Across the chasm?

Towards intergenerational empathy & solidarity on climate change

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Background

- Climate change a cultural phenomenon (Hulme, 2009)
- Relations at the heart of society (Donati & Archer, 2015)
- Generations as a shared consciousness (Connolly, 2019)
- Generational tensions and shame (Connolly, 2019)
- Climate change and individual morality (Jamieson, 2020)

Sources:
A chasm between generations?

- Youth: innocence, vulnerability, inheriting the issue - alarmist, apathetic, narcissistic - or heroic protagonists (Jones et al, 2023)
- Older generations as contributing to climate change (Ayalon & Roy, 2023)
- Millennial-Boomer animosity (Francioli et al, 2023)

Sources:
Perhaps it’s more nuanced

- Youth with mixed concern for climate (Sciberras & Fernando, 2022)
- Age less of a factor in climate attitudes & behaviours (Milfont et al, 2021)
- Generational sustainability attitudes and behaviours cultural, economic, practical (Khorana, 2024)
- Over-simplification and misuse of discourse (Meyer & Sokolíčková, 2024)

Sources:
Stereotypes, ageism, and fractured relations

- Stereotypes reinforce age-related prejudice for all age groups e.g. (Francioli & North, 2021)
- Perceived moral or competence failure (Fiske, 1998)
- Prejudice supports ‘lesser humanness’ (Karantzas et al, 2023)
- Intergenerational ambivalence, psychological distance, & reduced agency to action

Sources:
Towards intergenerational solidarity

- Solidarity as mechanical or organic (Gofman, 2014)
- Organic solidarity as ‘empathic solidarity’ (Thijssen, 2012)
- Interpersonal empathy supports humanization across cultural differences (Wiltshire, 2023)
- Understanding everyday lived experiences (Collins, 2005)

Sources:
Recommendation 1: Research

- Qualitative research with people across a diverse range of cultural perspectives
- Specific studies on popular characterisations of intergenerational and other groups in relation to climate change
- Seek to understand how people perceive others
- Focus on understanding relations between people – especially across generations
Recommendation 2: Social initiatives

- Personal stories and cultural narratives to dissipate generational categories, overcome stereotypes, and change perceptions on climate change
- Give voice to share real lived experiences
- Empathy-related toolkit for families and communities
- In-person relations e.g. university programs to partner students with their communities