange, and proposes a series of metaphors drawn from the four case studies. Finally, Chapter Seven summarises the main findings of the study and explores the relationship of intergenerational exchange to community building.

CHAPTER TWO:

# LITERATURE REVIEW

---

## INTRODUCTION

Intergenerational practice has emerged as one general approach that may help give substance to aspirations for bringing young people into closer contact with others in their community. Over the past ten years a great deal of literature has emerged to discuss this kind of practice. Before examining the primary research undertaken by the research team, it is first important to review this literature.

There are a number of reasons for taking account of the literature concerned with intergenerational practice. The first and most obvious is that contained in this work are important ideas, details and empirical data that are relevant to the intergenerational practice in Australia. Secondly, a review of the literature prior to carrying out research in the Australian context establishes the extent to which practice has been shaped by work elsewhere. Finally, lessons learnt from elsewhere may as yet go unnoticed by Australian practitioners.

What follows is a discussion of mostly scholarly or published material concerned with: (1) the context shaping the emergence of these kind of programs, (2) defining intergenerational practice, (3) the benefits of carrying out the work, and (4) the impact of factors such as gender and cultural background.

## THE CONTEXT

According to much of the literature concerned with intergenerational practice, there have been a number of important social and economic shifts that have led to decreasing

levels of contact between generations. Economically, Australia has experienced considerable change over the past thirty years with industry restructuring, globalisation of fiscal control and declines in the agricultural sector leading to high youth unemployment, reforms in work practices and uncertainty with job security. This has often been associated with increases in the incidence of social problems such as youth homelessness, suicide, criminal behaviour and drug use. Socially, the structure and form of families has changed with more children being born into single parent families, experiencing separation and poverty (see Bessant et al., 1998). Typically, many suggest this erodes traditional family values and opportunities for young people to interact with older role models. Concomitant with this has been the perception that 'community' and civic participation has broken down, with some commentators, such as Putnam (2000), suggesting the demise of voluntary association, reciprocity and trust.

At the same time, there is considerable evidence that many communities are becoming increasingly age-segregated with older groups, families, young people and children moving away from living in close proximity (Arfin 2004a). Children and young people attend age segregated schools, adults are spending less time with young people in a work environment, and seniors are increasingly moving to housing settings where there are only other seniors as neighbours (Senior Services, 2004).

For example, Hamburg Coplan (2004) claims there are 156 age-restricted communities on Long Island in the United States with many more proposed for construction. Data cited by Arfin (2004a), indicate that of the 627, 000 people living in Long Island in 2000, 87,000 were residents in housing developments that require people be over the age of 55. In addition, 8,000 lived in adult assisted living arrangements and 16,000 lived in nursing homes. This meant that in 2000 one out of five Long Islanders older than 55 lived in communities that restrict children, young people and families. At the same time, the numbers of young people are on the decline in these kinds of areas with Long Island recording the population of 20–35 year olds decreasing at five times the national average (Arfin 2004b).

Granville (2002, p. 3) paints a similar picture of the situation in the United Kingdom. She says that in 1996 there were 9.25 million people in Britain over the age of 65, with a projected increase to 12 million by 2021. By the middle of this century, the number of people over the age of 75 will have doubled. During the same period, the number of young people will steadily fall with projections that generations will quickly fall out of contact.

This pattern of residential segregation has become a cause of concern. According to Arfin (2004a), it is leading to a range of social outcomes that are unhealthy. These include competition for scarce public resources, self interest, stereotyping, the creation of environments that are breeding fear and discrimination based on age, some social anxiety and the loss of significant social and intellectual resources for

younger people. It is also leading to a spiralling of age segregation, with the cost of housing and living expenses in exclusive age communities making it increasingly difficult for families and young people to afford to live in them (Arfin, 2004b). In addition, communities where age segregation is growing are finding it difficult to recruit young workers and build service industries for the aging (Arfin, 2004b).

According to this literature, the effect of these social and economic changes has seen increasing numbers of young people growing up disaffected from their communities. Young people, marginalised from older adults, traditional social institutions and the labour market, are wearing the burden heavily. At the same time, older people are increasingly becoming alienated from their families, often locked away from involvement in public life as a consequence of feeling at risk of becoming victims of violence, crime and exploitation (Kaplan, Henkin & Kusano, 2002; Newman, Ward, Smith, Wilson & McCrea, 1997).

## DEFINING INTERGENERATIONAL PRACTICE

The notion of intergenerational practice is not well established in Australia. To understand what it might mean, consideration is given to literature from the United States, where the idea tends to have considerably more resonance than it does in this country.

According to the International Consortium for Intergenerational Programs (established in 1999) Intergenerational practice is best understood as “social vehicles that create purposeful and ongoing exchange of resources and learning among older and younger generations” (Kaplan et al., 2002, p. xi). In a similar fashion, the (US) National Council on Aging (NCA) describe intergenerational programs as those interventions that aim to “increase cooperation, interaction, or exchange between any two generations” through the “sharing of skills, knowledge, or experience between old and young” (National Council on Aging, cited in Duggar, 1993, p. 5). Likewise, Angelis (1992) defines intergenerational programs as “activities that bring old and young together for their mutual benefit” (cited in Barton, 1999, p. 625). Some kind of exchange between younger and older generations is thus expected as part of the programs, although the word ‘exchange’ is not used in the overarching term.

Like much of the work on intergenerational practice, these definitions tends to concentrate on programs that occur between the ‘old’ and ‘young’, with little scope for including those who are aged in between. According to Abrams and Giles (1999), ‘the field in general tends to combine all interactions which take place between someone over 55 years of age with someone younger than 18 years and labels them ‘intergenerational contact’, typically in the context of a community based, organised program’ (p. 209). Consequently, intergenerational programs are not normally seen to involve the ‘middle’ generation, even though relationships involving this age group with other age groups technically are ‘intergenerational’ by definition (O’Sullivan, 2002, p. 33)

Some scholars define intergenerational programs in a way that intentionally excludes family relationships. For example, Newman et al. (1997) define intergenerational programs as being “designed to engage non-biologically linked older and younger persons in *interactions* that encourage cross-generational bonding, promote cultural exchange, and provide positive support systems that help to maintain the well-being and security of the older and younger generations” (p. 56).

As Newman et al.’s definition also indicates, many intergenerational programs emphasise interaction rather than mere influence. Indeed, a key element in most definitions of intergenerational programs is that they involve face-to-face interaction between young and old. Ekstrom, Ingman & Benjamin (1999) point out that programs that promote intergenerational awareness, such as sustainable development initiatives that “protect the environment on behalf of future generations”, are considered by some researchers as intergenerational (e.g. Ingman, Benjamin & Lusky, 1999), but that: “For many purists, the concept implies that ‘interaction’ needs to occur between children and older adults in order to be truly intergenerational” (Ekstrom et al., 1999, p. 616).

Interaction can occur in a number of ways, as Whitehouse, Bendezu, FallCreek & Whitehouse’s (2000, p. 768) four types of intergenerational practice demonstrate. These don’t necessarily involve ‘exchange’. The first type involves organisations arranging activities for the young and old in the same premises, the second type involves partial interaction in programs with a small level of contact, the third type involves young and old forming working groups or pairing off, and the fourth type of interaction involves the young and old creating a mutual learning and/or work environment where outcomes are negotiated and shared. Manheimer (1997, p. 81) focuses on the direction of interaction and suggests programs range from a human services model of ‘doing for’ to a community development model of ‘learning with’. ‘Doing for’ programs involve young people undertaking service related activities for older people, whereas ‘Learning with’ programs involve young people collaborating with, or being instructed by, older people in educational or artistic endeavours. Although these categorisations may be useful in understanding the focus of programs and potential benefits, Kaplan’s (2004) suggestion to focus on the “depth of intergenerational engagement” may be more fruitful.

In particular, intergenerational programs attempt to reduce many of the physical and social barriers between seniors, children and young people. As Granville (2002) puts it, intergenerational practice brings together “two generations who have become separated from each other through changes in social structures, and enable the strengths of each age group to enhance the life experiences of the other” (p. 24).

Many definitions of intergenerational programs involve an identification of a specific objective or outcome as intrinsic to the work. For example, Chapman and Neal (1990) define intergenerational programs as “organised activities to bring together two

generations for the purpose of attitude change”. Attitude change, however, is only one of several objectives that tend to be addressed by intergenerational programs, and hence should not be seen as intrinsic to a minimalist definition.

Behind these aspirations for bringing differing age groups together is often a keenness for groups to resolve conflict and tension in local community settings (Granville 2002, p. 24). In most instances, those advocating intergenerational practice see it as a way to encourage meaningful and productive ‘engagement’ between the young and old in order to improve and enhance the quality of life for the young, old and general community. Or as Kaplan (2001) puts it, the consistent theme articulated is that “we are better off—as individuals and as a society—when open lines of communication, caring and support exist between the generations” (p. 2). Critical in this regard is also finding mutual spaces where the young and old can feel safe and comfortable in each other’s company.

Although the focus of intergenerational work is on bringing together the old and young, there are many different settings in which this can be done (Rideout, 2003). For example, intergenerational practice seems to have become a popular tool for schools and other educational institutions, voluntary and community groups, groups dealing with social problems, local government instrumentalities, sports clubs, churches and ethnic and cultural development groups (Kaplan, 2001, p. 1). Each of these particular settings shapes the level of interaction, the outcomes sought, the language and discursive emphasis and methods taken on. For example, much intergenerational practice in educational settings is concerned with school retention and encouraging students to build an ethic of ‘life-long-learning’. Intergenerational contact in some church, religious institutions and ethnic associations can focus on the inculcation and maintenance of traditional values and moral principles. Many community organisations celebrate intergenerational practice because of the intrinsic value in service to others and building connections between old and young. In settings where employment or economic improvement are important, the emphasis of intergenerational practice is often more on skills development and instilling competitive advantage and personal enterprise in the young.

Characteristic of much of the literature is an emphasis on settings outside institutions for the aged (Fox & Giles, 1993). Among such settings are schools and school classrooms (Brabazon, 1999; Couper, Sheehan & Thomas, 1991; Hatfield, 1984; MacCallum & Beltman, 1999), college and university campuses (Goff, 2004; Krout & Pogorzala, 2002), mental health centres (Griff, 1999) and community service programs (Taylor, LoSciuto, Fox, Hilbert & Sonkowsky, 1999). Some of the literature explores means of interaction involving art (Alexenberg & Benjamin, 2004; Keller, 1990), drama (Perlstein, 1998/99), literary composition (Kazemek & Logas, 2000), letter writing (Kiernan, 2002) and book discussion groups (Lohman, Griffiths, Coppard & Cota, 2003).

Table 4 summarises the key elements of intergenerational practice that have been identified through the review of literature. They elaborate the what, how, why and where of intergenerational practice.

**Table 4: Key elements of definitions relating to intergenerational practice**

<b>Intergenerational practice involves exchange between generations:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purposeful and ongoing exchange of resources and ideas</li> <li>• Increasing co-operation or exchange between two generations</li> <li>• Bringing younger and older people together for mutual benefit</li> <li>• Definitions often focus on exchange between those over 55 and under 18, with little scope for involvement of others</li> </ul>
<b>Intergenerational practice involves engagement at a range of levels:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The concept implies interaction, not just awareness</li> <li>• Levels of interaction can include sharing premises and partial interaction up to mutual learning with negotiated and shared outcomes.</li> <li>• A continuum of engagement can move from ‘doing for’ to ‘learning with’</li> </ul>
<b>Intergenerational practice has a range of intended outcomes:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harnessing the strengths of each age group to enhance the life experiences of the other.</li> <li>• A keenness to resolve conflict and tension in community settings</li> <li>• Bringing two generations together to foster attitudinal change</li> </ul>
<b>Intergenerational practice happens in a variety of settings:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools and educational institutions</li> <li>• Voluntary and community groups</li> <li>• Local government</li> <li>• Sporting clubs</li> <li>• Churches, ethnic and cultural development groups</li> </ul>



## THE BENEFITS OF INTERGENERATIONAL PRACTICE AND BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY

Many studies in the intergenerational field begin by asserting that the world faces a challenge with the dramatic increase in the number of older people as the lifespan is extended (Anderson, 1999; Bales, Eklund & Siffin, 2000; Barton, 1999; Feldman, Mahoney & Seedsman, 2001; Hanks & Icenogle, 2001; Osborne & Bullock, 2000; Paton, Sar & Barber, 2001; Schwalbach & Kiernan, 2002; Uhlenburg, 2000). One outcome of the extension of the lifespan is a dramatic increase in services for older people. According to some, this can lead to increasing competition over resources, as funding for services for older people drains the resources available for other sections of the population, thereby increasing intergenerational tensions (Knapp & Stubblefield, 2000). Lester Thurow states: “in the years ahead, class warfare is apt to be redefined as the young against the old, rather than the poor against the rich” (quoted in Foner, 2000, p.272). Others see a different problem—the increasing number of services for older people means that increasing numbers of young people are needed to fulfil roles in these services. Increasing public understanding of older people—particularly among the next generation of service workers—is therefore essential to fulfilling these roles.

Decreasing levels of contact between young and older people and the perpetuation of unfavourable stereotypes of older people threaten community capacity to deal with these challenges. Lack of opportunities for intergenerational contact in families—with roles for grandparents becoming limited (Bales et al., 2000; Strom & Strom, 2000), increasing numbers of single parent families (Lohman et al., 2003), geographical separation between grandchildren from their grandparents (Bales et al., 2000; Hamilton et al., 1999)—together with increasingly age-segregated social institutions (Corbin, 1998; Newman, Morris & Streetman, 1999; Uhlenburg, 2000), and social policies (Weill & Rother, 1998/99) are the principal factors blamed. Increasing generational differences in values and roles brought about by rapid social change (Feldman et al., 2001) means that the gulf between the youngest and oldest generations is wider than ever.

According to Ekstrom et al. (1999): “Intergenerational involvement emerges from the notion that industrial society has undercut or undermined the natural relationships between young and old” (p. 616). Some see these developments as the basis for increasing ‘ageist’ views among young people. Butler and Lewis define ageism (a term coined by Butler, 1969) as “a systematic stereotyping of and discrimination against people because they are old” (1982, p. xvii). Others see the basis of ageist views being principally driven by the media (Fillmer, 1984) or cultural processes (Langer, 1999; Thornton, 2002). According to Schwalbach & Kiernan: “A main goal

of intergenerational programming is to reunite the young with the old in an effort to dispel negative myths” (2002, p. 177).

Yet others blame a series of personal and social problems on the distance between generations. For example, it has become popular to argue that age segregation can bring on or accentuate depression felt by older adults. Indeed, some even suggest that, “together with an illness, the loss of a driver’s license or separation from loved ones, age segregation may contribute to vulnerability to suicide” (Hamburg Coplan, 2004, p. 1).

Common to most intergenerational programs, then, is the notion that lack of engagement between young people and older people constitutes some kind of problem, whether in terms of an individual’s personal development, or in terms of the successful functioning of society at large. There is, it should be noted, little empirical support for either of these views, and it is true to say that such problems have been presumed rather than investigated as research matters in themselves. Indeed, some critics have made the point that intergenerational differences are not, in themselves, necessarily problematic (Hendricks, 1996), nor are they the basis of any intergenerational warfare (Luna & Riemer, 1998–99).

Those advocating intergenerational practice see it as one means to combat these problems, and claim that there can be a series of benefits to the community. Traditionally, older members of the community pass on knowledge and wisdom in relation to such things as parenting methods, business sense, history and corporate and community memory. According to people like Arfin (2004b), the young in turn transmit hope, energy, and innovation and tend to take more risks and create enthusiasm.

Many studies emphasise the positive effect that intergenerational programs have on the lives of young people (Barton, 1999; Waggoner, 1995). Others emphasise mutual benefits to both young and old people (Aday, Sims & Evans, 1991; Angelis, 1992; Chapman & Neal, 1990; Cherry, Benest, Gates & White, 1985; Couper et al., 1991; Doka, 1986; Elder, 1987; Haber & Short-DeGraf, 1990; Hatfield, 1984; Hutchinson & Bondy, 1990; Keller, 1990; Peacock & Talley, 1984; Perlstein & Bliss, 1994; Peterson, 1986; Waggoner, 1995). In some of these programs, older people are less recipients of service provision, and more “mentors, tutors, caregivers, nurturers, friends, and coaches” (Uhlenburg, 2000). However, as psychologist Erik Erikson emphasises, involvement in intergenerational work and other elements of community life can be a “welcome source of vital involvement and exhilaration. When young people are also involved, the change in the mood of elders can be unmistakably vitalising” (Erikson, Erikson & Kivnik, 1986, p. 318).

American research indicates that intergenerational programs can offer older adults validation for their knowledge and contribution, practical assistance from younger

people they have been working with, help with such things as shopping and transport, and relief from a sense of isolation and the subsequent depression that follows (Hamburg Coplan, 2004, p. 2).

It is also claimed that building close relationships between the old and the young can protect older people from some of the stresses that come with ageing. For example Kell and Kahn, Wren, Marx and Rogers, and Taylor (all cited in *Intergenerational Strategies*, 2004), argue that forming connections with young people can help older people better deal with mental and physical illnesses such as arthritis and depression, isolation, boredom and loneliness. Helping young people also is reported to increase older adults' sense of self worth and of being needed and valued.

Furthermore, involvement in intergenerational work is purported to offer older adults the opportunity to keep learning, receive individual attention and recognition, develop friendships with young people, act as role models, reintegrate themselves into family and community life, give and feel needed, be kept invigorated, rekindled their sense of wonder and humour, and renew their own appreciation of past life experiences (*Intergenerational Innovations*, 2004).

In addition, successful intergenerational practice is reported to help young people gain confidence, build a sense of self worth, provide practical skills (particularly when they are involved in assisting older adults), offer adult support during times of personal difficulties and provide insights from those more experienced in life (Hamburg Coplan, 2004, p. 2).

Another US based study concluded there are many benefits for young people involved in intergenerational initiatives. It found that young people involved in mentoring programs were less likely to get involved in violence and drug abuse and were more likely to attend school, have more solid academic outcomes and be able to build healthier relationships (Tierney, Grossman & Resch, 1995). This was confirmed by a number of other studies. A Canadian study established that intergenerational mentoring programs enhance literacy development in the children and young people involved (Ellis, Small-McGinley and Hart cited in *Intergenerational Strategies*, 2004). Other US studies reveal that similar work increased young people's social growth and self-esteem, reduced family stress, loneliness and isolation, helped alleviate pressures on parents, gave members of family more personal time, increased young people's knowledge of drug use, positively influenced their behaviour in relation to drug and alcohol use, decreased school suspensions and increased enjoyment in school (Rinck cited in *Intergenerational Strategies*, 2004). Young people who participate in intergenerational programs, particularly those that involved themselves in community service, were found to have positive perceptions of older adults and more knowledge of the issues facing seniors (Knapp and Stubblefield cited in *Intergenerational Strategies* 2004).

Goff (2004) claims that: “Intergenerational service learning provides participants with opportunities to develop such qualities as initiative, flexibility, openness, empathy, and creativity and to gain a sense of social responsibility and an understanding of the value of learning throughout life” (p.206). According to Taylor et al. (1999), such qualities also contribute to resiliency in young people:

*One factor that may contribute to enhanced resiliency in youth is participation in work that benefits others in direct and personal ways. A strong community-service program is one that engages students in tasks that both the larger community and the students regard as being worthwhile and that challenges them to reflect on the meaning of their experience. (p. 81)*

The potential benefit of intergenerational programs to increase young people’s resiliency is also discussed by VanderVen (1999, pp. 43–44). ‘Doing for’ programs tend to regard the benefits for young people as flowing from what young people ‘give’ older people in terms of their service—with the act of giving or service itself being what leads young people to transform their outlook on society and their sense of responsibility towards it. ‘Learning with’ programs, on the other hand, see the benefits as accruing more from the content of what is exchanged, whether in terms of learning or in terms of emotional bonding. The effect of “cross-generational bonding” is one discussed by Newman et al. (1997, p.56). Stremmel, Travis and Kelly-Harrison (1997) make the point that children need relationships with people of all ages, including older people, to broaden their experiences. The importance of intergenerational contact in terms of improving personal development is a prominent theme in the intergenerational literature focussing on children and youth (VanderVen, 1999). Marx, Pannell, Parpura-Gill & Cohen-Mansfield (2004, p. 664) offer the following summary:

*[B]enefits of participating in intergenerational programming include: positive changes in perceptions/attitudes about older people (Aday, Aday, Arnold & Bendix, 1996; Aday, McDuffie & Sims, 1993; Aday, Rice & Evans, 1991; Bales, Eklund & Siffin, 2000; Carstensen, Mason & Caldwell, 1982; Cummings, Williams & Ellis, 2002; Ivey, 2001; Kassab & Vance, 1999; Newman, Faux & Larimer, 1997; Pinguart, Wenzel & Sorensen, 2000; Taylor & Dryfoos, 1998–1999; Taylor et al., 1999), increased empathy toward seniors (Schwalbach & Kiernan, 2002), increased knowledge of aging and institutionalised elderly (Slotnick, Reichelt & Gardner, 1985), an increase in prosocial behaviors, such as, sharing (Dellmann-Jenkins, Lambert & Fruit, 1991;*

*Lambert, Dellmann-Jenkins & Fruit, 1990), increased self-esteem (Bocian & Newman, 1989; Lowenthal & Egan, 1991), improved attendance at school (Brabazon, 1999), improved attitudes toward school (Taylor & Dryfoos, 1998–1999; Taylor et al., 1999), better school behavior (Cummings, Williams & Ellis, 2002), increase in self-management skills at school and interest in school work (Newman, Morris & Streetman, 1999), academic growth (Bocian & Newman, 1989; Cooledge & Wurster, 1985), and improved peer relationships (Newman, Morris & Streetman, 1999).*

The rationale of most intergenerational programs seems to centre on Allport's (1954) 'contact hypothesis', which states that cooperative contact with individual members of an 'out-group' can lead to a more positive attitude toward the out-group as a whole. The contact hypothesis has been applied explicitly to intergenerational studies by Caspi (1984), Hale (1998) and Schwartz & Simmons (2001), among others. Furthermore, there is a notion that such contact also promotes a more positive attitude towards society in general. In their examination of service-learning among middle-school youths, Scales, Blythe, Berkas and Kielsmeier (2000) remark:

*Being enabled by adults to provide help to others, watching adults do the same, and communicating about the meaning of those experiences, as common features of service-learning programs, might facilitate the acquisition by young people of socially responsible attitudes and behaviors (pp. 333–34).*

Moody and Disch (1989) remark that early intergenerational programs were often justified on sentimental grounds—namely, that participants felt better about each other as a result of their experience. They argued that such a rationale trivialised the larger social and political relevance of such programs, and that intergenerational programs instead need to be planned and evaluated in terms of the fulfilment of a larger societal objective of strengthening the wider community. The notion that intergenerational contact improves community capacity is one that is now widespread in the literature. According to Kaplan (2004):

*At the root of these intergenerational programs, priorities, and practices is a firm belief that we are better off—as individuals, families, communities, and as a society—when there are abundant opportunities for young people and older adults to come together to interact, educate, support, and provide care for one another.*

Woffard sees the benefits of intergenerational service-learning for young people as a “tried and tested way of instilling important civic values” (1998–99, p. 92). According to Berns (1997), interaction between young and old strengthens the community as a result of mutual understanding. Similarly, Granville and Hatton-Yeo remark: “Intergenerational exchanges can rebuild social networks, develop community capacity and create an inclusive society for all age groups” (2002, p. 197).

Other work claims that intergenerational practice helps increase tolerance, a level of comfort and intimacy between the old and young, helping to dispel clichés and myths about the aging process (Manheimer, cited in *Intergenerational Strategies*, 2004). In part, this is because intergenerational work demands that participants build common bonds, and discover shared life experiences, challenges and problems (Larkin, Newman and Manheimer, cited in *Intergenerational Strategies*, 2004). Indeed, significant evidence suggests that connections between young people and adults other than their parents is critical in shaping young people’s health (*Intergenerational Strategies*, 2004).

Intergenerational work potentially offers communities a range of benefits including: helping establish closer ties between those who are otherwise becoming distant and disassociated, helping promote work between different community groups, breaking down barriers and stereotypes about the young and old, enhancing and building culture (particularly in Indigenous and ethnic communities), and providing volunteers and workers to create community facilities and activities (*Intergenerational Innovations*, 2004). In addition, by working together young people and seniors can help build social cohesion in the community, pooling resources to help respond to the needs of others. This can mean that both public and private groups are better able to meet the needs not only of youth and seniors but a range of other members of the community (*Senior Services*, 2004). In other ways, intergenerational practice can encourage the sharing of resources that have otherwise been invested in one generational group—redistributing income, knowledge, time, skills and services (Kaplan, 2001, p. 2).

The rationale for intergenerational programs need not be on resolving some sort of ‘crisis’ or deficiency, but merely improving personal and societal functioning beyond what already exists. Kretzman and McKnight (1993) characterise this as the difference between a “needs, deficiencies and problems” perspective and a “capacity-focused” perspective. This change in rationale shifts the focus from some ‘gap’ that intergenerational programs are trying to resolve, to what effects intergenerational programs can have on improving society, regardless of any supposed problem.

Several studies have addressed whether intergenerational programs have a positive effect on young people’s attitudes towards older people (Aday, McDuffie & Sims, 1993; Auerbach & Levenson, 1977; Cardland & Kerr, 1977; Carstensen, Mason & Caldwell, 1982; Doka, 1986; Dooley & Frankel, 1990; Fox & Giles, 1993; Glass &

Trent, 1980; Ivester & King, 1977; Olejnik & LaRue, 1981; Prose, 1984; Trent, Glass & Crockett, 1979). Some argue that it does, others that it does not, while other studies have shown a slight improvement but nothing significant. According to Pinquart, Wenzel & Sorensen:

*On the basis of previous intergenerational interventions it can be concluded that merely bringing together members of different generations is not sufficient to improve intergenerational attitudes. Above all, it appears that if elderly participants remain passive during the encounter (Seefeldt, 1987), and if there is no intensive and personalised contact between generations and no common goals or interests (Olejnik & LaRue, 1981), there are few positive and sometimes even negative effects (2000, pp. 527–28).*

So despite such positive claims, the precise manner in which the community is strengthened as a result of intergenerational engagement has not been adequately established. For example, statements such as, “As youth are made aware of the need for community involvement and service to others, the community as a whole benefits” (Bullock & Osborne, 1999) are rather vague and simplistic. Henkin & Kingson (1998/99) are a little more detailed in their “intergenerational vision”, where old and young meaningfully engage in mutual support and mutual learning that strengthens the ‘social compact’ or the “the age-old set of obligations of persons of different generations to nurture and support each other” (Henkin & Butts, 2002, p. 67). However, they are somewhat imprecise in explaining how intergenerational programs actually strengthen the community.

Kuehne (1998–99) is a little more specific, but by no means sufficient, in her discussion of the contribution that intergenerational programs make to building community. She talks of ‘intergenerational communities’ where “young and old and those in between live and interact with one another” (p. 82). Her inclusion of “those in between” is noteworthy, given that the ‘middle’ generation is, as we have discussed, something of a lost child in the intergenerational literature. Kuehne outlines three ways in which intergenerational programs strengthen the community: (1) through building collaborative partnerships; (2) through developing a community’s assets, capacities and abilities; and (3) through promoting relationships and culture. Collaborative partnerships involve organisations such as human service agencies, schools and retirement homes working together on intergenerational projects. We might see such arrangements, however, more as by-products rather than explicit objectives of intergenerational programs. It could also be argued that only to the extent that such forms of collaboration have an enduring value above and beyond the specific program could they properly be seen as a community-building feature.

In terms of 'assets', Kuehne quotes Kaplan's (1997, p. 216) view that intergenerational programs help in "[eradication of] age-related stereotypes, perceptions of intergenerational continuity...a sense of 'citizenship responsibility' and community activism, community improvement themes and...a sense of cultural continuity". Kuehne then cites a United Nations intergenerational workshop that devised a global intergenerational plan "to support the rights of Indigenous children". We are left wondering, however, to what extent such projects actually increase community capacity beyond the goodwill and good intentions of those involved. Finally, in terms of relationships and culture, Kuehne mentions the way that intergenerational programs result in improved attitudes among children "toward school, the future, and elders" (1998–99, p. 84), and also serve as a means by which cultural traditions can be passed on down from one generation to another.

It is also claimed that intergenerational programs contribute to the preservation of cultural traditions (e.g. Kaplan et al., 2002, p. 7). La Porte (2000) examines the way that elders can pass on traditions and life experiences through sharing stories and artwork at children's art classes. While it is true that cultural traditions can be passed on in the absence of interaction between old and young, La Porte notes the way that the high school children in her study responded positively to learning directly from older people themselves as opposed to films and books. She quotes one student as saying, "It's like bringing history to life".

One issue not addressed by Kuehne, but discussed by others (e.g. Woffard, 1998–99; O'Sullivan, 2002), is the manner in which intergenerational programs utilise and promote volunteerism, both among young people and older people. Volunteerism is a key aspect of many intergenerational programs. Intergenerational programs are seen to not only make use of volunteers as part of their programs, but to actually foster volunteerism as an explicit outcome. This reflects the manner in which the community service ethic underpins the rationale of most intergenerational programs. Programs tend to be promoted to participants as 'giving to the community' (in the case of young people) or 'giving *back* to the community' (in the case of older people). Such sentiments are seen as central to notions of being a 'good citizen' (Granville & Hatton-Yeo, 2002, pp. 204–205).

In terms of the wider social impacts of intergenerational programs, it must be said that there is both a lack of evidence of significant positive benefits and an explanation for why the contact hypothesis (or any other hypothesis) should be relevant. As Salari remarks about intergenerational programs in general, "theory development is lacking" (2002, p. 321), a point also made by VanderVen (1999, p. 34). Abrams and Giles (1999) report that while there are many studies that point to the positive benefits of intergenerational contact, there is little explanation of why and how these contacts are positive.



Related to the problem of defining the benefits of intergenerational programs to the community is the general absence in the literature of discussion about the means for measuring the relationship between an increase in intergenerational engagement and an increase in community capacity. Of course, measuring community capacity is problematic in itself, yet alone measuring its relationship to intergenerational engagement. Attitude scales are popular measurement instruments (e.g. Schwalbach & Kiernan, 2002), but there is uncertainty over how long attitudes are sustained (Seefeldt, 1989), how attitudes translate into behaviour (Vernon, 1999, p. 168ff), and how such behaviour can be measured at the societal level. These problems are not unique to the intergenerational field, but they hamper any systematic evaluation of the benefits of intergenerational programs or of consideration of the success of a program. In fact, Uhlenburg (2000) points out that even basic survey information on the extent of intergenerational relationships in society is lacking.

Colley (2003) discusses the dilemmas around the evaluation of ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ outcomes of mentoring projects. While policy-makers and funding bodies may require hard outcomes (e.g. development of employability) as measures of success, practitioners argue against these as indicative of the mentoring relationship. Colley maintains, however, that practitioners’ preferences for soft outcomes (e.g. increased self confidence, higher aspirations) over hard outcomes, perpetuates assumptions that mentoring *per se* is inherently beneficial.

This review of literature has highlighted a range of outcomes and benefits attributed to intergenerational exchange programs. These are summarised in Table 5, in terms of the benefits for older people, young people and the broader community.

**Table 5: Summary of benefits identified in review of literature**

<b>Benefits for older people</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change in mood, increase in vitality</li> <li>• Increased ability to deal with mental and physical illness</li> <li>• Increase in sense of worth</li> <li>• Opportunities to keep learning</li> <li>• Relief from isolation</li> <li>• Renew own appreciation of past life experiences</li> <li>• Re-integration into family and community life</li> <li>• Development of friendship with younger people</li> <li>• Practical assistance with activities such as shopping and transport</li> </ul>

**Table 5: Summary of benefits identified in review of literature (continued)**

<b>Benefits for younger people</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase in self-worth and confidence</li><li>• Less loneliness and isolation</li><li>• Access to adult support during difficult times</li><li>• Increased sense of social responsibility</li><li>• Greater positive perception of older adults</li><li>• More knowledge of issues facing seniors</li><li>• Provision of practical skills</li><li>• School attendance improvement</li><li>• Enhancement of literacy development</li><li>• Less involvement in violence and drug misuse</li></ul>
<b>Benefits for the broader community</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rebuilds social networks, developing community capacity and a more inclusive society</li><li>• Breaking down of barriers and stereotypes</li><li>• Building of social cohesion</li><li>• Enhancing and building culture</li><li>• Alleviates pressure on parents</li></ul>

## THE IMPACT OF GENDER AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND

This section considers issues surrounding gender and culture in relation to intergenerational exchange. In particular, it identifies and discusses ways that factors such as gender and cultural background constrain and enhance the exchange between generations.

### The impact of gender

Gender does not receive prominent attention in the literature reviewed on intergenerational exchange. When it is considered, it is in terms of whether or not it is related to expectations or program outcomes, or of the availability of males for some intergenerational programs.

While some research omits any reference to gender, other studies have suggested that gender does not have a significant effect in terms of intergenerational program outcomes. For example, in their cross-cultural study of intergenerational communication in five Eastern and four Western countries (including Australia), Williams et al. (1997) found “no main effect for gender” and subsequently dropped gender as an independent variable in the analysis.

The issue of gender matching has received some consideration in the mentoring literature, but with no definite conclusions. Gender might relate to the aims of the program, for example, if the target group is males from a female-led household, or girls interested in non-traditional careers. Miller (1998) reports several unsuccessful pairings involving cross-gender matching of male mentors with female students. Holland (1996) reports the positive results of a long term school-based project linking boys with adult men. In reviewing a number of studies, Lauand (1998) maintains that there is no conclusive evidence relating to matching on gender but the appropriateness of gender as a matching issue needs to be considered.

Other work has shown that young people in intergenerational service-learning programs have different expectations depending on gender. Referring to a study by Hecht & Fusco (1995), Nichols and Monard (2001) note:

*...one study of 140 adolescent students from a New York City middle school who participated in a service-learning program found that girls consistently reported higher expectations for service-learning and expected more positive personal growth, such as learning to care for others, better understanding of people, and improving their community, than did boys. Boys were more motivated by grades and course credit than were girls.*

Such variations may be related more to gender differences in expectations of service-learning itself than to gender differences in attitudes towards intergenerational relationships. However, McCann, Kellermann, Giles, Gallois, and Viladot (2004) found that young adult females reported more satisfying intergenerational communication experiences than males of the same age.

Studies that have examined who young people consider to be significant in their lives have found differences related to gender. For example, when Galbo and Demetrulias (1996) asked university students to recollect those who had been significant adults during their lives, most nominated significant adults of the same sex. In answer to why they spent time with that person, females were more likely to say they wanted advice about personal problems and chose significant adults “who accepted you as you were”. Males said they liked to spend time with adults with similar interests so they “could do things together” (p. 412). Also, females were more likely than males to

nominate grandparents and kindergarten to grade 6 teachers, and males were more likely to nominate grade 9–12 teachers. The researchers concluded, however, that the quality of the relationship was more important than gender or ethnicity.

Among intergenerational families, the effect of the grandparent's gender has been studied. In an Australian study, Millward (1998, p. 27) found that "being a grandmother rather than a grandfather was associated with more contact and greater responsibility for the care of grandchildren". Differential effects in terms of the gender of the children, however, were not discussed. Hirsch, Mickus & Boerger (2002) report on a study that indicates that Afro-American adolescent girls from divorced families reported the strongest ties with their grandparents than other ethnic and Anglo-American groups. The influence of gender on intergenerational relationships involving non-related members seems a significantly neglected area.

In reviewing Australian mentoring programs in schools, MacCallum and Beltman (1999; 2003) found that male mentors were generally in short supply. This was also found in mentoring programs specifically for Australian Indigenous students (MacCallum, Beltman, Palmer, Ross & Tero, 2004). That study found that reasons were related to availability during school hours, the same people being repeatedly asked to participate in community programs, and to the use of police clearances in screening processes. MacCallum et al. noted that it was "not uncommon for a program to recruit over 20 suitable mentors, only to have half or more pull out when police clearance requirements were mentioned" (p. 42).

## The impact of cultural background

There is considerably more evidence that cultural background impacts on young people's perceptions of contact and conversations with older people. Much of the research makes comparisons between intergenerational exchange within cultures, and with a limited number of studies examining intergenerational exchange across cultural groups.

Based on the work of intercultural scholars, we can say with some confidence that the Eastern traditional ethic of filial piety has much power in shaping young people's treatment of older people. The ethic of *filial piety*, based on the Confucian doctrine of Hsiao Ching, stresses the importance of older people being respected and cared for by children and young people (Williams et al., 1997, p. 370). There is a considerable body of research concerned with the importance of this ethic in shaping Eastern young people's public treatment of older people so that they publicly demonstrate the authority of their elders. In contrast, Western attitudes to ageing are purported to have seen a shift away from the traditional valuing of older people. The popular conclusion of many is that as young people are given more individual autonomy and old conventions slip away, it becomes less important for the young to value their

elders. On the face of it, this seems to suggest that the philosophical and sociological traditions of the East are more likely to see young people honour the wisdom and value of the elderly and spend more time in intergenerational contact. In other words, in the East, relationships between the young and old are more likely to be characterised by productive and healthy relationships.

Because the bulk of the intergenerational literature comes from the United States (Kaplan et al., 2002, p. xi), the main cultural groups examined in studies are American communities such as African-Americans and Hispanics (e.g. Strom and Strom, 2000). Hirsch et al. (2002) report on a study that indicates that African-Americans have stronger intergenerational family ties than Anglo-Americans. The study speculates that the traditional importance of the extended family in the African kinship model may account for these differences.

There is also evidence, however, that we ought to be cautious about too quickly relying on traditional commitments to *filial piety*. Based on several studies of intergenerational communication in Eastern and Western countries (including Australia), Williams et al. (1997) report that, on several dimensions, young people in Eastern countries have a less positive view about communication with older people than Western young people (see also Kaplan et al., 2002, p. 16 and Ota, Giles & Gallois, 2001 in their comparison of Australians and Japanese). They point out that any simple notion of Eastern 'collectivism' producing higher levels of intergenerational communication than Western 'individualism' is ill founded, although they also emphasise that there is considerable variation in the quality of intergenerational communication in Eastern countries. Other studies indicate that there is much complexity in the way culture impacts on intergenerational contact. For example, on the one hand Chinese elders feel that they have markedly lost the status they once possessed in the family, which they attribute to the growing importance placed on technology and modern ideals rather than the traditional emphasis on respecting age (Davis & Harrell, 1993; Klintworth, 1996; Strom, Strom & Xie, 1995). On the other hand, Strom and Strom (2000, p. 270) point to the problem of the value placed by Chinese elders on taciturnity, deference to elders and conformity to traditions as obstacles to engaging in open, productive intergenerational dialogue with their grandchildren.

While young people from more traditional cultural backgrounds do seem to maintain public conventions of respect, it seems that their private attitudes towards older people can be far less positive. Indeed, emerging evidence demonstrates that young people from countries such as Hong Kong and China see older people as those responsible for poor intergenerational communication, responsible for family conflict and being thought of as long-winded and nagging (Ikkel, 1989). As Williams et al. (1997) demonstrate, Eastern young people seem to take on an ambivalent attitude

to the elder, “whereby (the elder) should be treated well but their views need not be taken seriously” (p. 372).

Perhaps as we might expect, some research in Western countries indicates that stereotypes about older people were often negative and discouraged traditional conventions of public respect (Williams et al., 1997, p. 373). At the same time, however, there is an emerging body of evidence to suggest that young people growing up in Western countries have more positive experiences of interaction with older people and are less likely to privately hold disdain. Indeed, compared to their counterparts in countries like Hong Kong young people in Western countries were more positive in their attitudes towards older people (cited in Williams 1997, p. 372). This is corroborated by McCann et al.’s (2004) review of literature, which found that Western young people report more favourable, satisfying and positive intergenerational communication experiences than young people from Eastern background.

On the face of it, these conclusions seem counter-intuitive and inconsistent with common sense. However, it may not be as surprising if we consider that the Eastern ethic of *filial piety* is not particularly concerned with young people’s needs and interests, instead more the accommodation of elders. In this way, young people’s autonomy and own interests and feelings are to be suspended in favour of the maintenance of tradition and in the interests of older people. In addition, there is little in this tradition that requires elders to reciprocate this honour and respect (Williams et al., 1997, p. 383).

Perhaps the shift away from tradition towards individual autonomy in the West has meant that we see a decline in Western young people’s ‘manners’ and public expression of respect towards older people. At the same time, traditional conventions limit the possibilities for young people enjoying satisfying relationships with their elders. Perhaps concomitant with these changes in the West have come a loosening of some of the constraints upon young people, so that they have enjoyed an increased autonomy in their interactions with older people. This may mean that in the East, there has been maintenance in public display of respect for the elder, while private disquiet has grown. In contrast, in the West we may have seen a decline in public expressions of respect, but some evidence that young people are more positive than their Eastern opposite numbers about their relationships with older people.

The process of migration, which has particular importance in the Australian context, places even more stresses on the preservation of traditional values such as *filial piety*. However, Ng, Liu, Weatherall & Loong (1998) report that Chinese immigrants to New Zealand retain an emphasis on respect for older people, even as the use of the Chinese language declines. It must be said, however, that Chinese communities in countries such as Australia, New Zealand and the United States have been

established for a very long time. Whether such obligations are retained among more recent immigrant communities, such as Vietnamese, Indonesian and Middle Eastern communities is a question that has yet to be established, particularly given the general absence of older members in such communities.

As yet, there appears to be scant reference in the literature to intergenerational practice with Indigenous Australians. This is perhaps more of a reflection of the unfamiliarity of the term ‘intergenerational’ in the Australian context than its lack of fit with Indigenous cultural domains. Indeed, there is ample evidence on the ethnographic record of rich intergenerational exchange and ‘mentoring like’ processes existing in Indigenous culture and lore (see Rowse, 1992). In a range of ways, many Indigenous cultural forms and conventions can look strikingly similar to that which many modern western organisations aspire to. Of recent years, this has seen mentoring initiatives with a strong emphasis on intergenerational contact developed by those involved in working with Indigenous communities (for example see Michaels, 1989 and Woods, et al., 2000).

Recent mentoring initiatives in Indigenous communities often involve a relationship between a young person and an older person, the mentor functioning as a guide, teacher, role model and supporter. Often these initiatives are grounded in well-established Indigenous cultural processes. There are differences, however, between a classic understanding of mentoring and how many Indigenous processes tend to work. In contrast to what has been set up in orchestrated youth programs, usually in an Indigenous cultural domain the mentor/mentee relationship is shaped by a complex set of interactions between kinship, land affiliation, age, gender, knowledge and demonstrated potential (MacCallum et al., 2004).

In addition to the general literature on youth practice with Indigenous Australians, there is also a considerable body of research concerned with how Indigenous people are or can be involved in their community through leadership, mentoring, training and cultural education programs (Butler, 2001; Cowlshaw, 1999; McCrae et al., 2003; Michaels, 1994; Walsh & Mitchell, 2002.). For example, Woods et al. (2000), Michaels (1989), O’Malley (1996) and Palmer (2003) discuss the features of mentoring initiatives developed by those involved in working with Indigenous communities. Often these initiatives stand in contrast to more Western models of youth practice, in which mechanisms for young people’s involvement tend to be highly structured, centre on individuals, focus on the needs of the young people in isolation from their community, mirror western democratic structures and processes, assume young people have little capacity for autonomy, involve much talking and public presentation, and have interests and needs determined more by their age than Aboriginality (Saggers, Palmer, Royce, Wilson & Charlton, 2004).

Evans and Ave (2000) echo these sentiments with reference to New Zealand. They critique the strong American cultural ethos underlying mentoring as a formal activity that presumes the “value of the individualistic, single relationship” form of mentoring, rather than “group or collective activities”. They suggest that New Zealand should adopt a “more natural indigenous, and culturally appropriate set of structures to support the psychological benefits of mentoring” (p. 41).

The issue of ethnic, cultural or socio-economic matching is also discussed in the mentoring literature. Again, matching on these criteria may be important for a program’s goals, but the general consensus is that successful outcomes can be obtained regardless of background or race. Mentors can still give psychosocial support and provide resources, with the additional benefit that non-similar matches can allow for growth and the experience of sharing from another culture—for both parties (Struchen & Porta, 1997). What appears important, however, is that these issues be acknowledged and considered in the matching (and preparation) processes. Mentors need to be prepared for cultural differences and they need to genuinely like and respect their mentees, and be empathic and non-judgemental (Lauland, 1998).

This was evident in the Indigenous Mentoring Pilot Project (conducted in 53 locations around Australia in 2001 to 2004, and reported in MacCallum et al., 2004). Although the main intention was to match Indigenous students with Indigenous adults, in some programs there were not enough Indigenous volunteers to go around. In many cases, programs reported the benefit of Indigenous students having the opportunity to meet non-indigenous adults who treated them with respect, modelled cross-cultural communication and provided concrete examples of how non-indigenous and Indigenous people can advance reconciliation (MacCallum et al., 2004, p. 37). Cultural awareness training was seen as an important component of these programs. The mentoring programs also provided a safe venue for non-indigenous community members who wanted to get to know and build relationships with Indigenous community members (p. 39). In some programs differences in language was used as a starting point for building a relationship (p. 57).

The review literature points to the complexity of issues related to culture and gender. There is little agreement as to how gender impacts on intergenerational exchange, and studies taking account of the cultural backgrounds of participants show that intergenerational exchange may differ in meaning with cultural group.



## CHAPTER THREE:

# CASE STUDIES

---

This chapter describes the sites chosen for further fieldwork and inclusion as case studies. These sites represent a range of programs by type, geography and intent. The sites are: the Bankstown Oral History Project in the inner western suburbs of Sydney, the ‘Radio Holiday’ Project run by Big hART in rural and remote Tasmania, the School Volunteer Program based in Perth, and the Yiriman Project based in the Kimberley region of Western Australia.

These sites were selected as a result of analyses of the focus groups and interviews, the snowballing process, and a consideration of the different elements of intergenerational programs identified in the literature review. The four case study sites exist in a variety of contexts, including projects in both urban and rural settings, a project that focuses on Indigenous people, another that exists in a particularly multicultural context, and another that is particularly related to schools. All of the projects involve both male and female participants—in a single sex environment in some cases and mixed in others. Taking account of the need for some kind of ‘exchange’, the sites all fit Manheimer’s (1997) ‘learning with’ rather than ‘doing for’ model, and fall into the more interactive third and fourth typologies of Whitehouse et al. (2000) which, as previously noted, involve young and old forming working groups or pairing off, and young and old creating a mutual learning and/or work environment where outcomes are negotiated and shared.

Our intent was to foreground the range of projects occurring, often in disparate areas, reflecting different perceived needs, clientele, and management. It was intended that these particular sites could provide useful data on best practice models,

be illustrative of intended as well as unanticipated outcomes, as well as provide insights into difficulties faced and overcome. The research team initially identified nationally 120 programs that currently could be considered to fall within the field of intergenerational practice broadly defined (see the Appendix for a list of the programs identified). Each of these four case studies is described in overview and are illustrative of formal programs that occur nationally (see Table 3 for a summary of features). However, these four in particular are revealing of both established and evolving practice and have a potential application beyond their own specific context.

The information presented in this chapter is predominantly descriptive, as analysis and interpretation of the case studies is largely reserved for later chapters. The case study descriptions vary in style and format, which is indicative of the diverse contexts in which the projects operate, and the various ways they have developed over time.

**Table 6: Case study program features**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Participant Characteristics</b>	<b>Program Characteristics</b>	<b>Duration of interaction</b>
Bankstown Oral History, NSW	Year 8/9 high school students; community members from various cultural groups	Oral histories	2 hours in first instance
Radio Holiday, Tasmania	Young people; community members and older people	Oral histories, cultural and arts production	12 months or 36 months
Yiriman, WA	Various Indigenous young people; elders; others	Walking on country	3 days to 3 weeks
School Volunteer Program, WA	Students of various ages (generally at-risk in some way) and adult community members	One to one mentoring	At least 1 semester

# STORIES BUILDING COMMUNITY: THE BANKSTOWN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

## Background

Bankstown Youth Development Service (BYDS) has run three oral history projects in Bankstown since 1990. Each has involved high school students interviewing people from other generations, most of whom they had never met before. The projects were the brain child of the BYDS Arts Officer. His philosophy captures the essence of the oral history projects:

*...everyone has a story to tell. Everyone has moments in their lives that are of interest to other people and usually more profound than they give themselves credit for. (Carroll, 2001, p. 5)*

Each project had the same basic format. Students were recruited from local schools, mostly volunteers or nominated by their history teachers, then trained in interview and transcription skills. The level of training and the quality of equipment increased with each project and larger funding grants. Individual students or pairs of students were matched to a local person and over a period of about two hours, the students conducted an interview that touched on different aspects of the person's life. The stories were written up by the students and published by BYDS. Each publication was then launched at a public function, which was attended by participants, other community members and visitors.

The projects were set in Bankstown, a city in south-western Sydney that has become increasingly multicultural over the last few decades. This is evident in the mix of cultures represented in the stories in the oral history publications and from observing the cultural mix of people at lunchtime in Bankstown Plaza, a shopping and meeting space adjacent to the Bankstown Station. The oral history projects are examples of the range of youth and intergenerational projects organised by the BYDS.

## Project development and implementation

### **The evolution of the oral history projects**

With a background as a history teacher, the Arts Officer developed the first oral history project in 1991. He approached history teachers in government high schools in the Bankstown area to identify students who might be interested and the local newspaper ran a story asking readers to nominate people who could be interviewed. The Arts Officer also went to local senior citizens clubs (predominantly white Anglo backgrounds) and ethnic respite centres (including Polish, Vietnamese, Greek, Italian,

and Chinese groups) to locate potential interviewees. If people were interested, he said that he would find students who spoke the relevant languages.

The first project had a small budget of around \$5000. The Arts Officer described this project as a “logistical nightmare” as there were so many people involved and so many elements to the project. He went to each class that had volunteers, took recording equipment, talked about what was involved and showed the students how to do it. Students initially interviewed each other and that provided an opportunity for them to get to know each other better. The three pieces of equipment had to be shared so a booking system was set up. A teacher or the Arts Officer accompanied the students to the ethnic respite centres or senior citizen’s centres for the interviews and initiated some ice breaking activities to introduce the students and the older people. The interview questions included: Where were you born? Were you in the war? What was it like in the war? How did you vote in the election? What changes have you seen in Bankstown? The students also collected photographs from the older people about their lives and some of these were scanned for inclusion in the publication. Twelve of the best stories were selected for publishing together with photographs older people had provided and a professional photograph of each of the participants. The first project was a great success and there were 11 high schools and 7 different language groups involved. In Tim’s words the project “brought people out of the woodwork”. Even so, some interviews were less successful as some students and older people were not able to engage sufficiently to generate stories.

The Oral History Librarian from the State Library had not heard of this kind of work being carried out by students previously. She described the project as the “most inspiring thing” and a “fabulous success”. She explained that it was an excellent way to get people together, especially those who were not inclined to mix. At the launch of the first project, she observed people who didn’t share a common language standing together, enjoying themselves and being part of something bigger than themselves.

In the second oral history project, the focus was on women, and high school girls were invited to interview someone that they admired and to carefully consider the reason for their choice of interviewee. The Arts Officer described this project, in 1993, as more controlled and skills-based than the first. It had three times the funding, so allowed for employment of a person to organise and conduct workshops with the girls on editing and writing as well as interviewing skills. This project was more personal in nature and women spoke of family life, childbirth, schooling and employment and other women’s issues. The title of the publication, *Conquering the Wall and Other Women’s Stories from Bankstown* was taken from one of the stories of an Iranian woman who told about education in Iran for women during a progressive era for women in the Shah’s reign. Many of the interviewees were relatives or neighbours of the girls but even then, participants reported that they found new connections and ways to interact. One reported that, “you live near someone but you don’t know them really”.

A spin off from this project was a writing group, as some of the girls became so interested in writing that they asked the person who assisted with the editing of the stories to look at their other writing.

The third project was conducted in 2000–01 as part of the Centenary of Federation Community Projects Program. Students and their teachers from six Bankstown government high schools participated and the students were trained by three oral historians who also carried out ‘professional’ interviews as part of the project.

### **Bringing strangers together**

The Arts Officer spoke about the project in terms of communication. He said that the optimal way for people to communicate and bring people together was to get younger people to interview older people. It was “a great way for people to engage with each other”. There seemed to be two concepts, one being to get young people to engage with people outside their usual group, and the other to involve people with little English in the project by offering to interview them in their first language. Even in the second situation, students would meet people they didn’t know or had not interacted with previously. Everyone interviewed about this project was enthusiastic about it. The telling of stories brought people together who would not usually come together.

There were a number of key factors for success mentioned by participants. A significant one was the need for a moderate level of engagement between the students and the interviewees. It was clear that this did not happen in all cases. If either was too shy, the interview was difficult to get passed a few word answers. One of the students thought that it would be helpful to have an informal meeting before the formal interview, because it took time for a rapport to develop and for the interviewee to open up. If the interviewee was a “bit of a character”, this was more likely to happen. In these cases, the interviewees were able to tell their stories with interesting anecdotes. Photos show that the students often became spell bound and the Arts Officer remembers many occasions when everyone realised the funny side of the stories, as the interviewees’ humour was evident when they reflected on how much things had changed.

### **Taking the stories to the community**

The stories from the Bankstown oral history projects continue to be listened to in a variety of forms. They have been published in books (*Recollections: A Bankstown Oral History Project*, 1992; *Conquering the Wall and Other Women’s Stories from Bankstown*, 1994; *The Bankstown Oral History Project*, 2001), and displayed in posters of images from the stories. In addition, the tapes of interviews and publications are held in the State Library of NSW and the Bankstown City Library, and the themes of the stories were developed into a set of vignettes for an *International Popular Exchange* 1993 drama festival.

The latest format is an innovative theatrical production, *Fast Cars and Tractor Engines*, based on eight of the stories from the 2000 project. New interviews were conducted with the Bankstown locals and members of their families. The set for the production is chatting around a kitchen table over a cup of tea and three young actors, connected to the recordings by headphones, “channel” the characters on stage. The stories are accompanied by a backdrop or “wall paper” of images filmed in the participants’ homes. The production was previewed in the local Bankstown paper, *The Torch* (31 August, 2005, p 9), and quoted the Arts Officer as saying “*Fast Cars and Tractor Engines* is exactly everything that people say that Bankstown isn’t...It’s an incredible hotbed of beautiful talented people just doing what they’re best at. It’s a stereotype buster!”

## Implications for community building

The Project exhibits community building on a number of different levels. These include:

- Students with classmates and teachers—students in class practicing interviewing with each other, and students whose language had not been perceived as useful or important had skills that were important for this project.
- Interviewers and interviewees— young people meeting and engaging with the lives of others whom they had not met or got to know well.
- The stories and the participants and wider community members—the oral histories become a means by which participants and other community members (students, older persons, family members, teachers, community members) could listen to and respond to the stories as presented in the media, publications, theatres and community functions.
- Evidence of sustainability beyond the life of the project, such as the girls’ writing group.
- New and renewed contact between neighbours or family members.
- Breaking down stereotypes about others in the community.

# RADIO HOLIDAY: BIG hART

## Background

Big hART is a community-based not-for-profit organisation that uses arts-based processes to create community leadership through:

- developing new pathways to participation and citizenship through early intervention with vulnerable individuals and families,
- seeding non-welfare partnerships in communities leading to effective resource sharing, effective innovative delivery and mentoring; and
- passing on to government effective evaluated strategies including innovative problem solving, networks across government agencies, high media profile for successful government funded projects leading to links between grass-roots practice and better social policy.

Big hART has won seven Commonwealth Heads of Government Awards for best practice, and worked to date with 4200 young people in 30 Australian communities over 12 years (<http://www.bighart.org/bighart/index.htm>). 'Radio Holiday' is one of five current projects that the Big hART team are currently delivering that are based on a model of intergenerational, whole of community practice working in remote and very remote communities.

## Project development and implementation

This community-based arts intervention project encourages a dialogue between young people from the North West coast of Tasmania and older people in the 'shack communities' of the region. This model has been modified over a number of years to include practice that runs as 150-week projects. This project has just come to the end of 50 weeks, completing the first of three phases.

The Radio Holiday project team worked with Hellyer College, Burnie City Council and other referring agencies to initially engage 51 multiply disadvantaged young people at risk of drug abuse, associated crime and disengagement from education, training and community. Through the project, multi-generational relationships and networks were developed in order to support positive individual and community change in relation to attitudes towards the young people involved and encourage long term, collaborative and flexible community-based approaches to issues. Of the 51 young people initially involved with Radio Holiday, 31 of these maintained six months or more continuous involvement. These young people from Burnie, Smithton, Penguin, Wynyard and surrounding North West Tasmanian communities worked with the Big hART team to visit shack sites, interview communities and participate in workshops.

These workshops were run by a large group of talented and experienced artists and included photographers, an award winning writer/director, composers, musicians and an Archibald Prize winning painter. Unfortunately, there are no data available on what happened to the twenty young people who did not maintain contact.

Radio Holiday specifically is a project where young people have been recruited to inquire into the disappearing 'shack communities' of the North West and Western coast of Tasmania. These shack communities are disappearing as the pressure on coastal development intensifies and the face of urban and regional development changes. In this project, young people were recruited through schools, community colleges, or youth centres where there was a perception that they were facing or seen to be vulnerable to substance abuse, displayed unacceptable levels of acting-out behaviour or were simply non-attendees. These young people were trained and mentored in interview skills, use of recording equipment and art-based processes in order to collect the stories of older community members in these remote communities. These stories and locations were used as a basis for the development of performance, film, visual art, and a series of radio plays that were then broadcast through ABC radio. In addition, a performance tour of this stage of the project was developed that was performed for the benefit of the shack communities involved and for the 'Ten days on the Island' festival. This tour was built around a series of 60's and 70's caravans that contained the artwork, poems, photographs and narratives of participants in the projects, with each caravan representing a shack community visited during the project. The tour also included award-winning Australian actor Kerry Armstrong, who supported the project through her contributions to these performances, including the original performance work developed by the young people involved.

### **Opportunities for participation**

Radio Holiday and other Big hART projects actively engage young people, providing entry points for them to participate constructively in our society. These avenues of participation have become increasingly less visible in contemporary culture where youth is increasingly seen as a commodity; this is especially true outside of metropolitan areas with the increasing divide reflected in the new rural poor. Through involvement with Radio Holiday skills are learnt, options increased, and pathways back into education and employment are created. It is the experience of Radio Holiday that young people will participate if provided with the correct opportunity. As one coordinator said:

*...when you allow people the opportunity to contribute...young people do step up when provided with the opportunity and feel that their contribution is valued.*



It is the arts dimensions to this project that are particularly powerful, for when we work with artistic form to give shape to experience, we create a symbolic world that allows us to shape, reshape, revise and re-vision (Powell & Marcow-Speiser, 2005). This, at one level, is the work that these young people are engaged in, shaping and reshaping, revising and re-visioning their lives—in short, to see things “as if they could be otherwise” (Greene, 2001). The arts also teach the value of hard work and commitment, features that Radio Holiday workers report are often lacking in young people of this particular demographic. This is reflected in the words of one of the youth workers on the project.

*I noticed the commitment and dedication [of the young people], they worked so hard, and everyone did their thing. It wasn't easy, they had to do without things [in the remote communities], and the weather wasn't good.*

### **Development of new skills**

Secondly, the benefits to the young people involved include developing new skills that allow them to be creative, for example, video and multi-media. What is important about these skills is that it allows them to create and be purposeful rather than being passive and reactive. It allows them to be responsible in some way for their own lives, and importantly, to experience success.

### **Recognition and affirmation**

Thirdly, a number of young people reported being recognised and consequently feeling affirmed through their involvement with the project. For example, Radio Holiday was featured as part of Tasmania's 'Ten days on the Island' festival. One young person told how he felt proud and described his experience in his local community.

*I was at the hairdressers a couple of weeks ago getting a haircut and the guy who was cutting me hair said, “Don't you know Drew? Didn't you do 10 days on the Island?” I said, “Yeh” and went bright red in the face and a few people actually recognised us from doing 10 days on the Island.*

*And people would just come up you and start speaking to you about it.*

*At first, I didn't think that anyone would be really interested in it. I didn't think that everyone thought it would get as big as it did. We're all really really proud.*

A fourth feature related to the developing ability of young people to work together.

*The development of group work skills, conflict resolution and working together to achieve a result.*

An important aspect of this arts-based approach is the ability to use group processes to achieve a result. Being successful with this process with this particular demographic of young people is especially important and elicits wider benefits. The young people themselves were cognisant of this. In their words:

*We've had a few altercations between people at times but we worked through them as a group too, which made it easier on everybody else but because if somebody had stuffed up or done the wrong thing then everyone else would try and help him. And bring up suggestions to help him rectify it. It wasn't just a one-on-one thing and we weren't just looking down on one person because it was a group effort. And we all bounced back as a group really quickly because we knew we had to put this on and that was the main focus.*

Radio Holiday helps these young people see the link between hard work and reward. A related aspect of the development of new skills, and the experience of success was that these became self-perpetuating. A support worker described it this way:

*I think once they knew that they had their skills it made them want to grow more skills and learn more skills. I feel that's why they are so keen and want to keep on going because they've been empowered to know that they are ok people.*

### **Development of perspective**

Fifth, the process of hearing other people's stories can broaden one's own perspective. For example, the experience of Big hART workers is that hearing other people's stories and performing them not only gives these young people perspective on their own position, but also helps them reframe their own experience in a broader context. In addition, embodying those stories in performance can give access to an affective level of the 'other' that may not otherwise be accessible to them—in short, you can feel what it might be like for someone else from the inside out.

### **The relational nature of the program**

A sixth feature of Radio Holiday is the relational nature of the program. Young people meet, and through workshops and experiences, develop skills in initiating and sustaining relationships. These relationships occur with support workers, other

young people who are participating in the program, then people who incidentally become involved with the program, and then ultimately branching back out into the community. This helps develop self-respect, resilience, and a sense of connectedness and community. In the words of one young person:

*The one thing that I basically liked was the people, basically I've met so many people and I haven't found one yet that I dislike, for example, these guys. I would never have known people like this and that's just amazing to me that we can get on and do so much work.*

For some young people, this was particularly pertinent:

*I just liked all of it, meeting new people and stuff 'cause I don't really like socialising with new people. It was all new to me and stuff and new people that I wouldn't even think about talking to.*

In a way I got to learn to meet new people and get along with other people that are different to me.

### **Changing perceptions of younger and older people**

A seventh feature of Radio Holiday is the changing perceptions of older people towards young people. During the course of the project, these young people appeared in a positive way to the old people they came into contact with. First, through the relationships they developed with these older people by being in their communities and spending time with them; second, connecting with them through their stories; and third; performing these stories for participants and the wider community. For example, young people were given gifts such as crayfish by the older people in the community. In the experience of these young people, this notion of 'gift' was unusual and affirmed the time they spent together. One young person said:

*We went crayfishing and they give us some crayfish because we took the time to get to know them, and he didn't know any younger generation people and that they could be caring. I really liked the fact that he had a heart to give to someone younger.*

Some young people were also struck by how little older people knew about young people.

*It's interesting to know how much they [old people] don't know about the generation of young kids. They have no idea, they think that its all computer games and Sonys, but it's not.*

Also these young people often reframed their views of older people. This new understanding was described using these words:

*...when we went to the shack communities most of the interviews we did were with older people who had lived there their whole lives and stuff. And getting their stories and interacting with them all of the time and finding out how great old people can be, 'cause it's something I hadn't considered before. And that they can be fun and interesting and you can learn lots.*

Finally, this work reflects notions of reciprocity and developing new knowledge and understandings across the community. Abbs (2003) helps us understand this development generally, and Radio Holiday particularly as a “Community of Recognition”, where individuals within the group “interact to recognise each other, challenge and extend each other’s understanding, both of art and life” (p. 14). In the words of one young person:

*I think that in the end when we was doing the shows and stuff we where doing something for someone else...it wasn't just us or them, it was a little gift to them.*

## Implications for community building

The benefits of the project include capacity building within communities to design and develop future projects that address relevant community issues, opportunities for young people to experiment with different modes of learning, the development of intergenerational understanding between older and younger Tasmanians, and mentoring this particular demographic of young people—who often come off a low skills base—to develop technical, personal and social skills that have a large impact on the individual’s future choices and role within their communities.

As young people collected and portrayed—through drama and the arts—the memories, stories and recollections of residents of these remote areas, they become intimately involved in the making and remaking of identity. Concomitantly, these young people are also being developed as a new generation of storytellers as they became creative agents within the life of our culture, potential makers of stories and re-makers of the self. This development can be seen as increasingly important when we consider that “nations are narrations” (Said, 1993), and the break down of community means that collective stories are no longer freely shared.

This lack of sharing has implications when we consider that young people are not well represented in our societies’ narrative and the older generation are becoming

increasingly fearful of youth. This project, particularly, is part funded by the Tasmanian Attorney General's Department and through the Tasmanian Community Fund in recognition of this fact. Hearing and witnessing stories implies connections and in the words of Scott Rankin, Big hART's creative director, "it is harder to hurt someone when you know their story" [Keynote 9/7/05 Drama Australia, Launceston]. Bringing stories from the margins of community builds connections.

In short, Radio Holiday seeds creativity, develops reciprocity, and highlights the importance of the cultural journey as a way into mainstream participation. These opportunities for participation include young people in the development of the future through developing skills, knowledge and connectedness; and when we build inclusion we develop a nation.

# TURNING TO THE OLD PEOPLE AND RETURNING TO COUNTRY: THE YIRIMAN PROJECT AND INTERGENERATIONAL EXCHANGE\*

\*In collaboration with John Watson, Anthony Watson, Peter Ljubic, Hugh Wallace-Smith and Mel Johnson.

## Background

The Yiriman Project started out because Aboriginal elders in the West Kimberley were worrying for their young people. In particular, they were concerned about young people who were harming themselves with drugs and ‘grog’ and getting in trouble with the law. Following long established traditions, they set up an organisation that would help take young people, elders and other members of the community on trips to country. According to those involved, they needed to turn to the old people for their wisdom and return to country to help build stories, strength and resilience in young people.

Initially, the project was operating from Jalmadangah, a community some 100 kilometres south east of Derby. After three years, staff moved to Derby to expand its operations and make available Yiriman trips to a greater number of communities. So far, Yiriman has been working with the Karajarri, Nyikina, Mangala and Walmajarri people, who comprise four Indigenous Australian language groups or cultural blocks in the West Kimberley region. Occasionally they also support similar projects in the north and east Kimberley.

## The Region

The area Yiriman serves is enormous. Indeed, the Kimberley is approximately twice the size of Victoria, three times the size of England or three-fifths the size of Texas. Although a large geographical mass, it has a relatively small population with just over 30,000 residents living in six towns (Broome, Derby, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, Wyndham and Kununurra) and over a hundred small Indigenous communities. The Kimberley is also very remote from the rest of Australia, with Derby approximately 2500 kilometres from Perth.

Compared to many other regions in southern and eastern Australia, the Kimberley enjoys a climate of extremes, from hot and humid weather in the summer or ‘wet’ to cold evenings in the winter or ‘dry’. During the dry, the sky is blue with warm to hot days, cool nights and no rain. However, during the wet, landscape and life change considerably. Cyclonic storms race through the region dropping enormous amounts of rain. Aggressive rains regularly cause flooding and a build up of water, particularly around the Fitzroy Valley region. For those who are unprepared, the heat, humidity and water can present dangerous hazards.

Those who established Yiriman have always called this part of the world their country. Typically science has conceptualised this as at least 40–60,000 years. It is certainly the case that evidence exists of human occupation stretching back further than ancient European times, with some of the oldest art work on record being found in the region (Zell, 2003).

The history of European colonisation in the Kimberley stretches back to the 1830s and 40s. Since this time there has been enormous disruption and dislocation experienced by Aboriginal people, many of whom were forced to leave their traditional lands. However, many Karajarri, Nyikina, Mangala and Walmajarri people have been able to remain in or close to the country of their ancestors until very recent times. This was made possible in part because of the value of their labour in the pastoral industry.

## Project development and implementation

### **The history of Yiriman**

In some ways, the idea for the Yiriman Project was not particularly new for those involved. The practice of taking young people away from their troubles, going on country with their elders and walking as a means for learning stories, becoming healthy, building their skills and respecting the old people, has long been a critical part of life and cultural practice for Nyikina, Mangala, Karajarri and Walmajarri. As John Watson one of the founders of Yiriman says, “walking through country has always been the way our families educate their young, hunt and collect food, meet other groups, travel to and carry out ceremonies, burn areas of land, carry out other land management practices, send messages, communicate, ‘freshen up’ paintings, collect and produce material culture such as tools and other implements, ‘map’ boundaries and collect intelligence and build knowledge”.

Although the idea had been discussed for some years, in 2001 the Yiriman Project was formally established. Those involved were keen to find ways for young people to stop ‘hugging’, what others might call separating themselves from “negative influences, and reconnect with their culture in remote and culturally significant places” (Yiriman, 2004a). Initially the plan was to establish a “drying out” centre well away from the goings on of town life and have young people walk on country during their stay. For a range of reasons (in large part to encourage the involvement of many communities across the vast areas within Karajarri, Nyikina, Mangala and Walmajarri country), Yiriman work has not fixed itself to one location. Rather, most Yiriman work has involved organising trips to country with elders and young people going along together.

### **What happens on a Yiriman trip?**

Typically a Yiriman trip begins when elders and Yiriman workers meet to start planning. The destination and major activities planned are the product of a complex set of decisions that reflect a number of contingencies including: who is available to travel, weather conditions, the needs of young people being chosen to participate, local community events, when a place was last visited, the needs of country (e.g. fire management and burning needs) and whether there are opportunities to travel with other groups. Of critical importance at this stage is the direction of the senior people or 'bosses' who identify where and when to travel, who should go and the activities to be undertaken. For example, at the beginning of one fire walk that involved twenty young men travelling a distance of over sixty kilometres, the Yiriman team met with senior custodians to consider where and when they should carry out the trip. Discussions started with elders who passed on their direct knowledge of which areas had not been burnt by Aboriginal fire management for over thirty years.

Typically a Yiriman trip lasts between a couple of days to a couple of weeks, depending on the area being travelled to, the work being undertaken and the time of the year. Anywhere from between a dozen to almost a hundred people participate in the trips. Recently 14 young men participated in a short four-day trip organised by Yiriman with the Australian Quarantine Service to carry out tests on feral pigs living along the Fitzroy River. In 2003, Aboriginal elders John and Harry Watson led a 24-day trek with eight camels to carry out fire control work at the edge of the Great Sandy Desert. In July 2003, almost one hundred people, from the very youngest to the oldest, walked for one week through Walmajarri country.

An important part of the Yiriman trips is the experience of walking. Indeed, walking has a range of functions for Yiriman. It is one means by which young people can be taken out of town and exposed to a very different environment to reconnect with their elders, Aboriginal culture and the land of their family. It is also one way of diverting young people's attention from drugs and alcohol, anti-social activities and general unhealthy life or what many in the Kimberley call 'humbug'. As Nathan Dolby from the Kimberley community Kupartiya concluded, taking young people on country was important "cause a lot of kids have started drinking alcohol and smoking, but I don't think it's a good thing. Bring them out here to dry out. They learn hunting and how to make Aboriginal things" (cited in Binge, 2004, p. 6).

For those involved in Yiriman trips, the physical demands of the walk are often arduous. Often young people walk between fifteen and twenty kilometres a day, regularly combining travel with other physically demanding tasks such as digging, hunting and collecting firewood. As the following account from the Walangkarr trek demonstrates, the demands of walking country are wide-ranging.



*For several more days we wandered east at ambling pace, burning small patches as we went. Waking up frightfully early one morning it was a silent decision that this would be the day we set out for home, Being some 35kms away the entire camp knew what lay ahead and without a word the camp was packed, water bottles filled, emptied then filled...and silently we left out final camp for home...[later that day] as the final throws of sunlight showered the spinifex we stumbled exhausted into Mowla Bluff Station...With 210 kilometres covered in ten days, all were exhausted beyond belief. (Yiriman, 2002)*

Walking is also important because it is something that many of the old people have memories of themselves. John Watson, one of the senior people instrumental in establishing and building Yiriman, had received much of his early instruction in Nyikina and Mangala culture as well as pastoral work while participating in walks (Marshall, 1988). Another elder Ned Cox recalled, “when I was a young fulla I was proper real good walker, I was there takin the lead when I was a young man...I been good walking all the way” (Binge, 2004, p. 6).

As part of this experience of travelling through country with their elders, young people are given opportunities to participate in a range of practical activities. These practical activities are often associated with taking care of country and reinvigorating Aboriginal lore and culture. Examples of the kind of activities built into Yiriman trips include land management work in Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs), ‘back to country’ visits where native plant harvest, commercial investigations and cultural heritage work occurs, and Rivercare/Fish Scientist field trips where young people and elders accompany scientists on research investigations on the Fitzroy River. On other occasions, Yiriman arranges its trips to coincide with large cultural events and meetings such as the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance Conference and the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Festival.

Many of the trips are planned to build in training and development opportunities and work together with other organisations. One example has been the close cooperation between Yiriman and the Kimberley Regional Fire Management Project. Travelling together, staff from both organisations work with young people to teach them how to burn country using traditional and modern burning techniques. Much of this occurs in conjunction with pastoral stations with young people learning how to grade fire-breaks, manage fire, carry out control burns, research the effect of burning on plants and animals, produce electronic maps and document their work.

Young people involved in these teams are given the opportunity to contrast western ideas about fire control and danger with Aboriginal use of fire as regenerative and life giving. Johnny Nargoodah from the Jimbalakudunj community reports on this work.

He said the teams, “mainly does firebreaks, you need to clear after the wet, which is good and when it’s still green it doesn’t burn real wild...it won’t jump over the next boundary. Plus it makes green for animals, kangaroo...bring in more grasshoppers for the turkeys. They (countrymen) know when to light it and when to go hunting and what time for goanna hunting and what time for turkey hunting...they don’t just go and light a fire” (cited in Kantri Laif, 2004, p. 8).

Through Yiriman walks, young people also get a first hand experience of alternatives to their town-based ways of living. As one young person recounted:

*There’s a lot of bush tucker out here. You don’t have to go shopping out here you can exercise and get your feed for free.  
(cited in Yiriman, 2004a)*

Or as another said:

*I learnt about eating the right foods. Eating less sugar and start being healthy by eating bush tucker with less fat on it.  
(cited in Yiriman, 2004a)*

This experience of country and traditional culture is combined with learning about healthy living and smart eating. Combined with activities to promote care of country are talks about such things as sexual health, diet and other health problems. Often in these settings the young and seniors learn things together and from each other.

As one young woman reported:

*I learnt lots of things about diabetics’ food and I enjoyed hunting for bush food. All the ladies had good fun walking around. They feel much better going bush. (cited in Yiriman, 2004a)*

On the same trip another young woman learnt:

*...you have to be careful at all times about babies and disease. That drugs and smoking can give you a bad future. What ever you wanted for the future might not be there because of all those things. And to each lots of fruit and veggies so you eat more natural sugars.  
(cited in Yiriman, 2004a)*

## Implications for community building

Perhaps in contrast to many who are adopting the mantra of intergeneration exchange, those creating the Yiriman Project have chosen to encourage young people to walk. Like their parents and grandparents before them, elders are taking young people back to country to “go along behind” them. Thus, the device of walking on country has become a means through which young people share time with their community, build respect for elders, maintain culture and language, learn to care for land, stay healthy and start to take a stake in their future. Or as Yiriman folk so clearly put it, trips on country help young people and their elders “go in along the same way”, “walkin’ along behind”, “learnin to clean up”, “yiriman” and “stop humbug”. In this way walking on country is being used as a means to build young people’s strength in physical and symbolic ways so they can take an active role in leading their communities. As a number of senior Yiriman people who want the best for their young people have said “them fullas our future...no more carryin...they bin walkin all the way”.

# MENTORING IN SCHOOLS: THE SCHOOL VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

## Background

### **History and funding**

Recently incorporated at the national level, The School Volunteer Program Inc. is a non-profit organisation that aims to promote intergenerational exchange between young people (from kindergarten to Year 12) and volunteer mentors, who are mainly seniors or retired citizens. The early beginnings of SVP emerged in 1991, following a Seniors' Public Forum organised by the WA Council on the Ageing ([www.svp.org.au](http://www.svp.org.au)). Four seniors visited Mount Lawley Senior High School to assist on a one-on-one basis with Year 8 students who were identified as having learning difficulties. As these initial exchanges in Mount Lawley Senior High School were extended through an additional group of seniors (many of whom were Rotarians), the outcomes highlighted the need to support school-aged children who were challenged by the academic curriculum.

As the SVP expanded in WA throughout the 1990s, the organisation experienced change in terms of financial and managerial structure, as well as the role of volunteer members. As the needs of school children became increasingly complex due to evolving family circumstances, the role of volunteer mentors was adapted; mentors who originally focused on tutoring in the area of academic difficulties began to support children more broadly in relation to issues such as self-esteem and life skills. To assist with the structural support during this period, the Council on the Ageing received funding for two years from the Gordon Reid Foundation for Youth. In 1995, the WA Department of Education and Training funded the SVP to the order of \$30,000, over a period of three years ([www.svp.org.au](http://www.svp.org.au)). In 2004, former WA Education Minister Alan Carpenter agreed to support the SVP with a grant of \$300,000 per year. Finally, a 'Friends of the School Volunteer Program' was created so that individuals can support the Program's various activities by making tax-deductible donations.

When the SVP became incorporated in 1996, a new board of management was formed to oversee daily operations and seek long term funding. Current annual funding derives from organisations such as WA Department of Education and Training, WA Department of Community Development, Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, United Way, SVP registered schools' annual fees and other donations (School Volunteer Program Inc, 2005, Overview). Supported by an increasing number of teachers, school principals and WA Department of Education and Training directors, the SVP now serves approximately 3500 kindergarten, pre-primary, primary and secondary students in WA. Over 2000

trained mentors ranging in age from 16–90, support young people in 217 schools across the state, including approximately 100 schools located in rural areas (School Volunteer Program Inc., March 2005, Members Official Newsletter).

### **Public recognition: Awards and Patrons**

Through a suite of prestigious community, state and national awards, the SVP has received public recognition that highlights the dedication of volunteers and the Chief Executive Officer in the community. Examples of these awards are listed on the School Volunteer Program Inc website ([www.svp.org.au](http://www.svp.org.au)), and include the Community Services Industry Awards 2004 for Strengthening Volunteering for working to build a better Western Australia, and the National Community Links Awards 2000 (WA State Winner Community Service) for being responsive to community needs and recognising the value of volunteering in our communities.

In terms of public recognition, WA patrons, the wife of the late Governor, Gordon Reid Mrs Ruth Reid A.M and The Rt Hon. Justice Desmond Heenan strongly support the Program. His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffery, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia represents the SVP on a national level and recently attended a ‘Special Afternoon Tea’ in Scarborough, WA to personally thank volunteer mentors for their work with young people in schools. Many volunteers also receive individual awards at schools to recognise the educational and social support provided to students needing support. Most recently, in 2005, a school volunteer who supported a Year 9 student for several years was nominated for the WA Active Citizenship Award.

## **Project development and implementation**

### **School Volunteer Program: A multitude of programs**

SVP has implemented a multitude of programs to fulfil its mission statement of:

- utilising the abilities of senior and retired people and other community members to guide students who are identified as at-risk of coping with the demands of school;
- promoting children’s achievement of their full potential through the development of life skills;
- promoting the value of seniors and retired people in our community; and
- breaking down intergenerational barriers (The School Volunteer Program, April 2005, Overview Update).

## Fulfilling a need

Since the 1990s, students, teachers and school communities in Western societies have attempted to adapt to unprecedented economic, social and technological change (Luke, 1998). As such, it can be argued that programs such as the SVP fill a growing demand for helping students at educational risk through the efforts of mainly senior and retired people as mentors. For these students, who often do not have extended family, intergenerational exchange characterised by programs such as the SVP may intensify feelings of connectedness to school and the wider community:

*In our country now there's a lot of very, very lonely kids that don't have extended families, they don't have access to the intergenerational 'stuff' (um) that we had...and that's why that need has come about now...the stats in the schools, 20 or 35 per cent of their kids are being classed as SAER (Students at Educational Risk) and that's not risk of failing school, that's the holistic approach of the child: the social skills, the behaviour problems the whole gamut. But the reason is, they haven't got those role models, and they haven't got those intergenerational connections at home, so where are they going to get them from? (Member of WA focus group: WA volunteering)*

Stowell (in press) comments that feelings of being 'connected' are essential to the support system needed for students' educational success, both social and academic.

Whilst a wide variety of academic, sporting and recreational activities connect older and younger people under the auspices of the SVP, the common thread linked to program rationales suggests a concept of 'learning community'. Informed by theorists such as Rousseau, Dewey, Piaget and Vygotsky, the 'learning community' defines all members of the community as both teachers and learners who acquire knowledge through democratic engagement and renewal (Wood, 1999). For the SVP, the most popular or 'core program' involves a volunteer mentor interacting with a student on a one-on-one basis for at least one school term (ten weeks). Mentors Across Generations in Communities (M.A.G.I.C) is also a school-based program and focuses on the adult mentor voluntarily assisting in one-off or short-term projects throughout WA. The aim is to help young people 'at risk' by implementing projects that integrate multiple generations in a range of innovative activities. Finally, Student Community Attendance Monitoring Program (SCAMP) involves volunteer mentors ringing parents or guardians of children to follow up on students' frequent school absences. During the telephone conversation, the volunteer gives parents and guardians the opportunity to inform the school of possible underlying reasons for their child's truancy (bullying etc.), which can be dealt with by school staff, as necessary.

To create links between seniors and young people, two mentoring programs are designed specifically for implementation in high school settings. These programs aim to enhance the computer skills of seniors and assist high school students to make career choices. Computer Links is a free six-week course, during which high school students (under the guidance of their teacher) act as mentors on a one-on-one basis to teach basic computing skills to approximately 15–20 participants. These community members are normally senior, unemployed or low-income earners. Career Mentoring aims to guide Year 10 students over a 10-week period to investigate career goals and opportunities. A volunteer acts as a role model to help their selected student make informed choices about education, training and employment.

A more recent initiative on behalf of the SVP focuses on establishing links between schools and the corporate community. Corporate Volunteering allows for volunteer partnerships, whereby employees and participants in schools engage regularly in mutually beneficial community projects (The School Volunteer Program Inc., April 2005, Overview update). The aim of this intergenerational exchange in local schools is for both young people and employees to develop their communication skills. As employees refine communication skills, the anticipated outcome of Corporate Volunteering points to parallel gains in industry, through positive marketing of the participating corporation.

### **Becoming a school volunteer**

Because the Program operates under the guidelines of government schools, all volunteer mentors must adhere to the WA Department of Education and Training's policies and procedures ([www.svp.org.au](http://www.svp.org.au)). Potential mentors must obtain police clearance and complete a registration form, a statutory declaration and a confidentiality agreement. SVP also ensures that all mentors comply with the current Working With Children Legislation. Once this process has been finalised, applicants attend a compulsory three-hour orientation workshop, of which the importance is highlighted in a School Volunteer Program Staff Member's comments below:

*...every volunteer now has to do a three hour orientation, and that goes through the duty of care, the privacy, all of those sort of things. Any longer that that, and one thing about volunteers is, that when they decide they want to volunteer within their community and this is the program they've chosen to do it in, they want to do it there and then, they don't want to have to wait three months or six weeks or something to get into a program so that's where we have to be very well disciplined on making sure that after that first contact, two weeks later or no further, they come and do an orientation training...*

Discussions at orientations include topics such as ‘reading made easy’, suicide prevention and drug awareness. For many volunteers who have had little direct and recent contact with young people, these discussions prove to be particularly insightful:

*The majority of the people when we talk to them about those trainings at the orientation, is ‘when are they going to be, we want to do them, we really want to get in and know more about the drugs, and names and all of that sort of thing’ (School Volunteer Program Staff Member)*

Existing mentors are also encouraged to attend refresher courses to extend their knowledge about a range of issues related to working with young people in schools. Workshop topics include depression, bullying and listening skills. For both new and experienced mentors, these courses also provide a social avenue to exchange ideas in a relaxed atmosphere.

In schools, the implementation process normally commences with the principal, who appoints a teacher coordinator to oversee the volunteer mentors. In each participating school, the coordinating teacher then contacts the volunteer mentors to organise times/days for meetings with the students. Once the volunteer mentor establishes contact with a young person in a school, they meet one-on-one for a period of one hour, on a weekly basis. Meetings must take place at the school site, normally in the library or in a quiet working area. Sometimes the volunteer mentor may assist the young person with homework. However, meetings often simply revolve around informal conversations during which the young person and volunteer mentor share their interests and experiences. Here, volunteer mentors are encouraged to draw on their life experience and demonstrate patience and empathy with the young person, who may be struggling with a challenging home situation. Indeed the following motto appears a propos: ‘mentors caring for young people’ in one of SVP’s publications, ‘An Introduction to The School Volunteer Program, “Mentors Caring for Young People’ (School Volunteer Program Inc., n.d.).

### **Creating protective environments**

Capitalism has been described as creating ‘at risk societies’ due to numerous factors. Risks relate to frequent flows of information and people over increasingly globalised borders, massive innovations in technological and scientific knowledge that produce rapid social, economic and cultural changes, challenges to patriarchal relations and a disintegration of the nuclear family (see Beck, 1992; Giddens, 2000, Singh, 2004). Particularly in terms of childcare and protection in Western societies, these factors have produced irreversible changes (Singh, 2004). In this context of anxiety due



to change, creating protective environments for children has become increasingly primordial. For the SVP, training potential and existing SVP mentors, equates with providing protective environments not only for children (students), but also for volunteer mentors.

For example, volunteer mentors and students are permitted to meet only on the school premises and during school hours. Volunteer mentors are also debriefed in procedures to follow in areas such as sexual or physical abuse. Mentors are informed of statistics concerning disclosure, such as children normally disclose incidents of abuse to people with whom they feel comfortable; children also normally make a disclosure only three times before continuing to endure the situation in silence. If a disclosure occurs, volunteers are instructed to listen to the child, explain that they find the situation worrisome and that they need to tell the school principal:

*...so the first thing we say to our volunteers is 'believe the child, the worst thing you can do is not believe the child because those other three times they haven't been believed'. Because it's more damaging if they don't believe the child than if it ends up that its all porky pies, you can deal with that, so we say believe the child, but they also know how to react...even though it's an awful thing to hear (you know from a young child that they've been physically or sexually abused) don't over-react but immediately tell that child that, 'I'm really worried about what you've been telling me, I can't handle it myself, how about you and I both go and talk to the principal', and you agree to go with them and talk to the principal about it. (SVP staff member)*

Whilst a child may object to disclosing the situation to the school principal, the volunteer must abide by the Department of Education's policies and procedures:

*Now the child might say 'no, no, no, no, if I tell anybody else, if we go and tell anybody he's going to beat up my mum and...'. They [the volunteer] are told they still have to tell that child 'well I'm really worried about you, I won't tell anybody else, but I have to go and talk to the principal. Nobody else in the school will know but I have to go and tell somebody. (SVP staff member)*

Once the volunteer has advised the school principal, it then becomes the principal's responsibility to report the situation to the DCD to ensure that children are protected from harm.

## Implications for community building

The numerous awards and rapidly increasing number of mentors, children and school staff in rural and urban areas of Australia indicate wide public acknowledgment of the SVP's progress towards fulfilling its mission statement. In particular, the school mentoring program has utilised the abilities of thousands of seniors and retired people to guide an equal number of students identified as at-risk of coping with the demands of school.

Because formal evaluations of SVP programs have not been completed, identifying specific long-term outcomes is somewhat challenging. In addition, due to the number of co-existing variables that impact on children's social and cognitive development, it is difficult to isolate the impact that mentoring may have on young people's lives. Whilst acknowledging these limitations, the SVP director re-affirms the perception that volunteer mentors play a fundamental role in the lives of many children who are in need of guidance:

*The difference that these people are making in these young people's lives is tremendous. The only thing with mentoring, it is very hard to have evidence-outcomes and evidence. We know it's there, but something that you say to a child often may not come into fruition until they're 15 and having to make a choice in their life.*

Such comments relate positively to the program's anticipated outcome of promoting children's achievement of their full potential by developing life skills.

Another qualifying indicator for measuring the SVP's outcomes is described as the length of time the volunteer mentors remain engaged. The SVP director indicates that

*...some of our measurement and our successes have been we keep volunteers for a long time, we've had some that have been in 10 or 11 years now, because they are making a difference to their communities.*

As such, the value of seniors and retired people can be viewed as promoted in local communities.

On a long-term basis, sustained and positive interaction between young and older people can lead to the breaking down of intergenerational barriers across communities. In this vein, the SVP director summarises one of the major impacts of the program as when older people:

*...see that all kids aren't bad and younger people see that older people aren't grumpy old things. Then that's breaking down those intergenerational barriers as well.*

Individual testimonials also provide some qualitative data that indicate that in specific circumstances, intergenerational barriers have disappeared. For example, in a description of his relationship with his tutor, a primary school student wrote:

*Mr Ashton comes to help me with my work and we talk about my brother Curtis because we both miss him. Mr Ashton is a very nice and honest man. I look forward to Mr Ashton's visits they really brighten up my days. During the past 6 months, Mr Ashton and I have developed a lasting friendship. I would like to thank Mr Ashton for being there for me. (Blake Maxwell, Beckenham Primary School, extract from Official Newsletter of the School Volunteer Program Inc. Scarborough Community Centre, Issue 28, March 2005)*

Blake's testimonial points not only to the dedication of the volunteer who gives generously of their time, but also to the nuanced qualities of lasting relationships, such as honesty, commitment and compassion.

CHAPTER FOUR:

# FROM DEFINITION TO IMPLEMENTATION

---

As was established in the review of the literature on intergenerational exchange, there are a range of ways of thinking about what the practice entails and how it is implemented. This chapter builds on the available literature by reporting the findings of this research. It includes a discussion of information gathered from interviews, focus groups and the case studies particularly in relation to the definition of intergenerational exchange, factors of successful programs, the challenges and constraints of program implementation and the influence of factors such as gender and cultural background of participants.

## CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF INTERGENERATIONAL EXCHANGE

What became apparent from discussions with people is that ‘intergenerational exchange’ means different things to different people. Indeed, responses to the question “What does intergenerational exchange mean?” by those participating in the focus groups were enormously diverse. In part, this reflects the diversity of ideas in the international literature and participants’ different roles in intergenerational practice. It is also explained by the fact that the conceptual device is a relative newcomer to the Australian policy environment. As a consequence, most of the practitioners have little contact with others to compare and share their understandings. Indeed, the snowballing exercise clearly established that those involved in intergenerational exchange work had connections that were thin and diffuse. Very few workers knew of others who were familiar with or carried out intergenerational exchange.

Definitions of intergenerational practice or exchange ranged from being quite defined and specific, to being very broad and all encompassing. For example, a policy maker provided the following general definition and distinction, “we understand that intergenerational means the link between young people and old people and multigenerational is across the generations”.

The definitions and comments provided seem to reflect that intergenerational exchange can occur in a moment, across a room, or over a long period of time involving face-to-face contact. Intergenerational exchange does occur in a familial context, but often it occurs meaningfully with non-family members also. Intergenerational exchange can focus on one dimension of a relationship such as the significant difference in ages, or it can encompass many dimensions including social, cultural and spiritual ones, whilst also including adjacent generations.

There appear, however, to be some consistent assumptions that people make about intergenerational exchange. Following well established discourses on the recent demise of community, people seem to associate intergenerational exchange with healthy family functioning, old style community life, small scale social relations, intimacy, wholesomeness and the natural order of things. In other words, we look to the past romantically as a time when intergenerational exchange was an important part of healthy community life. Often those conceptualising intergenerational exchange will see it as something that we see with the demise of community under modernity. In other words, people often erroneously assume that with modernity has come a break-down in traditional contact and meaningful relationships between the young and older generations.

Here, pre-modern styles of social organisation are revered and modernity is demonised. Much of this mirrors old conceptions of community as healthy in pre-modern times and diminished in modern times [see Ferdinand Tonnies’ treatment of *gemeinschaft* (community before modernity) and *gesellschaft* (society after modernity) (Tonnies, 1963)]. As a consequence, often people talked about intergenerational exchange as something that is necessarily good, positive or wholesome.

Clearly there are grounds for counselling caution in this regard. Romanticising the past in this way can lead to blind faith in intergenerational exchange as a panacea for a range of perceived social ills that are not at all related to the way contemporary social relations are forming. Simply focusing on intergenerational exchange as necessarily and always positive brings with it considerable risks.

For example, one person offered a sobering reminder of the need to be cautious about too quickly assuming that intergenerational exchange is something that is a thing of the past and is in need of rejuvenation. She made the point that this can lead

us to ignore continuity in its existence. Talking about intergenerational exchange in Aboriginal communities she said:

*intergenerational exchange is how we have always done things and continue to do them...our grandparents brought us up for much of the time, as did their's and we are taking care of our grannies (grandchildren)...you (Dave Palmer) talked before about a 'renaissance' in intergenerational exchange...well I don't think for many Aboriginal people we are seeing a renaissance because it has never gone away.*

Another interesting feature of people's conceptions of intergenerational exchange is that many people tend to use the terms intergenerational, intragenerational and multigenerational interchangeably. There were those that saw intergenerational exchange as something that involved the young and seniors coming together. On the other hand, some saw it as involving contact between people of a range of different ages. As one person said, it involves "people from different generations contributing to the life, the social capital of our community...".

A further interesting definitional distinction that emerged from the focus groups was one between familial and non-familial intergenerational exchange. Some participants emphasised the value of familial intergenerational relationships, but when these were not readily available, they sought to strengthen non-familial intergenerational relationships in some kind of compensatory way. For example, a program manager involved in a community-based intergenerational project said that he saw his work as engineering the kind of exchange that was not naturally happening in a family setting and "getting hold of government money from a variety of sources to facilitate that happening between people who would otherwise not meet".

A program manager representing a different community-based intergenerational program made a similar distinction. He said that, as an immigrant who has lost contact with his grandparents, he has always "been very mindful of the value of getting the generations together".

However, not all focus group participants defined intergenerational exchange with reference to familial or non-familial relationships. A researcher depicted intergenerational exchange as an attainable and informally occurring community phenomenon. This person did not seem to approach intergenerational exchange as something lost and in need of 'compensation'. Rather the comment seemed to emphasise intergenerational exchange as something that helps strengthen or build relationships that have begun to emerge in informal settings. A young person confirmed this when he challenged the view that a younger person spending time with an older person is unusual. He said that he considered it to be "normal to be around them...not weird".

Another theme emerging in people's discussion of the idea of intergenerational exchange is that it involves a certain kind of contact that occurs between the generations. Some assumed it involved direct and face-to-face relationships. For example, a program manager involved in a mentoring program stated that it is, "something ongoing and stable and long-term with an underlying level of trust... so that wherever the young person goes the mentor tags along".

Others saw it as possible without direct contact between those involved. For example, a program manager involved with a community-based intergenerational exchange program said the following:

*...a lot of what I do is involved with theatre and dance and hip-hop. I think when you have an opportunity to present kids [to older people]...there's another exchange that can go on...you see older people saying 'Oh my God, look at that kid dance, isn't he fantastic?... and he's a very good-looking young man, I wonder where he's from?'*

In this way, intergenerational exchange demands people spend time together representing their experiences in a mutually accessible form (such as art, drama, music, making or repairing something). For example, one young person talked about their experience of sharing their stories with those that initially saw them as "a kid with a skateboard, thinking 'he's not good, he's bad-arse' sort of thing". This prompted the young person to seek out ways to think about communicating in a way that was meaningful to seniors. He said, their attitude "sort of drove me to produce stuff that older people can enjoy".

Another aspect of people's understanding about the intergenerational experience was that it is something that involves mutually beneficial 'exchange'. Indeed, this kind of experience involves an exchange of goodwill and reciprocity. For example, one program coordinator observed:

*If kids go out and help the seniors and help in the homes, if the people in the homes or the retirement village have a good experience well then they might want to come back and mentor in the school to help the kids in the school as well.*

However, for others the emphasis appears to be on the process of communication. A program manager stated, "I think about intergenerational communication...I think the engagement, the connection, I think that those words describe for me more accurately what that is about, but also the process I think".

The key elements of intergenerational exchange identified through the focus groups, interviews and case studies are summarised in Table 7. In Chapter 7, these elements are compared with the elements identified through the review of literature in order to develop a definition to guide intergenerational practice in Australia.

**Table 7: Key elements of definitions as an outcome of the research**

<b>Intergenerational practice involves exchange between multiple generations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purposeful and ongoing exchange of resources and ideas</li> <li>• Increasing co-operation or exchange between two or more generations</li> <li>• Bringing different generations together for mutual benefit</li> <li>• In practice, exchange is multi-generational with a range of involvement of others</li> <li>• Exchange can involve mutuality and reciprocity</li> </ul>
<b>Intergenerational practice involves engagement and participation at a range of levels:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The concept implies interaction, action and awareness</li> <li>• Increasing levels of interaction, engagement and participation are evident alongside mutual learning with negotiated, shared and unanticipated outcomes</li> <li>• A range of engagement forms were evident including ‘acting on’, ‘sharing’ and ‘learning with’</li> </ul>
<b>Intergenerational practice has a range of intended and unanticipated outcomes:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying and harnessing the experiences of each age group to enhance the life experiences of the other</li> <li>• Developing understanding of the life experiences of other generations</li> <li>• Participating in and making culture</li> <li>• Bringing generations together to foster change in skills, behaviour, and attitudes</li> </ul>
<b>Intergenerational practice happens in a range of formal and informal spaces:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools and educational institutions</li> <li>• Voluntary and community groups</li> <li>• Indigenous communities</li> <li>• Local government</li> <li>• Sporting clubs</li> <li>• Churches, ethnic and cultural development groups</li> </ul>



## FEATURES OF SUCCESSFUL INTERGENERATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

Focus group participants identified a plethora of features that they associated with successful intergeneration programs. In the same way, the study of the case studies assisted in establishing consistent characteristics that help make intergenerational exchange programs work. Not surprisingly, people talked in different ways about what things work and what they considered success. However, there were some shared views expressed.

### Relationships

It must be remembered that the intergenerational programs canvassed varied in the amount of contact between participants as well as the length of time of the contact. It is therefore interesting to note that without exception, building relationships was identified as a critical factor ensuring the success of these intergenerational programs. With regard to a mentoring program, one manager said that:

*...adult to young person or child, the connection of the two...the strength of the exchange or the impact as a result of the mentoring relationship, comes from the depth and length of the relationship that we establish between the two.*

Mentoring programs often go on for years and involve extended contact between the participants, whereas by comparison some community intergenerational projects with a specific focus may have a relatively short and fixed period in which to complete their work. Contact in these relationships is not necessarily ongoing for extended periods, but the quality of the relationship is still emphasised. In projects that involved a shorter period of time for the generations to interact, as in the Bankstown projects for example, the level of engagement between the young person and the older person was critical.

Some expressed the view that 'focus' is an important factor in the success of intergenerational programs. Out of the focus or activity, relationship was likely to develop. As one senior explained:

*I think if you're going to run a community program, you need to have some sort of a focus to start with...(e.g. a computing program)...it really isn't about the computers, it's about the one-on-one bit, and half way through doing it they're talking about each other's lives....*

For others the nature of the relationship and the values that people have towards each other is most important. In particular the idea of being ‘non-judgemental’ was felt to be crucial for many. One program manager said:

*...we need to...make sure that we've trained the adult enough to understand that they don't judge, and they don't have to give anything and they don't have to provide goods and chattels, but walk with the young person for some time and develop a relationship with them—what we are trying to do is to develop an honest relationship between the two, so we don't focus on a goal, we don't focus on an academic output, we focus on people being non-judgemental...*

Similarly, one youth worker explained that:

*Why I think it makes it work is the acceptance of each one of them,... everyone's differences and their acceptance, that's the thing. The ones that were involved with the kids accepted that their language and probably their social skills weren't acceptable to some other people. Like 'fuck you!' is something not many people would like to hear in the middle of [name] market would they?*

One young person involved in Radio Holiday also highlighted that building relationships with older people facilitated a change in understanding that negated stereotypes.

*When we went to the communities and stuff, most of the interviews that we did were with older people and people that had been there their whole lives. And getting their stories, just interacting with them the whole time, and finding out just how great old people can be, it's something I hadn't considered before...they can be fun and interesting and you can learn lots.*

The possibility of reciprocity was also mentioned as important in building quality intergenerational exchange programs. Many claimed that it is intuitive to think that in a mentoring-type relationship, the younger participant would be the most likely to benefit. In many cases the benefits to the young person were many. However, others noted that older participants also benefit from the relationships. A program coordinator made this point:

*...the spin-off...was that the adults, of all ages were coming back to us saying, 'I get more out of this than he does or she does, and I love this, and I wouldn't give it up for anything, and they go for years and years and years because of it...'*

All the case studies programs demonstrated reciprocity in some way. For example, in SVP young people experienced increased connectivity to school and community, while seniors acquired computer skills.

## Support

It is clear from the experience of those consulted that quality relationships and appropriate supports at the organisation and community levels are essential ingredients for successful intergenerational programs. Those involved in the research also spoke about the support necessary for successful intergenerational programs. One program manager spoke of the organisational support necessary for success:

*...if we were to set up a relationship between an older person and a younger person, there must be a structure behind it, there must be a process, and if there's not it won't last and it won't work...both parties in the relationship need to be supported by a third party...so there needs to be someone out there guiding, directing, advising...let's call that supervision or support.*

Zeldin, Larson, Camino and O'Connor (2005) maintain that this organisational support is almost invisible in effective programs and provides a mainly facilitative function. The projects examined for the case studies all had evidence of strong organisational support, at various levels. For example, in the Bankstown oral history projects, the BYDS Arts Officer and later professional oral historians provided support for the teachers and students in developing the skills necessary for interviewing. At the time of the interview, support in the form of transport was provided to bring the students and older people together, and teachers and the Arts Officer provided social and emotional support to both interviewers and interviewees. The BYDS also provided structural support to publish the oral histories and to take the stories to the wider community.

Support at this wider community level was also considered to be important. As one person explained, "if a community isn't supportive of it in some way by recognising there's an issue and this may be a solution then it will fall over". Another pointed out that community groups have also got to be prepared to work in unison.

*I think one of the main things that you're going to have to make intergenerational programs work is partnership between government, community, corporates [business] really set in stone....so that's its not...being run by one sector of the community...it really is a whole community thing.*

So called 'grass roots involvement' was a particular element of this. In other words, it is important to have the involvement of people who were not necessarily involved in leadership positions or in public roles. One senior felt that, "if you impose it down it won't be sustainable, you have to have got the community coming up to you, but the training also has to happen and the policy has to be at the community level as well".

In addition to the organisational support provided by the BYDS, the Bankstown oral history projects had support of a range of community organisations, firstly in providing participants (local schools, and senior citizens and ethnic respite centres), and secondly in assisting in broadening the effect of the projects. The latter included local government, the State Library, local newspapers and community members.

A support worker from Radio Holiday said:

*The mood of this society in general, especially in regard to young people is kind of a punitive one...They talk about extending school hours for longer to basically put more weight on top of the young people...and that's what I find is the biggest thing about [the program]...it provides an opening for people to basically explore their own interests and to give what they're interested in doing so they have some choice...*

## Doing a range of things together

Another important ingredient of success has been to incorporate activities that animate or bring to life contact between young people and seniors. Indeed, the most successful programs are those that have a clear component of activity that has people doing something together. Although this activity or action varies enormously from project to project, its existence is critical.

In the case of the Yiriman Project the act of walking together on country is the principal means through which the young and old can start to forge a shared sense of purpose and build alliances. In addition, during Yiriman trips the young and the old get to hunt, burn country, repair fences, collect data, cook, build camps, create maps and carry out research together.

In the case of the Bankstown oral history projects, the young students and seniors developed the stories and chose accompanying photographs together. In Radio Holiday, participants interviewed each other, carried out research side by side, prepared plans for radio shows, edited, produced and wrote together.

In a similar fashion, the Student Volunteer Program involved a range of activities in which the students and older people worked together: repairing a bicycle, making cards to give to others, doing school work, writing emails.

These practical and often physical projects created the chance for both generations to form collaborations. This helped ‘break the ice’ and avoid the uncomfortable silences that are a feature of any new relationship. Working together on something together also helped create a sense of the capabilities of the other generation, often shattering stereotypes and unhealthy ideas about the unfamiliar other.

The key features of successful programs identified through an examination of the focus groups, interviews and case studies are summarised in Table 8. Then follows a discussion of the impact of gender and culture, each of which can enhance or constrain intergenerational practice.

**Table 8: Summary of features of successful programs identified from research**

<b>Opportunities for the development of relationships</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate time for development of relationships and breaking down stereotypical views</li> <li>• Activity as a vehicle for relationship development</li> <li>• Attention to the nature and quality of relationships, e.g. non-judgemental</li> <li>• Development of reciprocity</li> </ul>
<b>Availability of a range of support</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisational support</li> <li>• Broad community support</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities to do a range of things together</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help break the ice</li> <li>• Create a sense of the capabilities of each participant</li> <li>• Engage in practical and physical activities</li> </ul>
<b>Ways to take account of program specific issues</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide activities relevant to groups who may be reluctant to participate (e.g. males)</li> <li>• Explore ways for constraints to open up creative possibilities (e.g. language differences)</li> <li>• Awareness that gender and culture may shape the way leadership roles and social relationships are formed</li> </ul>

## THE IMPACT OF GENDER AND CULTURE

The impact of gender and culture on enhancing or inhibiting the exchange process is not well elaborated in the literature on intergenerational exchange. However, there was considerable attention given to these matters in interviews, focus groups and the case studies.

In particular, the impact of gender on participation in programs was discussed in a number of cases. Some focus group participants commented on the low participation of males in intergeneration programs, particularly as volunteers. One program manager reflected:

*...probably the most significant challenge has been...to get men involved. I've noticed a change over the 25 years that men have moved away from becoming involved—like there's a fear there.*

As one school chaplain observed, working closely with others is also often a challenge for young men. Talking about the participation of boys in a school volunteering program, he said:

*It's not a 'boy' thing. Boys are not in touch with themselves and haven't [therefore] the capacity to reach out to others. One boy had a girl he was friendly with, she went with him and that helped him. But it's hard to get boys involved due to the extra effects of peer pressure.*

However, those cognisant of this fact had discovered that there were some strategies that could help overcome this challenge. For example, one young person observed that strategies such as involving media, film, music, art and drama appear to minimise the impact of gender issues such as this. He said of his experience of an intergenerational exchange program that involved media production, “the guys and girls, they like to get equal opportunity to do everything...we all shared, and I mean shared so much...I just think it was absolutely wicked (because we got to work with media”.

Some involved in the focus groups thought that gender had little impact on programs. One student, who had an older woman as his mentor in the SVP, was surprised by a question about whether it made any difference if his mentor was a man or a woman.

However, others had much to say about the importance of gender, claiming that in many instances it presented a subtle but pervasive influence on the relationship built between the young and seniors. In particular, gender influenced the way that people communicated, what they felt able to talk about, the interests that people shared, the spaces that the young and seniors felt comfortable in inhabiting and people's general sense of comfort and safety.

It appears that gender difference presents both as something that may limit but also enliven intergenerational exchange. In some settings, particularly where there are strong cultural mores and conventions, it is critical that men build relationships with men and women with women. This was most evident in the case of Yiriman, where often separate men's and women's trips were arranged, in part because of the cultural obligations and avoidance behaviours associated with gender relations in very traditional settings.

This difference in experience created by gender often created a significant additional gulf between the young and old. At times, this made it difficult for people to bridge their considerable differences and form relationships. Sometimes the language, the interests and the style of men and women represented too great a distance to bridge. One youth worker put it this way, "its good to have people from diverse backgrounds come together but sometimes, especially when it comes to gender, the chasm is too great".

However, at other times the difference in gender helped accentuate the difference between young people and seniors. This in turn offered a distinct element of variation and hence gave those involved something that was out of their ordinary experience. In part, this tension produced by difference often provided a spark and energised the relationship. As one young man said, "the whole point of doing this is to meet people who are different...[mentor] is an old lady and someone like I've never met before. She's too good".

Important here too was that gender difference helped meet some of the needs of both young and older who had lost their capacity to know people of the opposite age and sex. This was thought to be particularly important where young people had lost their grandparent or other important people of the opposite sex. One youth worker put it this way, "some kids have never had a role model of the opposite sex...after the initial nervousness, it's just terrific to see this happen".

Culture as a factor important to intergenerational exchange was also identified by some focus group participants. As with other focus group findings, there was diversity of opinion presented, with some experiencing gender and culture as potential barriers, and others seeing them as areas of potential development.

Recruiting people from a range of cultural backgrounds was identified as a challenge by a number of people. One person claimed that volunteers involved in intergenerational programs did not always come from a mix of cultures, noting that:

*...we failed to have a range of people available as mentors; often they're very white Anglo-Saxon...you need a range of people...the limited pool of people who are willing to do this kind of work in a formal setting I think we found to be a problem.*

A school chaplain mirrored this concern when articulating the difficulty that they experienced recruiting students from cultures other than European–Australian. A program coordinator in another school posited that migrant families might be reluctant to allow their children to participate in volunteer work because they want their children to focus on other things, such as studies.

Another program coordinator emphasised the need for intergenerational interactions that allow cultural groups to re-experience and reconnect with their history and culture when stating that, “...for me it’s critical to facilitate that process...and so for me trying to reclaim some of that lost history and connection and identity with Pacific communities...and so part of that has been telling the stories...”.

For others, intergeneration programs provided a means of bringing together people from different cultural backgrounds. As the following quote from a focus group discussion suggests, intergenerational work can provide an opportunity for people to transform their experiences and ideas, particularly when people from different generations and different cultures have meaningful experiences of one another. As he explains:

*...even the small experiences I’ve had with these oral history projects see people meeting others from different backgrounds. Some of those experiences have been...not just heart-warming, but very educational for those involved...It is like the little pebble dropped in a pond, the ripple effect of those things...Like where you have an Anglo woman in her 70s who gets to meet a Lebanese boy for the first time and says, ‘my God, they’re not a bunch of vile little criminals, he was a delightful polite young man’.*

The case studies selected for this research demonstrate ways that a focus on culture can enhance the intergenerational experience. For example, one of the deliberate strategies of the Bankstown oral history projects was to link students with an adult from a different cultural background than their own. The program coordinator explained how one young male with a middle eastern background found that he and an older women originally from Europe had a common interest in wildlife films. The early tensions in their meeting subsided. Moments of humour were also remembered and no doubt these reduced the tension. These are moments of finding commonality. The story telling allowed the interviewer and interviewee to appreciate their differences—different experiences of life, cultural and religious expectations, different perspectives and experiences of some of the same things but in different time periods. The things they found in common, however, may have been crucial in making that connection. This is a well known ingredient in any form of collaboration—finding common ground (see MacCallum & Macbeth, 1996; Schmuck & Schmuck, 1997). In intergenerational



programs, the critical factor may be allowing the time or finding the context which enables different generations to find that common ground.

Language differences may constrain but also create new possibilities and identities for young people. The Bankstown oral history projects usually involved pairs of students interviewing an older person. In instances where the older person did not speak English, a student was found who could speak the same language and hence conduct the interview in the person's language. A second student would be present, but not necessarily speak the language. The students could see each other in a different situation, with skills they had not recognised previously.

Culture was also important because in many instances it shapes the way leadership and social relationships are constituted. Clearly in the case of the Yiriman Project, culture had a critical part to play in shaping how the relationships were forged. Following traditional cultural conventions, senior people acted as leaders in the process. Key elders were those who initially conceived of the idea of forming a youth program to respond to what they perceived as serious problems confronting young people. They were the ones who literally took young people on country. In addition, they have continued to direct staff, make policy decisions about the future of the organisation and give directions on where and when trips occur. Following existing cultural protocols during Yiriman trips, it is those who are responsible for various tracts of country who give clear directions on how land is to be treated and managed and what the young people should be doing and when. As one of the workers said, "each cultural block has two main senior people who also have important custodial responsibilities. These two people are my bosses who I am directly responsible to. Without these people Yiriman would not be able to work".

## CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS

In addition to evidence that suggests a range of positive outcomes there also exists within the literature, focus groups, interview discussions and case studies, a range of identified challenges to successful intergenerational practice. Evidence also exists of limits in accepting some of the basic premises taken on by advocates of intergenerational exchange.

As reviewed in the literature, several studies have questioned whether intergenerational programs have a positive effect on young people's attitudes towards older people while others have shown little effect. What follows is a discussion of both the limits of assuming intergenerational exchange is always healthy and some of the challenges to its successful adoption. The evidence from this research is that the following sorts of constraints and challenges have been reported as a result of different people's experience in intergenerational programs. These include:

- specific operational problems;
- social, personal and economic circumstances;
- stereotyping and ‘othering’ of the old and young;
- language differences;
- risk management culture; and
- limits in some of the ideas about intergenerational exchange.

Before proceeding on this discussion of problems associated with intergenerational exchange, it is worth being reminded of the important part that problems play in the formulation and support of new governmental programs. As Bessant et al. (1998, p. 311–312) point out, the existence of youth programs arises in large measure because of the identification of problems and barriers. Youth programs often target ‘at-risk’ youth who experience barriers and problems. Thus youth programs “position themselves at the point of failure of ‘mainstream’ institutions” (Bessant et al., 1998, p. 311). To put it another way, youth programs are often prompted or energised by the continued emergence of youth problems or challenges. Even those programs that claim to target ‘youth development’, ‘building assets’ or ‘celebrating young people’s success’ are subtly premised on the notion that youth are a population in need of special reforms and intervention.

The field of intergenerational exchange is intricately tied up with troubles, social problems and, to some extent, failures in governing the old and young. It is important to recognise that behind most formal attempts at encouraging intergenerational exchange is the idea that they are made necessary by a series of failures such as a breakdown in marriage, a lack of respect for older people, family violence and other associated elements of modern living. So in a rather ironic twist, failure in intergenerational exchange can, and does, inspire the introduction of intergenerational methods.

### Specific operational problems

As might be expected, there were different insights from those with whom we spoke about those things that get in the way of intergenerational exchange. Often people talked about challenges that were very specific to their own program or were shaped by local conditions. Often people talked about very specific operational problems. However, some of these are worthy of note.

A number of people hinted at the limits of relying on charismatic leaders or one enthusiastic person to drive a program. For example, a community member said, “this project has hinged on the creativity, hard work and enthusiasm of [coordinator]”. Having multiple people involved does mean that others can take over or develop the project, especially if the original person leaves.

Problems also existed because of the demands of being able to communicate with and understand the interests of a multitude of people across ages. In the projects involving interviews, comments of coordinators included, “this didn’t happen in all cases, sometimes because the interviewer and interviewee were “too shy” or “not good interviewers or interviewees”, or “just couldn’t engage each other”. As one participant recalled of an initial event — “sometimes it was very wooden”. Another young person said, “even though the teacher initiated some kind of icebreaker it was not always easy for the interview to get started. I would liked to have talked casually beforehand...it takes a few minutes to open up. You don’t want to pry into their lives...”

Differences in the levels of confidence of participants also made things difficult for people trying to encourage intergenerational work. In one of the focus groups about a program that was not yet running, students talked about the difficulty of getting started. Clearly they had different levels of confidence and competence. One young person said, “I know it is easier if someone else makes the contacts for you, but I feel better if I do it myself”. Another, “I am shy about calling up places and would like someone else to do it”.

In many cases logistics proved a problem, particularly where institutional conventions were rigid. One program coordinator remarked that, “dealing with schools is a challenge...sports, timetables, buses...its wears you down. You have to have sufficient patience”. As another program coordinator recounted, the particular needs of different age groups can bring with it added logistical challenges. In response to a focus group discussion about challenges they faced, this person replied:

*Logistics because there are lots of elements and lots of people. There is an order of magnitude where things expand...we have to juggle things and timelines...things not ready at the time...pain is mixed with joy. You have to be fairly flexible personally to run these projects.*

Recruiting people to participate in the programs was also seen as a regular challenge. Indeed one of the problems most discussed in the focus groups was the difficulty of recruiting and maintaining people’s involvement. Partly, this reflects the fact that many young people and seniors begin by feeling threatened or unsure about the other generation. In some institutional settings such as schools, this is made more difficult because of a lack of contacts with community groups or others who may be able to assist. In other cases, particularly where youth organisations seek to institute intergenerational exchange, problems occur because of the increased competition with other groups in recruiting volunteers and participants. With the growth in popularity of intergenerational exchange this is likely to worsen. In addition, the burdens associated with obtaining police clearances, attending training sessions and keeping records were all cited as added difficulties.

Another constraint experienced by some was having to restrict the contact people had with each other to specific (and often unstimulating) places or activities. A young person involved in a school-based intergenerational program seemed to experience the limitation of only being allowed contact with her mentor at school. She stated, “I’d like to go to different places rather than school...just something different”.

At other times, there existed a tension between getting people involved and getting something concrete done. This was particularly felt by those projects that involved arts and cultural production. In the case of Radio Holiday, there was a constant need to manage the tensions between the journey that the young and seniors go on and the quality of the arts product at the end. A similar tension was evident in the Bankstown oral history projects in terms of engaging the students and older adults in the interviews and the need for publishable stories.

Overall, focus group participants have identified limitations around societal attitudes to young people, policy responses, scope (who is perceived to be involved and who is perceived to need it), and context. What remains to be presented are the kinds of limitations that are experienced at the individual and personal level. As with all of the focus group data, some participants found certain factors or experiences to be limitations, whilst others viewed them as opportunities. When it comes to interviewing older people, some young people reported that it was very difficult always having to shout, or that the older people would “ramble on” for so long and get off topic. However, a young person reported that:

*Obviously we had to change the way we spoke...a little bit to fit the generation we were talking to, but other than that you have people who have hearing (difficulties)...it’s working out what’s best for the people you’re talking to.*

Another limitation confronting projects was the limited time frame imposed upon them from funding sources. For example, one of the workers from Radio Holiday commented that:

*...we have discovered; no 70 weeks isn’t long enough, no 100 weeks isn’t long enough, 150 weeks is about right...so in that time you are looking to create these precious moments for a young person with a deeply negative identity, self-loathing. Their whole life is driven by that muscle of the identity that navigates every experience of their life to a certain point where they will have who they are affirmed. You have to be virtuosic as an educator to plan out the moment, first of all get them there, first of all meet them, and then create an environment where they are actually creating and it’s non-welfare and it’s a moment where they are actually surprising themselves.*

Even in the Bankstown projects where the actual interaction only lasted hours, there was need for time; time for planning and organising funding, time for locating and preparing participants, as well as considerable time for writing, editing and publishing. The coordinator estimated a project needed about 18 months.

Others identified that it was often challenging to recruit quality people to be involved. As one worker commented, programs of this kind often attract ‘do-gooder’ people who come into programs as support workers for inappropriate reasons such as the desire to “change (rescue)” young people. He said:

*...projects are deeply inhibited by people that base their work on love. By that I mean a desire to change someone, so love and fanaticism are almost exactly the same concept just sliding off one side of the knife-edge. And that’s why you see so many good-hearted burnt out people.*

## Social, personal, historical and economic circumstances

As mentioned earlier in the literature, there have been a number of important social and economic shifts that have led to decreasing levels of contact between generations. The effect has been to see increasing numbers of young people growing up disaffected from their communities, and older people becoming increasingly alienated from their families, often locked away from involvement in public life. One of those interviewed made much of the influence of social and economic pressures on intergenerational exchange. In response to questions about the factors that shape this kind of contact she said:

*I know it’s not so popular to talk about this anymore but for Aboriginal people poverty is still the number one influence on intergenerational contact and the health of communities. The old and young still don’t have the basics like proper housing, food and in many cases clean water. In very practical ways generations are being split apart in Aboriginal communities. The old people can’t get around, they haven’t got places for their grannies (grandchildren) to stay and they sure as hell can’t got out and do things together.*

Another reminded the research team of the need for resources when she recounted the forced removal of Aboriginal families from their country. She said:

*A lot of the old people are aching to take their grannies back to country. They haven’t been able to for at least one whole generation because people have not had any means of doing it...no money for*

*cars, fuel or tucker. For 30 years some people have been trying to do it but haven't had the means.*

Social policy has played heavily into this. A support worker with young people involved in a community based project made the point that one response to social pressures has been to further constrain and exclude young people. In reference to extending school hours to stop young people from doing anti-social things, they stated, "...this doesn't help young people feel good about adults".

Often it was claimed that the personal circumstances of participants had a significant impact on the programs. For example, one program coordinator claims that the work was made difficult when young people came with multiple levels of disadvantage. In particular, those involved with Radio Holiday identified "intergenerational welfare dependence, family violence, abuse, neglect and poverty", as all having a profound effect on their work. In order to break the cycle of disadvantage, Radio Holiday will only run 150-week projects with these young people. They argue that a project of any lesser duration is unable to develop the necessary interpersonal, intra-personal, or technical project-specific skills.

### **Stereotyping and 'othering' of the old and young**

A further significant challenge to intergenerational exchange is the negative impact of stereotyping. According to the literature, the perpetuation of unfavourable stereotypes of older people and the young both threaten community capacity to deal with social problems and also make it difficult to build connections between the two groups. Researchers argue such developments set in play increasingly 'ageist' views among young people about the elder and among older people about young people.

As one young person posited "lots of kids don't want to do it because they don't think they can get anything out of doing things with older people". One school chaplain involved in a focus group said that some students initially thought the older people appeared to be "much older fuddy-duddies", but they thought differently once they got to know them.

The kinds of stereotypes that young people and older people might have about one another are quite well summarised by a program coordinator who said:

*...we are influenced too greatly by media: we have a lot of old people out there who think every kid is going to go and knock them over...and that's another bonus that comes out of intergenerational programs is actually seeing that 'gee old people can be great' and old people seeing that kids and young people are fabulous as well.*

Involvement in an intergenerational program may help to dispel these stereotypical views. However, they may be so ingrained that involvement in an intergenerational program may have little effect beyond awareness of difference. For example, a young person involved in a project stated that:

*I think the biggest thing for me was the generational gap...the older people in the communities think it's all computer games and candy and stuff...just how much space there is in between and the misunderstanding.*

With sufficient time and interaction these stereotypical views may begin to break down. As one young person from Radio Holiday said:

*They were very nice people and stuff like that and I found that they were a bit wary of young people because of the stereotypical person I suppose and you know they learnt from us too and that the younger generation aren't all dickheads and yeh it was good.*

## Language differences

Dealing with the range of language differences was another one of the constraints confronted. The kinds of differences presented themselves in three different ways. Sometimes those involved came from completely different cultural and linguistic traditions. For example, the Yiriman Project involves people who speak Karajarri, Nyikina, Mangala, Walmajarri, Kimberley Kreol, Aboriginal English and English. In the Bankstown project, efforts were made to have a student who spoke the language of the older people to be one of the interviewers. This was promised, but not easy to deliver in all cases and not easy for the interviews then to be translated back into English for the publication.

At other times the language of young people and the language of seniors can be markedly different. As one senior person said:

*...when I was trying to learn about computers as part of the volunteer program I was struck by how much the kids know about the language that we oldies don't. They kept up but we just couldn't.*

Finally, the language of program coordinators and policy is often profoundly different and unrecognisable to participants. Indeed, there is often a huge disparity between how participants speak and the new public language used to articulate intergenerational exchange program aspirations. For example, some reports on

intergenerational exchange use this new language to set out the necessary features of a good program framework, such as “support from key stakeholders” and “processes and outcomes to support future strategic decision making” or to state the focus of intergenerational programs, such as “education for citizenship and community participation across all age groups”.

As Watson (2003) reminds us, this kind of policy style is unfamiliar and illegible to most, if not all, English speakers. Indeed, the term ‘intergenerational exchange’ was itself not particularly recognisable to people we spoke with. As one person involved in the focus groups said, “I don’t like the term. It neither expresses well what is going on nor helps communicate the richness of the relationships”. Another said,

*its an awful way of describing things; typical of the new policy speak that is so full of auditor’s words. INTERGENERATIONAL EXCHANGE; it makes it sound like an economic transaction that you do on Wall Street not the beautiful gift that happens when the old and young respectfully share their lives.*

### ‘Risk management’ culture

As MacCallum et al. (2004, p. 42) observed, the emergence of what can be described as a risk management culture in Australian society and in youth practice in particular presents considerable challenges to intergenerational practice. However, this does not mean that identifying ‘risks’ always becomes a barrier to intergenerational exchange. On the contrary, evidence from the research indicates that the identification of certain ‘risk factors’ in the lives of the young and elderly (such as the breakdown of family values, isolation, discrimination, drug use and poor educational performance) has been instrumental in provoking and energising calls for intergenerational exchange initiatives. What follows is a discussion of the complex connection between ‘risk management’ culture and the formation of intergenerational exchange programs.

Following the analysis of Beck (1992) a number of youth studies writers have noted the proliferation of the idea and practice of risk management in work concerned with young people. As Tait (2000, p. 7) notes, the category of the at-risk youth is perhaps the most profound and formative in youth policy and practice. Young people serve as a special population who are both subject to an array of risks and themselves often considered a risk to others. As Bessant et al. (1998, p. 311) conclude, the effect of risk management in youth affairs is stark, with not only youth programs being driven by the need to respond to ever increasing risks but also themselves subject to new and flourishing constraints identified as risks to youth.



Significant in this regard is the growth in measures to deal with the preoccupation of the risk of child abuse, what Tait (2000) calls the most common theme to emerge in the new risk society. On the one hand, much evidence exists of the profound negative impact child abuse has on communities. In response child protection practices and various legislative requirements that govern agencies and youth organisations have emerged as a central element in youth practice. What is sobering to remember is that the act of child abuse is the most taboo form of ‘intergenerational exchange’. On the other hand, Tait reminds us that these new risks have little to do with the actual incidence of abuse rather they reflect changes in the way we are governing. As he says:

*The current concern over apparently high levels of child abuse is unlikely to reflect an increase in actual mistreatment; rather, it is more likely to represent the emergence of new thresholds of sensibility, through which once acceptable conduct eventually becomes problematic. (p. 110)*

At the same time, the category of older people is often associated with a range of risks. Typically they are seen as being among those who are at risk of a plethora of health problems, extra susceptibility to crime and increasingly less able to take action on their own behalf. Indeed, often typically in the media the aged are seen as those who are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse by youth.

How this plays out is most important for those keen on intergenerational exchange. Often intergenerational contact is seen as a means to offer something to the most at risk. At the same time it can be seen as an enterprise high in risk to young people and the aged. According to those consulted in this research, both groups are frequently conceived of as those who are susceptible to the abuse of the other at the same time as capable of inflicting abuse on the other. This often means that special measures are taken to limit and constrain contact between the two groups. For example, the kind of activities that mentors engage in are often seen as precisely the things that schools and youth organisations are charged with scrutinising the most. Meeting on a one-to-one basis, meeting out of an institutional setting, carrying out physical activities together and sharing intimate moments are often the things targeted as most risky.

As a result, many attempting to set up intergenerational exchange feel under pressure, are forced to change, reconsider or scuttle their plans by those imposing the new risk management regimes. Policy makers and managers spoke of the need to constrain the nature of activities or settings in which activities occurred in order to minimise risk. On the other hand project coordinators and workers with whom we consulted, spoke of the frustration of having to deal with increased pressures to micro-manage risk by eliminating things that were calculated to be of special danger or outside the parameters of what policy makers, funders and managers identify as ‘duty of care’.

This means that those charged with establishing intergenerational exchange have a range of forces impacting on their programs. On the one hand they are often trying to deal with or offer something to the most at-risk groups. They are trying to do this by bringing together those who are often identified as at most risk to each other. At the same time they are having to do things within a context of increased constraints as a consequence of the imposition of risk management procedures. As one person from Radio Holiday said, 'risk' is inherent in these kinds of projects with it being an essential element to both engage young people and also in order to break intractable cycles of substance abuse, unsociable behaviour or self harm.

For some workers, the pressures and contradictions are enormous. If they cancel their plans, their charges who are at risk will be offered nothing. If they limit their plans to meet the requirements of risk assessors, then they risk severely undermining the quality of the intergenerational relationship. If they ignore the warnings of risk managers and auditors, then the threat of legal action if accidents occur becomes magnified.

This was identified as a particularly significant problem for intergenerational exchange programs that occur within institutional settings and around issues concerned with justice and the law. It was also difficult in work with Aboriginal communities. As local government worker from the north of Australia said, "things like the increasing demand to have mentors get a police clearance are just going to make it impossible to get people on (Aboriginal) communities to become involved as mentors".

Another practitioner claimed that the complex expectations organisations had in relation to risk management procedures were "driving people away". According to this person:

*Seniors often start with some pretty simple ideas that they are going to try and help. After they have been through the screening process, read our duty of care procedures and got a police clearance many of them are put off both by all the paperwork and the worry that there may be trouble.*

Yet another concluded that the risk management culture was not helpful in dealing with and resolving risk, claiming that "it makes people lazy, trying to imply that if we fill out the forms and build a set of procedures then we are off the hook". Indeed, the same person went on to conclude that "risk management procedures are dangerous because they frighten people away from making careful judgement calls". As one youth worker said:

*...risk management is culturally very abstract in our situation. All its language is gobble de gook to us and the community. In any case the way people here deal with risk is to carefully expose young people to it not try and control it or give them some kind of procedure to follow.*

There seems a real need to develop ways to balance the risk of bringing together different generations with the risk of not using relevant, engaging (and often risky) activities.

However, responding to ‘risk’ also helped bring into being new opportunities, at times acting as the catalyst for initiatives such as intergenerational exchange programs. For example, a senior local government worker made this observation:

*Up here (Northern Australia) the irony is that while risk management concerns can sometimes be a hurdle, in fact when a risk is identified it almost always demands action be taken. This is what happened in relation to us getting involved in the intergenerational project. We identified risks to young people like alcohol use, family violence and anti-social behaviour. This then became the driving force in getting us to set up programs to get elders involved.*

In this way ‘risk management’ is at the same time both a challenge and a stimulant to Intergenerational Exchange initiatives. As Foucault (cited in Tait 2000) might say, risk management culture is productive, not in the sense that it is good or bad but rather in the sense that it produces the conditions that prompt new governmental interventions such as intergenerational exchange programs.

A summary of the challenges and constraints identified through the focus groups, interviews and case studies is shown in Table 9. We then turn to discussion of another challenge to intergenerational practice—some of the ideas about intergenerational exchange.

**Table 9: Summary of challenges to the development of successful programs identified from the research**

<b>Stereotyping and ‘othering’ of the old and young</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ingrained stereotypical views</li> <li>• Insufficient time and opportunity to move beyond ingrained stereotypical views</li> </ul>
<b>Social, personal, historical and economic circumstances</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effects of poverty and experiences of older family members</li> <li>• Multiple disadvantage</li> <li>• Social policy that further constrains activity</li> </ul>
<b>Language differences</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differences in the language of cultural groups</li> <li>• Differences in language use of young and old</li> <li>• Differences in language use of policy makers and participants</li> </ul>
<b>‘Risk management’ culture</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intergenerational exchange involves interaction of groups who may be at risk of each other</li> <li>• Imposed constraints may severely restrict the kinds of activities and levels of engagement</li> </ul>
<b>Specific operational problems (may be specific to a program and shaped by local conditions)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliance on too few people</li> <li>• Initial low levels of confidence and competence of participants</li> <li>• Demands of communicating with and understanding different age groups</li> <li>• Rigid institutional conventions (e.g. school timetables)</li> <li>• Recruiting appropriate participants and maintaining involvement</li> <li>• Tension between the process of relationship building and the expected outcome/ product of the activity</li> </ul>
<b>Limits in some ideas about intergenerational exchange</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notions of intergenerational exchange as a panacea for a diverse set of social problems</li> <li>• Acceptance of the inherent value of bringing together different generations</li> <li>• Focus on changing individuals without necessarily changing social systems</li> </ul>

## Limits in some of the ideas about intergenerational exchange

Another barrier to healthy intergenerational exchange is the fact that many have enormous faith in a series of ideas that remain unchecked. In particular, most advocates of intergenerational exchange programs appear to accept without thought three key premises. The first is that in days past (particularly before modernity), intergenerational exchange was a necessary, natural and healthy part of social relations. In other words, most accept the notion that intergenerational exchange was something good we had in days gone by. The second taken for granted idea is that with modernity has come the demise of intergenerational exchange. The third feature of much thinking is that social problems are on the rise as a consequence of this breakdown in relationships between the generations.

Common to much thinking about intergenerational programs, then, is the notion that a lack of engagement between young people and older people constitutes some kind of problem, whether in terms of an individual's personal development, or in terms of the successful functioning of society at large. It follows then that a way of resolving these social problems (things such as family breakdown, a lack of values, drug abuse, crime etc) is to rejuvenate contact between the generations. Here, intergenerational exchange is often seen as something of a panacea for a diverse set of complex social problems. Finally, many advocates for intergenerational exchange assume it to be necessarily positive for all involved.

As discussed in the review of literature, such problems have been presumed rather than investigated, with some critics making the point that intergenerational differences are not, in themselves, necessarily problematic. It needs to be acknowledged that, in large measure, these ideas too easily lead us to take on a rather antiquated, romantic and nostalgic view of the past. The danger of such a simple conception of history is that it ignores both the unhealthy elements of earlier forms of family and community and some of the rich features of modern forms of interdependent social relations. In other words, too quickly assuming a romantic view of the past can have us ignoring the pain of the past and some of the healthy elements of the present.

Related to the problem of defining the benefits of intergenerational programs to the community is the general absence in the literature of discussion about the dangers of different sorts of intergenerational contact. Indeed, there is nothing intrinsically positive about intergenerational exchange. On the contrary, various forms of intergenerational exchange may be very unhealthy. One Aboriginal health worker had this rather sobering reminder that intergenerational contact can be unhealthy:

*I don't think we should always see intergenerational exchange is always good. I can think of lots of examples that are really awful. I know people don't like to talk about it but intergenerational sexual abuse and family violence is devastating communities. Kids learn other stuff from intergenerational contact. Most of us learn to drink grog in this way. Gambling is another one here. It is passed down from generation to generation so you know the kids that are going to get into gambling. Food is another. Kids learning the wrong stuff to eat and passing down obesity from one generation to the next.*

Although risk management culture appears to have taken up some of these issues (as discussed in a previous section), finding a way to balance the various forms of risk is less clear.

Colley (2003) also questions that mentoring programs are inherently good. Her in-depth study of several mentoring relationships in a particular employment-focused UK mentoring program, demonstrated that mentoring can be effective for some young people, but may be counterproductive for others. In the latter cases, instead of leading to social inclusion, it can be lead to further social exclusion. Drawing on the work of Watts in 2000 on soft and hard mentoring processes, she highlights the contradictions inherent in some policy-driven mentoring programs:

*The evidence from this study suggests that the control policy-makers exercise makes it difficult in actual practice, to obtain the results [employment outcomes] they desire. While representing mentoring as a close **natural** bond, policies promote a model of **legal and artificial** mentor relationships designed to work **on** the habitus [personal dispositions] of mentors and mentees, rather than a model of **social and voluntary** relationships that work **through** individual's active participation and negotiation. This approach appears thoroughly contradictory. (p. 167, original emphases)*

Her solutions rest on a better understanding of mentoring, different ways of thinking about exclusion and inclusion, and a focus on systems change, rather than only trying to change young people to fit in existing systems.

This chapter has explored the findings of the research in terms of conceptualisations of intergenerational exchange, factors of successful programs, the challenges and constraints of program implementation and the influence of factors such as gender and cultural background of participants. We now turn to a discussion of the outcomes and benefits of intergenerational exchange.

## CHAPTER FIVE:

# OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS

---

Although there are challenges to the development of successful intergenerational programs, one of the features of intergenerational exchange is the notion that it can help achieve many things. Consistent across the focus groups, the literature and the case studies was evidence of multiple layers of benefits for both individuals and the life of communities. Another important feature is that in successful programs, benefits flow to a range of participants, meeting a range of instrumental, social and emotional needs.

Much focus group discussion was generated around the benefits of intergenerational programs—both to individuals and to their communities. This was an area within the research where people could readily identify a range of benefits and when it came to organising the data generated, it was interesting that sometimes it became blurred as to the focus of the benefit; the individual or the community. It became evident through the process of organising and sorting that the answer is both in many cases, because benefits to individuals often flow into their communities: their families, their schools, their groups, their neighbourhoods and their supporting organisations. Intergenerational programs at their best reflect reciprocity.

The evidence from this research is that when people become involved in effective intergenerational programs the following benefits accrue:

- people spend time with each other, break down barriers and develop new understandings of each other;
- people share experiences and get to build their community;

- people learn about history and build stories in young people;
- young people are diverted away from trouble;
- people become healthier, more motivated and more resilient, and engage in important ‘identity’ work;
- people get to work on practical activities that take care of or develop something important to the community;
- people have fun and enjoy themselves; and
- people build very concrete and often highly specialised skills, find work and were given career opportunities.

In this section of the report we will discuss this element of intergenerational work; what it produces or the kind of benefits that come from bringing the young and older people together. Before this discussion, it is first important to note that there can often be a nexus between the ingredients for successful work and the perceived benefits. For example, the practice of walking is both an important ingredient in the success of Yiriman and a very healthy and productive outcome for those Aboriginal communities involved. In the same way, the sharing of stories amongst those involved in the Bankstown oral history projects and Radio Holiday were often seen as important tools for making connections and developing the relationships between young and old, and at the same time as being a critical and positive outcome of the work.

## GETTING LOTS OUT OF IT: BUILDING MANY AND VARIED OUTCOMES

There were varied perspectives on the kinds of things people got out of their involvement in intergenerational exchange programs. Often this involved people giving specific examples of personal benefits or specific consequences that they experienced. However, many of these are worthy of note.

For example, a number of people remarked on how their involvement helped them build friendships. As one coordinator remarked, one of the unintended consequences was the development of friendships between himself and the people who had participated. He said, “it becomes friendship, almost a family-based thing”. Another acknowledged how their involvement gave them a greater understanding of others, in particular those neighbours for whom they had previously had little contact. One young person said, “you live near someone but you don’t know them really”.

In interacting with older people, young people also learn how to interact with others different from themselves. One coordinator explained that intergenerational contact helped the young learn how to “be polite, manners, things you wouldn’t mention to a young person but that is what they are learning”.



One program manager pointed out that intergenerational exchange can also serve as a launching pad for a multitude of other projects—“if the project is successful it can mutate into other things”. The Bankstown project has had many projects develop from each of the oral history projects. This seems to be because others have seen the success, people and ideas have been connected, and other possibilities become evident. For example, the first project spawned a drama based on themes from the interviews and was developed by a teacher from a local school, an Arabic Community Project at one of the schools which in turn led to commissioning of another project. A writing group developed from the second project, and an innovative dramatic production was recently performed in the local RSL over four nights based on the third project.

It also seems that intergenerational experiences helps many individuals feel better about themselves. As one young person remarked, “I realise that I have skills that I can use to listen to people and to help them”. Communicating similar sentiments a young person said, “talking with older people opens up your mind”.

## Breaking down intergenerational barriers

In a number of instances focus group participants identified the new understandings that both young people and older people developed in each other and about world around them. As one program manager said:

*...what I do is offer kids from this area an opportunity to see other worlds, and if they want to pursue that (you know) they've at least had a little glimpse...these things are immensely valuable...*

A young person echoes a similar sentiment when saying that:

*I think they (older people) might get to understand younger people a little bit better because they just get to talk to them and just chat about how their life is and things like that...like what they think of it...*

A program manager said:

*...there is such a strong benefit to getting rid of the false fear of young people to the life and well being of a group of older members of the community...and there are other issues to do with honouring elders in ways that our community is not quite so good at.*

Often these new understandings are built up through conversation, through sharing the things that are important to one another. One young person liked to talk to his mentor about rock music, about groups that his mentor did not know of. This young person commented that:

*...some new things that I know he doesn't know...we used to work on video clips and he was saying 'how do they advertise?' and I say 'sometimes they'll put on a few shows of movies of songs and stuff' and he's never heard of it and I told him.*

This kind of sharing appears to be a very positive experience, especially when there is a receptive audience. Another kind of sharing occurs through stories. As one program manager commented:

*...stories...it's having that time to listen to people's stories, and those anecdotes...about growing up...oftentimes (certainly) in another period of time and often in another country...and for children to be engaged in listening to older people talking and giving them a little bit of their history...*

Through interactions like those depicted above, people learn to know about each other and the world that the other person experiences. Across several focus groups conducted in WA high schools, young people frequently related the positives of the School Volunteer Program (SVP) to breaking down intergenerational barriers through sharing stories, dispelling stereotypes and developing friendships. For example, a year 8 student commented on the process of peeling away stereotypes that identified being around older people as 'weird' or 'strange':

*Usually people might think it would be strange to have like an older person around you; but (um) it feels normal to be around them, not just weird or something like that.*

A year 10 student also highlighted successful features of meetings with his mentor as a means of breaking down intergenerational barriers. In the following passage, the student described this process as one of sharing stories that led to increased understanding of self and 'other':

*I think they (older people) might get to understand younger people a little bit better because they just get to talk to them and just chat about how their life is and things like that...like what they think of it...*

The theme of sharing stories re-emerged in another Year 10 student's descriptions of the conversations he and his mentor engaged in:

*When they talk to us you learn lots about other things you don't know, you learn lots of stuff from them, like how to behave, how to talk to adults and all that...she told me about her husband. He died a few years ago because of the nerves thingee (motor neuron*

*disease)...and she said that every morning when she looked in the mirror she could see her husband and she talked to him a lot...and she'd always get upset when she talked about it.*

Here, the images of the volunteer mentor becoming upset as she discussed the death of her husband are striking and detailed. They suggest that the routine aspect of the pair's meetings over time encouraged sharing of significant personal stories as well as an empathetic response on the part of the student. Later, as the student returns to the thread of sharing stories, he points to the special relationship he has developed with his mentor, one of friendship and openness:

*You can say stuff that you want to say but you can't say anywhere else...you can speak to them (the mentor) as a friend, not a teacher...like you do have to behave but it's not like you have to sit down and sit next to them at the board or something.*

## Going along together: building community

Another kind of sharing that was reflected in the research data was that which involved reaching out to unknown others and sharing different backgrounds or perspectives on things. The benefit of this kind of interaction is that it often led to new connections in the community. One program manager referred to this as 'talking over the fence' and 'bridge-building':

*...I think the bridge-building aspect of it is transformational in terms of 'well that's all it took, a conversation, an opportunity to talk over the fence...I think that the more people that see how it can be done and how easy it is in some respects, I think it provides people with permission to take the risk and maybe start to have that kind of conversation with people that I normally wouldn't engage with.*

The implications of these 'bridge-building' experiences are well summarised by a program coordinator, who stated that:

*...I feel that if you can change people's way of thinking in a community that it's a better place to live...I think we have to change our way of making a little bit of time in the community to make people feel better about themselves...all of these programs we're running I just sort of feel will make that happen – it's not a short-term thing by any means it's a long-term thing, but if we start with the younger kids, perhaps by the time they get to high-school their attitudes might change...*

A teacher also commented on the importance of this kind of community building:

*It is easy to forget (particularly during this era of outcomes-based management) that community relationship building now can be worth a whole lot more to the community tomorrow, important in ways you might not have imagined. Like having the intergenerational exchange tradition in our school was really helpful when it came to recruiting people to get involved in our values education project that we are doing right now.*

The act of intergenerational exchange then involves both members of a partnership gaining not only knowledge and understandings of each other, but clear civic skills. One year 10 student demonstrates that, as he acquires and shares knowledge about bicycles, he can transform this knowledge through democratic engagement and renewal (Wood, 1999) in the wider ‘learning community’.

*Because I’m working on a bike, I’m building a bike...he (the volunteer mentor) just tells me what he knows about it and how when he was my age it was just a fixed wheel and stuff like that, instead of tricky stuff, and how he had to work on it to be able to ride it every day...*

Involvement in shared community is also remarkably evident for the seniors involved in the SVP. As they gain knowledge of themselves and others, their democratic engagement in the wider community can be renewed and transformed.

Thus, it can be argued that meaningful moments of intergenerational exchange allow for renewed enthusiasm on the part of both young and the ‘not so young’ members of communities. As one SVP staff member pointed out, many seniors feel an upsurge of motivation after engaging with the young people in the program:

*...I have so many volunteers and older people ringing me up and saying ‘X...’, this has changed our lives; we’ve got a reason to get up in the morning, we’ve got to get dressed and go down to the school because there’s kids there that like us.*

The evidence from the research shows how those involved in intergenerational exchange do recognise how it can help to build stronger communities. In other instances, projects offered outsiders a chance to recognise the strength and resilience of people in a community. As this account from a historian from the State Library of NSW demonstrates, all manner of unintended consequence can occur from the work carried out under the auspice of intergenerational project. Her attendance at the launch of the first oral history project in Bankstown Square was a “complete

revelation". She had never been to Bankstown and only knew about it as a "tough area" from what she had read or heard about it in the press. She felt an "honoured guest" and recalls it as "the most extraordinary thing I have ever experienced". She described the feeling of seeing the "gorgeous faced kids" standing with the people they had interviewed as a "most inspiring thing".

There is certainly much evidence that an important outcome of the Yirman Project is the multitude of opportunities young people are given to spend time with a variety of people from a range of sectors of the community. While on trips young people accompany adults (particularly elders) on hunting expeditions, are taught language by the old people, sit around the camp hearing stories of the past, look after those who are less physically able (by setting up camp and collecting firewood), look after younger children and work on other practical projects with members of their community. They also get the chance to work with scientists, health care practitioners, researchers, land managers, lawyers, veterinarians, youth workers, cartographers and a host of other professionals, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal.

Additionally, Yirman also works in league with others (often outside the immediate Indigenous community) who share a stake in land care, youth development, Indigenous lore and custom and community work. Indeed, one of the features of Yirman's work is that they rarely arrange trips on their own, instead carefully incorporating their plans to fit in with others such as pastoralists, fire managers, fish scientists, zoologists, biologists, cartographers, archaeologists, general practitioners, nurses, teachers. In this, only one element of the Yirman story, we can see examples of not only intergenerational but also intercultural and, arguably, interdisciplinary exchange. This has a multitude of benefits. On the one hand it gives economic rewards to senior people, establishes them as knowledgeable and reinforces their status with young people as the legitimate custodians in their country. Often this process has resulted in the renewed interest and pride by young people in their culture (for a discussion of similar work see Nesbit, Baker, et al., 2001, p. 191–192).

In describing an insight from one of the case studies, one person reflected that the field of intergenerational exchange is often organised around a complex network of social organisations:

*Understanding how it (the Yirman Project) works will take some time for you because its all a little like a jigsaw puzzle with all the pieces connected. When you start finding out some more it will seem like there are hundreds of people involved. After you've been around a little and you get to see how the pieces are connected you'll start to see one of the things that make it work...the fact that up here we all get tied up together.*

## Building stories in people

Intergenerational exchange as a means for refreshing community is closely tied in with encouraging seniors to pass on their stories to young people. Indeed, a consistent theme in all of the case studies examined was the value in bringing people together to pass on their experiences, histories and stories. In turn, story telling can have a series of positive effects. It helps seniors pass on a sense of history to young people. It helps in the passing on of important knowledge and the building of an appreciation of place, culture, language and social context.

One of the key reasons for establishing the Yiriman Project was to keep the old stories alive and to encourage young people to pick up and retell 'stories for country'. This experience of story telling, the *raison d'être* for Yiriman, both gives elders the chance to have their accounts listened to, young people the chance to learn and Aboriginal culture the chance to rejuvenate.

In a similar way, those involved in Radio Holiday came together to build stories in one another. In part, success is experienced in both these cases because journeying incites the telling of stories. It happens in this way, these events allow the older people to revisit the haunts of their own youth and to keep alive their memories and stories. This they do by passing them on as they walk or travel and by sharing time with young people around other activities such as talking by the fire at night. In this way, the journey gives young people an experience of place and helps them build their own story of place. This story in turn can be retold to future generations.

This means that the intergenerational 'journey' becomes a means through which young people can become an active part of the stories their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents have featured in. It also allows young people's stories to emerge. As one of the Yiriman field trip reports testify, not only were the activities and planned discussions keeping the young people busy, but they also provide a forum for 'stories' and discussion.

*An exciting discussion between several elders about communicating to young people was one of the greatest rewards to come out of the project. Being able to witness how the kids worked when communicated to in different ways from different people. Concerns about how they were treated at home were discussed and the need for more open and friendlier communication to occur. (Yiriman, 2002)*

For those participating, intergenerational exchange allows one to enter a temporal zone in which the past, the present and the future are aligned through conversations and stories. In this way, the intergenerational journey is used as a medium through which the stories of young and old can come alive or have new meaning attached.

How this happens is something others have speculated about. For example, being on country while you talk about country demands the exercising of a range of sensory tools. During Yiriman walks not only do young people listen to the accounts of their elders, their imagination is also enriched by the opportunity to see, touch, smell, indeed feel the stories. In the same way, combining stories with the act of staying in a caravan park and enjoying coastal activities profoundly enriches narrative.

Having the young and older people share stories also helps in decreasing stereotypes about each other. As Feldman et al. (2001) point out, increasing contact between the generations is one important way that these stereotypes can be confronted. As one young person involved in the focus groups said:

*hearing someone's story gives insight into their life...it shows you how things have changed...you may think that your life is hard now but you find out how hard life was.*

Another involved in the Bankstown project said:

*People have stereotypical views of people of other cultures...they are not well-spoken or educated, etc...I found out that stereotypical views are not correct.. you have to hear people's stories, have to listen. So many people don't have the chance to tell their story... with just a few hours listening you get a different idea.*

Yet another young person recounted:

*She (an older woman) had such an interesting life...done things for other people, for the community...I have more respect for them... it made it more strong and concrete.*

As the program coordinator of Radio Holiday also noted, programs such as these are “a terrific way of honouring elders in ways that our community is not quite so good at”.

## Diverting people away from trouble

Consistently those involved in intergenerational practice often see it as one means to combat a range of social problems, reporting that it an excellent way that older members of the community can pass on knowledge and wisdom in relation to such things as parenting methods, dealing with addiction, managing frustration and anger and dealing with personal needs. According to people like Arfin (2004b), the young in turn often transmit hope, energy, and innovation and tend to pass on optimism to seniors who are struggling with their needs.

It was certainly the case that people involved in the four case studies concluded that having the young and old together can help people better deal with their social and personal problems. As one person from the Kimberley region said:

*Everyone up here knows that when kids are having trouble they go and live with an aunty or grandparent who the family knows has some special wisdom or can help in some way...the grandparents got a way with the grannies (grandchildren) that just seems to work...projects like Yiriman is just a way of formalising this and it really does work.*

It also seems that intergenerational exchange can be an important way of diverting young people away from some of their troubles. At the very least, during the time young people are involved in intergenerational exchange programs with seniors and involved with some kind of formalised activity, they are usually kept away from social troubles. One of the reasons so many senior people get involved is because they see Yiriman as a way of making a difference to young people's future and providing practical ways of stopping harmful behaviour and replacing it with respect. Equally, many of the funding agencies responsible for providing money to projects such as these is they see it as a means of "achieving outcomes" such as "harm minimisation", "reducing alcohol and substance use", "addressing the increased incidence of youth suicide" and "a diversion from juvenile crime and anti-social behaviour".

An important element in the SVP was to find ways to steer young people in positive directions. This they attempted to achieve by providing weekly opportunities for informal talk with seniors. In these sessions, young people spoke candidly with their mentors on a one-to-one basis about a variety of things including their aspirations for the future. As one young person commented, this helped them gain knowledge about alternatives to those that they had considered.

*It's exciting...because you meet new people and learn about other stuff that we don't know; and you can learn from your like older people, like good stuff...everything, subjects, work, um about TAFE stuff and Uni stuff...I want to be a Nurse and learn about Nurse stuff..*

## Taking care of others, taking care of self: building health, motivation and resilience

Intergenerational exchange is also good for building health, motivation and encouraging physical and social resilience. In most cases, emotional and social support was provided by the older more experienced person to the younger less



experienced person in the relationship. In other cases, both the young and seniors got opportunities to talk about other health and social issues. One young person said that he got to “talk about social issues, like bullying or divorce or something like that that’s happening”. Another claimed that it helped “how I feel about things...how I take things”. Other young participants in the SVP had similar things to say about the value of relationships in offering support:

*Just having my mentor to talk about my parents divorce with was really helpful.*

*Explaining what I was doing at school in my videoing project really helped me work out what I was doing and how I could get through all my work.*

Another person reflecting on a different program offered:

*Both young people and seniors can be confronted with terribly difficult things and they are expected to do this on their own. One of the things I think we help do is offer people an ally, someone that they can go through it all with, someone who immediately breaks the isolation and loneliness often associated with youth and the aging experience.*

Participation in an intergenerational program also provided a context for the development of identity for many young people. A program manager reflected,

*Through self-expression they were starting to get an outside view of who they were, where they wanted to go, and then the audience congratulating that and providing a horizon-opening function [to see things as if they could be otherwise].*

A young person spoke about her rise in confidence as a consequence of contact with seniors. “I have become more confident. The teacher told me that I did a good interview and I should be proud of myself”.

The sense of pride that was created for young people who have not excelled at school is reflected well in the following quote.

*...my grade 5 and 6 teacher was there and I haven't seen him for probably 6 years possibly...for me to talk to him and him see me do what we'd put together and stuff like that, for me was kind of good because he'd seen what I'd become...*

The comments of a support worker who witnessed the growth in skills and confidence amongst young people on one intergenerational project also revealed a sense of pride in their accomplishments, “when you allow people the opportunity to contribute... young people [do] step up when they’re given the opportunity to involve themselves and to contribute and when they feel that their contribution is valued”.

Another young person reported the sense of being ‘honoured’ that she seemed to experience as a result of getting along with a group of older people. As she described:

*...We went crayfing with him and some other of the locals and they caught a few crayfish and then they gave some to us because we took the time out to get to know them, and I supposed he didn’t really know any younger generation people and that they could be so caring. I really liked the fact that he had a heart to give something to someone younger.*

It was not only the young people that experienced these kinds of feelings. Many seniors in the SVP reported feeling an upsurge of motivation after engaging with the young people in the program.

Not only does walking help maintain healthy relationships between the young and elders, it also helps to encourage the maintenance of healthy individuals. As one elder said, “good to have ‘im bush here: to show young people for hunting, sugar bag, and country. Exercise is good, we need it” (cited in Yiriman, 2004a). Through Yiriman walks, young people also get a first hand experience of alternatives to their town-based ways of living. As one young man said, “there’s a lot of bush tucker out here. You don’t have to go shopping out here you can exercise and get your feed for free” (cited in Yiriman, 2004a). Often in these settings the young and seniors learn things together and from each other. As one senior woman involved with Yiriman reported, “I learnt lots of things about diabetics’ food and I enjoyed hunting for bush food. All the ladies had good fun walking around. They feel much better going bush”. (cited in Yiriman, 2004a).

Across the variety of programs observed, the older person provides support to the younger, less experienced person in the majority of mentoring relationships. However, sometimes the situation is reversed. For example, ‘Computer Links’, one of the School Volunteer Program’s courses, involves ‘reverse mentoring’, whereby Year 10 and 11 students assist older people to gain knowledge and skills for using computers. During these sessions, as young people lead and model various activities, they begin to realise the importance of their own skills to assist other members of the community. A program manager commented on the sense of accomplishment that is created for young people through these sessions: “...it’s also benefiting the young people who are teaching them (the older people) on a one-to-one basis because it builds their self esteem by showing that ‘gee they know something more than this older person knows’...”.

Another clear theme that emerged during the research was the forging of alliances between young people and others and the strength of these alliances in building young people's capacity to "spring back from adversity" (Fuller, McGraw & Goodyear, 1999, p. 159). In other words, intergenerational contact helps build conditions that allow people to become more resilient to hard times or outside threats. In a number of cases people expressed a view that a strength of intergenerational contact is that it helps those who might otherwise be isolated and dealing with personal or social challenges on their own. As one person said:

*Both young people and seniors can be confronted with terribly difficult things and they are expected to do this on their own. One of the things I think we help do is offer people an ally, someone that they can go through it all with, someone who immediately breaks the isolation and loneliness often associated with youth and the aging experience.*

Two young participants in the SVP had similar things to say about the value of relationships in offering support:

*Just having my mentor to talk about my parents divorce with was really helpful.*

*Explaining what I was doing at school in my videoing project really helped me work out what I was doing and how I could get through all my work.*

These claims, that building strong connections and alliances between young people and others helps them better deal with their many challenges, is supported in the literature concerned with resilience which identifies the crucial nature of the establishment of positive relationships with caring adults (Beltman & MacCallum, 2006). Indeed some of the international research claims that the single most important element in build resilience in young people is caring relationships with characteristics such as empathy and respect (Laursen & Birmingham 2003).

## **Taking care of community facilities and working together: building practical projects together**

Another important outcome of much intergenerational exchange can be the building of practical projects that are of value to the community. As Sagggers, et al. (2004, p. 113) remind us, work with young people often has as one consequence the carrying out of projects that help build and maintain community facilities and services. Often these projects are not possible, have been neglected or are too expensive to be built in other ways. The combined energy and skill of the young and seniors can and does produce

some remarkable things. In their study of Indigenous mentoring programs MacCallum et al. (2004) noted that the efforts of the young and old resulted in the making of community gardens, walking trails, children's playgrounds, the creation of public art work, the maintenance of aged care facilities, the restoring of old boats, the running of special education courses for children, the hosting of recreational events for the disabled and the planning and hosting of community sporting events.

There was a range of examples of this occurring in the case studies. For example, the Bankstown project resulted in the creation and publishing of community resources in the form of a series of oral histories. In addition, a series of posters of images from the stories were produced and displayed in a range of places. As part of the School Volunteer Program, Mentors Across Generations in Communities (M.A.G.I.C) emphasises adult mentors voluntarily assisting in one-off or short-term projects throughout WA schools.

### **Care of the environment**

The Yiriman Project has had a profound impact on land care. Indeed one of the crowning features of Yiriman has been how it has encouraged young people and their elders to carry out burning and fire management work, take care of Indigenous Protected Areas, study and manage fish and other animal resources, collect and restore bush medicine stocks and control introduced species of animals and plants.

Often the effects of this work have been long term. As one person said, "the things we have built, like handrails for the elderly or public art in playgrounds, stay there for a very long time. As well as showing people about what can happen when oldies and young people work together the stuff helps the public by being there and being of use".

Much of this kind of work also itself encourages intergenerational exchange. For example, building projects undertaken under the auspice of intergenerational exchange projects often create public spaces that are used by families. As one expert on mentoring observed:

*I can think of at least a dozen projects that had young people and older mentors building structures that themselves encourage intergenerational exchange...like there is an adventure playground that I know about. It must attract hundreds of seniors and their grandchildren. It was built by an older guy and his mates working with unemployed young people.*

## Having fun and enjoying ourselves: creating delight with each other and building joy

Another important outcome clearly evident in the case studies and focus groups discussions was the dual outcomes of delight and fun. Although rarely acknowledged in the literature, many with whom we spoke and spent time with acknowledged that they came away from the intergenerational experience having had considerable fun and having enjoyed themselves. As was the case in the study undertaken by Saggars et al. (2004, p. 112), both young people and their elders counted as a most necessary element in motivating their involvement, the importance of having a good time and enjoying themselves. As one Aboriginal elder recounted, “our children and young people love spending time with us...and we with them”. Another person interviewed recounted:

*Many of us have great memories of the time we spent with our grandparents and older people when we were young. My own kids were so insistent on staying with their Nana each weekend...when it didn't happen they got cranky with us. There is something magic about this and I reckon it has a fair bit to do with the joy that both get out of time with each other. Too often we forget that this is also important when designing programs.*

Indeed, a mark of all four case studies was their success in the breaking of each generation's stereotypes of the other as boring, objectionable and/or uninteresting. In contrast in these cases both generations spoke of their time with each other as exciting, entertaining and even “cool”.

In part, this is because of the element of difference. By definition, intergenerational exchange demands the bringing together of people who have some degree of diversity in their interests. The intergenerational relationship is founded on exposing others to something that is novel, varied from the ordinary and new. It involves taking both parties out of the mundane and exposing them to something fresh. One might say that intergenerational exchange pushes the boundaries of the commonplace and in so doing brings people into the strange and stimulating.

As one person remarked:

*We forget sometimes that both the youth and the elders really, really enjoy themselves when they go away with each other. They enjoy each other's company. They absolutely love the storytelling around the camp-fire at night.*

Comments like the following were common amongst those involved in the focus groups, “it was a wonderful experience” (young person), “[everyone] enjoyed the process” (teacher), “[they] were thrilled to have their work published” (teacher).

## Learning together for the future: building skills, finding work and creating career opportunities

Consistently the literature refers to the power of intergenerational exchange in supporting learning, skill development and career enhancement. Often intergenerational programs are referred to as ‘co-learning programs’, emphasising the “transfer or sharing of experiences, knowledge or skills between older and younger persons” (Feldman, Mahoney & Seedsman, 2002, p. 4).

A broad group of young people represented in the focus groups identified themselves as increasing their skills and knowledge through interacting with older people. Older people, including mentors and community group members, were identified as providing knowledge and skills. As one program manager stated:

*Value; value...I've said it before and I say it all the time; one can never underestimate the value to a child of the involvement of older people, people who are prepared to spend time and pass on their knowledge; perhaps reading, teaching...running and playing with a ball; it's that investment, adding value to someone else's life.*

A young person acknowledged that his mentor helped him in the area of career development when he said that, “it's exciting...because you meet new people and learn about other stuff that we don't know; and you can learn from your older people, good stuff...everything, subjects, work, about TAFE and Uni”.

A young person from a different intergenerational program found spending time with older people very rewarding and stated that:

*For some of us it was actually nicer to hang out with the older generation than what it was to hang out with our own generation... not saying anything's wrong with ours...but with the older generation they are able to give you more knowledge on the area, where to go for the best surf.*

Not all young people developed skills and knowledge directly through their interactions with old people. However, this often occurred as an indirect consequence of the exchange. For example, some young people received training in skills such as interviewing before they met with older people. Others received training in skills such as using audio-visual equipment and drama to help represent the information

that they gathered from talking to older people. One young person involved in the Bankstown project said:

*...we've got all of these skills in the media, and interviewing and music, and all sorts of stuff like that and I just think that the whole idea and concept and everything about it is just great.*

A support worker involved in a community based project acknowledged the importance of skill development for helping young people who may not have excelled at school feel 'empowered', "it lets them develop on their own level, instead of an academically minded level. I feel that's why they are so keen and want for it to keep on going because they've been empowered".

A young person made a similar remark:

*...I love doing hands-on sort of stuff, I will admit I'm a semi-illiterate sort of person...but I've always had a passion for art and {the program} gave me the opportunity to use that.*

As one person involved in Radio Holiday said, intergenerational exchange can help the young and old acquire both specialised and general social skills. "In addition to using digital media they (both young and old) are acquiring skills such as timetabling, learning how to listen and being polite".

There was also considerable evidence from this research that intergenerational programs play an important part in the preservation of important cultural traditions. For example, Yiriman trips are certainly a powerful means of intergenerational exchange because of the important nexus that exists between young people, elders, country and long standing traditions. Bird Rose offers a powerful example of this when she recounts the guidance she received from her friend and teacher Jessie Wirrpa. Jessie Wirrpa taught Rose the practice of calling out to the 'old people for country', those guardians of the land who had returned to their country upon dying. Rose describes it in this way:

*When she took me walkabout she called out to the ancestors. She told them who we were and what we were doing, and she told them to help us. 'Give us fish', she would call out, 'the children are hungry'. When she was walking through country she was always with a group, and that group included the dead as well as the living (Rose, 2004, p. 167).*

In this way, intergenerational practice becomes a means by which young people can recognise that their place in the world is shaped by prior existence. This practice introduces to children and young people the importance of respecting the legacy that has been left by those (both human and the inanimate environment) who came before them (Muecke, 2004, p. 69).

In a way, we see in these conventions a profound intergenerational practice, one that demands that young people not only spend time with their living elders but also their dead ones too. Perhaps this means that here we see the ultimate in intergenerational exchange where the opportunity exists for young people to cross many more than two generational borders.



CHAPTER SIX:

# UNDERSTANDING PRACTICE

---

Part of the task of this report is to discuss how practitioners can encourage effective intergenerational exchange. Therefore, it is important to discuss the elements of success a little more abstractly but in a way that allows people from a range of different settings to apply what has been said to their situation.

There is a range of ways of trying to conceptualise models for intergenerational exchange. In order to help further people's understanding of how it can be done, we will start with an examination of the models others have devised to help encourage intergenerational exchange.

One of the features of these models is that they often tend to be reliant on cause and effect, are couched in terms of stepwise progressions, universalise practice, reduce sets of highly complex contingencies to simple prescriptions that will work 'everywhere' and/or present practice in binary or oppositional ways.

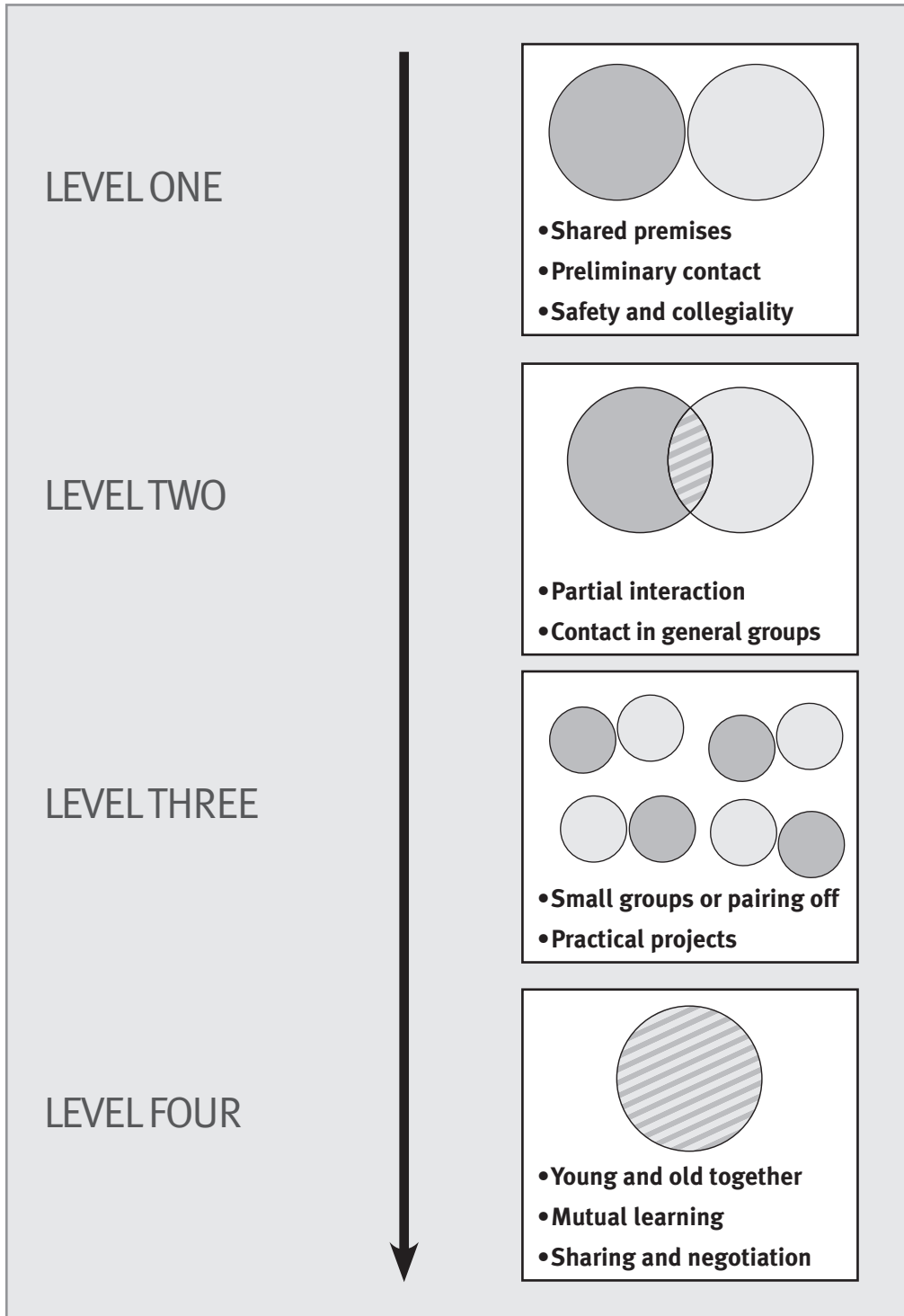
To help avoid this tendency in 'best practice' modelling this report has chosen to present its insights through reference to a series of metaphors taken from the case studies.

## DIFFERENT WAYS OF DEVISING INTERGENERATIONAL EXCHANGE MODELS

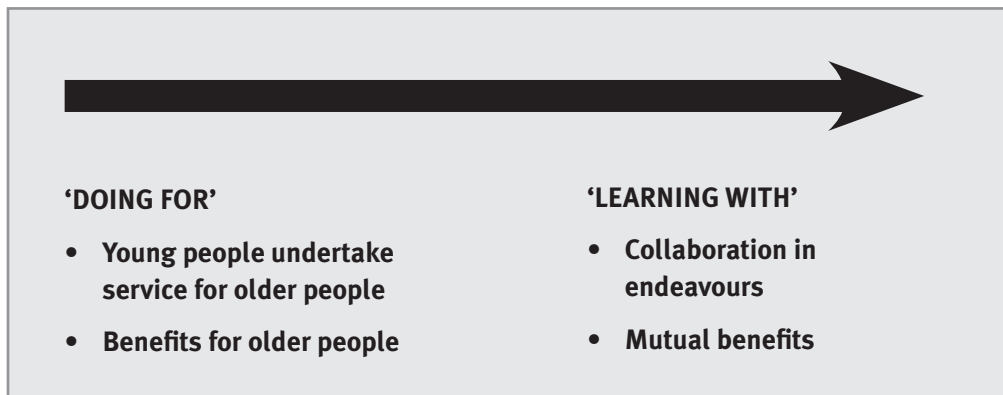
As previously discussed in Chapter 2, Whitehouse et al (2000, p. 768) posit that there are at least four types of intergenerational practice based on various levels of interaction between the generations. In this way, they present a model of four disparate or contrasting forms of intergenerational exchange (see Figure 3). The first type involves organisations arranging activities for the young and old to be housed or run out of the same premises. Often this strategy is used as a means of establishing preliminary contact and setting up relationships between a generational group and the hosting organisation. In other cases, establishing a domain or zone for each general group is an essential part of creating a sense of safety and collegiality. The second type of interaction involves partial interaction in programs with a small level of contact occurring between each of the general groups. For example, young people may make an initial short visit to an elder's residence or a space elders feel is theirs. Often this is also used to help build towards longer term and more extended contact. The third type or level of interaction involves the young and elderly forming working groups or pairing off, often to carry out a concrete project or activity together. In the fourth type, which Whitehouse et al. (2000) notes is rarely achieved, interaction involves the young and old creating a mutual learning and/or work environment where outcomes are negotiated and shared.

Manheimer (1997, p. 81) also employs an intergenerational program rationale typology. However, in this case the proposed model involves the use of the idea that intergenerational exchange can be tracked along a continuum. Manheimer characterises intergenerational programs along a line, with a human service model of 'doing for' at one end, and a community development model of 'learning with' at the other (Figure 4 depicts this kind of model). 'doing for' programs involve young people undertaking service related activities such as visiting aged-persons homes. Through helping the aged, young people are seen to develop positive attitudes towards the elderly. 'Learning with' programs involve young people collaborating with, or being instructed by, older people in educational or artistic endeavours. The focus with 'doing for' programs is on the benefits that such activities bring to the elderly, not young people. 'learning with' programs, on the other hand, emphasise more the mutual benefits that can be brought about by intergenerational contact.

**Figure 3: Intergenerational practice as levels of interaction**



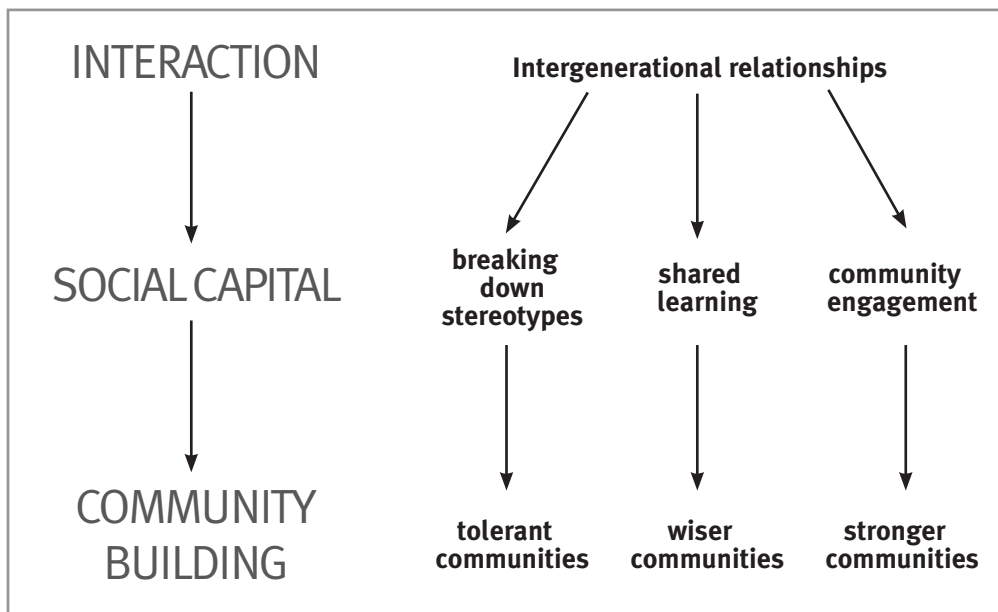
**Figure 4: Intergenerational practice on a continuum**



Others build their models around the idea of differing degrees or factors of success. Here models draw on the notion that layers of modes of practice exist, often with steps leading from less to more successful.

In terms of the discourse surrounding most intergenerational initiatives promoted in Australia (and certainly in the United States), the model of success often proposed is one that centres on a simplistic relationship between these sorts of individual and collective benefits and the community strengthening that is seen to result. Figure 5 shows these kinds of relationships.

**Figure 5: Intergenerational practice in terms of benefits**



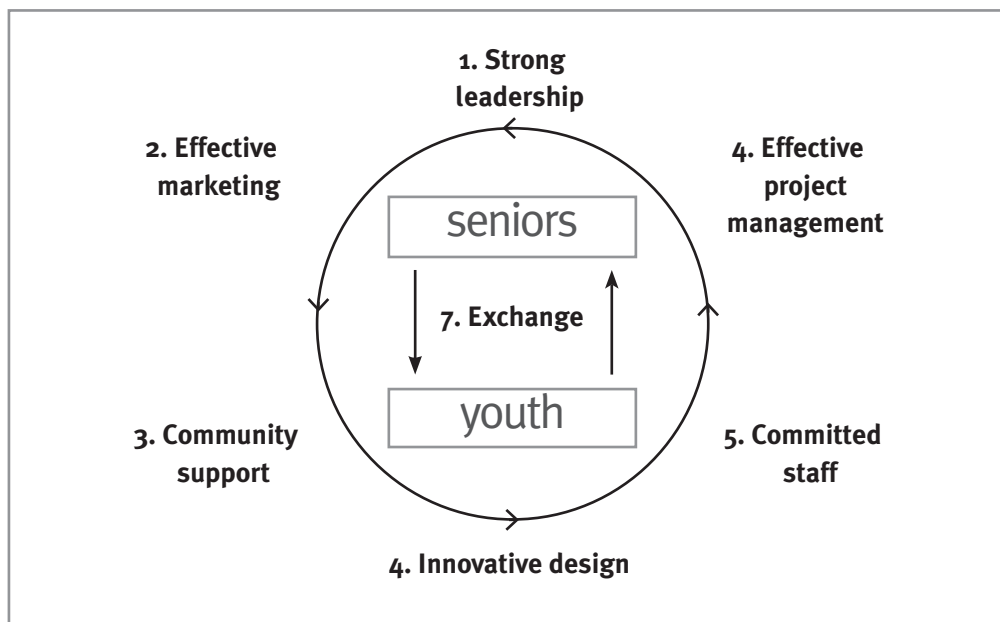
At times this is conceptualised as a linear model of cause and effect. At other times modes of practice are presented in terms of a general cycle of program effectiveness. The key concept underlying this model is that there exists some connection between different modes of intergenerational exchange. Here, practice is something that involves considerable circularity.

Feldman, Seedsman and Dench (2003, p. 4) have generated such a model. They identify six factors that are the key of sustainable organisational management in intergenerational exchange:

- support from key stakeholders;
- well established network systems;
- succession planning;
- marketing of project activities;
- information sharing and documentation that ensures the recording and storage of community and institutional memory; and
- evaluation of project activities, processes and outcomes to support future strategic decision making.

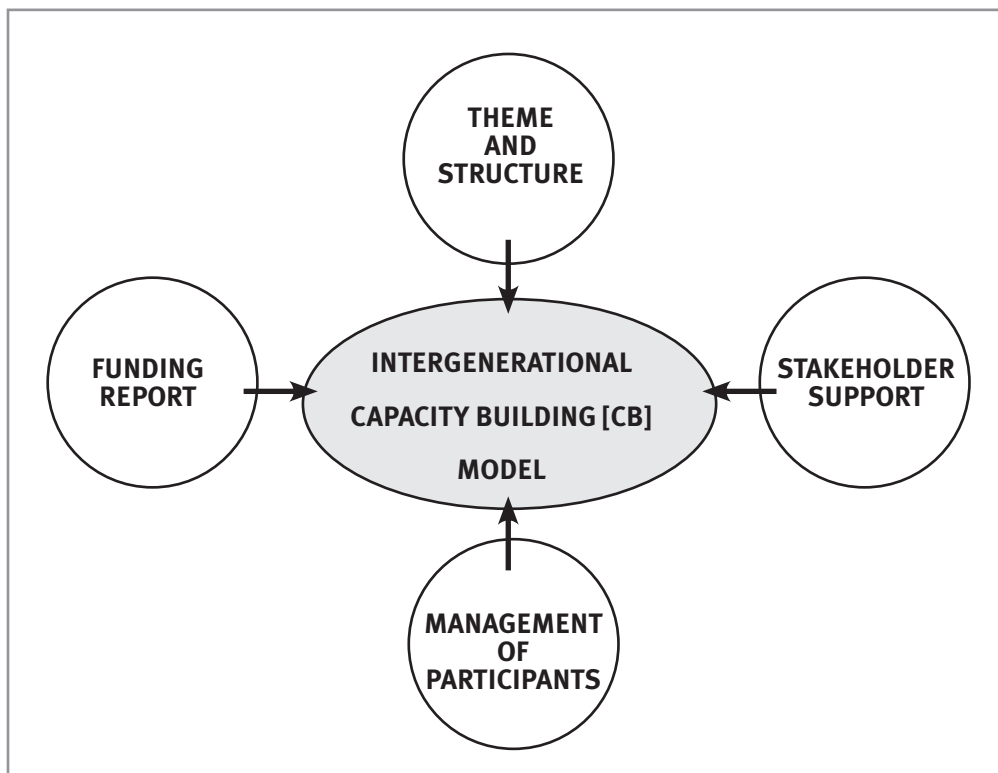
Here each factor is thought to be influenced by other factors, which are in turn influenced by other factors in what amounts to a cycle of dynamic practice, as shown in Figure 6.

**Figure 6: Intergenerational practice as cyclic**



Other models incorporate the idea of causal and cyclic relationships between practice and outcomes. For example, one group of Australian researchers (Feldman et al., 2003, p. 23) outline what they refer to as the Intergenerational Capacity Building (ICB) Model (see Figure 7). This is based on the importance of: a strong theme and organisational structure; a strong stakeholder base for sustained support; effective management of participants; and sustained funding.

**Figure 7: The ICB Model**



This model allows for considerable differences in the features of successful intergenerational exchange programs. It postulates that in some cases, one element (such as funding) may not be an overriding issue, whereas others—such as time and community commitment—are key elements in a successful program. However, what is emphasised is that at least a number of these elements must be present before good intergenerational practice can be expected.

## METAPHORS FOR PRACTICE

Developing models that act to conceptualise and order all forms of intergenerational exchange is one way to help understand the many and diverse forms of practice. However, there are a number of presuppositions that must be accepted if one were to proceed in this way. The first is that it is possible to devise models that make sense in all circumstances and communicate the breadth of difference in practice. The second is that most audiences speak in models or that they are meaningful to practitioners. The third is that practice is ordered, rational and tidy. Finally the development of models often involves the will to make conclusions universal and absolute.

For a number of reasons, this form of conceptualisation is not entirely helpful. First, it has not been possible to make universal claims about intergenerational exchange in Australia. The idea and practice as understood in the Australian context is very new. This research project was always relatively small in scope, and therefore the insights gained have been partial and in many ways provisional.

However, more than anything else, developing models can lead those adopting them to ignore the importance of tensions in practice. Work with young people, particularly work that sees young people come into contact with others is by its very nature fraught with tensions. As mentioned earlier in the report, the very idea of youth often implies difficulties and problems in social relations. Often programs are caught between the pressure to achieve outcomes at the same time as follow a certain process. Many are caught between their desire to focus on young people's strengths at the same time as responding to community concern about young people's deficiencies. Youth workers, for example, are routinely confronted by a range of ambivalent attitudes towards young people (see Palmer, 2003).

In contrast to developing models in this way the report will draw out features of intergenerational exchange using a series of metaphors taken from the case studies. We suggest that these metaphors signify important conceptual points about the practice of intergenerational exchange. All of the metaphors go on to symbolise that intergenerational practice demands negotiating the many tensions that confront program designers.

As Lakoff (2004, p. 54) says, there is tremendous power in an image to communicate a breadth of ideas. Indeed to a large extent we organise our thought using frames or metaphors. For example, we often talk about 'society' as if it is a body. We say that it has to sit on a 'solid foundation', it can crumble or fall, it is 'solid' or 'weak' or that it needs to be 'built'. To observe this is not simply to make a pedantic point. According to Lakoff (2004, p. 54-55) metaphors or frames are "mental structures that shape the way we see the world" and help us organise how we act. For example, in the political domain when the word tax is added to relief it evokes a set of images that sees tax

being treated as an affliction, something to be reduced, something to be minimised. As a consequence it can be very difficult to introduce reforms premised on the need for increased public expenditure when such a metaphor is popular.

If this notion is accepted, then metaphor not only shapes the way we see the world, it shapes “the goals we seek, the plans we make, the way we act, and what counts as a good or bad outcome of our actions” (Lakoff, 2004, p. xv).

Throughout the research people spoke in metaphors. For example, many talked about a mentoring relationship between the young and seniors as involving a shared journey. In this way the metaphor of the pilgrimage was evoked. Others spoke about intergenerational exchange as a way of countering “society’s ills” or helping make “communities healthy”. Here, medical and biological metaphors were called up. It was also common to use the metaphor of war, particularly when thinking about the constraints facing those seeking intergenerational exchange. For example, one person spoke about “confronting the enemy (in this case poor self esteem) head-on” while others routinely referred to the “battles” that young people had to deal with.

Therefore, there are a number of good reasons to draw on metaphors to help conceptualise intergenerational practice.

### Fire as a metaphor for the importance of risk and regeneration in intergenerational exchange

Yiriman’s use of the practice of fire burning offers us one metaphor for better understanding intergenerational exchange. Growing up for many of us involves being taught that fire is dangerous and to be avoided. Here fire is conceptualised as something that causes harm, even death to those who play with it or get too close to its heat. Fire then becomes a metaphor for destruction and pain, that which causes much distress and that which must be avoided at all costs. Indeed, for much of the past one hundred years fire management regimes involved eliminating the risk of fire, punishing those who started fires and clearing or removing any potential fuel for bushfires.

In contrast to western conceptions of fire as danger and devastation, most Indigenous Australians’ systems of knowledge and land management treat fire as a technology that helps regenerate country. Traditionally Indigenous communities used fire as a means to clean up country, help ‘rubbish country’ rejuvenate, sustain diverse ecologies and keep people healthy. In addition, it is used as a means to assist in the process of hunting, helping bring bush tucker to fruit, make camps safe and as a way to communicate with other groups. As they moved through their various tracks of land Indigenous people would burn to create a mosaic of rich and renewed areas with plants and animals coming alive as a consequence of regular burning. Burning in this



way is something that produces all kinds of positive effects. Not surprisingly for many of those associated with Yiriman fire serves as a metaphor for growth, restoration and regeneration. It is an act that is intricately tied up with caring for country and community. In Indigenous use of fire is something that brings with it some dangers. However, Aboriginal people are confident with and confident in fire, as something that if managed carefully and with regularity can help regenerate country and people.

Interestingly there are some parallels here with modernist treatment of 'risk'. To a large extent, risk represents something to be avoided, constrained and/or minimised by those governing. As Beck (1992) says, establishing regimes of risk management is a central marker of modern forms of government. Typically 'risk' is seen to stand in the way of good youth practice and is treated as something program designers need to carefully constrain, even eliminate.

Nowhere is this the case more than in contact between the young and seniors. As discussed earlier, this is in part because of the way that youth and ageing is treated in popular discourse. Both are at one and the same time often conceptualised as those who are at risk of being harmed and doing harm to the other. Classically media representations suggest that the elderly are vulnerable to physical attacks from young people. On the other hand, the image of the 'dirty old man' often signifies the risk of sexually exploitative seniors who pose a danger to young people.

As a consequence, by definition the act of intergenerational exchange involves risk. At the very least, intergenerational exchange brings those involved into a field of risky relationships. Indeed one might say that intergenerational exchange demands by its very nature the embracing of risk, dealing with threats by bringing together threats.

Perhaps in this way Indigenous treatment of fire as regenerative stands as a metaphor for the importance of risk as an element in intergenerational exchange. Like western conceptions of fire as dangerous often those dealing with youth practice see risk as something to be treacherous and to be shunned. In contrast, often those involved in intergenerational exchange treated risk as potentially generative rather than simply constraining. In other words, risk is seen as something that can enrich and 'fire up' contact between seniors and young people.

## Walking as a metaphor for intergenerational exchange as community

Yiriman's use of the practice of walking offers us another metaphor for better understanding intergenerational exchange. For those involved in Yiriman, walking is not simply a recreational activity or something that just involves physical exercise. Here, walking is also a means through which the young get exposed to education, hunt and collect food, meet other groups, travel to and carry out ceremonies, burn areas of land and carry out other land management practices, send messages and

communicate, 'freshen up' paintings, collect and produce material culture such as tools and other implements, 'map' boundaries and collect intelligence and build knowledge. Indeed as mentioned earlier, walking brings into being many things for the Yiriman Project.

In part, walking works because of the significance of country in traditional lore and custom (for example see Langton, 1998, Rose, 2004, Richards, Hudson & Lowe, 2002). However, walking also works for others because it allows the young and their elders to travel on a literal and symbolic journey together sharing time, space and the experience of community. Walking also works because, by its very nature, it involves animation and physical activity. This means that it is both helpful in creating and maintaining physical health and energising relationships between the old and young.

Indeed, the metaphor of walking along together seemed to be called up regularly by those with whom we talked. As one person said, "when I think of intergenerational contact I immediately think of those beautiful moments I had with my grandma...alone together walking along the beach, skimming pebbles in the sea, holding hands, sharing secrets and making promises that we wouldn't tell mum and dad". This picture of the young and old walking side by side seems to engender in people a yearning for human encounters that are full of fun, care, respect and an experience of mutuality.

Not surprisingly, there was also evidence from the research that the metaphor of walking and travelling together actually appears to have found a place in much of people's talk about intergenerational exchange. Indeed many used the following kinds of phrases to describe their work: "journeying together", "voyages of discovery", "walk the walk, not talk the talk", "walking along a similar path", "on the road to finding each other", "running along well" and "coming along in leaps and bounds". Some even described intergenerational exchange as a "movement", something that "is gaining momentum" and "a huge step in the right direction".

Perhaps this is because walking helps symbolise and bring about a multiplicity of things. As was observed earlier, walking is something that can be done in tandem with many other things. It is also something that helps bring other things to fruition. In this way walking as a metaphor symbolises the importance of going along together for its own sake and also as a way of encouraging other outcomes. Walking as a metaphor partly stands for the value of an inter-relationship between processes and outcomes in intergenerational practice.

Walking together also represents for many the opportunity to build an experience of community. As was the case for Yiriman, other intergenerational exchange programs had the young and seniors coming together, often for the first time in a long time. This directly contradicted many of the conventions that saw people marginalised from one other.

In each of the case studies, there was solid evidence that intergenerational exchange offers people opportunities to spend time with a variety of people from a range of different backgrounds. Indeed a fundamental premise for most involved in this kind of work was that it involves bringing together ‘strangers’ or those who have ‘become estranged’. In addition to spending time with each other the young and seniors involved often get to meet and work with others. For example, those ‘travelling’ with Radio Holiday got to work with artists, actors and musicians, share meals with tourists and record the knowledge of residents from very different geographic locations.

As was discussed earlier in the report, not only does walking act to bring people together, it also encourages them to work together. In each of the case studies, the intergenerational ‘journey’ involved people doing things together, often working on projects for mutual benefit and often on things that assisted others in the broader community. At least in part this is because, like the act of walking, intergenerational exchange encourages action.

As one of the Yiriman workers point out, walking or travelling together for a substantial period of time often encourages a deep and complex level of interaction. He says of the depth of intimacy, “often the most intense and powerful relationship building goes on while you are walking...there is something about walking together for a week that brings you into a real closeness...one of the truly great things about the Yiriman walks is that young people get to spend quality and intense time with other members of the community...we can’t underscore how powerful and long lasting this is...communities talk about it for months afterwards”.

In this way walking together symbolises the bringing of people into communion with those who are different. It stands as a powerful metaphor for intergenerational exchange as a means to build social contact between groups of people who otherwise might have limited dealings with each other.

## Caravanning as a metaphor for intergenerational exchange as performance

The notion of ‘caravanning’ offers us one metaphor to better understand intergenerational exchange through Radio Holiday, as caravans were both a literal part of the project and in the way they also represented wider purposes. For example, in Radio Holiday older-style caravans were purchased to literally move elements of the project between the remote and isolated sites of the shack communities that were the focal points. Caravanning, in this sense, links the community of home with the community of ‘away’ through travelling. The age of the caravans used also embodied an era that was passing—an era seen to be ‘golden’ and part of a quintessentially Australian experience—a holiday by the beach, a point of inquiry that was also an element of the project.

Second, the caravans were used to contain and display the artefacts of the project in much the same way that a caravan contains and reveals the markers of those who travel in them. Third, and unintentionally, they became a uniting feature in that they became a signature of the project through acting as a bridge between disparate communities, the young and older people who participated, and the way they engendered participation and commitment; a recognisable badge of Radio Holiday along the north and northwest coast of Tasmania. Caravanning as a metaphor can be seen to build links between communities who would not be together if not for the location, energy and enthusiasm of participants.

More than this, the caravans also became part of the performances developed for the project, literally as a backdrop to project multi-media images. They were used to demarcate a performative space through being drawn up into circular shape (corral) providing a focal point, or performance space, in the middle. Consequently, performance can also be seen as a metaphor to reveal certain aspects of intergenerational exchange in the way it signifies a number of different aspects of the project. For example, caravans became sites or repositories and ultimately performative spaces where the photos, artwork and memories of each shack community were ‘held’ and represented. In visiting a caravan you could see each location made visible through the art work of a visual artist, and listen to the work of radio artists as a radio play developed from the stories of each local community was broadcast. Each caravan then could be seen to perform, represent and evoke a sense of place and associated community.

Each caravan became a living, travelling museum containing the oral histories and creative work generated by young people involved in the project and a cameo that represented the essence of each shack community as it is was recorded, studied and put on display by project team members. In this sense, each caravan provided cultural sustenance to those who visited it and performed community.

The caravans also represented the travelling component of Radio Holiday through taking back the stories of the shack communities where they were performed for the benefit of the residents. These performances were also produced in regional centres and a capital city as a way of sharing the stories of these communities, thereby profiling the changing face of regional development, foregrounding the creative work of the young people in the project, and witnessing, affirming and honouring older people’s experiences through young people’s eyes. In the words of one young person, these performances were also “gifts”:

*Well I think like at the end like when we was doing the shows and stuff just like knowing we was doing something for someone else to make them happy, like these...communities have nothing like that... and especially not by young people and just us doing that for them was a gift to them in a way.*

And gift, understood through the theorising of Mauss (1967) and Hyde (1983), builds social bonds, implies reciprocity and is generative.

Consequently, the caravans became a place to ‘meet’. They represented a point of inflection where new creative work and existing memories of residents come together. In this way they represented conceptual, metaphorical and physical meeting places. In locations like Couta Rocks, for example, that has a permanent population of two, 150 people became audience members for that performance. Hence caravans in this sense provide a performative means of bridging between the young people who are participants in the project and the older people who are the repositories of the stories and history of these shack communities through literally bringing them together for performance.

The caravans were also a medium through which younger and older people came together. For example, one person who owned one of the vans and was previously characterised by his antagonism towards young people, offered to fix the springs and do it up, and subsequently became a mechanic who toured with the project and a valued resource. Another older couple with substantial health concerns, whose stories became a feature of one location, went on tour with the project conjointly with young people caring for, cleaning and proudly showing off the van and its contents to visitors. In this sense, these two groups of people found ways to ‘meet’ through the medium of the caravan.

Consequently, caravanning and performance provide powerful ways for understanding how intergenerational exchange is developed—always in specific locations between groups who might otherwise not come together—and performed, travelling together either literally or metaphorically; in short, made real through being aesthetically embodied with the intent of “knowing through doing and showing” (Alexander, Anderson & Gallegos, 2005, p. 1).

### “Ripples on a pond” as a metaphor for intergenerational exchange as creating unintended consequences and multiple outcomes

The metaphor of ripples on a pond was used by one youth worker to describe the multiple and long term consequences of intergenerational exchange. She said, of successful intergenerational contact “it is like the little pebble dropped in a pond, the ripple effect of those things goes on in a range of ways”.

Just as a rock dropped in a pond sends ripples far beyond it’s beginnings, also the benefits of genuine encounters between people of different generations can reach far beyond their original intent and place.

The ripple metaphor is important in that it reminds us that relationships do not exist in some kind of protected place that have no bearing on anything else around them.

A body of water cannot but be altered by its encounter with a raindrop or a stone. In the same way, community and social institutions change as relationships form or break down. A program may well seek to achieve a certain outcome or level of interaction between two people or a group, but human experience and research such as this, tell us that relationships are much more complex and far reaching than a discrete encounter between two people at a certain time.

In each of the projects examined in the case studies, a series of aspirations or outcomes was intended or anticipated. As mentioned previously, these varied from building community, combating social exclusion, educating, diverting young people from anti-social behaviour to encouraging respect for the elderly. However, in each case a range of unintended consequences occurred. In the first Bankstown oral history project, skills that were previously undervalued, such as being able to speak a certain language that was uncommon in the school yard but vital for interviewing seniors, were brought out in the open and cherished, giving new confidence to the young people involved. A short two-hour interview between a young person and an older person led to publications, community gatherings and the development of new skills—a group of young people involved in one of the projects subsequently began a writing group. At the launch of one of the Bankstown projects, the State Library historian observed people who did not share common languages mixing together and being part of something bigger than themselves.

A student who is part of the school volunteer program told of the experience of his mentor telling about her ongoing grief as a result of her husband's death. This encounter was very meaningful for the student, but not necessarily an initial aim of the school's mentoring program.

One of the central features of the research undertaken has been the multitude of effects of intergenerational exchange. For example, as a consequence of this kind of work people have passed on their knowledge of how to cook crayfish, told one another about their life stories and taught others how to surf. People have swapped their skills in fire management for scientific knowledge. They have explored the internet together and performed stories of each other's lives. They have fixed caravans together and shared meals. Many of these things were not intended consequences of the exchange. Rather they occurred inadvertently as part of a process that saw different people respond to the contingencies that confronted them.

Another feature of much of the work is that the encounters often do not stop at the conclusion of the project. The senior man from Bankstown who told his story in Polish to a young man from the local high school now has more confidence to tell his stories to others. The couple, who began fixing a caravan and ended up touring around Tasmania with Radio Holiday, now have a changed view of young people which permeates their lives. The Indigenous young men who walked on country as part of

a Yiriman trip with the Kimberley Regional Fire Management Project, now have new connections and skills, both modern and traditional, which do not fall away when the walking is finished.

As a consequence of these kinds of exchanges new relationships have emerged in communities. These relationships in turn have a life of their own, often beyond the short term of projects and often in ways that could not have been imagined.

## Cyber space as a metaphor for intergenerational exchange as a way to build safe spaces

The idea of cyberspace offers one other metaphor to help better understand intergenerational exchange. Described in avant garde terms such as ‘the information highway’, ‘the electronic frontier’ (Hawisher, 2000) and ‘a computer generated neighbourhood’ (Markoff, 1993) ‘cyberspace’ is a liminal and temporal space created through complex computer-mediated activities. Cyberspace was a term coined by fiction-writer William Gibson in 1982 and refers to the collective imaginary of space, or “consensual hallucination” as Gibson puts it, that is thought to characterise computer networks.

In Greek the term Cyber comes from the word ‘helmsman’ or person who pilots a ship. This serves as a nice metaphor for how those involved in intergenerational exchange navigate their way through their relationships with others. However, unlike a ship’s pilot, those who move into cyberspace have less physical constraints upon them. This allows the opening up of possibilities for new kinds of social relationships and the forming of alliances across boundaries (Delanty, 2003).

As well as serving as a useful metaphor, cyberspace is also literally something that a number of intergenerational exchange programs are making use of. For example, the SVP used cyberspace as a pedagogical tool, influencing the learning of seniors and the young through technology. At first glance it may appear that those involved were confined to individual rows of desks in the Computer Links room. However, what was actually happening was that the students sat in pairs with their senior partners in front of desktop computers sharing an experience of a more liminal space, both in the room and in new kind of virtual spaces far beyond the confines of the ‘real’ space of the room.

A point worth making is that, through these new technologies, the young and old can abandon old distinctions between real and imaginary community. This makes possible the bringing together of ‘strangers’ in an environment that feels safer for them, a place that can involve considerable anonymity so that new intimacies can be forged between people who never actually meet and see each other.

The use of these new technologies—for example mobile phones, the TV, radio, the CD player, and the Internet—also enhance the mobility of those involved in intergenerational exchange. They make it possible to travel great distances in virtual space and time creating new kinds of “dwellings” and places to meet others. They produce communion without necessarily propinquity, or nearness/proximity in time and space, allowing people to imagine themselves in a virtual community.

In the case of the SVP, as computer-mediated tasks unfolded, the pedagogy of ‘Computer Links’ emerged as connected to Learning Area content, but also to social interaction. As pairs of high school students and seniors extended the physical environment into ‘cyberspace’ by logging on-line to navigate web sites or send emails, the interaction became more shared with the young recognising their capacity to teach as well as learn. The layers of reciprocity and learning were then extended as a consequence of moving into this new space.

Although the School Volunteer Program provided a booklet detailing sequences of tasks, many partnerships transformed these guidelines to suit the elder learner’s needs. For example, some partnerships concentrated on using the program “Publisher” to create birthday cards; seniors could then send these cards to grandchildren who lived interstate or overseas. Featured across all social interaction was a respectful and egalitarian approach to pedagogy and relationships. As the following field note entry demonstrates, in many cases young people were extremely patient and supportive with their senior partner. “He spoke gently in a steady stream of suggestions, and really gave the student enough time to execute the tasks, prior to repeating instructions. He never intervened by taking over the mouse.” (Field Notes, SVP case study, August 2005)

Technology-assisted pedagogy, as seen in programs such as Computer Links, can also promote cognition in ‘cyberspace’ as learners use time in an asynchronous way. For example, the high school student or the senior can return to the original on-line activity several days later to reflect with an on-line audience; learners’ or mentors’ original responses can then be adjusted as knowledge, skills and attitudes change. Valentine & Holloway (2002) who studied online interactions, argue that the asynchronous nature of online interactions offer opportunities for learners to position themselves in new ways. In relation to seniors, Wright (2000) also sees advantages of extended on-line interaction. Learners are not immediately hampered by extraneous factors such as appearance or social class. From this viewpoint, as seniors become self-directed learners, they gain confidence in using a wider repertoire of literacy and numeracy practices.



On a broader level, as seniors learn to function effectively in 'cyberspace', they widen their social engagement as active members of communities. Seniors in rural centres who have had frequent involvement in on-line communities appear to have lower stress levels and greater opportunities for developing friendships and support networks (Wright, 2000). As these seniors also tend to access information relating to health and retirement, their engagement in 'cyberspace' may also ease the cost of health care and associated services (Millar & Falk, 2000).

CHAPTER SEVEN:

# CONCLUSIONS

---

This final chapter draws together the findings of the research and summarises the main points in relation to each of the research questions. Conceptualisations of intergenerational exchange lead to consideration of a definition for the Australian context. Then follows a summary of the features of good intergenerational practice, the challenges and constraints that impact on programs, and the ways gender and culture may both constrain and enhance intergenerational exchange. The many benefits of intergenerational exchange are noted, and the chapter concludes with a discussion of the role intergenerational exchange programs might play in fostering individual development and in building community capacity.

## CONCEPTUALISATION OF INTERGENERATIONAL EXCHANGE

Evidence from the literature review, interviews, focus groups and the case study work indicates that the idea of intergenerational practice is relatively new in Australia. As a consequence it is not yet part of many people's policy repertoire. In contrast, there is a much longer standing tradition of intergenerational practice in the United States stretching back at least twenty years.

This means that the term 'intergenerational' is conceptually loose with little clarity about what the term might mean in the Australian context. However, it does not mean that youth practice involving older adults is new in Australia. Indeed, one could argue that initiatives designed to strengthen relationships between young people and

seniors are as old as youth work in Australia (see Bessant et al., 1998), or even older in the case of Indigenous cultures, as demonstrated in the Yiriman case study.

Also important to observe is that, by and large, intergenerational work tends to focus on bringing together the old and young children with some regular mention of the involvement of young people between 12–25 years. As a consequence there is a considerable absence of programs that explicitly seek to bring young people together with the ‘middle’ age groups, although this happens regularly for many in the context of school, sporting activities and employment. In effect, however, many intergenerational programs do bring together multiple generations, as the coordinators and managers of many programs are members of the middle generation.

In comparison with the elements of definition from the review of literature (see Table 7, where italics is used to highlight the new findings), the research reveals that intergenerational exchange in the Australian scene may be represented in terms of multiplicity. Instead of a focus on interaction between two generations, one young and the other old, the focus would be better placed on multiple generations. In addition, the outcomes of intergenerational exchange are many and varied: some are expected while others are unanticipated; some are tangible in form while others are less tangible and interpersonal in nature. These unanticipated and intangible outcomes are crucial elements in building community as they become the bonds and bridges that grow to form networks and interconnections. Also, the space in which the exchange occurs is dynamic, whether it be in terms of geography, cyber space or interpersonal space. Further, there are instances of intergenerational exchange in Australia going back many generations. Indigenous communities that have continued to practice intergenerational exchange, can model ways to engage with each other and build intra- and inter-cultural communities.

Thus, it is possible to develop a broad inclusive definition of intergenerational exchange that might guide its further development in Australia. Intergenerational programs involve active engagement and participation of multiple generations in activity that involves mutual exchange in a range of formal and informal spaces. Effective intergenerational exchange produces a range of tangible and intangible outcomes that can contribute to the development of both individuals and communities. This kind of intergenerational practice is additional to the development of family relationships, but can involve any age group, from young children to the very aged members of our communities.

**Table 10: Key elements of definitions relating to intergenerational practice from the literature review and the research**

From Literature	From Research
<p>Intergenerational practice involves exchange between generations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purposeful and ongoing exchange of resources and ideas</li> <li>• Increasing co-operation or exchange between two generations</li> <li>• Bringing younger and older people together for mutual benefit</li> <li>• Definitions often focus on exchange between those over 55 and under 18, with little scope for involvement of others</li> </ul>	<p>Intergenerational practice involves exchange between <i>multiple</i> generations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purposeful and ongoing exchange of resources and ideas</li> <li>• Increasing co-operation or exchange between two <i>or more generations</i></li> <li>• Bringing <i>different generations</i> together for mutual benefit</li> <li>• In practice, <i>exchange is multi-generational with a range of involvement of others</i></li> <li>• <i>Exchange can involve mutuality and reciprocity</i></li> </ul>
<p>Intergenerational practice involves engagement at a range of levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The concept implies interaction, not just awareness</li> <li>• Levels of interaction can include sharing premises and partial interaction up to mutual learning with negotiated and shared outcomes.</li> <li>• A continuum of engagement can move from ‘doing for’ to ‘learning with’</li> </ul>	<p>Intergenerational practice involves engagement and <i>participation</i> at a range of levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The concept implies interaction, <i>action</i> and awareness</li> <li>• Increasing levels of <i>interaction</i>, engagement and <i>participation</i> are evident alongside mutual learning with negotiated, shared and <i>unanticipated outcomes</i></li> <li>• <i>A range of engagement forms</i> were evident including ‘<i>acting on</i>’, ‘<i>sharing</i>’ and ‘<i>learning with</i>’</li> </ul>

**Table 10: Key elements of definitions relating to intergenerational practice from the literature review and the research (continued)**

From Literature	From Research
<p>Intergenerational practice has a range of intended outcomes:</p>	<p>Intergenerational practice has a range of intended and <i>unanticipated</i> outcomes:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harnessing the strengths of each age group to enhance the life experiences of the other.</li> <li>• A keenness to resolve conflict and tension in community settings</li> <li>• Bringing two generations together to foster attitudinal change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Identifying and harnessing the experiences of each age group to enhance the life experiences of the other</i></li> <li>• <i>Developing understanding of the life experiences of other generations</i></li> <li>• <i>Participating in and making culture</i></li> <li>• <i>Bringing generations together to foster change in skills, behaviour, and attitudes</i></li> </ul>
<p>Intergenerational practice happens in a variety of settings:</p>	<p>Intergenerational practice happens in a <i>range of formal and informal spaces</i>:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools and educational institutions</li> <li>• Voluntary and community groups</li> <li>• Local government</li> <li>• Sporting clubs</li> <li>• Churches, ethnic and cultural development groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools and educational institutions</li> <li>• Voluntary and community groups</li> <li>• <i>Indigenous communities</i></li> <li>• Local government</li> <li>• Sporting clubs</li> <li>• Churches, ethnic and cultural development groups</li> </ul>

## FEATURES OF SUCCESSFUL INTERGENERATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

Available evidence also indicates that much of what goes by the name of intergenerational work is often an aspect, method or element of other approaches. For example, often what gets described as mentoring draws heavily upon the involvement of older volunteers. Many of the programs discussed in the literature could also be described as one element of a community development strategy or one part of youth work practice (Granville 2002, p. 8). What has been demonstrated is that intergenerational exchange is both burgeoning and growing in popularity. As such it is a field of practice likely to 'fire up' contact between seniors and young people.

Projects to assist in this regard are growing and becoming more elaborate in their form and features. For example, this research has documented some concrete examples of programs that bring young people and seniors together to enrich each other's lives including:

- mentoring;
- role modeling;
- coaching;
- exchange involving shared knowledge about the internet, email, and other new technologies;
- volunteering;
- work in schools;
- arts-based work including film making and theatre; and
- and walking events involving Aboriginal young people and their elders.

In order for these kinds of programs to successfully develop intergenerational exchange, there needs to be:

- opportunities for the development of relationships;
- availability of a range of support, from both within an organisation and the broader community;
- opportunities to do a range of things together; and
- ways to take account of program specific issues.

However, programs invariably find that success is dependent on overcoming a range of different challenges.

## CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS

Also identified have been the challenges and constraints that make this kind of work difficult including:

- negative stereotyping and ‘othering’ of the old and young;
- social, personal, historical and economic circumstances, which contribute to the young and old becoming distant from each other;
- language differences;
- ‘risk management’ culture;
- specific operational problems (which may be specific to a program and shaped by local conditions, such as reliance on too few people, tensions between outcomes and the process of relationship building, lack of public space); and
- limits in some ideas about intergenerational exchange.

## THE IMPACT OF GENDER AND CULTURE

Aspects related to gender and cultural background were found to variously constrain or enhance intergenerational exchange. Some programs experienced difficulties gaining participation of particular groups, for example boys in some community service oriented programs and male mentors in school and community based programs. The lack of male mentors is well documented in the literature and has been found to relate to availability at particular times and issues around risk management. However, this research established that arts and media based activities were found to engage boys and ensure their participation in intergenerational exchange, to the extent that differences between boys and girls were not evident. In addition, there is evidence that where traditional lore and custom is practiced there is much to be gained by drawing on and being sensitive to cultural conventions. In particular, incorporating cultural practice into intergenerational exchange programs is clearly important in work with Indigenous young people.

In some instances language and cultural differences, in addition to age differences, can appear too wide to bridge, but some programs were able to highlight those differences and use them to energise and shape the relationships formed between the generations. The Bankstown oral history projects and the Yiriman Project are excellent examples of how this can be achieved, but in different ways. For example, the fact that the practice of walk on country is an extension of traditional cultural life and something that elders see as intricately tied up with the maintenance of community life was critical in the success of the Yiriman Project. Here being sensitive to gender difference and being

sensitive to the cultural practice of gendering activities was also important in shaping intergenerational exchange that worked for Indigenous communities.

## OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS

The research revealed that both young people and older Australians, in particular, claim they get much out of these exchanges with other generations including the chance to:

- spend time with each other, break down barriers and develop new understandings of each other;
- share experiences and get to build their community;
- learn about history and build stories in young people;
- to be diverted away from trouble;
- become healthier, more motivated and more resilient, and engage in important 'identity' work;
- get to work on practical activities that take care of or develop something important to the community;
- have fun and enjoy themselves; and
- build very concrete and often highly specialised skills, find work and were given career opportunities.

Table 8 provides a full list of the benefits and outcomes identified through the research. In addition, it provides a comparison between the benefits of intergenerational exchange as reflected in the literature, and those generated by the research. As can be seen, some of these benefits are new (*italics is used to highlight the new findings*), some confirm previous research, and some recast previous benefits and outcomes in a new light providing depth of understanding. In the next section, contributions to community building, these new understandings are elucidated.



**Table 11: Summary of the benefits of intergenerational exchange from the literature review and the research**

From Literature	From Research
<p>Benefits for older people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change in mood, increase in vitality</li> <li>• Increased ability to deal with mental and physical illness</li> <li>• Increase in sense of worth</li> <li>• Opportunities to keep learning</li> <li>• Relief from isolation</li> <li>• Renew own appreciation of past life experiences</li> <li>• Re-integration into family and community life</li> <li>• Development of friendship with younger people</li> <li>• Practical assistance with activities such as shopping and transport</li> </ul>	<p>Benefits for older people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Get to spend time with younger people and combat feelings of isolation</i></li> <li>• <i>Increased self-esteem and motivation</i></li> <li>• <i>Share experiences and have an audience appreciate their achievements</i></li> <li>• <i>Reflect on earlier life experiences</i></li> <li>• <i>Respect, honour and recognition of their contribution to the community</i></li> <li>• <i>Opportunities to keep learning</i></li> <li>• <i>Get to learn about young people</i></li> <li>• <i>Development of skills, particularly social and new technology skills</i></li> <li>• <i>Have fun and involved in physical activities</i></li> <li>• <i>Pass on traditions, language and culture</i></li> <li>• <i>Exposure to difference</i></li> <li>• <i>Development of friendship with younger people</i></li> <li>• <i>Practical assistance with activities such as shopping and transport</i></li> <li>• <i>Helping build strength during adversity (resilience)</i></li> </ul>

**Table 11: Summary of the benefits of intergenerational exchange from the literature review and the research (continued)**

From Literature	From Research
Benefits for younger people	Benefits for younger people
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in self-worth and confidence</li> <li>• Less loneliness and isolation</li> <li>• Access to adult support during difficult times</li> <li>• Increased sense of social responsibility</li> <li>• Greater positive perception of older adults</li> <li>• More knowledge of issues facing seniors</li> <li>• Provision of practical skills</li> <li>• School attendance improvement</li> <li>• Enhancement of literacy development</li> <li>• Less involvement in violence and drug misuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Become <i>healthier</i></li> <li>• <i>Encouraging optimism, helping building strength during adversity and encouraging hardiness (ingredients for resilience)</i></li> <li>• Access to adult support during difficult times</li> <li>• Increased sense of <i>civic and community responsibility</i></li> <li>• <i>Learn about history and the stories of others</i></li> <li>• <i>Building of their stories</i></li> <li>• <i>Fun and enjoyment</i></li> <li>• <i>Gain respect for the achievements of older adults</i></li> <li>• Provision of practical skills</li> <li>• School attendance improvement</li> <li>• <i>Support in building career and jobs</i></li> <li>• <i>Exposure to difference</i></li> <li>• <i>Diversion from “trouble”, particularly drugs, violence and anti-social behaviour (at least while they are involved in activities)</i></li> </ul>

**Table 11: Summary of the benefits of intergenerational exchange from the literature review and the research (continued)**

From Literature	From Research
Benefits for the broader community	Benefits to the broader community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rebuilds social networks, developing community capacity and a more inclusive society</li> <li>• Breaking down of barriers and stereotypes</li> <li>• Building of social cohesion</li> <li>• Enhancing and building culture</li> <li>• Alleviates pressure on parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Building</i> social networks and developing <i>bridges across the community</i></li> <li>• Breaking down of barriers and stereotypes</li> <li>• <i>Challenge stereotypes</i></li> <li>• <i>Encouraging and modelling civic skills</i></li> <li>• Enhancing and building <i>language</i> and cultural development</li> <li>• <i>Building, maintaining and revitalising community facilities and public infrastructure</i></li> <li>• <i>Producing public art</i></li> <li>• <i>Encouraging volunteerism</i></li> <li>• <i>Act as the impetus for other community projects</i></li> <li>• <i>Provide volunteers for community services and encourage people to work with other community groups</i></li> <li>• <i>Create community stories, public history and shared accounts of the past</i></li> <li>• <i>Take care of the environment and manage land care</i></li> <li>• <i>Divert crime and anti-social behaviour</i></li> <li>• <i>Encourage community health</i></li> <li>• <i>Fun and delight</i></li> </ul>

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO COMMUNITY BUILDING

In addition to examining the range of intended and unanticipated consequences of intergenerational exchange this research has sought to explore the relationship between intergenerational programs and the potential to foster and develop resilience, enhance social connection and interactions and build both individual and community capacity. It is fitting to finish the report with a review of the research in this regard.

While many place great faith in intergenerational practice as a mechanism for achieving all manner of social and economic outcomes, there is as yet little evidence to confirm a casual link. In part, this may be because many of these perceived benefits are themselves hard to measure. For example, intergenerational practice is often claimed to increase social capital and decrease social inclusion, but these two ideas are themselves hotly contested and very difficult to tie down. This means that although there is much perceived value in this style of practice, as yet, this has yet to be adequately established.

On the other hand, evidence from this research is that many are keen to find ways to bring young people and seniors together. There is also evidence of outcomes that correspond to the features found to be important in the development of individual resilience and to increases in various forms of social capital.

Notwithstanding earlier discussion of the research findings, the most illuminating set of themes that emerged from this research was the multiple dimensions to and multifarious effects of intergenerational exchange. What struck the research team was that intergenerational exchange happens in many different settings, with many different generations involved (not simply the oldest and the youngest), prompted by different interests and challenges, using diverse methods and with an assortment of practical outcomes. We could conclude that good intergenerational exchange tends to encourage multi-dimensional contact; contact across social groups, contact across interests, contact across community organisations, with multi-outcomes and encouraging interdependent relationships. We saw evidence that intergenerational exchange works in regional Australia as well as in urban settings. Those involved often included children, young people of many ages, the not so young, seniors and a range of others in between. A range of organisations and institutions are taking on this work in a range of settings. Intergenerational exchange appears to be flourishing in the work of schools, labour market programs, youth organisations, Indigenous communities and arts production. Initiatives are helping to achieve many things including helping with school attendance, repair community facilities, divert people from anti-social behaviour, build respect and encourage civics. To put it another way, intergenerational exchange operates to encourage intersubjective connections across broad range of social groups and generations.

What consistently struck the research team most was that although the initiatives often appeared simple (for example the Yiriman Project organising trips where the young and elders walked together), in fact there were many dimensions and the outcomes were often numerous and complex. Indeed if there is a single defining feature of the intergenerational exchange examined by this research it is that far from being simple and one-dimensional it is complex and multifaceted, instead of leading to single effects it produces the conditions that encourages a great many things.

This is particularly so in relation to two elements of the practice: the building of relationships and the building of networks. Consistently the research confirmed that intergenerational exchange is instrumental in building positive and substantial relationships between those who would otherwise not have come into contact. Regularly people participating in the research argued that successful intergenerational exchange provides a wonderful vehicle for relationships between young people and others.

Often these relationships were strong, intimate or what the social capital theorists call vertical social bonds. These more traditional kinds of links are most often associated with what Tonnies described as *Gemeinschaft* or premodern forms of community with an emphasis on the maintenance of small numbers of close personal relationships, often with strong attachments to place and kin, with a fairly unitary culture and faith in traditional institutions, values and sanctions. Some intergenerational exchange methods used tend to encourage this kind of social capital formation. In particular, the kind of mentoring that encourages the building of a one-on-one relationship between a young person and an older mentor tends to create depth of bonds. This kind of social cohesion is critical in building resilience in young people.

As Deveson's (2003) review of the literature on resilience concludes, these kind of close and personal associations between the young and older are crucial in helping both groups contend with life's challenges. Indeed the literature consistently concludes that the conditions typical of one-on-one intergenerational exchange help forge stable and substantive relationships that are tremendously important in helping people "spring back from adversity" (Fuller et al. 1999, p. 159). In other words, intergenerational contact which focuses on depth of relationship helps build conditions that allow people to become more resilient to hard times or outside threats. In a number of cases people expressed a view that a strength of intergenerational contact is that it helps those who might otherwise be isolated and dealing with personal or social challenges on their own.

These claims, that building strong connections and alliances between young people and others helps them better deal with their many challenges, is supported in the literature concerned with resilience which identify how crucial is the establishment of

positive relationships with caring adults. Indeed some of the international research claims that the single most important element in build resilience in young people is caring relationships with characteristics such as empathy and respect (Laursen & Birmingham, 2003).

Interestingly this kind of work closely parallels the evidence from those who advocate the recreation of old social ties. For example, Robert Putnam has convinced many with his argument for increased social capital and the building of trust and social reciprocity to bridge gaps between groups and build social cohesion (Putnam, 2000). In his famous book *Bowling Alone* he cites an extraordinary array of data to substantiate his view that the demise of American life and economics is attributable to the decline in social connection and community capacity and argues for a systematic rebuilding of links between the young and the old, neighbours and their friends and the recreation of traditional and civic associations.

However, much intergenerational exchange also promotes a different kind of social cohesion. In addition to encouraging deep connections between individuals, much of the work the research reviewed helped encourage contact that had breadth as well as depth. Indeed many of the cases of intergenerational exchange examined saw those involved establishing 'weaker' links or what the social capital theorists call horizontal social bonds. These kinds of social bonds might well be associated with what the classic sociologist Emile Durkheim called organic solidarity or society not based on commonality but on difference and a more diverse division of labour and sociality. To put it another way, just as evident in intergenerational exchange programs was the creation of opportunities to encourage more interdependent sets of relationships between a range of people across a range of settings.

Certain kinds of intergenerational exchange methods tended to encourage this kind of social capital formation. In particular, intergenerational initiatives that had groups of people working together or involved a broad range of people promoted weaker but more 'bridged' disparate social connections. For example, ventures such as the Big hArt and Yiriman Project see those involved building a broad range of contacts, often for short periods of time but across a diverse set of interconnected settings. Arguably this kind of social cohesion is critical in building networked communities.

Interestingly as Delanty's (2003) review of the literature on community concludes, these kind of weaker but diverse links between the young and older are equally crucial in helping equip young people for the future and encourage the conditions for civics and modern communities. In contrast to more traditional kinds of community these kind of relationships are most often associated with what social capital theorists describe as bridging social capital. Rather than celebrating more traditional forms of community people like Richard Florida (2002) argue that the creation of socially diverse forms of community create more economic and social opportunities.

According to Florida, modern social systems are multifaceted so that the citizen routinely needs to negotiate a social existence involving movement across social milieux and multiple social connections. As a consequence young people and seniors need to be more widely connected than was previously the case, with reduced strength but increase diversity of networks.

As researchers like Castells (1996) argue, modern social relations are characterised by networks of association that are more displaced, less familial, instead occurring across a fluidity of networked connections. As communications technology and so called ‘virtual’ or ‘cyberspaces’ emerge young people are better prepared if they have a multitude of weak or thin social connections. As a consequence the types of communities that young people live in are less confined to location and family and more global and multifarious. In other words, intergenerational contact which provides opportunities for weak but diverse relationships to occur and which foster multi-layered networks to be established are likely to better prepare those involved for their participation in present and future encounters with others. This was borne out during the research with considerable evidence that intergenerational initiatives build young people’s diverse social contacts. Indeed this is precisely what projects such as Radio Holiday, Yiriman, the Bankstown oral history projects do best; encouraging varied contacts across social networks.

Several ‘experts’ spoke about intergenerational exchange in terms of building bridges across gaps or divides. These bridges allowed many of the programs to draw young people, seniors and others into a rich tapestry of social relations. The effect of creating these loose ties can have far reaching and unintended consequences well beyond the imagination of those who carry out such work. For example, when asked to talk about the benefits to individuals and communities those participating consistently claimed that its fundamental importance was in creating preliminary pathways to many and varied social networks.

In response to a review of literature concerned with how to promote resilience in young people, Fuller (2004) developed a list of factors that help parents and others provide the “elasticised rope around [young people’s] middle that helps them bounce back”. In particular he claims that young people’s resilience is best supported when:

- family life is promoted so that young people feel like their thoughts, tastes and opinions are listened to;
- young people are given age appropriate responsibilities and meaningful participation;
- young people are encouraged to build friendship groups that are as wide and diverse as possible and have groups of friends outside their immediate school;

- young people are involved with at least one sporting group or civic association;
- young people are gently encouraged to mix with positive people;
- young people are linked with a trustworthy adult outside the family;
- young people get to celebrate cultural events and important occasions;
- young people's spontaneity is encouraged;
- young people get to see adults dealing with difference; and
- young people know and mix with resilient adults that model optimism.

Significantly these features of resilient conditions for young people match up with the most illuminating features of intergenerational exchange borne out in this research. Indeed when people described their experience of intergenerational exchange initiatives they appear to be describing activities that are well suited to the creation of hardy young people able to rise above the many challenges and difficulties they face. Not only does it offer the means through which substantive or deep relationships between the young and others (bonding social capital), but it has much value as a means of promoting and enriching thin but broad networks and connections (bridging social capital).

In returning, then, to a conceptualisation of intergenerational exchange programs, this research has found that the most effective programs are those that combine opportunities for and support both bonding and bridging forms of social capital. These programs are elaborate, complex, and multifarious in every way. Metaphor is a particularly helpful way to conceptualise intergenerational practice as it takes account of complexity and multifarious forms of practice. Further it allows identification and exploration of the tensions inherent in intergenerational exchange.

In these kinds of settings, where young people and others have an opportunity to work together and build a diversity of networks, the consequences can be many and varied. Intergenerational exchange can prompt outcomes that are a little like the act of burning a bush fire, the act of walking, the act of caravanning and the act of throwing a pebble into the still waters of a pond. At one and the same time intergenerational exchange is like the metaphor of the bush fire that creates a mosaic of growth and regeneration. It creates the conditions that can help clean up, heal and restore the state of community relationships as well as cultivate the seeds of growth. Similarly intergenerational exchange can provide an enormous stimulant for communities to 'take steps' or 'go along together'. In this way it is a little like the act of walking, an act that in itself helps animate and set in motion a great many things including learning, talking, socialising, working and exercising. Likewise one could suggest that good intergenerational exchange is a little like caravanning. Like those



who get to travel in a caravan, participants in intergenerational exchange experience both the safety and intimacy of living in close proximity to others at the same time as the joy and benefits of mobility and the chance to meet and build contacts. In a similar fashion intergenerational exchange encourages the building of bridging networks similar to the process of 'surfing' cyberspace. Like those who enter the virtual community of the internet, intergenerational exchange takes participants into liminal and temporal spaces that immediately extend their social networks. Finally the benefits and consequences of intergenerational exchange could be likened to the impact produced when one drops a rock in a pond. The ripple effect of genuine and interconnected encounters between people across the generations can extend well beyond the original encounter and participants.

# REFERENCES

---

- Abbs, P. (2003). *Against the flow: Education, the arts and postmodern culture*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Abrams, J. & Giles, H. (1999). Intergenerational Contact as Intergroup Communication. *Child & Youth Services*, 20(1/2), 203–217.
- Aday, R. H., McDuffie, W., & Sims, C. R. (1993). Impact of an intergenerational program on black adolescents' attitudes toward the elderly. *Educational Gerontology*, 19, 663–673.
- Aday, R. H., Sims, C. R., & Evans, E. (1991). Youth's attitudes toward the elderly: The impact of intergenerational partners. *The Journal of Applied Gerontology*, 10, 372–384.
- Alexander, B. K., Anderson, G. L., & Gallegos, B. P. (Eds.). (2005). *Performance Theories in Education: Power, Pedagogy, and the Politics of Identity*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Alexenberg, M. & Benjamin, M. (2004). Creating Public Art through Intergenerational Collaboration. *Art Education (Sept)*, 13–18.
- Allport, G. W. (1954). *The Nature of Prejudice*. Cambridge: MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Anderson, T. (1999). Aging Education in Higher Education: Preparing for the 21st Century. *Educational Gerontology*, 25, 571–579.
- Angelis, J. (1992). The genesis of an intergenerational program. *Educational Gerontology*, 18, 317–327.
- Arfin, P. (2004a). LI needs programs to unit the generations. *Intergenerational Strategies Website*. <http://www.igstrats.org/unitedgerations.htm>

- Arfin, P. (2004b). Island needs the young and the old. *The New York Times*, Sunday, June 6, 2004.
- Auerbach, D. N., & Levenson, R. L. (1977). Second impressions: Attitude change in college students toward the elderly. *The Gerontologist*, 17(4), 362–366.
- Bales, S., Eklund, S., & Siffin, C. (2000). Children's Perceptions of Elders Before and After a School-Based Intergenerational Program. *Educational Gerontology*, 26, 677–689.
- Barton, H. (1999). Effects of an Intergenerational Program on the Attitudes of Emotionally Disturbed Youth toward the Elderly. *Educational Gerontology*, 25, 623–640.
- Beck, U. (1992). *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London: Sage Publications.
- Beltman, S., & MacCallum, J. (2006). Mentoring and the development of resilience. *International Journal of Mental Health Promotion*, 8(1), 17–28.
- Berns, R. M. (1997). *Child, family, school, community: Socialization and support*. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.
- Bessant, J. (1997). Free market economics and new directions for youth workers, *Youth Studies Australia*, 16(2), 34–40.
- Bessant, J., Sercombe, H., & Watts, R. (1998) *Youth Studies: An Australian Perspective*. Melbourne: Longman.
- Binge, L. (2004). Kurungal walk takes kids back to country. *Kantri Laif: News for Indigenous Land and Sea Managers across North Australia*, (1), 5–6.
- Botsman, P., & Latham, M. (2001). *The Enabling State: People Before Bureaucracy*. Sydney: Pluto.
- Brabazon, K. (1999). Student improvement in the intergenerational work/study program. *Child & Youth Services*, 20(1/2), 51–6.
- Brennan, D. (1998). Government and civil society: restructuring community services. In B. C. P. Smyth (Ed.), *Contesting the Australian Way: States, Markets and Civil Society*. (pp. 124–136). London: Cambridge.
- Bullock, J., & Osborne, S. (1999). Seniors', volunteers', and families' perspectives of an intergenerational program in a rural community. *Educational Gerontology*, 25, 237–251.
- Butler, B. (2001). Empowering young people—and ATSIC perspective, in 2nd National Youth development Conference proceedings, Adelaide, SA. [http://www.ausyouth.on.net/conference/conf\\_pdf/pg68.pdf](http://www.ausyouth.on.net/conference/conf_pdf/pg68.pdf)
- Butler, R. (1969). Age-ism: Another form of bigotry. *The Gerontologist*, 9, 243–246.
- Butler, R. N., & Lewis, M. I. (1982). *Aging & mental health positive psychosocial and biomedical approaches*. St. Louis, MO: C.V. Mosby.
- Cardland, D. K., & Kerr, S. (1977). The cross-generational program at Bucknell University: Older students in an educational setting. *Social Education*, 41, 494–497.

- Carroll, T. (Ed.) (2001). *The Bankstown oral history project*, 2001. Bankstown: BYDS.
- Carstensen, L., Mason, S. E., & Caldwell, E. C. (1982). Children's attitudes toward the elderly: An intergenerational technique for change. *Educational Gerontology*, 8, 291–301.
- Caspi, A. (1984). Contact hypothesis and inter-age attitudes: A field study of cross-age contact. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 47, 74–80.
- Castells, M. (1996). *The Rise of the Network Society*. Malden, Blackwell.
- Chapman, N. J., & Neal, M. B. (1990). The effects of intergenerational experiences on adolescents and older adults. *The Gerontologist*, 30, 825–832.
- Cherry, D. L., Benest, F. R., Gates, B., & White, J. (1985). Intergenerational service programs: Meeting shared needs of young and old. *The Gerontologist*, 25, 126–129.
- Colley, H. (2003). *Mentoring for social inclusion: A critical approach to nurturing mentor relationships*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Corbin, D. (1998). Intergenerational programs: HPERD's role in fostering the mental and physical health of older adults. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 69(8), 20–23.
- Couper, D. P., Sheehan, N. W., & Thomas, E. L. (1991). Attitude toward older people: The impact of an intergenerational program. *Educational Gerontology*, 17, 41–53.
- Cowlishaw, G. (1999). *Rednecks, Eggheads and Blackfellas: A Study of Racial Power and Intimacy in Australia*. St Leonards: Allen and Unwin.
- Davis, D., & Harrell, S. (Eds.). (1993). *Chinese families in the post-Mao era*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Delanty, G. (2003) *Community*. London: Routledge.
- deVaus, D., & Qu, L. (1997). Intergenerational transfers across the life course in Australia. *Bulletin on Ageing*, 2(3).
- Deveson, A. (2003) *Resilience*. Melbourne: Allen and Unwin.
- Durkheim, E. (1933) *The Division of Labour in Society*. New York: Free Press.
- Doka, K. J. (1986). Adolescent attitudes and beliefs toward aging and the elderly. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 22, 173–187.
- Dooley, S., & Frankel, B. G. (1990). Improving attitudes toward elderly people: Evaluation of an intervention program for adolescents. *Canadian Journal on Aging*, 9, 400–409.
- Duggar, M. L. (1993). *Intergenerational programs: Weaving hearts and minds*. Tallahassee, FL: Florida Council on Aging, Florida State Department of Education.
- Elder, J. K. (1987). The youth 2000 campaign. *Aging*, 356, 17–19.

- Ekstrom, C., Ingman, S., & Benjamin, T. (1999). Gerontology/environmental links in aging education: toward an intergenerational view of sustainability. *Educational Gerontology*, 25, 613–621.
- Erikson, E. H., Erikson, J., & Kivnick, H. Q. (1986). *Vital involvement in old age*. New York: Norton.
- Evans, I., & Ave, K. (2000). Mentoring Children and Youth: Principles, Issues, and Policy: Implications for Community Programmes in New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, 29, 41ff.
- Feldman, S., Mahoney, H., & Seedsman, T. (2001). Intergenerational curriculum: A two stage primary school project for promoting positive images of ageing. *Australasian Journal on Ageing*, 20(3), 35–41.
- Feldman, S., Mahoney, J.H. & Seedsman, T. (2002). Education for Positive Ageing: a partnership model for effecting sustainable outcomes. *Education and Ageing*, 17(1), 7–23.
- Feldman, S., Seedsman, T., & Dench, R. (2003). Building Intergenerational Capacity: A National Study of Intergenerational Programs. Available at URL: <http://www.staff.vu.edu.au/aura/Research/aura%20report.PDF>
- Fillmer, H. (1984). Children's descriptions of and attitude toward the elderly. *Educational Gerontology*, 10, 99–107.
- Florida, R. (2002). *The Rise of the Creative Class*. New York: Basic Books.
- Foner, A. (2000). Age integration or age conflict as society ages? *The Gerontologist*, 40(3), 272–276.
- Fox, S., & Giles, H. (1993). Accommodating intergenerational contact: a critique and theoretical model. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 4, 423–451.
- Fuller, A., McGraw, K., & Goodyear, M. (1999). Bungy jumping through life: what young people say promotes well-being and resilience. *Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 9(1), 159–168.
- Fuller, A. (2004). *Creating Resilient Families: Practical Solutions to Adolescent Problems*. Camberwell, Vic: Australian Council for Educational Research.
- Galbo, J.J., & Demetrulias D.M. (1996). Recollections of nonparental significant adults during childhood and adolescence. *Youth & Society* 27(4), 403–420.
- Giddens, A. (2000). *Runaway world. How Globalization is reshaping our lives*. New York: Routledge.
- Glass, J. C., & Trent, C. (1980). Changing ninth-graders' attitudes toward older persons. *Research on Aging*, 2, 499–512.
- Goff, K. (2004). Senior to senior: Living lessons. *Educational Gerontology*, 30, 205–217.
- Granville, G., & Ellis, S. (1999). Developing theory into practice: Researching intergenerational exchange. *Education and Ageing*, 14(3), 231–248.

- Granville, G., & Hatton-Yeo, A. (2002). Intergenerational engagement in the UK: A framework for creating inclusive communities. In Kaplan, M., Henkin, N., & Kusano, A. (Eds.), *Linking lifetimes: A global view of intergenerational exchange*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Granville, G. (2002). *A Review of Intergenerational Practice in the UK*. England: Beth Johnson Foundation, Centre for Intergenerational Practice.
- Greene, M. (2001). *Variations on a blue guitar: The Lincoln Centre Institute lectures on aesthetic education*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Griff, M. (1999). Intergenerational play therapy: The influence of grandparents in family systems. *Child & Youth Services*, 20(1/2), 63–76.
- Haber, E. A., & Short-DeGraff, M. A. (1990). Intergenerational programming for an increasingly age-segregated society. *Activities, Adaptation and Aging*, 14, 35–49.
- Hale, N. M. (1998). Effects of age and interpersonal contact on stereotyping of the elderly. *Current Psychology: Developmental, Learning, Personality, Social*, 17, 28–47.
- Hamburg Coplan, J. (2004). Some retirees yearn for tranquil living sans children, but experts ponder the effects on society as a whole. Available at URL: <http://www.igstrats.org/huneo4newsday.htm>
- Hamilton, G., Brown, S., Alonzo, T., Glover, M., Mersereau, Y., & Willson, P. (1999). Building community for the long term: An intergenerational commitment. *The Gerontologist*, 39(2), 235–238.
- Hanks, R. S., & Icenogle, M. (2001). Preparing for an age-diverse workforce: Intergenerational service-learning in social gerontology and business curricula. *Educational Gerontology*, 27, 49–70.
- Harris, P. (1999). Public welfare and liberal governance, In Peterson, A., Barnes, I., Dudley, J. and Harris, P. (eds). *Poststructuralism, Citizenship and Social Policy*. London: Routledge.
- Hatfield, T. (1984). Alternate generation education: A development curriculum for secondary schools. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 19, 223–234.
- Hawisher, G. (2000). Accessing the virtual Worlds of Cyberspace. Keynote Address to the Furman University National Symposium on New Information Technologies and liberal education. *Reprinted in the Journal of Electronic Publishing*, 6(1),1–13 University of Michigan Press (Sept. 2000).
- Hecht, D., & Fusco, D. R. (1995). Gender differences among early adolescents' motivations and expectations for service learning. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Northeastern Educational Research Association, Ellenville, NY, October 1995.
- Hendricks, J. (1996). Intergenerational relations: More smoke than fire. *The Gerontologist*, 36(1), 125–128.

- Henkin, Z. & Butts, D. (2002). Advancing an intergenerational agenda in the United States. In Kaplan, M., Henkin, N., & Kusano, A. (Eds.), *Linking lifetimes: A global view of intergenerational exchange* (pp.65–82). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Henkin, N., & Kingson, E. (1998/1999). Advancing an intergenerational agenda for the twenty-first century. *Generations*, 22, 99–105.
- Hirsch, B., Mickus, M., & Boerger, R. (2002). Ties to influential adults among Black and White adolescents: Culture, social class, and family networks. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 30(2), 289–304.
- Holland, S.H. (1996). PROJECT 2000: An educational mentoring and academic support model for inner-city African American boys. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 65(3), 315–321.
- Hutchinson, S. A., & Bondy, E. (1990). The pals program: Intergenerational remotivation. *Journal of Gerontological Nursing*, 16, 18–26.
- Hyde, L. (1983). *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Ikel, C. (1989). Becoming a human being in theory and practice: Chinese views of human development. In Kertzer, D.I. and Schaie, K.W. (Eds) *Age Structuring in Comparative Perspective* (pp. 45–68). Hillsdale New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Ingman, S. R., Benjamin, T., & Lusky, R. (1999). The environment: The quintessential intergenerational challenge. *Generations*, 22(4), 68–71.
- Intergenerational Innovations (2004) Benefits of Intergenerational Programs. *Intergenerational Innovations Website*. Available at URL: <http://www.intergenerate.org/resources>
- Intergenerational Strategies (2004) Benefits to intergenerational policy, programs and issues. *Intergenerational Strategies Website*. Available at URL: <http://www.igstrats.org/youthbenefits.html>
- Ivester, C., & King, K. (1977). Attitudes of adolescents toward the aged. *The Gerontologist*, 17, 85–89.
- Kantri Laif (North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance) (2004). Fire team on fire. *Kantri Laif: News for Indigenous Land and Sea Managers across North Australia*, (1), 8.
- Kaplan, M. (1997). The benefits of intergenerational community service projects: Implications for promoting intergenerational unity, community activism, and cultural continuity. In Brabazon, K. & Disch, R. (Eds.), *Intergenerational Approaches in Aging: Implications for Education, Policy and Practice*. New York: Hawthorn Press.
- Kaplan, M. (2001). A news article approach for promoting the ‘Intergenerational Perspective’. *Forum for Family and Consumer Science* 6(3), 1–5.
- Kaplan, M. (2004). Toward an intergenerational way of life. *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences*, 96(2), 5–10.
- Kaplan, M., Henkin, N., & Kusano, A. (Eds.). (2002). *Linking lifetimes: A global view of intergenerational exchange*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

- Kazemek, F., & Logas, B. (2000). Spiders, kid curlers, and white shoes: Telling and writing stories across generations. *The Reading Teacher*, 53(6), 446–451.
- Kiernan, H. (2002). Strategies to expand a penpal program from simple letters into a full intergenerational experience. *Educational Gerontology*, 28, 337–345.
- Keller, M. J. (1990). Intergenerational sharing: Teens and elderly for the arts (TEA). *The Journal of Applied Gerontology*, 9, 312–324
- Klintworth, G. (1996). Taiwan's international identity: 400 years in the melting pot. *Journal of East Asian Affairs*, 10, 373–394.
- Knapp, J., & Stubblefield, P. (2000). Changing students' perceptions of aging: the impact of an intergenerational service learning course. *Educational Gerontology*, 26, 611–621.
- Kretzman, J.P., & McKnight, J.L. (1993). *Building communities from the inside out*. Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, Northwestern University.
- Krout, J., & Pogorzala, C. (2002). An intergenerational partnership between a college and congregate housing facility: How it works, what it means. *The Gerontologist*, 42(6), 853–858.
- Kuehne, V. (1998/99). Building intergenerational communities through research and evaluation. *Generations*, 22(4), 82–87.
- Lakoff, G. (2004). *Don't think of an elephant! Know your values and frame the debate: The essential guide for progressives*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green.
- Langer, N. (1999). Changing youngsters' perceptions of aging: Aging education's role. *Educational Gerontology*, 25, 549–554.
- Langton, M. (1998). *Burning Questions*. Darwin: Northern Territory University.
- La Porte, A. (2000). *Oral history as intergenerational dialogue in Art Education*. *Art Education*, 53(4), 39–44.
- Lauland, A. (primary author) (1998). *Yes, you can: A guide for establishing mentoring programs to prepare youth for college*. Washington, DC: US Department of Education. (This book is an update and revision of an earlier U.S. Department of Education publication entitled One-on-one: A Guide for Establishing Mentor Programs). Available at URL: <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/YesYouCan/title.html>.
- Laursen, E.K. & Birmingham, S.M. (2003) Caring relationships as a protective factor for at-risk youth: an ethnographic study. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services*. 84(2), 240–246.
- Lohman, H., Griffiths, Y., Coppard, B. & Cota, L. (2003). The power of book discussion groups in intergenerational learning. *Educational Gerontology*, 29, 103–115.
- Luke, A. (1998). Getting over method: Literacy teaching as work in 'new times' *Language Arts, Urbana*, 75(4), 305–314.
- Luna, A. & Riemer, H. (1998/99). The 2030 center: An intergenerational agenda. *Generations*, 22(4), 76–78.



- MacCallum, J. & Beltman, S. (1999) *Mentoring in schools by members of the community: International Year of Older Persons Mentoring Research Report*. Canberra: Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs., Available at URL: <http://www.detya.gov.au/schools/publications/index.htm>.
- MacCallum, J. & Beltman, S. (2003). Bridges and barriers in Australia's youth mentoring programs. In F. Kochan, & J. Pascarelli (Eds) *Global perspective on mentoring: Transforming contexts, communities, and cultures* (pp.73–103). Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.
- MacCallum, J., Beltman, S., Palmer, D., Ross, C. & Tero, C. (2004). *Indigenous Mentoring Pilots Project 2001–2004: National Evaluation Report*. Canberra: Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training.
- MacCallum, J., & Macbeth, J. (1996). *Collaborative learning: Working together in small groups* [video and booklet]. Perth, WA: Murdoch University and Gripping Films.
- Manheimer, R. (1997). Generations learning together. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 28, 79–91.
- Markoff, J. (1993). *New York Times*, October 24, p.E7.
- Marshall, P. (Ed.). (1988). *Raparapa: All Right, Now We Go 'Longside the river'*. Broome: Magabala.
- Marx, M., Pannell, A., Parpura-Gill, A., & Cohen-Mansfield, J. (2004). *Educational Gerontology*, 30, 663–675.
- Mauss, M. (1967). *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (I. Cunnison, Trans.). New York: W. W. Norton.
- McCann, R., Kellermann, K., Giles, H., Gallois, C., & Viladot, A. (2004). Cultural and gender influences on age identification. *Communication Studies*, 55, 88(18).
- McCrae, D., Ainsworth, G., Hughes, P., Price, K., Rowland, M., Warhurst, J., Woods, D. and Zbar, V. (2003) *What Works, the Work Program: Improving Outcomes for Indigenous Students*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Michaels, E. (1989). *For a Cultural Future: Francis Jupurrurla Makes TV at Yuendumu*. Sydney: Art and Text.
- Michaels, E. (1994). *Bad Aboriginal Art: Tradition, Media and Technological Horizons*. St Leonards: Allen and Unwin.
- Millar, P., & Falk, I. (2000). Seniors Online: Online literacy and learning by senior citizens in rural centres. Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs. *The Adult Literacy and Numeracy Australian Research Consortium (ALNARC)*. Melbourne: The National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia.
- Miller, A. (1998). *Business and community mentoring in schools* (Research Briefs Research Report No 43): Department for Education and Employment, Available at URL: <http://www.dfee.gov.uk/research/report43.html>.

- Millward, C. (1998). *Family Relationships and Intergenerational Exchange in Later Life*. Working Paper No.15, July 1998. Australian Institute of Family Studies.
- Moody, H. R., & Disch, R. (1989). Intergenerational programming in public policy. In S. Newman & S. Brummel (Eds.), *Intergenerational programs: Imperatives, impacts, and trends* (p. 101–110). Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press.
- Muecke, S. (2004). *Ancient and Modern: Time, Culture and Indigenous Philosophy*. Sydney: University of New South Wales.
- Nesbit, B., Baker, L., Copley, P., Young, F. and Anagu Pitjantjtjara Land Management (2001). In Baker, R., Davies, J. and Young, E. (Eds) *Working on Country: Contemporary Indigenous Land Management of Australia's Lands and Coastal Regions* (pp. 187–198). Melbourne: Oxford University.
- Newman, S. (1997). History and evolution of intergenerational programs. In Newman, S., Ward, C. R., Smith, T. B., Wilson, J. O., & McCrea, J. M. (Eds.), *Intergenerational programs: Past, present, future* (pp.55–79). Washington, DC: Taylor & Francis.
- Newman, S., Ward, C. R., Smith, T. B., Wilson, J. O., & McCrea, J. M. (1997). *Intergenerational programs: Past, present, future*. Washington, DC: Taylor & Francis.
- Newman, S., Morris, G. A., & Streetman, H. (1999). Elder-child interaction analysis: An observation instrument for classrooms involving older adults as mentors, tutors, or resource persons. *Child & Youth Services*, 20(1/2), 129–145.
- Ng, S., Liu, J., Weatherall, A., & Loong, C. (1998). Intergenerational relationships in the Chinese community. In Ng, S., Weatherall, A., Liu, J., & Loong, C. (Eds), *Ages ahead: Promoting inter-generational relationships* (pp.85–104). Wellington, NZ: Victoria University Press.
- Nichols, A. H., & Monard, K. (2001). Designing intergenerational service-learning courses based on student characteristics. *Educational Gerontology*, 27, 37–48.
- Olejnik, A. B., & LaRue, A. A. (1981). Changes in adolescents' perceptions of the aged: The effects of intergenerational contact. *Educational Gerontology*, 3, 339–351.
- O'Malley, P. (1996). Indigenous governance, *Economy and Society*, 25 (3), 310–326.
- Osborne, S. & Bullock, J. (2000). Intergenerational programming in action: Befrienders. *Educational Gerontology*, 26, 169–182.
- O'Sullivan, A. (2002). Strengthening intergenerational bonds through volunteerism: A global perspective. In Kaplan, M., Henkin, N., & Kusano, A. (Eds.), *Linking lifetimes: A global view of intergenerational exchange* (pp.29–38). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Ota, H., Giles, H., & Gallois, C. (2001). Age stereotypes and vitality in Japan and Australia. Unpublished manuscript.
- Palmer, D. (2003). Uncertainty, ambivalence and talk about 'Aboriginal youth'. *Youth Studies Australia*, 22(4), 11–17.

- Paton, R., Sar, B., & Barber, G. (2001). Working with older persons: Student views and experiences. *Educational Gerontology, 27*, 169–183.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication.
- Peacock, E. W., & Talley, W. M. (1984). Intergenerational contact: A way to counteract ageism. *Educational Gerontology, 10*, 13–24.
- Perlstein, S., & Bliss, J. (1994). *Generating community*. New York: The Print Center.
- Perlstein, S. (1998–99). Culture builds community: Elders share the arts. *Generations, 22*(4), 72–74.
- Peterson, C. F. (1986). Across the age boundaries. *Journal of Gerontological Nursing, 12*, 12–16.
- Pinquart, M., Wenzel, S., & Sorensen, S. (2000). Changes in attitudes among children and elderly adults in intergenerational group work. *Educational Gerontology, 26*, 523–540.
- Powell, M. C., & Marcow-Speiser, V. (Eds.). (2005). *The Arts, education, and social change*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Prose, J. L. (1984). Changing adolescent behaviors toward the elderly. *Educational Horizons, 62*, 102–103.
- Putnam, R. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Richards, E., Hudson, J., & Lowe, P. (2002). *Out of the Desert: Stories from the Walmajarri Exodus*. Broome: Magabala.
- Rideout, R. (2003). Generations Connecting: modern technology has made the teaching and learning of Social Studies one of the most exciting disciplines in schools today, *Ontario, 22*(3), 28.
- Rose, D.B. (2004). *Reports from a Wild Country: Ethics for Decolonisation*. Sydney: University of News South Wales.
- Rowse, T. (1992). *Remote Possibilities: The Aboriginal Domain and the Administrative Imagination*. Darwin: North Australia Research Unit, ANU.
- Saggers, S., Palmer, D., Royce, P. Wilson, L. and Charlton, P. (2004) 'Alive and Motivated': *Young People, Participation and Local Government*. Canberra: National Youth Affairs Research Scheme. Monograph.
- Said, E. (1993). *Culture and imperialism*. New York: Random House.
- Salari, S. (2002). Intergenerational partnerships in adult day centers: Importance of age-appropriate environments and behaviors. *The Gerontologist, 42*(3), 321–333.
- Scales, P.C., Blythe, D.A., Berkas, T.H., & Kielsmeier, J.C. (2000). The effects of service-learning on middle school students' social responsibility and academic success, *Journal of Early Adolescence, 20*, 332–358.

- Schmuck, R., & Schmuck, P. (1997). *Group processes in the classroom*. Madison, WI: Brown & Benchmark
- Schwalbach, E., & Kiernan, S. (2002). Effects of an intergenerational friendly visit program on the attitudes of fourth graders toward elders. *Educational Gerontology*, 28, 175–187.
- Schwartz, L. K., & Simmons, J. P. (2001). Contact quality and attitudes toward the elderly. *Educational Gerontology*, 27, 127–137.
- Seefeldt, C. (1989). Intergenerational programs—impact on attitudes. *Journal of Children in Contemporary Society*, 20, 185–194.
- Senior Services (2004) *Intergenerational Volunteering*. Available at URL: <http://www.seniorservices.org/hottopics/intergeneration.htm>
- Sercombe, H., Omaji, P., Drew, N., Cooper, T. and Love, T. (2002). *Youth and the Future: Effective Youth Services for the Year 2015*. Hobart: National Youth Affairs Research Scheme.
- Singh, P. (2004). Risk Management Vs Risk Retreat: A case study of child protection policy carriage. Paper presented at the AARE conference, University of Melbourne, November, 2004.
- Stremmel, A. J., Travis, S. S., & Kelly-Harrison, P. (1997). Mutually beneficial activities for young children and older adults in dependent care. *Young Children*, 52, 29–31.
- Strom, R., & Strom, S. (2000). Intergenerational learning and family harmony. *Educational Gerontology*, 26, 261–283.
- Strom, R., Strom, S., & Xie, Q. (1995). The small family in China. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 27(2), 37–46.
- Stowell, L. (in press). Building alliances, building community, building bridges through literacy in T.S. Dickinson & K. D. Wood, (Eds). *Promoting Literacy in the Twenty-First Century: A Handbook for Teachers and Administrators Grades 4–8*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Struchen, W., & Porta, M. (1997). From role-modeling to mentoring for African American youth: Ingredients for successful relationships. *Preventing School Failure* 41(3), 119–127.
- Tait, G. (2000). *Youth, Sex and Government*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Taylor, A. S., LoSciuto, L., Fox, M., Hilbert, S. M., & Sonkowsky, M. (1999). The mentoring factor: Evaluation of the Across Ages’ intergenerational approach to drug abuse prevention. *Child & Youth Services*, 20(1/2), 77–99.
- Tonnies, F. (1963). *Community and Society*. New York: Harper and Row.
- The School Volunteer Program Inc. (2005). Overview, School Volunteer Program Inc. Perth: SVP.
- The School Volunteer Program Inc. (March, 2005) Members Official Newsletter, March 2005. Perth: SVP
- The School Volunteer Program Inc. (April, 2005) Overview update April 2005. Perth: SVP.
- The School Volunteer Program Inc. (n.d.) An Introduction to The School Volunteer Program, ‘Mentors Caring for Young People’. Perth: SVP.

- Thornton, J. (2002). Myths of aging or ageist stereotypes. *Educational Gerontology*, 28, 301–312.
- Tierney, J. P., Grossman, J. B., & Resch, N. L. (1995). *Making a difference: An impact study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures.
- Trent, C., Glass, J., & Crockett, J. (1979). Changing adolescent 4-H club members' attitudes toward the aged. *Educational Gerontology*, 4, 33–48.
- Uhlenburg, P. (2000). Introduction: Why study age integration? *The Gerontologist*, 40(3), 261–266.
- Valentine, G., & Holloway, S. (2002). Cyberkids? Exploring Children's identities and social networks in on-line and off-line worlds. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 92(3), 302–319.
- VanderVen, K. (1999). Intergenerational Theory: The Missing Element in Today's Intergenerational Programs. *Child & Youth Services*, 20(1/2), 33–47.
- Vernon, A. (1999). Designing for Change: Attitudes Toward the Elderly and Intergenerational Programming. *Child & Youth Services*, 20(1/2), 161–173.
- Waggoner, G. (1995). Adopt an elder: Linking youth and the elderly. *Activities Adaptation & Aging*, 20, 41–52.
- Walsh, F., & Mitchell, P. (Eds). (2002). *Planning for Country*. Alice Springs: Jukurrpa.
- Watson, D. (2003). *Death Sentence: The Decay of Public Language*. Sydney: Knopf.
- Weill, J., & Rother, J. (1998/99). Efforts of advocacy organizations to strengthen the social compact. *Generations*, 22(4), 94–98.
- Whitehouse, P.J., Bendezu, E., FallCreek, S. and Whitehouse, C. (2000). Intergenerational community schools: a new practice for a new time. *Educational Gerontology*, 26, 761–770.
- Williams, A., Ota, H., Giles, H., Pierson, H. D., Gallois, C., Ng, S. H., Lim, T-S., Ryan, E.B., Somera, L., Maher, J., & Harwood, J. (1997). Young peoples' beliefs about intergenerational communication: An initial cross-cultural comparison. *Communication Research*, 24, 370–393.
- Woffard, H. (1998/99). Promoting intergenerational strategies: The role of the corporation for national service. *Generations*, 22(4), 88–93.
- Wood, P. (1999). Teaching and learning, school and community. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 20(3), 419–429.
- Woods, W., Wanatjura, E., Colin, T., Mick, J., Lynch, A. & Ward, N. (2000). Atunypa wiru malparara malparara: the strength of working together. In Weeks, W. & Quinn, M. (Eds). *Issues Facing Australian Families: Human Services Respond* (p. 91–100). Sydney: Longman.
- Wright, K. (2000). Computer-mediated social support, older adults and coping. *Journal of Communication*, (Summer), 100–118.

Yiriman Project (2002). Nyikina Mangala Men's Project 24–28 June 2002. Available at URL: <http://yiriman.org.au/tripreportone.htm>

Yiriman Project (2004a). Oongkoorr Preventative Bush Medicine Camp: Barrgana August 2004. Derby: Yiriman Project.

Yiriman Project (2004b). Kurungul Walk July 2004: Teaching Youths How to Look After Country. Derby: Yiriman Project.

Zell, L. (2003). *Kimberley Coast: Wilderness—North Western Australia*. Perth: Wild Discovery.

Zeldin, S., Larson, R., Camino, L., & O'Connor, C. (2005). Intergenerational relationships and partnerships in community programs: Purpose, practice, and directions for research. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 33(1), 1–10

# Appendices

---

Research questions and the corresponding research components

Details of focus groups and individual interviews

List of intergenerational programs identified

## Research questions and the corresponding research components

**Table A:**

<b>Research Questions:</b>	<b>Corresponding Research Components</b>
In what ways can intergenerational exchange be defined? What theoretical perspectives underpin these concepts? How do these definitions and concepts relate to current approaches to working with young people and older people, in both a policy and program context?	Literature review Expert focus groups
What are the benefits of intergenerational programs to both individual participants and the broader community?	Review of literature Previous case studies of intergenerational programs Field work
What issues are evident in the implementation of intergenerational programs and how do they impact on program delivery?	Review of literature Previous case studies of intergenerational programs Expert focus groups Field work
In what ways do factors such as gender and/or cultural background constrain and enhance the exchange between generations (particularly Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse communities)?	Review of literature and previous case studies of intergenerational programs Expert focus groups Field work
What factors constitute good practice intergenerational program model[s]? In what ways do these factors differ across communities?	Data analyses Writing
In what ways do intergenerational programs have potential to foster and develop resilience, enhance social connection and interactions and build both individual and community capacity?	Data analysis Writing



## Details of focus groups and individual interviews

**Table B: Focus groups**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Date</b>
Perth	2 policy makers, 1 program manager, 1 researcher, 1 senior	April, 2005
Sydney	3 program coordinators	April, 2005
Melbourne	1 program director, 1 researcher	April, 2005
Tasmania	7 young people, 3 youth workers	July, 2005
Tasmania	13 young people, 2 youth workers	July, 2005
Perth	3 Year 8 students	June, 2005
Perth	3 Year 7 and 8 students, 1 program coordinator	August, 2005
Perth	4 Year 11 students, 1 program coordinator	August, 2005

## Individual interviews

Held in Western Australia and South Australia, between December 2004 and September, 2005:

Executive Officer of local government

Project Officer

Coordinator

Youth worker

2 Youth Policy Officers

Academic—youth studies

Indigenous Affairs Policy Officer

Researcher

Teacher

3 school chaplains

School-based project officer

## Questions to guide the focus groups and interviews

Preliminary—Introductions and informed consent process (if not completed prior to the focus group meeting), background to the project.

### **Intergenerational exchange—what is it?**

What is your experience of intergenerational exchange with young people?

What do you understand by intergenerational exchange with young people?

What stands out for you in this work?

What touched you about doing intergenerational work with young people?

### **Why do it?**

What prompted your involvement in intergenerational exchange?

What did you see as the potential benefits? (Both for individuals, community, young people and seniors)

Looking back at it do you now see it differently in some way?

Some people say that these are the benefits—what do you think? It helps:

- Bridge between young and older groups
- Build community
- Reduce crime
- Decrease prejudice and stereotyping
- People better deal with their personal and social problems
- Pass on knowledge
- Pass on values and cultural traditions
- Transfer hope
- Encourage innovation
- Exhilarate
- Validation
- People deal with stress
- People development their friendship and social networks
- Build social capital and increase resilience
- Build self-esteem
- Combat loneliness and isolation
- Help alleviate pressures on parents
- Give members of family more personal time
- Increase young people’s knowledge of drug use
- Decrease school suspensions and increase enjoyment in school
- Instilling important civic values

In your experience how might intergenerational exchange with young people be different from other kinds of youth practice?

### **Ingredients for success**

What do you see are the key ingredients of success in intergenerational practice?

Think about an intergenerational exchange initiative that worked well. What made it work so well?

### **Barriers to success**

Can you think of examples where intergenerational practice did not or would not work?

Think about an instance where intergenerational practice did not work very well. What was behind this?

If you were to design a 'worst practice manual' what would you include in it?

What have you taken with you as lessons from this experience? How would you see things different now in contrast with how you thought of this kind of work when you began to be involved?

If were talking to someone who was embarking on intergenerational practice, what would you want to warn them about?

### **Other issues**

Think again about your experience of intergenerational exchange. What happened that was unexpected?

Were there any unintended positive outcomes?

What happened that surprised you?

How do you think Intergenerational exchange would go with:

- Indigenous young people?
- Young women/young men?
- Young people from cultural diverse backgrounds?
- Young offenders?

How does gender impact on this kind of work?

How does culture impact on this kind of work?

## List of intergenerational programs identified

<b>Program and/or Organisation</b>	<b>State</b>
'A Walk Through Time' — Caloundra City Council	Qld
Aboriginal Youth Mentor Program	Vic
Adopt a Gran program — Burnie	Tas
After School Recess	WA
Agelink Reminiscence Theatre	WA
Ages (All Generation Enrich Society)	WA/SA
Ahlan Kaz Mentoring Program	Vic
Allsorts Mentoring Program	Vic
Anglicare — 'A Lesson in Life'	SA
Aquinas College Community Service	WA
Asista	Vic
Aunties and Uncles Cooperative Family Project Limited	NSW
Bankstown Oral History Project	NSW
Barnardo's Kid's Friends	ACT
Big Buddy Club	WA
BigHart	National
Big Sister Big Brother/Big Brother Big Sister	NSW/Vic
Brayton Young Offenders Mentoring	Vic
Broken Hill Community Mentoring	NSW
Bruce Rock District H.S.	WA
Bush Breakaway	SA
Cairns Youth Mentoring Scheme	Qld
Canterbury Change Makers	NSW
Champions Mentoring Program	Vic
Clarendon House/Highview Intergenerational Project	Vic
C.O.A.C.H. Community Mentoring Program	Vic

Co-Pilots program Launceston	Tas
Connecting Points Project	Qld
Connexions: Voices Makin' Choices Project	Qld
Colac Cross-Generational Activities Program	Vic
Community Mentoring	ACT
Computer Literacy For Seniors	WA
Cross Age Skills	Vic
Cultural XChange	Qld
Culture Interrupted	Qld
dEadly mOb Mentoring	NT
Derwent Work Mentor Program	Tas
Djerriwarrh Buddy System	Vic
Docker River Kungka's Mentoring Project	NT
Dulin: Indigenous young peoples mentoring project	Vic
Enriching Our Lives	WA
'Every Generation—It's on for young and old!' Festival	SA
Family in Cultural Transition Program	Qld
Filippino Grandparents Playgroup	NSW
Flute 'n' Veg	WA
Finding Yourself—Central Murray Area Consultative Committee Inc	Vic
First Australians Business	National
Fremantle Children's Services	WA
Generations Together	WA
Get It Together mentoring program	Vic
Glanville Village and St Josephs College	Vic
Good Beginnings	Vic
Grandfriends [Liverpool, Council On The Ageing]	NSW
Grandparents At School	Vic
Grandparents In Schools	Vic

'Grandparents raising grandchildren'	SA
Granfriends	ACT
Great Mates mentoring program—Hunter Valley and in Mt Druitt	NSW
Hand Brake Turn	Vic
Hands On, Handing On project	Tas
Helping Hands [Surrogate Grandparents]	WA
Helping Hands Mentoring Package	Vic
Hog Hair And Leeches	Vic
Homeshare—Free Accommodation	NSW
Horsham Intergenerational Online Project	Vic
Irrkerlantye Arts	NT
Intergenerational Doncare	Vic
Islamic Women's Association	Qld
Jacaranda House/Bairnsdale West Intergenerational Project	Vic
Junior Lacemakers	WA
Learning Assistance Program [LAP]	WA/SA/Tas
Lefroy Community Service [Incl. Brownies and Guides]	WA
Manningham U3a Elders	Vic
Melba Community Support Program	Vic
Men's Shed mentoring programs	Vic
Mentoring Central Coast	NSW
Miimali Mates Mentoring program	NSW
Moreland Mentoring	Vic
Music Links	WA
"My Story" Computer Mentoring	Vic
Next Step Youth Drug and Alcohol Service—mentoring	WA
Nundah Reconciliation group	Qld
Odyssey Travel—New England Grand Venture	NSW
OnTrack—The Smith Family	NSW

Panyappi Indigenous Youth Mentoring Project (IYMP)	SA
Plan-It Youth	NSW/Vic
Playwright mentorships	National
Primary Carers [Campbelltown]	NSW
Reading With Seniors	WA
Red Cross Community Action	WA
Red Cross In Schools	Vic
Riverside Hostel Robinvale Intergenerational Project	Vic
Rural Co-Pilots	Tas
RUSH (Reducing youth Self Harm)	SA
Schools Intergenerational Project— Office of Senior Victorians	Vic
Schools Volunteer Program	WA
Seniors Helping at Risk Kids (SHARK)	WA
Senior’s Month	NT
Span Craft Sharing	Vic
Spray Can Plan	Vic
St John’s Ambulance ‘PALS’ Literacy Program	NSW/Qld
Stepping Stones Foundation	SA
Stonnington Mentoring	Vic
Swan Districts Career Mentoring Program	WA
Tall Poppies Project	Vic
Trinity Youth Options	WA
Upper Yarra Secondary College Mentoring	Vic
Wagga Wagga Grandparents As Carers	NSW
Wesley Senior Social Learning	NSW
Whitelion—Juvenile Justice Centres	Vic
‘Wired’ Mentor Support Program	Qld
‘Women Of Note’ [Girl Guides]	Vic
Xavier Caritas Christi Italian	Vic



Y Hand in Hand	SA
Yiriman Project	WA
YMCA Youth Mentoring Project 'The Y Talk it Through'	Qld
YMCA Big Brother Big Sister Program	WA
Young Adults Mentoring Workshops	Qld
Young Offenders Pilot Program (Brayton Mentoring Initiative)	Vic.
Youth Outreach Program [South West]	WA