Committee 5
Re-Visioning the Aging Society:
A Global Perspective

DRAFT--8/5/95
For Conference Distribution Only

INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS: FAMILY MEMORY AND THE PUBLIC WORLD

by

Kevin Brabazon
President
New York State Intergenerational Network
New York, New York USA

The Twentieth International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences
Seoul, Korea August 21-26, 1995

Intergenerational Relationships, Family Memory and the Public World

Draft for discussion

Kevin Brabazon
New York State Intergenerational Network

"A society that cuts off older people from meaningful contact with children is greatly endangered. In the presence of grandparents and grandchildren past and future merge in the present."

Margaret Mead

This paper discusses a number of socially valuable attributes of elders--defined in the Western world as those over 65 years of age--from a theoretical perspective, and shows how these attributes are applied in intergenerational programs. Intergenerational issues are briefly reviewed from an international perspective and arguments presented for placing these issues on public policy agendas. The paper concludes with suggestions for public policy development that make more productive use of cross-generational resources, and produce better social integration[1] between generations. It is suggested that a healthier society will follow.

The paper focuses on intergenerational relationships that include elders as participants, and ignores those that do not. The paper is divided into the following sections:

I. Attributes of elders that have value for younger generations.
II. Why intergenerational issues should be placed on the public policy agenda.
III. Key policy implications.

[1]Integration is used here in the standard organizational sense: the coordination of organizational functions that have been specialized and "differentiated". An organization that has no way to re-integrate the functions that are deliberately specialized for the sake of efficiency is doomed to dysfunction.

SECTION I:

Attributes of elders that have value for younger generations

Several attributes that have profound implications for younger generations are postulated and explored. While none of the attributes is assumed to be proven, material from the social sciences and organizational theory is used to validate the propositions. The age related attributes and their implied applications identified below are not intended to be exhaustive, but to suggest that such attributes do occur naturally. Human societies can either recognize such characteristics and use them for beneficial purposes, or ignore them and risk the loss of critically needed resources. The attributes identified here and their implications are:

- Inclination towards caregiving: nurturing roles
- Lack of coercive power: trusting relationships; confidant, counseling roles
- Longer time horizons: patience and understanding
- Informality of structure: confidant, counseling roles
- Successful navigation of the life review: candor, serenity, wisdom and ego-integrity.

•Inclination towards caregiving, for older men as well as women

Marsel Heisel (Heisel, 1993) discusses this attribute in her review of studies done of older adults in two developing countries, Egypt and Turkey, one relatively more developed than the other. The attribute is externally manifested in older men more obviously than women--because of the contrast with former behaviour--as they spend increased amounts of time at, or close to, home and more time with grandchildren.

A survey conducted for the Commonwealth Fund by Louis Harris and Associates (Louis Harris and Associates, 1992) indicates that older men in the U.S. are only slightly less likely to volunteer time with their grandchildren than older women.

These studies provide the same conclusion independent of culture and level of development. They strongly suggest that the caregiving inclination is not only a characteristic of the biological nurturer but is a

characteristic that develops with age in men. None of the studies indicate whether there is a significant shift in the caregiving inclination for women with age but do indicate that the inclination is retained by older women. Heisel cites this as evidence of a reduction in gender differentiation between older men and women, when contrasted with younger age groups, in Turkey and Egypt.

Whether it is age itself, or a change in roles that are more likely to occur as age progresses, is not indicated by these studies. However, the commonality of age-related nurturing--especially evident in males--across economic and cultural boundaries is of interest because it suggests a "universal" characteristic rather than a cultural, economic or gender-derived attribute.

Erik Erikson refines this caregiving inclination further (Goleman, 1988) by calling it "generativity", defined as the desire to pass on to future generations what has been contributed to life, as well as the "instinctual drive to create and care for new life". Erikson is also suggesting that this is a "universal" characteristic, one that goes beyond basic caregiving or nurturing to include a desire to pass on something of perceived value.

Harvard psychiatrist Robert Coles (Coles, 1993) adds that there is a distinct idealism present in individuals in later life, and distinguishes its "pastoral" quality from the 'more "prophetic" bent of youthful idealism'. Marc Freedman uses these viewpoints to argue the case for involving older adults in national and community service (Freedman, 1994).

If there is indeed something of value to pass on, this would seem to be a fairly powerful combination of characteristics: caregiving inclination, posterity-focussed generativity, and late-life idealism--a resource that any rational society would not want to squander.

•Change of power relationships

An analysis of types of power within organizations when applied to the family--as the basic organization in society--illustrates an important shift in power relationships with age. Henry Mintzberg (Mintzberg, 1973) uses the scheme of French and Raven to categorize the different kinds of power that operate within organizations. The five kinds of power discussed are:

Reward power - the ability to mediate rewards

Coercive power - the ability to mediate punishments

Referent power[2] - the feeling of "oneness", or the desire for such an identity

Legitimate power - the legal right to exert influence over a specified domain of people and range of activities

Expert power - special knowledge or skill that is needed by a subordinate

Parents may have all of these power relationships in regard to children, though certain children--teenagers for example--may dispute the expert knowledge of parents, and may not want to identify with them at all. Grandparents in general will have selected power relationships: they will usually have some reward power, though probably less than parents; they may have a significant degree of referent power, since grandchildren may have a desire to be close to them; and they may have a degree of expert power, depending on how much they are familiar with the skills necessary for their grandchildren, and how much their "life experience" is valued.

Elders may have mixes of these kinds of power but it is the *absence* of coercive power that may be the most significant. The absence (or reduction) in coercive power leads to a greater potential for a "trusting" relationship between grandparent and grandchild, and therefore a greater potential for sharing confidences and communicating memories. In intergenerational programs with at risk youth, and programs with younger children, these relationships are often described by participants as *friendship relationships*, and will often be referred to this way in this paper.

Parents are accorded the power to punish within families, as law enforcement officials and educators are outside families. However, the power to punish is not conducive to the development of friendship relationships, which imply fairly equal power distribution and non-threatening attitudes. Coercive relationships may be caring, but the kinds

---

[2]Referent power is probably the least obvious of the list. It is generally used to describe informal power relations that might be referred to as "influence". Examples are religious leaders and their followers, public figures whose viewpoints are listened to by interested supporters, rock and roll singers whose fans dress or try and look like them, or gang leaders who are selected and supported by their followers.

of confidences shared between friends are less likely to occur. The more often punishment is used, the less likely it is that trust will develop.

Coercive power carries with it a very specific set of responses. The threat of, or potential for, punishment generates fear and an expectation of potential pain or loss. While coercive power can be used fairly and wisely, it is probably the most misused of all kinds of power, arouses the most mistrust, and is certainly the most resented by those who are its victims. For example, law enforcement agencies are delegated much of the coercive power in society, and complaints about its misuse are probably much greater that complaints about misuses of other forms of power.

The absence of--or reduction in--coercive power leads to a greater potential for trusting relationships between grandparent and grandchild, and therefore a greater potential for sharing confidences and communicating memories. The stereotypical image of the grey-haired grandmother who bakes cookies for the grandchildren still exists as a cultural ideal. From the viewpoint of power relationships, however, the key components in this image are not the cookies but the "behind-the-scenes" dynamics. This image of the grandmother is caring, giving what children like and, most importantly, *non-threatening*,-- there is no coercive power involved in the relationship. This is the image of someone we would all like to talk to and expect to be understood by. Who would not confide their secrets in such a grandmother over cookies and milk?

A well integrated family can capitalize on the different roles that members may potentially play. In such a family, the parents do not have to fear competition from the grandparents regarding the childrens' affection or allegiance, often major issues between competing adults. Confidences, complaints, hidden hurts, fears or whatever, that may be confided in a caring grandparent by a grandchild ought, in principle, to be issues that a grandparent can discuss helpfully with a concerned parent. There are stages in the development process when relations between parents and children become more difficult--typically teenage years--when grandparents can be of particular value. Experience in going through this "stage" with their own children (now the parents) is a great teacher and elders may have helpful advice to give to both parent and child. However, without the inclination of the grandchild to confide in the

grandparent, problem solving depends entirely on the skills of the parent(s).

In difficult situations where intra-family relationships are involved, knowledge of *relationships* is important. Learning and life experience do not necessarily involve technical skills. In fact, in today's rapidly changing technical environment, age may often indicate obsolete skills. If one is therefore looking for technical skills to learn from an elder, as might be appropriate in a stable tribal community, one may be at a loss. However, if one is interested in learning about relationships, which have some unchanging characteristics associated with them, an elder might be a sensible person to consult.

All people during their lifetime--if they are to be socially integrated, stable and productive--need to learn how to build successful relationships with others in relatively unchanging roles. For example, as people age they need to build relationships with socially more powerful people such as parents, teachers and supervisors; social equals such as siblings, peers, colleagues, co-workers, team members, friends and spouse; and socially less powerful people such as children, employees and students. Most elders will have tried all kinds of relationships, and will have been more or less successful at building them. Many elders will have reflected upon their successes and their failures, and "reintegrated" them (Butler, 1963). It is possible that a failure that is reflected on deeply is a better lesson than a success that has no reflection attached.

Wise people learn from other peoples' mistakes and therefore are more inclined to avoid them. American society in the last two generations, however, seems to have glorified the rebellious spirit of youth to an unprecedented degree, and therefore the inclination not to learn from wiser heads. *One consequence of this has been the decline of family and social "integration".*

The absence of coercive power allows another desirable characteristic to be built. *Respect* can be established between elder and junior *without fear being included.* Children (and adults) can respect the greater wisdom attached to some elders, without the dis-unifying elements of fear, or threat and reaction being present. This can open doors for youth to develop other adult relationships. For example, intergenerational programs that work with at risk teens often comment on the fact that, once

teens have developed relationships with older adults in the program, they begin to experience improved relationships with other adults, such as parents and teachers, with whom they may have been experiencing difficulties.

•Time orientation

Is patience a characteristic that can be attributed to elders more often that other age groups? If it is, there should be a theoretical base. The work of Lawrence and Lorsch (contingency theory) will be used to underscore the different *time horizons* of elders and younger generations, with their implications for a theory of patience in elders.

The work of Paul R. Lawrence and Jay W. Lorsch (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1986) sheds some interesting light on the impact of the environment on different units within an organization. Contingency theory, as it is usually referred to, suggests that different environmental factors impact units within an organization--*the nature of the role of each unit requires a different response to the environment.* Lawrence and Lorsch provided empirical analysis of several dimensions of the units they studied, namely: formality of structure, interpersonal orientation, time orientation and goal orientation. Of particular interest to the topic of intergenerational relations are the dimensions of time orientation and formality of structure.

The approach of Lawrence and Lorsch involved predicting expected outcomes, based on the concepts of contingency theory, and then comparing the predicted outcomes to empirically gathered information from a group of companies being studied. In regard to the dimensions of formality of structure, interpersonal orientation and time orientation, their predictions were well supported by empirical observation.

Four divisions in each of the corporations were studied--production, sales, applied research and fundamental research. For the purposes of this article, I am generalizing the division identifications by grouping them into "production oriented"--production and sales--and "support" roles--applied and fundamental research. The production and sales divisions are primary in that they produce the "bottom line" for the companies, i.e., they produce the goods or services and sell them. The research departments should be "productive", but they are not part of the actual production. They provide

support--improvements, new ideas, analysis of processes, recommendations for improved systems, and evaluation for the production oriented divisions.

Lawrence and Lorsch summarize, "...structure and time orientation appear to vary in almost a linear relationship to the certainty of the task...". The production and sales divisions have very *certain* tasks; for the two research departments, the tasks are significantly less certain. It is no surprise then, in this context, that the *production oriented departments have significantly shorter time horizons than the support divisions.*

If this concept is applied to families, the most basic organization in society, we can hypothesize that the *production oriented* functions will tend to produce shorter time horizons than the *support* functions. While the roles of older adults vary from culture to culture, it is generally the parents who are charged with basic "production", i.e., feeding, clothing, sheltering and arranging for education of juniors. The proposition therefore becomes that grandparents will tend to have longer time horizons than parents. In this context, the proposition is based on the relative roles of the two age groups, rather than their relative ages. This structural analytical approach says nothing about the impact of age *per se* on the time horizons of individuals, a separate issue not addressed in this paper.

This longer time horizon is put to work very effectively in intergenerational programs that work with at-risk youth, such as the Intergenerational Work/Study Program operated by New York City Department for the Aging, who have notoriously short time horizons. After extensive exposure to older adults through internships and service learning opportunities, the teenagers involved show remarkable improvement in their ability to "see beyond high school graduation" and plan for the future (New York City Department for the Aging, 1992).

Another interesting case study regarding the shift of time orientation from the immediate to the much longer term, is that of Geronimo, the Apache tribal leader. In his younger years he reacted with immediate action to the injustices practiced against his people. In his later years, however, his primary concern was the continued existence of his tribe, a marked contrast in perspective.

This hypothesis regarding extended time horizons for those in the grandparent *role* would suggest that grandparent caregivers--grandparents fulfilling a parental mandate, such as raising their grandchildren--would probably exhibit a shorter time horizon, such as the one hypothesized for parents. This would suggest beneficial interaction with peers who could provide a less production oriented/grandparent-type role, with longer time horizons. While there is no empirical research that I am aware of in this area, the observation at least warrants further investigation.

One implication of the longer time horizons attributed to older adults in this hypothesis is that elders tend to be more patient than juniors. Longer time horizons imply a greater willingness to wait for results--a greater *capacity* for patience.

Patience in adults such as parents, teachers, counselors and grandparents is a quality that is highly regarded by children. This quality implies a willingness to listen, which in turn suggests a greater understanding of the child. The desire to be understood appears to be important to most humans, but it is particularly important to the relatively powerless. It is only through understanding that the needs of the powerless can be met since, ipso facto, they do not have control over the necessary means nor the resources.

• Formality of Structure

Contingency theory suggests that production oriented units will be more formally structured than those that are support oriented. This in turn suggests that relationships between parent and child are likely to be more formally structured than those between grandchild and grandparent--it may be easier for a child to approach a grandparent than a parent. Greater informality of structure suggests greater ease of communication, especially for inner feelings and sensitivities. This greater informality of relationship between grandparent and grandchild is another reason for calling the relationship a "friendship" type. It is a further explanation for the ease with which grandchildren may confide in grandparents--the counseling or confidant role of grandparents.

The nature of this type of relationship is anecdotally supported by Lucille Nahemow's review of older women's roles in Zimbabwe (Nahemow,

1993). The traditional role of the *Swahira* is described by Nahemow as "...a confidant. In most cases the Swahira is the most important person in one's life and is responsible for all kinds of support in times of need. The Swahira is a critical link in the family structure." In Zimbabwe today, the Swahira is typically a grandmother.

There are contrasts in formality of structure of grandparent roles between less and more developed countries. Selby and Schechter write (Selby and Schechter, 1989):

> "The elderly tend to keep major family roles in rural areas of less developed countries. In urbanizing areas of those countries and in the more developed lands, the elderly play less structured roles.
>
> In traditional societies, the wisdom and experience of the older person are still considered pertinent to major family tasks. However, in societies undergoing relatively rapid socio-economic changes, the older person's experience tends to be discounted."

• Memory and the life review

Memory is considered so important that societies construct elaborate methods for collecting and storing this valuable commodity. Modern societies have invested huge amounts of resources to store ever larger volumes of information in computers. Simply put, memory is important in all societies but is not the exclusive domain of elders. So what distinguishes memory in elders from memory in any other being? The answer lies in two areas: the length of time that elders have lived and the opportunities they have had to collect information and process it; and the process that usually occurs late in life which is commonly referred to as the "life review".

Age and memory. Age is one determinant in the number of memories a person can accumulate and the amount of time available for reflection. The shift in roles from parent to grandparent also improves reflection as the demand for production oriented results diminishes and the lengthened time horizons provide a bigger picture to put all of the memories into. Elders have more to remember, more time to sift and sort memories, and more time for reflection. While none of these opportunities in themselves produces wisdom, they are probably pre-requisites for its

development. Elders may not always be wiser, but they are at least more likely to be wiser.

There are at least five areas of memory that are socially valuable, but which manifest their value only if memories are transmitted to family or society. These areas are:

•Factual information

•Skills:

-external skills such as technological and job skills, arts and crafts

-internal skills such as developing, maturing, thinking, caring, planning for self, and reflecting

-social skills such as relationship building, negotiating, understanding others, sharing, competing, winning, losing, problem solving, communicating, developing strategy, planning for others, and team building

•Methods and systems (successful and unsuccesful)

•Values, standards, and norms

•Culture, traditions, and history

Simone DeBagno in his visual studies of elders, Portraits of Age (DeBagno, 1993) tells the story of a Cambodian elder who survived Khmer Rouge efforts to exterminate the dance teachers of the nation by posing as a fruit seller. She has helped Cambodian culture, as well as the spirituality that is interwoven with it, to survive. Her age and experience carry the nuances and subtleties of the art form with them--qualities that are often not available to younger cohorts. While she may not be an "average" elder with her uncommon commitment and courage, it would be hard to imagine her being successful in this way if she belonged to any other age group.

Unfortunately, in the growing number of countries that are influenced by utilitarian philosophies--ones that are primarily economic in character--culture is "fifth business". The memories that have value in such a philosophic framework are primarily utilitarian/technological, since the engine of economics is technology driven. *In such an environment esteem for elders is predictably diminished since they do not have information resources valued by the society.*

The life review. Robert Butler states (Butler, 1963):

"The life review is conceived of as a naturally-occurring universal mental process characterized by the progressive return to consciousness of past experience, and particularly, the resurgence of unresolved conflicts; simultaneously, and normally, these revived experiences and conflicts are surveyed and reintegrated. It is assumed that this process is prompted by the realization of approaching dissolution and death."

and:

"The life review process not only occurs in the elderly but may be instigated at earlier stages by the expectancy of death; for example, in the fatally ill or the condemned."

This suggests that the life review is a structural phenomenon, brought on by proximity to death rather than by age itself. However, it is a process that will affect anyone who lives long enough to anticipate his/her demise, or is ill enough to expect it.

Brandon Wallace's (Wallace, 1992) social constructionist perspective of the life review seems somewhat at odds with Butler:

"..elderly persons' talk of the past is seen as a social activity, growing out of and shaped by narrative challenges posed in the course of interaction.

"By fulfilling cultural expectations and facilitating interaction with persons of different ages, self-esteem may be enhanced by the recognition and fulfillment of age-appropriate narrative participation."

However, Wallace makes no comment on the internal psycho-dynamics that may progress silently. In restricting his study to the external dynamics--the actual talking about the past--he has focussed attention on the *social value* of the life review, whereas Butler's attention is directed to the individual reviewer and the importance of the process to him/her. In practice, both viewpoints are useful to understanding the process.

In long term care facilities, formal engagement of elderly residents in support of their life review process is fairly routine and considered therapeutic. Alternatively, life review programs in a socially productive setting, i.e., one where the material is of benefit to the interviewer or audience--such as the Brookdale Center on Aging (Journal of Gerontological Social Work, 1988)--produce extensive amounts of "living" history, material that is both factually and culturally important. Innovative

programs such as Elders Share the Arts (New York City Department for the Aging, 1992) use reminiscence as the basis of mental wellness programs in senior centers--the psycho-therapeutic viewpoint--and also assist older adults in sharing their life history through living history theater and other artistic expression (Perlstein and Bliss, 1994)--the social value viewpoint.

Whether one subscribes to Butler's view that the life review is a mental process; Wallace's proposition that it is initiated by narrative challenges; or accepts both as different aspects of the same attribute, the fact that the life review occurs is not disputed by either one. What it means, however, in terms of its value to the family and society is another question. Part of the answer lies in identifying what value the reintegration of memories in the elder may have for others.

Successfully navigating the life review produces qualities of character that are potentially valuable for others:

> "...this process helps account for the increased reminiscence of the aged..... and that it participates in the evolution of such characteristics as *candor, serenity and wisdom* among certain of the aged."

Erikson adds a parallel viewpoint to late-life development, referring to it as "ego integrity" (Erikson, 1985). He sees in the final stage of life cycle development the fulfilment of the preceding seven stages:

> "It is the ego's accrued assurance of its proclivity for order and meaning. It is a post-narcissistic love of the human ego--not of the self--as an experience that conveys some world order and spiritual sense, no matter how dearly paid for. It is the acceptance of one's one and only lifecycle as something that had to be and that, by necessity, permitted of no substitutions: it thus means a new, a different love of one's parents. It is a comradeship with the ordering ways of distant times and different pursuits. Although aware of the relativity of all the various life styles which have given meaning to human striving, the possessor of integrity is ready to defend the dignity of his/her own life style against all physical and economic threats....."

and:

> "Ego integrity, therefore, implies an emotional integration which permits participation by followership as well as an acceptance of the responsibility of leadership."

He concludes:

"..it seems possible to further paraphrase the relation of adult integrity and infantile trust by saying that *healthy children will not fear life if their elders have integrity enough not to fear death.*"

Butler's elder who has successfully passed through the life review and Erikson's mature adult who has achieved ego integrity appear to be one and the same. They both have attained qualities of character and have developed personalities that have value and significance for juniors in family and society. Perhaps the life review is a kind of naturally-occurring, late-life "rite of passage" that leads to a new social role just as the junior's rite of passage leads to the new social role of adulthood.

Whether life review is used in psycho-therapeutic ways to aid the elderly, by historians to collect information about the recent past, or by the young to hear humorous stories or wise counsel, it is a process that must be socially integrated if people are to fulfil their life cycle roles. *Fulfilment of life cycle roles is a necessary precondition for a healthy society.*

Using the attributes of elders for intergenerational programming

The attributes postulated in Section I are suggested below as the factors at work in a wide range on intergenerational programming. For example, the **inclination towards caregiving** is harnessed socially in a wide range of programs, such as: child care (Southeast Florida Center on Aging, 1990; Newman, Vander Ven, and Ward, 1992), tutoring (American Association of Retired Persons and the National Association of Partners in Education, 1992), after school programming, mentoring, foster grandparent programs (with at-risk infants, children, teen parents) (Walls, 1987), family preservation and programs that work with families that have children with disabilities (Miller, 1986).

The **change of power relationships** and **informality of structure** in relationships are applied in programs that require young people--especially those who are "at-risk"-- to confide in mentors and to learn internal or social skills or values from them (New York City Department for the Aging, 1990; Isabella Geriatric Center, 1995; Freedman, 1988; Henkin, Perez-Randall, and Rogers, 1993). Examples would be: learning employability skills, e.g., development of responsibility, ability to relate to a supervisor, team building, and relationships with clients; building self esteem and respect for others; conflict resolution; developing parenting

skills; and preventing child abuse (Corporation for National Service, 1990). Relationships between "friends" and building trust are the best conditions for these kinds of learning.

Extended time horizons are invaluable in teaching planning skills--skills that many young people have in short supply (New York City Department for the Aging, 1992; Henkin, Perez-Randall, and Rogers, 1993; Freedman, 1988). Long time horizons show the "larger picture" more easily; short time horizons tend to show a "piece of the picture". Drop out prevention, career planning, college preparation and substance abuse prevention programs are all ones that utilize the extended time horizons of elders to expand the time horizons of the youth involved, and therefore to develop a more extensive "future orientation". The patience that is hypothesized to result from this characteristic in elders is of value in almost any intergenerational program.

Memory and the life review are key qualities for oral history and life review programs (Charnow, Nash and Perlstein, 1993; Sweitzer, 1993), storytelling, intergenerational neighborhood planning (Kaplan, 1994), and some arts projects (Perlstein and Bliss, 1994). Elders who have effectively "navigated" the life review process are valuable in almost any program, but particularly programs that utilize tham as counselors or advisors.

SECTION II:
WHY INTERGENERATIONAL ISSUES SHOULD BE ON THE PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

Points to note in this section[3]:

- Population aging
- Age isolation
- Contrasts of older adults as "resource consumers" and "resource providers"
- Breakdown of extended families
- Increases in "skipped" generation families
- "Productive" aging

There are two kinds of cross-generational issues that are discussed in this section:-

- **Demographic issues,** which refer to changes in the population of different nations vis-a-vis the proportions of different age groups contained therein;
- **Programmatic issues,** which generally underscore the value that different generations have to one another.

Population aging is considered by many to be a "problem". When looked at solely from a "caregiving" viewpoint, it is easy to see that the costs are the major consideration and not the benefits.

In some societies, older adults are regarded as "dependent" and "resource consumers" in the same way that children are viewed. Societies that have limited resources or face constant struggles to survive are likely to view older adults as competing for resources with younger members of the society. In extreme cases (such as some Arctic and desert dwellers) they may, in the past, have required their elders to give up their lives to avoid taking scarce resources from the young.

However, going beyond the "physical" level and moving up Maslow's hierarchy of needs (on a societal level, that is), older adults who have been

---

[3]Particular thanks are expressed to Dr. Ken Tout, of Help Age International, whose research is used extensively in this section.

considered a "resource consuming" population may be viewed quite differently as a social resource. As custodians of life experience, knowledge of culture and traditions, wisdom, stability, patience, and long experience of decision making, problem solving and compromising, elders take on a new aura. This shows up in many of the "productive aging" concepts that will follow. These are not material benefits that older adults offer to the society, and their value may not therefore be as obvious to a society focused on utilitarian economics.

Even though intergenerational--or cross-generational--concepts in their broadest sense include interractions between any two (or more) generations, because of the particular value of the older adult population, the phenomenon of population aging, and the fact that intergenerational programs in most nations tend to originate initially from the aging networks, more emphasis in this section is placed on the interractions between elders and other age groups than between non-elderly age groups.

DEMOGRAPHIC ISSUES

The aging of populations is a well recognized, world-wide phenomenon, evident in both developed and developing nations. As advances in medicine and public health allow people to live longer, and declining fertility rates reduce the younger cohorts, the percentage of older adults in most societies is increasing. By the year 2000, the world's elderly will reach 426 million, more than double the number in 1970, and fifty nine percent will live in developing nations. Data available from the United Nations projects an increase of 322% in the "over 60" age group for the period 1960-2020. In developed nations, the increase will be in the neighborhood of 160%, whereas in the developing nations it rises to 489%, and in some regions of the Caribbean and Latin America, it soars to a staggering 700% (Tout, 1989). By the year 2025, one in every ten people will be an older adult. It is clearly perverse to regard the successful efforts to extend life expectancy and improve health as a "problem". However, unless there is adequate planning based on a clearer understanding of the value of different generations to one another, what is a real success may be turned into a failure. Reports of elder abuse and the

social and economic hazards associated with increasing longevity are being reported through recent studies (Maxwell and Silverman, 1981). Reports are equally clear from developed and developing nations.

The growth in the elderly population is not a new phenomenon. In 1948 Sauvy commented that, compared to other contemporary phenomena, population aging is the "...least doubted, the best measured, the most regular in its effects....as well as the most influential" (Sauvy, 1948). However, most nations are quite unprepared to deal with this "most influential" phenomenon.

The increase in the number of people 60 years and older is putting enormous pressure on the Social Security systems of many developed countries. It has become apparent that a smaller number of workers are contributing to the retirement incomes of a growing number of retirees. Most Social Security retirement incomes are not true pensions, i.e., they are not based on accumulated contributions of individuals through their working lives, which are invested to produce retirement income. Instead, working adults pay for current retirees on a "pay-as-you-go" basis. Therefore the ratio of working adults to retirees is of great concern.

Exacerbating this problem is the growth of the "frail" elderly population, those who require ongoing medical attention or other special supports in order to function adequately, either in a long term care facility, assisted living, or at home in an isolated situation. In one way, with greatly reduced family size brought about by extensive family planning, and much improved health care and life expectancy, many societies seem to have "painted themselves into a corner" from an economic viewpoint. However, it is important to distinguish the differing characteristics of the various populations within the older adult age bands. As the frail elderly have increased, so also have the active and healthy elders. It is also important to recognize that the frail elderly may have the same memories and aquired skills as their healthier cohort members. It does not require physical dexterity to communicate life experiences, though it may help in modeling parenting skills.

In France, which has maintained a mandatory retirement age in order to allow employment opportunities for younger workers, mandatory retirement has now been challenged. In 1992, the number of working adults supporting each retiree fell below three for the first time, almost

bankrupting the Social Security system. While the same ratio will not occur in the U.S. until the year 2020, the hand writing is none-the-less on the wall. Calls to stop early retirement options (62 years) and increase retirement age beyond 65 are not uncommon, and have already been implemented to a limited degree. One argument in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services revolves around classifying entitlements according to the degree of disability rather than age.

The demographic "problem" is compounded by *increasing age isolation*. Besides the established problems of elders who are isolated by fear of crime or physical access problems to their residences, more older adults in developed nations are opting to live in retirement communities in areas where they have no historical ties to the surrounding neighborhood, which tends to isolate their interests from the neighboring population. Separation, whether enforced or chosen, tends to reduce understanding between different groups. This dynamic, for example, has impacted local government efforts to raise taxes or issue bonds when trying to raise funds for local school districts. It is a dynamic that wise public managers can address by using an intergenerational approach. An example from Dade county in Florida illustrates this.

Dade County has a high percentage of older adults who have settled in the congenial climate and low taxes of Florida. The head of the school system in the 1980's, faced with the need to raise funds for the schools in the area (many in low income neighborhoods) created ways for older residents to interract with students. Extensive intergenerational programs were introduced and incentives provided to elders to volunteer their time, which resulted in significant development of understanding between the populations. Getting bond issues passed became an easier process for the Superintendant of Schools.

Most developing nations do not have social security systems in place, and age isolation is more likely to occur by choice of younger family members who migrate to urban areas in search of employment. Factors leading to age isolation in developing nations include:

- **Modern education**. Usually it is the youth who travel to centers of education--located in urban areas--leaving other age groups behind.

• **Migration factors**, which are viewed with "pessimism throughout the developing world" (Tout, 1989)--though it should be noted are not viewed as significant in developed nations where migration has been common since various nations' industrial revolutions. An African study of aging states that "as urban birth and long-distance migration increase in Africa, ties to an ancestral homeplace are weakening, and urban governments will have to acknowledge the needs of elderly people who have lost such ties" (Ekpenyong, Oyeneye, and Peil, 1986). From an intergenerational viewpoint, it should be added that the needs of the isolated younger generations will also need to be addressed. Accompanying the urbanization taking place in most nations is the growth in numbers of "troubled" young people, such as delinquent youth and parenting, unwed teens who lack the support of their traditional tribal/family cultures.

Since 1962, a Ghanaian researcher discovered that 18% of rural households had lost all contact with children who, having obtained some form of education, had migrated to distant towns (Apt, 1981/1985). Migration is commonly caused by economic factors and the movement of the "working" population in search of enhanced economic opportunities. The results are often twofold: increasing numbers of isolated elders; and growth in the number of "skipped" generation families, i.e., families that are missing the intermediate age band. Since it is the grandmother who is more likely to have survived her spouse, the burden of raising grandchildren will more likely fall to her.

The problems of mutually isolated generations can be addressed by intergenerational programs of different kinds that have been initiated in developed nations, where the problems of age separation have been known for some time. The rapid aging of populations that has taken place over a 20 year period in developing countries is the same process that occurred in developed nations over a 200 year period (Tout, 1989). Developed nations therefore have had more time, resources and opportunity to work on these problems.

• **AIDS and other catastophic phenomena**. Further sources of societal fragmentation are impacting developed and developing nations alike and are therefore likely to be "common cause" in the future. The loss of societal involvement of a growing number of intermediate age band members (the "sandwich" generation) is being caused by AIDS (in all countries), warfare (primarily in some developing nations), and drug addiction and incarceration

(primarily in developed countries). The result is a growing number of "single grandparent" families. The grandparents, or in some cases great-grandparents and great-aunts, range in age from 40 to 90 years of age, so not all are specifically older adults and in most cases (though certainly not all) the grandparent is in fact the grandmother. However, this has to be one of the most challenging intergenerational issues to come before policy makers and practitioners since the first recognizable intergenerational program was started in the U.S. in 1963 (the beginning of the Foster Grandparent programs).

Developed nations are almost as unprepared as developing. Older adult services have strict age guidelines that exclude many skipped generation families; foster care services discriminate against "same family" foster parents; adoption laws and welfare laws need to be amended. Developing nations that have no social welfare infrastructure can be devastated by this problem, and the level of poverty that can be experienced by a frail elder, unable to compete in the economy and raising several small children may be unparalleled in recent history. Fortunately the issue is of concern to a wide variety of organizations including governments, health organizations, aging and intergenerational groups, childrens advocates, and womens organizations. Perhaps this issue, more than any other, will help international organizations understand the need for intergenerational approaches to social problem solving and development.

The current trend internationally to examine the meaning of **"productive aging"** is probably a reactive one rather than proactive. As the demographic aging process continues, the pressure is on all nations to explore and find the value that older adults can have to the rest of society, i.e . their "contributing roles". This is one of the most important considerations in this article since productive aging usually results in some kind of intergenerational activities. The history of development of intergenerational programming in the United States is instructive in this regard.

Population aging, which has taken place over a 200 year period in developed nations compared to a 20 year process in developing nations, brought its first impacts in the U.S. in the 1960's during a period of social change and revised concepts. The first Foster Grandparent program, where older adults provide care and guidance to children with special or

exceptional needs, was established in 1963. The prototype for the Retired Senior Volunteer Programs (which now number over 750) was started by Janet Sainer in Staten Island in 1967. As a counterpoint to these, the first widespread, institutionalized student volunteer program was established through the National Center for Service Learning in 1969. In seeking to develop a basis for education in civic values and commitment, this program has become significantly intergenerational. The concept was greatly strenthened in 1990 through the passage of the National and Community Service Act. When it was reauthorized as the National and Community Service Trust Act in 1993, by including the major older adult volunteer programs under the same legislation, it became the most significant piece of intergenerational legislation since the passage of the Social Security Act.

The aging of populations demands fresh thinking, not only on practical matters but also on the intrinsic value of the different stages of the life cycle and the role of age groups in relationship to one another (Tout, 1989). It also demands that many nations take a closer look at the utilitarian (economic dominated) philosophies that control their social policy, and look for some deeper values.

INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Intergenerational programming is relatively new in developed nations, but at least has been extensively discussed and applied since the early 1960's. A proliferation in intergenerational programming in the U.S.A. since the mid 1980's has resulted in thousands of activities around the nation. A survey performed by the New York State Intergenerational Network in 1990 identified over 500 programs in New York State alone. These programs cover an extraordinarily wide range, with bases in the following networks: long term care (Hegeman, 1985), education (Friedman, 1990), aging (National Council on Aging, 1991/1994), youth service (Stout, Boyd and Volanty, 1992), child care (Southeast Florida Center on Aging, 1990), medical care (Isabella Geriatric Center, 1995), foster care (Corporation for National Service, 1990), housing, environmental protection, home care (couch,1992), and so on. Generations United, the main national

intergenerational organization in the U.S., was created in 1986 by two of the organizational leaders in aging and childrens' services, namely the National Council on Aging and the Child Welfare League of America.

This collaboration came about partly as a response to the growing activism of the "generational equity" lobby, which advocates reduction in aging funding by claiming that aging services are unfairly funded when compared to childrens' programs. However, the child welfare and aging networks both indicate that this lobby has not yet advocated for increased funding for children in any way that would be meaningful, and therefore view it with a high degree of suspicion.

Generally, aging and child welfare advocates are interested more in collaboration and avoiding destructive competition for government funding, and have organized against it. This is an important element in the founding of Generations United which, at the same time, has filled a void in the national intergenerational arena, i.e., the need for a national network to advocate specifically for intergenerational issues and programs, and to pull together the existing local ones. There is no doubt that Generations United, along with other national influencers (including the academic institution-based groups such as Temple University's Center for Intergenerational Learning, and the University of Pittsburgh's Generations Together) have had a profound impact on the growth of intergenerational programs and networks throughout the U.S.

There are models in developed nations to address almost any kind of social or cross-generational issue. Community-based, long-term care of frail elders; family preservation; children with special needs (born drug addicted, HIV positive, or with special medical needs); children with educational problems (performing below grade level, in need of special education, at-risk of dropping out); juvenile offenders; parenting teens; incarcerated women who give birth; "skipped generation" families; performing arts; oral history; community planning; and environmental planning are all issues that have been successfully addressed using intergenerational models in developed nations. Along with this has come a (small but) growing recognition of the value of the extended family.

Ken Tout, Intergenerational Coordinator of HelpAge International, has been extensively involved in efforts to initiate cross-generational programming in developing nations. He reports (Tout, 1989) that "..the

subject was virtually unrecognized in the developing world until the 1982 World Assembly on Aging. In the interim, the pace of debate and research has been slow". However, "A number of intergenerational pilot projects have pointed the way toward wider strategies for either reinforcing the existing family system while there is still time, or identifying surrogate family structures based on the commitment of individuals or communities." Tout acknowledges that, "such intergenerational experiments can probably be counted by the dozen rather than by the hundred across the developing world," but "their apparent success constitutes its own challenge to governments, academics and voluntary groups to respond with urgency to the imperative of probably the most influential social change of modern times", i.e. population aging.

Because many developing nations continue to experience severe budgetary problems, especially regarding available funds for social development, *experimental intergenerational programs are likely to emerge from the voluntary sector.*

Interviews conducted with Maithamako Molojwane, U.N. Delegate from Botswana in the 47th session, and representatives from the Societe des Retraites in Abijan, Cote D'Ivoire, indicate that continuing migration of young people to the cities, extended family breakdown, and loss of support from traditional tribal structures have left increasing numbers of older adults and youth without support. The visible consequences reported are growing numbers of older adults begging in cities, since social security supports are not available, and single, teenage parents without extended family assistance. Additionally, since migration does not always lead to employment (especially for those lacking education), there is a significant population of unattached and often unemployable young males, amongst whom crime rates are increasing.

Based on successful programs in the U.S., it is feasible to bring together the older adults without income support (usually older women, since they outlive spouses on average by 7 to 10 years) and place them in "surrogate grandparent" roles with teen mothers (and fathers where applicable) where they can teach parenting and life coping skills. Young men and women in need of employability skills can learn them as community caregivers to elders who need their assistance. Both populations gain in self esteem, and older adults have an opportunity to

pass on their life skills and experience to a younger generation that needs them.

Such programs are extremely cost effective, since they are usually primarily "stipended" volunteer activities and serve two populations simultaneously. Small scale supports that allow both age groups to survive and, simultaneously gain from their interactions, can have profoundly positive social consequences. Young people can continue in school while providing their services, thus guaranteeing a better trained work force in the future, and children of teen parents (who are more likely to be marginalized in terms of opportunities) will have enhanced developmental possibilities. Such surrogate families are not a perfect substitute for the real thing, but go a long way towards mitigating the problems that result from fragmentation.

If such efforts are cross-tribal--as many in the U.S. are inter-cultural-- important elements for national cohesion can be addressed simultaneously. Factionalism that occurs around different national, tribal, racial, religious, or ethnic origins is common in developed as well as developing nations. Intergenerational service and care projects like those mentioned above have had remarkable results at building bridges of understanding in the U.S. While dialogue is an important part of reducing hostility, provision of services by one part of the population to another has shown great potential in building real understanding (cf: work of Generations United, Temple University - Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia respectively).

The New York Times has reported (2/23/93) increased abandonment of children in Uganda below age 14 due to the AIDS pandemic. Because of the extent of the problem, the government is unable to accomodate these children in orphanages. In a significant number of cases, the situation involves a head of household of 12 to 14 years caring for younger siblings, and simultaneously trying to engage the educational system. For some, there are a few acres of land inherited from deceased parents and, in these situations it seems the authorities have concluded that at least the junior families have the means of survival. However, if intergenerational program approaches were utilized in the situation, elders who have been displaced by similar circumstances could be matched with the juniors for mutual benefit.

Older adults could provide child care for the younger siblings, as well as teaching traditions and agriculture. As a stabilizing influence they would be invaluable, and supportive agencies could provide a valuable add-on. For example, UNIFEM has adopted an approach in some situations of educating mothers in order to improve the education of children (some of this has even "rubbed off" in recently attempted programs in the U.S.). Why not try the same with surrogate grandmothers, who would in turn be better educational supporters, agricultural advisors, and health maintainers of junior families?

A final point to discuss in intergenerational programming is the **informal social roles** that older adults can play. Such programming as designed in developed nations naturally attempts to "harness" the strength of such roles for social benefits. In fact, one of the values of cross-generational programming is that society/government can build on functions that are already in place, or at least characteristic of the populations in question, and thereby produce much greater results. However, the kind of roles played in different nations can vary so widely that a case by case evaluation needs to be done. Two examples offered here were described to me by people interviewed for this paper:

- **Norma Levitt,** Chairperson of the NGO Intergenerational Subcommittee of the Committee on Ageing described the informal, but socially critical role, that older women often play in China. In a society where social benefits are lost if a family has more than one child, maintaining contraception is an important function. Since older adults usually exhibit a keen interest in the future of their grandchildren (this is reported frequently as the reason why older adults return to the caregiving role in skipped generation families, even at great personal hardship), it is not surprising that older Chinese women often play an active role in safeguarding their grandchildrens' futures.

- **Dede Obombasa,** a Columbia University graduate student and intern at the United Nations in 1992/93, described the informal roles that older women played in refugee camps where she lived for two years (she was a refugee from Uganda and lived in camps in the Sudan). Once the formal interventions were over each day, i.e. when those who delivered food and other services to the

> refugee camps had gone, the informal systems of governance that produced organization and mitigated against criminality took over. Because of the traditional respect that was accorded to elders in the societies from which the refugees came, the elder refugees were able to exert considerable influence over activities in the camps. This included conflict resolution, ensuring proper distribution of supplies, and providing care and support to younger members of the communities. The response that the elders received generated a strong sense of self esteem, which is an important motivating factor and survival dynamic. A significant degree of (informal) social organization therefore took place, improving the chances of survival and facilitating the efficient operation of the camps. Dede described in more personal terms the intervention of an older woman who became her mentor and an important role model. As a teenager separated from her parents, who had fled to another country and were not found until several years later, the surrogate grandparent became an important stabilizing factor and link with traditional standards.

Much additional research needs to be done into the informal roles that older adults play in different societies. However, there is enough basis in successful models that already exist to consider their adaptation to new and varied situations.

It is important to clarify that intergenerational programs have goals beyond their functional objectives. For example, in a program where adjudicated youth provide needed services to older adults as the functional objective, the primary goal may be exposing the youth to the life history, memories, experiences, reintegrated personalities, and longer time horizons of the elders they will meet. Interraction on any functional base produces this exposure and the benefits to young and old that flow with it.

However, it is important that a functional base exists. One of the problems sometimes encountered in mentoring programs is dealing with the question "What are we supposed to *do*?" Lack of clarity in this area causes uncertainty and can produce ineffective relationships. If only the functional objectives exist, however, there is no longer an intergenerational program in place, since the services involved could equally be provided by someone from the same age band or a professional.

In an intergenerational agricultural program operated by the New York City Council for Church and Social Action in the 1980's, older adults

who had migrated from the South in and around the second world war helped inner city youth to grow vegetables. Through the course of each summer, the youth learned the following lessons and *values* from the elders, in addition to the actual agricultural skills:

- Immediate gratification is not available
- Patience is needed to produce results
- Nurturing is required for best results

These values were quite different than the survival skills they knew from the streets, and were part of the primary goals of the program, which existed in addition to the functional goals, i.e., learning agricultural skills.

If young and old are brought together on any functionally valuable basis, their life cycle roles become apparent, i.e., the exchange of valuable characteristics between the two populations occurs. Any intergenerational program also contributes to ***social integration*** *in addition to its functional goals, and this should be recognized as a legitimate end in its own right.*

SECTION III:
Key Policy Implications

The proposition in this section is:

•The overriding goal of public policy, as applied to cross-generational issues and programs, should be to encourage social (generational) integration and discourage social (generational) fragmentation. In order to accomplish this, generationally divisive policies should be avoided, since lack of integration in organizations leads to dysfunction, and opportunities to bring young and old together for socially valuable purposes should be encouraged.

There are a number of arguments in favor of public support of intergenerational programs. Some significant ones are offered by Eric R. Kingson (Kingson, 1989), Harry R. Moody and Bob Disch (Moody and Disch, 1989), and Paul R. Nathanson (Nathanson, 1989).

Kingson suggests: "...there is a growing need for intergenerational programs and approaches to public policy....(which) provide some important and unique contributions to contemporary American society. These contributions include responding to challenges emerging from an aging society, by developing productive roles for the aging population, bridging stereotypes associated with age, and promoting understanding between the generations that discourages generational competition. These programs and policies can support families and communities through their involvement in family caregiving and the linking of community agencies."

Moody and Disch offer: "...a rationale for public support on behalf of intergenerational programming that invokes an ideal of citizenship. This rationale is contrasted with the more commonly cited "sentimental" justifications such as promoting life satisfaction, attitude changes and good feelings."

Nathanson takes the position that: "....a political imperative for such (intergenerational) programs does exist and that such programs may lead to a questioning of government benefits provided solely on the basis of chronological age."

From an organizational viewpoint the processes of "differentiation" (specialization of function or role) and "integration" (coordination of specialized functions) are key to its success. Differentiation has been important since the early history of mankind as individuals have taken on specialized roles in the hunting for or gathering of food, to participation in complex organizations today. The degree of integration is what determines the effectiveness of the group. For example, in a modern corporation lack of integration between the production and sales departments can lead to more goods being sold than produced, leading to a crisis of customer confidence.

In family and society, the roles of different family members and age bands may be decided by culture, tradition, law or natural selection. It seems likely that "naturally selected" attributes that contribute to the health and continued existence of the group become embedded in or underpin aspects of custom, tradition or law. However, if a family member or age band develop or are forced into a non-contributing or redundant role, "integration" becomes a problem. Only roles that are important to the functioning of the group are addressed in organization theory concepts of integration. So, defining the roles of elders is critical if there is to be any real integration. Additionally, the roles of elders cannot be easily identified unless there is first some analysis of their life cycle roles or age related attributes.

Social policy in general should encourage social integration as part of its overall rationale. Policy that works in the opposite direction, whether by design or "unintended consequence", will tend to produce greater fragmentation and additional, unanticipated social problems. The natural working of intergenerational relationships should be considered a socially positive force that makes the life cycle attributes of young and old available to one another. Nathanson's view of government benefits provided solely on the basis of chronological age makes sense in this context, since such an approach tends to put age cohorts in competition and contention with one another--the opposite direction of social integration.

In Kingson's analysis, social integration is served by responding to the challenges of an aging society, developing productive roles for elders and bridging age related stereotypes--understanding facilitates integration. Moody and Disch's support for the ideal of citizenship is

appropriate because it highlights an important characteristic for team building--being a good team player on a social level--which clearly facilitates social integration. However, the "sentimental" justifications for intergenerational programming should not be disregarded, even though they are not likely to produce results for an advocate seeking to persuade a "hard-nosed" policy maker. "Life satisfaction" implies that an individual is at least satisfied with their life cycle role--they are well integrated--and if "attitude changes" are away from negative viewpoints and towards accepting and appreciating other age groups, they will certainly facilitate social integration.

Other kinds of intergenerational initiatives not mentioned above, such as developing curricula on aging in schools (Couper, 1992) and art programming, also have their unique contributions to make to social integration. Understanding the process of aging and where it fits into the whole life cycle contributes by building understanding of other age groups, and reducing fear and stereotypes of aging. It is also possible that wider access to such education, as well as exposure to "live" elders, could impact the excessively youth oriented culture that has developed in the latter half of this century.

Intergenerational arts programming allows participants to create together and share deeper parts of their psyche. It is difficult to watch a theater group like the Full Circle Theater Troupe of Temple University and not be moved by the performers.

Competition for resources and "generational equity"

This section will examine one situation where there appears to be, and will probably continue to be, significant competition for resources between young and old: *social security systems built on a pay-as-you-go basis*

Social security systems as operated by governments today are built on a simplistic and utilitarian view of the life cycle--they postulate a "right-to-retire" as though "productive employment" were the only contribution that people can make to their society. However, the propositions in this article suggest instead a modified version of this "right", i.e., a right to retire from a *production oriented role*, and to become

productive in an alternative life cycle role--with family or society in general.

Any social security or retirement system built on a pay-as-you-go basis will encounter problems once population aging is advanced within the nation. The point at which the number of working adults supporting each retiree is insufficient to maintain a solvent system, without unacceptably high taxes, is the point at which generational conflict is guaranteed to break out. *With most nations committed to low fertility rates and life extension through better health care, the point of confrontation is unavoidable.* Clearly a social security system built on such a basis does not contribute to social integration, but rather to fragmentation.

Additionally, a retirement system that makes no acknowledgement of the valuable life cycle roles of older adults is wasting an important and naturally occurring resource. This resource, through intergenerational programming, has demonstrated the capacity to address serious social problems in the U.S. such as:

•Relatively poor educational standards, based on international comparisons

•At-risk backgrounds and behaviour of youth

•Socially negative outcomes of families under stress

Elders who receive social rewards to assist youth through intergenerational programs would save the society many other costs resulting from these problems. For example:

•Each inner city youth who is assisted to high school graduation is more likely to find ongoing employment and is less likely to require social welfare supports[4]

•Every child that is kept out of foster care through effective family preservation saves the federal, state and local governments significant resources, not only in terms of foster care payments, but also through the elimination of "aging out" costs[5] and costs associated with the fact that children raised in foster care are at greater rick for delinquent behaviour

---

[4]The New York State Department of Labor estimates that, by the year 2000, 95% of all jobs in New York City will require a high school diploma

[5]Costs associated with passing the maximum age for foster care support, and making a

•Any child who is motivated and assisted in performing up to grade level in the first and second grades is less likely to drop out in later years

A rational social security system should facilitate access to elders as resources.

A simple model of a cross-generationally sound system could be developed on the following basis:

•Government mandated savings. Governments could establish actuarially sound pension systems on behalf of working citizens that would collect contributions from them and their employers. Upon retirement, these funds--the property of the individual and not the state--would be used to purchase an annuity or "pension". Working people would then have the option--and incentive--to contribute more if they chose, thus increasing retirement savings[6]. Retirement age could be decided upon partly by the individual, and not exclusively by the government. Those with adequate resources could choose to retire before 62 years of age; those who wanted to leave resources to an impoverished family could continue working and will or deed their accumulated resources to younger family members. The availability of funds for retirement would no longer be the responsibility of the current working population and a source of generational dispute would be removed.

•Government supported intergenerational programs. Programs that provide elders opportunities and incentives to make their life cycle attributes available to younger cohorts, such as the Foster Grandparent program, could be made into extensive national projects. Older adults would have the incentive of earning a non-taxable stipend which, for very low income elders, could make their income up to a manageable level. However, eligibility to participate based on income limits should be removed since this discourages participation of higher income elders whose skills are also socially valuable. Such a program should not be viewed primarily as an income support activity as the Foster Grandparent Program is today, but as a project to harness the skills, knowledge, caring and life experience of the society's elders.

This kind of system would produce a better integrated, healthier society.

---

supported transition to independent living

[6]Under a pay-as-you-go system there is no incentive to pay more since the ultimate return is unaffected

We should not forget that the "wolf" of population aging is "baying" at all our doors. As the number of working adults declines and the number of retirees increases, all existing social security systems face a potentially insoluble challenge: how do you pay for larger number of retirees with fewer working age producers? Argentina has witnessed riots over social security; the French social security system almost went bankrupt in 1992; and Italy expects, with their population declining, that there will soon be one working adult for every two retirees. Being a late entry into the social security "game", the U.S.A. does not face bankruptcy of the system until the year 2030. However, it will start taking in less money than it pays out as soon as 2013.

There is still time to split the system into a two-tier structure that combines social security savings--contributions collected from both employees and employers by the government and saved for the employee's retirement--and pay-as-you-go tax contributions that will maintain current retirees and gradually convert into payments for socially valuable contributions by elders.

This strategy, based on productive life cycle roles, not only keeps the "wolf" of population aging away from the door, but it rewards elders for providing a socially necessary resource to juniors, and contributes enormously to social integration by encouraging elders to adopt a life cycle role that will bring them regularly and routinely into contact with younger cohorts.

Since this paper has been concerned with the role of elders internationally as well as within the U.S., the last word should go to the Chairperson of the NGO Committee on Ageing at the United Nations. Susanne Paul, who has pursued a lifelong commitment to international aging issues, states her vision of the potential of elders very simply and very idealistically: "The tremendous energies and creative resources of older people should be used to bring peace and justice in the world."

References

American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) and the National Association of Partners in Education (1992) Becoming a School Partner: A guidebook for organizing intergenerational partnerships in schools, Washington, D.C.: AARP

Apt, N. (1981/1985) Aging in Ghana, Legon, Ghana: University of Ghana; cited in Tout, K. *Intergenerational Exchange in Developing Countries*, New York: Haworth Press

Butler, Robert (1963) The Life Review: An interpretation of reminiscence in the aged, *Psychiatry*, Vol 26

Charnow, S., Nash, E., and Perlstein, S. (1993) Life Review Training Manual, New York: Elders Share the Arts

Coles, Robert (1993) The Call of Service: A Witness to Idealism, Boston: Houghton Mifflin

Corporation for National Service (1990) The Foster Grandparent Program: Bridging the Generation of Need, Washington, D.C.: Corporation for National Service

Couch, Larry (Ed.) (1992) Let Us Serve Them All Their Days: Young Volunteers Serving Elderly Homebound Persons, Washington, D.C.: National Council on the Aging

Couper, Donna (1992) Schools in an Aging Society (Curriculum Series), Southington, CT: The Center for Understanding Aging

DeBagno, Simone (1993) Portraits of Age (video), New York: United Nations

Ekpenyong, S., Oyeneye, O., and Peil, M. (1986) Reports on study of elderly Nigerians from the Centre of West African Study, Birmingham, England: University of Birmingham; cited in Tout, K. *Intergenerational Exchange in Developing Countries*, New York: Haworth Press

Erikson, Erik H. (1985) Childhood and Society, New York: W. W. Norton and Company

Family Friends Resource Center (1991/1994) Family Friends: Heart Medicine Money Can't Buy, Family Friends: A Program Guide, and Family Friends Replication Manual, Washington, D.C.: National Council on the Aging

Freedman, Marc (1988) Partners in Growth: Elder Mentors and At-Risk Youth, Philadelphia: Public Private Ventures

Freedman, Marc (1994) Seniors In National and Community Service, Philadelphia: Public Private Ventures

Friedman, S. (Ed.) (1990) Closing the Gap: An Intergenerational Discussion Model Guide for Replication, Kensington, MD: Interages

Goleman, Daniel (June 14, 1988) Erikson, In His Own Old Age, Expands His View of Life, the New York Times; cited in Freedman, Marc (1994) *Seniors In National and Community Service*, Philadelphia: Public Private Ventures

Hegeman, C. (1985) Child Care in Long-Term Care Settings, Albany, NY: Foundation for Long Term Care

Heisel, Marsel A. (1993) Socio-Economic Development and Gender Relations in Late Life: Views from Turkey and Egypt, Budapest, Hungary: paper presented to the International Congress of Gerontology

Henkin, N., Perez-Randall, C., and Rogers, A. (1993) Linking Lifetimes Program Development Manual, Philadelphia: Center for Intergenerational Learning, Temple University

Isabella Geriatric Center (1995) Health Career Partnerships, New York: Isabella Geriatric Center

Journal of Gerontological Social Work, Vol.12, Numbers 3/4 (1988) Brookdale Center on Aging, New York: Haworth Press

Kaplan, Matthew (1994) Side By Side: Exploring Your Neighborhood Through Intergenerational Activities, Berkeley, CA: MIG Communications

Kingson, Eric R. (1989) The Social Policy Implications of Intergenerational Exchange; in Newman, S. and Brummel, S.W. (Eds.) *Intergenerational Programs: Imperatives, Strategies, Impacts, Trends*, New York: Haworth Press

Lawrence, Paul R. and Lorsch, Jay W. (1986) Organization and Environment, Boston: Harvard Business School Press

Louis Harris and Associates (1992) The Nation's Great Overlooked Resource: the Contributions of Americans 55+, New York: The Commonwealth Fund

Maxwell, R. and Silverman, P. (1981) Geronticide, Los Angeles: American Anthropological Association; cited in Tout, K. (1989) *Intergenerational Exchange in Developing Countries*, New York: Haworth Press

Miller, Meredith (1986) Family Friends Program Reaches Disabled Children in Eight U.S. Cities, *Perspective On Aging*, November/December 1986; Washington, D.C.: National Council on the Aging

Mintzberg, Henry (1973) The Nature of Managerial Work, New York: Harper & Row

Moody, Harry R., and Disch, Robert (1989) Intergenerational Programming in Public Policy; in Newman, S. and Brummel, S.W. (Eds.) *Intergenerational Programs: Imperatives, Strategies, Impacts, Trends*, New York: Haworth Press

Nahemow, Lucille (1993) Older Women's changing Role in Zimbabwe, Budapest, Hungary: Paper presented to the International Gerontological Association

Nathanson, Paul S. (1989) Political Imperative for Intergenerational Programs?; in Newman, S. and Brummel, S.W. (Eds.) *Intergenerational Programs: Imperatives, Strategies, Impacts, Trends*, New York: Haworth Press

New York City Department for the Aging (1990) Between Friends: Creating Intergenerational Work/Study Programs for Youth At-Risk and Older Adults: A Guide for Concerned Communities, New York: New York City Department for the Aging

New York City Department for the Aging (1992) A Program That Works: the Intergenerational Work/Study Program (video), New York: New York City Department for the Aging

New York City Department for the Aging (1992) Alert & Alive: a mental wellness program for older adults, New York: New York City Department for the Aging

Newman, Sally M., Vander Ven, Carol and Ward, Christopher R. (1992) The Productive Employment of Older Adults in Child Care, Pittsburgh: Generations Together, University of Pittsburgh

Perlstein, Susan and Bliss, Jeff (1994) Generating Community, New York:Elders Share the Arts

Sauvy, A. (1948) Social and economic consequences of the aging of Western European countries, *Population Studies*, 2; cited in Tout, K. *Intergenerational Exchange in Developing Countries*, New York: Haworth Press

Selby, Philip and Schechter, Mal (1982) Aging 2000: a Challenge for Society, the Sandoz Institute for Health and Socio-Economic Studies; Lancaster, England: MTP Press Limited

Southeast Florida Center on Aging (1990) Intergenerational Child Care: Program Development, Dade County, Florida: Little Havana Activities and Nutrition Centers of Dade County

Stout, B., Boyd, S., and Volanty, K. (1992) Y.E.S. Youth Service Provider Guide, Lubbock, TX: Home Economics Curriculum Center, Texas Tech University

Sweitzer, Pam (1993) Reminiscence Projects for Children and Older People, London: Age Exchange

Tout, Ken (1989) Intergenerational Exchange in Developing Countries; in Newman, S. and Brummel, S.W. (Eds.) *Intergenerational Programs: Imperatives, Strategies, Impacts, Trends*, New York: Haworth Press

Wallace, J. Brandon (1992) Reconsidering the Life Review: The Social Construction of Talk About the Past, *The Gerontologist*, Vol. 32, No.1

Walls, Nancy (1987) Three Generations of Love: Foster Grandparents and teenage parents are a natural combination, *Aging*, No. 355; Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services