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世代間問題

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Intergenerational Problems

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多くの世代間問題は様々な年齢層の間における交流の欠如に起因し、今日の社会では、実際にこれら多くのギャップが引き起こされている。年齢層で分断された学校システム、特に日本では家族の規模が縮小し、拡大家族が一緒に生活することがますます少なくなっている現実が、今日存在する交流縮小の主要な一因となっている。今、世界の各地で世代間交流のニーズに基づいて促進されている、多くのプログラムを把握することが奨励される。加えて西洋の古典にあたる聖書には、世代間参加・交流に関連した恩恵についての多くの実例が書かれていることに注目する必要がある。

My opinion is that most intergenerational problems stem from the lack of interaction between the various age groups and that our society in general today has actually caused many of these gaps. The family size growing smaller, age-segregated school systems, less and less extended families living together (especially in Japan), have all contributed to the level of interaction that exists today. It is encouraging to see many programs now being encouraged to create this need for intergenerational interaction.

There has been a strong movement in recent years to introduce more intergenerational programs into society as a whole. Society seems to have created gaps between the generations that need mending to insure the health of its members. Intergenerational problems stem from many areas but our society, as it is structured today, has actually caused many of these. One of the most obvious areas is in the area of the standard school systems of the world today. Children from a very early age are separated from others into age-segregated groups to spend most of the day. This extends from nursery school all the way through the university level. The child only deals with other children of his/her own age and there is little room for

interaction between age groups. Especially in the junior high and senior high school level there is so much concentrated time with only their peer group that it almost excludes all other age-groups from their little "world". There does seem to be an effort made to inter-relate these different age groups and also exposing them a few times a year to nursing home residents or nursery schools but this is not nearly enough to be truly beneficial.

One of the major areas that have a lack in this system is that the older student does not teach, encourage, or challenge the younger student. In the past in a one-room school with all levels of ages, the older ones often helped the younger ones to understand their lessons. These types of intergenerational activities have been lost in the large grade-separated schools. The challenge to understand what the older students could do spurred the younger ones to be motivated to higher levels. This also gave the younger students greater satisfaction in being able to progress in their education. The admiration (of the younger students) of those that had achieved higher levels of understanding caused a respect for the elder student, which led them to seek them for advice. The older, much wiser student (adult) was thus respected and honored. This level of respect and honor has largely been lost in our present system.

Another large area of concern is the breakdown of the family unit. Not only has the extended family unit been spread apart by work location, the immediate family unit has also been broken apart by our systems. The work place has demanded more time of the father and/or mother than in the past and the present school systems (especially in Japan) have also added to the lack of family time. Very few families are able to eat their meals together as a family, a habit that was considered normal in the past. It was at the table that many discussions were had that stretched the younger members knowledge and included them in the everyday problems of the family and the world around them. The adult members were able to show their knowledge of things around them and gained respect from the younger members as challenges were met.

The size of the average family unit has also added to the lack of inter-activity of the younger members of society. In the past it was not unusual for a family to have five or six children who all helped each other and learned to respect the abilities and handicaps of each one.

Learning to honor another's different opinion or way of doing something added to the understanding of each member. All of these things contributed to society as a whole. Whereas today many families are only having two or sometimes only one child, causing these children to have possible difficulties with interaction among peers and others as well. In the past there

would have been a larger extended family of various ages that would also have contributed to the learning processes of all of the members.

The habitual gatherings of extended family and neighbors that was a regular feature of years gone by has been exchanged for the most part with peer oriented activities (regardless of age). In the past in most parts of Europe and the United States, the family usually spent time every week at some sort of religious activity. In these neighborhood gatherings there would have been all ages represented and activities would have been created with all ages taken into account. Many of the non-religious community activities would also have been planned around the different ages. Some of these activities included county fairs, barn dances, and other community festivals. Some of these activities still exist today and are enjoyed for the same reasons as in the past.

The Bible has many examples of the benefits of intergenerational participation. It teaches that the older women should teach the younger women to love their husbands and to love their children. The older men are to be dignified and sensible so that the younger men will follow their example. Parents are to discipline their children. This would include training and teaching them how to act and what skills are needed to succeed in life. All of these include intergenerational cooperation.

Grandparents should be influential in the lives of their grandchildren, but not only in gift giving. There should be the passing on of qualities that are beneficial to society. Although this is accomplished easier if the grandparent is in the same house much can be transmitted even from long distance. The Bible teaches that a "man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife". This system encourages a separate family unit that comprises of a father, a mother, and children. But the Bible is also strong on respecting the elder and learning from them.

The experiences of the elder can be a storehouse of information and admonition to the younger. In the Bible it tells of the Israelites making large piles of stones to commemorate great achievements or events. The reason for this was that as their children would ask them in years to come what the stones were there for, the parent could tell of the great wonders that happened that day and teach the younger the values of their family. Often the telling would pass on to the grandparent as the actual witness. When eyewitnesses die off we need to depend on only hear-say which is not nearly as accurate as the original viewer's account. As the younger ones learned from the older ones, much knowledge and values and wisdom about the world was passed on from generation to generation. All of these activities preclude that the

younger ones will ask questions of the older ones. This cannot take place unless the various members are interacting together. The grandparents although separated by living quarters still need to be a vital part of the family.

There is a concerted effort today to bring back this kind of interaction between the generations so that each can contribute to the welfare of the other. As elder members of society have more time to devote to hobbies much can be taught to the younger generations through their expertise and experience. In this way the respect level of the elderly returns to the younger who may have viewed them as incompetent and fragile. It is encouraging to see the many avenues that are being made available to the public for these kinds of intergenerational activities. Lifelong learning also helps to encourage each generation to add to its knowledge and gain from all levels of society. There are many programs available today to encourage this kind of interaction between generations. It would seem that the immediate family circle would be the best place to start but as families are separated by various situations, participating in regional programs seems to be the next best answer. Allowing time for these kinds of activities will further enhance the interaction of the different age groups.

As more people participate in these activities more will enjoy the benefits of each other's strengths and weaknesses.

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