Our research explores issues of social cohesion and migration from inter-personal and intergroup interactions to social and economic dynamics at the national and international level. **With over 80 academics** and more than **50 graduate research students in the faculty** working in social cohesion and migration, we are at the forefront of research into the mechanisms of building and sustaining stronger, more resilient communities. **Since 2010 we have collaborated with 67 national and international partners** to deliver more than **100 projects valued over $10 million**. Practical applications of this research include informing policy making, contributing to debate and reporting on trends in social cohesion both here in Australia and internationally.

**IDENTITY AND BELONGING**

To build community resilience it is important to understand the individual and examine personal perceptions and beliefs that influence our sense of identity and belonging. Questions of connectedness and shared values in a community are explored via the social, historical, and cultural factors that contribute to community development and sense of belonging. We use multiple lenses to gain a deeper understanding of identity and belonging. Our evidence-based research has helped deepen understanding of the shared values and beliefs that help to build connected and resilient communities. Our research draws attention to the voice of community which can feed into decision processes such that governance becomes more inclusive.

The Faculty of Arts has particularly strong expertise in intercultural competence - lifelong process of nurturing key attitudes (such as respect, openness, and curiosity) and skills (e.g. related to verbal and non-verbal communication) required to overcome cultural barriers.

Our research in intercultural competence helps to explain:
- **Cultural awareness** (Who am I? How do my cultural values influence my words, thoughts and my behaviour?);
- **Cultural understanding** (Why are people with a different cultural background not necessarily thinking, talking and behaving as I am expecting?); and
- **Cultural sensitivity** (How do we understand/deal with difference?)

**CASE STUDY OVER LEAF:**

**AUSTRALIAN GENERATIONS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

Arts researchers are collaborating with community leaders and key stakeholders at the local, state and regional level to identify creative solutions and innovative research projects to capture robust data and evidence to help build connected and resilient communities.

Projects related to identity and belonging have helped to: explain identity, social change and emerging needs of Melbourne’s Jewish community; write unexplored history of Vietnamese veterans in Australia; explore issues of Australian heritage in times of accelerated climate change; examine urban cultural policy; examine immigrants’ changing values and perceptions of funeral rites in the context of multicultural Australia; and map out life histories, generational change and memory of Australian communities.
This was the first major national project to investigate intergenerational dynamics and the impact of dramatic social, technological and environmental changes on the experiences and attitudes of succeeding Australian generations. The project created 300 life history interviews with Australians born between 1920 and 1989, totalling 1221 hours of audio recordings for an online audio archive hosted by the National Library of Australia (NLA).

The study resulted in a series of technological innovations in oral history archiving and production. It was the first full-scale large project planned and implemented using the NLA’s new cutting edge audio delivery system, and the Library adapted, improved and innovated its audio delivery system throughout the Australian Generations project.

That system has also facilitated the production of the project’s recent book Australian Lives: An intimate history (Monash University Publishing, 2017), which is the first book in which extensive oral history extracts can be both read and heard online, and which readers have curated online access to a major research archive.

The research challenged Australian generational stereotypes and offered more nuanced and historically situated approaches to understanding Australian generations and their significance. Members of the research team used the Australian generation interviews to investigate a series of topics in Australian social and cultural history, such as: the relationship between class, gender, ethnicity and higher education; the changing experiences of mental illness, shifting community attitudes about mental health, and the ways structural patterns of inequality shape the prevalence and experience of mental ill-health; and the significance of place and material objects that provide points of anchor in a rapidly changing world.

The national scope of this project advanced understanding of the diversity of Australian historical experience within groups and over time.