

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Bridging the Gap

Professor Rhonda Craven and Dr Alexander Yeung from Centre for Educational Research, and Dr Tanya Covic, School of Psychology, together with the Benevolent Society have been awarded a UWS Research Partnership Program grant to test the effectiveness of interventions designed to build social cohesion.

'In the midst of Australia's economic growth, some communities are in danger of being left behind and becoming caught in a perpetual cycle of social and economic disadvantage', says Professor Craven. 'This research is the first stage of a larger project to address this disadvantage by implementing multiple interventions to actively build social cohesion in two disadvantaged communities by implementing school-based programs to bridge the gap, and to build and foster networks and relationships between community members from all walks of life.'

A set of validated measuring instruments will be developed that will help researchers and service providers to assess both the factors and outcomes of place poverty and disadvantage. Findings will be used to further develop and refine the Bridging the Gap program that addresses the three crucial dimensions for achieving social cohesion: bonding, bridging, and linking networks. Further, the underlying relationships and reciprocal effects between social cohesion factors and socio-economic circumstances for the two communities will be shown. Semi-structured interviews with students, parents, and principals/teachers will include an exploration of their perceptions of social capital and networks in the community as well as the perceived and actual social and economic circumstances in their lives.



The findings are expected to inform social policy and practice in Australia and contribute to the development of a valuable program that facilitates social cohesion in Australian communities.

Project Title: Bridging the Gap: Developing Valid and Reliable Measures of Social Capital in Socially Disadvantaged Communities

Funding has been set at: \$15,595

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