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Intergenerational attitudes and experiences of older adults

**A narrative analysis set within a retirement village participating in
an intergenerational programme (IGP)**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree
of Doctor of Clinical Psychology at Massey University, Albany, New Zealand**

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ABSTRACT

iPlayed is an intergenerational programme (IGP) taking place between residents of a retirement village in Wellington, New Zealand and preschoolers at a childcare facility nearby. IGPs have been designed to address an increasingly age segregated society and have been shown to have multiple benefits for older people, including generativity (a need to nurture and guide younger people). As no research on the IGP experience of older adults exists in New Zealand, this research aimed to not only understand this, from the older adults' perspective, but to also understand their views and experiences of IGPs in general, and about preschool aged children. In-depth interviews were conducted with eighteen retirement village dwelling older adults about their experiences and then analysed using narrative analysis. From the eight identified narratives the iPlayed experience was found to be a brief, life affirming experience and one in which they had to adopt certain roles in order to enhance enjoyment. Beyond this, no deeper meaning was assigned to it. The influence of ageing being a time of contribution back to society was evident, and, for some, iPlayed was positioned within this narrative as an option to accomplish this. iPlayed was also located within the context of a retirement village as a means to reclaim some of the social identity lost through moving to this environment. Deep meaning was ascribed to the role of great grandparent or grandparent and familial generative exchanges were identified as operating indirectly through the parents of the preschoolers and not via an exchange of cultural artefacts, wisdom or knowledge with the young child. With non-kin children, the traditional direction of generativity was challenged, with older adults implying that the younger person's knowledge of modern technologies was of more benefit to them compared to what they had to offer. Participants identified that, in general, interacting with preschool aged children is stimulating and beneficial, but is not for all older people. In its current design iPlayed was queried, by those not participating in it, for how this might be impacting on its ability to provide an

opportunity for older people to be generative or even as a means for people to contribute to the community they live within.

These findings recognise a different social milieu in operation today, the experience of ageing in New Zealand and how intergenerational exchange fits within this. Set amongst the powerful social narrative to age ‘successfully’ active today, this research has identified that IGPs can carry out an important role within this structuring force. Building on from this study, researchers should aim to further understand the views and perceptions of older people on younger people which will, in turn, help policymakers and IGP developers harness the best of what both young and old have to offer each other. Finally, for those working in the IGP field, the concept of generativity between non-kin older people and preschoolers needs further exploration.

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