



The State of Intergenerational Relations Today

A Research and Discussion Paper

James Lloyd

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ILC-UK
22-26 Albert Embankment
London
SE1 7TJ
Tel. +44 (0)20 7735 7565
www.ilcuk.org.uk

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About the Author

James Lloyd is Head of Policy & Research at the ILC-UK. He read Philosophy at University College London and has Masters degrees in Comparative Politics, and in Public Policy. He joined the ILC-UK in October 2005. His publications for the ILC-UK include *A National Care Fund for Long-term Care* and *Retirement Capital and Online Social Networking*.

jameslloyd@ilcuk.org.uk

About this Report

This report is a research and discussion paper on the topic of intergenerational relations. It incorporates original research undertaken by the BMRB (British Market Research Bureau),¹ and policy analysis and discussion on the wider topic of intergenerational relations.

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All opinions expressed in the report are the author's own and should not be attributed to any of the aforementioned organisations.

¹ <http://www.bmrb.co.uk>

² <http://www.bt.com>

³ <http://www.ageconcern.org.uk>

Executive Summary

Intergenerational relations at the societal level matter and as such, are a legitimate interest for policymakers. At a general level, social contact has significant health benefits, particularly for those who may be at higher risk of social isolation, such as men in retirement. More generally, strong and positive intergenerational relations can be identified as a key factor in:

- The transmission and exchange of human capital within society.
- The transmission of useful life-skills both up and down the generations.
- The transmission of values, moral codes and social norms.
- The reproduction and transmission of culture, history and identity.
- The prevention and reduction of age-based prejudice and discrimination.
- The formation and preservation of intergenerational solidarity at the societal level that underpins the intergenerational contract.
- Maintaining the transmission and exchanges of knowledge and values between the generations that may be decreasingly occurring at the family level.

However, a number of challenges to the functioning of intergenerational relations at the community and societal levels can be identified. Positive contact, interaction and communication between different generations may be affected by differences in physical and cognitive functioning among different age-groups, which leads to the occupation of separate physical spaces and engagement in different activities. In addition, psychological changes that occur throughout the life course may create differences in the behaviour of younger and older cohorts and affect how each views the world, their role and interaction with others.

Differences in the socialisation and experiences of different cohorts during different life stages means that each cohort is shaped differently by prevailing changes in society, the economy and technology. Simply occupying different life stages will also affect the outlook, priorities and behaviour of different age-groups. Original survey research commissioned by the ILC-UK found that among a sample of respondents aged 16-65+, younger cohorts were more likely to perceive difficulties among older people in relating to younger people than older people themselves.

Various socio-economic trends may be adverse to the functioning of intergenerational relations:

- Increasing longevity, resulting in increasing spacing between the oldest and youngest members of society.
- Internal migration associated with different life stages may potentially restrict opportunities for intergenerational interaction.
- In addition to the ongoing socialisation experiences of different cohorts, the increasing speed of social, economic and cultural changes associated with globalisation and related cultural and technological change, potentially increases further the differences in the characteristics and experiences of different cohorts.
- Fiscal pressures associated with demographic change may result in increasingly prevalent contests between different generations over the use of public resources, such as conflict over spending priorities and the use of public spaces.

Original survey research commissioned by the ILC-UK found that the majority of respondents among a sample aged 16-65+ thought that old and young people today “live in separate worlds”. Large proportions of different age-groups were also found to believe that relations between old and young today are worse than in the past.

A number of different approaches are available to policymakers seeking to improve intergenerational relations. Policymakers can seek to provide a better environment for

intergenerational relations through the application of 'inclusive' approaches, such as 'inclusive design'. Ongoing policy developments are already seeing this applied to:

- The housing stock.
- Neighbourhoods.
- Public spaces.
- Workplaces.

More generally, there is scope to explore how the activities undertaken in inclusive spaces could themselves be more inclusive. In particular, policymakers could explore how the message of 'age-diversity' could be communicated more widely in local third-sector, voluntary and amateurs organisations and clubs.

The internet is arguably the most 'inclusive' environment of all. Web-based platforms such as online social networking present multiple and cost-effective opportunities for advancing intergenerational relations that policymakers should explore.

In addition, there is growing interest in the benefits of coordinating direct interaction among older and younger cohorts at the community level. Intergenerational practice (IP) has demonstrated the benefits of bringing different cohorts directly together. Although 'age-based', rather than 'age-neutral', the intergenerational aspects of IP are particularly suited to facilitating the kinds of intergenerational exchange and transmission of knowledge and values that many commentators and stakeholders identify as important. Formal evaluation of IP is required in order for policymakers to fully incorporate the tools that IP provides into wider policy measures to improve the functioning of intergenerational relations.

More generally, the Government should strengthen the evidence base on intergenerational relations at the societal and community level. This could be undertaken through the application of survey instruments developed in fields such as educational gerontology. It could also be undertaken by making use of theory, methodologies and evidence developed across the human and social sciences in research into intergenerational relations at the family level.

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Chapter 1: Why do Intergenerational Relations Matter?

Intergenerational relations matter. Individuals may define themselves as 'young', 'old' or somewhere in between, but positive contact, interaction and communication among individuals in different age-groups and different cohorts is important. It is an issue not just for individuals, families and communities, but for policymakers as well. Why is this case? This chapter reviews the reasons.

Social Contact

Social contact is good for you. This observation may seem obvious; yet, few realise just how powerful the effect of social contact can be. For example, research has shown that amongst the 'oldest-old', social contact with non-family members has a greater impact on mental well-being than their health status.⁴ In short, even when older individuals are suffering longstanding illness, their mental well-being can be as good as those who are in good health, if such individuals engage in social contact.

Opportunities for social contact vary by life-stage. For example, for many individuals, especially men, retirement is synonymous with loneliness, and ultimately, depression, as they are removed from the social structures and networks that provided them with social contact during their working life.⁵ Depression is itself a clinical condition, and for some individuals, can be a precursor to a downward health spiral.

Successful Ageing and Social Interaction (2007)

Researchers from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine used population-level data to explore the interaction of social contact and mental well being. Their analysis found that older people with the "best" mental 'quality of life' (QOL) showed physical QOL that was similarly poor to those in the "worst" and middle categories of mental QOL. This finding suggests that individuals are able to 'remain positive' despite declining physical health; how we age mentally may not necessarily reflect how we age physically; and, there is some 'compensation' between domains. What factors and outcomes were associated with the best mental QOL in people who nevertheless had poor physical outcomes? The researchers found that far more than any other factor, social interaction with non-family members was significantly associated with good mental QOL.

This means that social contact and interaction is an issue of concern for policymakers, especially in relation to those groups more likely to experience loneliness and isolation through life-stage or other factors. Indeed, policymakers have recognised the importance of social contact for older people as part of schemes to provide more innovative and holistic care and support services.⁶

The first step to understanding the importance of intergenerational relations is recognising the health and other benefits of social contact, the variations in opportunities for social contact among different life-stages, and the fact that social interaction is itself a legitimate interest for policymakers.

⁴ Grundy E et al. (2007) *Successful Ageing and Social Interaction*, ILC-UK, London

⁵ Cacioppo J and Hughes M (2006) "Loneliness as a Specific Risk Factor for Depressive Symptoms: Cross-Sectional and Longitudinal Analyses" in *Psychology and Aging*, Vol. 21, No. 1, p140–151

⁶<http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/SocialCare/Deliveringadultsocialcare/Olderpeople/PartnershipsforOlderPeopleProjects/index.htm>

Intergenerational Contact and Exchange

What is so important about social contact *between* the generations? Interest in intergenerational interaction and social contact is prompted by the potential for such contact to involve the exchange of knowledge, skills, information, ideas and values. Intergenerational transfers and exchanges within families have long been a topic of interest to academic researchers. However, such transfers can also occur at the community and societal levels. These exchanges can occur both upwards and downwards and are vital to economic growth, the formation of social identity, the reproduction of culture and the functioning of a cohesive society.

- *Human capital transfers*

When knowledge and skills are marketable and economically useful, i.e. potentially wealth-generating, they are known as 'human capital'. There has long been an interest in the intergenerational transmission of human capital within families, particularly as a factor in explaining the limits to social mobility. For example, the intergenerational transmission of human capital within families has been found to be a key factor in explaining entrepreneurship.⁷

Outside of the family, the most common sites for the transmission of human capital between generations are where it is bought (e.g. universities) or where there are opportunities to be trained, i.e. in employment. In particular, the workplace is a crucial site of intergenerational relations and exchange of human capital that may be vital to organisational survival and continued competitiveness.⁸

The continual transmission and 'passing down' of human capital between generations is clearly vital for economic growth, and in fact, the functioning of society. But there are limits to these processes in education and the workplace. Organisations are not always able to invest in the training of staff. Individuals may not be able to afford, or be too risk-averse, to invest in higher and further education. This means that every other site and mechanism available for the transmission of human capital between generations is vitally important, whether through community activities, social networks, professional associations and forums, and mentoring schemes. Interaction and contact between the generations therefore presents policymakers with an important potential site to facilitate the intergenerational transmission of human capital.

Crucially, as individuals experience longer careers, individuals may have to undertake re-training and re-skilling at several points. As a result, the transmission of human capital can occur upwards between the generations, and not just downward.

- *Life-skills*

The preceding section focused on knowledge and skills that can generate wealth: 'human capital'. However, much of the knowledge and skills that individuals use and deploy in everyday life does not generate wealth, but is simply used to navigate situations and processes in other domains outside of the workplace. These 'life-skills' may relate to human relationships (marriage and divorce), institutions (interaction with public and private organisations), societal and institutional rules and procedures, the use of products, services and technology, as well as self-sufficiency, e.g. cooking.

⁷ Dunn T and Holtz-Eakin D (2000) "Financial Capital, Human Capital, and the Transition to Self-Employment: Evidence from Intergenerational Links" in *Journal of Labor Economics*, Vol. 18, No. 2

⁸ Argote L and Ingram P (2000) "Knowledge Transfer: A Basis for Competitive Advantage in Firms" in *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, Vol. 82, Issue 1, p150-169

Society is characterised by the continual exchange and transmission of life-skills as each cohort acquires knowledge and passes it on to succeeding cohorts. This process adapts to changes in society, the economy and technology, as new life-skills are acquired and passed on. Some public bodies have sought to define and formalise types of life-skills to enable transmission through organised programmes, particularly for vulnerable young people.

Example: Life-skills going down the generations

Skills and knowledge are acquired through experience. Different experiences are associated with particular life-stages and the life-skills that are gained can then subsequently be passed on to others. Some examples of this process are obvious: families receive help in child-birth and child-rearing from the advice available from older cohorts that have already experienced such key life-events. Other examples may be more subtle, such as how to deal with redundancy for the first time.

However, this transmission of life-skills is far from 'one-way'. Changes in technology, products and services, and the structures and institutions that individuals encounter, continually create a need for individuals to have to re-learn life-skills to navigate and understand the world.

For example, when the mechanisms and processes for applying for a new passport change, despite the best attempts of public officials to communicate changes to the public, older individuals may rely on the young to help them adapt and respond to a new system. However, arguably the best example of life-skills passed from young to old is the use of new technologies, particularly information and communication technologies.

Are life-skills important? Absolutely. A society in which the exchange of knowledge and life-skills between generations is fluid will result in better outcomes for all individuals. This means the scope and opportunities for individuals to exchange life-skills both within and between different generations is also of interest to policymakers.

Example: Life-skills going up the generations

An individual's ability to learn and use new technologies is highest in their youth. There are popular jokes about small children teaching their grandparents to programme a VCR. These observations pinpoint very real changes in psychology and cognitive function associated with age and development. Each cohort masters the technologies available at their peak ability to learn to use such innovation. However, past this 'peak' many individuals struggle to adapt to emerging technologies that are quickly adopted by younger cohorts. The implications are serious. Being unable to use a computer means a new form of 'online social-exclusion'. It is therefore no surprise that examples of the transmission of computer skills from young to old can be found in many families and communities.

More generally, in addition to 'life-skills', other types of behaviour are transferred between generations, such as 'health behaviour', and consumption habits.⁹

- *Values and norms*

Every society contains values and cultural norms that enable the society to function and impose a voluntary moral code on individual behaviour. The transmission of these values is vital to the functioning of a cohesive society.

In an era of increasing cross-border migration, governments have been compelled to attempt to formalise and clarify a society's values for incoming migrants. The UK is no exception and those seeking UK citizenship are now subject to a test of their values against the articulated values of UK society.¹⁰

Intergenerational relations are vital to the transmission of cultural values and norms that

⁹ Mandrik C et al. (2005) "Intergenerational influence: Roles of conformity to peers and communication effectiveness" in *Psychology and Marketing*, Vol. 22, Issue 10, p813-832

¹⁰ <http://www.lifeintheuktest.gov.uk>

enable social cohesion. It is widely recognised that parents transfer their values to their children in the context of the family.¹¹ Yet this exchange of values and norms also takes place outside the family in the community and intergenerational social networks. For this reason, policymakers also have an interest in maintaining the intergenerational community networks that facilitate the transmission and learning of values and moral codes.

- *Culture and history*

Much “history” is written down. However oral history has long been recognised as a crucial mechanism for the transmission and preservation of historical knowledge, and in fact, most historical knowledge is not written down but exists in the memories of individuals, which may subsequently be passed from generation to generation. The creation and transmission of ‘collective memory’ occurs through intergenerational dialogue at a family level,¹² and by extension, can also occur at the community and societal level. Such historical memories are crucial to the formation of communities, as well as the personal identity and community attachment of individuals.

Regional identity

Like most countries, the UK contains multiple overlapping national, regional and local identities. A person stopped randomly on the street may simultaneously identify themselves as Scottish, Glaswegian, and a resident of Easterhouse. Social identity, such as regional identity is an important part of a person’s well-being, and intergenerational contact and interaction may be key to the formation of identity.

In addition to history, national, regional and local cultures also rely on intergenerational relations. Technology and commerce has seen music, literature, art and dance is reproduced and disseminated for mass audiences. However, large swathes of national, regional and local cultures are not commodified and distributed in this way, but rely on the social interaction of different generations for their reproduction and dissemination.

Inter-group Contact: Contact between the generations

Sociologists and social psychologists have long had an interest in how individuals perceive themselves to be members of certain ‘groups’, and how they subsequently perceive and behave towards individuals from other groups. Classic studies developing ‘inter-group contact theory’ were concerned with how inter-group interaction could overcome religious and ethnic stereotyping and prejudice, with the ultimate result that common identities would form across different groups, and inter-group rivalry, conflict and violence would reduce.¹³

However, various researchers have sought to apply inter-group contact theory to relations between different generations, i.e. between ‘the young’ and ‘the old’. Some commentators perceive that generational distinctions are increasingly blurring,¹⁴ and clearly defined roles for particular ages and life-stages are receding. Nevertheless, the continued existence of age discrimination and stereotyping between the generations – *ageism* – which can be both ‘benevolent’ and ‘pernicious’, sees continued research and lobbying by the charitable sector, and results in ongoing reform by policymakers.

¹¹ Schönflug U (2001) “Intergenerational Transmission of Values” in *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, Vol. 32, No. 2, p174-185

¹² Attias-Donfut C and Wolff F (2005) “Generational memory and family relationships” in Johnson M (ed.) *The Cambridge Handbook of Age and Ageing*, p443-454, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

¹³ Allport G (1954) *The Nature of Prejudice*, Cambridge. MA

¹⁴ Biggs S (2005) “Beyond Appearances: Perspectives on identity in later life and some implications for method” in *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences*, Vol. 69B, S118-S217

Intergenerational contact has long been seen as one possible mechanism to reduce ageism.¹⁵ Research on public attitudes has found that those who have had contact with older people were more likely to perceive commonalities between younger and older people.¹⁶

Example: Age discrimination and stereotyping

Age discrimination between different generations can occur both upwards and downwards. In recent years, media commentators have focused on the prevalence of young 'hoodies', with other observers reporting an increase among older cohorts of fear of 'the young'. Conversely, prejudice and discrimination toward older people may be relatively benign, such as an assumption that older people have lower expectations, or sinister, for example, when older individuals are denied access to healthcare.

Research has also found reduced stereotyping of older people as incompetent by those who have friendships with people over 70.¹⁷ Studies in psychology have explored how contact with younger generations in positive and negative contexts affects the cognitive performance of older people in tests,¹⁸ showing how positive contact with younger people can reduce feelings of intimidation. Other research has found that positive intergenerational settings were associated with more social behaviour in adults, and higher cognitive performance in older adults.¹⁹

These outcomes highlight the role of positive intergenerational relations in preventing age-based prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping. Reducing such discrimination is an important ongoing sphere of policy development, and the potential of intergenerational contact and interaction to advancing such objectives underlines the importance of intergenerational relations for public policy.

Intergenerational solidarity

Across the 'developed world', most societies have developed a welfare state that is underpinned by the existence of intergenerational solidarity. Most state pension systems and healthcare systems (including both the UK tax-funded NHS and social insurance systems common in many countries) rely on an implicit contract between the generations, known as the 'intergenerational contract'. The intergenerational contract sees each working-age cohort pay for the healthcare and pensions of the retired cohort on the understanding that succeeding cohorts will do the same. The intergenerational contract benefits individuals at each life-stage; in effect, individuals are tied-in, through income tax and national insurance contributions, to a compulsory retirement saving and retirement health insurance scheme, that sees them contribute when most economically productive, and receive back when most in need.

The functioning of the intergenerational contract relies on the existence of intergenerational solidarity, i.e. a perception of commonality and group membership between those in different cohorts. Intergenerational solidarity relies in turn on the strength of intergenerational relations outside of the family. Indeed, contact and interaction between generations within a family is an insufficient guarantor of intergenerational solidarity; most families engage in internal welfare transfers (care, bequests) that rival the transfers embodied by the societal intergenerational contract. Perceptions of commonality and shared group identity between

¹⁵ Peacock E and Talley W (1984) "Intergenerational contact: a way to counter ageism" in *Educational Gerontology*, Vol. 10, Issue 1, p13-24

¹⁶ Ray S et al. (2006) *Ageism: A benchmark of public attitudes in Britain*, Age Concern England

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ Abrams D et al. (2006) "An age apart: The effects of intergenerational contact and stereotype threat on performance and intergroup bias" in *Psychology and Aging*, Vol. 21, p691-702

¹⁹ Kessler E & Staudinger U (2007) "Intergenerational potential: effects of social interaction between older adults and adolescents" in *Psychology and Ageing*, Vol. 22, No. 4, p690-704

different generations are key to maintaining intergenerational solidarity, and have been recognised as such at both the national and international level.²⁰

Trends in family structure and co-residence

As identified above, intergenerational exchanges and transfers of human capital, life-skills, culture and identity occur within the family. For example, interaction with grandparents has been shown to be associated with increases in self-esteem.²¹ However, as family structures change, the potential for such intergenerational transfers and exchanges at the level of the family may be limited or constrained. For this reason, some commentators argue that the importance of intergenerational relations at the community and societal level are elevated in importance.

Both economic migration and culture can explain patterns in the proximity of adult children to their parents, and the extent of contact. Across continental Europe, Mediterranean countries exhibit closer family relations than more northern countries.²²

In the UK, the proximity of adult children to parents varies with socio-demographic characteristics.²³ Typically, lower socio-economic groups live in closer proximity. However, evidence of declining regular contact between adults and their non-co-resident parents is inconclusive.²⁴

Long-term trends in intergenerational co-residence appear to declining rates of co-residence. Surveys from the 1950s and 1960s found that between one third and one half of elderly people in the UK lived in a household containing one of their children. By the 1990s, this proportion was closer to 5-15%.²⁵ By extension, it can be surmised that the number of households containing a grandchild and grandparent must also be declining.

Intergenerational relations at the community and societal level therefore appear as an increasingly important potential site for the intergenerational exchange of knowledge and values may be taking place less and less at the family level.

It is also important to recognize the influence of intergenerational interactions inside and outside the home. Younger people with limited intergenerational interaction and relations at the family level may be unprepared for interaction with older people at the community level. Conversely, fear of young people among older cohorts may be related to the lack of intergenerational interaction at the family level.

For policymakers recognising the importance of intergenerational relations and exchange within the family, long-term trends in family structure, proximity and contact, suggest an increasing importance for intergenerational relations.

²⁰ http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/egm_unhq_oct07_recommendations.pdf

²¹ Giarusso R et al. (2001) *Grandparent-adult grandchild affection and consensus: Cross-generational and cross-ethnic comparisons*, Andrus Gerontology Center, University of South California, Los Angeles

²² Hank K (2007) "Proximity and Contacts Between Older Parents and Their Children: A European Comparison" in *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 69, Issue 1, p157-173

²³ Shelton N and Grundy E (2000) "Proximity of Adult Children to their Parents in Great Britain" in *International Journal of Population Geography*, Vol. 6, Issue 3, p181-195

²⁴ Grundy E and Shelton N (2001) "Contact between adult children and their parents in Great Britain 1986- 99" in *Environment and Planning A*, Vol. 33, No. 4, p685 – 697

²⁵ Grundy E (1999) "Household and Family Change in Mid and Later Life in England and Wales" in McRae S (ed.) *Changing Britain: Families and Households in the 1990s*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

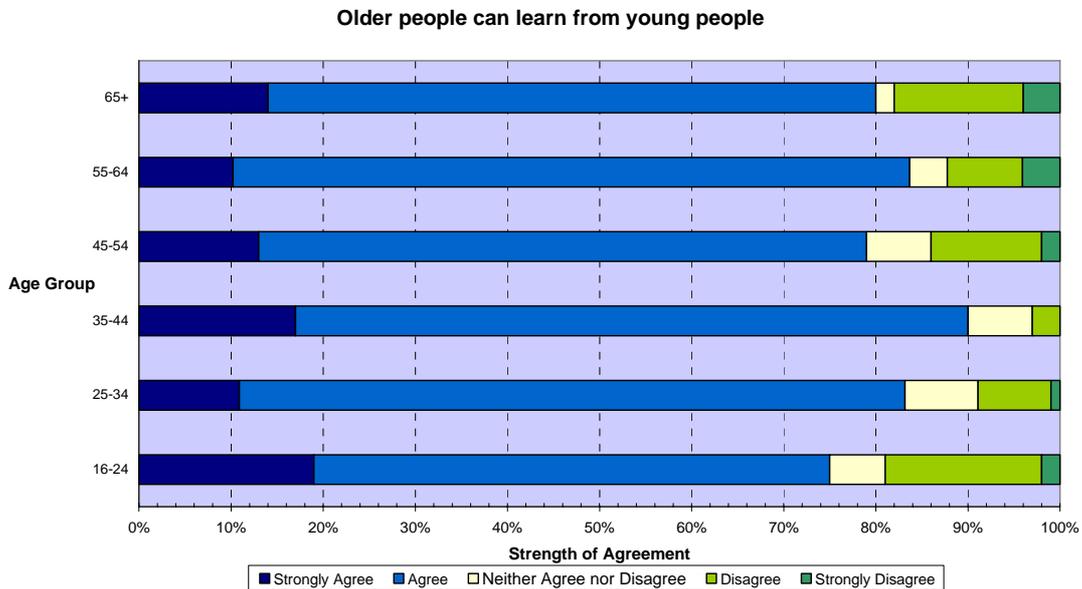
The State of Intergenerational Relations Today

This brief review has explored some of the ways in which social science has identified the importance of intergenerational relations outside of the family at the community and societal levels, whether in terms of intergenerational solidarity, the reproduction of human capital and the transmission of culture.

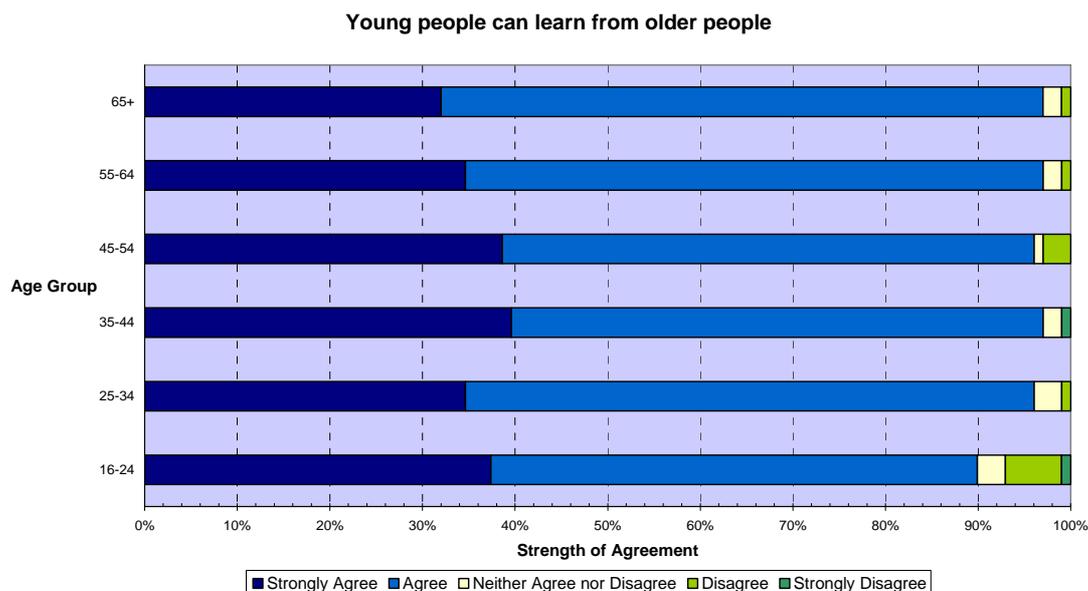
However, beyond social science, to what extent does the UK population itself actually recognise intergenerational exchanges and transfers?

Formal definitions of different aspects of intergenerational relations have not been developed, and validated survey questions are not available. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to expect that a representative sample of the population would display some recognition of intergenerational exchanges.

The ILC-UK therefore commissioned research that asked a representative sample of respondents of all age-groups (16 to 65+) about whether older people can learn from younger people and vice versa.²⁶



²⁶ This research, which is referred to throughout this report, involved telephone interviews undertaken by the BMRB (British Market Research Bureau) with 1,010 adults aged 16+. The sample was representative of the GB population by age, sex and class.



The research found that:

- 82% of respondents agreed that older people can learn from the young. However, 19% of those aged 16-24 and 18% of those 65+ disagreed with this statement
- 96% of respondents agreed that young people can learn from older people.

The overwhelmingly positive responses to such simple survey questions identify a widespread awareness of the transmission of knowledge between generations among the general population.

This may suggest that relations between the generations at the societal level are generally positive. However, among many commentators, there is a perception that intergenerational relations are somehow ‘worsening’ as a result of various societal trends. Further research commissioned by the ILC-UK also highlighted negative preconceptions about the scope for positive intergenerational relations. The next chapter therefore explores the challenges that exist to relations between the generations.

Key Points from Chapter 1:

- Intergenerational relations matter and as such, are a legitimate interest for policymakers.
- At a general level, social contact has significant health benefits, particularly for those who may be at higher risk of social isolation, such as men in retirement.
- More generally, strong and positive intergenerational relations can be identified as a key factor in:
 - The transmission and exchange of human capital within society.
 - The transmission of useful life-skills both up and down the generations.
 - The transmission of values, moral codes and social norms.
 - The reproduction and transmission of culture, history and identity.
 - The prevention and reduction of age-based prejudice and discrimination.
 - The formation and preservation of intergenerational solidarity at the societal level that underpins the intergenerational contract.
 - Maintaining the transmission and exchanges of knowledge and values between the generations that may be decreasingly occurring at the family level.

Chapter 2: What is the Challenge?

The previous chapter explored the importance of relations between different generations outside of the family for societal well-being and the economy. This chapter explores the challenges that exist to the development of strong and sustainable intergenerational relations. These relate to naturally occurring factors around the life-course, different life-stages, ageing and development. The chapter also explores societal and economic trends that are perceived to be adversely influencing the scope and nature of interaction between different generations.

Development and Ageing during the Life Course

It has long been proposed that social disengagement is a natural part of the ageing process,²⁷ although this proposition has consistently been subject to critique. However, when considering different generations, both “perceptions of difference” among younger and older cohorts, as well as other limits to their interaction, can be related to the various aspects of cognitive, physical and other changes associated with development and ageing over the life-course. This section explores the implications of these changes for intergenerational relations.

Differences in Physical Functioning

The physical functioning of individuals varies at different stages of the life-course. In particular, although there are wide variations among individuals and among different aspects of physical functioning, most people experience some form of declining physical functioning associated with the ageing process.²⁸ Physical functioning has many components, such as balance, grip strength, gait-speed and hearing. Ultimately, continuing and worsening declines in physical functioning may be characteristic of end-of-life disability and ill-health.

The physical spaces that individuals occupy and the activities they engage in are determined significantly by their physical functioning, in particular, their mobility. Public policy is already active in seeking to ensure most physical spaces and environments, such as homes and neighbourhoods are ‘inclusive’.²⁹ However, especially in paid employment and leisure, physical capacities are key in determining what individuals do and the physical space they occupy. Where differences in physical capacities create scope for exclusion from activities and spaces, this may form a barrier to interaction between different generations.

Physical functioning, space and activity

Physical functioning defines the spaces we occupy and the activities we engage in. In some spheres, such as sport, the separation of those with higher physical functioning is viewed as normal and legitimate. In other spheres, such as access to public buildings, the exclusion of some individuals because of their physical functioning is not tolerated. To some extent, physical functioning can actually define individual preferences, with the ultimate effect of separating different generations. For example, the sport of lawn bowls, which requires lower physical functioning than some other sports, is significantly more popular among older cohorts than younger cohorts.

²⁷ Cumming E et al. (1961) “A formal statement of disengagement theory” in Cumming E and Henry W (eds.) *Growing old: The process of disengagement*. New York: Basic Books

²⁸ Melzer D et al. (2006) “Chapter 6: Measured Physical Performance” in Banks J et al. (eds.) *Retirement, health and relationships of the older population in England: The 2004 English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (Wave 2)*, IFS, London

²⁹ Communities & Local Government (2007) *Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods: A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society*, HMSO, London

Differences in physical capacity among different age-groups are also a key driver of “perceptions of difference”, i.e. in viewing an individual as different to oneself.

Physical functioning, space and activity

Physical functioning defines the spaces we occupy and the activities we engage in. In some situations, such as sport, the separation of those with higher physical functioning is viewed as normal and legitimate. In other situations, such as access to public buildings, the exclusion of some individuals because of their physical functioning is not tolerated. To some extent, physical functioning defines preferences, with the ultimate effect of separating different generations. For example, the sport of lawn bowls, which requires lower physical functioning than some other sports, is significantly more popular among older cohorts than younger cohorts.

For example, younger cohorts may perceive older cohorts as being ‘different’ and ‘separate to themselves on account of physical functioning, affecting their attitudes and behaviour toward older people.

Differences in Cognitive Functioning

Cognitive functioning varies with age. A person’s ‘cognitive capacity’ increases in the development phases of infancy and childhood. Among older cohorts, the majority of individuals experience declining cognitive function as a part of the ageing process. Evidence on the population aged 50+ in the England shows declines in various aspects of cognitive function such as numeracy, literacy, prospective and short-term memory.^{30 31} However, as with physical functioning, declines in cognitive function are far from unilinear, and some individuals show negligible reductions in cognitive capacity in old age.

Differences in cognitive functioning matter because they may directly contribute to perceptions of difference between different age-groups. Where individuals notice and perceive differences in cognitive capacity to someone of a different age-group, this directly contributes to their perception of difference, and may lead to individuals de-selecting themselves, losing confidence or avoiding contact with individuals they perceive as different.

Along with physical capacity, cognitive functioning also influences the activities and physical spaces that individuals engage in and occupy, reducing interactions between different generations.

More importantly, differences in cognitive function may also affect social interaction. For example, researchers have linked declines in cognitive ability among older groups to declines in humour comprehension. In particular, different aspects of cognitive function such as ‘working memory’, ‘cognitive flexibility’, ‘verbal abstraction’ and ‘visual scanning’ have been shown to affect cognitive comprehension of humour.^{32 33} Conversational style and speed of dialogue may also be influenced by cognitive capacity, and may be one factor why individuals seek out substantially similar individuals for friendship and socialising.

Development and Psychological Change

Psychological changes occur right through the life-course from infancy through adolescence up to and including old-age. Quite literally: individuals think differently as they age. In the context of the ageing of the UK population, it is especially relevant to consider the multiple

³⁰ Huppert F et al. (2006) “Chapter 8: Cognitive function” in Banks J et al., *Retirement, health and relationships of the older population in England: The 2004 English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (Wave 2)*, IFS, London

³¹ Banks J & Oldfield Z (2007) “Understanding Pensions: Cognitive Function, Numerical Ability and Retirement Saving” in *Fiscal Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 2, p143–170

³² Shammi P & Stuss D (2003) “The effects of normal aging on humor appreciation” in *Journal of the International Neuropsychological Society*, Vol. 9, p855-863

³³ Mak W & Carpenter B (2007) “Humor comprehension in older adults” in *Journal of The International Neuropsychological Society*, Vol. 13, p606-614

aspects of the psychology of ageing. For example, research into 'decision-making competence' shows important differences between younger and older people.³⁴ Ageing is associated with changes in the way individuals make decisions. Research has shown that older people typically seek less information to solve problems than younger people³⁵ and that older people tend to be more interpretative, focusing on interpersonal and experienced elements of a problem rather than 'propositional content'.^{36 37}

Another important aspect of the psychology of ageing is the 'positivity effect'. Researchers have found that as individuals reach old-age, they experience fewer negative emotions, and indeed, appear to 'filter out' negative information.³⁸ For example, older individuals appear to subconsciously distort their recollection of the past to focus on positive memories.³⁹ The positivity effect appears to result from cognitive control mechanisms that enhance positive information and diminish negative information in the mind of the individual, so as to improve both cognitive performance and achieve greater emotion regulation.⁴⁰

Differences in psychological characteristics associated with different points of the life-course represent another difference between younger and older cohorts, particularly relating to how individuals see themselves, the world, and how they navigate daily situations

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Differences in cognitive and physical functioning across the life-course, as well psychological changes associated with different life-stages, could all be expected to affect interaction between different cohorts. In light of the ageing of the GB population, the ILC-UK commissioned a survey of a representative sample of individuals across all age-groups, in order to find out whether individuals regard older people becoming disengaged from younger people outside of their families as a natural part of the ageing process.

³⁴ Finucane M. et al. (2002) "Aging and decision-making competence: an analysis of comprehension and consistency skills in older versus younger adults considering healthplan options" in *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*, Vol. 15, p141–64

³⁵ Johnson M. (1990) 'Age differences in decision-making: a process methodology for examining strategic information processing' in *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences*, No. 45, Vol. 2, p75–8

³⁶ Blanchard-Fields F. (1996) 'Emotion and everyday problem solving in adult development' in Magai C. and McFadden S. (eds.) *Handbook of Emotion, Adult Development, and Aging*, p149–65, Academic Press: London

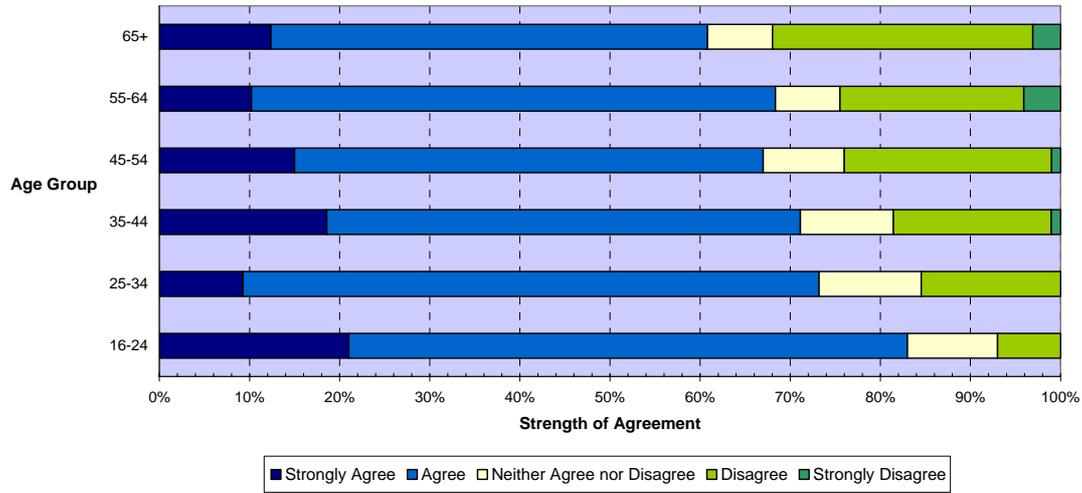
³⁷ Sinnot J (1989) *Everyday Problem Solving: theory and application*, Praeger: New York

³⁸ Mather M & Carstensen L (2005) "Aging and motivated cognition: the positivity effect in attention and memory" in *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, Vol.9, No.10, p496-502

³⁹ Charles S. et al. (2003) "Aging and emotional memory: the forgettable nature of negative images for older adults" in *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, Vol. 132, No. 2, p310–24

⁴⁰ Mather M & Carstensen L (2005) "Aging and motivated cognition: the positivity effect in attention and memory" in *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, Vol.9, No.10, p496-502

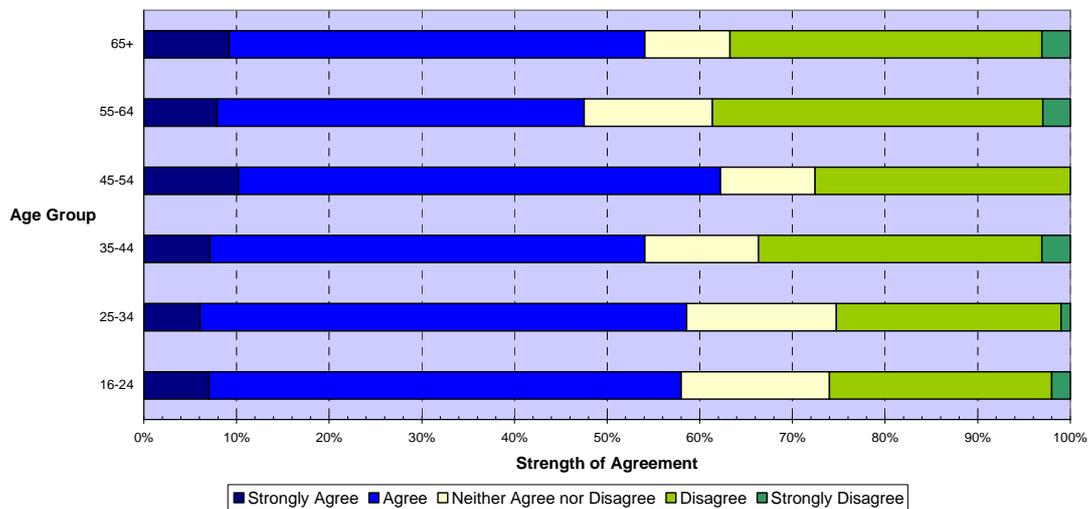
Outside of their families, a natural part of the ageing process is for older people to become disengaged from younger people



Overall, the majority of most age-groups agreed with this statement. Interestingly, it appears that those aged 16-34 were less likely to agree with the statement than those aged 65+.

Respondents were also asked whether they agreed with the statement:

Outside of families, people of different generations generally find it difficult to communicate



More respondents (55%) agreed than disagreed (31%). Supplementary questions also suggested that lower social groups (DE) were more likely to agree with the statement.

These findings suggest a number of challenges for policymakers and older people’s groups. Large numbers of people, including older people themselves, appear to regard social disengagement among older people with younger people as a natural part of ageing, as opposed to the result of social context and environment.

In addition, it seems that the majority of the population observe communication problems between different generations.

Life-Stage and Cohort Differences

The previous section looked at how life-course changes in cognitive and physical functioning, and other aspects of development and ageing, may affect intergenerational relations. This section looks at two other sources of differences between generations that may be expected to inhibit strong and positive intergenerational relations:

- Cohort effects - how being born during one particular era affects individuals and ultimately creates differences between different preceding and succeeding cohorts.
- Life-stage – how the experience of a particular life-stage affects individuals.

Differences in Cohort Experience

Every cohort is shaped – or ‘socialised’ – by the period during which it experiences different life-stages, in particular, formative periods during youth and adolescence. Every era sees change: new or different opportunities, limits, lifestyles, standards of living and values. These shape individuals, the paths that individuals take in life and their attitudes to themselves and society. Two excellent examples of societal changes influencing particular cohorts in the UK are National Service, and the creation of mandatory student grants for higher education.

Example: National Service

National Service was introduced on January 1st 1949. Every healthy man between 17 and 21 was expected to serve in the armed forces for 18 months. This form of compulsory peacetime conscription ended on December 31st 1960. National Service shaped the experiences, values and attitudes of one generation of British men.

Example: Higher education

Under the Education Act of 1962, a national Mandatory Award of student maintenance grant was established, payable by Local Education Authorities to students on most full-time degree courses. The effect was to massively open up opportunities for access to higher education, increasing student numbers.

A further key difference in cohort experience is the experience of employment. In addition to increasing ‘flexibilisation’ and long-term increases in female participation in paid employment, long-term transitions in output from manufacturing to services and knowledge-based industries mean younger cohorts are experiencing a very different working-life to older cohorts. It is projected that in the six years up to 2014, agriculture, utilities, manufacturing, textiles and construction are all expected to see smaller workforces. Education, health, social care, distribution, transport, retailing and business services are projected to see expanded workforces.⁴¹

Each cohort’s experiences at different life-stages shapes the cohort, and may result in a form of collective identity that distinguishes it from preceding cohorts. For example, much has been written about the emergence into adulthood of the baby-boomer generation coinciding with the transition from ‘post-war austerity’ to the ‘consumer society’.⁴² In political science, research on ‘socialisation’ has explored whether individuals who pass through their formative years during definable historical eras constitute political generations characterized by shared dispositions or collective memories that outlast the eras themselves.

However, the development of different values, attitudes and preferences among different cohorts creates differences between cohorts. For example, cohorts vary in their characteristics: it is often noted that the ‘baby-boomer’ cohort is wealthier and healthier than preceding cohorts,⁴³ making it likely that their expectations and experience of old-age will in critical respects be different to that of earlier cohorts. However, interestingly, some

⁴¹ Wilson R et al. (2006) *Working Futures 2004-2014: National Report*, University of Warwick

⁴² Stewart A and Torges C (2006) “Social, Historical, and Developmental Influences on the Psychology of the Baby Boom at Midlife” in Whitbourne K and Willis (eds.) *The Baby Boomers Grow Up: Contemporary Perspectives on Midlife*, p22-41, New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates

⁴³ Metz D and Underwood M (2005) *Older, Richer, Fitter*, Age Concern England, London

researchers have noted a desire among 'baby-boomers' to erase differences with younger generations, demonstrating that individuals may deliberately reach beyond the identity offered by membership of their cohort.⁴⁴

At the family level, researchers have explored how differences between generations in values, particularly in relation to notions of support and independence, can create ambivalence, or even conflict, between the generations.⁴⁵ By extension, differences in values and outlook between different cohorts can be expected to be a constraint on intergenerational relations at the societal level. Cohort membership therefore results in real differences to members of other cohorts, both older and younger.

Differences in Life-Stage Experience

Although obvious, it is important to recognise that a fundamental difference between different generations is life-stage, and the 'lived-experience' of individuals in a particular life-stage. Old and young people are different simply because the life of someone aged 20, for example, undertaking higher education, will likely be very different to a 'third-age' retiree aged 70.

However, life-stages do not simply result in obvious and easily observable differences between different generations, for example, whether or not someone works, what this means for their activities each day, their schedule and the physical spaces they occupy. Life-stage also influences attitudes, values and perceptions: such personal characteristics can and do vary by life-stage. Indeed, researchers have found that the effect of life-stage can be more important than cohort membership and characteristics on political outlook.⁴⁶

Importantly, these differences apply both between different cohorts (youth vs. retirement) as well as within cohorts. For example, younger cohorts who are pre or post family-formation; or, those in retirement who are 'healthy' or experiencing frailty and long-term ill health, i.e. the difference between from 'third-age' and 'fourth-age'.

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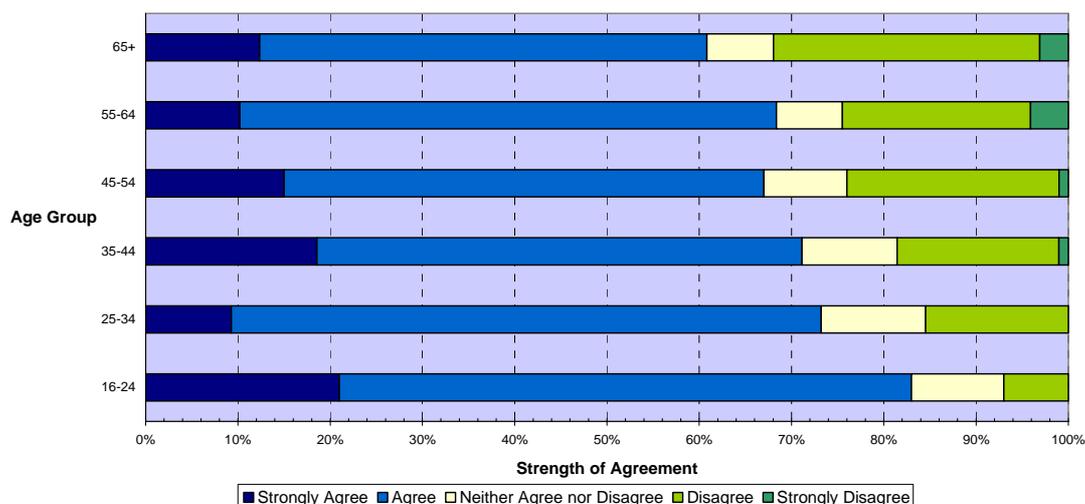
This section has explored how life-stage and cohort-membership creates differences between the generations, and individual motivations, behaviour, attitudes and perceptions of the world. These affect factors affect how different generations 'relate' to each other. The ILC-UK therefore commissioned a survey of a representative sample of the GB population about how different generations relate to each other. Again, in the context of the ageing of the UK population, respondents were asked whether outside of their families, it becomes harder for older people as they age to relate to younger people.

⁴⁴ Biggs S et al. (2007) "The Mature Imagination and Consumption Strategies: Age and Generation in the Development of a United Kingdom Baby Boomer Identity" in *International Journal of Ageing and Later Life*, Vol. 2, No. 2, p31-59

⁴⁵ Pillemer K et al. (2007) "Capturing the Complexity of Intergenerational Relations: Exploring Ambivalence within Later-Life Families" in *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 63, No. 4, p775-792

⁴⁶ Nikolayenko O (2008) "Life Cycle, Generational and Period Effects on Protest Potential in Yeltsin's Russia" in *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 41, p437-460

Outside of their families, it becomes harder for older people as they age to relate to younger people



Overall, a majority of respondents in each age group agreed with the statement. However, an interesting age effect was noticeable: those aged 16-24 were significantly more likely to agree (83%) with the statement than respondents aged 65+ (59%). This suggests that rather than older cohorts perceiving problems in relating to younger people, it is younger cohorts that perceive that older cohorts do not relate to them.

Social and Economic Trends

The preceding sections looked at how natural changes in the life-course, and the experiences of different cohorts, may create ‘differences’ between generations, and form a barrier to positive intergenerational relations.

However, some commentators highlight the social and economic trends in the current era that are perceived to have an adverse influence on intergenerational relations and which justify a response from policymakers to deploy policy measures to compensate. This section explores these trends.

Longevity

Life expectancy is increasing. It is projected that by 2031, the UK population will include 3 million people aged over-85 compared with 1.2 million in 2006 and around 0.6 million in 1981.⁴⁷ What does increasing life expectancy mean for intergenerational relations? Put simply, as people live longer, the differences in the cohort-experience and characteristics of the oldest and youngest adult cohorts will potentially also increase. In the view of commentators, this will represent a new pressure on positive relations between the oldest and youngest generations in society.

Migration

Intergenerational relations are clearly determined by the scope for interaction between different age-groups, which in turn is determined by residential location. However, the UK

⁴⁷ ONS (2008) *Population Trends*, No. 131, London: HMSO, www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/Population_Trends_131_web.pdf

population is in continual flux as individuals move around within the country, or migrate in and out.

Internal migration among the constituent countries of the United Kingdom has remained relatively constant between 1976 and 2006.⁴⁸ In contrast, annual migration into the UK has increased substantially from 1991 to 2006 (around 330,000 to 590,000). Similarly, annual outward migration has increased from around 285,000 in 1991 to 400,000 in 2006.⁴⁹

In relation to different generations, life-stage may affect choices of where to live and is generally perceived to result in two relevant trends: the migration of younger people to major urban cities for employment, and the migration of older people to coastal and rural towns and cities for life-style. Although the picture is complex, there are clear geographic patterns in the proportion of retirees within different UK regions. Analysis of 1991 and 2001 Census data show that areas with a high proportion of retired people are concentrated along the coastal areas of the country, especially Cornwall.⁵⁰ Christchurch in Dorset, Rother in East Sussex and East Devon all have populations with over 30% of individuals above state pension age. Many large urban areas saw reductions in the proportion of their population above state pension age between 1991 and 2001, such as Greater Manchester, Tyneside, and most especially, London. However, such proportional changes in the retired population will also reflect inward migration flows, and the fact that most such migrants reside in urban areas and are young.

Although research and data on such changes does not provide a conclusive picture, there is no doubt that different age-groups display different migratory patterns, potentially creating cities and regions containing a high proportion of individuals in one age-group or life-stage. Such a tendency toward the geographical separation of different generations represents a clear challenge to the functioning of intergenerational relations in society.

Globalisation, cultural and technological change

Powered by advances in information and communication technology, as well as increasing physical flows of people and ideas, 'globalisation' is generally acknowledged as a defining social phenomenon of the current era. Vast amounts of research and academic literature have been produced charting globalisation and its different features.

Inevitably, the 'socialisation' of different cohorts and their experience of the life course is affected by globalisation, potentially increasing the differences in outlook, values, identity and cultural resources of different cohorts. In particular, the characteristics of younger cohorts shaped by globalisation may result in larger differences between young and older generations, so that different cohorts find themselves lacking the shared experiences that enable understanding, empathy and shared identity.

Example: the changing cultural resources of young cohorts

Globalisation and advances in technology have rendered enormous changes in the cultural resources of young people, such as their access to mass media. For example:

- * A 15-year old in 1960 may have had access to the two national TV channels, *BBC Television Service* and *ITV*, as well as limited public service radio.
- * A 15-year old in 1990 had access to four national TV channels, and multiple public and commercial radio stations.
- * A 15-year old in 2008 has access to multiple national TV and radio services, and through the Internet, can be exposed to literally thousands of different cultures, ideas, fashions.

Crucially, experience of globalisation may vary by age-group. For example, the prevalence of overseas travel is higher among younger cohorts.

⁴⁸ Source: ONS data.

⁴⁹ Source: ONS data.

⁵⁰ Soule A et al. (2005) *Focus on Older People: 2005 Edition*, ONS, HMSO

Developments in technology may also impact upon intergenerational relations. In particular, usage of different forms of information and communication technology may vary by age-group. For example, usage of mobile phones is higher among younger cohorts than old cohorts. Variations in communication via SMS messages increase this contrast. Use of technology not only therefore presents a further difference between cohorts, but actually results in different cohorts communicating in entirely different ways. Similar comments could be made for certain online communication tools, such as 'instant messaging'.

Finally, changes in the cultural, social and technological environment may create changes in social norms, which may have an effect on intergenerational relationships and on value transmission between generations. Academic researchers have observed that some social norms may affect the current social context and there may be significant distance between current social values held by younger generations compared to older generations.⁵¹ and those held by older generations. Other norms may be based more on the current social context and there may be significant distance between current social values and those held by older generations.

Demographic change and contested resources

The ageing of western countries has long caused predictions of "intergenerational conflict". In fact, no manifestation of an intergenerational conflict has emerged; for example, only one country – Israel – contains an effective older people's political party.

Nevertheless, two potential sources of competing priorities and interests between the generation deserve highlighting. First, an important implication of an ageing population is increasing fiscal pressure on public spending as demands on certain types of public spending (state pensions, healthcare) increase simultaneously to reductions in the ratio of working age individuals to those above the state retirement age.

As multiple western countries confront demographic change, each is likely to settle on different agreements and 'fixes' in relation to the 'cost centres' of an ageing population (healthcare; pension income; social care; housing adaptation; built environment, etc.), how these will be paid for, and the balance of responsibility between the individual and the state. Wherever individuals below retirement age resent the fiscal pressure imposed by supporting a larger retired population, this may lead to social friction. In particular, these effects may be exacerbated by older cohorts using significant shares of other resources, such as the housing stock, or possessing individually high levels of wealth compared to high levels of debt among younger cohorts.⁵²

In addition, research has highlighted the contested use of public space in lower socio-economic neighbourhoods as affecting negatively older people's perceptions of their residence.⁵³ Such examples highlight that in addition to contesting public spending at a macro level, the use of public resources may be contested at a local level given different preferences among age-groups.

Although often subject to exaggeration among commentators, the contested use of public resources in the context of demographic change may result in negative discourse surrounding intergenerational rights and responsibilities, adversely affecting intergenerational relations at the societal and community level.

⁵¹ Constanzo P and Hoy M (2007) "Intergenerational Relations: Themes, Prospects and Possibilities" in *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 63, No. 4, p885-902

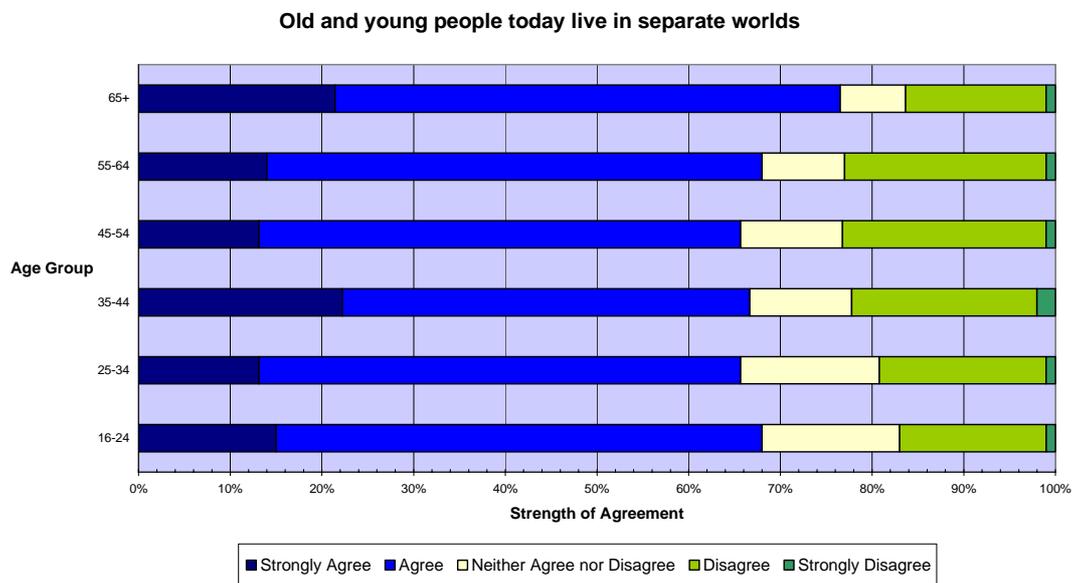
⁵² Boreham R and Lloyd J (2007) *Asset Accumulation across the Life Course*, ILC-UK, London

⁵³ Lyndhurst B (2004) *Sustainable cities and the ageing society: the role of older people in an urban renaissance*, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

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Have intergenerational relations “worsened”? Is it possible to measure intergenerational relations? These questions are explored in later chapters. However, beyond the use and development of academic scientific indicators of intergenerational relations, does the wider population perceive changes in intergenerational relations? Although commentators may propose that intergenerational relations are threatened by social and economic trends, using subjective and personal impressions of intergenerational relations, is there a perception in the general population that intergenerational relations are poor, or are worsening?

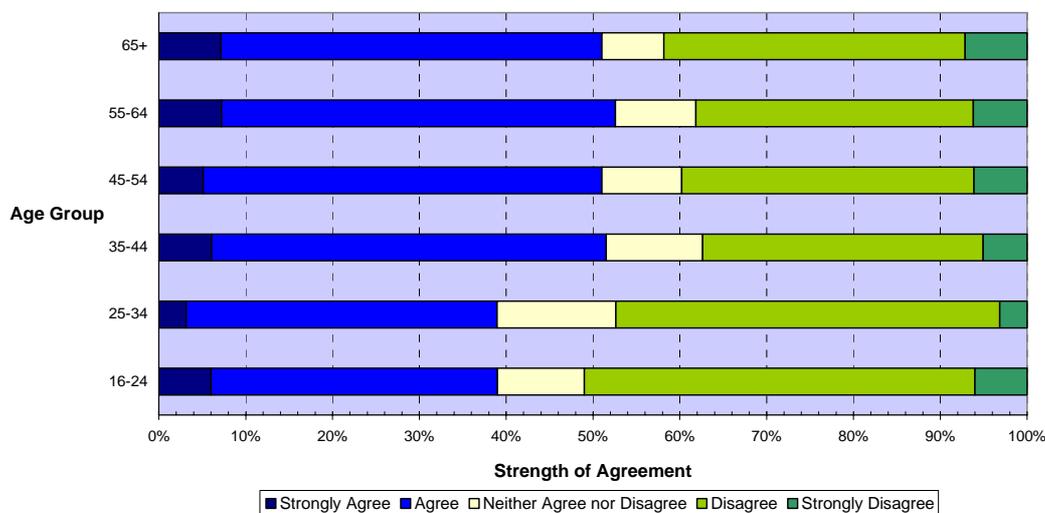
In order to explore how relations between the generations are perceived, the ILC-UK commissioned research of a representative sample of the GB population. To gauge whether respondents perceived understanding and contact between older and younger cohorts, the concept of ‘living in separate worlds’ was deployed. Respondents were asked if they agreed with the statement:



The majority of respondents across the full age range (16 to 65+) agreed with this statement (67% compared to 20%). However, the age cohort of 65+ agreed significantly more than respondents between the ages of 25-34 and 45-54.

The ILC-UK was also interested to explore whether relations between the generations were perceived to be ‘worse’ than in previous eras. Survey respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the statement:

Relations between old and young in society today are worse than in the past



Overall, more respondents (67%) agreed with the statement than disagreed (20%). Interestingly, respondents in lower socio-demographic groups (C2 and DE) appeared more likely to agree with the statement. This finding could be interpreted in multiple ways, for example, as reflecting the tendency for ‘collective memory’ to have an excessively positive view of previous eras. Alternatively, the finding could be seen as confirmation that trends in society are resulting in less positive contact and interaction between the generations.

Discussion: The Challenge to Intergenerational Relations

This chapter has reviewed factors that may pose a challenge to relations between generations. They can be distinguished between those that are naturally occurring, for example, differences in physical functioning associated with age and the life-course, and factors relating to contemporary social and economic trends.

Interestingly, a section of the UK population does appear to believe that older and younger cohorts live in ‘separate worlds’ and that relations between the generations are worse than in the past.

Scientifically developed survey questions to measure intergenerational relations have not been developed, so it will never truly be possible to assess whether the extent of positive contact, interaction and communication among older and younger generations has in fact reduced or increased in living memory. Historical data is not available. However, recognition of the importance of intergenerational relations and perceived challenges to them have created a widening belief that a public policy response is required and appropriate, and interest in what public policy can achieve in relation to intergenerational relations. This is explored in the next chapter.

Key Points from Chapter 2:

- Positive contact, interaction and communication between different generations may be affected by differences in physical and cognitive functioning among age-groups, that leads to the occupation of separate physical spaces and engagement in different activities.
- Psychological changes are associated not just with child development but continue throughout the life course. These changes may create differences in the behaviour of

younger and older cohorts and affect how each views the world, their role and interaction with others.

- Differences in the socialisation and experiences of different cohorts during different life stages means that each cohort is shaped differently by prevailing changes in society, the economy and technology.
- Simply occupying different life stages will affect the outlook, priorities and behaviour of different age-groups.
- Various socio-economic trends may be adverse to the functioning of intergenerational relations:
 - Increasing longevity, resulting in increasing spacing between the oldest and youngest members of society.
 - Internal migration associated with different life stages may potentially restrict opportunities for intergenerational interaction.
 - In addition to the ongoing socialisation experiences of different cohorts, the increasing speed of social, economic and cultural changes associated with globalisation potentially increase further the differences between different cohorts.
 - Fiscal pressures associated with demographic change may result in increasingly prevalent contests between different generations over the use of public resources, such as spending priorities and the use of public spaces.
- Survey responses from a representative sample of the UK population does reveal a perception that older and younger cohorts “live in separate worlds” and that relations between the generations are “worse” than in the past.

Chapter 3: What is the Role for Public Policy?

The preceding chapters have identified numerous benefits from strong and positive intergenerational relations at the societal and community level: the exchange of human capital and life-skills; the transmission of values, culture and history; the preservation of intergenerational solidarity; and the reduction of age-based prejudice and stereotyping.

The previous chapter identified various challenges to 'intergenerational relations'. Some arise from naturally occurring variations across the life course in cognitive and physical functioning, that result in spatial separation and perceptions of 'difference' among different cohorts. Psychological differences among individuals at different stages of the life course can also be expected to affect social interaction. Differences in cohort experience and life-stage also create differences among generations in values, attitudes and experiences. Recent trends in longevity, internal migration, changing socio-economic conditions and globalisation also all appear to pose challenges to strong and positive intergenerational relations at the societal level.

This chapter is concerned with how and whether public policy should address intergenerational relations. Are intergenerational relations a legitimate or appropriate interest or target for public policy? Notions of 'strong communities' have already featured heavily in the efforts of UK policymakers.⁵⁴ However, can relations between different cohorts be specified and focused upon meaningfully by public policy? What policy levers and mechanisms are available? What outcomes would be sought? What would a strategy to improve intergenerational relations look like? How would it be implemented? How would it be evaluated?

In fact, various stakeholders have for some years been concerned with improving relations between the generations at the societal level. Two broad approaches can be identified: first, the creation of 'inclusive' spaces, environments, activities and cultures that provide a platform for strong intergenerational relations; second, the deliberate exposure of groups from different generations for the purpose of improved intergenerational understanding, empathy and exchange. This chapter explores both approaches in turn.

Inclusive Spaces

As noted above, different cohorts vary in their physical functioning. Providing a physical site for intergenerational relations therefore requires the creation of physical spaces suitable and inclusive for individuals of all ages and physical capacities. Government policy has already recognised the implications of an ageing society for the housing stock, and is seeking to ensure that all housing will be inclusive and suitable for all ages and capacities.⁵⁵

The Government is also seeking to extend the concept of 'lifetime homes' to the level of 'lifetime neighbourhoods'.

Example: Toward lifetime neighbourhoods - Harding E (2007) ILC-UK

"A lifetime neighbourhood would provide all residents with the best possible chance of health, wellbeing and social inclusion, particularly as they grow older. This would require an accessible and pleasant built environment in which residents of all ages are not unnecessarily excluded by age, physical or cognitive ability, and remain able to work, socialise and participate for as long as possible."

⁵⁴ Communities & Local Government (2008) *Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities: Statutory Guidance*, HMSO, London

⁵⁵ Communities & Local Government (2007) *Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods: A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society*, HMSO, London

This concept builds on previous notions of 'age-friendly cities' to look at the design of public and civic spaces, transport and other amenities. Each of these physical spaces will be made as 'inclusive' as possible by adaptation to suit individuals from all age-groups.

Other sites of potential intergenerational exchange and interaction can be identified. For some years, researchers and policymakers have explored and developed models of the 'inclusive workplace',⁵⁶ particularly through the application of 'inclusive design'.⁵⁷

Indeed, the design of workplaces for older people is an active field seeking to ensure that age-groups can participate in work.⁵⁸

Inclusive design in the workplace

The application of inclusive design in the workplace can be found in everyday objects, such as a chair or desk-lamp, that are designed for use by individuals with a wide range of functional capability.

Inclusive Activities

If the physical design of space can be 'inclusive', whether a public square, a home or sports centre, it can therefore provide a site for intergenerational relations. But what activities can take place in these spaces? Is it possible for more activities to be 'inclusive' so as to facilitate intergenerational relations?

In the workplace, work itself may appear defined by the physical, cognitive and knowledge resources of employees. However, researchers have begun to explore how the design of work and the tools required to undertake it, whether in manufacturing or service industries, can be made more 'inclusive', so that a more diverse range of individuals can engage in work. These changes in working practices are being driven as much by recognition of the ageing of the UK workforce, as by an objective to encourage intergenerational relations.

However, beyond the workplace, is there scope for policymakers to make other activities more 'inclusive' and age-diverse? For example, among public services such as education, healthcare and the arts, there may be scope for creating more inclusive activities. For example, various organisations have sought to increase the age diversity found in further and higher education, implicitly recognising the potential of educational environments as facilitators of intergenerational relations.

In the third sector and at the community level, there may be scope to educate and encourage local sporting and cultural clubs about the benefits and rewards of intergenerational relations that could be achieved through age-diverse recruitment and participation. Just as the Government has encouraged age-diverse workforces by highlighting the positive effects of age-diversity,⁵⁹ there may be scope to extend such programmes to the voluntary and community sectors. For some organisations, this may be a question of seeking to recruit for the first time individuals who are younger (16-24) or older (65+) than they would normally target. For example, local amateur football clubs could target older members who may not actually continue to play competitive football, but can nevertheless contribute to the functioning and community of a club. The Government can use the 'contact points' between voluntary organisations and public bodies to articulate the value in age diversity, and encourage volunteers and individuals to value intergenerational activities.

⁵⁶ Myerson J & Ross P (2006) *Space To Work: New office design*, Laurence King, London

⁵⁷ Coleman R (2006) *An introduction to inclusive design*, Design Council, London:

http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/AutoPdfs/DesignCouncil_1350.pdf

⁵⁸ <http://www.welcomingworkplace.com>

Hitchcock D (2004) "Is Inclusive Design Ready to Improve Employment Opportunities" in *Journal of Occupational Psychology, Employment and Disability*, Vol. 6, No. 2, p75-78

⁵⁹ <http://www.agepositive.gov.uk>

Virtual Platforms for Intergenerational Relations

The preceding section looked at physical spaces and activities that may provide a platform for, or facilitate, intergenerational relations. However, it is important not to overlook the internet as a site of 'virtual' intergenerational relations. Internet usage is increasing among all age-groups, in particular, among older cohorts. Clearly patterns of usage, and what individuals use the internet for, vary enormously, and will vary by age-group, e.g. the tendency for online social networking sites to be used principally by younger people.

However, although some may question the value of online 'virtual' interaction, the internet has multiple advantages as a site for intergenerational relations. Online interaction is 'age-blind'; for example, users of football chat rooms do not know each other's age so are unable to make age-based judgements or deploy age-based stereotypes or preconceptions. In this sense, internet-based interaction is inherently and entirely 'inclusive'. Online interaction does not enable individuals to form the kind of immediate preconceptions and judgements associated with face-to-face interaction.

A further advantage of the internet as a site for international relations is its reach: intergenerational interaction based on face-to-face interaction is limited to the physical sites which an individual uses in their locale. Indeed, the reach of online interaction and the multiple opportunities it presents for the exchange of views, knowledge and values etc., creates scope to re-evaluate the types of interaction that are possible. For example, some commentators have highlighted the potential of online social networking among young and old for society to make better use of the human and social capital that retirees possess, but which is left unused by their local community; for example, online mentoring of teenagers in deprived local areas by retirees living far away.⁶⁰

It therefore appears that there is enormous potential in using online platforms to advance intergenerational relations. Importantly, the infrastructure required is either free (e.g. online social networking sites) or relatively low-cost to develop (i.e. websites, etc.).

Discussion: 'Inclusion' and Intergenerational Relations

The preceding review has briefly explored how the design of physical space, activities and the internet can be 'inclusive' in nature, providing a platform for intergenerational relations by creating environments and activities that are as open as possible to age diversity.

Is such an approach suited to public policy? Can this approach be appropriately measured and benchmarked as a basis for public policy toward improving intergenerational relations? In relation to physical design, the benchmarking of inclusive design in relation to products and spaces is well-advanced. Various formal design standards are available against which to measure physical products and spaces. Measures to encourage age-diversity in workforces are also relatively well-advanced.

It also appears that virtual platforms for online interaction offer enormous potential. The relatively low-cost of online interaction by different cohorts offers a compelling case for the Government to investigate how such contact could be encouraged and developed. It bears repeating that the 'internet' is arguably the most 'inclusive' site for any human interaction.

However, in relation to the voluntary, civic and third-sectors, the message of 'age-diversity' and 'age-inclusion' is much less observable. Indeed, given the factors identified in Chapter 2 that lead to the separation of different age-groups in daily life, this may be the most ingrained form of exclusionary behaviour that is difficult for public policy to address. This is one reason why some agents have long believed in the necessity and value of specific schemes that bring different age-groups within the community directly into contact with each other. Such programmes are explored in the next section.

⁶⁰ Lloyd J (2007) *Retirement Capital and Online Social Networking*, ILC-UK, London

Intergenerational Programmes and Practice

The preceding section looked at how 'inclusive' approaches can enable and facilitate intergenerational relations. This section looks at an alternative approach to improving intergenerational relations adopted in many communities: organised activities designed to bring together individuals of different age-groups for the specific purpose of advancing intergenerational relations.

For several decades, national and local organisations and communities keen to improve intergenerational relations have organised projects, schemes and activities that bring together older and younger members of society to engage in meaningful and mutually rewarding activity, providing direct 'exposure' to different generations. This growing field of activity has resulted in a widening international network of volunteers, academics, social entrepreneurs and specialists with an interest in such 'intergenerational practice' (IP). Often, but not always, the intergenerational aspect of IP is central to a project, for example, when older members of a community talk to groups of younger people about local history that they have experienced.

Intergenerational projects can be built around multiple types of activities and learning, such as: life-skills; healthy-living; art and culture; history, etc.⁶¹

Example of Intergenerational Practice

Generations in Action was an intergenerational programme in the north of England that sought to enable older people to engage in helping younger people through mentoring and one-to-one activities. The project was funded by the Active Community Unit of the Home Office, running from 2001-2004.

As the field of IP has developed, organisations such as the Beth Johnson Foundation⁶² in the UK have also sought to make it more professional. Various publications and organisations have sought to benchmark and communicate best practice in relation to intergenerational programmes.⁶³ In the UK, one higher education provider now offers an accredited certificate in intergenerational practice.⁶⁴

Formal narrow definitions of intergenerational practice are not typically advanced, and the specific objectives of individual intergenerational schemes vary, depending on the nature and background to a particular project. This reflects in part the fact that most schemes are adapted and designed around the community, interests and preferences of participants. Those involved in IP have argued that projects work best when participants, or their representatives, are involved from the outset in planning exactly what they want to do.⁶⁵ In this sense, the approach of IP is not an 'out-of-the-box' community tool; rather, it is better described as an approach, incorporating certain objectives, ideals and guidelines.

Participants and observers of IP report numerous benefits of such schemes including: improved social inclusion; improved intergenerational respect and understanding; transfers of knowledge and learning; promotion of local identity, solidarity and culture. Crucially, practitioners of IP report that the benefits to communities are not limited to the sphere of intergenerational relations; IP can deliver more general benefits such as creating social capital, community cohesion, etc. IP can therefore be evaluated both in terms of improving intergenerational relations at the community level, and against other types of schemes and programmes that seek to create social capital and positive outcomes for the community.

⁶¹ Hatton-Yeo A (ed.) (2006) *Intergenerational Programmes: An Introduction and Examples of Practice*, Beth Johnson Foundation

⁶² <http://www.bjf.org.uk>

⁶³ Bernard M & Ellis S (2004) *How Do You Know That Intergenerational Practice Works? A guide to getting started on evaluating intergenerational practice*, Beth Johnson Foundation
Hatton-Yeo A & Watkins C (2004) *Intergenerational Community Development A practice guide*, Beth Johnson Foundation

⁶⁴ <http://www.volstudy.ac.uk/Intergen>

⁶⁵ Age Concern West Sussex (2003) *Generations as partners: a practical framework for use by anyone interested in bringing young and older people together*, ACE West Sussex

Literature: MacCallum J et al. (2006) *Community building through intergenerational exchange programs*, National Youth Affairs Research Scheme, Australia

MacCallum et al. list multiple benefits of IP derived from different types of intergenerational schemes around the world. For older people, these include: increased ability to cope with physical and mental illness; increased perception of self-worth; opportunities to learn; renewed appreciation for their past experiences; reintegration in the family and community life; spending time with young people combats feelings of isolation; development of skills, especially social skills and the use of new technologies; and exposure to diversity. For younger people, the benefits of IP are said to include: increased sense of worth, self-esteem and self-confidence; enhanced sense of social responsibility; more positive perception of older persons; greater awareness of the heterogeneity of older persons; more practical skills; less involvement in violence and drug use; increased sense of civic and community responsibility; and, alternative leisure activities to cope with problems, particularly drugs, violence and antisocial conduct. For the community, practitioners of IP cite benefits such as: enhanced social cohesion; building social networks and develop bridges in the community; build, maintain and revitalize community opportunities and public infrastructures.

The evaluation of intergenerational practice and programs

Inevitably, variations in the setting and participants for intergenerational schemes mean that successful outcomes experienced in one scheme may not automatically be reproduced in different settings. Numerous studies have been undertaken to evaluate intergenerational programmes in the UK and abroad. The majority of these evaluations have been qualitative, incorporating techniques such as interviews and focus groups. Observational techniques involving the recording of verbal and nonverbal contact, as well as the recording and encoding of activity have also been used.⁶⁶

Limited quantitative research evaluating the effectiveness of IP has been undertaken. Studies in the US have sought to use quantitative research techniques to measure the effect of intergenerational contact achieved through intergenerational programs. There is a history of research into whether contact between the generations improves certain outcomes, in particular, attitudes to individuals of a different generation.⁶⁷ Researchers have also sought to look at the effect of participants for specific groups of older people, such as those with frailty,⁶⁸ as well as looking at the interaction of the very young (pre-schoolers) with those experiencing advanced effects of ageing.⁶⁹ In light of the sometimes contradictory findings of such research, a limited number of studies have sought to deploy rigorously tested measures of attitudes, and to study the effects of intergenerational programs using a control group.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Pinazo S and Kaplan M (2008) "The benefits of intergenerational programmes" in Sanchez M (ed.) *Intergenerational programmes: Towards a society for all ages*, "la Caixa" Foundation, Barcelona

⁶⁷ Dellmann-Jenkins M et al. (1982) "Fostering Preschoolers' Prosocial Behaviours Toward the Elderly: The Effect of an Intergenerational Program" in *Educational Gerontology*, Vol. 17, Issue 1, p21-32

Aday R et al. (1991) "Youth's Attitudes Toward the Elderly: the Impact of Intergenerational Partners" in *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 372-384

Aday R et al. (1993) "Impact of an Intergenerational Program on Black Adolescents' Attitudes Toward the Elderly" in *Educational Gerontology*, Vol. 19, Issue 7, p663-673

Knapp J and Stubblefield P (2000) "Changing Students' Perceptions of Aging: The Impact of an Intergenerational Service Learning Course" in *Educational Gerontology*, Vol. 26, No. 7, p611-621

Marcia S et al. (2004) "Direct observations of children at risk for academic failure: benefits of an intergenerational visiting program" in *Educational Gerontology*, Vol. 30, Issue 8, p663-675

⁶⁸ Griff M et al. (1996) "Intergenerational Activity Analysis with Three Groups of Older Adults: Frail, Community-Living, and Alzheimer's" in *Educational Gerontology*, Vol. 22, Issue, p601-612

⁶⁹ Gigliotti C et al. (2005) "An Intergenerational Summer Program Involving Persons with Dementia and Preschool Children" in *Educational Gerontology*, Vol. 31, No. 6, p425-441

⁷⁰ Meshel D and McGlynn R (2004) "Intergenerational Contact, Attitudes, and Stereotypes of Adolescents and Older People" in *Educational Gerontology*, Vol. 30, p457-479

Other studies have sought to evaluate outcomes that can be clearly measured, e.g. school grades.⁷¹

In the UK, a handful of quantitative studies have been attempted exploring the outcomes of intergenerational practice. For example, researchers deployed the Short-Form 12 Health Survey (SF12) and CASP-19 to measure health and well-being effects for volunteers in an intergenerational scheme in the north of England.⁷² However, the sample sizes involved prevented any tests of statistical significance.

Improving the evidence base on intergenerational programmes

Although many IP projects have sought to incorporate ongoing evaluation, the majority of this research has been qualitative. Combined with the wide and colourful array of intergenerational schemes, the evidence base on the outcomes and benefits of IP has yet to result in a major investment in intergenerational schemes at the level of public policy.

In large part, this can be related to the fact that so little reliable quantitative evidence of the effects and outcomes of IP has been produced. It is therefore worthwhile considering in detail why so little quantitative research into IP been undertaken. As researchers have noted, IP is inherently unsuited to quantitative research methodologies.⁷³ Various aspects of IP are a barrier to quantitative evaluation:

- Sample size – IP projects usually involve relatively small numbers of people, with the result that surveys of participants in IP projects will yield sample sizes that are too low to provide results that can be tested for statistical significance, the social science test commonly required for evidence-based policymaking.
- Variations in projects – it is far from clear that simply aggregating data for participants in multiple IP projects provides reliable data. As described, IP projects are typically shaped by the particular subjective interests and preferences of local individuals. As a result, IP projects may not be directly comparable, let alone suitable for providing aggregate data for analysis.
- Confusion over what is to be measured – IP projects vary in their aims, both in their narrow objectives, e.g. exchanging knowledge of local history, or wider goals, e.g. fostering a sense of local community. Such variations suggest that a single standardised set of indicators could not be appropriately applied to all IP projects, even if such a standardised set of indicators had in fact been developed by academic researchers.
- Control groups – one approach to measure the effects of IP would be to measure outcomes, for example, attitudes toward ageing, before and after, participation. However, unless participants are to be surveyed before they decide to participate in an intergenerational project, a sample of IP participants prior to participation is not representative. A second approach would be to recruit a randomly selected control sample; however, this would require recruiting control subjects in the immediate local area and finding sufficient participants with similar characteristics to the participants in an IP project, e.g. being aged below 25 or above 60.

The difficulties identified in measuring the outcomes of IP contrast with studies into the effect of participation in gerontology courses on the attitudes of medical students towards the oldest-old. The nature and setting for such courses, which incorporate standardised study materials, controllable environments and 'control samples' of other students, have enabled researchers to use validated scientific attitudinal measures.⁷⁴ In contrast, IP sees

⁷¹ Jucovi L (2002) *Measuring the quality of mentor-youth relationship: A tool for mentoring programs*, Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

⁷² Ellis S (2004) *Generations in Action: Final Evaluation Report*, Beth Johnson Foundation

⁷³ Kuehne V and Kaplan M (2001) *Evaluation and research on intergenerational shared site facilities and programs: What we know and what we need to learn*, Generations United background paper, Project SHARE, Washington DC

⁷⁴ Stewart T et al. (2007) "The Middle of the Road: Results from the Aging Semantic Differential with

participants contribute to the development and guidance of schemes, and each project is designed and adapted to the local community, its characteristics and preferences. As such, it is not clear that validated measurement tools could ever be developed to produce scientifically reliable measures of outcomes from intergenerational programmes.

Discussion: Intergenerational practice and public policy

Intergenerational programmes and practice pose a dilemma for policymakers concerned with improving intergenerational relations at the community and societal level. The positive benefits of intergenerational programmes are real, immediate and obvious to participants, observers and organisers of intergenerational projects. The numerous qualitative studies of IP testify to the range of positive outcomes that can yield from intergenerational programmes.

However, in the UK, significant public investment in intergenerational programmes and schemes has yet to occur. In large part, this reflects the fact that there has been no large-scale formal evaluation of intergenerational projects. The base of reliable quantitative, social science evidence on the outcomes of IP in the UK is small. As a result, key questions for IP remain, such as: how long do the positive effects of IP last for? Can IP projects be copied and reproduced? How does IP compare to other types of schemes and programme that seek to achieve similar outcomes at the community level? Is IP cost-effective?

In the absence of a strong evidence-base, policymakers may continue to be inhibited from incorporating IP into public policy designed to improve intergenerational relations or other community-level outcomes.

However, this raises important questions for both policymakers and practitioners of IP: can the outcomes of IP be measured through quantitative research? Are the quantitative techniques required for formal evaluation actually coherent with IP? If not, how should public policy proceed?

For example, in the absence of validated survey questions, akin to scientifically developed batteries of questions - such as 'CASP-19' and 'SF-12' - that could be used to measure outcomes sought from intergenerational programmes, what sort of questions should be used to survey participants in IP? If questionnaire surveys of participants are not to be used, what other reliable quantitative outcomes could be used in evaluation?

These difficult questions reflect both the intangibility of intergenerational programmes, and the methodological limits to quantitative social science that forms the basis of evidence-based policymaking. It is unclear how these dilemmas can be overcome. What remains is uncertainty over the benefits to public policy and intergenerational relations that could be gained through greater public investment in IP. This is unsatisfactory for policymakers as well as practitioners and advocates of IP. There is a clear risk of a missed opportunity.

Discussion: Intergenerational relations and public policy

This chapter has explored the scope for public policy to advance and improve intergenerational relations. Although previous chapters have identified challenges to the functioning of intergenerational relations at the community and societal level, it is clear that a number of policy responses are available.

The reconfiguration of public and private spaces to be 'inclusive' is an active field of policy development. Similarly, both policymakers and the private sector are engaged in advancing the spread of 'inclusive work-places'. However, plenty of opportunities remain for policymakers to advocate and encourage 'age-diversity' within the third sector and at the community level.

Four Cohorts of Medical Students” in *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, Vol. 55, Issue 8, p1275-1280

The use of online platforms for intergenerational interaction and exchange arguably represents the biggest unexplored opportunity for policymakers concerned with intergenerational relations. Although current cohorts confront unprecedented longevity and the increasing generational spacing of the youngest and oldest in society, the internet is a fantastic new means to re-imagine relations between the generations, suited to mobile, fluid digitally-connected lifestyles.

However, face-to-face intergenerational interaction at the community level can create enormous benefits, as numerous qualitative studies of intergenerational practice have found. As the third-sector develops the tools and knowledge to disseminate and expand the reach of IP, policymakers must monitor the development of IP and explore what sort of formal evaluations would enable it to be incorporated at a deeper level to address intergenerational relations in society.

Key Points from Chapter 3:

- Policymakers can seek to provide a better environment for intergenerational relations through the application of 'inclusive' approaches, such as 'inclusive design'. Ongoing policy developments are already seeing this applied to:
 - The housing stock.
 - Neighbourhoods.
 - Public spaces.
 - Workplaces.
- More generally, there is scope to explore how the activities undertaken in inclusive spaces could themselves be more inclusive. In particular, policymakers could explore how the message of 'age-diversity' could be communicated more widely in local third-sector, voluntary and amateurs organisations and clubs.
- The internet is arguably the most 'inclusive' environment of all. Web-based platforms such as online social networking present multiple opportunities for advancing intergenerational relations that policymakers should explore.
- Intergenerational practice (IP) has demonstrated the benefits of bringing different cohorts directly together. Although 'age-based', rather than 'age-neutral', the intergenerational aspects of IP are particularly suited to facilitating the kinds of intergenerational exchange and transmission of knowledge and values that many commentators and stakeholders identify as important.
- Formal evaluation of IP is required in order for policymakers to fully incorporate the tools that IP provides into wider policy measures to improve the functioning of intergenerational relations.

Chapter 4: What are the Next Steps?

Interest in intergenerational relations is not new. Enormous amounts of academic research have been undertaken into intergenerational relations at the family level. Across most social and human sciences, intergenerational interactions and exchanges within the family have been explored, measured and evaluated in countless academic journals and textbooks.

However, as family structures evolve, kinship networks change and the 'extended family' recedes, the role of intergenerational relations at the community and societal level is growing in importance. Intergenerational interactions within the family are crucial for development and well-being across the life-course; these outcomes can also be influenced by intergenerational relations at the societal and community level.

However, important social trends are also creating concern about alienation and distancing between generations, as the research summarised in this report has demonstrated. Perhaps scaling up their experiences within families, many people regard relations between 'old' and 'young' as a key indicator of a cohesive and functioning society. Increasingly rapid social change, technological advances, changing economic conditions and the explosion of multiple, overlapping subcultures are perceived to be threatening the functioning of intergenerational relations. Whereas the bonds and routines of family life may enable different generations to overcome such factors in this setting, at a societal level, no such ties are available to 'reconnect' different generations.

If society is unprepared for coping with such disruptive trends and changes, it is no surprise that policymakers should also be struggling to consider appropriate responses. This report is has surveyed the issues around intergenerational relations, and through simple survey analysis, shown the anxieties which individuals of different age-groups feel about intergenerational relations. What then are the next steps for policymakers?

Improve the evidence base on intergenerational relations

There is a clear need to improve the evidence base on intergenerational relations at the community and society level in the UK. In different contexts and forms, various academic researchers have already developed measures and tools that could be put to this purpose. For example, within educational gerontology, the 'Ageing Semantic Differential' is a research instrument used to measure attitudes toward the elderly. Researchers have sought to revise the instrument in light of perceived problems⁷⁵, such as reliability and validity issues.⁷⁶ However, recent research has shown that the tool does perform well against alternative measures.⁷⁷

Perhaps inevitably, research into intergenerational relations at the family level may also provide a framework to improve measures of intergenerational relations at the societal level. For example, US sociologists have proposed a theoretical framework within which to view intergenerational relations.⁷⁸ The researchers propose six dimensions of solidarity: structure (e.g. geographic distance); association (e.g. social contact, shared activities); affect (e.g. feelings, affection); consensus (e.g. agreement); function (e.g. exchanges of aid); and norms

⁷⁵ Polizzi K (2003) "Assessing attitudes toward the elderly: Polizzi's refined version of the aging semantic differential" in *Educational Gerontology*, Vol. 29, No. 3, p197-216

⁷⁶ Stewart T et al. (2006) "Reliability and Validity Issues for Two Common Measures of Medical Students' Attitudes toward Older Adults" in *Educational Gerontology*, Vol. 32, No. 6, p409 - 421

⁷⁷ Iwasaki M and Jones J (2008) "Attitudes Toward Older Adults: A Reexamination of Two Major Scales" in *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, Vol. 29, Issue: 2, p139 - 157

⁷⁸ Silverstein M and Bengtson V (1997) "Intergenerational Solidarity and the Structure of Adult Child-Parent Relationships in American Families" in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 103, No. p429-60

(e.g. sense of mutual obligation). Preferably, a wider set of scientifically developed and validated survey items could be developed through interdisciplinary collaboration. There is a large base of academic theory and research on intergenerational relations in the family that could be reconfigured to help policymakers understand intergenerational relations in society.

Open up the policy tool-box

The issue of intergenerational relations pushes policymakers to the edge of the “policymakers’ toolbox”, to the edge of what can be measured through social science research, and to the edge of traditional conventions and notions of what is the appropriate domain for policy intervention.

This is clearly visible in relation to the development of intergenerational practice. At relatively low cost, IP is able to achieve real and significant outcomes at the community level. Where such outcomes steer individuals to better outcomes, for example, greater social engagement and confidence, as opposed to loneliness, isolation and depression, there are potential savings to public spending. However, more ephemeral outcomes such as the development of local identity and attachment are just as valuable.

Evidence-based policymaking is important. However, what cannot be measured through the best tools of social science does still exist. A first step will be for policymakers to explore in more detail how IP could be measured and evaluated applying conventions coherent with evidence-based policymaking. IP is cheap, and it would be relatively easy to scale up intergenerational programmes to become national schemes.

The internet also poses fascinating opportunities for policymakers. Even 10 years ago, it would have been out of the question to consider a strategy for improving intergenerational relations that relied on connecting diverse individuals through words, sounds and pictures from different parts of the country applying social technologies that are seamless, ‘inclusive’ and free. However, this is all now possible. Again, although such tools stretch beyond the traditional terrain of public policy interventions, significant and cost-effective benefits are possible.

Embed an intergenerational aspect to all aspects of Government activity in future

This report has reviewed the importance of intergenerational relations at the societal level to the exchange and transmission of knowledge, values, culture and history. The report has also explored the challenges to the functioning of intergenerational relations arising from both the changes in individuals over the life-course, the experiences of different cohorts co-existing in society, and the changes in society that transform the setting for social relations. This review suggests a wider agenda to embed intergenerational awareness and considerations in Government and public sector activity in the future. This agenda ultimately reflects increasing longevity and the growing proportion of older people in society, and can be considered just one more aspect to public policy addressing the reality of demographic change.



ILC-UK
22-26 Albert Embankment
London
SE1 7TJ
Tel. +44 (0)20 7735 7565
www.ilcuk.org.uk