

Programs that affect Intergenerational Solidarity

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Abstract

In light of the demographic changes transpiring worldwide and with a framework of intergenerational solidarity, we must consider the needs and resources of individuals, families, and communities that contribute to and detract from intergenerational solidarity. The previous session addressed demographic and cultural factors that lead to generational segregation both within families and in larger communities. The present paper expands beyond familial contact as a means of achieving intergenerational solidarity. Specifically, I report on skipped-generation, non-familial intergenerational programs that can support age integration by building capacity with a strengths-based approach.

Introduction

Bengston's domains of familial intergenerational solidarity (Bengston et al 1990) also serve as powerful indicators of solidarity between generations in the larger community. Advocates of a society for all ages uphold ideals of positive intergenerational sentiment (affectual solidarity), shared values (consensual solidarity), and an opportunity structure that favours intergenerational contact (structural solidarity) and reflects a commitment to civic roles and obligations (normative solidarity). Levels of intergenerational solidarity fall along a continuum for each dimension of the model. Solidarity within a community fluctuates with historical and political events, demographics, and economic shifts.

One might presume that high levels of intergenerational solidarity within families would carry over to the larger community, but positive contact with outgroup members in one's family does not necessarily generalize to other outgroup members (Newman et al 1997; Pettigrew 1998). Harwood and colleagues (2005) described factors such as group salience, uniqueness, and quality of contact that affect whether one's contact with an outgroup member generalizes to their attitudes towards other members of that outgroup. For example, when a 14-year old describes her grandmother as "awesome, active, smart, funny, and tough" and then goes on to explain that her grandmother is "not like other old people," she is less likely to transfer the positive sentiment she has for her grandmother to other older persons. Indeed, Funderburk and colleagues (2006) associated frequent contact with un-related older adults, but not family members, with more positive attitudes about aging in general. Consequently, we cannot rely on familial contact to achieve intergenerational community solidarity.

We may look to attitudinal and behavioural measures for indicators of intergenerational community solidarity; currently, these are equivocal. Attitudes of youth towards older adults are heterogeneous (Jarrott et al 2007; Knox et al 1986; Lichtenstein et al 2005)

and may be positively (Aday et al 1996; Bales et al 2000) or negatively (Aday et al 1993; Middlecamp & Gross 2002; Seefeldt 1987) affected by familial and non-familial intergenerational contact. For example, Fees and Bradshaw (2005) determined that children with more grandparent contact possessed greater ambivalence about the aging process.

Early, limited research on elders' attitudes towards children suggests generally positive attitudes of older adults about children (Seefeldt et al. 1982). Further, a large number of older adult respondents agreed that the issues of children should receive national attention. More recently, research demonstrated the multiple stereotypes older adults have about young people (Matheson et al. 2000). Most of these stereotypes were positive and these positive stereotypes were rated as more typical than the negative stereotypes. The multiple perspectives young and old have about each other reflects the diversity in both groups.

Researchers debate whether attitudes towards older adults generalize to ideas about one's own aging. Aday and colleagues' study (1996) determined positive effects of intergenerational programming involving fourth graders and senior centre participants on the children's attitudes towards older adults and their own aging. In contrast, children whose views of older adults improved over the course of an intergenerational intervention (Newman et al 1997) maintained negative attitudes about their own aging. The inter-relationships between intergenerational contact, attitudes towards older adults, and attitudes towards one's own aging are significant because negative self-stereotypes tend to adversely impact individuals' health (Levy 1996, 2003) and even their longevity (Levy 2002). Kidwell and Booth's (1977) finding that even older adults report the greatest social distance from members of their own age group indicates a limited capacity to experience old age as a positive period in life that is likely influenced by a range of cultural, relational, and developmental factors.

Attitudes indicating presence or absence of intergenerational community solidarity should be reflected in a generations' support for programs and policies that directly benefit another age group. For example, public support for welfare programs primarily serving older adults (such as Social Security or other pension programs) is quite high (Cook & Barrett 1992), which may indicate consensual solidarity. Silverstein and Parrott (1997) also reported support across cohorts of Social Security, but younger persons were less likely to view cutting elder programs as a violation of the public good. At the same time, Silverstein and Parrott determined that contact with grandparents moderated the more negative attitudes towards elder public care programs. That is, those with more grandparent contact tended to report greater support of elder programs. Groups such as *Americans for Generational Equity* (<http://www.age-usa.org/index.php>) bring to the forefront the economic challenges facing future generations because of current levels of support for aging Americans.

Reports on voting habits of older adults emphasized the considerable heterogeneity within the population of older voters (Turner 2001). Thus, factors other than generation more keenly affect whether older adults vote in favour of youth/family programs and policies. To illustrate, advocacy groups such as the Wisconsin Intergenerational

Advocacy Group reflect the commitment of some groups of seniors to the issues of children and families. Conversely, other communities' voting patterns may reflect weaker support of child welfare programs. Given the high rates of voter participation among older adults, child and family advocates may find benefit in voter education programs targeting older adults.

Pursuit of careers in aging should reflect normative and affectual solidarity. Evidence is alarmingly low, though educators and administrators proffer interventions to attract and train health care workers to serve an aging population. Worldwide, extremely low rates of medical nursing, social work, and therapy students graduate planning to focus on a geriatric population (Fajemilehin 2004; Gorelik et al 2000; Schigelone & Ingersoll-Dayton 2004). With older adults currently constituting 13% of the older American population and expected to rise to 20% in less than 50 years (He et al 2005) and with rapid growth in aging populations globally, the need for geriatric health and human services workers will quickly outstrip the availability of such individuals.

At the same time that intergenerational strategies present a logical, strengths-based approach to meeting community needs with community resources, age segregation (a lack of structural solidarity), and resultant social distance, detract from normative solidarity. Indeed, although many practitioners expect non-familial intergenerational relationships to thrive organically when proximity is achieved, they are typically surprised by the amount of work required (Hayes 2003), and intergenerational programs often flounder within two years (Hamilton et al 1999).

Government officials, practitioners, educators, and researchers must intentionally plan and construct societies for all ages to achieve intergenerational solidarity. Community solidarity can be accomplished with a Results Management (RM) orientation (Orthner & Bowen 2004) that utilizes a strengths-based approach. The current paper outlines a RM approach to meeting community needs with intergenerational strategies. It provides an overview of theory- and evidence-based practices that support success of non-familial intergenerational programs. Finally, it reviews a variety of intergenerational programs that contribute to community solidarity among all ages.

Result Management

The RM approach is a logic model developed by Orthner and Bowen (2004) in which practitioners focus on resource allocation and decision making to achieve identified outcomes. While many intergenerational programs focus on activities, practitioners of the RM approach manage results instead of activities. The model incorporates five steps (see Figure 1.). The first step requires an analysis of both the needs and resources of a community. For example, complimentary needs addressed with the intergenerational Experience Corps include the financial needs of lower income retirees and elementary school aged children who need remedial reading assistance. Older adult volunteers in the program receive a monthly stipend in exchange for spending 15 or more hours per week working with children on their reading and schoolwork (www.experiencecorps.org). Resources stem from the older adults' time and commitment and financial support for the seniors' training and stipends.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Next, partners identify desired broad-based community outcomes. In so doing, they answer the question, “How will this community look different if we meet the identified needs?” These outcomes could be the result of a targeted intergenerational intervention but more likely are influenced by a range of factors. An example would be an increase of college graduates entering gerontology and geriatric careers after participating in coursework that pairs students with an older adult mentor. Many factors influence career selection, one of which would be the presumed positive effect of intergenerational contact.

Third, partners determine programmatic outcomes that will contribute to community goals. These are likely to be the direct result of a program or intervention. In the intergenerational context, programmatic outcomes might be an increase in the number of children and elders who choose to join intergenerational activities at co-located teen and senior centre when staff members introduce a new schedule of intergenerational activities.

Only after the community’s needs, resources, and desired community and program outcomes have been identified do organizations or communities implement programming that will achieve these goals with the fourth step of the model. Orthner and Bowen (2004) emphasized the use of evidence-based practices to achieve identified goals. The next section of the paper reviews theory- and evidence-based practices that support positive intergenerational contact.

The last step in the RM approach involves periodic reassessment of the effectiveness of resource allocation and practices in meeting community needs. As effective practices are institutionalized and meet identified needs, new needs and resources may be addressed with intergenerational strategies.

Evidence-based Practices

While a range of “how to” IG manuals exist (Epstein & Boisvert 2005; Jarrott 2007; Kaplan & Hanhardt 2003; Steinig 2005), there is not one manual that fits all communities, needs, or intergenerational strategies. This is why the RM approach is useful as a logic model, the application of which is shaped by theory and evidence-based practices specific to a population, community setting, or service. Intergenerational contact does not always have positive effects (Aday et al 1993; Seefeldt 1987) so we must attend to not only the structure and availability of intergenerational contact but also the quality of the contact setting (Knox et al 1986; Schwartz & Simmons 2001), whether in a familial or non-familial setting. Allport’s (1954) contact theory provides essential conditions to support positive intergroup contact. Intergenerational scholars have used the contact theory to assess and inform interventions (Caspi 1984; Meshel & McGlynn 2004) across a range of intergenerational contact settings. The following sub-sections outline the contact theory tenets and other evidence based practices that apply widely to intergenerational programs.

Contact Theory

Support of administrators, stakeholders, tradition, or law. Intergenerational programs often develop under the direction of one or two enthusiastic employees or volunteers (Deutchman et al 2003; Rosebrook & Bruno 2005). Without the support of supervisors or other stakeholders (e.g., parents or caregivers of program participants), or without a tradition of intergenerational programming, sustaining the programs often proves impossible. To engender administrative and institutional support, intergenerational partners can construct a shared intergenerational mission statement and a memorandum of understanding regarding their commitment to collaboration. Directors may incorporate intergenerational responsibilities into staff job descriptions, and resources may be coordinated to create an intergenerational coordinator position. The Neighbors Growing Together program at Virginia Tech incorporated each of these practices as they worked to institutionalize their intergenerational practices (Jarrott et al 2006). As a result, intergenerational programming has become a tradition and staff members readily collaborate to partner young and old with the full support of administrators.

Equal group status. Interpreting the condition of equal group status in an intergenerational context can prove tricky, particularly when discussing contact between young children and frail or dementing elders. Rather than suggest that adults and children are equal in health and ability, I interpret this condition to mean each participant has something to contribute to and something to gain from the contact setting.

Many intergenerational programs are framed as one group serving the other, which inherently creates a status differential between the “givers” and the “receivers” of the service. Salari (2002) described the common case of infantilization at adult day programs with intergenerational programs involving young children. When the young and old participants are treated the same (i.e., similar interests and abilities), the older adults are denied the opportunity to contribute to the program in a way that matches their abilities, and they are less likely to benefit from the contact.

Even in programs with an obvious direction of service, such as students performing Service-Learning by providing home maintenance for elderly residents, equal group status can be achieved by encouraging youth and elders to see what they can gain from and give to each other. In the S-L example, students have the opportunity to learn about the circumstances of older adults, they develop specific skill sets, and they can learn from the experiences of the elders. Similarly, the older adults have the opportunity to learn about the aspirations and circumstances of today’s youth while sharing their experiences and advice.

Interaction characterized by cooperation and common goals. Intergenerational programs involving cooperation, as opposed to competition, as youth and elders work towards a common goal is central to positive contact. While youth and elders may be united to address different needs of the individual groups (e.g., older adults’ need for generativity is supported with a living history program that addresses children’s language arts skills), they should be united in their purpose (e.g., conducting life history interviews and studying the community’s development). Furthermore, programs should be able to

identify one goal that both groups have in common, such as developing positive intergenerational relationships (Jarrott et al 2006).

Opportunities for friendship. Pettigrew (1998), in his analysis of Allport's (1954) contact theory, added one condition for positive intergroup contact, opportunities for friendship. The condition speaks to the import of frequency and regularity of contact (Caspi, 1984). Some "one-shot" intergenerational programs have demonstrated positive outcomes (e.g., a panel of visiting elders in a classroom; Couper et al 1991); however, the program that brings together the same children and elders will better reduce ambiguities about the relationship, lessen social distance, and support intergenerational solidarity (Bales et al 2000; Chapman & Neal 1990)

Other Evidence-based Practices

Voluntary nature of contact. While contact between generations is the best way to support intergenerational solidarity, contact needs to be voluntary (Jarrott & Bruno 2007). Some children and seniors will need time to acclimate to the intergenerational setting if they have had limited contact with the other generation. Adults who decline invitations to join programming with one age group may welcome opportunities with a different age group (Seefeldt et al 1982). For example, some adult day services participants who regularly refused to join intergenerational programming with the neighbouring pre-schoolers welcomed the chance to join a language arts project with area seventh graders (Jarrott, et al 2007). Similarly, children may need to try out different roles in the contact setting before they find where they feel most comfortable. If children or older adults refuse contact, their wishes should be respected as program staff collaborate to identify appropriate ways to involve them in the intergenerational setting.

Variety of opportunities. Provision of varied IG opportunities supports high levels of voluntary IG contact and increases the range of needs that can be addressed intergenerationally. Drawing on continuity theory (Atchley 1982) and theory of personhood (Kitwood 1997), practitioners can expect individuals to find greater meaning engaging in familiar roles and activities. Many practitioners will be challenged to provide a spectrum of intergenerational options as it runs counter to what is frequently observed in the community settings older adults often occupy. At a time when the scope of familial and employment roles is typically narrowing (Carstensen 1992), volunteer and recreation activities (Ice 2002) tend to further constrict options available to elders, especially frail elders. Older adults' interests and experiences only become more diverse with age and a commensurately wide range of opportunities with intergenerational options will more likely attract them and their young counterparts.

Cross-training. Because professionals working with youth and older adults typically have expertise limited to one generation or the other, cross-training is recommended for intergenerational practitioners (Jarrott et al 2006; Travis & Stremmel 1993). Such training typically addresses developmental characteristics of the two (or more) age groups, the purpose, and anticipated benefits and challenges of intergenerational programs, and evidence based practices for connecting the generations. Levels of training can range from single session workshops to semester long courses and specialists

certificates (Rosebrook & Bruno 2005; Rosebrook & Larkin 2003). Some practitioners even recommend cross-training sessions for the young and old participants prior to initiating intergenerational contact (Bressler et al 2005). Research demonstrated that receipt of training contributed to more positive attitudinal change about IG contact among shared site intergenerational care staff (Jarrott et al 2004).

*Non-familial Intergenerational Programs that Support
Intergenerational Community Solidarity*

A survey of education and human services research publications, trade journals, newsletters, and websites reveals a plethora of diverse intergenerational programs that can be framed with a RM approach to building intergenerational solidarity. The following highlights examples of such programs.

Residential Programs

Hope Meadows is uniquely positioned in the US as a residential community at a former military base that provides low-cost housing to foster care families and low income elders who contribute to the community by volunteering a minimum of six hours per week. Elder volunteers' tasks can include tutoring, playground supervision, and guarding school crossings. Eheart and Hopping (2001) reported developmental benefits for the foster children and increased sense of purpose among the older adult volunteers. Porgozola and Krout (2001) described a different type of intergenerational residential setting in which a retirement community was built on the campus of Ithaca College. Residents were able to attend college courses, and university students collaborated with residents for a range of service, educational, and social projects.

Home Visits

In an effort to foster civic engagement, secondary schools and an increasing number of university courses require students to perform volunteer work or Service-Learning. Some opportunities include visits with community seniors where students may perform light maintenance that elders cannot complete on their own. Students learn about the range of abilities of seniors and, through interactions with the older adults, they learn about the social histories of the adults, and they learn about themselves (Brown & Roodin 2001; Knapp & Stubblefield 2000). The seniors benefit from the services provided, and the socialization with the children, and they learn about the lives of today's youth. Older adult participants described contributions they made to the Service-Learning context, including sharing stories of "olden days," encouragement to overcome challenges in life, and their friendship (Underwood & Dorfman 2006). Even family members benefit; those interviewed by Bullock and Osborne (1999) reported they worried less about their aging relatives who were visited regularly by Service-Learners.

Parallel to youth visiting the homes of seniors to provide services, programs such as *Family Friends* (http://www.templecil.org/family_friends) connect older volunteers with families caring for a disabled child. Seniors visit the family home on a regular basis to

interact with the child. Parents receive some respite, and the child's social ties broaden by forming close ties with another person.

Telephone reassurance programs. In the past, telephone reassurance programs, such as "Grandma, please!" have supported latchkey children needing advice, help, or simply someone to listen about their day at school. Trained volunteers received calls from children and made referrals to the supervisor if they determined that the child needed urgent help.

Care Settings

Care settings are a common site for intergenerational programs. Addressing the increasing need for formal care support at both ends of the lifespan, the children's component may consist of daycare or wraparound school care, and the elder care program may consist of adult day services, assisted living, or nursing home care. Innovative programs may link generations in residential communities or connect one group in a care setting with intergenerational participants from another program. Children and seniors may visit each other's programs from across town, down the street, or in the same building.

Shared site intergenerational programs are uniquely positioned to connect the generations because they provide ongoing services concurrently to children and seniors; that is both children and seniors are in attendance at programs in a single building or adjacent buildings at the same time (Readers are directed to Generations United's *Under one roof* for a useful resource on shared site intergenerational programs; Steinig 2005). Care programs are the most common shared site setting (Goyer & Zuses 1998). Shared and non-shared site programs have demonstrated capacity to support children's (e.g. Marx et al 2004) and elders' well being (Hayes 2003; Jarrott & Bruno 2003, 2007; Ward et al 1996), improve community and attitudes towards intergenerational contact among staff (Jarrott et al 2004), contribute to caregiver benefits (Gigliotti et al 2005), and provide cost-effective care (Chamberlain et al 1994). In an early study by Hegeman (1985), nursing home directors reported that co-locating a child care program at their facility was valuable for attracting staff and that it improved the nursing homes' image in the broader community. Such programs have the potential to provide cost-effective care without duplication of services. Elder care programs that provide on site child care may find such programs enhance retention and reduce absenteeism of staff, a major problem in the long term care field. Generations United recently initiated a study of the cost-effectiveness of shared sited programs.

Another care setting that supports intergenerational programming involves older adults as employees or volunteers at children's care programs. Larkin and Newman (2001) reported that senior employees provided a family-like quality to the program and that they allowed the lead teachers to accomplish other tasks and provide more one-on-one care. Older care workers modelled for the children, supported practice of social skills, and, for some children, eased the transition from home to school. An early study by Dellmann-Jenkins and colleagues (Dellman-Jenkins et al 1991) reported enhanced pro-

social behaviours among children attending a university-based childcare with older adult volunteers.

Educational Settings

Although the structure of the education system typically segregates generations, they are also a common source of intergenerational programs. Schools may target intergenerational solidarity with aging curriculum (Lichtenstein et al 2005; Jarrott et al 2007), Service-Learning, or older adult volunteers. Older adults have been used as mentors to youth at risk of drug use and dropping out of school (Taylor et al 1999) and as living historians addressing students' curriculum (e.g., Bales et al 2000; Meshel & McGlynn 2004). Bales and colleagues (2000) observed an increase in the number of positive words and a decrease in the number of negative words students used to describe traits of visiting elder historians. Fourth graders involved in an outdoor curricular experience with older volunteers demonstrated significantly enhanced school behaviours compared to those without elder partners (Cummings et al 2002). Experience Corps represents a large-scale initiative in the US that places teams of trained senior volunteers in an elementary school where the volunteers provide 15 or more hours of service per week. Most volunteers are low-income women who receive a stipend for their contributions. Research demonstrated increased physical activity for the volunteers (Tan et al 2006) and significant academic improvements among child participants (Meier & Invernizzi 2001).

Community Service Settings

Recreation settings provide opportunities for sharing resources that can connect generations and save money. For example, senior centres may co-locate with wraparound care programs. These may be shared resource programs, where the children's program occupies the space in the morning and late afternoon, while the seniors use it during the day, or it may involve periodic or regular activities involving senior centre participants and youth. For example, older children might visit the centre to teach the seniors how to use computers, elders might teach children how to play chess, or both groups could work together on service projects.

Diverse intergenerational programs abound. A Native American Indian community centre in Arizona (www.nsaie.org/knowledge.htm) recently introduced a program designed for elders to pass down tribal language and traditions to children. Non-familial intergenerational camps have been piloted in Puerto Rico (Bidot, ND) and the US (<http://www.generationscrossing.com/>). The Betty J. Queen Centre in Louisa, Virginia is a shared site intergenerational program that houses a senior centre, youth centre, child care, adult day care, and an ARC of the Piedmont centre that supports day programming for young adults with mental disabilities. Programs share space and equipment resources (e.g., kitchen, basketball court, and meeting areas) as well as companionship.

The SHINE (Students Helping in the Naturalization of Elders) and Intergenerational Bridges programs are noted for their work in connecting young or old immigrants with US citizens to work on the naturalization process. SHINE connects college students with

elderly immigrants while Intergenerational Bridges pairs older adults with young immigrants (<http://www.interages.com/programs/bridges.php>). Such programs go beyond intergenerational solidarity to promote national solidarity. As populations in the US and other countries become increasingly diverse ethnically and racially, the support by citizens of immigrants will enhance norms of civic obligation (Skilton-Sylvester & Garcia, 1998).

Sustaining Capacity for Intergenerational Solidarity

Beyond building intergenerational solidarity, we must attend to its sustainability. Indicators of sustainability described by Mancini and Marek (2004) mesh nicely with the RM approach and the contact theory. Indicators of community program sustainability include: (a) leadership competence, (b) effective collaboration, (c) understanding the community, (d) demonstrating program results, (e) strategic funding, (f) staff involvement, and (g) program responsiveness. Beyond these markers, intergenerational advocates share the responsibility to disseminate their experiences in order to shape future practice and policy. Intergenerational strategies evolve to address the ever-changing circumstances of societies. We enhance the probability of success by scaffolding our experiences and ideas with those of others who have explored how to foster positive intergroup contact, build community, and connect generations to achieve a greater good.

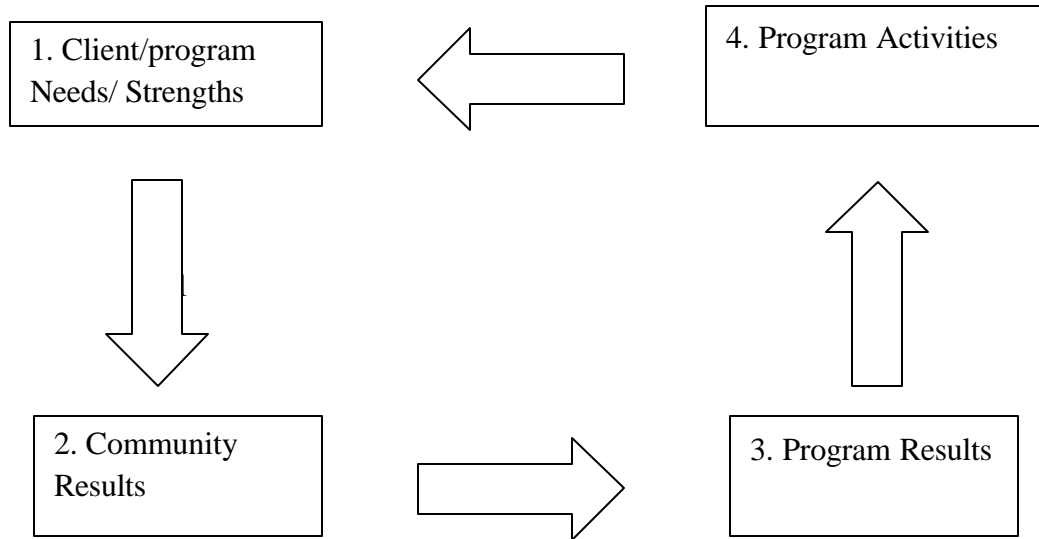


Figure 1. Result Management Design (Orthner & Bowen 2004: p. 900). Published with permission from Dennis Orthner.

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