



Elders Connecting to Young People Through Singing: Evidence of Generativity in an Intergenerational Program

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Advancing Interdisciplinary Research in Singing (AIRS)
funded by Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
Major Collaboration Research Initiative



Intergenerational Programs

Intergenerational (IG) programs are built on the assumption that human development is a life-long process and that important opportunities for promoting engagement and well-being are created when young and old interact (Desouza, 2007).

Intergenerational Programs

Key Characteristics of IG Singing Programs:

- **Beneficial**
- **Meaningful**
- **On-going**
- **Serving the community**
- **Learning opportunities**
- **Relationship building**
- **Communication**
- **Identity options**
- **Equal group status**

(e.g., Friedman, 1997; Jarrott, 2007; Heydon, 2007)

Intergenerational Singing Programs

Characteristics of IG Programs:

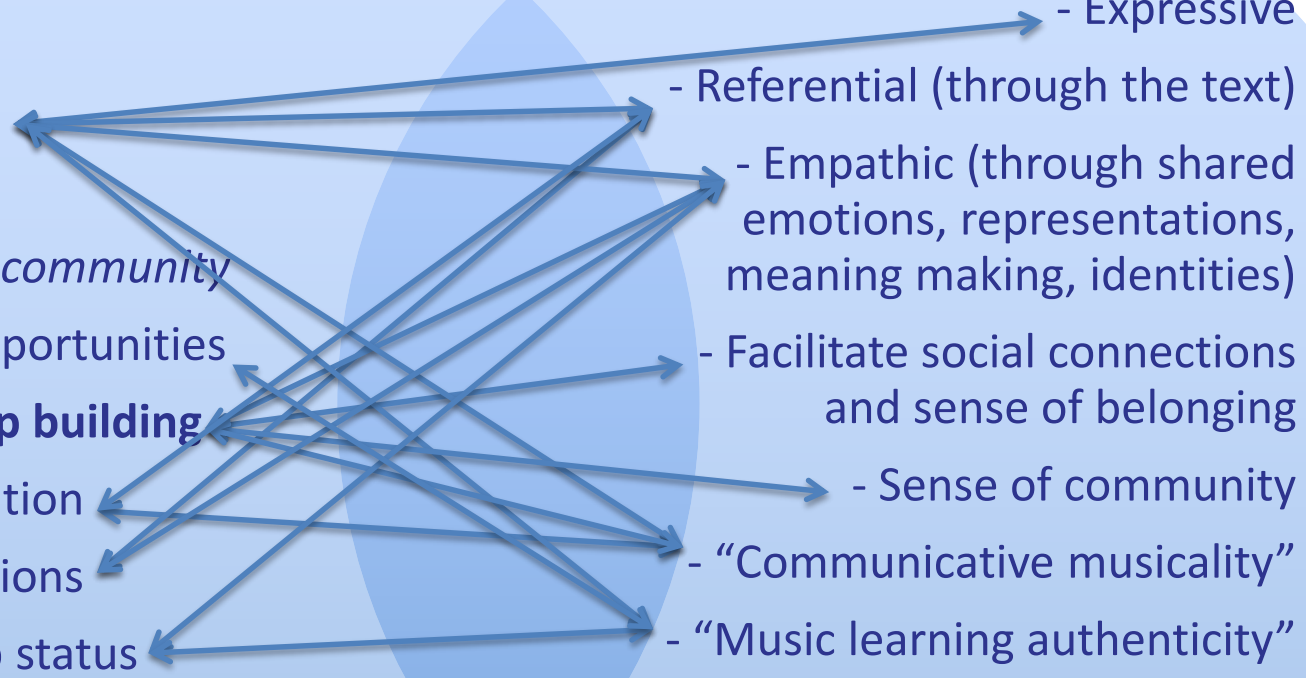
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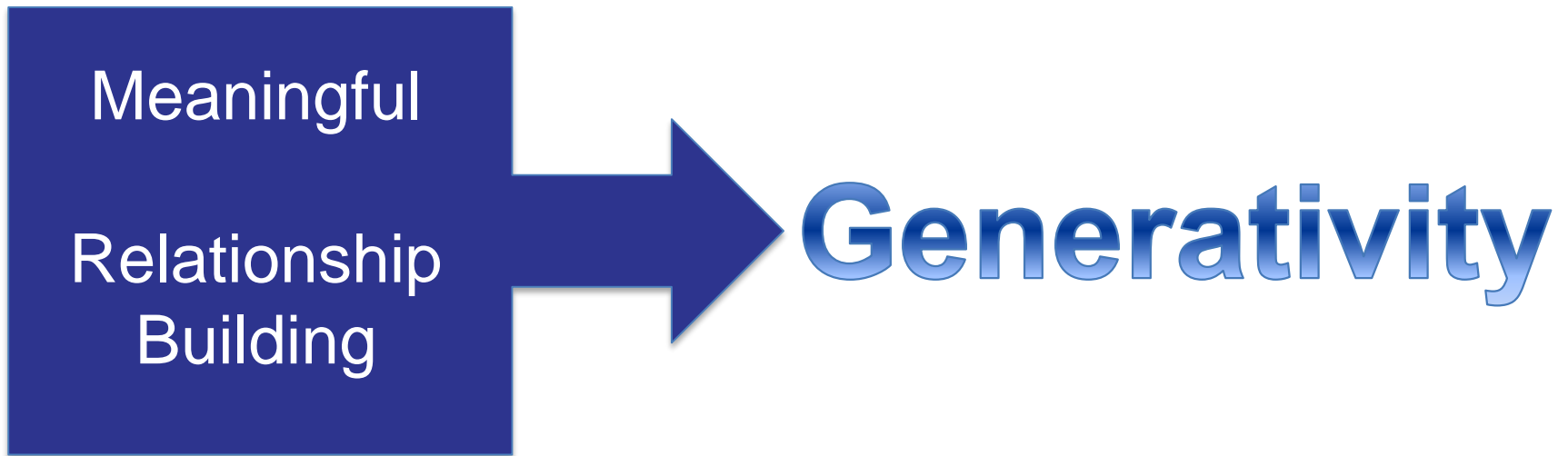
(e.g., Friedman, 1997; Jarrott, 2007; Heydon, 2007)

Characteristics of Shared Singing:

- Expressive
- Referential (through the text)
- Empathic (through shared emotions, representations, meaning making, identities)
- Facilitate social connections and sense of belonging
- Sense of community
- “Communicative musicality”
- “Music learning authenticity”

(Green, 2005; Malloch, 1999; MacDonald & Miell, 2002; Welch, 2005)

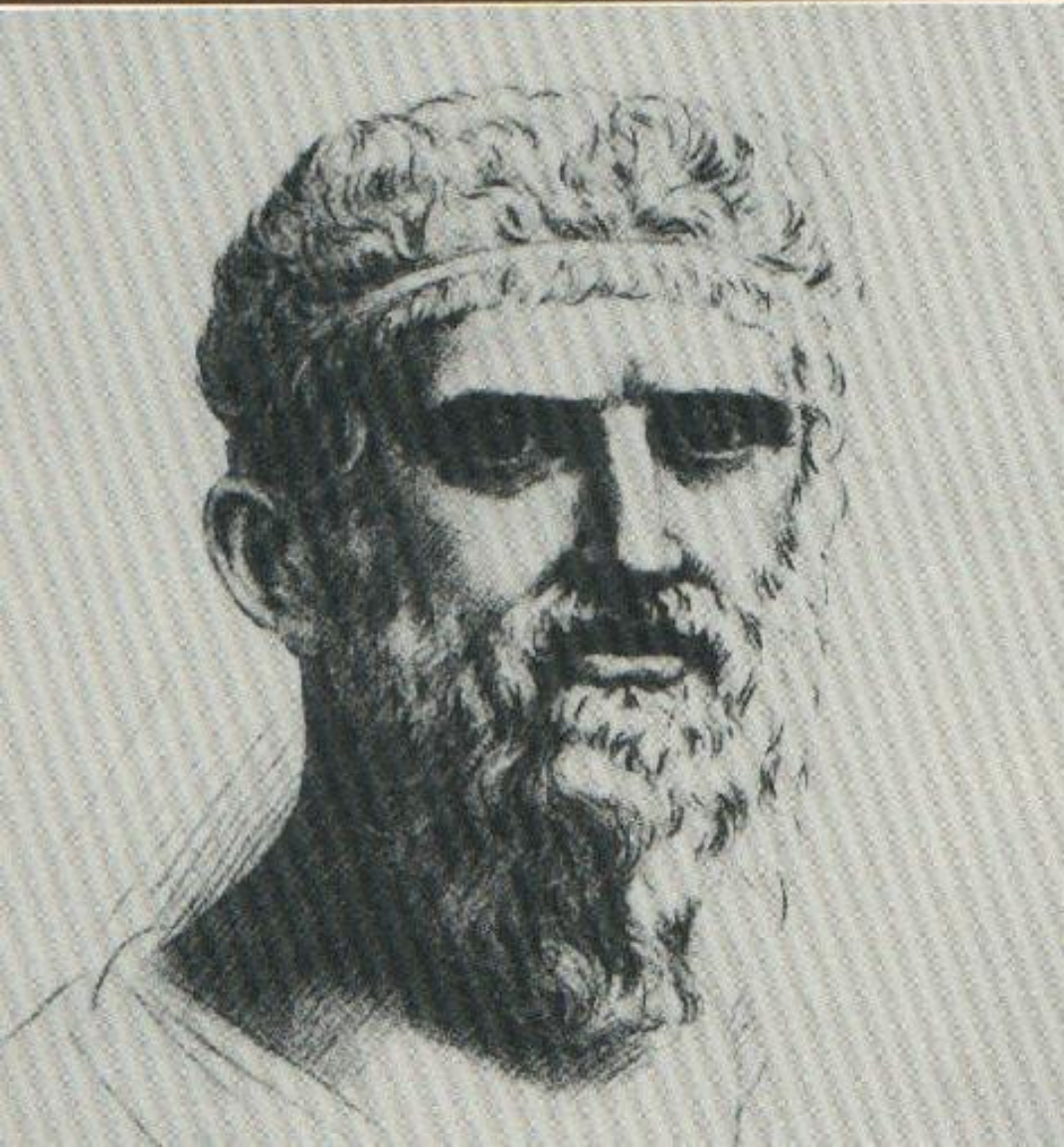




Generativity refers to an older adult's concern for and commitment to the learning and well-being of the next generation (McAdams, 1992).

Although generativity is about helping young people, it has been found to be beneficial to the health and well-being of older adults.

PLATO



Immortality and
the externalization
of the self

“Plato’s
unrecognized
theory of
generativity”

Wakefield (1988)

Generativity

Erik Erikson introduced the concept of generativity in the context of a life-span theory of personality/identity development.

“...primarily the concern in establishing and guiding the next generation.”

(1963, p. 267)



Generativity and Adult Development

How and Why We Care for the Next Generation



Edited by

Dan P. McAdams and Ed de St. Aubin

Generativity is “the adult’s concern for and commitment to the next generation, as expressed through parenting, teaching, mentoring, leadership, and a host of other activities that aim to leave a positive legacy of the self for the future” (McAdams, 1998, p. 4).

Generativity

“...the single strongest and most consistent predictor of many dimensions of socially responsible behaviour, including volunteerism and contributing one’s time and one’s money to family members and to community concerns.”

(Rossi et al., 2001 as cited by McAdams and Logan, 2004, p. 23)

Generativity and Well-Being

Higher levels of generativity in older adults (aged 67-72) are related to higher independent self-report measures of:

- nurturance
- empathy
- affiliation
- achievement
- life satisfaction

(Gugot et al, 1991; McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992; de St. Aubin & McAdams, 1995; Nestor, 1989).

Generativity

Although recognizing that life circumstances may preclude generative actions which in turn may be influenced by socio-demographic characteristics, Graussbaum and Bates (2002) found no association between generative behaviour and

- gender
- education level
- employment
- marital status

Generativity

In sum, as initially suggested by Erikson (1965), “generativity plays out beyond the private domain of family and is expressed at a societal level in the public sphere as social responsibility, in the sense that it contributes to the sustainability of society”.

Generativity

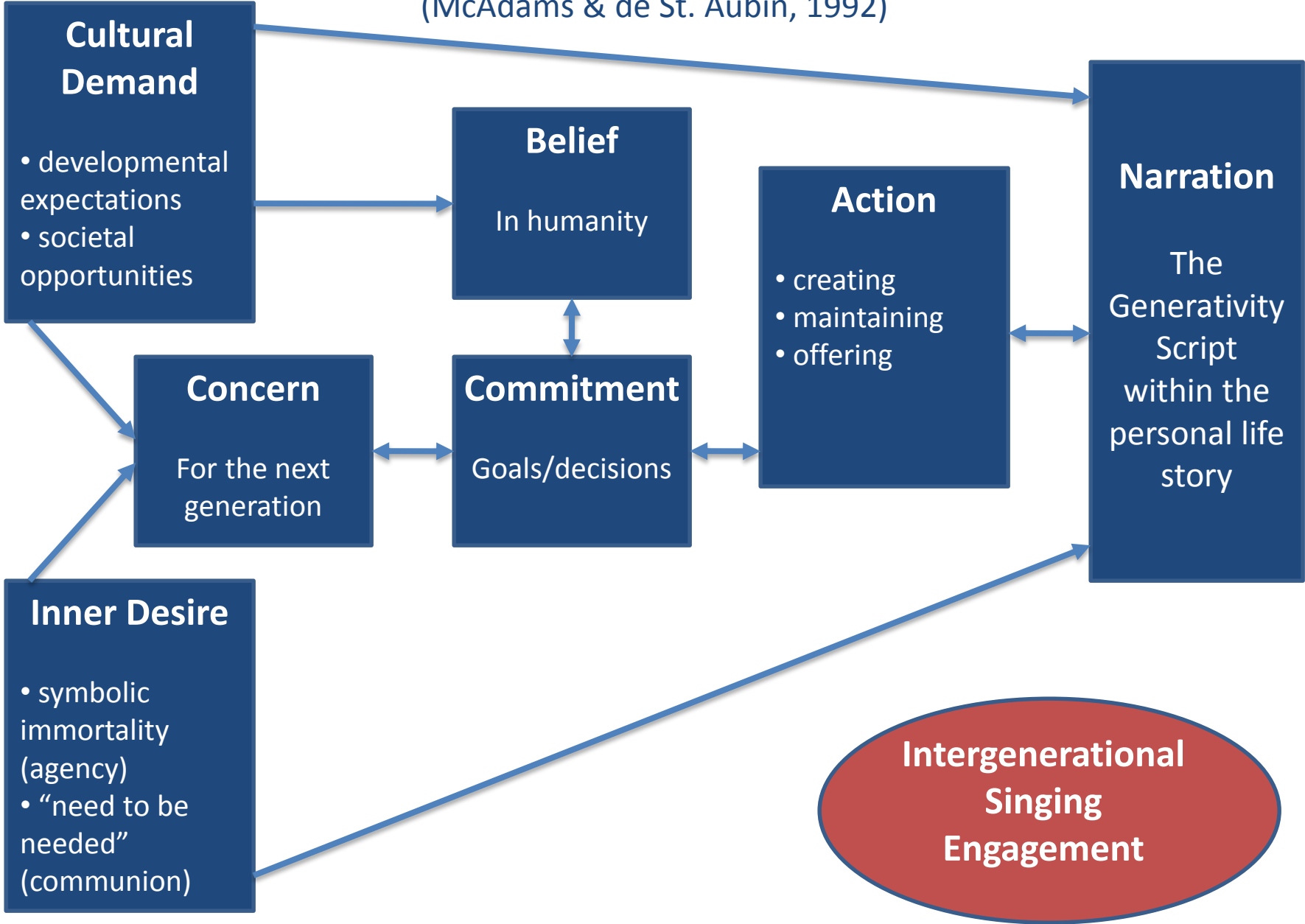
Manheimer (2004, p. 121) argues that society must provide “avenues for bringing young and old together in cooperative learning ventures”.

Generativity

Generativity connects past, present, and future as traditions and rituals are maintained and recreated in attempts to benefit future generations. (St. Aubin, McAdams, Kim, 2004, p.11).

Theory of Generativity

(McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992)



Mapping Intergenerational Singing Engagement within a Generativity Framework

Self-report and behavioural measures, and “life story narratives” involving 5 main areas:

1. **Creating** – creating a new song or way of singing together; linking song to identity, emotion or life experience aimed at shared/mutual understandings
2. **Maintaining** – putting forth effort to sustain singing activities and traditions
3. **Helping & Offering** – offering help, assistance, guidance, mentorship, etc. to another when singing
4. **Intergenerational Involvement** – becoming meaningfully involved in singing with member(s) of the other generation
5. **Symbolic Immortality** – expresses concern or interest in becoming involved with singing as a way of contributing to and passing on to the next generation

Generativity and Intergenerational Singing Engagement

Research Questions

1. To what extent is intergenerational singing associated with increases in levels of singing engagement among young/older participants both initially and over a longer period of time?
2. To what extent is intergenerational singing engagement a mediator/moderator of generativity in older adults?
3. What patterns of relationships are found between measures of intergenerational singing engagement, generativity and well-being?
4. How do older adults relate intergenerational singing to their own life histories (past and future scripts)?

Programs and Participants

- Existing “Music Together” IG Singing Program (Vancouver)
– 10 weeks, senior residential care facility with preschool children
- Developed multimodal IG Singing Program (London)
– 8 weeks, shared site with residential care and kindergarten aged children
- Developed IG Singing Program (Chatham) – 8 weeks, residential care with school aged children
- Developed multimodal and digital media IG Singing Program (Zurich)
– 5 months (bi-weekly), community elders meeting at a seniors “rest home” with kindergarten aged children from local school

Preliminary Findings

Older adults who valued singing more (believed it is important), had enjoyed singing in the past and were interested in singing derived:

- a sense of purpose or meaning and fulfillment from singing
- greater sense of well-being from participating in the program
- greater characteristics of generativity

Findings

Most prominent characteristics of generativity displayed or described by the older adults were:

Maintaining: putting forth the effort to sustain singing activities and traditions

Helping & Offering: offering help, assistance, guidance, mentorship, etc. to children when singing

Symbolic Immortality: expressing concern or interest in becoming involved with singing as a way of contributing to and passing on to the next generation

Findings

Suggests that attention in program development needs to focus on enhancing other characteristics of generativity:

Creating: creating a new song or way of singing together; linking song to identity, emotion or life experience aimed at shared/mutual understandings

Intergenerational Involvement: becoming meaningfully involved in singing with the children

In developing our IG singing programs, we focus on multimodal learning, connection, and communication, with the aim of enhancing and expanding learning opportunities and meaningful engagement, to foster all five characteristics of generativity.



Joe: “There is something about singing in general that you can learn. Even from memory. If [the residents] sing, the children can learn something.”