

## Chapter

# Knowledge of Intergenerational Contact to Combat Ageism towards Older People

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## Abstract

Among the multi-dimensional social aspects of aging, intergenerational contacts and relationships between older and younger people will be the focus of this chapter. Underpinned by a study that sought to address and reduce ageism, this chapter discusses the respective roles of direct and indirect intergenerational contacts and their associations with the attitude and prosocial behavior of younger people towards older people. This chapter aims to provide initial evidence about the related processes, mechanisms and relationships involving the older individuals and young people in our society. Valuable insights and synergistic efforts will be provided in how the governments, schools, private and community groups, and the media will all have an integral part to play in applying the knowledge of intergenerational contact to combat ageism towards older people. Future research is needed to better integrate the processes, mechanisms and changing relationships between generations to serve the aging population of Hong Kong.

**Keywords:** ageism, attitude, intergenerational contact and communication, older people, prosocial behavior

## 1. Introduction

Accelerated aging of the population is leading to a situation in which older people will become the largest proportion of the total population in society. Ageism, which is defined as stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination based on chronological age [1], has become a pressing issue resulting in an increase in research attention across the globe. Existing literature has shown that a prejudicial attitude is a significantly strong predictor of perceived and actual discriminatory behavior directed towards older people [2, 3]. The World Health Organization Global Report on Ageism, World Health Organization (WHO), pointed out that one in two people perceive discrimination against older people in younger people have age discrimination than other age groups [4]. Intergenerational contact, which has expanded from familial to nonfamilial relationships between older and younger people, was seen as an effective way to combat ageism. Generally, intergenerational contact includes direct and indirect forms. Direct intergenerational contact is usually described as face-to-face intergenerational contact between older and younger people. Indirect intergenerational contact is

defined as younger people's contact exposure to older people that does not involve an actual interaction or a direct relationship [5, 6].

The trends of research into intergenerational contact and research on attitude and prosocial behavior towards older people were examined. Most of the studies investigated factors affecting attitude towards older people, and the findings consistently reported that face-to-face intergenerational contact was associated with positive outcomes for attitudes towards older people [2, 7–12]. These studies, however, neglected to examine factors contributing to positive, face-to-face intergenerational contact. In the research into indirect intergenerational contact, only a few studies were found to investigate the relationships between indirect contact, attitudes, and prosocial behavior in the intergenerational context [10, 13, 14]. Yet, the findings were generally inconsistent. There was also scant research examining the interactions of different types of intergenerational contact and their impacts on attitudes and prosocial behavior towards older people. As a result, the mechanisms by which direct and indirect intergenerational contact influenced attitude and prosocial behavior towards older people were not comprehensively described in the existing literature.

Our understanding of factors affecting the quality of intergenerational contact, the relative importance of different intergenerational contact, and how they interrelate was hampered by the lack of a coherent approach to research in this area. To address this, this chapter discusses the roles of direct and indirect intergenerational contacts in reducing ageism. First, the author discusses theoretical approaches underlining intergenerational contact. Second, the author reports a recently completed study that investigated factors contributing to the quality of intergenerational contact, and the roles of direct and indirect intergenerational contacts in promoting young people's attitudes and prosocial behavior towards older people. Lastly, the discussion includes recommendations for policies and intergenerational strategies to reduce ageism.

## **2. Theoretical approaches to intergenerational contact**

As applied to this study, intergenerational contact is defined as the intergroup contact between older and younger people. There are two primary types of intergenerational contact: direct and indirect intergenerational contact.

### **2.1 Direct intergenerational contact**

Direct intergenerational contact, also known as face-to-face intergenerational contact, occurs in various forms including contact within a family relationship, friendship or working relationship. It can also take place in intergenerational programmes supported by authorities [6, 15]. Allport's Intergroup Contact Theory [16] explains the psychological process of contact between people from different social groups causing an in-group person to reduce prejudice against an out-group. It has been used extensively to study intergroup contact. According to Allport's theory, four conditions are essential for positive, direct intergroup contact. When face-to-face intergroup contact demonstrates an equal status, shares a common goal, maintains a cooperative interaction and is supported by institutions or authorities, such contact results in reduced prejudice and discriminatory behavior against outgroup members.

Social Presence Theory [17] emphasizes the importance of an interpersonal dimension that plays in face-to-face intergroup contact. It predicates that

communication media influences people's impressions of and responses to others which is essential in developing or maintaining social interaction. According to the theory, the level of richness of communication media affects that of social presence. The medium that promotes communication, simultaneous feedback, and a rich exchange of ideas and information results in a higher level of social presence leading to a positive face-to-face contact [18]. In other words, intergenerational communication media, which includes face-to-face contact, telephone conversation and written and text-based media, is considered the antecedents of the face-to-face intergenerational contact quality.

In the existing literature, face-to-face intergenerational contact was often assessed, in terms of frequency or quality, by self-reports. For frequency of contact, young people were asked to indicate how often they had face-to-face contact with older people. Quality of contact was assessed by young people's self-reported quality of face-to-face contact with an older person(s). Previous studies that measured both frequency and quality of contact consistently found that the quality rather than the frequency of face-to-face intergenerational contact was associated with significantly better attitudes among younger people towards older people [8–10].

## **2.2 Indirect intergenerational contact**

There are two major forms of indirect intergenerational contact. Extended intergenerational contact forms when a younger person knows a friend who has a positive relationship with an older person [19, 20]. It suggests that a younger person does not necessarily meet an older individual to gain a positive perception of older people. Knowledge about a friend's positive intergenerational contact with an older individual is enough for building a positive attitude or prosocial behavior towards older people. The rationale behind extended intergenerational contact can be explained by Balance Theory [19]. The theory assumes that people aim to maintain balanced human relationships and seek ways to resolve the imbalance when it happens. An imbalanced human relationship occurs when there is a positive relationship between the individual and the ingroup friend, and between the ingroup and the outgroup friend, but a negative relationship between the individual and the outgroup. As a result, to maintain harmonious human relationships, individuals try to improve their attitude towards the out-group. Applied to this paper, when a younger person receives extended intergenerational contact by learning about a positive relationship between his or her friend and an older individual, the younger person tends to gain a positive attitude towards older people. Previous studies assessed extended intergenerational contact by asking young people to indicate how many of their close friends had a positive relationship with older person(s). The more friends have a positive relationship with an older individual that a younger person recognized, the more extended intergenerational contact would be experienced by him or her.

Another form of indirect intergenerational contact is called vicarious intergenerational contact. It occurs when a younger person observes a younger person, a member of the same social group, having positive, intergroup contact with an older individual [6]. Theoretically, this contact involves a process of observational learning and abstract modeling. Through observational learning, a younger person observes others and receives information about social norms of an intergenerational contact between older and younger people. Further, a younger person is facilitated to behave similarly to those being observed. Abstract modeling takes place when an individual applies attitudes and behaviors learned from the observation of others to similar

contexts involving older and younger people [20]. Vicarious intergenerational contact can be depicted in various forms of media containing a story about an intergenerational interaction that is described by words or images and takes forms such as books, newspapers, television, radio programmes and social media.

General Learning Model, developed by Buckley and Anderson [21], is the primary psychological theory of learning used to explain the effect of media on prosocial behavior. It shares a similar theoretical mechanism with that of vicarious intergenerational contact. Like the mechanism of General Learning Model that emphasizes the influence of observation that fosters a learning counter, vicarious intergroup contact creates a vicarious learning encounter through the observation of a successful intergroup interaction and thus observers model their thoughts or behaviors based on these observations [22]. In addition, both General Learning Model and vicarious intergenerational contact influence the individual's behavior towards strangers, rather than towards family members or friends. In other words, older and younger people do not have a genuine relationship in vicarious intergenerational contact. When General Learning Model is applied to this paper, a younger person who observes a character, who positively interacts with an older individual in a media outlet such as television or printed material, the younger person will be more likely to develop similar thoughts and attitudes and to engage in similar behaviors towards older people in an authentic environment. To assess young people's exposure to vicarious intergenerational contact depicted in the media, participants in previous studies were asked to indicate, in terms of frequency, how often they had seen any positive interaction between older and younger people via different occasions. A higher frequency meant more vicarious intergenerational contact received by younger people.

### **3. Study**

A recently completed study by the author provides new evidence about the effects of direct and indirect intergenerational contact on young people's attitudes, prosocial intentions and prosocial behaviors towards older people. A cross-sectional study of 467 young Chinese people aged between 15 and 24 years was conducted in Hong Kong in 2020. Participants responded to an online questionnaire regarding their experiences of intergenerational contact with older people, as well as their perceived attitude, prosocial intention and prosocial behavior towards older people. In particular, the study addressed two research questions:

- what were the factors contributing to the quality of intergenerational contact from the perspectives of younger people?
- what were the respective roles of face-to-face, extended and vicarious intergenerational contact in influencing young people's attitudes and prosocial behavior towards older people?

Several dependent variables were measured. Kogan's Attitude towards older people scale [23] was used to assess participants' perceived attitude towards older people. The potential total score ranged from 34 to 238, with a higher score indicating a more positive attitude towards older people. Perceived prosocial intention towards older people was assessed by the Hong Kong version of the Prosocial Tendencies Measure [24] and the total score was derived as the summation of all the item scores which

ranged from 24 to 120. A higher score implied more prosocial behavioral intentions. In addition, a context-specific, five-statement prosocial intention scale that was originally developed by Bousfield and Hutchison [8] was used. The total prosocial intention score ranged from 5 to 25 with a higher score representing more prosocial intention towards older people. Modified from existing research [8, 25], the measurement for prosocial behavior included five situations involving older people. Young people were asked to indicate how often they exhibited prosocial behaviors towards older people on a five-point scale ranging from 'never' to 'always' in the five situations. The overall prosocial behavior score was derived as the summation of all the item scores that ranged from 4 to 20. A higher score implied more prosocial behavior towards older people.

### **3.1 Factors contributing to quality of intergenerational contact**

Based on Allport's Intergroup Contact Theory [16], the conditions for facilitating quality intergenerational contact should include equal status, intergroup cooperation, shared goals and institutional support. As existing literature that tested the associations between these conditions and the quality of intergenerational contact was limited, the study attempted to investigate these associations. Younger people in the study were asked to indicate their perceptions of equal intergenerational status, intergenerational cooperation and shared goals during their face-to-face contact with older people. The results showed that younger people who perceived higher levels of equal status in face-to-face intergenerational contact were more likely to report a higher quality of face-to-face contact with older people. The study also examined the types of intergenerational communication media that were associated with young people's perception of the quality of face-to-face intergenerational contact. Younger people in the study estimated how often they had used each of three media categories of phone contact, social-networking platforms (e.g. WhatsApp), and paper-based media (e.g. letters) to communicate with older people. The results showed that phone contact was the most significant factor associated with better quality of face-to-face intergenerational contact while social-networking platforms and paper-based media were not. Younger people who had more phone contact with older people, they were more likely to report a higher quality of face-to-face contact with older people. The full results of the study have been reported in [26].

### **3.2 Roles of direct and indirect intergenerational contact in influencing attitude and prosocial behavior towards older people**

Before analyses were conducted to test whether face-to-face, extended and vicarious intergenerational contact significantly contributed independently to a positive attitude towards older people, the study tested the relationship between attitude, prosocial intention and prosocial behavior towards older people and the results confirmed that prosocial intention mediated the relationship between attitude and prosocial behavior towards older people. Therefore, when young people displayed a positive attitude towards older people, they were more likely to engage in prosocial intention and further, prosocial behavior towards older people.

Regarding the roles of different types of intergenerational contact, the present study showed that the quality of face-to-face intergenerational contact was the strongest contribution to attitude towards older people, followed by vicarious intergenerational contact in the complete sample. However, extended intergenerational contact

was not significantly associated with attitude towards older people in the complete sample. Further, the results demonstrated that the strengths of direct and indirect contact relationships differed in people having high and low levels of face-to-face contact frequency. For young people having more face-to-face contact with older people, quality of face-to-face intergenerational contact and vicarious intergenerational contact were significantly associated with a better attitude towards older people, with quality of face-to-face contact being the strongest correlate. For young people having less or absent face-to-face contact with older people, vicarious intergenerational contact became the strongest contribution to a positive attitude towards older people, followed by face-to-face intergenerational contact and extended intergenerational contact. Details of the study results were published elsewhere [27].

## **4. Theoretical implications**

### **4.1 Intergenerational engagement in face-to-face contact**

Young Chinese people in this study had a strong desire for equal intergenerational status in face-to-face contact with older people, while they had relatively less concern about intergroup cooperation and shared goals. The findings affirm that cultural principles play an important role in intergenerational relationships. In Chinese societies, the traditional values of filial piety have empowered older people to engage in a hierarchically intergenerational relationship with younger people characterized as engaging in non-accommodative behaviors and communicating in an inappropriate manner, such as talking down to young people, providing unsolicited advice and negatively stereotyping young people. Therefore, young Chinese people may perceive an unequal status in face-to-face intergenerational contact and describe older people as non-listening, complaining, disapproving, over-parenting and bossy [28]. There is evidence of young people who perceived older people as unaccommodating and displaying a negative attitude towards older people [29]. Therefore, the typical expression of age-based norm of filial piety in Chinese culture may explain the results of the study in that young Hong Kong Chinese who recognized equal status in their face-to-face contact with older people perceived this contact as higher in quality.

### **4.2 Intergenerational communication media**

Nowadays, social-networking platforms have become the most frequent communication medium which is regarded as a replacement for traditional communications among younger people. From the perspectives of older people, however, telephone remains the preferred medium to stay in contact with others. On the one hand, compared to younger people, older people are slow to accept and adapt to technology as they have relatively lower Internet self-efficacy in terms of perceived ease of use, perceived quality and accessibility of technology. They generally lack confidence and are less inclined towards new communication technologies. Thus, they have lower behavioral intentions towards technology [30, 31]. On the other hand, existing literature demonstrates that older people value deeper and more thoughtful communication via phone [32, 33]. Compared to social-networking platforms, phone contact produces a higher level of social presence which is essential for developing or maintaining social interaction. It is obvious that the use of communication media by young people to maintain relationships with older people is likely to manifest in different ways. The findings of the

study suggested that young people who were willing to communicate via the medium preferred by older people (i.e. by phone) reported a better quality of face-to-face contact with older people compared to those who used other communication media.

### **4.3 Strengths of direct and indirect intergenerational contact**

Of all hypothesized factors, quality of face-to-face contact had the strongest association with a positive attitude towards older people. As in the present study, most intergenerational contacts stemmed from family relations, we could hypothesize that frequent face-to-face contact with an older family member was not positively linked to attitude towards older people from the perspective of young Hong Kong Chinese. The present findings reflect that the cultural norm of intergenerational solidarity, which is associated with intergenerational closeness and contact, is weakening in Hong Kong Chinese societies. Traditionally, intergenerational closeness and contact are not exclusive, but have interacting effects, in Chinese families [34, 35]. However, the actualization of intergenerational solidarity has been challenged in Chinese societies. Young Chinese people have become more influenced by the Western culture of individualism focusing on independence, self-reliance and self-fulfillment, which contradicted the traditional norm of authoritarian filial piety in Chinese culture [36]. From the perspective of young people, older people belong to a different generation and have quite different living circumstances, interests and beliefs. Consequently, contact experiences are not always positive in Chinese multigenerational families [37, 38]. It is therefore not surprising that the present study found no relationship between frequency of intergenerational contact and attitude towards older people in the Chinese context. These findings are in line with a recent study showing that intergenerational co-residence is not significantly linked to a higher quality of life for Chinese older people [39]. The transformation of family intergenerational contact suggests the need to look beyond traditional models to understand family intergenerational relationships in the changing contexts of Chinese societies.

The study proved that indirect intergenerational contact was a significant correlate of positive attitude towards older people, but it had a weaker effect than direct contact. While 91% of younger people in the study had face-to-face contact with older people, one plausible explanation was that young people having positive face-to-face contact already had a positive attitude towards older people. Hence, their attitude towards older people was not influenced further by indirect contact. Additionally, scholars suggested that people depended on direct, rather than indirect, contact to determine their attitude towards outgroup people [19]. As a result, when there was face-to-face intergenerational contact, indirect intergenerational contact produced little added effects on attitude towards older people.

This was the first study to prove that vicarious intergenerational contact was the strongest contribution to a positive attitude towards older people when young people's face-to-face contact frequency with older people was low. In other words, vicarious intergenerational contact could positively promote young people's perceived attitude and prosocial behavior towards older people. Findings shed light on linking media, depicting vicarious contact to attitude and prosocial behavior in the intergenerational context that has reinforced the power of communication media in reducing ageism. Yet, the existing literature consistently shows that older people remain negatively represented in the media. Since media portrayal reflects a society's values and culture, negative media portrayal could be an indicator of the general negative perception of older people within a society. Younger people's negative perception of older people

and their relation of older people to physical limitations are partly due to the negative media portrayals of older people [40]. Particularly, Prieler et al. [41] assert that the public perception of older people is negative in east asian countries and communities, as evidenced in visual media. They analyzed television advertisements from Hong Kong, Japan, and South Korea to determine their representations of older people in terms of numerical representations, roles, social interactions, settings and product categories. The analyses showed that older people were underrepresented in television advertisements. Although the author's study has confirmed that media-based vicarious intergenerational contact can positively influence younger people's attitude and prosocial behavior towards older people, the overall results of those media-based vicarious intergenerational programmes are still unknown. It is important to explore the impact of those programmes on ageism reduction in future research.

The study confirmed that extended intergenerational contact was significant only in younger people reporting less or absent face-to-face contact. The plausible explanation of why extended contact did not produce a significant effect on attitude relates to the phenomenon of transitivity, which refers to participants' ability to recognize the complex relationships embedded in extended contact. The definition of extended intergroup contact emphasizes the components of two relationships that involve a direct relationship between an individual and their in-group friend, and an existing extended relationship between an ingroup friend and an in-group friend's out-group friend [42]. Hence, the report of extended contact involves a two-step thinking process. Younger people needed to identify the relationship with their in-group friends (known as the direct relationship), and then, determined whether these ingroup friends had positive contact with older people (known as the extended relationship) [19, 42]. Because of the complex thinking process, younger people might provide inaccurate information about their extended contact. They might have underestimated or overestimated their extended intergenerational contact. Future research should re-visit the operational definitions of extended intergenerational contact in a more systematic manner to ensure that the measurements of direct relationship quantity and extended relationship closeness are taken into consideration.

## **5. Implications for policy and practice**

To combat ageism, scholars have consistently shared the same views on encouraging policies that foster intergenerational connections with different sectors working together to eliminate prejudice and discrimination against older people [43, 44]. While there is a lack of a research-based approach for policy design to address the complexity of intergenerational practices, serious effort needs to be put into understanding intergenerational needs and promoting quality intergenerational connections, that is intergenerational solidarity, between older and younger people at distinct levels in Hong Kong.

### **5.1 Intergenerational contact in the family context**

The present study showed that young people's most frequent contact with older people was via a grandparent or parent. Therefore, the family remains the primary source of intergenerational contact in Hong Kong. In recent decades, the family has been remarkably changing in terms of its structure, functioning, living arrangements and intergenerational relationships. On the one hand, social phenomenon such as



delayed childbearing, grandparent-parent-grandchildren bonding sandwich families and older people living longer have widened the age gap between generations. On the other hand, complex family relationships such as divorce and remarriage have weakened family support for younger and older members of a family. Due to these evolving family trends, new directions for the development and implementation of family policies should have been formulated accordingly [45]. However, there is still marked asymmetry in the family-friendly policies implemented in Hong Kong with more support and practices provided to families having young children. For example, many companies and industries allow flexible working hours for taking care of children, offer subsidies for childcare and provide access to child-care facilities in the workplace. While elder-family policies related to intergenerational solidarity focus more on care-giving for aging parents, there is a lack of policy support for building positive familial intergenerational relationships and promoting the quality of familial intergenerational contact. To promote familial relationships in families with older people, future family policies should consider unique features that shape the new familial intergenerational ties and integrate views and perspectives from younger and older generations into the family. Also, future research is critical to illuminate these issues.

## **5.2 Integrational contact in the institutional context**

Efforts to promote intergenerational contact have expanded from familial to nonfamilial relationships between older and younger people. While intergenerational programming is the instrument for policy enfolded intergenerational practice, effective intergenerational programmes, which are diverse and appear in various forms, can inform theoretical and evidence-based policies. The development of intergenerational programmes requires partnerships between government, non-government organizations, employers, and academia for promoting opportunities for quality intergenerational contact between older and younger generations [44].

To reduce ageism among younger generations, there are some things that key partners and relevant stakeholders might do to advance policy and practice in intergenerational programmes. First, face-to-face and vicarious intergenerational contact can be implemented together in intergenerational programmes to effectively reduce ageism. Vicarious intergenerational contact, which serves to be a facilitating component of an integrated intervention package, can be implemented before the actual face-to-face intergenerational contact occurs. Such intervention may reduce intergroup anxiety and produce lower stress responses when young people have face-to-face contact with older people. Further, an intergenerational programme should explicitly involve an equal intergenerational relationship that can be achieved by the exchange of knowledge, skills, values, and resources to promote reciprocal support and respectful collaboration between older and younger people [46]. Kessler and Staudinger [47] suggested that an intergenerational programme should activate generativity in older people and identity formation in young people in order to form an equal intergenerational status. For instance, an intergenerational programme includes two collaborative tasks involving work on a life problem that assigns the status of 'expert' to older people and work on a fictitious media problem that assigns the status of 'expert' to young people. As a result, such an approach facilitates the generativity in older people and identity formation in younger people in a way that older and younger people are given opportunities to equally receive and contribute to topics that they value leading to the development of equal intergenerational status in face-to-face contact.

### **5.3 Integrational contact in the societal context**

Intergenerational programmes can transfer intergenerational solidarity from an institutional to a societal setting. On the one hand, the social ties formed between older and younger people in intergenerational programmes can be part of their informal social networks in the community [48]. On the other hand, equally exchanged knowledge, skills, values, traditions, resources, insights, reciprocal support and respectful collaboration gained from intergenerational programmes can facilitate a process of capital exchange in society [44, 46].

To ensure intergenerational solidarity is sustained in the wider community, intergenerational integration is the key, meaning that integration of the child/youth- and elder-oriented initiatives that involve community-wide and multi-sector efforts are required at the societal level. Through efficient and flexible uses of physical facilities, and through social mobilization of resources to simultaneously cater for the physical and social needs of older and younger generations, intergenerational integration helps to create social capital in an inclusive community [44, 49]. There is a wide range of innovative, practical examples of intergenerational integration. Schools, for example, can serve as community centres that offer programmes and meal services for older people during after-school hours. Similarly, senior centres can provide after-school activities for youths [46, 49]. Additionally, a multi-generational community centre that combines services for older and younger people can create natural opportunities for bringing older and younger generations together to promote spontaneous intergenerational interactions and bridge diverse intergenerational experiences.

The new evidence about the significant role of vicarious intergenerational contact in promoting a positive attitude towards older people among younger people provides insights into building mass media influence to combat ageism. Mass media, including news, television, radio and social media is one of the most powerful sources of influence on many public health issues, effectively sending information to a vast audience. A growing of initiatives has been observed on the impact of the media on increasing people's awareness and knowledge, and on the media's ability to change attitudes, social norms, and behaviors regarding public health issues. In the recent decade, social media has largely replaced the traditional mass media such as television or newspapers in the younger generation. Therefore, vicarious intergenerational contact should be recognized and publicized through social media to reduce ageism. The content of vicarious intergenerational contact should explicitly feature an equal status in the interaction between older and younger people.

## **6. Strengths and limitations of the study**

There are a few strengths of the presently reported study. It examined potential variables contributing to the quality of face-to-face intergenerational contact that has been largely neglected in previous researches. These variables include aspects of intergenerational engagement and intergenerational communication media. Further, the present study has addressed the limitations of previous research regarding sampling. Previous studies on intergenerational contact adopted a homogenous sample, with participants being recruited from one study site only. Also, the study focused on the general, younger population, recruiting young people from different backgrounds. Thus, it offers a more heterogeneous and representative sample as compared to those of previous studies.

The present study has identified some limitations. First, the sample was predominantly female (66.6%), which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study relied on participant reports rather than observation of actual prosocial behavior. As self-reported data are susceptible to recall bias and social desirability bias, there may be discrepancies between self-reported and actual prosocial behavior. Finally, some variables were measured by single items. A single-item measure failed to examine how young people defined, 'quality of face-to-face intergenerational contact.' It might also have simplified the measurement of extended intergenerational contact since the self-reported extended contact involves a two-step thinking process.

## **7. Conclusion**

This chapter has described theoretical approaches to study different types of intergenerational contact in the context of older and younger generations. The author's recently completed study provided new evidence about the related processes, mechanisms and relationships involving the older individuals and young people. The study has contributed to filling the research gaps regarding intergenerational contact between older and younger people in Hong Kong. First, the study demonstrated that younger people maintaining frequent phone contact with older people and perceiving an equal intergenerational status during face-to-face contact with older people had higher quality of face-to-face intergenerational contact. Second, the study investigated the relative importance of direct and indirect intergenerational contact. Indirect intergenerational contact was related to a more positive attitude towards older people when younger people's opportunity for face-to-face intergenerational contact with older people was low. Although the quality of face-to-face intergenerational contact was associated with a significantly better attitude towards older people, vicarious intergenerational contact was the strongest contribution to a better attitude when younger people's level of face-to-face contact with older people was low. The new evidence has challenged the traditional assumptions embedded in current policies and practices to combat ageism. Based on the study findings, this chapter has provided political and practical suggestions highlighting the importance of synergistic efforts in that governments, schools, private and community groups, and the media all have the responsibility to address the pressing challenges of ageism reduction. Intergenerational integration is the key area in which policymakers and organizations of different sectors should take an intergenerational lens to develop innovative policies and practices at family, institutional and societal levels [4].

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Elsie Yan, for her insightful guidance, constructive feedback and continued support at each stage of the study. Her enthusiasm and motivation inspired me a lot which drove me to the completion of the study.

## **Conflicts of interest**

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest as far as the study is concerned.


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