Chapter 5
Intergenerational Strategies for Promoting Lifelong Learning and Education

Abstract This chapter highlights the relational nature of learning and especially notes that through education, intended intergenerational practices have great potential to foster sustainable relationships in society. Examples of international intergenerational programs focused on lifelong learning and education in countries as different as Germany, India, Spain, United Kingdom, Uruguay, and U.S. are presented as pathways to combat the following three main threats to sustainable societies: cultural discontinuity, lack of trust, and the increasing challenges to living in diverse contexts. Special attention is paid to the move from multi-generational learning and education contexts to intended intergenerational endeavors at all levels. Purposeful efforts are made to facilitate interaction between generations to enhance learning and education. The traditional paradox in evidence is that most of our school systems consist of age-segregated classrooms while a community of teachers, families and students from different generations are living side by side. This phenomenon is highlighted. In order to illustrate how this paradox may be solved, we present a few cases of international intergenerational initiatives carried out in educational settings where generations meet purposefully to teach and learn together across the lifespan.

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Learning, Education, and Relational Practices

That learning and education must be approached as lifelong processes is common sense. After all, it is evident that we are learning creatures from the moment of birth, even earlier according to some new research into prenatal development. What has not been so obvious is how education extends throughout life as well.

Peter Jarvis (2001), one of the leading international experts in the study of learning, has suggested that it is through learning that human beings "create and transform experiences into knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, values, senses and emotions" (p. 10). Hence, learning is the food for continuing change in the person: everyone is able to learn and change as long as they are alive. Where we differ from

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M. Kaplan et al., *Intergenerational Pathways to a Sustainable Society*,
Perspectives on Sustainable Growth, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-47019-1_5

Jarvis is when he asserts education is just subsumed within learning, for “education is learning in a formal situation” (p. 2). We believe it is not just that.

As we understand it, education, unlike learning, brings into play not only the community, much more than a group in the formal context, but instead, the forging of a moral community (Fernández Enguita, 2016). At its heart, education is a moral practice rather than a technical or technological enterprise. As formulated by Gert Biesta (2012), this latter idea leads us to one of the main differences between learning and education: “…education is a *teleological* practice, that is a practice framed and constituted by purposes.” (p. 583). Yes, we may say that learning can have a purpose (e.g., learning to read so that I am able to learn more). However, whereas learning purposes do not necessarily have to be connected to a sense of the common good, educational endeavors are judged by their desirability regarding our membership in a certain community. Education is not just concerned with change but also with improvement of the world we live in.

Moreover, education is a *relational practice* for it always implies someone else with whom, from whom, or for whom it is possible. If learning emphasizes the potential for ongoing development and change, then education calls our attention to the set of values which make learning a desirable endeavor in relation to influencing others. As Biesta states, “whereas ‘education’ is a relational concept that, in most cases, refers to the interaction between an educator and a student, ‘learning’ denotes something that one can do alone and by oneself” (Biesta, 2011, p. 66).

Consequently, there may be self-directed learning but not self-directed education, at least not in equal terms. Those talking about self-directed education have mostly referred to self-directed instruction, another way to coin self-directed learning. It is through education that we keep being members of a moral community throughout our lives, not just uniform members (*I am just one of us*), but distinctive, diverse and incomplete members (*I am a unique human being*) because our relational nature always entails being in touch with others whose lives are linked and interdependent to ours: “Every person is a knot in a net of relationships” (Panikkar, 1993).

Briefly, we might say, on the one hand, “*I am alive, therefore I can learn*”, and on the other hand “*I belong (in a human community), therefore I am an interdependent human being*.” The continuing nature of change and interdependency makes learning and education lifelong, ongoing and based on contingent accomplishments; we never can take for granted what it is that we will be able to learn or what the results of education will be.

5.1.2 Learning, Education, and Intergenerational Practices

How is it that the lifelong character of learning and education connects with an intergenerational perspective? Adopting an intergenerational perspective leads us to wonder about time-bound connections and disconnections across the life-span (birth to death), the life-cycle (development stages which reproduce), and the

life-course (social and historic timing as per our linked lives) (O'Rand & Krecker, 1990). In the end, generations can be viewed as specific locations within demographic, familial, organizational, historic, and individual time. Therefore, one way to understand that learning and education are life-long consists of paying attention to dynamics throughout life within the framework of several interrelated and intersecting generational positions.

For instance, those college students who have finished their studies in 2016 take with them forever not just a degree, but also another indicator to add to their profile of generational identities, namely being a student from the 2016 Class. Whether, when, and how they will use this indicator is a matter to unfold. However, for them to explain their lives, referring to the year of their college commencement may instill a certain sense of continuity regarding their life-cycles, as well as a sense of connection through a life-course cohort-linked experience–that of all students in the 2016 Class. Actually, in many current societies mandatory education years in school constitute an institutionalized way to organize part of the life cycle and therefore those years are important in terms of generational identity. Unsurprisingly, many of our sustainable social relationships across generations are woven within the school system: wasn't that the basic narrative in Mitch Albom's best-selling book *Tuesdays with Morrie*?

5.1.3 The Question at Stake

From the perspective of our book, the key question at stake regarding the triangle of lifelong learning, lifelong education, and intergenerational relationships would be the following: *to what extent are our current learning and educational practices powerful sources of (un)intended and sustainable intergenerational relationships?* The authors in this book argue that there is a lot of leverage to be gained in lifelong learning and education towards more sustainable societies, and the intergenerational nature within learning and education is at the core of that leverage to be unleashed.

Every day, everywhere in the world, thousands of children and youth spend a significant number of hours with their teachers at schools, vocational training centers, and colleges. We all seem to have assumed that it is good for our younger generations to attend a formal system of education as an ensemble of mono-generational groups of pupils engaging with a few adults –their teachers and the school staff. Actually, the age at which children typically enter the school system might be considered an official start for them to a new lifelong pathway for learning and education.

The more developed a country is, the more accepted is the idea of staying longer in the school system, including not just compulsory education, but also all the formal education institutions. However, during all this school time awareness about intergenerational processes and the weaving of intergenerational relations taking place is not the norm. Children and youth tend to spend time with classmates of

similar age, similar competence level and similar seniority in the school organization. For instance, mix-age or mix-competency groupings are unusual, and even deemed inappropriate in many schools, with rural schools by necessity being the exception to this rule (Hyry-Beihammer & Hascher, 2015). When such groupings are incorporated into the system, it is not always the case that the intergenerational component of these groupings is made visible.

Hence, a paradox arises: while schools gather different generations every day, typically school teachers and instructors in the classrooms are in different generational positions than their students, and many times are not able to recognize the intergenerational nature of the learning and education process going on. We are losing an opportunity to build social fabric and to develop the interdependency mentioned above; therefore, society's sustainability loses terrain.

Our hypothesis in this particular chapter is clear: the more we are able to connect different generations so that they can interact, relate, and get mutually engaged in learning and education throughout life, the more we will be increasing and strengthening our chances to make our societies sustainable. Why? Because life is a project whose span, cycle, and course make us all linked to other people along a continuum of time through processes of both bonding and bridging, and intergenerational endeavors are geared to link up specific positions in a life time (generations), and to preserve a sense of connection between past, present, and future relationships (relational sustainability).

5.2 Creating Purposeful Intergenerational Lifelong Learning and Education

Nowadays, many learning and education settings are multi-generational. Different generations congregate at venues where learning and education is taking place. However, a collection of generations does not guarantee anything regarding what is really at stake here, namely how people from different generations interact and mutually engage while keeping their generational identities in mind. All schools are multigenerational sites by definition. Schools are typically structured around learning and education, partially organized through encounters and interactions between teachers and pupils who belong to different generations, hence their obvious intergenerational nature. However, this type of taken-for-granted intergenerational composition does not correspond to meaningful, everyday relations at each and every school. The fact that people from different generations are together, and even interact, does not equate to intergenerational exchanges and education. Hence, our interest is to identify settings where the advantage of their multi-generational status has been taken to promote and adopt sustainable intergenerational relationships as an intended underlying principle. Examples of the latter can be found internationally and we will present a few of them below.

That intergenerational lifelong learning and education can be made purposeful and make a difference, leads us into the realm of intergenerational programs. Biggs and Lowenstein (2011) have argued that intergenerational initiatives are opportunities for people to place themselves in the position of a different generation in four main steps: (i) becoming critically aware that generational identity is a key factor in social relationships; (ii) understanding similarities and differences between generations; (iii) taking a value stance around generational positions; and (iv) acting with generational awareness. Otherwise said, intergenerational practices are sensitizing instruments to recognize and engage in the web of generations and intergenerational interactions around us. Moreover, and getting back to Biggs & Lowenstein's analysis, intergenerational endeavors can facilitate participants to experience two particular features of intergenerational relationships:

> "First, the degree to which it is possible to place oneself in the position of the age-other and develop empathy between generations; second, the possibility of working towards negotiated and sustainable solutions" (p. 140).

Of course, this idea of producing "sustainable solutions" must be based upon sustainable relationships working for the common good. It is through fostering lifelong learning and education, because they have to do with lifelong change and interdependency, personal development and the forging of moral communities, that intergenerational approaches can provide contexts to find sustainable solutions around three main challenges: multiplication of boundaries which make us feel an uncomfortable sense of discontinuity and disconnection; erosion in intergenerational trust; and struggles to build one's identity within a world of increasing difference and diversity.

Intergenerational programs in lifelong learning and education may counterbalance current tendencies in relationship fragmentation insofar as these programs may develop "the capacity to place oneself in the position of the other and to locate sources of solidarity that make for lasting and positive social relations" (Biggs & Lowenstein, 2011, p. 146).

5.3 Combatting Discontinuity and Disconnection

Time flow always combines continuity and discontinuity, as the Polish sociologist Bauman (2007) has reminded us. However, the current rhythm and scope of ongoing and ubiquitous changes in many societies worldwide is disturbing, as "...discontinuity of experiences is almost a universal phenomenon affecting similarly all age categories" (p. 124). In this context, intergenerational programs promoting lifelong learning and education may present a pathway for society's sustainability. Our reasoning lies in the twofold nature of generational identity and intergenerational endeavors. On the one hand, there is intergenerational continuity: each generation is generated by a previous one with which it has something in common. However, there is also discontinuity: each new generation displays a partial break of its bonds

with the previous generation from which it emerged. This combination of continuity and discontinuity is at the basis of intergenerational strategies' capacity to combat excessive discontinuity and disconnection. Actually, assuring cultural continuity has been coined as one of the imperatives behind the increasing interest in intergenerational programs (Kaplan & Sánchez, 2014).

Thus, intergenerational learning is one form of deterrence against disruptions to cultural and historical traditions of passing on the knowledge from older generations to younger ones. The plight of indigenous peoples–such as Native Hawaiians, Native Americans, the Maori of New Zealand, and Aborigines of Australia– who have experienced cultural dislocation, social fragmentation, and physical relocation across generations proves it (Kaplan & Lapilio, 2002). In India, the Aastha Foundation for Welfare and Development (a non-governmental organization based in Delhi) has been funding several intergenerational programs including some in which older adults function as "culture watchdogs." Based in community centers, they engage local children and youth (5–15 years of age) at least once a week and educate them about local traditions, celebrated festivities, and the importance of maintaining a sense of cultural identity despite an influx of Western values. Cultural values and ethics are conveyed through telling stories, sharing anecdotes and "small talk." This intervention is seen as a response to the erosion of the traditional value system and ethics from the younger generations of Indian society in metropolitan cities like Delhi (Kaplan & Chadha, 2004).

Let us move now from India to Western Europe:

> "We have all learnt things we would never have known about Reading's history and even our own families, as we would have never had the reason to ask. It has given us the chance to spend our afterschool time doing something fun as well as educational, rather than going home just to sit on the sofa." (Armstrong, 2012, p. 295).

This last excerpt was made by a participant in the *Historypin*[1] after-school group at the Littleheath School in Reading (United Kingdom). It is an example of how an intergenerational strategy can be useful for both providing a non-formal learning opportunity and engaging different generations around cultural continuity–including initiatives aimed at recording and preserving local history, collective and personal histories, and cultural heritage. The passing of knowledge and the discovering and preservation of hidden histories are at the heart of this program. Obviously, in this particular case it is not just that learning does happen, but thanks to intergenerational learning, life-spans and life-cycles may stretch out as far as the capacity to keep memories alive expands. Hence, social processes articulated around these memories and collective imagery are sustained.

[1] "Historypin.com is an online, global archive to which people can add photos, audio, video, stories, and memories by pinning them to a particular place and time on the Historypin map. The Historypin app also lets people add and explore content while walking around their local areas. Since its launch, Historypin has been a catalyst for numerous online and offline collaborations between older and younger people" (Armstrong, 2012, p. 294).

Another service being rendered by *Historypin* to society's sense of connection and sustainability has to do with its potential to reduce social isolation, and therefore to support healthier lives:

> "Historypin is proving to be an extremely powerful catalyst for positive intergenerational contact and the reduction of social isolation. Both on individual and community levels, Historypin has brought people together across generations and cultures and created a sense of belonging within communities. New friendships have been made between older and younger people, social confidence has increased, and new skills have been learned. Families have found out more about one another and people have gained a sense of understanding and pride in their local areas" (Armstrong, 2012, p. 296).

Intergenerational technology programs have demonstrated as well significant capability to foster lifelong learning and education (Sánchez, Kaplan, & Bradley, 2015); some 11 % of 46 intergenerational programs with a strong technological component surveyed in 11 countries admitted to have adopted *cultural continuity* as their area of intended impact. *All Together Now*, in the U.S., and *Generations Together*, in the UK are just two of those programs. The latter makes possible for over 100 school children from 8 schools across Worcestershire to carry out interviews with older members of their community. Stories are recorded, edited, and archived so that they may be retrieved and used in school projects demonstrating how powerful the combination of technology, non-formal and formal education can be to fight the sense of discontinuity.

Technology may be used either face-to-face or through virtual environments that can also function as resource and learning hubs to preserve continuity and connections. For instance, the originators of the EU-funded, multi-country *Grandparents and Grandchildren* program established the "Internet Gym," a multilingual website with supporting materials for young tutors (including teaching exercises and other pedagogical resources designed for them), older adults, and professionals who either conduct or are considering to conduct such programs (Schneider, Tosolini, Iacob, and Collinassi (2012).

Third, Richardson, Collin, Rahilly, and Bolzan (2011) have explored the *living lab* space, a virtual setting created for youth to conduct workshops on social networking and cybersafety for adult participants. It is described as a "non-hierarchical space of intergenerational dialogue and learning that generated mutual respect between the young people and adult participants" (p. 8). These examples hint at how further development of virtual environments, for more fluid, multi-faceted, and participatory intergenerational exchanges, might herald a paradigm shift for extending the possibilities of intergenerational interaction beyond what any individual could have conceived of as possible even recently.

5.3.1 Mix-age Intergenerational Education

If we focus now on formal education, The Intergenerational School (TIS) may be highlighted as an outstanding international example of how to connect different generations' lives and relationships in a sustainable way. TIS was founded as a charter school in inner-city Cleveland, OH in the year 2000 under two main principles: (i) learning is a lifelong developmental process, and (ii) knowledge is socially constructed within the context of a diverse community of personalized relationships. TIS began with 30 students but now serves about 225 children aged 5–14. Its mission is to connect, create, and guide a multigenerational community of lifelong learners and spirited citizens.

TIS believes that lifelong learning in a school cannot be fully accomplished unless people from across the life-span become involved as both learners and teachers. Hence, the strong intergenerational emphasis in the TIS model: "Intergenerational learning allows younger learners to watch older learners go about learning. That is how the younger children learn how to learn…how they come to know about knowing" (The Intergenerational School, 2009). How does TIS actually organize the engagement in the school of learners from all generations? Multi-age classrooms and a group of multi-generational volunteers participating as co-learners in the school life on a regular, intentional, and carefully planned bases constitutes the main answer to that question. It is through this approach of making the school a multi-generational community of lifelong learners and teachers that discontinuity and disconnection are confronted in different ways. This is exemplified in the following quotes from a TIS guidebook for teachers (The Intergenerational School, 2009):

- "In making connections with the younger generations, elders realize that they have a powerful opportunity for a lasting legacy that will outlive them;"
- "teacher is the guide-on-the-side, sitting next to the child, looking to 'lead forth' existing knowledge or experience within a student… then helping the student to construct connections between the old and the new;"
- "when content (…) is connected to context in real life, learning comes alive;"
- "the connections [of children's learning to academic, civic, economic, and empowering ends for that learning] are strands in the narrative of learning, now made more meaningful, and education becomes learning for life."

On a personal interview by this book's authors, one teacher in TIS said that the heart of this school is with connections between students and mentors from different generations: "It is these connections that students are making that help in their learning." We would add that (good, strong) connections are what makes TIS a sustainable community.

Mix-age intergenerational learning and education as implemented at TIS is an interesting approach towards an increasing engagement between generations throughout life. In many school settings age discontinuity has become the norm, despite the fact that a long historic tradition of bringing up the young in non-age-segregated contexts exists (Pratt, 1986). However, many times in life our successful

experiences of learning and education are not necessarily age-segregated (e.g., informal family education). Actually, a strong case is being made for multi-generational classrooms not only in the school system but also in higher education where student's age diversity is increasing steadily:

> "Multigenerational classrooms in formal higher education may constitute windows of opportunity to rethink the practice of teaching as far as they may become venues for triggering processes of intergenerational learning, i.e., learning between the generations stemming from an awareness of differences accrued through individual and group affiliation to diverse generational positions" (Sánchez & Kaplan, 2014, p. 475).

While literature on multi-grade (Quail & Smyth, 2014), and multi-age learning (Simonson, 2015) in the school does not yet provide enough categorical evidence to support its effectiveness, cases like TIS combining a mix-age and an intergenerational approach at different levels proliferate (e.g., the Integrative Montessori Volksschule[2] in Munich, Germany, the Ramon y Cajal School[3] in Zaragoza, Spain, and Cregagh Primary School[4] in Belfast, Northern Ireland). The need to research further and deeper into both the principles, nuts and bolts of mixed age intergenerational education seems obvious.

5.4 Strengthening Intergenerational Trust

Human trust, "the single most important ingredient for the development and maintenance of happy, well-functioning relationships" (Simpson, 2007), has been mainly approached four-fold: as an expectation, a probability, a moral commitment, and a personal predisposition. We consider trust to be a relational asset which has to do with interdependence and bonding capacity with others, a key ingredient in sustainable societies. We argue that intergenerational relationships are instruments for the development and support of a sense of trust, in times when trust and social capital are eroding rapidly: "intergenerational learning and education is understood to have immense potential for overcoming this gap and reaching new forms of solidarity and trust between younger and older generations" (Schmidt-Hertha, Krašovec, & Formosa, 2014, p. 2).

Anthropologist Mary C. Bateson (2010) has formulated the question which constitutes the focus of this section in the chapter: *how can we manage to teach younger generations who they can trust and, at the same time, make them capable of trusting along their lives?* Bateson believes that we can only achieve this if those of us who are no longer children offer young people examples of trustworthiness. In other words, we will make it happen if we are capable of trusting others and of putting this

[2] http://www.montessori-muenchen.de/?seite=werkstatt_allgemein

[3] http://www.changemakerschools.org/profiles/2016/3/2/ceip-ramn-y-cajal

[4] http://www.cregaghprimary.org.uk/intergenerational-project/

trust into practice. We are interested to find out the extent to which this may be achieved through lifelong intergenerational learning and education.

Trust (as well as distrust) is relational insofar that it is generated through reciprocal exchange between individuals in interaction. Trust always emerges out of relationships in progress. Therefore, the nature and format of trust will be different depending on the relational structures and processes involved. In terms of well-being across the life span, it seems that interpersonal trust may be an important resource for successful development, and that older adults tend to show higher levels of interpersonal trust than younger ones (Poulin & Haase, 2015). Actually, age has proven to be positively related to generalized trust across 38 countries (Li & Fung, 2013).

In a study on how to attain a harmonious world through intergenerational connections, VanderVen and Schneider-Munoz (2012) concluded that mistrust represents one of the dangers to social relations, something that can be modified through intergenerational relationships:

> "Where youngsters have a need for a primary attachment figure, an older person outside the family or, possibly, in the extended family can serve as an attachment figure and lay the ground for the development of the trust and hope that are the positive outcomes of this phase of development (Erikson, 1950/1963). This foundational sense obviously prevents the emergence of those beliefs based on distrust and sets the stage for harmonious relationships. Similarly, having a relationship with a younger person can promote a sense of well-being in an older person who not only would work to build trust in the youngster but whose own trust in the world enables him or her to still play a meaningful role." (p. 123).

One of the most documented intergenerational programs in South America is *Shared Wisdoms* [Saberes compartidos], which was implemented in Montevideo (Uruguay) from 2009 to 2012. A recent report on this program (Korotky, 2015) has looked into trust-making among primary school students and older volunteers who interacted during school time. A teacher involved in this program explains how trust emerged:

> "As time went by, children began to trust rapidly in the older adults. Children loved to be seated on their older adults' lap. Sometimes, at home, as parents are in a rush they don't have time [to spend with their children]. (…) Thus, something like being seated by an older person that apparently seems so insignificant it really means that children are trusting fully on these older volunteers. Children are expecting these older adults to take responsibility for what they need from them: feeling protected." (Korotky, 2015, p. 58).

5.4.1 Intergenerational Mentoring

Intergenerational mentoring programs (IMP henceforth) constitute one of the first answers to our question at hand. Typically, mentoring is intergenerational itself since it consists of "a relationship developed between a more experienced older adult and an unrelated younger protégé whereby the mentor provides guidance, instruction and encouragement" (Cumming-Potvin & MacCallum, 2010, p. 308).

After many years of implementing IMP, we know that trust, along with mutuality and empathy (Rhodes, 2005), is a basic component in intergenerational mentoring. Actually, IMP in schools have demonstrated that the mentor-mentee relationship, especially in the case of lower social class students, may be more appropriate as a source of trust than the teacher-student relationship, as this mentored student acknowledges:

> "You can say stuff that you want to say but you can't say anywhere else… you can speak to them (the mentor) as a friend, not a teacher… like you do have to behave but it's not like you have to sit down and sit next to them at the board or something" (Cumming-Potvin & MacCallum, 2010, p. 314).

Similarly, some 40 college students from the School of Psychology at the University of Barcelona, Spain involved in the *Sharing University* intergenerational project during the 2008–2009 academic year described their interaction experience with some 25 older citizens as follows [emphasis added]:

> "It was a very enriching experience; … pleasant; … positive; … communicative; … productive; … spontaneous and **trust-inspiring**, for both sides; …It was a unique experience, there are no limitations to say whatever you think, and because we are not family, we open up so much more; … We elders and youths have come together, we've exchanged experiences, and seniors and young people got on very well; … It was really good to be able to come together with a group of people with whom we do not usually spend time, unless we do so with family members; … It was a great coming together, where we were able to exchange ideas and life experiences, despite the difference in age" (Gárate, 2015, n.p.).

Typically, trust in IMP arises in the context of goal-oriented tasks (DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011), and its lack is a predictor of premature match termination (Rhodes, Reddy, Roffman, & Grossman, 2005). According to Kupersmidt and Rhodes (2014), the three truly essential behaviors of successful mentors are the following: be trustworthy, be empathic, and be authentic. Actually, Noam, Malti, and Karcher (2014) expressly recommend helping mentors size up the degree of trust and safety demonstrated by their mentees.

Building intergenerational trust takes time, and lifelong learning and education require time; therefore, both tasks–building trust and implementing lifelong learning and education–may be approached as mutually attuned. In fact, Balcazar and Keys (2014) wonder about the minimal amount of engagement typically necessary to build trust in the mentoring relationship since below a certain duration threshold, trust would not be achievable. In line with this idea, the European project "Hear me" has developed a guide to train senior mentors in the context of at-risk-youth mentoring programs (Rothuizen, Klausen, & Hesselbjerg, 2011), advising the development of mentor-mentee trust over a succession of meetings, and admonishing older mentors to be reliable even if the mentee is unreliable.

High levels of trust within mentoring intergenerational relationships are associated with positive academic and behavioral outcomes:

- "Students who are at risk of academic failure in public elementary schools can make significant progress in reading skills through being tutored and mentored by older adults once a week during a single academic year" (Morrow-Howell,

Jonson-Reid, McCrary, Lee, & Spitznagel, 2009). In particular, their grade-specific reading skills can be up to 40 % higher than those of their low-reading counterparts not involved in the intergenerational program.

- "Youth (9–13 years old) participating a minimum of 2 h per week in a school- and community-based substance abused prevention intergenerational program showed significantly better attitudes toward school, the future, and elders, and had fewer days absent from school than those students who either were not mentored but were given other types of intervention or were provided with no intervention at all" (Taylor, LoSciuto, Fox, & Hilbert, 1999).
- "a national evaluation of BBBS [Big Brothers Big Sisters] mentoring programs found that levels of trust and closeness in mentoring relationships predicted positive academic and behavioral child outcomes above and beyond the effects of relationship length (…). Thus, the quality of the mentor-mentee relationship clearly influences child outcomes." (Kupersmidt & Rhodes, 2014, p. 443). Furthermore, a study on a local BBBS 'Reading Bigs' program (Larkin & Wilson, 2009) concluded that "when Bigs and Littles established a bond of caring for one another, they built a foundation of trust to discuss all manner of topics" (p. 27).
- After just an 8 week pilot, older adults, teachers and the school principal in the Generation Xchange program based in South Los Angeles, "all reported seeing evidence of benefits for children even in this short time in terms of both behavior (fewer reported referrals to principal) and achievement (improvements in reading and/or math)." (Seeman, n.d.).
- High school students in Southern Spain were assigned to either a group of older volunteers or their teachers to spend 10–12 educational weekly sessions around risks and risk-prevention associated with the use of technology and alcohol consumption. A mix-method analysis concluded:

> "In general, as compared with the decision to do nothing about the matter, the option of bringing the secondary school pupils of our sample into contact with elderly volunteers to speak and learn about prevention risks and attitudes (vis-à-vis internet use and social media and alcohol consumption) is much more promising than the alternative of working with the pupils' own teachers on the same matter." (Pérez, Sánchez, García, & del Moral, 2015, p. 20).

At The Intergenerational School (TIS), the Reading Mentor Program has demonstrated as well huge potential to support acquisition and mastering of key skills for lifelong learners. Through this program over 70 volunteer adult/senior reading mentors commit to at least 2 h per week with students for one-on-one reading, sharing stories and building trustful relationships. In the 2013/14 academic year TIS reading mentors spent over 4000 volunteer hours with students (Whitehouse, Whitehouse, & Sánchez, 2016). The outputs from this effort may be ascertained in the context of the following excerpt about how TIS understands its intergenerational programming:

> "The inclusion of older adults is an intentional design element in the school's model. On a daily basis through our successful intergenerational programming, seniors and other community members share their time, wisdom and enthusiasm for lifelong learning with TIS students through structured learning programs. Not only do all of these events directly support and enhance the academic curriculum, the students gain life lessons and are prepared

> for interacting with others that are different from them. It is an extremely valuable part of the model for TIS students to see older adults actively furthering their own learning. Some of the most successful activities are either side-by-side programs where both the TIS students and the seniors are engaged in their learning together, or programs in which the TIS students serve as mentor-teachers for the seniors. These experiences are inspirational for every person involved no matter where they may be on their own life journey. There is no doubt that these encounters are contributing to our students' success academically, socially, and developmentally." (The Intergenerational Schools, 2012, n.p.).

Experience Corps (EC), an intergenerational mentoring program at schools in the U.S. has been one of the most studied models. For instance, Rebok et al. (2004) reported on the EC program in Baltimore which was designed to support the needs of children in grades K-3 through older adult volunteers serving 15 or more hours per week during a whole academic year. They looked at EC's potential to combat disruptive classroom behavior and lack of learning readiness on children's literacy and behavior, and their preliminary findings indicated that the EC program led to improvements in both student academic achievement and behavior. Why? According to this source, older volunteers offered "stability, caring, and consistency, which are essential to learning, as well as the richness of their experience and presence as role models" (p. 90). More recently, Fried et al. (2013) accomplished a dual evaluation of EC concluding that improved readiness to learn among children in this program was a predictor of propensity towards lifelong learning as well as future educational achievement. In this case, the connections between this type of program, lifelong learning processes, and deep and mutually rewarding intergenerational relationships become evident.

5.4.2 Intergenerational Homesharing

Intergenerational Homeshare Programs (IHP) are another example of how a trustworthy context may enhance informal lifelong learning. In 2010 Spanish researchers made the evaluation of the top IHP in the country (by the name of Viure i Conviure) providing service to over 300 homeowners and homeseekers—most of them college students. Data from a questionnaire replied by 306 participants in this program indicated that behind IHP there is authentic learning taking place with regard to ability to relate to both relatives and non-relatives from other generations.

We understand that in multi-generational societies like the ones we live in, being competent to establish satisfactory intergenerational relationships becomes a key skill to move successfully along the life-cycle. In this sense, IHP offer a very unique and effective opportunity for learning how to share life experiences (and space and a sense of place) with people from different generations. Furthermore, IHP provide as well an environment where younger people may learn to value older adults, hence to lower ageism against the elderly. For older homesharers and younger homeseekers in Viure i Conviure, learning "new things [through] new significant life experiences" was deemed to be among the top five benefits gained through their intergenerational engagement in the program.

5.5 Learning to be in a More Diverse World

Intergenerational relationships are about diversity because they must transcend individual and even one's own group positions to meet and interact with people and organizations situated in different generational locations. In this journey from our generational positions to those of others personal identity is at stake. We are challenged to consider ways in which we are different and similar to those belonging to generations other than our own. We may wonder about the extent to which our way of being and doing overlaps with how others—from different generations—embrace the world around them.

Learning to live in a diverse world seems to us a basic principle for society's sustainability. The tension between preserving our own identity while being able to accept and live happily within diverse contexts may be positive as far as we have learned to cope with it. Intergenerational lifelong learning and education strategies can help in this regard.

5.5.1 Age Diversity

For a first example, let us think of multi-age classrooms in schools and colleges versus the traditional mono-age way to organize educational settings. How is it that a multi-age learning and education environment can enhance our capacity to live in a diverse world? Ohsako (2002) talks about a program in Hamburg, Germany enabling Jewish Holocaust survivors returning to Hamburg (who were born in Hamburg but immigrated to different countries during the Nazi-regime) to engage German schoolchildren through conversation and site visits. Are we able to anticipate fully the potential of such a program to facilitate children's understanding of the past as well as their readiness to live a future in contexts of diversity?

Regarding age diversity and the development of ageist beliefs, we know that high school students involved in ongoing intergenerational programming may hold a more positive image of older adults (Thompson & Weaver, 2015). However, it is not any type of intergenerational contact that will erode ageism: we need not only long-term intergenerational programs but also,

> "interventions encouraging acquaintances to empathize with one another, to disclose information of a personal nature to one another, to work on communication accommodation so that interactions are comfortable and enjoyable, and to focus on what makes one another unique" (Christian, Turner, Holt, Larkin, & Cotler, 2014, p. 8).

On a similar vein, researchers evaluating The Meadows School Project (MSP) implemented in a south-central British Columbia (Canada) rural community underscored the importance of promoting intense intergenerational connections over time (Carson, Kobayashi, & Kuehne, 2011). Hence, the value of "immersion" intergenerational programs such as MSP through which 10–14 years old students are literally relocated to a nearby assisted living facility during 40 days in the academic

year. It is in this context of routine and intense intergenerational interaction at a fully different setting that positive learning outcomes evolve:

> "Positive outcomes were also noted for the students, especially in the educational and developmental domains. For example, students increased their knowledge of the aging process. "At the end [of the project] it was not as hard to communicate with them [residents]," remarked one student. Furthermore, students gained a heightened appreciation of both the abilities of residents and the challenges residents face. "I learned that they [residents] can still learn a lot of stuff even though they are old," noted a student. Myths were dispelled as students spent time with residents: "The most surprising thing was about my buddy . . . she flew planes!" Another student reflected, "I think the most surprising thing I learned is how much they [residents] love children, they love us so much, I was really surprised to see how much fun they had with us." Finally, students gained historical perspective: "It was fun getting to know what it was like when they [residents] were younger . . . how they lived." (p. 413).

At a higher education level, Dublin City University is leading an international movement to set up so-called Age Friendly Universities (AFU). AFU abide by ten principles among which there is the following one: "To promote **intergenerational learning** to facilitate the reciprocal sharing of expertise between learners of all ages." AFU will only be able to implement this principle if they welcome proactively on campus students from different generations. How to do it?

One possibility consists just in encouraging multi-generational course registration. An evaluation of a multi-generational course in a Spanish university showed that the participants' main reason to keep engaged in the course was developing their capacity to gain a greater understanding and respect for different points of view (Lirio, Alonso, Herranz, & Arias, 2014). Similarly, Brooks (2005) concluded that age-mixing in UK further education colleges not only conveys positive messages to younger students about lifelong learning but also helps students to participate in more varied and interesting discussions:

> "As a result, students became more sensitive to other possible interpretations of texts and images, which enhanced their learning" (p. 64).

In the particular context of multi-generational community college classrooms the numbers of non-traditional students in these classrooms are increasing steadily. Clemente (2010) recommends taking advantage of this age-diverse environment to discuss and learn about differences and similarities, a learning that is connected to identity building since the face-to-face intergenerational engagement in the classroom produces a deep reservoir of evidence on the relational nature of identities, especially in the case of older students. We believe that perceiving and experiencing one's own identity as multifaceted and relational is a rich asset in our endeavors to achieve sustainable relationships during the life cycle.

Another possibility at the higher education level to learn about living in age-diverse settings is represented by models such as Lasell College (U.S.) in collaboration with Lasell Village, a continuing care retirement community sited on campus and integrated into the organizational structure of the college. Residents in this community must complete a minimum of 450 hours of learning and fitness activity each year. Obviously, intergenerational learning with Lasell College's younger students is among the available options to meet that learning requirement. This combination

of two sites –a college and a housing facility for older adults– into a shared-site increases opportunities for learning and education at any stage in life.

Trudeau (2009) explored how intergenerational engagement as approached in the Lasell experience was beneficial: maintaining the connection with young people, providing a sense of continuity ("It's terribly important for us to happen to know where we're going today, and for them to know where we were," said one older resident), and practicing intergenerational reciprocity, are among the identified benefits. Ted, one of the Lasell Village residents who participated in this research made a strong argument about how the shared-site he was living at offered a way to challenge age-segregation in society:

> "Children are with children, teenagers are with teenagers, young adults are with young adults, we're again a separate group. And, bridging I think helps our aging along, my aging process certainly, because I feel that I'm part of the population dynamic, actually. I'm not sort of over here, and, that's terribly important, because it's some way to bring us together. I think we remain, I think we do remain younger here. I think my friends here would agree with that. I think we'll remain younger here because we are part of that dynamic. And we are not old folks in a, even a council for the aging for example. And so we are not all so separated, as the rest of the people. I think the young people feel the same way. God, here are old people. You know, we are hungry to know what it's like to be part of that part of life. That also helps us feel that there is meaning in our lives, because we are important to them" (Trudeau, 2009, pp. 156–157).

Certainly, this last excerpt tackles several issues raised along the chapter. The *bridging* component mentioned would not be possible unless a consciousness around the urgency of maintaining connections in a diverse world was present. Continuity, connection, diversity, and meaning making mingle in the quest for more sustainable societies.

5.5.2 Ethnic and Gender Diversity

Since we are delving into pathways for lifelong learning and education to support sustainable relationships, ethnic-diverse and gender-diverse contexts will be interesting to look at. For instance, Yep (2014) describes a partnership between a college and a public library in Los Angeles, U.S. with participation of college women students and adult Asian women immigrants to foster dialogical town-gown relationships: "We intended for college students to learn not only from books and lectures but also by being engaged in the world" (pp. 53–54). Through collaborative creative writing projects and storytelling in the framework of a social justice service learning project, both students and immigrant women were able to learn about both intragenerational and intergenerational similarities and differences with a transformative purpose, as students themselves were able to acknowledge:

> "(We) learned from each other's experiences and helped to maintain a supportive space in which each woman could express her voice through writing and dialogue .... The flow of our voices allowed us to grow out of a classroom-dynamic and into a family" (Yep, 2014, p. 55).

In this project co-creating a new sense of place (to confront the many forms of displacement that both the adult Asian and the college women had experienced) was assumed to be a goal. All human relationships develop in a space whether physical or virtual. Places are meaningful spaces, more than just a backdrop or a container for actions. Hence, the need to cultivate a shared sense of place among diverse groups and generations if we really want to overcome the perception of diversity as an obstacle for sustainable societies. To this regard, the potential of intergenerational education to create livable places for diverse groups has been documented: examples of lifelong learning and education settings which may be considered *Intergenerational Contact Zones* abound (Brooks, 2016; Kaplan, Thang, Sánchez, & Hoffman, 2016). Actually, the following concept of intergenerational place-based education has been proposed as an approach to connect a diversity of interests in local and other places: "open-ended, ethical, embodied, and situated activity through which places and intergenerational relations are produced and skills, knowledge and values are learned." (Mannion, Adey, & Lynch, 2010, p. 2). The "immersion" model of intergenerational program implemented by The Meadows School Project as described above attests to the objective of pursuing place-based and intense intergenerational education (Carson et al., 2011) as a means to enhance our capacity as lifelong learners.

The EMPOWERMENTTODAY project (Travis & Ausbrooks, 2012) has been developed by two social work educators to enhance the personal and academic success of adolescent male African Americans, whose high school and college graduation, as well as college retention rates are much lower than those for other ethnic groups. Implemented through a school-university collaboration, this initiative to promote positive youth development included intergenerational dialogues: adolescents and adults discussed the *Bring Your "A" Game* film and adults explained how they used some tools presented in the video to achieve personal success. Once this intervention carried out, "youths were able to think more critically about their circumstances and assess their existing strengths and resources with greater precision" (Travis & Ausbrooks, 2012, p. 188).

"It was a good way to become aware that sometimes one must learn to adapt to situations which you never anticipated in your life;" "[intergenerational] encounters were very satisfactory and productive, and they helped us to learn more about other cultures and places in the world." These are words from two 14-year old students attending High School in A Coruña (Northwest Spain) and participating in the "Talk to me about emigration: The value of experience" intergenerational program. Since migration –both emigration and immigration– has become a strong trend in the country, understanding what it is like to leave one's birth place and go to another country for years seems to be a good focal point for enhancing youths' capacity to face diversity. The educational value of this initiative lies in the effective combination of a school-based social sciences curriculum, older emigrants' experiences, and youngsters eager to live in a more diverse and mobile world.

In Ireland a doctoral candidate has focused her research on intergenerational learning as way to activate young children's civic engagement in four Irish Primary Schools (Hanmore-Cawley, 2015). Appreciating diversity was among the themes explored through the qualitative component of this research. Results from language tutoring

activities (in Spanish, French, Italian, and German) delivered by retired language teachers indicated that diversity awareness among students had been increased not only in the classrooms but beyond, through "learning ripples," as an older tutor explains:

> "I see this project…like a stone dropped in a pond…You have the pupil, at the centre…learning a skill/task from the older generation [which]…ripples out to the home…and the children can help them now…In turn, those adults are talking to other people…thinking of their involvement in French…bringing the ripple further out because they are learning about other cultures…other languages…appropriate behavior and how other…cultures manage their systems…and they have new awareness of that. So, from one little classroom…I see that the interaction extends…into the community, and then further into the world." (p. 195).

5.6 Conclusion

We hope this chapter has convincingly made the case that intergenerational strategies for promoting lifelong learning and education not only exist and deserve more attention but also are spreading internationally in number and formats. Today's quest for more sustainable societies involves paying attention to issues like socio-cultural discontinuity, loss of trust, and augmented diversity. These issues require more relational strategies to boost social cohesion, positive interdependence, and a stronger social fabric. We are not just in front of a demographic imperative, but we are confronting to some extent an anthropological change: "we are evolving into a rather different species, inhabiting a new niche and challenged to adapt in new ways" (Bateson, 2010, p. 10). Intergenerational lifelong learning and education strategies are part of the response to these issues, as illustrated throughout the chapter.

Generational interdependency and the view that human beings—approached as learners, educators, and recipients of education—are knots in nets of relationships have been two capital ideas in this chapter to explain how we may be able to promote more sustainability in contemporary society. In this context, learning and education throughout life becomes a cross-generational endeavor; it will only be possible at its full potential if generations collaborate towards an interwoven future as all generations get more and more linked within a growing multi-generational population. We are witnessing a move in that direction; hundreds of intergenerational learning initiatives in non-formal, informal and formal educational settings are being implemented internationally. However, we must increase our degree of intergenerational awareness so that those initiatives can be fully leveraged and profited.

This chapter conveys a clear message to anyone interested in intergenerational lifelong learning and education: making possible for different generations to meet and interact is not enough if we intend to strengthen available opportunities to learn and educate from birth until death. We need to develop an intergenerational lens and sensitivity allowing for powerful and effective planning and implementation of generational encounters and interactions around learning and education. Providing a few relevant principles and cases to the latter task, this chapter has contributed to meet that need.

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