Leading learning beyond the classroom: The barriers and benefits to intergenerational practice

Louise Anne Masterson

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the

Degree of Doctor of Education

30th April 2024

**Abstract**

This thesis adds to an existing body of knowledge aiming to provide a deeper understanding around the value of intergenerational practice. The study reviews the benefits and barriers to the planning and delivery of intergenerational practice to further understand why the UK lags so far behind other countries in this area. Although this study was undertaken as the world slowly exited from the Covid-19 pandemic, the lack of intergenerational practice in the UK is not a new concern. In 2019, United For All Ages highlighted in a report that, despite variations in demographics, Britain emerged as the most age-segregated nation globally. At the same time, Castiello *et al*. emphasised the innate social nature of people, highlighting how fostering positive connections between young and old within a nurturing setting can fulfil the emotional needs of both age groups, reminding us that people are “wired to be social” (2010, p. 1). Given that both individuals and communities benefit greatly from forging meaningful intergenerational relationships the topic of intergenerational practice is actually an area of great importance (DeVore, Winchell and Rowe, 2016). This research employed a sequential, exploratory case study approach conducted over three distinct phases. Data was gathered via questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, a learning walk, autonomy audit and a personality quiz. The study started off with 42 participants who responded to the questionnaire having been located through purposive sampling. From there, the participants were narrowed down to 2 who met the full criteria for the case studies. Thematic analysis of the data revealed that a general lack of training opportunities in the field has contributed to the gap in knowledge and understanding around the benefits of intergenerational practice. At present there is no intergenerational policy in England and the literature evidences that it is not a government priority, with one particular pilot study involving 12 local authorities being terminated before completion. Early years settings often place a heavy emphasis on policy compliance and regulatory inspections, which can sometimes influence the focus of their work. Currently, there is no intergenerational safeguarding framework for staff to follow and the data reveals that this is seen as a barrier, making staff nervous to embrace this form of practice. The findings from this study suggest that those settings with highly qualified staff, a high level of autonomy, confident enough to defend their practice and unafraid of creating innovative curriculum choices, were more likely to engage with intergenerational practice.

**Acknowledgements**

My sincere thanks go to all those who have participated in this study. By contributing their thoughts and experiences they have enabled this research to happen. I trust that I have represented their views honestly, and hope they will be pleased with the outcome.

Thank you to all of the EdD team that have supported me throughout the programme over the past six years. Particular thanks must go to Dr. Louise Kay, my thesis supervisor who has guided me on this research journey from start to finish. Alongside this, many thanks to Dr. David Hyatt for keeping me motivated and challenging my thinking. My EdD colleagues have been a source of great inspiration and support as we shared this experience, through good times and bad. To the patient staff from Learning Services past and present, your support has been endless and I will be eternally grateful.

Finally, thanks are due to my family, especially my parents. For listening to me during the hard times and providing encouragement, always believing that this EdD was achievable. Although my grandmothers are no longer around, I must thank them both for the impact they had on my life and subsequently this thesis. They would be amazed to learn just how inspirational they have been.

**List of Tables and Diagrams**

**Tables**

Table 1 - Literature Review search terms part one

Table 2 - Literature Review search terms part two

Table 3 - All methods aligned to the research questions

Table 4 - Participant demographics from phase one of the study

Table 5 - Participant demographics from phases two and three of the study

Table 6 - Phase one methods aligned to the research questions

Table 7 - Phase two methods aligned to the research questions

Table 8 - Phase three methods aligned to the research questions

Table 9 - Summary of data for questions 1 to 5 and 8 to 10 of questionnaire

**Diagrams**

Diagram 1 – Socio-cultural lens is applied to this study (Vygotsky, 1978)

Diagram 2 – Self-determination theory is applied to this study (Ryan and Deci, 2017)

Diagram 3 – Social Pedagogy is applied to this study (Singleton, 2015)

Diagram 4 – Theoretical framework used for this research

Diagram 5 – Methods used

Diagram 6 – Research design model (Grix, 2002, p. 180)

Diagram 7 – Research design model created for this specific study

Diagram 8 – Recap of methods used throughout the phases

Diagram 9 – Key themes emerging from phase one data

Diagram 10 – Key themes emerging from phase two data

Diagram 11 – Key themes emerging from phase three data

Diagram 12 – Key themes relating to the benefits of intergenerational practice

Diagram 13 – Factors that benefit successful intergenerational practice

Diagram 14 – Key themes relating to the barriers around intergenerational practice

Diagram 15 – Key factors present in motivated leaders in the field (Ryan and Deci, 2017)

**Contents**

**Chapter** **Pages**

**1: Introduction**

1.1: Introduction to the thesis 9

1.2: Social Distancing and the Covid-19 Pandemic 9

1.3: Societal Divisions – not a new concept 11

1.4: Personal and Professional Context 13

1.5: Defining Intergenerational Practice 15

1.6: Historical Context 16

1.7: Research Questions 20

1.8: Structure of the research and thesis chapters 20

**2: The Literature Review**

2.1: Introduction 22

2.2: Methodology 23

2.3: Benefits of Intergenerational Practice 27

2.4: Barriers to Intergenerational Practice 37

2.5: Factors Aiding Success 42

2.6: Covid Constraints 46

2.7: Implications for Future Practice 50

2.8: Summary 51

**3: Theoretical Framework**

3.1: Introduction 53

3.2: The Influence of Socio-cultural Theory in the field 53

3.3: Taking a psycho-social approach 55

3.4: The Neurosequential Model 55

3.5: Theoretical Framework used for this study 56

3.6: Summary 63

**4: Methodology**

4.1: Introduction 64

4.2: Researcher Positionality 66

4.3: Research Paradigm 69

4.4: Research Design 71

4.5: Methods 74

4.6: Ethical Considerations 85

4.7: Data Analysis and Report Writing 89

4.8: Reflexive Thematic Analysis 90

4.9: Generalisability and Reliability 93

4.10: Credibility and Trustworthiness 94

4.11: Summary 96

**5: Analysis and Findings**

5.1: Introduction 97

5.2: Research Questions and How Data were Collected 97

5.3: Phase One Analysis of Data Findings 98

5.4: Phase Two Analysis of Data Findings 105

5.5: Phase Three Analysis of Data Findings 113

5.6: Summary of Emergent Themes from the Overall Findings 124

5.7: Summary 127

**6: Discussion**

6.1: Introduction 128

6.2: Discussion of themes emerging from Phase One Data 128

6.3: Discussion of themes emerging from Phase Two Data 139

6.4: Discussion of themes emerging from Phase Three Data 148

6.5: Collation of the emergent themes 164

6.6: Summary 170

**7: Conclusion**

7.1: Introduction 171

7.2: Reflecting upon the research design 171

7.3: Limitations of the study 174

7.4: Implications for future research 174

7.5: Contribution to knowledge 175

7.6: Recommendations 177

7.7: Summary 179

**References** 180

**Appendices** 218

**CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION**

1.1: Introduction to the thesis

This chapter introduces the thesis, identifies the rationale for the research and explains how the structure of the study unfolds. The research aimed to discover more about intergenerational practice both pre and post covid, to help understand why the UK trails behind other countries in the field. It focused exclusively on a limited sample of early years staff from Northern England and served as an exploratory case study, delving into their practices, thoughts, and experiences, in relation to the planning for and delivery of intergenerational practice. An early years angle was adopted as the main driver for this research because that appeared to be where the paucity of literature lay. While the intention of this study and its report is to offer further insights into the value around this model of education and care by highlighting the benefits of intergenerational practice, it also explores the potential barriers that could be encountered. It is hoped that the findings from this research will resonate with other professionals working in both the early years, and those organisations involved with older adults. However, it is important to note that this study does not claim to offer conclusive answers to what is an undeniably complex subject. Whilst the findings from this research contribute further to an existing body of knowledge, this study also offers a fresh perspective regarding intergenerational practice, as the research was undertaken at a time when society was slowly emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic.

1.2: Social distancing and the Covid-19 pandemic – Societal Divisions

The most recent and significant barrier to intergenerational practice was the Covid-19 pandemic, which exacerbated the divide between generations (Butts and Jarrott, 2021). This health crisis dictated the segregation of older adults from younger children and intergenerational practice in its previous form became untenable (Cole, 2023). During the Covid-19 crisis these two integral sectors, early years and older adults, were driven apart to protect those deemed most vulnerable. The paucity of literature about the impact that lockdown restrictions placed upon these non-familial intergenerational relationships suggests this is an area that has not been widely researched, though it has been acknowledged in some literature. That said, it should be noted much has been written about those older adults living in residential care separated from their families during this period (George, 2021).

It is true that from a health perspective the older population was vulnerable, but such a strategy also resulted in isolation for them from a personal and social perspective (Barragan *et al*., 2020). This alienating model referred to by the British government as “social distancing” (DHSC, 2020) had echoes of a definition coined back in 1957 by Mannheim. At that time, the sociologist used the term to describe enforced power hierarchies. This was not entirely dissimilar to the situation which arose in 2020 as a result of the government-sanctioned referral to ‘social distancing’ adopted by some governments which served to perpetuate ageist prejudices and negative perceptions towards older adults (Barragan *et al*., 2020). Furthermore, alleged comments made by the then Prime Minister Boris Johnson which were later revealed by the press, propagated this idea that some members of society were more valuable than others; a decision which appeared to be based upon how much contribution one could make to the economy (McGrath, 2023). From some perspectives, it could be argued that the crisis society was facing was treated almost like a form of social Darwinism by certain factions of the Government.

It should be noted however, that intergenerational relationships were not responsible for the spread of the contagion. The Covid-19 virus could easily pass between infected people of any age so the justification and separation of these two groups during this period was problematic from the start (Barragan *et al*., 2020). Upon reflection, the narrative around social distancing has even more significance today, given the negative consequences that these separations caused, which are only now just coming to light in further research, such as that conducted by Bessell (2021a, p. 448):

Existing inequalities have been exacerbated, poverty is deepening, and relationships are under pressure, with highly deleterious consequences for children. Despite the significant impacts on children, they have been largely invisible in policy responses and there have been no serious attempts on the part of political leaders to engage with children or respond to their concerns.

Furthermore, the literature showed there were negative connotations around this terminology in existence long before 1957 and the work of Mannheim. The 1920’s saw a social science tool called ‘The Social Distance Scale’ which was designed to measure racial prejudice. The 1980’s saw the phrase ‘social distancing’ used in relation to the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) crisis and in 2004 the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) used the term in relation to severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and other airborne illnesses (Waxman, 2020). Moving forward to the Covid-19 pandemic, it is evident that any “previous supposedly established models of co-existence have been challenged; not least by the phenomenon of social distancing” and the message this sends out (Bjursell, 2020, p. 673).

There are those such as Poole (2020) who argued that a better term to use might have been ‘physical distancing’ which was the term employed by the Irish government at the time. Although these terms represent two different things, it needs to be acknowledged that they are not mutually exclusive and physical distancing measures could still have resulted in social distancing for some. It could be argued that the UK choice of language was never deliberately intended to create further division within society; however, there is a case to be made that use of the terminology ‘social distancing’ certainly did not help in terms of social cohesion.

1.3: Societal Divisions – Not A New Concept

The subject of intergenerational practice and divisions in society held considerable importance before the pandemic due to the global variations in demographics. A report from United For All Ages in 2019 revealed that, despite demographic differences, Britain was identified as the most age-segregated country in the world. An All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG, 2017) report suggested that this generational division was influenced, in part, by geography. Older adults tended to live in rural areas, while younger individuals predominantly resided in cities and urban zones where shared spaces were diminishing (Dalton *et al*., 2019).

It is true that for various reasons such as better employment, or unaffordable housing in some areas, that a greater number of families are relocating and becoming more widespread. As a result of being separated by long distances the time they can spend together is reduced, but this is far from being the root cause of the problem (George, 2018). For example, Brannen (2003) discussed the concept of ‘beanpole’ families where people are waiting until they are much older to give birth and choosing to have fewer children. The consequence of this change in family dynamics means that the wider family network of grandparents, aunts and uncles may not exist for these children, thereby removing any opportunity for them to forge relationships with older adults.

Castiello *et al*. reminds us that people are “wired to be social” (2010, p. 1) and that the development of positive relationships between young and old in a nurturing environment can support the emotional needs of both groups. It could be argued that we are relational beings and a huge element of these relationships is based upon affectivity, both within and beyond the family (Barragan *et al*., 2020). Given that both individuals and communities benefit greatly from forging meaningful intergenerational relationships (DeVore, Winchell and Rowe, 2016) the topic of intergenerational practice is actually an area of great importance.

Furthermore, the beneficial impacts seen from engagement with intergenerational practice could provide valuable guidance for the Government in terms of their policy priorities with regard to inclusion and social cohesion moving forward (Granville, 2002; Pain, 2005). The literature suggests that intergenerational practice can potentially contribute to the existing array of social policy initiatives addressing loneliness and isolation, especially in the face of challenges posed by a progressively ageing population. Importantly, these interventions have demonstrated the ability to enhance satisfaction and quality of life for all participants, extending beyond the older adults (Kuehne, 2003).

Looking back, it was critical that I took the time to reflect on the experiences I have had within my own life to consider how these might have influenced this study. Scott and Usher (2002, p. 75) asserted that “research, through whichever paradigm it is carried out, as being just as much about values as about methods and outcomes.” This process served to help me self consciously articulate my own philosophy to recognise how these experiences have shaped my beliefs and values, and how these beliefs and values might impact upon this research; positively, negatively, consciously and subconsciously, in a concerted effort to address any invisible influences at play.

1.4: Personal and professional context

The embers for this research project were lit when I was asked in my role as a University Lecturer to write a module entitled ‘Leading Learning Beyond The Classroom.’ As I set about my research for that task I was looking at the traditional forest school, beach school, museum and gallery learning, when I came upon the concept of intergenerational practice. I recalled the numerous schools and early years settings I had visited in my capacity as both an Early Years Inspector and a Link Tutor for trainee teachers out on placement; but I struggled to remember any examples of intergenerational practice. As I started to engage with the literature surrounding this topic, I began to reflect upon my early career when I worked as a Nursery Manager where the idea of intergenerational practice had never even been mooted. I revisited memories of my own school days and once again there was no evidence of this type of practice taking place. This sparked an even keener interest in the topic and I decided it definitely needed to be included in this new module I was writing.

Reflecting upon my own experiences and reading around the subject, there seemed to be a lack of UK intergenerational practice taking place in comparison to that being delivered in other countries such as the USA, Canada and Japan. This was concerning to me because I remembered my own childhood and the time I spent with older grandparents and their friends, they are happy memories and times at which I learned so much. They taught me about the previous flu pandemic of 1918 and relocating to Liverpool from Ireland. Tales were told about living through two world wars and the roles they held whilst the men were off fighting. This information was presented in an exciting way through their lived experiences and the stories they recounted; a stark contrast to the text book learning I was exposed to at school. Given all these benefits, I wondered why the UK had not made more effort to embrace the opportunities that intergenerational practice could provide. Other countries had recognised the value of this way of working years ago (George, 2018). The literature I was reading further supported my observations and highlighted a few possible reasons for why the UK seemed to be trailing behind:

1. lack of understanding as to what is meant by the term intergenerational practice;
2. lack of training in this area which would enable practitioners to be confident and competent when working with both older adults and young children;
3. lack of awareness as to the benefits gained from older adults and young children engaging together in intergenerational practice.

Engaging with the literature persuaded me to examine this further and in particular to consider this more deeply in the context of living through the Covid-19 pandemic, especially as the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2022) seemed to suggest there might be more of these types of viruses appearing in the future. If intergenerational practice was already an area that needed further work and education, then what was going to be the impact when practitioners were faced with the constraints of social distancing and intermittent lockdowns? Furthermore, I was interested to learn more about the motivation of the leaders from those settings that do engage in intergenerational practice when there was no obligation to do so. It led me to consider how settings would adapt to and overcome the challenges they had been faced with during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the long term impact this could have in terms of its wider significance for the field and beyond.

There is already talk of a social justice impetus with those more adversely affected by Covid-19 coming from a lower socio-economic group (McNeely and Schintler, 2020; Stok *et al*., 2021). Furthermore, this made me wonder what this meant for the field moving forward. It became evident that a period of transition was going to be needed and it was not going to be a straightforward case of pre-Covid pandemic moving to post-Covid pandemic practice, but at the time of writing, it was unclear as to what this period of readjustment and reimagining of intergenerational practice might look like.

1.5: Defining intergenerational practice

Intergenerational practice is not easy to define, as there is no one universal definition (Granville, 2002). Before formal education, there was a type of intergenerational practice that existed with one generation passing their skills and knowledge onto the next (Hoff, 2011). Values were embedded, learning was shared and stories were told. However, over time, these traditional extended family experiences have been dwindling (Cole, 2023). In an effort to address this, the benefits from such engagement have been explored more recently by bringing together a new model mixing generations in a non-familial way, placing a heavy focus on positive relationships and knowledge exchange, and so it is the phenomenon of intergenerational practice in its current form has evolved (Vanderbeck and Worth, 2015).

There are many publications surrounding the wide diversity of interpretation around the terminology in relation to intergenerational practice. The literature explained that what it meant to one person might differ to that of another, simply because it is presented in several different ways with several different purposes. For example, journal articles in the field use terms such as “intergenerational care and intergenerational learning” (Cole, 2023, p. 6); intergenerational activity or “intergenerational programs” (Park, 2014, p. 181). Hence, there is still the need for further clarity. Springate, Atkinson and Martin (2008) campaigned for a greater definition of the term ‘intergenerational practice’ because of the ever increasing blurring of the lines and interchangeable terminology. The blurring of this language is problematic as these different terms do indeed have different meanings and this only serves to cause further confusion to practitioners.

As a result of the current literature lacking clarity as to what actually constitutes intergenerational practice, and there being no agreement around a definition, it makes it difficult for practitioners to fully understand and replicate the process. Some studies illustrate a visitation model whereby older adults visit children in their nursery environment whilst other studies discuss children visiting the older adults in their care homes or sheltered housing. There are integrated settings, co-located settings, independent settings and single site models (Cartmel *et al*., 2018) all claiming to be engaging in intergenerational practice. This situation makes it easy to see why there is some confusion and problems in defining intergenerational practice.

For the purpose of this study intergenerational practice is going to be referred to and used in terms of the definition provided by the Beth Johnson Foundation (2009, p. 1):

To bring people together in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities which promote greater understanding and respect between generations and contribute to building more cohesive communities.

This is a view also held by Feldman (2012) who asserted that one of the key drivers in this field is that both sets of participants are involved in knowledge exchange. Furthermore, a key difference to the traditional modes of classroom-based education is that intergenerational practice is a far more sociable learning experience because of the social and emotional connections that are established during the activities. These activities are always explored together within an equal space (Cole, 2023). The literature highlights that intergenerational practice needs to take place in an inclusive space, which also provides each participant with equal opportunities and equal rights (Neves and Casimiro, 2018; Barragan *et al*., 2020; Kernan and Cortellesi, 2020).

1.6: Historical Context

The first intergenerational programmes can be traced back to the 1960’s (Hanks and Ponzetti, 2004) but in terms of true intergenerational practice using the earlier definitions, the literature shows how progressive Japan was in the field, leading the way back in 1976 when Masaharu merged a care home with a nursery in Tokyo (Cole, 2023). As a result of this now established way of working, the ethos of intergenerational practice is fully embedded into Japanese society today (Burke, 2020). The USA is another country keen to prioritise intergenerational practice with roots tracing back to the John F Kennedy programme, which established the foster a grandparent scheme back in 1963. To this day America still has a number of policies in place to support this, for example the Older American’s Act (Kaplan, Larkin and Hatton-Yeo, 2008); this is different to the situation in England where there is no intergenerational policy in existence yet. Before the onset of the Covid pandemic, the prevailing literature predominantly concentrated on demonstrating the positive outcomes for those older adults involved, particularly through studies on loneliness, mental health, and isolation. This stood in sharp contrast to the limited discourse on the potential benefits that such practices could offer to young children (Lyndon and Moss, 2023; Di Bona, Kennedy and Mountain, 2019).

Presently there are some good independent initiatives striving to promote the field of intergenerational practice within the UK. These include but are not limited to Generations Working Together based in Scotland, Linking Generations based in Northern Ireland and The Beth Johnson Foundation based in England. Out of these three organisations, The Beth Johnson Foundation (BJF) is the longest running having been established in 1972, however, since this time it has not expanded much geographically and tends to focus mostly on the area of Staffordshire. In response to this, 2001 saw the Centre for Intergenerational Practice (CIP) established within the BJF. The primary purpose of the hub was for networking, training and general support and advice (Titterington *et al*., 2020).

It would appear from the literature reviewed, that England and Wales are trailing behind the other UK nations. It could be argued that this is because to date the Scottish formed Generations Working Together (2014) and Northern Ireland’s Linking Generations (2008) are the only two organisations operating countrywide. It should be acknowledged that both of these groups do have an affiliation to the BJF and these organisations have benefitted from the research, experience and practicalities of the BJF using this as a springboard to develop and extend intergenerational practice in their respective nations (Titterington *et al*., 2020).

Since the 1990s, intergenerational practice has garnered increasing attention from practitioners and policymakers both in the UK and internationally (Abrams, Eilola and Swift, 2009; Hatton-Yeo and Batty, 2011). Slowly, over the last twenty years, the UK government has recognised that older adults and young children both have developmental and educational needs (DeVore, Winchell and Rowe, 2016). Recent evidence indicates that, before the pandemic, local authorities and various organisations were also showing a growing interest around the topic. As a result, some local authorities started to look for further ways in which to promote intergenerational practice, with the aim of promoting the quality of education and care for both groups. For instance, Liverpool City Council actively participated in intergenerational cafes, where a group of young children, accompanied by their parents, were invited to monthly sessions with the older adults. This initiative originated from an idea proposed by an early years lecturer who noticed that the young children she worked with lacked an understanding of the concept of ‘mending’ something (Weinstein, 2019). While initially themed around this idea, the sessions have expanded to cover all three pillars of sustainability and have been so successful that Liverpool City Council invested in the programme, facilitating its extension.

In 2018, Liverpool Football Club participated in endorsing an intergenerational initiative that connected pensioners with children as young as four years old. The project centred around acquiring skills for crafting rag rugs and cushions, with children collaborating alongside the pensioners, facilitating mutual learning (Black, 2018). These examples, both stemming from a single city, demonstrate effective ways to promote and cultivate sustainable communities through intergenerational practice. However, despite the proliferation of such projects, there remains a scarcity of research to comprehensively assess the benefits of intergenerational practice in the UK (Abrams, Eilola and Swift, 2009; Granville, 2002).

Before the pandemic, there was a notable increase in innovative approaches within the field, aiming to bring together older adults and young children. This occurred both at the community level and through the establishment of institutional connections, including broader collaboration with schools and nurseries. Whilst more UK practice was starting to emerge, the United States, in particular, had already embraced this trend, fostering working relationships with numerous community partners and sites (Epstein and Boisvert, 2006; Jarrott, Gigliotti and Smock, 2006; Kovacs and Lee, 2010). The outcomes of these projects align with other literature suggesting that intergenerational practice can wield a substantial societal impact, thereby attesting to both its value and universal significance (Femia *et al*., 2008).

The literature from the UK indicated that numerous studies on intergenerational practice had been conducted since 2000, each with varying durations. In some programmes, children interacted with older adults on a weekly, termly, or sometimes more frequent basis, albeit always for a limited period, typically around 6 weeks or 3 months. In contrast to the UK studies, the USA had more settings where older adults and nurseries were co-located within the same facility, allowing for ongoing intergenerational activities and the potential for longitudinal studies to be conducted (Cole, 2023).

In the UK, there are a few intergenerational programmes where the older adults and the nursery occupy separate buildings but are situated on the same site in a co-located manner. One example is Apples and Honey Nightingale, the first UK intergenerational co-located community nursery and social enterprise, which opened in London in 2017. There are now initiatives to establish integrated intergenerational settings in the UK, inspired by models in the USA, Japan, and Canada where this practice is already ingrained in society. Following successful trials in Wales and Cambridgeshire (United for All Ages, 2019), Belong, which opened in Chester in 2022, is believed to be the first of this type to be fully established in England. Belong is a care setting for older adults and contained within the building is a children’s nursery. In 2019, United For All Ages published a report titled 'The Next Generation,' with the goal of having approximately 500 intergenerational settings in place by the end of 2023. Whilst these UK proposals are still mostly in the early stages due to pandemic-related delays, the fact they are being planned and constructed evidences the growing importance attributed to this form of intergenerational practice, indicating its increasing prevalence throughout the UK.

1.7: Research questions

The overarching title for this study was **“*Leading learning beyond the classroom: The barriers and benefits to intergenerational practice.”*** In order to address the main questions arising from the title, the following sub research questions were developed and aimed at those currently working in a variety of roles within the early years sector in England:

1) What are the benefits of intergenerational practice?

2) What are the barriers to intergenerational practice?

3) What motivates an early years leader to engage with intergenerational practice?

These questions will be examined in further depth within the methodology chapter. The first question discussed the benefits of intergenerational practice to support the argument that this is an important topic, and justify why the UK needs to be better at engaging in this way of working. From there, the second research question sought to unpick some of the barriers that prevent early years practitioners participating in the field; this might partially explain why the UK trails behind other countries in this area. The final question then moved into the specifics relating to early years leaders, looking at the reasons behind why some choose to engage in intergenerational practice.

1.8: Structure of the research and thesis chapters

The fieldwork spanned nine months, and involved the active participation of 42 respondents who worked in a variety of roles in different early years settings. These contributors initially shared their data through a questionnaire in phase one. From these, 10 participants were then spoken to in relation to their responses and subsequently, 2 of them were selected to enter the next two phases of the study. This involved the participants engaging in semi-structured face-to-face interviews for phase two. Phase three consisted of a learning walk, which in essence provided the opportunity for a chat or an “informal conversational interview” (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2018, p. 510), an autonomy audit and a personality quiz (Pink, 2018). The thesis incorporates data from the initial questionnaires (Phase One), semi-structured interviews (Phase Two), and the learning walk, autonomy audit and personality quiz (Phase Three). The rationale behind this selection and other methodological choices is thoroughly discussed in Chapter 4 of the thesis.

The subsequent chapters include Chapter 2, which is a literature review. This chapter positions the study within its field, providing insights into the value of and challenges to the planning and delivery, of intergenerational practice. Suggestions around factors that may dictate success surrounding the delivery of this type of practice and the constraints that Covid-19 has placed upon the field were also critically reviewed. Chapter 3 focuses on the rationale for the theoretical framework used for this study. It presents a selection of the main theoretical frameworks previously used for studies around intergenerational practice, and these are considered in relation to their own strengths and weaknesses. Chapter 4 is the methodology chapter and details the decisions made regarding data collection, analysis, and reporting, along with a discussion of ethical considerations. Chapter 5 is the findings chapter, presenting a data summary and analysis of the findings for each separate phase of the study. This culminates in the drawing together of the emergent themes for all phases in relation to the research questions. Chapter 6 provides a detailed discussion around the findings and aims to create a comprehensive overview of participants’ thoughts and practice in response to the research questions, and relates these to the theoretical framework used for this study. Finally, Chapter 7 concludes this thesis and proposes recommendations for future practice, discusses the limitations of this study and suggests avenues for further research.

The next chapter provides an overview of the literature with regard to intergenerational practice in order to justify why there is a space for this research to be undertaken.

**CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW**

2.1: Introduction

This literature review aimed to provide some further clarity around the topic of intergenerational practice to help understand why for decades the UK has trailed behind other countries such as USA, Canada and Japan. As such, the following narrative examines several key themes in relation to intergenerational practice. Whilst addressing some of the wider issues within the field, this literature review predominantly seeks to highlight the value of this way of working and identifies some of the key benefits and barriers to intergenerational practice. It considers what factors might aid success in the field and it discusses the implications for future practice. Furthermore there is a dialogue around the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of how this influenced the field with regard to the constraints and creativity that it delivered. Some of the main theoretical frameworks that previous researchers have employed when carrying out their studies are reviewed and considered separately in Chapter 4.

After reviewing the literature, it appeared that there was little published about how UK early years settings are engaging in intergenerational practice. Nor was there much information detailing how settings had adapted their practice in relation to the intergenerational paradigm previously discussed, given the recent Covid constraints. It was from this gap that the research sub-questions were developed in order to learn more about how intergenerational practice works today from a UK perspective, and to consider what, if any, lessons have been learned in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Cole (2023) believes that intergenerational practice fosters the values of community, democracy and humanitarianism – but only when carried out under the right conditions. The next section details the methodology used in order to undertake this literature review.

2.2: Methodology

In conducting this review, I identified the most pertinent sources by employing a functional definition. The literature focused on older adults was classified based on Pain's (2005) categorisation, specifically targeting individuals aged 60 years and above. The aim was to examine content that delved into instances where these older adults participated in non-familial intergenerational activities with children aged 7 years or younger.

In this review, a framework adapted from Ibrahim's (2008) model was employed, utilising Boolean logic to explore several electronic databases. Initially, Scopus was chosen for its comprehensiveness and control over the search process. InterEd was selected for its strength in early years education, and the British Education Index was the final database chosen. However, it soon became evident that limited work was published within the UK, creating a notable gap in the desired knowledge. Consequently, the literature search had to be expanded geographically. Given the historical presence of intergenerational practice since 1974 in the USA (George, 2018), the decision was made to include the Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC) database to uncover relevant literature, which could also be applicable to a UK context. The citation count was considered to gauge the influence of works in the field and guide their inclusion in this literature review.

The strategy used for this review aimed to locate any key research from the start of the year 2000 to evidence the importance of maintaining intergenerational relationships and provide a rationale for why it is imperative that a space is found through which intergenerational practice can continue. Secondly, the literature was scrutinised to further examine the potential barriers and challenges in relation to the delivery of intergenerational practice both pre and post pandemic. Again, the literature around this was found to be lacking, so an international perspective had to be taken when trying to search in response to the constraints placed upon settings during the recent Covid-19 crisis.

The search strategy employed whilst not a traditional full systematic literature review was systematic in its nature. It is acknowledged that this review cannot constitute a comprehensive systematic literature review, given the impracticality of examining every single publication on the subject. For instance, a Google Scholar search for the term ‘intergenerational practice’ yielded 366,000 results. It became evident that in order to conduct this literature review there needed to be a further exploration and some narrowing of key terminology regularly used in the field. As a result, the framework employed to define the key words used a model adapted from Ibrahim (2008) where the research question was split into three categories encompassing ‘who, what and how’ (table one). In relation to the first search for this review the ‘who’ represented children aged 0-7 years, the ‘what’ refers to intergenerational practice and the ‘how’ was categorised as the benefits children gain from a social and emotional perspective. From this process the below list of key words was created for each of the categories which were then converted into the following nested format (“intergenerational practice\*” OR “intergenerational activit\*” OR “intergenerational program\*” OR “intergenerational setting\*”) AND (“children’ OR “preschool\*” OR “nurser\*” OR “kindergarten\*”) AND (“social development” OR “social interaction\*” OR “emotional development” OR “empathy formation”).

Recognising the impossibility of reviewing every piece of work in this vast landscape, I accepted that a degree of bias would inevitably be present in this review around the issue of selection and inclusion. To mitigate potential bias, I deliberately chose the following key electronic databases, Scopus, InterEd, British Educational Index and ERIC and focused on the most highly cited publications that remained relevant to the research questions. The search filter that had been generated (table one) was then ready to be entered into the aforementioned electronic databases using Boolean logic.

Table One – Search Terms Part One

“intergenerational practice\*”   “children” “social development”

OR OR OR

“intergenerational activit\*”    “preschool\*” “social interaction\*”

OR AND OR AND OR

“intergenerational program\*”   “nurser\*”   “emotional development”

OR           OR OR

“intergenerational setting\*”   “kindergarten\*”  “empathy formation”

The whole process was then repeated (table two) in relation to the second search conducted for this review. The parameters changed slightly so that the ‘who’ represented children aged 0-7 years, the ‘what’ referred to intergenerational practice and the ‘how’ was categorised as the challenges faced by early years settings as they adapted their planning and delivery in the field. The key words created for each of these categories, were then also converted into the following nested format (“intergenerational practice\*” OR “intergenerational activit\*” OR “intergenerational program\*” OR “intergenerational setting\*”) AND (“children’ OR “preschool\*” OR “nurser\*” OR “kindergarten\*”) AND (“barrier\*” OR “challenge\*” OR “limit\*” OR “problem\*”). This search filter was then entered into the same electronic databases selected before using Boolean logic.

Table Two – Search Terms Part Two

“intergenerational practice\*” “children” “barrier\*”

OR OR OR

“intergenerational activit\*”    “preschool\*”   “challenge\*”

OR    AND   OR  AND    OR

“intergenerational program\*”   “nurser\*”   “limit\*”

OR           OR     OR

“intergenerational setting\*”   “kindergarten\*”  “problem\*”

I opted for this approach because there seemed to be so little intergenerational literature in the field that related to the UK and even less that related to the period during the Covid-19 pandemic. Utilising this strategy therefore allowed me to capture an overview of everything that was out there whilst also providing a rationale for engaging with the literature in that way.

Although the literature indicated a growing prevalence of intergenerational practice in the UK, I was mindful of the time it takes for peer-reviewed journal articles to reach publication. To address this, I opted to explore additional literature, including archived issues of the industry magazine Nursery World. Using the Box of Broadcasts database, a search was conducted, identifying relevant broadcast material such as recent Channel 4 documentaries in the field, which offered supplementary information. While these latter two searches lacked an academic focus and did not involve peer-reviewed material, they have been included because it could be argued that practitioners engaged in such projects can offer a valuable perspective. Their views should be considered to present a comprehensive representation of activities in the field.

The literature bank utilised in this study had to be selective, and I acknowledge its lack of exhaustiveness, recognising that alternative strategies could have been employed. For instance, I could have conducted interviews with experts and academics actively researching the field or explored the initiatives of third-sector organisations involved in establishing new intergenerational programmes. I am aware of these additional search avenues that could have been pursued, but due to the project's timeframe, choices had to be made. Nevertheless, I deemed it necessary to revisit and update the literature search once all other aspects were complete. This decision stemmed from my awareness of the extended duration required for peer-reviewed journal articles to appear in databases, considering that the original search occurred back in 2021.

Therefore, what follows, is a literature review that underpins this study. It examines several key themes whilst simultaneously mapping any key literature on the challenges and successes that faced settings wanting to engage in intergenerational practice during both the pre and post Covid era.

2.3: Benefits of Intergenerational Practice

2.3.1: Socio-emotional development

The literature used within this review examined the many benefits that intergenerational practice has for younger children, older adults and society in general. Several important areas were highlighted, one of which revolved around the socio-emotional development of young children. Socio-emotional development is defined by the Early Intervention Foundation (2015) as the ability of a child to concentrate, manage their emotions, form relationships and empathise with others.

Fostering positive connections between the young and old within a supportive environment can address the emotional needs of both age groups. Additionally, it offers significant health advantages for older adults by mitigating feelings of loneliness (Morita and Kobayashi, 2013; Holt-Lundstad *et al*., 2015; Landeiro *et al*., 2017). While there appears to be limited research on the social and emotional benefits children derive from such projects, findings from this review indicate mutual advantages for both groups, including enhanced empathy (Femia *et al*., 2008) and increased social interaction (Pasupathi *et al*., 2002; Hendricks and Cutler, 2004). It appears that this type of learning environment provides children with the opportunity to discover how autonomy and agency plays a role within the relationship building process. At the other end of the spectrum, it can also provide a positive experience of social engagement for the older adults who feel valued and given a newfound sense of purpose.

Several studies have identified a positive impact on the social development of children resulting from their interactions with older adults (Pasupathi *et al*., 2002; Femia *et al*., 2008: Park, 2015). The majority of literature discussing this particular benefit for children primarily originates from the USA. For instance, a study conducted in Ohio, USA (Rosebrook and Larkin, 2003) observed an intergenerational programme that examined the socio-emotional skills of a group of children. This was then compared with a control group of similarly aged children without such exposure. The results revealed that children engaged in the intergenerational programme demonstrated more advanced levels of socio-emotional development compared to the control group.

In the USA, Holmes (2009) conducted another study that yielded similar results, revealing heightened levels of acceptance, socialisation, self-esteem, and intellectual development among all the children involved. The findings suggested that children acquired empathy and compassion through helping others, particularly in settings where knowledgeable staff provided support. These staff members could effectively encourage children to contemplate the experiences of the older adults or disabled participants and guide them in responding to their individual needs (George, 2018).

When children interact with older adults, they often find themselves needing to exercise a higher level of patience than they are accustomed to. This experience can contribute to the development of their skills in self-regulation, empathy, and emotional understanding (Davis, Bruce, and Gunnar, 2002). This learning aligns with the Vygotskian model of socio-cultural theory (1978), emphasising the significance of children learning from quality interactions with more experienced individuals, whether this is older adults or their peers. The limited literature addressing the benefits to children also highlights the crucial aspect of how friendships are established and trust is built, enabling the formation of meaningful relationships. George (2018) discussed the importance of knowledgeable adults supporting children who may be uncertain about interacting with older adults, by role-modelling effective engagement and initiating conversations.

The literature highlighted the use of observations of engagement between the groups to ascertain what impact these intergenerational programmes were having on the socio-emotional development of children. Various measurement tools were employed to track this phenomenon, with researchers in the USA utilising instruments such as the Children’s Perceptions of Aging and Elderly (CPAE) inventory and the Index of Empathy for Children and Adolescents. Specifically, Femia *et al*. (2008) employed a measure developed by Kochanska (1994) to gauge empathy levels. Furthermore, in addition to these models, Femia *et al*. (2008) utilised a social acceptance scale adapted from a measure initially developed by Piercy, Townsend, and Wilton (2002). Although originally designed to assess children's acceptance of individuals with disabilities, the measure from Piercy, Townsend, and Wilton (2002) was easily adapted to evaluate children's acceptance of older adults.

Moreover, research by Femia *et al*. (2008) revealed that children participating in intergenerational practice exhibited higher levels of social acceptance, empathy, and improved self-regulation compared to those without engagement with older adults in their study. Hastings *et al*. (2000) discussed how children can recognise the emotional needs of others from the age of one and how they use this awareness to build bonds of trust. The inclination of young children toward reciprocity and their non-judgmental nature implies that interactions with older adults can positively influence their social and emotional development (Proietti, Pisacane, and Cassia, 2013; Moll and Khalulyan, 2017). However, it could be argued that the quality of these interactions is key, and this has a direct impact on the benefits produced (Shaffer, 2008). Positive relationship development proved pivotal for both groups in fostering empathy and other prosocial behaviours, with more effective studies allowing participants to engage in the preparation and planning processes (Femia *et al*., 2008). Establishing positive relationships is crucial as literature suggests that the development of empathy can impact children's emotional regulation and intellectual development (Decety and Jackson, 2006).

Research conducted by Catalano *et al*. (2004) asserted that the children who possess a greater level of resilience and can cope better in times of adversity, are often those who have had the opportunity to form attachments with older adults outside of their own family unit. In the current climate where mental health and wellbeing is a key focus, this research around strategic ways in which to develop resilience in young children serves to reinforce the need for intergenerational practice and relationship building across the ages. It could be argued that this way of working needs to continue and develop even more so, as we emerge from the pandemic.

2.3.2: Dealing with death

The topic of death is a legitimate concern for everyone involved in intergenerational practice, and it cannot be disregarded. Statistically, children often find themselves forming connections with older adults who unfortunately pass away. Many parents express concern about how this experience may affect their children and whether exposing them to the range of emotions associated with death is necessary. While some may argue that children should be protected from discussions about death, the recent challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic served to highlight the importance of preparing children for such circumstances. However, this preparation should be approached in an age-appropriate manner, employing simple language and easily understandable concepts (Lehman, 2012).

In a study by George (2018), parents of children engaged in an American intergenerational project, who had encountered such a loss, were interviewed. All of them expressed the belief that the death had not been a traumatic experience for the child, attributing this to the sensitive and honest manner in which it had been addressed. Therefore, it could be argued that those children who were better prepared for such an event might have been those who had already been exposed to this subject in some capacity, either real or hypothetical.

Indeed, parents participating in George's (2018) study agreed that it constituted a vital life lesson. They emphasised that death is a natural progression and an inevitable aspect of life, highlighting the importance for children to comprehend the changes in the life cycle. Parents acknowledged they were aware beforehand that such an event might occur during the project, and unanimously felt that the experience contributed to their children's emotional growth. The children were encouraged to openly share their memories of the older adult and were assured that it was acceptable to feel a sense of loss. Notably, one child expressed a desire to attend the funeral of their older friend. While this may seem melancholic, researchers explained that it is, in fact, a healthy experience, illustrating the strong and loving relationships fostered during the study, which outweighed the occurrence of an older adult passing away during the project.

More recent studies conducted during the Covid era, such as the one by Walsh, Furey and Malhi (2021) or that of Bessell (2021a) have now identified that some children are experiencing more anxiety than before about the mortality risk to their older relatives and friends. Perhaps it could be argued that engagement in some sort of intergenerational practice might alleviate this anxiety and help children to process death as part of life so long as this is carried out in an age-appropriate way.

2.3.3: Narrowing the attainment gap – or not?

The literature highlighted other benefits for children who participated in intergenerational activity. These programmes were discovered to have a positive impact on various challenges faced by young children, including the enhancement of literacy and language skills, addressing issues of poor social mobility, promoting school readiness, and bridging the attainment gap. This is evident in the findings presented in the report 'The Next Generation' published by United for All Ages (2019). Whilst this study does not emanate from an academic source and would be referred to as ‘grey literature’ it has been included in this review as it raises key points around the attainment gap and the ways in which intergenerational practice can help reduce this.

Conversely, materials that were published during the Covid crisis showed that now the attainment gap was wider than ever. These academic research studies have produced compelling evidence to suggest that inequalities have risen with early years and primary school children being the most impacted (Steward and McDevitt, 2023). It could be argued that the reduction in intergenerational programmes during this period may have been a contributory factor to this but only in a small way.

2.3.4: Benefits to older adults participating in intergenerational practice

This study focused primarily on the benefits to young children as opposed to older adults because when the review was conducted that was where the paucity of literature appeared to be. However, further explanation around the benefits to older adults who participate in intergenerational practice needs to be discussed, because although there are some similarities to the benefits that young children experience in terms of the positive relationships, increased cognitive function and knowledge exchange, there are also some key differences (Doll and Bolender, 2010; Reisig and Fees, 2007; Skropeta *et al*., 2014). The greatest impact that intergenerational practice can have on older adults is by supporting them to overcome those particular deficits that are often associated with ageing, for example “impaired mobility, frailty, social isolation and loneliness” (Kenning *et al*., 2021, p. 374).

As the average age of the population continues to rise globally one might expect older adults to become more visible within our community, however, the opposite seems to be true with many older adults regarding themselves as invisible. Feeling lonely and being socially isolated can impact negatively on the overall health of a person with studies linking this isolation and loneliness to anxiety, depression, mobility issues, high blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease (Cacioppo and Cacioppo, 2014; Pagone and Briggs, 2021). Britain has taken the subject of loneliness more seriously in recent years appointing a Minister for Loneliness in 2018 (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport) with the intention of adopting strategies to tackle social isolation. Britain is not alone, because this thinking can also be seen on a more global level, for example in the Netherlands they launched a campaign entitled ‘One against loneliness’ where in some supermarkets the checkout staff were encouraged not to rush older adults through the till and to take time to connect and chat. These ‘chat checkouts’ then lead to ‘chat corners’ were the older adults could take the time after their shopping to access a relaxing area, regain their energy and have a coffee and chat (Cole, 2023). Singapore created its first intergenerational playground in 2018, it was co-located on the same site as a nursing home for the older adults and was a space for play opportunities for young and old. With the aim of getting people moving, this playground was unique in that it was completely inclusive having been designed especially to support those adults who might have extra physical needs or use a wheelchair. France too has adopted several programmes recognising that one of the greatest health risks for older adults is loneliness (Holt-Lundstat *et al*., 2015). England, Scotland and Wales are also working hard to tackle this issue, but “to date, Northern Ireland has not implemented a nationwide strategy to tackle social isolation and loneliness, leaving it the only country within the UK without one” (Cole, 2023, p. 26).

Intergenerational practice that can bring together older adults and younger generations has been acknowledged by the World Health Organisation (2021) as one way in which to tackle loneliness and isolation. Using this strategy to address social isolation also makes financial sense. For example, there is a growing body of research linking social isolation to poor nutrition and malnourishment in older adults (Agarwal *et al*., 2016; Jones and Ismail, 2022). A poor diet can result in poor health, which may lead to anaemia, dehydration, dizzy spells, falls, ulcers and ultimately in some cases hospitalisation (Agarwal *et al*., 2016; Sahin *et al*., 2016). Recognising this correlation and the lack of literature and previous research around food focused intergenerational activities, Jones and Ismail (2022) carried out a study where older adults and young children grew food together, cooked food together and ate food together. Their study highlighted the importance of inclusion and explained how some older adults with dementia or mobility issues enjoyed the experiences that gardening brings. Again, this project got people moving. For the older adults, there were positive aspects to this programme including improvements in mental wellbeing, sense of purpose, mobility and significantly the diets of the older adults improved allowing them to become stronger and healthier.

This study shows how successful intergenerational programmes could reduce the need for clinical or medical intervention in relation to some older adults. Further studies show that these type of intergenerational activities not only contribute to good physical and mental health which leads to positive ageing, for example see the work of Fancourt and Finn (2019), but they also have the potential to promote mobility whilst addressing social isolation and loneliness (Jarrott 2011; Teater, 2016). It could therefore be argued that any government funded programmes or investment in intergenerational activities would be money well spent, especially if it reduced the need for clinical interventions or hospitalisation of older adults.

2.3.5: Improved community cohesion

Several research studies, including those by Granville (2002), Pain (2005), Robinson (2006), and Highman *et al*. (2023), identified improved community cohesion as a notable benefit. However, for individuals to truly feel part of a community, it is essential for them to recognise that they have a voice and to believe that their opinions hold significance (Cole, 2023). Moore and Statham (2006) and Granville (2002) delved into the additional benefits related to the development of social capital, emphasising how intergenerational practice could serve as a framework for fostering community cohesion.

Before the pandemic, Liverpool City Council (2006) and Manchester City Council (2007) had independently generated reports and engaged in intergenerational practice, aiming to create community-oriented intergenerational programmes. Pain (2005) reaffirmed the idea that intergenerational practice aligns with government policy priorities, with certain policymakers recognising its potential positive outcomes for social cohesion. However, in order for intergenerational practice to take place there needs to be physical public space for this to occur, and this requires careful planning in relation to the architecture and design of our communities. This is an idea further discussed by Hauderowicz and Ly Serena who wrote about “spatial potentials for intergenerational relationships” (2020, p. 97). The discussion around the development of urban environments that offer age-inclusive spaces was quite limited in the materials accessed for this review, with the paucity of literature also commented upon by Thang (2015). Although the concept of ‘age-integrated’ planning is not new and was written about by Mumford back in 1949, there is still an argument to be made, that for intergenerational practice to thrive then the idea of “intergenerational spaces” needs addressing first (Vanderbeck and Worth, 2015).

In 2017, the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on social integration produced a report entitled ‘Healing The Generational Divide’ this highly emotive title inferred that there was a real issue present and something needed fixing or repairing (Dalton *et al*., 2019). The literature recognised that intergenerational practice “promotes greater understanding and respect between generations and, consequently, community cohesion” (Kernan and Cortellesi, 2020, p. 6). However, it should be noted that these materials were all published prior to the Covid crisis taking hold and demonstrated the need for urgent action then; so it could be argued that the situation moving forward as we move on from the pandemic needs to be paid even greater attention.

There is a case to make that the UK government needs to contemplate the establishment and maintenance of a continuous offer of intergenerational programmes. This could be done in a culturally sensitive way whilst affording policy makers the opportunity to assess the broader community benefits in terms of inclusion and social cohesion these interventions could bring. One potential suggestion is that Local Authorities and Central Government could adopt an ecological systems framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1977), as proposed by DeVore, Winchell, and Rowe (2016), and integrate this with the early years curriculum offerings and regulatory government standards. It could be argued that without much effort, this could easily be interwoven into frameworks that are already in place as the examples below demonstrate.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) already emphasises that the attachments that children form shape their social world and are crucial to their personal, social and emotional development. Children are encouraged to understand the world in which they live in order to foster their understanding of the diverse cultural, social and ecological environment of which they are a part (DfE, 2021). There is also a requirement for settings to deliver Fundamental British Values, which from an early age talks about mutual respect and tolerance (DfE, 2021). Intergenerational practice works well as a vehicle to deliver these goals, yet it could be argued this link is yet to be recognised.

In support of the previous point, the literature reviewed also showed that Stanistreet, Elfert and Atchoarena (2020) believed education should provide learning opportunities that promote personal growth and enable individuals to become responsible citizens. Therefore, it could be argued that these strategies promote active participation and engagement within the community in an effort to foster relations encouraging community cohesion, yet still it appeared there were limited links made between intergenerational practice and these documents within the literature reviewed. The literature from Watts (2017) further supports this argument by discussing how intergenerational practice aids the development of social capital, which then in turn enhances social cohesion.

One could argue that it is essential for everyone to experience a sense of belonging within their community and to have the ability to participate in decisions that impact their lives. Fitzpatrick (2020) asserts that urgent steps are needed to actively promote greater social cohesion by providing opportunities for a participatory approach that involves everyone in the cultural and social fabric of their community. Post-pandemic, the World Health Organisation (WHO) placed renewed emphasis on intergenerational practice by publishing its first international report addressing the impact of ageism in 2021. Furthermore, the WHO identified social inclusion as one of its eight essential domains for building and sustaining age-friendly communities (Centre for Ageing Better, 2021). Cole (2023) contends that every individual in society holds value and a place within it, emphasising the responsibility of those in the field of education to demonstrate to young people that they are integral to a broader world where everyone matters. Ironically, although older adults and young children are often perceived as marginalised groups and the most excluded in society, they are actually crucial to the establishment of a sustainable community (Buffel *et al*., 2014).

A report by The Local Government Association emphasised the importance of conducting additional research in the field to better inform future policy and practice. They highlighted the necessity for more evidence specific to the UK context regarding the effectiveness of such practices, as opposed to relying on research from countries like the USA and Japan (Springate, Atkinson, and Martin, 2008). This highlights the need for local and regional governments to collaboratively support and strategically work together in these policy areas. By advocating for intergenerational practice, the UK Government has an additional chance to enhance both the social and economic benefits to society.

2.4: Barriers to intergenerational practice

2.4.1: Lack of training leads to lack of understanding

The literature reviewed highlighted several barriers that prevented providers from adopting any kind of intergenerational practice. There was a consensus that part of this lack of involvement was down to a gap in understanding around the benefits of intergenerational practice and the confusion that existed around the context in which it could be delivered. These misunderstandings were not surprising due to the limited training opportunities that still exist in the field (Cole, 2023).

The Journal of Intergenerational Relations (JIR) was established in 2003, yet today there is still no intergenerational policy established in England and intergenerational practice does not exist as a mainstream learning theory in its own right in UK colleges or universities. However, it has been recognised that it is slowly growing as a professional learning opportunity with small pockets of research emerging (Kernan and Cortellesi, 2020).

A further consequence as a result of the limited training opportunities available, means there is a lack of suitably qualified and specifically trained staff to work in the field of intergenerational practice. This lack of training has resulted in a hybrid workforce where practitioners emerge from a traditional background, either having previously worked with children or they have come from the other end of the spectrum bringing with them carework experience with older adults (Fischer and Ferlie, 2013). It is important to recognise that the limited training opportunities are an issue, and this provides the evidence to argue that this is an area which is “key for policy design and implementation” moving forward (Hendrikx and Van Gestel, 2017, p. 1105).

2.4.2: Safeguarding

When conducting this literature review, I was unable to locate any safeguarding framework for those wanting to engage in intergenerational practice. Regardless of the specific nature of intergenerational practice discussed in the literature, it is evident that all researchers work with two of the most vulnerable segments of society. The older adults were typically aged 60 or older, and often much older, with one study having a participant who was 102 years old. Additionally, the groups of children involved were all aged 7 years or younger, posing a complex set of considerations for researchers to ensure the physical and emotional wellbeing of everyone involved. Surprisingly, none of the reviewed studies mentioned the processes undertaken concerning safeguarding. This oversight is notable, especially given the existence of Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and Article 3 of the Human Rights Act, both designed to protect these groups from any form of harm by safeguarding their wellbeing.

One could argue that additional ethical considerations could have been more thoroughly examined concerning the life experience and age of the older adults participating in these studies. For instance, if their terminology regarding ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and other aspects had not evolved with the times, there could have been a risk of inappropriate language being used with the children. This potential scenario could pose challenges that would need to be delicately addressed, as it may not always be feasible to anticipate people's remarks when working in this environment (Cole, 2023).

2.4.3: Literature highlights a lack of inclusive practice

The literature under review did not address whether children with special educational needs or behavioural issues had been intentionally excluded from the discussed studies. However, it was evident from the literature that none of the studies included children meeting these criteria. Although some children may have posed potential risks to the older adults participating, and vice versa, this aspect was not acknowledged. Rather, it seemed that the children chosen to participate in these studies who had been selected by nursery staff, appeared to include those children with slightly delayed language and communication development.

In just two of the studies reviewed which were carried out by Femia *et al*. (2008) and George (2018) children were directly consulted and asked about their willingness to participate in the programme, however in all the other cases reviewed, consent was primarily sought from parents, along with approval from gatekeepers in the respective early years settings. While this aspect is not the current focus of discussion, it raises the broader debate on consent versus assent. These studies did not explicitly elaborate on the children's sentiments regarding participation, nor did they provide insights into how the children were prepared for their involvement in the programmes. Moreover, if the children involved in these studies did not desire to partake in the presented activities, there seemed to be no opportunity for them to decline, and it appeared that they lacked any autonomy. Once again, it can be contended that ethical research practice requires ongoing consent from all participants, with an option for individuals to withdraw from the study at any given point.

2.4.4: Not a government priority

Pre-pandemic, the literature implied that intergenerational practice was not a priority for the UK government. There was a 2009 study around intergenerational practice which the Department for Education commissioned to review a programme designed to span 12 local authorities. The initial end date for this project had been scheduled for March 2011 however this study was brought to a premature close in September 2010 due to funding constraints. In 2018 the government developed the Connected Society Strategy (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport). Interestingly, it was in this paper that the Minister of State for School Standards at the time (Nick Gibb) discussed intergenerational practice, but the emphasis he placed upon this was in relation to the eradication of loneliness and social isolation. By neglecting to discuss the mutual benefits for all those who participate in these types of programmes, the lack of understanding of the field by those in Government was once more evident.

Moving forward, Cole believes that the political landscape is now slowly changing and that policy makers are starting to see “the benefits of integrated models” (2023, p. 9) and a coming together of the generations. Cole (2023) is optimistic that this might constitute more investment towards a holistic way of working in an effort to build a more integrated society. These small changes build upon the work of Heydon (2013) who attested that intergenerational practice should use the foundations that already exist within a community, and it is those strengths and resources that should be used as a starting point and developed further.

2.4.5: Lack of longevity

The studies scrutinised in connection with this literature review were all derived from short-term projects, which aligns with Jarrott's (2011) observation that there is a conspicuous absence of any longitudinal evaluations in the current field. The research appeared to be most effective in addressing these issues in co-located and integrated intergenerational settings where participation was optional due to its ongoing nature as a way of life for those involved. In these settings, which delved into specific aspects of intergenerational practice, the challenges presented by time constraints and the necessity to establish new relationships, as encountered in other studies, were not as prevalent. As highlighted by Eichsteller and Holtoff (2011), the establishment of effective relationships necessitates trust from both parties, and this trust-building process takes time. Consistency is a crucial element required for relationships to flourish (Weinstein, 2019).

2.4.6: Lack of established relationships

It is important to acknowledge, however, that while there is substantial evidence supporting the benefits to children's social and emotional development through engagement in intergenerational practice, there are instances where this may not hold true, as illustrated by the following example. In episode one of *Old People’s Home for Four Year Olds* (2018) aired on Channel 4, a group of children were tasked with making invitations for a tea party with the older adults. A nursery teacher, unfamiliar with the children, supervised the activity and, while passing one table, asked a young girl to create an invitation for her parents. The little girl responded by revealing she did not have a mother because she had passed away. This potentially distressing situation might have been avoided with a different methodological approach.

Given the aforementioned scenario, a reasonable suggestion would be that individuals organising and facilitating such studies should either possess prior knowledge about the children or have someone present from the setting the children belong to. In cases where the nursery school is situated on the same site as the accommodation for older adults, or preferably when the nursery is within the same building as the older adults, there is the advantage of having a consistent staff continuum familiar with both groups. Conducting short-term studies with external professionals who lack familiarity with the participants could potentially result in emotional distress, and this should be acknowledged as a risk factor.

On the other hand, some may contend that having individuals too closely connected to the participants could introduce bias into any findings if they are not entirely objective when recording data. This presents a challenging situation where a compromise is likely required. While the significance of organising meaningful activities for both children and older adults is crucial in such studies and interventions, prioritising the best interests of the children should still remain a primary concern.

2.5: Factors aiding success

2.5.1: Positive relationships lead to careful planning

What came through in the literature reviewed was that a key driver to success in the field was well-trained staff that had forged positive relationships with all the participants, young and old. As a result, this meant that they were in a position to plan suitable activities that progressed the learning and development for all parties involved (Epstein and Boisvert, 2006; Jarrott and Smith, 2010). It was simply not enough to put the children and older adults in a combined space and expect success (Femia *et al*., 2008). Building upon the literature concerning the planning of intergenerational practice, one could argue that the programmes considered effective in terms of delivery were those with a design base incorporating systematic planning and reflective practice.

It could be asserted that those intending to participate in intergenerational practice might simply use the existing research and practices available. For instance, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum framework (DfE, 2021) encompasses four overarching themes. Three of these can be directly applied to underpin curriculum design for intergenerational practice: positive relationships, enabling environments, and learning and development. Moreover, a fourth theme emphasising the importance of recognising the uniqueness in each child could be adapted and applied to both young children and older adults involved in these programmes. The literature highlighted that certain factors contribute to the success of some programmes over others, and a common thread among the reviewed research appears to be the careful consideration given to the planning process for intergenerational activities (Rosebrook and Larkin, 2003).

The literature examined in this review studied some of the interventions involving specifically trained staff who were familiar with both the older adults and children which supported them to facilitate effective activity planning (Gulano *et al*., 2018). The evidence suggested that this led to the establishment of a learning environment that enabled staff to engage in high-quality interactions and offer meaningful, open-ended learning opportunities. Studies of this nature also demonstrated more favourable outcomes in terms of benefits for all the parties involved (Epstein and Boisvert, 2006; Jarrott and Smith, 2010).

A report conducted by the Local Government Association entitled Intergenerational Practice corroborates this view, with the authors listing all these points as key factors for success (Springate, Atkinson and Martin, 2008). It is important to consider the planning process when intending to deliver intergenerational activities because another study highlighted that those programmes that lacked good planning were at risk of infantilising the older adults involved (Steinig, 2005), and as Cole recently commented this has unfortunately become “a trait common within the UK discourse of ageing” (2023, p. 16).

2.5.2: Well-qualified staff

The literature reviewed appeared to suggest that the recruitment of well-trained staff was pivotal to successful intergenerational practice (Epstein and Boisvert, 2006; Jarrott and Smith, 2011). More generally, Tickell (2011), Nutbrown (2012) and Roberts-Holmes (2013) have written extensively about the need for graduate led early years settings in which those leading practice understand the importance of childhood and are well versed in child development. Unfortunately, to date, these attempts for workforce reform called for by Moss (2014) have still not yet been realised. It could be argued, however, that it is necessary to revisit this point as the literature reviewed posits that when practitioners who have this high level knowledge combine this with an approach involving reflexive praxis, a space is created in which change can happen (Boardman, 2018). Intergenerational practice needs these highly knowledgeable, highly reflective practitioners who are capable of creating change in an innovative way, unafraid of disrupting the normal status quo in terms of leading learning beyond the classroom.

Earlier reports such as The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE, 2004) and Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years (REPEY, 2002) had already highlighted the need for strong leadership from reflective practitioners if early years settings were going to deliver a higher level of quality education. Meanwhile, the literature showed Whalley concurring with this view and defining reflective practice as “taking personal responsibility for the way we work with children, families and colleagues, the capacity to work autonomously and to manage change thoughtfully” (2008, p. 53). It does need to be acknowledged, that although reflective practice is a good place to start, it is only ever the beginning of any transformative process and this is no different in the field of intergenerational practice.

Whilst some studies chose to underpin the activities they delivered using Montessori styled sessions with a view to improving functional motor skills for both age groups (Camp and Lee, 2011; Lillard, 2005), the literature in relation to this is scarce. The review highlighted that the literature in general around pedagogical approaches was limited in relation to UK practice. More recently, the term “nurturing pedagogy” has become common place in early years practice which pays credence to the importance of positive relationships and the power of caring interactions (Hayes and Filipovic, 2018, p. 222). It could be said that this transfers well when applied to the field of intergenerational practice situated within an authentic cultural context.

Literature from Ireland suggested that an examination around whether or not the concept of intergenerational practice being a pedagogical strategy in its own right needed to be explored (Fitzpatrick and Halpenny, 2022). Although this was not a UK study, it could be argued that the field of intergenerational practice deserves to have a workforce that considers what they do within their practice, and what they could do differently. The type of practitioners who know when it is the right time to challenge others and when they need to refrain. Those who engage in a constant process of self evaluation and are happy to discuss their work openly with colleagues in order to support each other to develop new ways of working. In essence, it could be argued that this equates to good social pedagogues who can link theory to practice and take a holistic approach to their work. Social pedagogy as a concept stemmed from Germany and is often translated as ‘community education’ or ‘education for sociality’ pinpointed at the intersection where care and education meet (Cameron and Moss, 2011). Although the literature did not specifically mention social pedagogy in terms of intergenerational practice, it could be argued that having these core values might make this a transferrable pedagogical model.

Furthermore, it is important to note that some of the literature reviewed for this work raised the issue that intergenerational programmes often lacked any type of conceptual framework and therefore provided only anecdotal evidence of impact (Martins *et al*., 2019; Canedo-Garcia, Garcia-Sanchez and Pacheco-Sanz, 2017; Vander Ven, 2011). More generally, the literature in relation to the way in which pedagogy and curriculum informed intergenerational practice was quite scant at the time of this review.

2.5.3: Involving Families

The literature indicated that incorporating families into the entire process is identified as another key success factor, as explored in the study conducted by Epstein and Boisvert (2006). Nonetheless, it can be argued that the evidence from such studies is constrained by the short-term nature of these programmes (Belgrave, 2011; Middlecamp and Gross, 2002; Salari, 2002). That said, literature relating to Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 17) which dated back fifty years ago discussed the importance of engaging parents in any type of educational programme in which children participate so this is not a new concept:

The involvement of the child’s family as an active participant is critical to the success of any intervention programme. Without such family involvement, any effects of intervention, at least in the cognitive sphere, appear to erode fairly rapidly once the program ends.

Furthermore, in certain short-term studies, inconsistent interaction between older adults and children yielded varied outcomes, occasionally demonstrating substantial evidence of no discernible benefits for either group (Belgrave, 2011; Middlecamp and Gross, 2002; Salari, 2002).

2.6: Covid Constraints

An Australian study conducted prior to the pandemic highlighted the importance that children placed upon intergenerational relationships both within their families and the wider community (Bessell, 2017). Since this study was undertaken, the pandemic has impacted upon these relationships in terms of the restrictions and barriers that have been enforced upon both groups during periods of lockdown and beyond.

It is not unreasonable to suggest that the Covid crisis and the subsequent separation of young from old will reveal some level of deleterious impact in the future. It could be argued that it is most likely going to impact upon the social and emotional development of those who were babies and young children at the time. Furthermore, research is now emerging with Egan *et al*. (2021) writing about the impact that the closure of schools and early years settings during lockdown had on children’s social and emotional wellbeing. The stresses placed upon these interpersonal and social relationships, or lack thereof, may result in issues relating to their future sense of social connectedness and wellbeing.

Although some relationships had been moved online, this was not without problems either. Prior to the pandemic, Fuchsberger *et al*. (2012) remarked that social interactions through technological means could have a positive effect in the relationship building process, but they were by no means a suitable substitute for face-to-face interaction. They further commented, that any benefits gained from using such technology were only as a result of technology being used in addition to face-to-face interaction and not when it was only the sole means of communication (Fuchsberger *et al*., 2012). This situation was identified as problematic pre covid and it was only further exacerbated once the pandemic arrived.

A study in Singapore analysed an intergenerational therapy programme that was moved online during the pandemic (Lyu, Xu and Cheng, 2020). During the online sessions, it was noted that the lack of physical touch between the young children and the older adults resulted in less engagement from the older generation, and in particular from those with functional, visual or cognitive impairments. Although the providers were reassured that they were managing infection control and recognised the benefits of being able to engage with more participants than an in-person programme could ever facilitate, it was no substitute. The limitations presented by this way of working led them to conclude that whilst this was an acceptable temporary form of delivery, it could never permanently replace their previous in-house sessions.

Whilst the more fortunate families and settings were able to move their relationships online, there were many who did not have this luxury, and as such the relationships between young and old were paused. Such technology could only help those with the skills and access to use it, whilst those without remained isolated and disconnected. Data published by the Office for Children’s Commissioner revealed that an estimated 9% of families living in the UK lacked access to any type of computer or tablet (Vibert, 2020).

Even more worrying was the situation concerning those youngsters born during that period who have only recently just begun to establish any relationships with those outside their household. Many grandparents were still unable to meet their new family members a year or so after the beginning of the pandemic, either due to lockdowns in the UK or broader travel restrictions and border controls. It is important to recognise that there is an argument to be made here—suggesting that a year of separation from their grandchildren may cause more distress to older individuals than to the children. A year in the life of an older adult, when considered as a percentage of their remaining lifespan, is significantly higher than that of a child who, hopefully, has decades ahead of them. Thus, while the separation of generations may have safeguarded the physical health of older adults, it did not shield them from the emotional trauma resulting from these enforced separations.

Establishing online relationships with older adults or grandparents whom they had never met before proved challenging for young children right from the start. One possible explanation for this difficulty is the multifaceted nature of children's communication. Multimodality, as explored by Cowan (2014) and Flewitt (2005, 2005a), explains that children express themselves through various means, an idea not new to the field. Malaguzzi introduced the concept of the 'Hundred Languages' to signify the diverse ways children communicate, encompassing art, dance, drama, and non-verbal gestures (Malaguzzi and Gandini, 1993). It is crucial for researchers or practitioners working with children to acknowledge this diversity, ensuring that significant interactions are captured and not overlooked. Any long-term restriction of these interactions may potentially result in a transformation of social bonds and a reshaping of future relationships, altering the traditional intergenerational paradigm (Barragan *et al*., 2020).

Children engage more with those adults they trust and with who they have a meaningful relationship (Ridley, 2014) and these relationships are particularly significant for children who may be non-verbal. Yet, for this group, establishing such relationships was nearly impossible when conducting online relationships, which only served to exacerbate the problem. These findings illustrate the importance of maintaining physical contact between young children and older adults, and highlight that we must not fall into the trap of ‘virtual’ relationship building becoming the new norm. One way to ensure this does not happen is by continuing to create safe spaces and opportunities for intergenerational practice to continue, and know that in doing so, we are promoting the health and wellbeing of both groups (Barragan *et al*., 2020).

Barragan *et al*., (2020) went as far as to develop a manifesto entitled ‘Intergenerationality Adds Up Lives’ in order to address the issues that Covid-19 has brought to the fore. This manifesto proposed several recommendations in order for society to take this opportunity to create a new model for the field, in this time of change. They believe that now is the time to enact these changes and to increase the profile of intergenerational practice given the value to society this potentially provides. One of their key proposals was to increase the number of networks and groups that deliver provision from an intergenerational perspective. The literature being released now suggests that during the Covid pandemic more intergenerational groups did indeed start to emerge (Butts and Jarrott, 2021).

The Covid pandemic brought with it many constraints, but it also required people to get creative and alter their thinking, particularly around how to plan and engage with intergenerational practice. In Italy the intergenerational theatre workshops run by ‘The Sky On Earth’ transitioned their practice and instead of remaining inside the theatre they moved their performances to the grounds underneath the windows of the local nursing homes (Butts and Jarrott, 2021). Children would perform for the older adults whilst decorating the gardens and windows of the homes. In Michigan USA, a group introduced ‘Regen Storytelling Workshops’ with each session involving 5 young children and 5 older adults. They would meet online weekly for an hour and each project would last one to two months. Over this period, together they developed an improvised story to which everyone contributed six words at a time, so the final product was a truly collaborative piece of work (Butts and Jarrott, 2021).

The people of Uganda were worried about food security during the pandemic and they formed an intergenerational group to plan how they could develop sustainable food solutions. Out of this a gardening group consisting of young children and older adults came together, growing nutritious foods. This was then extended to educate the younger children about animal rearing. In Finland, older shop workers started to place teddy bears in the windows of the closed stores (Heljakka, 2020). This pandemic toy play then spread out into houses in the community. Children loved to see these displays as they walked through the town recounting the different sizes and colours on their bear hunt. However, the learning that took place extended way beyond this, as children were also educated about the reason the older adults had placed the soft toys in these windows. This action stemmed back to the First World War when people used to place two candles in a window to indicate a safe place in which refuge could be sought. It could be argued that without the pandemic constraints, these projects would never have existed in that form, and yet there is no reason why this should not have been the case. There has always been the scope for such organisations to multiply their efforts and maximise the design of their services to increase output and accessibility via new channels of communication.

What this demonstrates is that moving forward perhaps practitioners need to consider the functionality and flexibility of the intergenerational programmes that are being devised. For example, the storytellers project was born in Italy and involved older adults acting as storytellers to children aged 7 and under. This project was not designed specifically with the pandemic in mind having been devised a year earlier in 2019 (Cortellesi, 2020). Children were issued with a giant robot bell, which they used to connect with the storytellers. When a child wanted to hear a story they would shake the bell and this would alert the older adult on shift to receive a notification on their phone that the storybell was active. This was their cue to then read a story down the phone line, which the child could hear at the other end transmitted out of the storybell robot. Just like in a telephone call, the storybell robot allowed the older adult and the child to interact with each other and ask questions if they wished. Those interviewed about the simplicity of the resource perceived the absence of any video link to be of benefit, with participants commenting about the versatility of the storybell for those with impaired sight and other difficulties such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

2.7: Implications for future practice

Since 2009, the 29th April has been established as a ‘European Day of Solidarity between Generations.’ In 2020, their manifesto highlighted that this was now the time for change and encouraged communities to use what had been learned during the Covid-19 pandemic and this time of crisis, to reset and think about creating a new model of society (Barragan *et al*., 2020). This literature review contributes to the argument that there has never been a more important time to be engaging in intergenerational practice, drawing attention to the barriers and challenges that might prevent progress, whilst illustrating the value of this innovative way of working for both the young and old, and society in general.

Barragan *et al*., (2020) argues that now is the time for society to amend their existing policies in relation to intergenerational practices so new methods of communication can be adopted. Their aim is for settings to enable spaces where people from different generations can interact, and these relationships be nurtured. It could be argued that without this type of social model, society is in danger of normalising the confinement and disconnection between the generations that has occurred during the pandemic, and that this will continue as a new norm. As Bjursell (2020) points out, prior to the pandemic social isolation was already an issue for some of the older generations in society, and this is yet another gap that seems to have widened as a result of the Covid crisis. More work in the field of intergenerational practice could help to counteract this.

Slowly, new research in this area is starting to filter through. Before the pandemic, Pain (2005) addressed how intergenerational practice could help tackle issues such as loneliness and isolation among older adults caused by age segregation. However, it must be acknowledged that the Covid-19 pandemic significantly exacerbated this problem, bringing it to the forefront. At the time of writing this review, the literature discussing the challenges and successes that early years settings have had in terms of their planning for, and delivery of intergenerational activity throughout the pandemic was also limited. This may be attributed to the fact that for many settings it just ground to a halt and is something that this research addresses, along with other challenges that were faced in the field.

2.8: Summary

To conclude, this chapter discussed the history of intergenerational practice and outlined the value it has for all those who engage with it. It discussed factors identified for success in the field and reflected upon the challenges that face those who might wish to plan and deliver intergenerational practice. It has also explored what impact the Covid crisis had on the field in terms of the constraints placed upon settings, whilst going on to discuss some of the creative projects that were born out of such constraints. The review considered how now might be the right time to recognise intergenerational practice as a necessary part of our social infrastructure because of the benefits it provides to the public good. Various bodies of literature have been reviewed to reiterate how intergenerational practice can contribute to social cohesion and the wider policy implications that have arisen as a result of the pandemic, but it also highlights the barriers that are faced because intergenerational practice is not seen as a government priority.

The literature highlights the benefits that intergenerational practice brings and yet at the time of writing the UK still trails behind other countries in the field. When conducting this review, there were several key gaps identified in the literature with relation to the lack of any current intergenerational policy or standardised intergenerational safeguarding framework in England. There was literature around the benefits to older adults participating in this type of practice, but less literature around the benefits to children. The lack of training opportunities and current knowledge and understanding of the field was not really explicit in the literature reviewed. As a result, this study has employed the following research sub-questions in order to add to the current body of literature and better understand why this seems to be the situation:

* What are the benefits of intergenerational practice?
* What are the barriers to intergenerational practice?
* What motivates an early years leader to engage with intergenerational practice?

**CHAPTER THREE – THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

3.1: Introduction

The literature suggests there are a number of theoretical frameworks, each with their own strengths and weaknesses that have historically been used for research projects focused on Intergenerational Practice. The following section reviews some of the key theoretical perspectives that researchers in the field have applied as a lens through which to understand their studies, and to promote some critical reflection and dialogue around the phenomenon that is intergenerational practice.

In a study by Jarrott (2011) it was suggested that Contact Theory (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew 1998) and Erikson’s Theory (1950) were the most frequently cited theoretical frameworks to be used in the field of intergenerational practice. Further reading identified that socio-cultural theory using the work of Vygotsky (1978) and Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (1979) was also a popular choice, whilst the more recently devised Neurosequential model in Education (Perry, 2012) was an approach favoured by some Australian intergenerational researchers. It should be acknowledged however, that even today there is still a general lack of theory being used in this field, and that where it is referred to, it appears the same theoretical frameworks are being used repeatedly (Kuehne and Melville, 2014). What follows is an exploration of these theories in more depth.

3.2: The Influence of Socio-cultural Theory in the field

Socio-cultural theorists believe that learning is an active and collaborative process (Fitzpatrick, 2020) and that social relationships are central to this process. The work of many educationalists today (Rogoff, 1998; Trevarthen, 2011) continues to build upon the work of the earlier socio-cultural theorist Vygotsky (1978) and it was upon this same basis that a pedagogy of relationships was established in Reggio Emilia by Loris Malaguzzi. He believed that social learning came before any type of cognitive development (Malaguzzi and Gandini, 1993). This aligns with the work of Vygotksy who believed that each experience a child has starts off socially and the development of consciousness that evolves becomes a personal journey from which they can learn. This was termed by Vygotsky as the “path along which the social becomes the individual” (1978, p. 198). This was more recently commented upon by Veresov and Fleer who deemed that the “social environment (social interactions) are not factors, but they are the source of development” (2016, p. 327).

Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (1979) has some similarities to socio-cultural theory. Both theories offer a framework formed around a wider context involving social and cultural influences with the aim to help us understand human development and the importance of interpersonal relationships. It could be argued that one of the main points at which these theories intersect is with regard to the interaction of bidirectional influences. Bronfenbrenner discussed this idea in terms of interconnected systems whilst Vygotksy referred to this concept in terms of the more ‘knowledgeable other’ and his theory around the zone of proximal development.

In the literature reviewed, Bronfenbrenner Ecological Systems Theory (1979) seemed a popular choice through which to examine how a child benefits both directly and indirectly from engaging in intergenerational projects. This theory works upon the concept that a child does not live in a vacuum and is going to be impacted by events that unfold around them, both on a micro and a macro level. Bronfenbrenner believed that in order to have a sustainable society, the people within that society needed to “have learned the sensitivities, motivations and the skills involved in assisting and caring for other human beings” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 53). This approach could be said to mirror the values behind intergenerational practice well.

3.3: Taking a psycho-social approach

The majority of research projects that had some sort of focus around the relationship formation aspect contained within intergenerational practice and the subsequent impact social contact has in relation to reducing prejudices on both sides predominantly used Contact Theory (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew 1998). Other projects that focused on the psychosocial aspect of intergenerational practice leaned towards Erikson’s Theory, which, was applied in order to examine how young children, were being guided by the older adults they were mixing with. The repeated use of these frameworks was not a surprising revelation to me, for as far back as 2011 Jarrott conducted a review into the available literature around intergenerational practice which resulted in the conclusion that Contact Theory and Erikson’s Theory were the most frequently cited. It would appear that not much has changed in the decade since.

3.4: The Neurosequential Model

The Neurosequential model in Education (Perry, 2012) is an approach favoured by the Australian intergenerational researchers and was based around the following five aspects:

1. secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships
2. partnerships
3. high expectations and equity
4. respect for diversity
5. ongoing learning and reflective practices.

These are all indicators of quality in terms of what one would expect good intergenerational practice to encompass. This model could perhaps explain the difference in quality regarding the programmes being delivered, and maybe even account for why some are successful and others fail.

3.5: Theoretical Framework Used for this Study

As outlined above, the literature suggests there are a number of theoretical frameworks, each with their own strengths and weaknesses that have historically been used for research projects focused upon Intergenerational Practice. These include but are not limited to Contact Theory (Allport, 1954) Erikson’s Theory (Munley, 1975), Socio Cultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) incorporating Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and the Neurosequential model in Education (MacKinnon, 2012).

The theoretical framework for this study is made up of three elements and has drawn upon one of these traditional frameworks by using Socio Cultural Theory. It should be acknowledged that this theoretical framework adopts a perspective from the work of Vygotsky 1978 but discounts the Ecological Systems Theory developed by Bronfenbrenner 1979. Socio Cultural Theory was then blended with a couple of theories that are not normally used in the field of intergenerational practice. These included Self Determination Theory using the work of Ryan and Deci (2000) and Social Pedagogy using the work of Smith (2019). The following section will provide a rationale for merging these three frameworks in order to develop an appropriate lens through which to analyse the data produced during this study.

Initially, the traditional theoretical frameworks were studied closely to see which, if any, could be applied to this particular research. Those researchers that took a psycho-social approach to their work around intergenerational practice and employed the most popular choice of theoretical frameworks were studying aspects around the psychological development of their participants (Jarrott, 2011). In doing so, they used frameworks such as Contact Theory (Allport, 1954) and Erikson’s Theory (1950). Whilst Contact Theory could be applied to an element of this study in relation to the benefits of intergenerational practice, it could only address a small piece of the project. Meanwhile Erikson’s approach placed too much emphasis on the psychological development of the participants in relation to their social and cultural environment to be a suitable model for use in this particular case. Therefore I concluded that neither of these models could form an appropriate theoretical framework for this particular research.

The Neurosequential model in Education (Perry, 2012) was a popular framework for projects around intergenerational practice carried out in Australia. This newer model would certainly provide a good lens through which to investigate the quality of any intergenerational practice undertaken, however, it was not a best fit for this particular study. It did not seek to explore the motivation behind why it is particular settings opt to deliver intergenerational practice in the first place and others do not. I felt the answer to this question was important if we are to consider strategies that address how output in this area can be increased.

Out of all the traditional frameworks, Socio Cultural Theory was the one framework that I felt really resonated with this research and that was based upon the work of Vygotksy (1978). Using Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (1979) and employing the application of the Chronosystem in terms of a global pandemic might have been interesting. Fitzpatrick (2020, p. 49) talks about “young and old as beings and becomings and the value of a wide range of environments to facilitate collaborative learning.” If this was used as a theoretical framework for studies during the Covid-19 era it could have provided a lens through which to examine the impact that the pandemic had both indirectly and directly on children during this time in terms of the delivery or non-delivery of intergenerational programmes. That said, this particular model puts the child at the centre of these outer systems, and at the heart of intergenerational practice it is believed that both young children and older adults should be regarded as equal participants (Fitzpatrick, 2020). Therefore, without tweaking this model in order to also place the older adults at the heart of the outer systems, this model could prove problematic in terms of being a suitable framework for this research.

One of the key constructs of socio cultural theory is the importance of relationships in learning and development. Believing that social and cognitive development were symbiotic, Vygotsky (1978) placed a high emphasis on families, communities and children, recognising that more knowledgeable individuals would be able to guide and support children to make progress. It was important to Vygotsky that the child and the teacher should be regarded as equals when it came to this collaborative way of working which should take place in a shared cultural space (Bodrova and Leong, 2003). It is within these spaces that spontaneous things occur and the greatest learning can happen. There is an argument to suggest that this links well to the learning and development experiences that participants encounter when engaging in intergenerational practice and as such, this was deemed to be a suitable framework to consider in relation to this study. Taking the theoretical model of Vygotksy’s socio cultural theory (1978) I was able to adapt this concept and apply it to the needs of this study. I felt this would be a good lens for use with the first research question.

*Diagram 1 – Shows a socio-cultural lens applied to this study* (Vygotksy, 1978)

Whilst Socio Cultural Theory would be an appropriate framework through which to view some of the data, there were other aspects that needed to be analysed through a different lens. It became apparent, that the best way to approach this project would be to combine several theoretical frameworks to provide a more holistic lens. This strategy resulted in the formation of a new merged framework, which would serve as a model through which to support the analysis and interpret the results generated from the three research questions. The next step was for me to consider other models that had not traditionally been used in the field of intergenerational practice, but might form an appropriate lens through which to understand the generated data in relation to this particular study.

It was during this process that I discovered Self-determination Theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000). The literature reviewed around this model predominantly discussed the work done by Ryan and Deci (2000) and although not traditionally used in the field of intergenerational practice I started to think that this might prove relevant to this particular study. It could be argued that the answer to the successful planning and delivery of intergenerational programmes might actually relate more to the values/attitudes of leaders and staff, taking into account the rationale behind their actions. It seemed relevant that consideration should be paid to the motivational factors behind staff action at those settings, which participated in intergenerational practice, and had maybe placed enough importance upon this to continue to do so throughout the pandemic. Ryan and Deci (2000) talked about two different types of motivation (autonomous motivation and controlled motivation).

According to Whalley (2008) the art of reflection requires someone to be “taking personal responsibility for the way we work with children, families and colleagues, the capacity to work autonomously and to manage change thoughtfully” (p. 53). This links well with the concept of self determination theory (SDT) developed by Ryan and Deci (2000) whose research has shown that when people are autonomously motivated to do something this results in elevated levels of performance, wellness and engagement.

This is not the case with controlled motivation, which is when a person feels coerced into or obliged to do something in order to avoid punishment or gain rewards. Instantly I was reminded of those practitioners who talk about doing something because Ofsted or the Local Authority required or expected it. I wondered if these were the settings that perhaps engaged in intergenerational practice, not because they were intrinsically motivated but because they were extrinsically motivated and felt they were being controlled and had to do it. It could be argued therefore that this might be part of the reason behind why some settings failed in their efforts to deliver intergenerational practice and others have succeeded. The literature also highlighted the work of Pink (2018) who discussed how freedom could be the most powerful motivator of all. This also aligned with the concept of autonomy, which is one of the three key factors in SDT, the other two being competence and relatedness (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

This seemed to be an appropriate theoretical framework to use for this particular project. Not only could this theory be applied to learn more about those leaders who plan and deliver intergenerational practice, but it could also be taken further in relation to those who participated in intergenerational programmes. It might be argued that those programmes deemed to have successful outcomes were those that took place in settings where the older adults and children were intrinsically motivated to engage in the activities, as opposed to having a timetable of events thrust upon them. I wanted to discover what motivated a setting to engage in these intergenerational programmes, for example, did the leaders/practitioners consider the participants perspectives, were they providing the participants with choice, did they understand that there may be barriers to participation which they needed to work with participants to overcome in order to elevate the situation? This theoretical framework would provide an effective lens through which to address these questions and were particularly relevant to research questions two and three. Taking the theoretical model of autonomy, competence and relatedness, a diagram developed by Ryan and Deci (2017) was adapted and applied to suit the needs of this study.

*Diagram 2 – Shows how Self Determination Theory has been applied to this study*

(Ryan and Deci, 2017)

There was one further model that I came across when researching potential frameworks for use with this study. This was the concept of Social Pedagogy. Whilst social pedagogy is widely used in Latin America and continental Europe, the values of this philosophy have only recently become mooted in Britain (Edwards and Hatch, 2003; Cameron, 2004). It is suggested that this way of working has the potential to enhance existing educational models by offering a “values-led approach to relationship-centred practice that aims to holistically support people’s wellbeing, learning and social inclusion” (Smith, 2019, p. 1). This three-pronged approach, which responds to the head, heart and hands seemed to fit quite well with the concepts behind intergenerational practice, although the literature reviewed for this study was unable to provide any examples where social pedagogy had been directly applied to studies around intergenerational research.

In the current neoliberal landscape Moss (2014) argues that in order for educational change to happen society needs to recognise the value of alternative provisions that promote a more ethical way of living and being. Society needs to consider other ways of working that could fill the void created by removing the current system, however, Moss (2014) also reminds us that Foucault espoused that if there is a dominant discourse then there will always be resistance. However, by adopting a more social pedagogical approach and engaging in more intergenerational practice it could be argued that although things are starting to be done differently, ultimately it is for the greater good. Intergenerational practice is a way through which a more equal society can be created via educational means, and that is what the literature reviewed in the previous chapter confirmed as one of the key benefits of this way of working.

Social pedagogy is interested in how society supports its marginalised members, and young children and older adults could be argued to fall into this classification. Furthermore, it is closely aligned to the cultural attitudes and traditions that exist within a community and seeks to strengthen these societal bonds. The literature sometimes referred to social pedagogy as ‘community education’ and again, this terminology could be applied to intergenerational practice. Collectively, although not a traditional model applied to intergenerational practice, this seemed a fitting approach to adopt for this study. Taking the model of head, heart and hands, and a diagram developed by Singleton (2015) I was able to adapt this concept and apply it to meet the needs of this study.

*Diagram 3 – shows how social pedagogy has been applied to this study* (Singleton, 2015)

3.6: Summary

By combining the three models discussed above, the theoretical framework for this study was born.

*Diagram 4 – Theoretical Framework used for this study*

The process of steps undertaken to reach this point has enabled me to state with confidence that this research is grounded in established ideas.

The next chapter outlines the methodology used to undertake this research, which was carried out over a nine month period in the North of England.

**CHAPTER FOUR - METHODOLOGY**

4.1: Introduction

This chapter will critically evaluate the rationale behind the suitability of the chosen research strategy. A case study approach was chosen as the vehicle through which the research questions could be addressed and the project conducted. Literature suggests that this strategy is particularly useful to facilitate research in the field of early childhood education (Thomas, 2011; Atkins and Wallace, 2012; Albon and Mukherji, 2015). When considering other methodologies I always reverted back to the case study approach. The closest considered ‘other’ methodology was ‘action research’ but as the whole purpose of action research is to make improvements to practice, which are then evaluated and revisited in order to make yet further changes (Atkins and Wallace, 2012) this would have been problematic to execute. Furthermore, it was certainly not my intention to critique the effectiveness, nor, the quality of the intergenerational practice, particularly that which was delivered during a pandemic. So the case study approach was confirmed as the most suitable framework to follow. Once the questionnaires had been returned, a number of identical activities were carried out over a period of time at the identified settings that had filtered through to the next phases. These included a semi-structured interview, learning walk, autonomy audit and an online personality quiz.

All the components that contribute to the methodology for this study will be explored. A review of my positionality as the researcher leads into a discussion around research paradigms and the subsequent design for this project. This is followed with information about the methods, the participants and an examination of the ethical considerations necessary for this study, after which a discussion explains how the data were analysed. To conclude the chapter, there will be a review of the generalisability of the study and reliability of the data, with a justification provided as to why I believe this research has been both credible and trustworthy. The term methodology is used to describe the overarching research strategy taking into account an analysis of the selected methods and data collection process (Denscombe, 2010; Menter, 2013).

Clough and Nutbrown (2012, p. 39) discuss the importance of remaining “methodologically self-conscious” and this is what I have also strived to do throughout this process whilst investigating the following three key questions:

* What are the benefits of intergenerational practice?
* What are the barriers to intergenerational practice?
* What motivates an early years leader to engage with intergenerational practice?

This project was split into three separate phases and the methods adopted are outlined in the diagram below.

*Diagram 5 – Methods Used*

**Phase One** **Phase Two Phase Three**

Semi-structured Interviews

Interviews

Questionnaires

R

Learning Walk

Autonomy Audit

Personality Quiz

Taking a sequential exploratory approach I was able to analyse data from phase one of the study, which then informed the process undertaken for phase two. This process was then repeated with the findings from phase two informing phase three. Applying this strategy allowed me to gain a deeper level of understanding about the subject and enabled me to investigate this topic from a variety of perspectives (Opie, 2019).

The following table summarises which methods addressed which research questions.

*Table 3 – Methods Aligned to Research Questions*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Methods | RQ1:  What are the benefits of intergenerational practice? | RQ2:  What are the barriers to intergenerational practice? | RQ3:  What motivates an early years leader to engage with intergenerational practice? |
| Phase One |  |  |  |
| Initial Questionnaire | ✔ | ✔ |  |
| Phase Two |  |  |  |
| Semi-structured interview | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| Phase Three |  |  |  |
| Learning Walk | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| Autonomy Audit |  |  | ✔ |
| Personality Quiz |  |  | ✔ |

Phase one was the questionnaires. Phases two and three involved visits to the chosen settings in order to conduct some deeper level investigation regarding the success and challenges that had been faced in this field in recent years. More information also needed to be gathered regarding the motivation behind those choosing to implement and deliver intergenerational activities, particularly when the response on the initial questionnaire indicated that none of these settings had undergone any formal training in the field. There was no obligation for any of these leaders to engage with this way of working, so phases two and three sought to unpick what made the leaders at these settings want to operate differently and participate in intergenerational practice.

4.2: Researcher Positionality

I concurred with the view from Nightingale and Cromby (1999) that it is impossible for a researcher to remain outside their own research and that “social science research is saturated with positionality” (Clough and Nutbrown, 2012, p. 10). Using questionnaires in phase one, which were submitted to the participants, completed by them and then returned to myself, enabled me to adopt more of an outsider role in terms of researcher positionality. However, I was not able to maintain this way of working as I moved forward through the other two phases. It could be argued that the application of different data collection methods within the study caused my positionality to shift along the spectrum that defines objectivity at one end and subjectivity at the other. As the project progressed, I found myself further away from objectivity and closer to subjectivity as I strived to make sense of the reflections and experiences that were being relayed to me. Engaging in face to face interviews in phase two, and then being shown around the settings chatting informally to the participants in phase three had meant stronger relationships with the participants were being established. The reason for this was that a more personalised approach was required as the study passed through each phase, and hence, as I became more involved with the participants, the level of objectivity displayed by myself was reducing.

I should make the point that objectivity as discussed here, does not infer that a researcher must remain neutral, it simply argues that a researcher should strive to avoid a situation where any personal beliefs and values might introduce bias into the study. It is reasonable to suggest that every person whoever they are, or wherever they come from holds their own cultural values and beliefs. In this case, my views aligned with those of Johansson, Emilson and Puroila, (2018, p. 4):

We see values as socially constructed and embedded in time, place and culture. Values are relational because they refer to our intersubjective life with others.

Therefore, it could be argued that the important point is that these values and beliefs are acknowledged by the researcher. Cohen, Mannion and Morrison (2018) suggest that researchers need to position themselves so they can try and reduce any “power differentials” (p. 136). I appreciated that being invited into the participant’s world was a privilege. During the research process the participants were asked to reflect on what had gone well and what had been challenging. By asking them to consider such matters I had to ensure that they did not feel judged, so in an effort to alleviate this I ensured that I remained empathetic whilst retaining a level of formality and informality (Hochschild, 2012).

In terms of subjectivity and being honest about my positionality, I endeavoured to follow the guidance from Mao *et al*. (2016) who advised that researchers should consistently reflect upon their individual “positionality, social location, power and privilege” (p. 6). In response to this, the concept of researcher power and the key ethical issue of power imbalance was something that I was conscious of. I accepted that “power relations are immanent in all research settings” (Brooks, Riele and Maguire, 2014, p. 106) but again I felt that this was on an ever-shifting continuum. In terms of designing and conducting the research I may have been the knowledgeable other; but in terms of intergenerational experiences from working in the field, then the participants held more power as they were the knowledgeable ones and I was there to learn more about the subject.

The participants were aware of my current standing as a university lecturer in early years and this did not appear to intimidate or silence them. They openly shared their views and opinions and this was particularly evident during the learning walk, a strategy that lends itself to “informal conversational interviews” (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2018, p. 510). This particular method afforded the participants the freedom to have their true voices heard, whilst allowing me to learn about their perceptions and experiences in relation to intergenerational practice. However, at all times I remained aware of the potential for any power imbalance in relation to the interviewer and the interviewee (Atkins and Wallace, 2012). It was important the participants felt able to provide responses that were authentic, and that they were not trying to base their replies on what they thought that I as the researcher wanted to hear reminiscent of the Hawthorne Effect (Basit, 2010). In order to counteract such an event, I followed the guidance from Basit (2010) and Denscombe (2010) using follow up questions to clarify responses and key points made by the participants. This strategy is known as “respondent validation” (Denscombe, 2010, p. 299) and using such a process allowed me to confirm their answers so that the final representation of participant data remained authentic. Furthermore, through the use of extended questioning I was able to drill down deeper into the details of the data being provided.

By the time the learning walk was carried out in phase three of this research, a good level of researcher/participant rapport had been established, and as before, prior to each data gathering process beginning, continued consent was gained from the participants to ensure they were in agreement with and understood the research method being used. Although the learning walk involved me laptop in hand, typing as I went whilst being guided by the participants through each setting, it was a strategy that the participants were familiar with, as this is how current Ofsted Inspections are conducted. The approach feels more relaxed than traditional structured or semi-structured interviews, but it should be noted that the researcher is unable to maintain as much direct eye contact with the participants; however, the researcher is still able to acknowledge and validate all the contributions from the participants. The learning walk was conducted in person, in the familiar environment of their own setting, and previous studies have highlighted how this strategy supports participants to feel valued as the process takes place within a safe space where they are able to speak freely and with ease, as highlighted in literature from Thomas (2011) and Shapka *et al*. (2016).

I fully acknowledge the fact that the themes for this study were generated from the point at which the data resonated with my interpretive framework, and this framework had been founded upon my own training, skills and assumptions. This process continued through into the writing up of this thesis. Scaife (2004) implores researchers to be honest when writing the research report and to acknowledge their own biases, views and values of the world, which have already been discussed in Chapter One. Furthermore, Braun and Clarke (2020) believe that researchers using reflexive thematic analysis should own their perspectives, their personal and social standpoint, and their positioning. These approaches underpinned this study and formed the framework that I reflexively referred back to at each stage of the project when engaged in this research.

4.3: Research Paradigm

By reflecting on my philosophical standpoint, I was able to appreciate the rationale behind why I had adopted a qualitative approach to my work. This choice was rooted in my interpretivist epistemology, as discussed by Punch (2013) and Basit (2010), coupled with a relativist ontological perspective according to Ritchie *et al*. (2013). Basit (2010, p. 16) characterises this methodological paradigm as a way to attain "depth rather than breadth," serving as a suitable methodology for research that captures the perspectives of participants, social situations, and experiences. This resonated with my personal values and beliefs.

As a researcher with an interpretivist orientation, I believed that I would come across various interpretations of truth in this study. My aim was to capture the participants' individual perspectives on truth. This notion of multiple truths aligns with the postmodernist perspective. To remain within the paradigmatic framework, it might be more fitting to employ a broader definition. For example, Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 105) articulate a paradigm as:

The basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, influencing choices of method and fundamentally shaping ontological and epistemological stances.

To clarify, the research for this study was predominantly qualitative in nature because as an interpretivist researcher I naturally opt for a more qualitative paradigm (Secker *et al*., 1995; Altheide and Johnson, 1994) seeing the world as socially constructed. This is a view shared by Hammersley (2000) who believed “there is no such thing as objective knowledge but only knowledge that is socio-culturally situated” (p. 3). As a result of this ontological outlook, I was able to recognise the extent to which my findings might be subjective, appreciating that some people understand and make sense of the world on their own terms (Marshall and Rossman, 2016). However, owning this viewpoint also required me to accept that this philosophical stance also meant agreement of the fact that I would be unable to create objective methods or research because this was just not possible (Popper, 1974). Takahashi and Araujo (2020) more recently alluded to the same thing when they said that “an interpretive epistemology leads to the rejection of an objective reality” (p. 109).

The literature espouses that epistemologically, case studies have the potential to be compatible with those who follow a positivist or interpretivist trajectory (Takahashi and Araujo, 2020). Where the divergence occurs is with the choice of methods and data analysis, the details of which should enable any reader to identify the ontological and epistemological stance of the researcher. A discussion around the methods and data analysis used for this particular study will follow later on in this chapter.

I was afforded the opportunity to consider any values implicitly or explicitly that might influence this study as I scrutinised my research paradigm. Furthermore, conducting such a critique created a space for further contemplation around the methodological approach taken for this study, whilst at the same time, providing the justification for the selected methods. I considered how these might have been influenced by my own values in addition to any other external factors. This process was then able to support me to reflect upon my own ontological and epistemological positioning and as a result increased my awareness regarding the need to be a critical, reflective and reflexive researcher.

I decided to approach this from the perspective of Attia and Edge (2017) whose work stemmed from that of Masny (2016) and who based their view of reflexivity as a two pronged approach. It was important for me to reflect upon how I was affected myself by the research process and in turn how I was also affecting the research. This allowed me to question my own past experiences and assumptions. I believe that by taking this approach I have provided a more holistic level of reflexivity, which adds to the overall credibility/trustworthiness of the study. It is difficult to say how any researcher should approach potential unconscious bias, because it is hard to address factors of which they are not aware. For this reason, I decided that it was important to keep a research diary, which was used as a reflective tool to assist with my self-awareness. Pollard (2002, p. 17) states that reflective practice is about challenging oneself and paying attention to the importance of “open-mindedness, responsibility, wholeheartedness.”

4.4: Research Design

After reviewing the literature around research design, and recognising that my own ontological and epistemological position would inform other aspects of the process including the selection of an appropriate methodology and methods, I opted to use the following model created by Grix (2002) as the basis for my own overarching framework.

*Diagram 6 – shows the research design that inspired this study* (Grix, 2002, p.180)

A diagram of methods and methods

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

By carefully considering each of these components I was able to formulate the following design so it flowed with a level of internal coherence. Takahashi and Araujo (2020) term this process “research alignment” (p. 100).

*Diagram 7 – the research design for this specific study*

As discussed earlier in this chapter, my ontological and epistemological positions have already been outlined. Moving onto the methodological approach used, this was identified because Yin (2014) suggested that researchers who sought to explore a phenomenon within a real-life context would find a case study approach fitting. However, classifying this case study in terms of the genre was not as straight forward, because there were elements of it that matched aspects of both the descriptive and the exploratory form. I had no deep level understanding around the research topic and wanted to explore it further, and I also wanted to do this within the real-life context in which it existed. To compound matters further, the surrounding literature posed another issue in relation to whether a case study is actually a methodology as believed by Merriam (2009) and Yin (2015) or whether it is to be defined as a research strategy as Cresswell (1998) suggested. Ultimately, I decided that this work aligned itself best with Stake (1995) who used the term ‘intrinsic case study’ for when a researcher decides to conduct a study because they have a genuine interest in the subject matter and they believe that other people would be interested in this too.

The methods used and the process undertaken to complete the data analysis will be explored within separate subsequent sections of this chapter. A realistic timescale of nine months was scheduled for the data to be collected and analysed. Whilst this might seem like a long period of time for a piece of work this length, it was justified, because of the study being split into three phases with each phase informing the next. This meant that the findings and analysis from each phase needed to be conducted before I was able to progress with the next phase of the study.

4.5: Methods

Using a case study approach, this project adopted a qualitative enquiry using mixed methods. It was both sequential and exploratory, structured to take place over three phases and culminated with two small case studies completed. It was inspired by the work of Stake (1995) and influenced by Gough and Thomas who recognised that this was a way to “think small but drill deep” (2016, p. 67). Yin (2014) also discussed how this approach enabled research to be conducted in a real life context, which further supported the decision to frame the design in this way.

I reasoned that adopting a mixed method approach to generate both quantitative and qualitative data would need further explanation as to how this enhances the data collection. However, there is a complexity here that needs to be addressed, for it could be argued that if the values of the researcher are linked to their ontological and epistemological stance, which in turn supports the establishment of the methodology which then informs the methods, then it is reasonable to question what justification there is for using mixed methods. This issue was raised by Sale, Lohfeld and Brazil, (2002), who stated that “quantitative and qualitative methods represent two different paradigms, they are incommensurate” (p. 50). However, I take the view that it might not be so problematic after all, because Sale, Lohfeld and Brazil (2002) also mention in that same article, that if the researcher is using mixed methods and accepts that one set of data complements the other, enhancing the data but not necessarily validating it, then there should be no reason why mixed methods cannot be used without issue. Literature from Caracelli and Green (1997) further supports this argument and refers to this type of design as adding structure and value to a research project believing that results from one method type have the ability to enhance or clarify the findings from another dominant method type. That argument is applied in relation to this study, which adopts a mixed method approach because it lends itself stylistically to the uniqueness of this research and the questions being asked.

In relation to this study, there will be those who take the view that researchers who follow a mixed methods approach fall into the philosophical school of pragmatism, see for example the work of Bazeley, 2018; Johnson *et al.* 2014, and Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003. However, having reflected upon this idea, and appreciating that I have taken a pragmatic perspective in terms of selecting the best methods to suit the research questions and gather the data, I still believe I firmly fall into the school of interpretivism. Utilising a mixed methods approach does not necessarily mean I have to shift my epistemological foundation because interpretivism can also align with a mixed methods approach for the following reasons. In phase one both quantitative and qualitative data were collected via the questionnaire, and this information was then used to guide the development of the qualitative measures used within phases two and three. Adopting this approach in phase one allowed the research to be attuned to both the social and cultural context of the study along with the perspectives of the participants, resulting in a holistic view around the complexities that present in terms of the benefits of and barriers to intergenerational practice. Interpretivism emphasises the importance of understanding the social and cultural context in which the participants operate and it could be argued that combining the strengths of both these approaches resulted in a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding that would not have been present if the quantitative aspect of the questionnaire used in phase one had been omitted.

4.5.1: The Pilot

When searching for material guidance about the importance of conducting a pilot prior to commencing this study, I found the literature to be quite limited, a point raised previously by authors such as Kim (2011) and O’Cathain *et al.* (2015). As I delved deeper into this I learned that rather than conduct a pilot which “tries out the operation of all pieces as they will be implemented in the planned study” as defined by Doody and Doody (2015, p. 1074) I realised that what I needed to complete was a partial pilot that tried out certain aspects of the study, a process which Doody and Doody termed a “feasibility study” (2015, p. 1074).

I asked three university students who were studying part time but working full time to pilot the questionnaire and the interview for me. This had to be two separate processes, as I could not devise the interview questions until the responses from the actual questionnaire had been analysed meaning there was a gap of around three months between these two tasks. The students were issued with the pilot questionnaires to self-complete and return. They said they found the questions easy to understand and the format of the questionnaire simple to follow. There were no criticisms raised for me to act upon, so with this feedback I chose not to make any amendments but felt it had been a valuable exercise with the potential to enable me to identify any revisions or adjustments that might have been needed before launching into the live study.

With regard to the semi-structured interview questions these were not carried out at the student’s settings, but at the university after class. Silverman (2013) highlights that qualitative researchers often use their pilot to focus on research design and cites interview protocols as being the most commonly piloted issue. This was also true in this case as I had been wavering whether to audio record the interviews and then to transcribe the interviews, or whether to try and type them verbatim as I went. During the pilot I opted to see if I would be able to type the student responses directly onto the laptop. Years ago, I had secured a typing qualification of 100 words per minute so this was not an unrealistic strategy to pilot even if I had lost some of my skill. It transpired that actually this was a good way of working because I managed to keep up most of the time and as the students engaged in their thinking time before they responded, if needed I could catch up. I was pleased with this result as it meant it would save me a lot of time further down the line. The students also commented that they would prefer the researcher to engage in this way of working rather than being recorded.

In terms of the learning walk, there was no possibility of piloting this method as it was too bespoke. Similarly, I felt there was no point piloting the autonomy audit or the personality quiz as these were pre-established methods that were simply being applied to this particular study. Doody and Doody (2015) comment that “a pilot can be used to self-assess readiness, ability and commitment as a researcher” (p. 1075) a view also previously supported by Beebe (2007) and Lancaster, Dodd and Williamson (2004). As this was a small-scale research project I felt that in terms of conducting a feasibility study and some aspects of a pilot that I had demonstrated that the research methods were viable and that the study should go ahead as designed. It could also be argued in line with the work of Padgett (2008) that this strategy also served to add further credibility to the study.

4.5.2: Participants

This research is about intergenerational practice and it could therefore be questioned as to why I have omitted to ask any older adults or young children to participate in this study. The rationale behind this decision is that the focus of the study is on practitioners, in particular, those leaders responsible for delivering intergenerational practice at their early years settings. I wished to learn more about their practice, their motivation, the successes and challenges they had faced in planning for and delivering intergenerational practice and what adaptations if any, they had made to address the constraints presented by the covid pandemic. This explains why this methodological paradigm was suitable for this study because it “interprets social reality the way it is viewed by the research participants” (Basit, 2010, p. 14).

In order to access those practitioners who planned for and delivered intergenerational practice, I had to engage in the use of “purposive sampling” (Denscombe, 2010, p. 34). This enabled me to focus on their role and be in a position to explore in detail their issues and concerns, as well as their successes in terms of moving forward from prior to, during and after the pandemic in terms of delivering sustainable intergenerational practice.

Initially, I thought that all participants would be adult practitioners from one or more of the following settings within the Liverpool City Region, preschool, primary school, afterschool clubs or children’s centres. However, it soon became obvious that I would have to broaden this boundary if I was to get the information I needed, so the study was extended geographically to include the North of England. I took the opportunity to distribute information about the study at an early years event targeted at graduates. There was a good response from the delegates there, but it needs to be acknowledged that this has influenced the demographic data in terms of the qualification levels of participants in phase one. As this research study is about the coming together of generations, I took the active decision to ensure that all participants were over the age of 18 but I chose not to compartmentalise them any further as I felt that this would have no bearing on the outcomes.

I did have a concern at the start of this research as to what might happen if too few settings engaged in intergenerational practice. However, I did not let this dissuade me from continuing to pursue this project, as I believed that even if I only managed to gather one case study from one setting then that would still be valuable information (Woods and Sikes, 2022). Requests to participate in phase one were distributed to a total of 150 settings, 42 of which responded and indicated they would like to take part in this study. Upon receipt of the 42 completed questionnaires, two settings were identified as eligible to participate in phases two and three of the study, as they were the only organisations that indicated any engagement with true intergenerational practice. It was recognised at an early stage that this would not be classed as generalisable data, but it was still valid and important and perhaps relatable to others. The fact that the data would not be generalisable did not pose a problem to me, as I was of the belief that I had a basic human responsibility to the participants with whom I was working to tell their story and value that story, whether that was one person or one hundred.

*Table 4 – Participant Demographics from phase one of the study*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Gender | 42 Females |
| Length of time spent working with children aged 7 or under | 1-5 years (2); 5-10 years (4); 10-15 years (5); over 15 years (31) |
| Highest qualification | GCSE or equivalent (1); NVQ 3 (5); BTEC (1); Foundation degree (3); Bachelor’s degree (3); EYPS/EYTS or QTS (12); Master’s degree (17) |
| Type of settings | School nursery (26); PVI daynursery (13); PVI Preschool (1); Rainbows (1); Charity (1) |

*Table 5 – Participant Demographics from phases two and three of the study*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Gender | 2 Females |
| Length of time spent working with children aged 7 or under | over 15 years (2) |
| Highest qualification | EYPS/EYTS or QTS (2) |
| Type of settings | PVI Preschool (1); Charity (1) |

There were two participants involved in phases two and three of this study. The participant from setting one is responsible for a charitable run nursery first established in 2022. This is an innovative intergenerational nursery setting that is situated within a mix of independent and supported living accommodation. The nursery operates all year round and is open six days a week Monday- Saturday from 7.45am and 6.00pm. The number of places the setting can offer is 25. The nursery caters for children from birth to five and provides funded early education for children. There are children at this nursery who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and others with English as an additional language (EAL). As this is a new setting it is awaiting its first Ofsted inspection post registration, however the owner does have another nursery setting which at the last Ofsted inspection was classed as outstanding.

The participant from setting two is responsible for a privately run sessional preschool first established in 2005. It has two classrooms, one for children aged 2-3 years and one for children 3-4 years, an office, toilet facilities and a fully enclosed area for outdoor play. The setting operates on the grounds of a local primary school and employs twelve members of staff. Four members of staff are qualified to level six and the rest are qualified to level 3. The preschool operates term time only with morning and afternoon sessions held between 8.45am and 3.45pm. The number of children on roll is 54 and the total number of places the setting can offer is 50. The preschool provides funded early education for two, three and four year old children. There are children at this preschool who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and others with English as an additional language (EAL). At their last Ofsted inspection this setting was classed as outstanding.

4.5.3: Phase One Methods

*Table 6 – Phase one methods aligned to research questions*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Methods  Phase One | RQ1:  What are the benefits of intergenerational practice? | RQ2:  What are the barriers to intergenerational practice? | RQ3:  What motivates an early years leader to engage with intergenerational practice? |
| Initial Questionnaire | ✔ | ✔ |  |

The data collection method used for phase one of this study involved traditional questionnaires (Appendix D) designed to provide the data needed to respond to the first and second research question. These were effective in eliciting participant information and posed both open and closed questions. This method enabled me to cover a larger geographical area, was cost effective and a useful way to generate both “qualitative and quantitative data in parallel” (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2018, p. 181). This was needed in order to identify participants and enable the move into phase two of the research. Furthermore, the data from these questionnaires could be standardised, as the questions posed to the practitioners were all identical. Requests were sent out to 150 settings and 42 questionnaires completed and returned. This was done in a variety of ways, online, in person and by post.

One of the key purposes for starting this study with a questionnaire was to identify settings that engaged with any type of intergenerational practice. It also sought to identify settings who had halted their practice during the pandemic in addition to those who had carried on in some form. The questionnaire ascertained some key information from a number of participants, which was needed before phase two could be implemented. Questions 1 to 5 and 8 to 10 asked for factual responses using pre-populated choices. Questions 6 and 7 asked for an individually crafted response. As a result, questions 1 to 5 and 8 to 10 were analysed statistically and questions 6 and 7 were analysed using a reflexive thematic approach (RTA) in line with Braun and Clarke (2020). This information included but was not limited to:

1. If they understood what was meant by intergenerational practice
2. If they had ever engaged in intergenerational practice
3. If they had ever received any training in this area
4. If they knew what the benefits were to older adults, young children, staff and the community through participation in intergenerational practice
5. What barriers they perceived might prevent intergenerational practice taking place
6. If they had continued to engage in intergenerational practice during the covid crisis.

From the outset, participants were advised that not all settings from phase one would meet the criteria for further phases of this study and as such those settings completed their involvement at the end of phase one. Being upfront about this funnel approach with potential participants in the participant information sheet meant that nobody should feel rejected if they were not invited to participate in the next phase, as they would understand why they did not meet the criteria for this. However, they were reassured that data from their participation in phase one would still be used in the study to help support a greater understanding around the subject.

4.5.4: Phase Two Methods

*Table 7 – Phase two methods aligned to research questions*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Methods  Phase Two | RQ1:  What are the benefits of intergenerational practice? | RQ2:  What are the barriers to intergenerational practice? | RQ3:  What motivates an early years leader to engage with intergenerational practice? |
| Semi-structured interview | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |

After reviewing the data from the returned questionnaires in phase one, two participants were invited to take part in phase two, which was designed to gather qualitative data and adopted an approach using semi-structured interviews (Roberts-Holmes, 2012). The interview questions (Appendix E) were designed in order to elicit further data in response to the three research sub questions. This strategy also enabled me to further investigate the responses from the questionnaires in phase one. This was deemed to be a suitable method as it allowed me to probe for deeper responses from the participants than the questionnaires had afforded.

It was important that the participants felt they could freely discuss their work and reflect upon the challenges and successes they had experienced, but it was stipulated that they were not to name any children or parents or older adults who had been involved in their intergenerational projects. This was also highlighted in the initial participant information sheet and on the consent form. Furthermore, a verbal reminder was also given to each participant prior to the interview commencing.

Both interviews were electronically recorded onto a laptop in real time, again this was mentioned in the participant sheet and consent form so the participants were prepared. I also verbally checked this was understood and that each participant was in agreement with this prior to any interview commencing.

4.5.5: Phase Three Methods

*Table 8 – Phase three methods aligned to research questions*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Methods  Phase Three | RQ1:  What are the benefits of intergenerational practice? | RQ2:  What are the barriers to intergenerational practice? | RQ3:  What motivates an early years leader to engage with intergenerational practice? |
| Learning Walk | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| Autonomy Audit |  |  | ✔ |
| Personality Quiz |  |  | ✔ |

Phase three allowed me to ascertain more information collectively for all three research questions and consisted of three different models of data collection which were:

* Learning walk/tour of the setting
* Autonomy audit
* Online personality questionnaire.

When deciding how to collect the data for phase three of the research, I ensured that I selected methods that could be used to generate both quantitative and qualitative data which would help participants to

* examine the challenges and successes they had encountered when delivering intergenerational practice or explanations as to why this practice had ceased
* reflect upon what motivated them to engage in intergenerational practice and finally
* have a safe space to contemplate and discuss their concerns around the delivery of intergenerational practice moving forward.

This latter point is important as busy practitioners rarely have the time or are presented with the opportunity to reflect upon and discuss these wider social issues, which are relevant because they do impact upon the development of the children in their care (MacNaughton and Hughes, 2011).

As well as further exploring the benefits and barriers to intergenerational practice, phase three was designed to capture more information regarding the three main components that Ryan and Deci use to define their Self Determination Theory (1985); these are competence, autonomy and relatedness. Self-determination theory (SDT) as explained earlier when discussing the theoretical framework for this study, is based around the concept of motivation. SDT places motivation into two categories, that of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. More recently this model has been expanded upon with researchers such as Pink (2018) deducing that people with particular character traits will fall into the intrinsic category or the extrinsic category. With this in mind he has set out a test to ascertain the different personality types. He labels these personality types as type ‘I’ (instrinsic) or type ‘X’ (extrinsic).

Phase three began with a learning walk. This encompassed a tour of the setting and generated the space for natural conversation to flow as the participants gave me a show around. It elicited qualitative data that addressed all three of the research questions. This process could also be classed as an unstructured interview, or an “informal conversational interview” as defined by Cohen, Mannion and Morrison (2018, p. 510). This data collection strategy, which is more like an informal chat (Berry, 1999) allowed me as the researcher to “elicit people’s social realities” (Wildemuth, 2017, p. 239). I felt this was important for gathering data in relation to all the research questions. It was a safe space where participants could voice their perceptions and experiences, with the intention being this strategy would elicit more authentic responses. As we toured the setting I had my laptop in hand and recorded the conversation that unfolded naturally by typing it up as we went along.

The second data collection method used in phase three asked the participants to complete an autonomy audit (Appendix F). Again, this is a strategy designed by Pink (2018) but tests out the theory from Ryan and Deci (2017) regarding the theory that people need to control the course of their lives if they are to feel truly motivated by having a good level of autonomy. The audit generated quantitative data and consisted of 4 brief questions where each person had to score themselves between 0 and 10, with 0 meaning “almost none” and 10 meaning “a huge amount” of autonomy in their working life (Pink, 2018 p. 164).

The final data collection method used in phase three consisted of a short online questionnaire that was in essence a personality quiz. This again had been designed by Pink (2018) and participants accessed this online (www.danpink.com/drive.html) in order to determine which personality type leaders were most aligned to, type ‘I’ (intrinsic) or type ‘X’ (extrinsic). Each participant was provided with an online link, which led them to the questionnaire where they had to answer a series of 30 questions, grading their responses from a choice of 5 listed options identified as strongly agree down to strongly disagree. Once this task had been completed the computer automatically analysed the data and presented the participant with the results of their personality type.

4.6: Ethical Considerations

The main “criterion for educational research is that it should be ethical” (Wellington, 2015, p. 54). Before any work could commence on this project I undertook an ethics module, which I passed in September 2020. In addition to this I also had to gain ethical clearance from the University of Sheffield Ethics Committee. This was granted in March 2021 (Appendix A). I was asked by the panel to consider a minor adjustment with regard to whether or not I should use purely online methods due to the covid situation at the time. Whilst an online first approach to fieldwork might have seemed more appropriate under the circumstances, my preference was to conduct in-person interviews. This thinking was motivated by a research report from Shapka *et al*. (2016, p. 361) who found that “interviews conducted online produced fewer words and took longer to complete, and involved more rapport-building.” The work of Shapka *et al*. (2016) concurred with earlier research conducted by Thomas (2011) which commented upon the fact that interviews conducted in person in a familiar environment make a participant feel valued as they are in a safe space and can speak freely with ease – this was with the proviso however that a level of researcher/participant rapport had been established. Furthermore, I believed that if the interviews were to be conducted in-person at the participants place of work, then they would have easy access to any physical materials they wanted to share with me, as opposed to trying to do this virtually on a screen. I accepted however, that due to the covid situation online methods might have to become a default choice, and that if this became the case then I was reassured that although “the findings suggest that despite taking longer and producing fewer words, data quality is unaffected by the mode of data collection” (Shapka *et al*., 2016, p. 361). Thankfully this situation did not arise and everything intended to be done in person was able to take place.

There was no anticipated harm or distress to any of the participants in terms of the actual research topic itself, and it is this, which forms the fundamental basis for most ethical guidance – protecting participants from harm (Hammersley and Trianou, 2012). Participant welfare is indeed the main priority in any research study and this should take precedence over everything else “even if it involves compromising the impact of the research” (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2018, p. 128). The main risk to any of the participants or myself would have been catching covid. Although the preferred course of action was face to face in person interviews, I recognised that depending upon the covid situation at the time these might have to be shifted to virtual interviews using zoom, Google meets or Microsoft teams. I reassured any potential participants who might have been anxious about meeting with me in person, that a flexible approach could be taken with regard to the interview schedule to mitigate any covid concerns.

I appreciated that even if face to face meetings were allowed, some potential participants might not be comfortable with this, so I explained that should this be the case then the interview could be switched online - participants were not required to issue the researcher with any justification for their request. I was also aware of the fact that holding interviews with the participants might present further complications in terms of them needing some time away from the children with whom they worked, along with a room in which the interview could be held. Recognising this might be problematic for some settings and could impact upon the adult/child ratio I accepted some interviews might need to be rescheduled at the last minute. Participants were reassured that this was perfectly understandable and would not compromise their participation in the project if this occurred.

Prior to phase one commencing, potential participants were supplied with a covering letter, participant information guidance and a consent form. It was only after they had time to review this documentation and make the decision to participate that they were to sign and return the consent form. Upon receipt of the consent form, the questionnaire was sent out along with a photocopy of their signed consent form for their own records. This correspondence was done predominantly by email but paper copies were available if that was preferred. In line with the assertion from Cohen, Mannion and Morrison (2018, p. 123) that “informed consent is a cornerstone of ethical behaviour” I considered that the participants had been given all the information they needed about the research so they were in a position to choose whether or not to take part. Again, it was made stipulated within the guidance that each participant who commenced the study and then changed their mind, were quite within their rights to withdraw without having to give any justification for their decision and without any questions being asked. This is a process described by O’Leary as “the right to discontinue” (2017, p. 70). I did however set a deadline for withdrawal from the project, which was 30/06/2022. Each participant was issued with my contact details in the form of an email address and a mobile phone number, and advised that they could contact me at any time with any questions or issues they may have in relation to this study

As the only researcher involved in this project I had sole control for the gathering and storing of the data obtained throughout the course of this study, which adhered to GDPR guidelines. Data was stored on my home computer and held in encrypted files, which could only be accessed via secure password. All the data was safely backed up in the cloud. The computer itself required two-factor authentication to be accessed. Cohen, Mannion and Morrison (2018) discussed the absolute necessity of confidentiality at all times; these participants were reassured that any information they provided was in total confidence and that they could expect anonymity and where necessary pseudonyms would be used. There was also an expectation from the participants that they would not identify anyone (child, parent or older adult) by name during the interviews. I did, however, follow this up by advising all the participants that there might be one caveat to this, because if any participants had been involved in a significant intergenerational activity which had already attracted media attention, then there was a risk that said intergenerational project might be identifiable to some.

When conducting previous research, I have always strived to follow the good practice suggested by Bell (2010) who avers that ‘anonymity’ should reach the point where even the researcher has no idea which set of data has come from which participant. However, this was not practicable for the research design of this project. Firstly, I needed to know where the completed questionnaires had come from, in order to filter the relevant participants through to the second phase of the study. Secondly, as this was a sequential study consisting of three phases, with each phase informing the next, I was put in a position where the participants and the data could not be anonymised before the analysis stage.

The interviews and reflective conversations were uploaded to my computer at the earliest opportunity upon returning to my home from each setting, and again stored in secure encrypted files. This data was only ever intended for analysis and illustration within this thesis, although consent was sought from the participants should it be required to support future conference presentations or lectures. The consent form also requested permission from participants to authorise the use of any data, which may be taken from this research to be used in the writing of any future journal articles. However, no other use would be made of this data without specific written permission from a participant and being the sole person responsible for analysing this data in my home office, I was able to ensure that nobody outside this project was allowed access to these materials.

As part of my role as a lecturer in early years at another university I had already completed GDPR training. I was fully aware of how to comply with online research data protection requirements, and so was able to competently engage in good practice regarding data management and storage in relation to this study. This equipped me to be in a position to reassure the participants that all the necessary steps would be taken to protect the research data. As this research project was for my doctoral thesis, the participants were advised that there might be others who would request access to the raw data, but that this was not expected to extend beyond my supervisors and subsequently any examiners. The participants were all advised that the raw data in relation to this study would be destroyed after the recommended period of three years from completion of this thesis.

I informed all the participants that I was happy to make an overview of the findings available, and to share any data/findings with the settings that engaged with this research to enable those participants to see the results from this study, irrespective of whether they were phase one only participants or they engaged in all three phases of this project.

4.7: Data analysis and report writing

After reviewing the methodological literature surrounding data analysis methods and considering the range of qualitative analytical approaches that could be used for this study, I decided that the most appropriate would be some type of thematic analysis. Thematic analysis (TA) only really started to come to the fore in the 1990s as a way in which to analyse qualitative data. It is believed to have stemmed from phenomenology, which is concerned with subjective sense making from the researcher about the lived experiences of participants as this literature from Braun and Clarke highlights (2006, p. 79):

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data in a (rich) detail. However it frequently goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic.

The decision was taken to use this process because it would be an effective way of generating meaning from qualitative data within a qualitative paradigm and it fitted well within a sequential exploratory case study such as this.

What had previously been problematic to me was that when reading some papers, researchers would often cite themes but refrain from identifying which analytical model had been used. If there was no systematic process outlined, how could I as a reader understand how they had arrived at their conclusions? As someone who was unable to understand how those researchers had arrived at their judgements, this then led me to question just how credible their analysis had been. I did not want that to be the case for this study. I wanted the reader to be able to understand the steps I had followed to come up with my conclusions. It was for this reason that I chose to follow the ‘Reflexive Thematic Analysis’ model designed by Braun and Clarke (2019). As a researcher I could stipulate the steps I had taken to analyse the data, and as a reader the audience would be able to understand the process through which the deductions were made.

4.8: Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis is just one of the three TA approaches identified by Braun and Clarke (2019), the other two being coding reliability and codebook. Each approach is underpinned by different research values and philosophical assumptions, but reflexive thematic analysis takes a more organic and fluid approach to coding and was the one most closely aligned to my ontology and epistemology. Reflexive thematic analysis is an interpretive and subjective process operating within a qualitative paradigm providing the researcher with choice and flexibility as to how it is enacted. Using this approach allowed me to acknowledge the different contexts within which my participants were working, accepting that each individual early years setting is socially constructed.

Reflexive thematic analysis, brings with it a lot of freedom in terms of flexibility but it is still systematic. Braun and Clarke (2021) applied six phases to this process. They deliberately called them phases and not stages as they believed that they may be completed in a sequential order, but there is the option to go back and revisit some phases several times in order to generate themes that work together to tell a story about the data. The six steps that I followed in order to move through the data analysis process and onto the report writing were:

1. familiarising oneself with the data
2. generating codes
3. constructing themes
4. reviewing potential themes
5. defining and naming themes
6. producing the report.

This process was applied separately to the three phases that made up this research study in preparation to identify what issues needed to be explored in each subsequent phase that followed. Some of the phases within this study were easier to analyse than others, but just as Braun and Clarke (2021) had posited, this was not a linear process and I found myself revisiting steps 1, 2, 3 and 4 several times over in order to reach step 5.

In phase one, using some closed questions on the questionnaire had allowed me to engage in straightforward quantitative measures to analyse that data. The open questions were easily coded into sub groups around training, and the benefits and barriers of intergenerational practice. In phase two, the raw data from the semi-structured interviews were more time consuming to analyse and they were categorised according to identifiable patterns around learning and development opportunities, reflective practice and motivation. Phase three comprised of three different data collection methods. The raw data from the informal conversations that arose as a result of the learning walk were the most difficult to analyse due to the amount of text that had been generated. Allowing participants the space and time to talk freely about their work, in addition to answering any questions I had posed meant the written notes from these encounters were immense. As in phase two, these were categorised according to any identifiable patterns, which this time were, around staffing, safeguarding, autonomy, the environment, pedagogy and curriculum.

The autonomy audit was designed to assess numerically just how much control the participants felt they had over their career decisions. This process involved a mathematical operation that did not take long to compute and analyse for each of the participants in phase three. Similarly, the personality questionnaire immediately categorised participants into one of two groups identifying them as either intrinsically or extrinsically motivated. Inferences were made from these, and the wider data were then examined from the perspective of self-determination theory to try and deduce what was motivating the leaders at these settings to engage in intergenerational practice. Only once all this was done was I able to start developing my themes (Appendix G).

Reflexive thematic analysis places an emphasis on the researcher to own their perspectives, their personal and social standpoint and position, by creating patterns of shared meaning underpinned by a central organising concept (Braun and Clarke, 2021) This rich way of working, drilling deep into the data to create a story, provided me with the freedom and flexibility to make deliberate choices. I allowed the data to evolve into the themes, rather than starting out with themes and then trying to find the data to support them. It was exciting that I had a starting point but still had no idea about what would unfold until such time as it did. As Braun and Clarke (2021) aver thematic analysis is not a mechanical process it is active and recursive.

4.9: Generalisability and Reliability

The intention of this research was never to produce large-scale empirical generalisations, but instead, to explore the complexity of meanings and representations found amongst the data, similar to that suggested by Takahashi and Araujo (2020). The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding around the delivery of intergenerational practice in the hope it would produce further insights into the benefits and barriers of this type of work.

The phase one research method involved a questionnaire distributed to 150 early years settings which generated an overall response rate of 28%. One might suggest that the findings from this data could loosely be termed as “generalisable” using the definition from Thomas (2011, p. 109) because the findings could be related back to some of the broader issues evidenced in the literature review. However, data obtained whilst at the settings from the unstructured interviews during the learning walk, online questionnaires and personality quiz focused more on the personal opinions, reflections and values of the leaders delivering this practice, and as such were in such a small quantity they are better termed as relatable and not generalisable.

The lack of generalisability often attributed to case study research can be viewed as a criticism by those opposed to the view that this methodology constitutes a rigorous form of research, and as a result they deem it to be unreliable (Seuring, 2008). This was not a view that I shared. Instead, I have chosen to accept Ollaik and Ziller’s (2012) view of validity, which they explain in terms of the level of care and attention taken in relation to the research development and research results.

Flyvbjerg (2006) discussed certain misconceptions around case-study work, but concluded that this is ultimately dependent upon the epistemological stance of the researcher conducting the study. For example, a researcher taking a positivist approach might view theoretical knowledge as more valuable than practical knowledge, whilst a researcher such as myself taking an interpretivist approach would perceive practical knowledge as equal to, or in some cases, more important than theoretical knowledge. As Hughes claims “for the interpretivists, knowledge is valid if it is the authentic and true voice of the participants” (2001, p. 36) and this is what I have strived to convey. Positivists also take a different view of what constitutes rigour (Pozzebon and Freitas, 1998; Gibbert and Ruigrok, 2010) but in concurrence with the views of Takahashi and Araujo (2020, p. 108) who attest that “In case studies with a non-positivist orientation, rigor can be achieved through careful alignment (coherence among ontology, epistemology, theory and method)” it is further suggested that this research project does demonstrate rigour, because as demonstrated in the framework developed for the research design, this study has adhered to the process of ‘alignment’ (see diagram 7).

Bassey (1981) purported that any findings from a single case study have the potential to relate to another person situated in a similar position, experiencing a similar set of circumstances, but this is to be termed “relatability” not generalisability (p. 85). Bassey went on to introduce the concept of “fuzzy generalisations” based on the premise that similar situations may cause similar outcomes (1999, p. 12). Although there is some divergence in the findings from the data in each of the two case studies, there is also some convergence, which resonates with this latter view from Bassey. Additionally, Siggelkow (2007) posits that a single case study can still provide persuasive new insights into an issue. Taking these theories into account, whilst this study might not be able to satisfy those who seek to use generalisability as a component of rigour, it could be argued there is no reason why this study, which focused on depth not breadth, cannot be classed as research that is reliable, relatable and rigorous.

4.10: Credibility and trustworthiness

The earlier discussion about unconscious bias and researcher values influencing a study needs to be revisited when talking about trustworthiness and credibility. My main belief with regard to this study has always been that intergenerational practice is of huge importance, not just to those directly involved, but to the cohesion of society in general because of the positive impacts it can generate. By being upfront at the start of the study with regard to my own values and beliefs I hoped to avoid any accusation of researcher bias with regard to what data has been selected for analysis and representation. This was a topic discussed by Bell *et al*. (2010) and Scaife (2004) who agreed with the importance of such a strategy in order to give the research credibility and trustworthiness.

It was initially anticipated that the amount of data produced by this study would be too much to include and that inevitably some data would need to be excluded. However, when it became apparent that only two settings would prove suitable to take through to phase two of this study I thought that problem had been eroded. This was not the situation; even with just two case studies I had still generated more data than needed. I did, however, ensure that the data that was excluded was done so purely because it did not add anything extra to the data that has been presented. When selecting what data to include I used the data that best answered the research questions.

Whilst some theorists such as O’Leary (2017) and Yin (2015) might define credibility in terms of triangulation, this study followed the guidance from Gough and Thomas (2016) who recommended researchers to “think small but drill deep” (p. 67) defining credibility in terms of different methods used at various points in order to gather the data. This represents the research process used for this study. As discussed in the previous section, it is not practicable to apply positive perspectives to an interpretivist piece of work because they are based on a different ontology and epistemology (Sandberg, 2005), and to even attempt this would nullify any claims of authenticity I made. This is a point reiterated by Starr (2010) who agrees that this would only serve to “generate a veil of ambiguity relating to conventional notions of methodological trustworthiness” (p. 5).

This has enabled me to state with confidence that this research is both trustworthy and credible.

4.11: Summary

This chapter has detailed the decision-making processes and rationale for the methodology and methods used for this particular study. Furthermore, it has explored the philosophical approach towards the research design. A discussion regarding data collection methods, participant demographics and data analysis methods has been explored, as well as the ethical considerations given to this project having been detailed. The chapter concluded with issues related to generalisability, reliability, credibility and trustworthiness.

The work of Lather (2006) resonates with the key arguments in this chapter, by acknowledging the fact that there is no one right way to conduct a piece of educational research. It is a conscious epistemological choice and researchers should be open to methodologically moving “in many different directions in the hope that more interesting and useful ways of knowing will emerge” (Lather, 2006, p. 53). The following chapter reports upon the findings of the data at each phase of the study.

**CHAPTER FIVE – ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

5.1: Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the findings in order to identify key thematic strands from data, which was collected in the North West of England over a nine month period. All of the participants worked within an early years setting, but their individual roles and the types of settings they were employed at were wide ranging.

5.2: Research Questions and how data were collected

The findings from phase one, two and three data are presented individually and analysed in sequence. A systematic process has been used in order to establish the identification of key themes, which address the overarching research title in relation to the following sub questions:

1. What are the benefits of intergenerational practice?

(phase one, phase two and phase three findings)

1. What are the barriers to intergenerational practice?

(phase one, phase two and phase three findings)

1. What motivates an early years leader to engage with intergenerational practice?

(phase two and phase three findings)

The key themes from each phase are presented visually at the end of each section in the form of a diagram. The chapter concludes with the collation of the main findings from all three phases. The diagram below highlights the methods used throughout each phase.

*Diagram 8 – Methods used throughout the phases*

5.3: Phase one analysis of data findings

Phase one data were collected via an initial questionnaire (Appendix D). Requests were sent to 150 early years settings in the North West of England predominantly by email but paper copies were available if that was preferred. A total of 42 responses were received making an overall response rate of 28%. Each of the questionnaires were then coded P1-P42 to represent each participant. The table overleaf provides a summary of the data for questions 1 to 5 and 8 to 10 from this questionnaire. It should be noted that this is a small-scale study therefore any claims made are limited because these findings have to be accepted as indicative and not wholly conclusive.

The questionnaires at phase one provided a response to the first two sub questions:

1. What are the benefits of intergenerational practice?
2. What are the barriers to intergenerational practice?

*Table 9 - Summary of data for questions 1 to 5 and 8 to 10*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Length of time spent working with children aged 7 or under | 1- 5 years (2); 5-10 years (4) 10-15 years (5) over 15 years (31) |
| Highest qualification | GCSE or equivalent (1); NVQ 3 (5); BTEC (1); Foundation degree (3); Bachelor’s degree (3); EYPS/EYTS or QTS (12); Master’s degree (17) |
| Type of settings | School nursery (26); PVI day nursery (13); PVI Preschool (1); Rainbows (1); Charity (1) |
| Feels confident to discuss intergenerational practice with others | Yes (16)  No (26) |
| Has had some formal training in relation to intergenerational practice | Yes (1)  No (41) |
| Can identify some benefits of intergenerational practice | Yes (40)  No (2) |
| Can identify some barriers to intergenerational practice | Yes (40)  No (2) |
| Setting engages in intergenerational practice | Yes (10)  No (32) |

The data from the questionnaires in relation to questions 1 to 5 and 8 to 10 revealed that 24% of participants stated that their setting engaged in some form of intergenerational practice. The participants came from a wide range of settings and this may have influenced the value placed on intergenerational practice. The qualification level of participants does seem to be unusually high for early years practitioners with the data revealing that 40% of respondents held a Masters level degree. This can be explained by the high return rate from a batch of questionnaires handed out at an early years conference. Whilst the data showed that 95% of participants were able to identify some of the benefits attributed to intergenerational practice, the data indicated that only 38% of participants would feel confident discussing the subject of intergenerational practice with others. This lower figure could be attributed to the fact that only 2% of the sample size had received any formal training in relation to this type of practice.

5.3.1: Summary of data for questions 6 (Q6) and 7 (Q7)

Questions 6 and 7 required the participants to consider the benefits and challenges to intergenerational practice. They were asked to craft their own response in relation to these questions. The findings are summarised below with the number of participants listing these benefits shown in brackets after the statement. Firstly the data reports upon participant perceived benefits for children engaging in intergenerational practice:

* Reduces social isolation and loneliness for families who may be living without older people in their lives (25)
* Builds a sense of community, an understanding and appreciation of others (21)
* Reduces ageism (6)
* Supports the development of empathy and kindness towards each other (21)
* Helps support children with the development of self regulation and emotional intelligence (22)
* Increases reading and literacy skills and language and communication development (21)
* Supports personal and social development and skills (4)
* Develops knowledge and understanding of the world and an appreciation for others and a wider sense of self (1)
* Supports functional skills/sharing of skills (5)

The benefits for older adults were highlighted as follows:

* Reduces social isolation and loneliness for families who may be living without younger people in their lives (26)
* Builds a sense of community, an understanding and appreciation of others (20)
* Reduces ageism (6)
* Creates a sense of purpose and usefulness (4)
* Maintains cognitive function (3)
* Development of new skills (21)

However, the levels of understanding in relation to the benefits of this way of working varied greatly as a sample of responses demonstrate in the examples below:

… it can strengthen and develop communities and develop a respect and an understanding for others… it is an opportunity to share and develop skills become past aware and future ready… it challenges ageism… reduces loneliness within communities… develops language and communication skills for both parties… supports wellbeing and mental decline… (Questionnaire – P29, Q6)

… it teaches mutual respect and promotes social interactions… it can give children positive role models and opportunities to share experiences… (Questionnaire – P2, Q6)

… sharing skills between age groups… companionship, reducing loneliness and social isolation… increases understanding and sharing of experiences between generations… improves mental wellbeing and self confidence… (Questionnaire – P31, Q6)

… interactions between different generations stimulates talk about the past and allows the younger generation to learn about history from different perspectives and the older generations to learn about more modern issues, such as technology… (Questionnaire – P4, Q6)

… intergenerational practice will help to bring back the pre-Covid standards and normality with acknowledgement to the changes and pressures that have occurred… (Questionnaire – P40, Q6)

… I have only witnessed this on a series on Channel 4… (Questionnaire – P23, Q6)

…respect, sharing, history… (Questionnaire – P19, Q6)

… values the lives of elderly people… give them purpose (Questionnaire – P30, Q6)

…having taken one of my previous classes to a nursing home… see the adults improve their mood … with the children via music… (Questionnaire – P41, Q6)

… good intergenerational practice is sustained and develops relationships over time, it is not turning up at a care home every so often with a balloon or singing songs at Christmas… (Questionnaire –P36, Q6)

In relation to the perceived barriers around intergenerational practice, the data highlighted the following issues:

* Lack of understanding of context (10)
* Lack of understanding of the benefits (9)
* Safeguarding concerns (29)
* Logistical arrangements (24)

The following samples illustrate further the challenges that participants felt could be an issue and prevent settings from engaging in intergenerational practice:

… fear of getting it wrong… staff knowledge and understanding of the needs of both parties… ensuring that it is planned, purposeful, fully risk assessed and not just done because it is popular at the time or because it ticks an agenda or looks good for a regulatory body… (Questionnaire – P36, Q7)

… children could be wary of older people… older people may not like the behaviour they see or the noisiness and busyness of younger children… (Questionnaire – P2, Q7)

… controlling what elderly people say and do… (Questionnaire – P28, Q7)

… finding the right activities and setting that suits all… (Questionnaire – P38, Q7)

… organising to get different generations in the same place… safeguarding… (Questionnaire – P4, Q7)

… safeguarding – as in trust- do the parents of the children trust the process… (Questionnaire – P23, Q7)

… parent perspectives… child anxieties… (Questionnaire – P25, Q7)

… children may be too physical/lively for the elderly… (Questionnaire – P31, Q7)

At the time of writing, Covid-19 was still an issue for some and general safeguarding concerns were a constant theme arising from the questionnaires. The data also went on to identify further barriers that had presented as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

These included:

* Difficulties presented through social mixing
* Requirements to operate more in silos
* Senior management being wary of Covid cross contamination between groups
* Lack of access to technology for some
* Lack of ability to operate this technology even if it was available

… risk of Covid… cross contamination between each setting… (Questionnaire – P41, Q7)

… Covid, DBS checks, time… lack of respect… (Questionnaire – P39, Q7)

… death and counseling young children… (Questionnaire – P30, Q7)

… safety and safeguarding requirements…even though the number of visitors is increasing… SLT are concerned about mixing young children and older, possibly more vulnerable adults… (Questionnaire - P26, Q7)

… safeguarding and protection of vulnerable groups, since Covid there is a real issue of infection control… (Questionnaire – P36, Q7)

The data from phase one revealed that 80% of the participants had some knowledge and understanding regarding the benefits and barriers around intergenerational practice showing they were familiar with the concept, even though the levels of understanding varied. However, despite the identification of lots of benefits, only two settings, which equated to 5% of the sample size were participating in this type of practice so something different was happening there.

5.3.2: Summary of key themes emerging from phase one data

The diagram overleaf presents the four key themes that were highlighted within the data collected from the questionnaire.

*Diagram 9 – Key themes emerging from phase one data*

5.4: Phase two analysis of data findings

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews; the participants from each of the two settings chosen to take part in phase two of the study were interviewed separately. As this was a sequential exploratory study, the questions asked were predominantly informed by the findings from the questionnaires issued in phase one, in conjunction with literature that had been read for Chapter 2.

Some of the interview questions related to new topics that had been raised such as motivation, whilst others overlapped with phase one of the study as the research strived to drive deeper into the benefits and barriers around intergenerational practice.

The participant from setting one is identified as S1. This setting is charity led and aims to promote intergenerational practice at its best. Practitioners work closely together with both young children and older adults in order to create a shared space where these two groups can learn from each other. It is a £21m state-of-the-art development. An architect designed retirement village offering a range of living options for older adults. These included independent living apartments, home care and households where 24-hour support and nursing care are available. Integrated into the complex is a 25-place nursery that provides care and learning for children from birth to five years, six days a week.

The participant from setting two is identified as S2. This setting was based within a local authority run school, although the preschool itself was classed as a private, voluntary and independent (PVI) setting. The previously completed questionnaire identified that this participant had previously engaged in intergenerational practice but this had stopped all together during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The interviews at phase two provided a response to all three sub questions:

1) What are the benefits of intergenerational practice?

2) What are the barriers to intergenerational practice?

3) What motivates an early years leader to engage with intergenerational practice?

5.4.1: Summary of data results from phase two

Further thematic analysis was conducted to examine the interview findings. This analysis was undertaken using the reflexive thematic analysis approach devised by Braun and Clarke (2020). The findings from Phase one indicated there was a lack of training in the field, which concurs with evidence reported in the literature review. Given this situation, I needed to find out more about how these two participants had acquired their knowledge on intergenerational practice so a semi-structured interview was carried out (Appendix E). The responses to this question are provided below:

… Through reading. Talking to other people. There’s been a few grass roots things going on for the last 15 years but they have not been funded really, and they’ve not been particularly round here. I was part of a group working on a project called ‘Born For Life’ this was with a group of other outstanding providers who all worked together and we did a little bit of intergenerational work. The focus on that is ‘hear me, see me, know me’ and it’s all about human dignity and the reasons why we do what we do. It is obvious that families need each other. I also went to visit an intergenerational project down South as part of my research… (Interview Q1, R1, S1)

… Through professional discussions with people involved in the setting up of other projects. Through my own research and through having my own elderly parents come into the setting with ‘artefacts’ to show the children. The initial impact of them bringing in just one item, a mangle was so good that it just carried on from there. The children were fascinated to learn about this machine and under supervision were able to have a go for themselves at turning the handle to squeeze the water out of the clothes. It was great fun and a great learning experience… (Interview Q1, R1, S2)

There were two key distinctions between the different settings. Setting one had been established for the sole purpose of engagement with intergenerational activity, whilst setting two seemed to have stumbled upon an idea that started their journey into intergenerational practice almost accidentally. Given that the activity planned by S2 was not initially designed nor recognised to be an explicit engagement in intergenerational practice, more information was needed from this setting with regard to the exchange of knowledge that took place between the older adults and the younger children. It was evident that the ‘artefact’ activity could be a great learning experience for the children, but in terms of true intergenerational practice being defined by the Beth Johnson Foundation (2009) and Feldman (2012) as a process through which both parties were learning from an interaction or experience, this response did not identify where the learning was in this particular case for the older adults.

It appeared from the responses above that both participants had effectively been self-taught. They had taken responsibility for their own continuing professional development seriously. The initial questionnaires revealed that both S1 and S2 were graduates. S1 had qualified teacher status (QTS) and early years professional status (EYPS) and S2 had EYPS. Both participants had been working in the early years field for over 15 years. Naturally then, the next question revolved around how they had both turned their knowledge into actions. The data revealed that setting one had actually benefited from the delays that Covid brought about as the response below reveals.

… I’ve had to do a lot of reflective practice. This setting should have opened in January 2020 then Covid hit and there were massive problems with the build. Prior to this we had talked about how we would manage infection control such as vomiting and diarrhoea bugs shutting things down, or flu outbreaks, but then Covid. Well the pandemic gave us a chance to reflect on what we were doing and also the layout of the setting. Initially we had designed a baby room then an older room, but the pandemic putting it all on pause gave us time to think, by doing that we were just adding to the problem of dividing groups again by age, we were contributing to the very problem we were trying to fight against. We realised our original model should change to reflect what we were seeing and doing… (Interview, Q2, R2, S1)

These were rich responses, but it was important to also learn about the barriers that had been faced and how these settings addressed the challenges that had arisen. Earlier in the interview the participant from setting one had explained how the delayed building work had allowed the team to rethink the internal layout of the setting. This challenge had initially been viewed as a barrier, but S1 had been able to turn this into an opportunity for change and improvement. The second setting elaborated upon the ‘artefacts’ project in their response.

… From my initial idea to get my own parents in with the ‘artefacts’ I then extended this project to invite other older adults/grandparents into the setting to share items of interest. By involving the grandparents and having them come and talk to the children it was benefitting those young children who don’t have any older adults in their lives. A lot of the things that children are introduced to by the older adults could be regarded as ‘old fashioned’ but it is important for children to learn about mending and fixing if we are going to educate them about recycling and sustainability as it is all part of that bigger picture. Being more ‘green.’ We seemed to have turned into a society with a ‘throwaway’ culture but thankfully that is slowly being reversed and the children are educating the adults about the need to save the planet… (Interview, Q2, R2, S2)

In line with the concept of self-reflection the participants were then asked to discuss what they had done that they felt had worked well.

… There’s a traditional model in retirement homes that believes older people and those with dementia only want to talk about the past so they spend time making memory boxes and looking backwards. From my experience here, a lot of older people like to reflect about the past but they want to be aware of the future too. They want to talk about their grandchildren and they want to understand the way they live and relate to that. I want the people here to be looking forward. When the older adults are mixing with the young children they are getting that human touch, the handholding or hug, the spontaneity that comes with the curiosity the children have for the older adults. There is a lot of love in our setting. The relationships getting formed are strong and emotional attachments are being made… (Interview, Q3, R3, S1)

The response above reveals that this participant was keen to find new ways of working and wanted to disrupt the norm when it came to supporting older adults by challenging the traditional attitudes to how they are treated.

…all the resources are intentional. We use lots of sensory items. Everything can serve as a provocation and promote storytelling. The older adults are keen to share their knowledge, for example last week we were reading a story about a sailing boat. One of the older adults had a relative with a narrow boat that sailed past our setting. He explained to the children the difference between a narrow boat and a barge. From that one story and this further event the children have gained three layers of understanding and they can clearly tell you the difference between a sailboat, narrow boat and a barge. Another good discussion we have is around clothing, the differences between what the children and the older adults wear. For example one child had a vest on but didn’t know you could get a vest that ‘goes right down your arms with sleeves’ until the older adult showed him. The children were talking about a gilet and one older adult told them he calls it a ‘singlet’ the learning is immense… (Interview, Q3, R3, S1)

The data shows that careful consideration is given to the activities delivered at this setting and there is evidence of flexibility in the topics that are explored. It would appear from the response above that the setting engages in an approach highlighted by Ephgrave (2018) that involves planning in the moment and going with the children’s interests.

…The children are learning from stories that matter. They understand that some older adults are not quick on their feet, or need assistance getting up out of the chair. The children are learning to exercise patience with them and be kind. They are growing in confidence and resilience as they have all these new experiences – it’s about cultural capital. Recently we have made bird feeders. The children have helped the older adults pour the ingredients into the cups, the older adults seem to naturally ask questions of the children about what they are doing, sometimes because they genuinely don’t know and sometimes it’s to help children consolidate their understanding… (Interview, Q3, R3, S1)

I was aware that this was a purpose built setting geared specifically to intergenerational practice, thereby enabling the response to this question from S1 to be so rich in detail. The findings from the data suggested that purposeful shared spaces and ‘intentional resources’ that served as provocations were likely to be contributory factors in the delivery of successful intergenerational practice. The same question around what has worked well at these settings was put to the participant from setting two who extended her discussion around the artefact project:

… I think the older adults bringing in items from the past has worked really well on so many levels. I don’t believe that these projects should be tokenistic, it can’t be a one off and needs to form part of what we are doing overall in terms of learning. The children got knowledge of all sorts of resources that people used to use years ago and they are able to make modern day connections eg from the mangle to the washing machine, from the old ‘brick’ type mobile phones with aerials, to the touch screen smart phones of today. By bringing in actual physical items for the children to explore it ignites their interest and sparks that love of learning. It is really powerful. It gives the adults a chance to discuss what they used to do and consider how things have moved on as well. The children are being exposed to new vocabulary and have to treat the items with respect, taking care of the artefacts too… (Interview, Q3, R3, S2)

It was interesting to see that this word ‘tokenistic’ had been raised again. It was previously used in phase one by one of the participants. Here, the data implies that intergenerational practice needs to be embedded within the curriculum and sustainable in nature as opposed to a one off activity that happens on a sporadic basis.

The response below highlights issues around intergenerational staff recruitment. Due to a sector wide shortage, the recruitment of early years staff is already problematic and the adult social care sector faces its own challenges. Data from phase one indicated that there was a lack of training in the intergenerational field. Together these factors would suggest that acquiring suitable staff for these intergenerational ventures could prove difficult as the following data revealed.

… It has been a real struggle to merge the two disciplines when it comes to staffing a setting like ours. Most people are either early years trained, or trained to work with adults. There is not really any courses that people can take to equip them to work with both ends of the spectrum at once. People that work in care are trained in processes primarily, they are trained in things like manual handling, administering medicine, help with bathing, dressing. People who work in early years learn about attachment, relationships, brain development, it is more person centred than process focused and I’m finding that those trained in early years can transition to support the older adults easier than the other way round… (Interview, Q4, R4, S1)

S2 had started their artefact project prior to the Covid pandemic. Unsurprisingly their biggest challenge had been Covid, which subsequently brought their intergenerational practice to a temporary halt.

… Covid-19 has been a massive challenge as there were no visitors allowed into the setting, not even parents so the artefact project stopped. I would like to start it up again and perhaps also have it in reverse where the children visit some of the older adults in the local care home because most people have items from the past that could be used in this kind of exploratory ‘show and tell’ format. This would however be a lot more difficult to logistically arrange than having the older adults come to us, but it is not impossible… (Interview, Q4, R4, S2)

The data from phase one raised some Covid related barriers and here the data in phase two referred to it again. The Covid pandemic had disrupted intergenerational practice but it had also provided practitioners with an opportunity to rethink how this is delivered and the place it has in society moving forward.

When each participant was asked how they saw themselves, one participant saw herself as a rescuer (Interview, Q5, R5, S1) and the other as a people pleaser (Interview, Q5, R5, S2). This was not surprising given the roles they had adopted at their settings, but this required further exploration to discover how relevant this was to their motivation. I decided to be specific with this question and asked them directly ‘What is it that motivates you?’

… desire for change and for respectful human values. As a society just look at how we market our Birthday cards once you are over forty. They talk about breasts hanging down, being over the hill, growing old and infirm, wanting you to know your life is over. Having worked in early years for a long time I have a good understanding of what a family needs and that each family is unique. It’s a lot about language, we’ve ensured we have a language rich environment. It’s also about the relationships – they are key, how we feel and respond to others and how they respond to us… (Interview, Q6, R6, S1)

I reflected upon the comments made regarding the messages that we as a society send out about growing older. The birthday card analogy was not something that I had previously considered. S2 – the people pleaser provided the following response to the same question:

… I’m always looking to do things at nursery that have a positive impact on everyone. When my parents came into the setting, they got as much out of that learning experience as the children, it worked both ways but differently… (Interview, Q6, R6, S2)

The motivation of S2 is evident in this response and evidences that this participant is always striving for improvement and reflecting on past events to see where changes can be made.

5.4.2: Summary of themes emerging from phase two data

The diagram below presents the three key themes that were highlighted within the data collected from the interviews.

*Diagram 10 – Key themes emerging from phase two data*

5.5: Phase three analysis of data findings

Phase three was designed to address the lines of enquiry identified above and consisted of three stages from which the data were collected. These methods constituted a learning walk (LW); Autonomy Audit (AA) designed by Pink (2018); and a Personality Quiz (PQ) designed by Pink (2018). As this was a sequential exploratory study, any questions asked were predominantly informed by the findings from the interviews conducted in phase two, in conjunction with literature that had been read for Chapter 2. The data generated from the methods used at phase three collectively explored in more depth the emerging themes from phase two of the study and provided a response to all three sub questions:

1. What are the benefits of intergenerational practice?
2. What are the barriers to intergenerational practice?
3. What motivates an early years leader to engage with intergenerational practice?

5.5.1: Summary of data results from phase three

5.5.1.1: Learning walk with S1

The learning walk was an opportunity to have an ‘educational tour’ of the setting. This was an opportunity for me to chat informally to the participant at each setting who continue to be referred to as S1 and S2. They were able to use this time to explain how the environment was organised, how their curriculum had evolved and the impact that this had on the young children and the older adults.

The purposeful architect designed environment that housed S1 used the natural elements to promote conversation and encourage imaginative play. I observed children spending time planting with the older adults, wandering along the sensory paths and sitting at one of the garden tables listening to the sounds of the birds and the wind chimes. Children and adults shared snack and meal times and enjoyed chatting about their day. S1 explained to me that the area is thoroughly risk assessed and there are no hidden areas so children are free to roam at their leisure, as staff can always have them in sight. There were mark making resources outside to engage the children painting on a larger scale on the floor. Further resources to enhance their work were available such as chalks, ribbons, twigs and gloop, this kept them occupied and enabled them to create artwork they were proud of. These types of activities also supported the development of their skills on a larger scale using their fine and gross motor skills. There was a small digging area and metal pots and pans and other kitchen equipment for the children to create mud pies and other imaginary recipes. Providing provision that inspires and motivates was a priority to S1.

S1 told me that because of the pandemic the building work was put on hold temporarily. This then allowed some of the layout to be reconfigured to ensure that should another event like Covid-19 occur, that there would be strategies in place to facilitate as much safe interaction as possible. Adjacent to the shared garden area, was a separate garden area, which could be accessed directly from the nursery rooms. Presently these spaces are free for everyone to use, but should the need arise then they can be divided up to keep the older adults and children at a safe distance, but the design is such that both sets could still have one another in sight and chat to each other from a safe distance.

S1 explained the benefits of this type of layout:

…this design works really well in the current climate too because sometimes some of the older adults do not want to mix directly with the children but they like to sit on the benches under the pergola and watch them play through the railings. These railings have been designed with a curved top lending itself to people wanting to lean on it when they are looking over. The children love to see the older adults investigating what they are up to. These garden areas have been specifically landscaped around a circular central meeting place, and there are specific shady areas, which cater for all round weather conditions… (LW, S1)

S1 discussed the curriculum that is offered at the setting. The participant explained how they have developed their own intergenerational pedagogy which incorporates the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2021) along with a ‘Mirrored Curriculum Framework’ based upon the strong traditions of practice promoted by Froebel (1887), Malaguzzi (1993), Isaacs (1971), Vygotsky (1978) and other influential theorists. This innovative merged pedagogical programme has the following aims for children:

…to feel safe, secure and loved within a community that cares, experience joy and reward from learning experiences that excite them. Take safe risks that enable them to be curious, explore and discover. Experience deep engagement and connection as their world of learning expands. Reflect and find peace in themselves in ways that support self-care and learning confidence… (LW, S1)

This data strongly suggests that the construction of meaningful relationships is at the heart of such a unique curriculum. S1 told me that earlier on that day the children had been helping the older adults make bird feeders. This had followed on from one of the older adults introducing some of the children to his pet budgie. The participant explained to me that:

…some of the older adults are a little shaky with their hands when they are pouring so the idea was that the children would scoop and pour the ingredients into the cup which the adult would hold for them. Working together had meant that both groups had a shared sense of purpose and felt that they were supporting each other… (LW, S1)

The nursery rooms had a different look and feel to the traditional nursery settings so commonly seen in England. The rooms were bright and airy with plenty of windows allowing the natural light to stream in. There were numerous living plants of various sizes in each room. On the floor was an accessible light box. Regular sized armchairs and cushions were strategically placed. The participant told me that the adults and children both have access to a shared library and in addition to this, there were numerous books visible in all areas. There were several seagrass baskets which contained sensory items such as sponges and scented bean bags. The majority of resources were wooden and placed freely on top of comfortable soft rugs. Low level posters and artwork from the children was displayed around the room which feels more like a lounge in a residential house as opposed to a nursery room. The use of lamps created ambient lighting and the participant told me they also use dimmer switches to alter the light levels in the room. The wooden sand tray had pebbles and dried out poppy shells in it along with some metal buckets with water inside for the children to play with. The nursery rooms could be described as having a minimalist feel to them. The floor to ceiling windows allowed the natural light to illuminate the spaces. Practically all the resources were made from wood or other natural products. The participant told me that:

… when one little boy came for a look around the nursery he asked his mother ‘where are all the toys?’ (LW, S1)

Room dividers and small tables had all been designed with curved edges to add to the smoothness of the room. Large mirrors were placed low down on the walls for the children to explore themselves and others, as well as adding more light to the rooms on darker days. Floor to ceiling windows further enhanced this space further, and although this could be seen as a positive design feature, it had caused some problems at the setting as the following data revealed:

…when the setting opened some of the older adults weren’t used to this type of design and it seemed to cause them some anxiety whenever a child went near the window, particularly on the upper levels of the building. It took time for these older adults to adjust to this kind of architecture and reassurance from the staff to convince them that the children were perfectly safe and that the fact the windows went down to the floor meant children were able to look out of them at the passing world… (LW, S1)

The participant explained to me that all the resources within this room were chosen because they support the learning and development of both groups, the young children and the older adults. She tipped a container of smooth wooden shapes that resembled bread rolls onto the table, as I went to pick one up she told me:

…case in point… when you see these resources you cannot help but want to pick them up and grip them in your hand, to feel the smoothness of the curves against your skin. This helps children with their motor skills, but it also helps exercise any arthritic joints that the older adults may have as they manipulate the shapes in their hands. By using lots of sensory items and taking a holistic approach at this setting, everything we do is geared to meet the needs of everyone present. It is very inclusive… (LW, S1)

When I asked how the participant decided what resources to include in the nursery area she explained that she worked with some dementia nurses who employ the ‘Namaste care approach.’ This approach does not prioritise process and protocol (as previously discussed by S1 being an issue) and instead it focuses on the person (Yous *et al*., 2023). It takes a holistic approach using sensory resources to provide the older adults with both physical and emotional experiences with the aim of improving their quality of life and this way of working was easily transferrable to the early years context.

… I liken it to the current approach used within early years that focuses on the needs and interests of a child recognising their individuality and uniqueness. For example, traditionally bubble blowing is an activity used with young children to help promote their hand/eye co-ordination if trying to pop the bubbles as well as helping them create shapes with their mouths as they blow which can support them with their speech. Well bubble blowing is also of benefit to older adults. Studies have shown that some non-verbal older adults exposed to the delights of bubble blowing began to speak again as they laughed at the bubbles filling the room and floating past them. So, you see, although the Namaste approach was designed predominantly for those with dementia, there is no reason that some of the activities cannot be used and adapted to work with other older adults or children… (LW, S1)

Outside the library there is a sign on a sandwich board ‘knitters needed – we need your help, our dolls haven’t got any clothes – come and see us in the nursery if you can help.’ The participant explains:

… nobody is obliged to get involved in any intergenerational activities, it has to be the choice of the older adult and the choice of the child. Lots of signs like this might encourage some of the older adults to come into the shared spaces if they are initially a bit hesitant. Also it gives them that sense of purpose, that they are being useful by creating something there is a need for...(LW, S1)

I had been interested in the issue of autonomy but in relation to the participants S1 and S2. The data here highlights how the issue of autonomy sifts through to the older adults who have complete control of whether or not they wish to participate in the intergenerational practice at this setting. Opportunities for engagement are presented, but ultimately they retain agency and make the decision over whether or not to get involved. I asked S1 about other projects taking place at the setting. She told me that they are currently in the process of creating a colourscape, cognition compendium which is going to act as an intergenerational assessment tool but it can also be used for cognitive games and training through artwork. The setting has also started up a grandparents learning co-operative, a group where grandparents can have their views listened to and act as a forum to give them a collective voice. On a shelf in the library I noticed the little peg dolls, some painted, some blank and a sign that said ‘help us to grow our intergenerational family.’ These subtle provocations appeared to encourage participation without persuasion in setting one.

These settings worked with two of the most vulnerable groups in society. With regard to setting one, if the two groups were continuously freely mixing then it was important to understand how this was risk assessed? Young children can be boisterous at times and often leave things lying around on the floor, surely this could present a trip hazard for the more vulnerable older adults. Also, what behavioural expectations were set for the older adults? How did the setting ensure that no inappropriate language or behaviour manifested and was this even possible? S1 explained to me that there were three classifications of older adults involved in this scheme and that at no time is any older adult ever left alone with a child. The three groups were as identified as:

1. those who lived independently in the self catered apartments at the complex
2. those who needed supported living within the household and may have additional needs such as dementia or Parkinsons
3. those who attended the setting on an ‘experience day’ and this is for adults who do not reside at the complex but attend to use the facilities included in the specialist day care service (LW, S1)

The participant told me that this had been a really steep learning curve. S1 provided the example of where there had been an incident in which someone from the second category above had been brought into the nursery by their carer who then left:

…the staff working within the nursery quickly realised that although the situation was not unsafe, this particular older adult had a greater level of need so they had had to call up the carer who came back into the nursery area and stayed with the older adult. As a result of this now, those people who fall into the second category above are always required to bring along their carer/support worker when participating in events with the children. Every situation is carefully risk assessed, but sometimes the risk assessments conducted by those working with the elderly do not align with those working with the children… (LW, S1)

S1 explained her concerns going back to the earlier point made about those working in elder care being more trained in processes than people:

…they are trained in physical aspects, to work with people who can’t swallow, how to engage in manual handling and they rarely ask the older adults what they want to do, there seems to be no real pedagogy happening. Meanwhile, early years staff are trained more in things like brain development and the importance of creating attachments. What this means is that actually those trained in early years have transitional skills that supports them to work well with the older adults, but those originally trained in elder care lack the transitional skills required to work with the children. For example, there is one older adult who had been classified as a “hitter’ on their risk assessment and there was a query over whether or not it would be safe for them to be around young children. The elder care staff said this person hit out when they were feeling threatened. Not wanting to exclude anyone from this programme I took the decision to invite the older adult to spend some time with the children, but I myself would keep a close eye on the older adult. What we found was that actually this older adult had sensory issues/needs, just like some young children do. It was just like when a young child displays schematic behaviour. If they are throwing toys around a nursery, it is more than likely that they have a trajectory schema and this behaviour can be modified if they are given the right resources to play with such as pull back cars, or balls to throw outside or a jack in the box. Similarly those children who are climbers need to be given opportunities to climb, they need to be given the resources to climb on… (LW, S1)

Returning to the issue of autonomy, it might have been difficult for S1 to get her wish to try out her theory if she did not have complete control and agency with regard to the way in which practice was carried out at this setting. In this situation, S1 was able to utilise her knowledge and apply the underpinning theory around schematic behaviour to address the matter. S1 suspected that this type of ‘hitting’ behaviour from the older adult could be modified successfully, meaning that someone who might have previously been excluded from such a project was now fully included:

…I recognised that what this older adult was craving was touch and there was no real aggression present. From this starting point I started to introduce ‘self hugs’ into the activities, so when the adults and children did something I would say ‘give yourself a big hug’ or ‘give your arms a little massage’ and this enabled that particular older adult to gain some sensory touch. Similarly when I observed her getting a bit agitated I would give her resources to hold such as tactile beanbags which would satisfy her sensory craving for touch… (LW S1)

Given that a lot of the older adults were in their 80s at this setting, I asked the participant how they would deal with the subject of death. I wondered if parents who were sending their children to the nursery here would worry that secure relationships would be made with the older adults and then one day they might cease without warning. The participant explained the situation to me:

…parents who send their children to the nursery at this setting whole heartedly believe in the power of these intergenerational relationships and that death is a natural part of living. Children need to be educated about the cycle of life, they may lose grandparents or siblings or pets. Death is an unavoidable factor, but developing children to be resilient enough to cope when these situations occur can mitigate any upset and negativity around the matter. We would never say something unrealistic in this situation, for example “Mabel has gone up to the sky and is a star now” we would use the correct terminology and say “Mabel has passed or died.” The plan is that the children will paint stones for that person which will then be put in the garden. This setting already educates children about life, growth and decay in lots of ways, for example there are lots of living plants both inside the setting and outside, some survive, some don’t… (LW, S1)

It would appear from these examples within the data, that autonomy coupled with this level of pedagogical knowledge is invaluable in these kinds of situations. S1 continued the discussion around staff and explained that a gap had been identified in the different standards to which staff had been trained. This then lead me to question her about what strategies she was taking to address this:

…new staff have completed the “Generations Working Together Diploma” online, but intergenerational training programmes are few and far between. Even though staff have accessed some intergenerational training, they still do not see themselves as experts in this field and seem to regard their initial training whether it be in early years or elder care to be their primary field with the intergenerational training being an add on… (LW, S1)

The response given by S1 suggests that the staff are somewhat stuck in a void between two fields whereby they had become hybrid practitioners. They were no longer early years practitioners, nor care workers for older adults, but also, they had not yet assumed the identity of being an intergenerational practitioner – they were still in a state of becoming.

5.5.1.2: Learning walk with S2

Once again, the learning walk with S2 was an opportunity to have an ‘educational tour’ of their setting. This was an opportunity for me to chat informally to the participant who could explain how the environment was organised, how their curriculum had evolved and the impact that their intergenerational projects had on the young children and the older adults. The nursery was set up in a traditional way, there was an entrance hall with cloakroom and bathrooms, and off this were two classrooms. With regard to the curriculum delivered at this setting, the participant explained to me the holistic way in which learning and development takes place and how it was threaded through all the activities that the children participated in. For example:

…the artefact project introduced children to new vocabulary, by using equipment such as the mangle they were utilising their gross motor skills turning the handle, mathematical skills counting the rotations, and all the time increasing their knowledge and understanding of the world. It really helped develop their cultural capital… (LW, S2)

I asked the practitioner what the older adults were learning from their experiences with the children. She told me about a recycling project the children had been working on which followed after the artefact project:

… the children gathered up used plastic bottles and built an igloo style house in the garden… (LW, S2)

S2 showed me the large scale igloo that had been built outdoors. She also showed me other structures that the children had built from old crates and tyres including a bug hotel, compost heap and fruit and vegetable gardens. The participant explains to me that:

…when the older adults visit the setting they learn from the children all about the need to protect the environment. At this setting we don’t buy resources if there is any possibility of making them. The children used discarded shoe boxes to create their own Christmas tree and decorated it with recycled crisp packets. Ofsted loved that. Some of the older adults were surprised to learn that plastic can be recycled into kerbstones, car components, or furniture. The children put on a production around the theme of a character they had created called Michael Recycle who was made entirely from recycled products and the older adults were invited to the performance. The children aged two, three and four had created a story around plastics being abandoned in the ocean. It featured pirates who were throwing stuff away and a team of superheroes who taught them what they should be doing instead… (LW, S2)

S2 explained that Covid continued to cause problems with regard to staffing. Not only did the nursery have to contend with a shortage of good qualified staff when it came to recruitment, but they were still struggling with staffing levels due to illness. She told me about the latest Covid government guidance for early years settings (DfE, 2022) that they were following. This document directs a setting to prioritise vulnerable children and those of critical workers, followed by those who will be transitioning to reception in September, then four years olds, then three year olds, then two year olds.

5.5.1.3: Autonomy audit & Personality Quiz - S1 and S2

Both participants S1 and S2 scored 40/40 in the autonomy audit (Appendix F) meaning that they were in a position to make decisions and take actions that were tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of their settings. They had full control over what happens in the workplace and were able to take an innovative and creative approach to their work without being bound by the constraints of others. This freedom was evident in some of the responses already provided, for example the choice of S1 to include the older adult who had been labelled by some as ‘a hitter.’ S2 went on to demonstrate the level of freedom exercised at her setting in relation to the curriculum design she had implemented. Whilst there might be an assumption that both these participants who appear to be selfless in their passionate approach and dedication to intergenerational practice are intrinsically motivated, the personality quiz (Appendix F) conducted by S1 and S2 revealed that they were both actually classed as being extrinsically motivated. One possible explanation for this could be that, in one sense everyone is bound by others in some regard, for example, Ofsted, Board of Governors, parents.

5.5.2: Summary of themes emerging from phase three data

The diagram overleaf presents the four key themes that were highlighted within the data collected from the learning walk, the autonomy audit and the personality quiz.

*Diagram 11 – Key themes emerging from phase three data*

5.6: Summary of emergent themes from the overall findings

The diagrams overleaf show the collation of the emergent themes across all the phases being placed into four key groups. The themes in each group were then categorised according to the overarching research title and the sub questions.

*Diagram 12 – Key themes relating to the benefits of intergenerational practice*

*Diagram 13 – Factors that benefit successful intergenerational practice*

*Diagram 14 – Key themes relating to the barriers around intergenerational practice*

*Diagram 15 – Key factors present in motivated leaders in the field* (Ryan and Deci, 2017)

5.7: Summary

The next chapter takes the theoretical framework specifically designed for this study and combines it with the themes that emerged from the analysis to form the basis of a discussion around the findings.

**CHAPTER SIX - DISCUSSION**

6.1: Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the key thematic strands evidenced within the data, highlighting links to the theoretical framework. Each phase of the study will be discussed in sequence and the chapter concludes with the collation of all the emergent themes and what they may mean in relation to the research title and the sub-questions.

6.2: Discussion of themes emerging from Phase one data

The discussion that follows explores the four key themes that were highlighted within the data collected from the questionnaire issued to participants in Phase One.

*Diagram 9 – Key themes emerging from phase one data*

6.2.1: General lack of training and knowledge in the field

Socio-cultural theory (Vygotksy, 1978) highlights the importance of social interactions and the cultural context in shaping individual development but with limited training opportunities still reported in the field (Cole, 2023), it follows that there could potentially be a lack of understanding from practitioners around the concept and delivery of intergenerational practice. This is problematic because it could result in missed opportunities for cultural transmission, improper scaffolding, and ineffective engagement being fostered between the older adults and children. The initial data from the questionnaires revealed that participants from 10 different settings said they engaged in intergenerational practice. However, when those 10 participants were spoken to further, it soon became obvious that there was some level of confusion around what they understood to constitute intergenerational practice.

Participant P41 (Q6) discussed taking children into a local nursing home to sing for the older adults. There is not necessarily any exchange of learning taking place here and one of the key drivers of intergenerational practice according to Feldman (2012) is that both parties participate in knowledge exchange. In addition to this, limited one off activities do not facilitate the relationship building necessary for bonds of mutual trust to develop, which is another important component of intergenerational practice. In the context of social pedagogy, these relationships are seen as essential to **learning** and **personal growth (Smith, 2019)**. A lack of training and knowledge in the field of how to plan for and deliver effective intergenerational practice could hinder the development of these trusting relationships, because staff may not be in a position to foster respectful dialogue due to an inability to recognise the potential challenges or needs that arise from communicating and working with the different age groups. That said, the concept of intergenerational practice using the definitions in the section overleaf was understood and evidenced in the response issued from P36 (Q6) who identified that good intergenerational practice requires sustainability and should not be a one off tokenistic event.

Intergenerational practice, as defined by the Beth Johnson Foundation (2001), is characterised as a process that involves bringing individuals from various generations together to participate in purposeful activities, fostering mutual benefits through interaction and engagement with each other. In this study, it was used, alongside a similar definition of intergenerational practice from Feldman (2012), which involves the exchange of knowledge between both parties, however, it subsequently transpired that only 2 out of the 10 settings were participating in actual intergenerational practice that fulfilled these criteria. This was not a surprising piece of data given the absence of a universally accepted definition (Granville, 2002) and the fact that terminology appears to have now become interchangeable. As a result, the different terminology used to discuss this topic is prone to creating confusion and previously prompted Springate, Atkinson and Martin (2008) to advocate for a clearer definition of the term 'intergenerational practice.' What one person might identify as an intergenerational activity, may be referred to by others as an intergenerational programme (Park, 2014) or intergenerational practice (Cook and Bailey, 2013).

The literature examined for this study indicated that interventions showing superior outcomes in terms of intergenerational benefits for all involved, were those in which specifically trained staff had a deep understanding of both the older adults and children. Effective planning of activities was a key factor in these successful interventions, but the complexity of this process must be acknowledged (Epstein and Boisvert, 2006; Jarrott and Smith, 2011). Without staff receiving adequate training in order to gain the knowledge required to appreciate the needs of both groups, there is a chance that they **might** plan tasks that are more appropriate for one generation than the other resulting in a lack of meaningful intergenerational interactions and social connections taking place. Furthermore, the potential consequence of any **imbalance for those engaging in intergenerational practice** undermines the concept of **participation** in terms of social pedagogy, where each person’s voice, experience, and capabilities should be considered and **valued equally** to avoid specific groups feeling marginalised (Smith, 2019). In these circumstances, where one group might find the activity does not meet their needs and is too difficult for them because it has not been appropriately tailored to them, then the likelihood of disengagement increases and the motivational levels of participants may reduce to the point where they no longer wish to participate in the intergenerational activities on offer and this is problematic. Therefore, it likely follows that when staff are not well trained and do not know the older adults and children well, that outcomes could suffer. This concern was voiced by P36 (Q7) who listed a fear of getting things wrong and a lack of staff knowledge and understanding of the needs of both parties as being an issue. Although P36 (Q7) raised the issue of staff knowledge (or rather lack of) as being a potential barrier to a setting engaging in intergenerational practice, none of the participants raised the fact explicitly that there seems to be limited training accessed/offered in this field and that could constitute a major barrier.

The literature would suggest that intergenerational practice is not really seen as a priority by the UK Government. For example, a 2009 HM Government study entitled ‘Generations Together Programme’ was commissioned to evaluate the results from a study that spanned across 12 local authorities. The intention of this study was to generate a wider interest around the concept of intergenerational practice and the benefits that emerge from this way of working. This evaluation was due to run until March 2011, but due to unforeseen budgetary issues it was brought to a premature close in September 2010. The data generated from the initial questionnaires in this study highlighted that only 10 out of the 42 respondents would feel confident discussing with others what is meant by intergenerational practice. If intergenerational practice is not seen as a priority, this could also explain why practitioners have a lack of confidence discussing the approach. Furthermore, it could explain why there are so few training courses in the field, because funding and resources are not being directed that way.

However, it should be noted that there are some independent initiatives and organisations currently working to promote and support intergenerational training in the UK; for example, Generations Working Together (established 2007) which is based in Scotland, and Linking Generations (established 2004) and the Together Old and Young (TOY, established 2012) programmes which are both based in Northern Ireland. It would appear that England and Wales are trailing behind in this area because at the time of writing, Generations Working Together, Scotland, and Linking Generations, Northern Ireland, are the only two country wide intergenerational development bodies currently operating in the UK at the time of writing. Although The Beth Johnson Foundation, based in Stoke on Trent has been the longest running intergenerational organisation established back in 1972, it predominantly serves the area of Staffordshire and has not expanded much further across England over the years.

6.2.2: Social cohesion

Phase one data identified that some participants believed one of the benefits pertaining to intergenerational practice was the fact that it could reduce loneliness (P29, P31 – Q6) and social isolation (P31, Q6). The body of literature in the field does indeed posit that intergenerational practice has the potential to contribute to the current range of social policy agendas around loneliness and isolation. It should be noted that isolation can impact both generations but in different ways, for example, older adults may experience age related discrimination or physical isolation whilst young children could be subject to social exclusion. Socio-cultural theory highlights the importance of social networks and intergenerational practice is a good way to reduce isolation and promote social inclusion by providing a safe space for both groups to come together and engage in activities where they feel connected to each other, supported and valued.

Addressing issues such as social isolation is key when considering the topic of social cohesion. In 2017, the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on social integration produced a report entitled ‘Healing The Generation Divide’ this highly emotive title implies that there is a real problem to address here and something needs fixing or repairing (Dalton *et al*., 2019). These are challenges faced by any society with an increasingly ageing population, but in 2019 Britain was reported to be the most age-segregated country in the world (United For All Ages, 2019) so this was already identified as an issue that needed addressing pre-pandemic and is not a new phenomenon.

It could be argued that building a culture of inclusion and intergenerational working that respects and values the contributions of individuals from different age groups, encourages active participation and engagement, and is something to be fostered. This is a good strategy to support children to develop some of the skills they need to be successful in a diverse and multi-generational world where children learn to respect older people, and the knowledge and experiences they can share together. This point was raised in the response from P4 (Q6) who discussed one of the benefits of intergenerational practice being that children can learn about history from different perspectives because interactions between different generations stimulates talk about the past. P29 (Q6) put it well, describing it as an opportunity for children to “become past aware and future ready.” That said, it should be remembered that the whole ethos underpinning intergenerational practice according to Feldman (2012) is around knowledge exchange. Therefore, there needs to be a recognition that both children and older adults should be learning through these experiences, a point that P31 (Q6) has identified in their response, which explained that intergenerational practice allowed for “increased understanding and sharing of experiences between generations.”

When older adults and young children are engaged in activities together they are building relationships that support their individual and collective social and emotional wellbeing. Socio-cultural theory and intergenerational practice both recognise the importance of shared experiences where participants can interact with each other and learn from a more experienced individual. When participants are motivated through a joint sense of purpose and commitment to others with whom they are working, this likely has the potential to filter through to the wellbeing of the whole community. Therefore, it could be argued that this type of inclusive intergenerational practice may help foster social cohesion.

The concept of social cohesion is deeply rooted in socio-cultural theory and is often seen as the “glue that binds societies” and it is “considered an essential ingredient to address common societal challenges” (Moustakas, 2023, p. 1028). It can be “characterised by resilient social relations, a positive emotional connectedness between its members and the community, and a pronounced focus on the common good” (Moustakas, 2023, p. 1028). One of the key benefits of intergenerational practice is that it is seen to have the ability to promote social cohesion (Hatton-Yeo and Batty, 2011). This is attributed to the fact that when it is carried out effectively, amongst other benefits, intergenerational practice also promotes a sense of belonging for those participating by fostering the holistic development of each individual in terms of their social, emotional and psychological wellbeing; much aligned with the key factors underpinning social pedagogy (Smith, 2019).

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework requires providers to educate children in relation to ‘Understanding the World’ and help them to make sense of their physical world and the community of which they are a part (DfE, 2021). Intergenerational learning opportunities that serve to foster the continuation of cultural identity and promote problem solving across the generations between older adults and young children can contribute to an improvement in social cohesion and educate children about their place within the community. Given that any participation in intergenerational practice could satisfy Ofsted and EYFS requirements in these areas, it is surprising that more settings do not get involved in this type of practice.

Social cohesion can be both a product and a driver of the three related principles that define self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2017). These three principles, autonomy, relatedness and competence can also be seen within the field of intergenerational practice. Autonomy allows participants to determine their own level of involvement within the activities on offer, competence grows for all individuals as they learn new skills and gain new knowledge from each other, and relatedness is seen as relationships form and deepen thereby cultivating more empathy and stronger emotional connections. When intergenerational practice adheres to the three key components of self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2017) the participants will find the experiences more enjoyable, meaningful and fulfilling. It is likely that this will encourage the older adults and younger children to feel more motivated. This intrinsic motivation is key to sustained participation in intergenerational practice, which in turn supports to maintain and deepen social cohesion.

6.2.3: Safeguarding

The data generated from phase one questionnaires showed that a large number of participants felt that safeguarding concerns were a major barrier. This was mentioned both explicitly and implicitly through a variety of responses. There were those participants who used the term ‘safeguarding’ in relation to working with two of the most vulnerable groups in society (P36, P4, P23, P26 - Q7). For example P36, (Q7) talked about safeguarding and protection of vulnerable groups whilst P26, (Q7) discussed safety and safeguarding requirements. Conversely, there were those participants who did not use the term ‘safeguarding’ but their answers alluded to safeguarding concerns (P28, P31, P41, P39, P30 - Q7). For example P31, (Q7) referred to the fact that children might be too physical around older adults whilst P28, (Q7) raised concerns about how staff might control the actions of the older adults in relation to what they said and did in the presence of children.

When the literature search was conducted in relation to this study, extensive reading around the issue of safeguarding was undertaken. At that time, searching the UK policy landscape, there was no existing intergenerational safeguarding framework that could be located, so nothing established that could be followed by those working in the field. Therefore it seems valid that the participants in this study would raise safeguarding as an issue, because it is a key responsibility and keeping children and older adults safe is a priority.

However, safeguarding is not just about creating a policy with a set of rules and boundaries to keep everyone safe from harm. An effective policy needs to be structured in such a way that it fosters wellbeing and promotes a culture where everyone is aware of their rights, and participants and staff feel comfortable enough within their environment to know they will be supported if they raise any concerns. Taking this approach when designing a safeguarding policy for the purpose of intergenerational practice means the document will also be underpinned by social pedagogy as both highlight the importance of creating safe, supportive, inclusive environments which seek to remove any power imbalances; a place where individuals can thrive (Smith, 2019).

Safeguarding can also be viewed in the context of social cultural theory, which believes groups should work together in an environment that nurtures a collective social responsibility to care for one another (Vygotksy, 1978). This is an important point, because if a safeguarding policy is too restrictive and lacks the capacity to allow participants to voice any concerns or express their discomfort about a situation, then there is a good chance this might negatively impact upon the sustainability of the intergenerational practice being delivered. This is because it could lead to participants becoming demotivated and disengaged from the whole process, thereby highlighting, from a policy perspective, the importance of participants having autonomy when engaging in intergenerational practice.

Presently, intergenerational organisations have to create their own safeguarding framework. One way to do this could be to start off with the adoption of Article 19 from the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the child, which addresses children’s rights to be protected from all forms of violence. This could be coupled at the other end of the spectrum with Article 3 from the Human Rights Act designed to safeguard adults. Using these two documents as a baseline, settings could then build upon this with other documentation such as The Care Act (2014) for adults and the newly published Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2023) or Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) and any other relevant documentation pertaining to the age of the children involved, in line with the guidance and procedures of the relevant safeguarding partners. Understandably, this would require a lot of effort and extra work from staff and there is not always the time and resources to commit to such a task, particularly when staff already face such heavy schedules. Therefore upon balance it seems fair to list this as a barrier.

6.2.4: Covid constraints

The Covid-19 pandemic arrived and impacted everybody and everything, including

children, older adults, and communities. It has been claimed that nowhere was this more evident than in the field of intergenerational relationships because these two integral sectors, early years and older adults, were driven apart in an effort to protect those deemed most vulnerable (Bessell, 2017). Ordinarily, infection control is a valid concern for those planning any type of intergenerational practice, but the Covid pandemic exacerbated this with the ensuing dialogue circulating around children being little ‘super spreaders’ who needed to be kept away from vulnerable older adults. However, as Barragan *et al*. (2020) asserted, this was problematic from the start because it implied that this was a problem between two particular age groups, when in fact it was not intergenerational relationships responsible for causing the contagion, but simply passage of the virus between any infected people of any age.

The Covid constraints may have created limitations for those working in the field of intergenerational practice, however, it also provided new opportunities for more innovative working (Cole, 2023). Nonetheless the data from this study only responded to the Covid constraints in terms of the limitations and barriers that it presented (P41, P39, P30, P26 – Q7). Participants cited a variety of Covid related barriers including the fact that visitors to the setting were increasing slowly but were still not back up to pre-Covid levels (P26, Q7). Cross-contamination was noted as a concern by both P41 and P26 (Q7). Meanwhile, P30 (Q7) raised a point around the possible need to provide bereavement counselling for young children.

The constraints placed upon intergenerational practice can also be understood through each of the three lenses used to form the theoretical framework for this research. Socio-cultural theory places a large focus on learning through social interactions with others (Vygotsky, 1978) yet the need for social distancing restricted these physical interactions within the field of intergenerational practice. The shift to virtual formats, although a valuable substitute given the situation with the pandemic, did not offer participants the same depth of connection that direct person-to-person exchanges can foster and therefore it could be argued that the trust building process between the older adults and young children was damaged. The previous ‘informal’ learning opportunities that in person practice presented had now been removed, and as such the reciprocal scaffolding that occurs naturally during intergenerational practice was inevitably reduced. This also links closely to a core principle of social pedagogy that focuses on the quality of relationships built through direct in person interactions (Smith, 2019). The disruption of these in person interactions reduced the capacity for mutual learning opportunities and therefore individual personal development was most likely hindered. Social pedagogy promotes active participation to generate opportunities for experiential person-to person learning. However, in order for settings to abide by the rules enforced because of the Covid crisis, many of these collaborative projects and activities just ceased.

With regard to self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2017), moving intergenerational practice on line also had consequences in terms of reducing the ability of the participants to have as much autonomy over their involvement in the activities on offer. The Covid constraints made it difficult for the providers of intergenerational practice to create the conditions needed to foster intrinsic motivation. This partly stemmed from the fact that online activities became more structured in terms of both provision and scheduling. The ensuing reduction in autonomy could be argued to likely lead to a decrease in the motivation of participants, because they were becoming more externally controlled and had less personal freedom. If this resulted in participants feeling less connected and social bonds were becoming strained in an unfamiliar virtual learning environment, this could result in the older adults and young children gaining less enjoyment from the intergenerational activities; this could also impact upon their wanting to engage in the process and ultimately the sustainability of the programme.

The paucity of literature about the impact that lockdown restrictions placed upon these intergenerational relationships suggested that this was an area that had not been widely researched, though much has been written about those older adults in residential care who were separated from their families (George, 2018). That said, what did not appear to be a research focus, was the impact of lockdown restrictions on the intergenerational friendships that ground to a halt. Given that individuals and communities benefit greatly from forging meaningful intergenerational relationships (DeVore, Winchell and Rowe, 2016) it is actually an area of great importance, with the potential to provide valuable guidance for the Government moving forward in terms of their policy priorities with regard to inclusion and social cohesion (Granville, 2002; Pain, 2005).

There was also limited literature discussing the challenges and successes that early years settings had in terms of their planning and delivery of intergenerational activity. Maybe this could be explained by the fact that planning for and delivering intergenerational activities is complex and there was not much intergenerational activity happening at this time, and as a result research opportunities were limited. This theory resonates with the data from the questionnaires because the 2 settings who did engage in intergenerational practice, using the definitions from Feldman (2012) and Beth Johnson Foundation (2001) had not participated in any activity during the pandemic. This meant that 42 out of 42 settings, so 100% of participants in this research study had not been involved in the delivery of any intergenerational activity at that time.

6.3: Discussion of themes emerging from Phase two data

The discussion that follows explores the three key themes that were highlighted within the data collected from the interviews in Phase Two.

*Diagram 10 – Key themes emerging from phase two data*

6.3.1: Learning and development opportunities

In the current climate where growing consideration is being given to mental health and wellbeing, it is positive that the literature reveals that children who are able to form attachments with adults other than those within their own family, have a higher ability to develop greater resilience and cope better in times of adversity (Catalano *et al*., 2004). The findings from this study (Interview, Q3, R3, S1) reinforced what Catalano *et al*. (2004) said with regard to resilience as the participant explained how the children participating in these intergenerational exchanges are growing in confidence and resilience as they encounter new experiences. It could be argued that nowhere are there more opportunities for children to have these experiences than through participation within intergenerational programmes. These opportunities afford young children a chance to be experience these different types of relationships, and reinforce the case that as a society there is a need to make space for intergenerational practice.

There was evidence in the data gathered from this study to support the positive outcomes arising from the intergenerational relationships that had been established. Phase two data discusses the strength of the emotional relationships and the extent of the emotional attachments being made (Interview, Q3, R3, S1). Furthermore, research by Femia *et al*. (2008) identified that children involved in intergenerational practice showed a greater level of social acceptance, empathy and were able to better self regulate than those children who had not had any engagement with the older adults in the study. Building positive relationships between young and old in a nurturing environment can support the emotional needs of both groups, as well as having key health benefits for the older adults in terms of reducing loneliness. This is because when older adults can connect with the children and feel that their life experiences are valued, it generates a sense of belonging and therefore they are less likely to be lonely; as Castiello *et al*. reminds us people are “wired to be social” (2010, p. 1).

Relatedness is all about the need to feel connected to others and the development of meaningful relationships is one of the strongest benefits to come out of intergenerational practice. In Self Determination Theory, relatedness refers to a sense of belonging, connection and warmth with others, so there are clear links emerging here between intergenerational practice and the work of Ryan and Deci (2017). Similarly, the connection between intergenerational practice and social pedagogy (Smith, 2019) also resonates here with both approaches placing attention upon social interaction, the importance of collaborating with others and the creation of strong personal connections in order to reach shared understandings. Whilst this type of experiential and contextual learning looks different to formalised educational activities, it could be argued that it is just as valuable because it is providing young children and older adults with learning that connects to real life skills within a social context.

Where there seems to be limited research in the field is regarding the social and emotional benefits that children gain from being involved in such projects, and yet, the findings of this study reiterate the supposition that these benefits are real. Engaging in activities that involve helping others seemed to foster empathy and compassion in children, particularly when supported by knowledgeable staff who then went on to encourage the children to reflect upon the experiences of the participating older adults or disabled individuals, as well as how to respond to their needs (George, 2018). This theme came through in the phase two data when the participant talked about how the children are learning to understand that some older adults may not be as quick on their feet, or they might need some assistance to get up out of the chair (Interview, Q3, R3, S1).

As previously stated, the literature in this area is limited, and it appears that the majority of research conducted attesting to these benefits for children comes from the USA, where there has been a particular focus on studies noting a positive impact upon the social development of children as a result of the interactions they shared with the older adults (Park, 2015; Femia *et al.,* 2008; Pasupathi *et al*., 2002). For example, a study conducted in Ohio investigated the socio-emotional skills of a cohort of children engaged in an intergenerational programme, comparing them with a group of similarly aged children who did not have such exposure. The results indicated that the children participating in the intergenerational programme demonstrated heightened levels of socio-emotional development compared to their counterparts (Rosebrook, 2002). Similarly, Holmes (2009) conducted a study yielding comparable findings, with all participating children exhibiting increased levels of acceptance, socialisation, self-esteem, and intellectual development.

Whilst this research study is rich in examples of the socio-emotional learning that has taken place, it also provides details around how children and adults are developing in other areas of learning. For example, S2 discusses the topic of sustainability and knowledge and understanding of the world, particularly in relation to how the older adults are learning from the children about preserving the planet. Meanwhile the children are exploring the issue of recycling and make do and mend (Interview, Q2, R2, S2). Children are also learning new vocabulary from their conversations with the older adults (Interview, Q3, R3, S2). This type of learning maps well with the Vygotskian (1978) model of socio-cultural theory, with children and adults learning through high quality interactions with those more experienced others, be it adults or children.

Vygotsky (1978) believed that unlearned abilities such as attention, perception and memory are built upon by the culture or context in which that child is part. This, he argued is largely transmitted through language. Therefore, communication could be considered an important part of cognitive development. This is true throughout a person’s life as we learn more deeply when involved in communication and social interaction with others. Furthermore, if the older adults and young children feel emotionally supported and are able to form strong connections with each other, they are more likely to experience positive learning outcomes as their overall levels of motivation and desire to participate increase. Constructivist theory is based on the idea that we construct our own learning through interactions and by building on past experience and knowledge; this has wide reaching implications for intergenerational practice. It also suggests that both the children and the older adults need to have autonomy, and that learning can take place in a variety of different spaces in addition to the traditional classroom environment.

The richness of the intergenerational relationships that have been built during the course of this research evidence the importance of human contact and the benefits that brings. For example, something as simple as a child holding hands with an older adult where “they are both getting that human touch” (LW, S1) is an experience that cannot be generated through a virtual medium. It could be argued that the growth of new technologies around information and communication has enabled individuals to become much more independent in their learning and removes the need for interpersonal and social relationships. Whilst this can empower people in one sense it also has the power to isolate them. Fuchsberger *et al*. (2012) posited that social interactions through technological means can have a positive effect in the relationship building process, but it is by no means a suitable substitute as the benefits gained are shown only when it is used in addition to in-person interaction and not a sole means of communication. This point raises concerns about relationships, citizenship and society as a whole with far reaching implications for learning.

6.3.2: Motivation

Leaders involved in the planning and delivery of intergenerational practice may be keen to engage in their own continuing professional development, but they are also motivated by how their actions support the personal growth of the older adults and young children with whom they are working. This motivation can be further understood through the three lenses that make up the theoretical framework for this study. For example, social pedagogy believes that relationships are at the heart of the learning and development process and that everyone should have a voice and a sense of ownership over this process (Smith, 2019). Intergenerational practice fosters these ideas by providing the older adults and young children with experiences to develop meaningful social connections and carefully planned participatory learning opportunities where people feel empowered. As a result, the learning that takes place during intergenerational practice, stretches far beyond the purely academic or intellectual because it also aids social and emotional growth with both groups developing a level of empathy towards each other.

Vygotsky (1978) believed that learning is inherently social and occurs through interactions with others, and similarly, in this study the leaders of intergenerational practice took responsibility for creating the spaces for mutual learning and collaboration between the older adults and young children to occur. These interactions are not just an opportunity for knowledge transfer, but they can also lead to mutual understandings between participants and personal emotional growth; this resonates with Vygotksy’s view of learning as a social, emotional and intellectual process. Often the leaders will take on a role whereby they are scaffolding, guiding and supporting the older adults and young children to achieve various goals set within their zone of proximal development, and they are able to do this because they know and understand the needs of each individual participant. It could therefore be argued that by helping the participants to accomplish new competencies, leaders are able to derive satisfaction, and remain motivated themselves.

Self Determination Theory (SDT) established by Ryan and Deci (2017) considered that there were two different types of motivation, namely autonomous motivation and controlled motivation. Their research has shown that when people are autonomously motivated to do something this results in elevated levels of performance, wellness and engagement. This is not the case with controlled motivation, which is when a person feels coerced into, or obliged to do something in order to avoid punishment or gain rewards. An example of controlled motivation could be that someone refers to doing something because Ofsted or the Local Authority require or expect it. Autonomous motivation would be someone doing something because they believe it is for the greater good. If those leading intergenerational practice have the autonomy to freely shape their programmes in such a way they believe it can best benefit the older adults and young children, and they start to see the results of their success, then it is reasonable to expect that their levels of motivation will increase.

Both S1 and S2 were highly skilled, well qualified practitioners, but it did not automatically follow that this would lead them to be more motivated to engage in intergenerational practice than somebody less skilled or qualified. However, a leader who is highly qualified might possess a deeper understanding of the importance of implementing intergenerational practice, and the positive impact it can bring to the lives of both the children and the older adults in terms of their learning and development. If they have the vision and confidence to adopt a different way of working, to lead learning outside the classroom, then this might motivate them to integrate it into their practice. Furthermore, the satisfaction felt when leaders know they are contributing to the growth and development of others and when they are able to start to see meaningful relationships flourish is likely to drive them forward.

The phase two response from S1 discussed “desire for change and for respectful human values” (Interview, Q6, R6, S1) and this certainly fits with the concept of autonomous motivation. The response from S2 also aligned with the requirements for autonomous motivation and talked about “always looking to do things at nursery that have a positive impact on everyone” (Interview, Q6, R6, S2). This was interesting because it puts forward the possibility that one component to successful planning and delivery of intergenerational programmes could actually lay with the values and attitudes of staff, and the rationale behind their actions. Fullan (2001) states moral purpose is one of the essential motivating components of change leadership. By this he is referring to the desire of a person to make a difference to the lives of others, but also that the means of getting to those ends must be fair and ethical; working with integrity to strive to improve the quality of how people live together. Perhaps this also goes some way to explain more generally why some settings fail in their intergenerational exploits and others succeed. Simply mixing older adults and children together in an environment does not guarantee success by itself, it is much more complex (Femia *et al*., 2008).

6.3.3: Reflective practice

The process of reflective practice allows those who are planning for and leading intergenerational activities not only to critically examine their own actions and experiences, it also provides a way through which leaders can reflect upon the quality of the intergenerational opportunities they are providing for others. Taking the time to do this provides leaders with the opportunity to raise the quality of their intergenerational offer by ensuring their practice is meaningful, contextual and reciprocal for both the older adults and the young children. Taking an approach where there is reflection in action and on action happening (Schon, 1991) the leaders are able to assess whether one particular group is dominating an activity, and if this is the case, enables adjustments to be made in real time. It also provides the space to see if activities are fully inclusive or there are further barriers that need lifting. Ensuring that both the older adults and the young children are working together cooperatively, learning from each other with adequate scaffolding and are keen to actively participate in the tasks on offer resonates with the empowerment ethos of social pedagogy (Smith, 2019), Vygotsky’s (1978) zone of proximal development and the key principles around autonomy as discussed by Ryan and Deci (2017).

The phase two data suggests that being able to engage in reflective practice is an essential component that benefits the delivery of intergenerational programmes and contributes to successful outcomes. S1 described how the pandemic put the building plans on hold for her organisation, this then created the time and space much needed for reflection (Interview, Q2, R2, S1). By S1 having this time and using it to reflect on the plans for the setting, it had allowed her to disrupt the traditional expectations around a nursery layout. This might normally encompass a baby room, toddler room and preschool room. However, by going through the process of reflection, S1 realised that the original three room layout planned for the setting was contributing to the same problem they were trying to fight against. She did not want to be dividing groups by age and promoting segregation, when everything about intergenerational practice strives for the polar opposite. Had S1 not entered into this process and made these changes to reflect upon what intergenerational practice truly entails, then that organisational model would look different and arguably perhaps be less effective. This linked back to the literature reviewed in chapter two which discussed the importance of “spatial potentials for intergenerational relationships” being a critical part of the planning process (Hauderowicz and Ly Serena, 2020, p. 97).

When S1 and S2 were asked to reflect on what they had done that worked well at their settings, both participants were able to provide comprehensive responses and provide good examples of their successes (Interview, Q3, R3). Equally, both participants S1 and S2 were able to reflect upon what their biggest challenges had been. S1 entered into a discussion about the complexity around staff and revisited the earlier issue mentioned in phase one data around a lack of training and understanding in the field. It appeared that trying to merge the two disciplines was tricky. At one end of the spectrum there were care staff for the older adults, at the other were early years staff and S1 had the task of fusing them together. The lack of accessible training did not help. It was interesting to hear that S1 said they were finding it easier for those trained in early years to transition to working with the older adults, as opposed to the care staff for older adults transition to working with young children. She mentioned that most people who work in care are primarily trained in processes, whereas early years staff tended to be more person centred with some level of knowledge around subjects like brain development and attachment (Interview, Q4, R4, S1).

Whalley emphasises that reflection involves “taking personal responsibility for the way we work with children, families, and colleagues, the capacity to work autonomously and to manage change thoughtfully” (2008, p. 53). Additionally, the literature suggests that early years settings led by well-qualified graduates who grasp the significance of childhood and can respect and value it, tend to show more progress resulting in improved outcomes for children (Tickell, 2011; Nutbrown, 2012). Success for those with Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) is attributed to their role as reflective practitioners with emotional intelligence, utilising their ability to engage in reflexive praxis to drive change (Boardman, 2018). Freire defines praxis as “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (1970, p. 51). Individuals with EYTS recognise that reflection is just the beginning of the improvement process; they possess the skill to guide their staff and settings through the necessary transitions toward pedagogical enrichment. It is this reflective practice that was highlighted within the phase two data by S1 and S2 who both have Early Years Teacher Status.

The capacity to take personal responsibility for something and to recognise the needs of others is not acquired quickly; it is acquired slowly and progressively, through repeated experience, careful guidance and reflection. Given that this is predominantly gained through experience, it follows that those leading any intergenerational work, as well as those participating in the programmes, need to be given opportunities to make decisions for themselves and voice their opinions, and thus the discussion returns once more to this concept of autonomy.

6.4: Discussion of themes emerging from Phase three data

The discussion that follows explores the four key themes that were highlighted within the data collected from the learning walk, the autonomy audit and the personality quiz during Phase Three.

*Diagram 11 – Key themes emerging from phase three data*

6.4.1: Environment

Those leading intergenerational practice need to provide a carefully structured physical and social environment for the young children and older adults. These spaces work best when staff are able to provide a fully inclusive, flexible and welcoming environment in which meaningful relationships can be fostered and participants can work collaboratively to share their knowledge and experiences with each other as outlined in Vygotksy’s (1978) writing around the ‘more knowledgeable other’ in relation to learning and development. As previously discussed, Ryan and Deci (2017) explain that when individuals feel they have freedom and control over a situation in which they can exert their independence, then they are more likely to be engaged in the learning process, so the environment also needs to facilitate these factors as well as ensuring that the activities on offer are challenging and of interest for both the older adults and the young children. Meanwhile, social pedagogy (Smith, 2019) highlights the importance of relationships, community, participation, autonomy and well-being so those responsible for delivering intergenerational practice also need to ensure that they are designing an environment which is able to support these values which closely align with the philosophy of intergenerational programmes and that should allow practice to thrive.

There are four guiding principles within the Early Years Foundation Stage framework (DfE, 2021). One of these relates to enabling environments, and this supports the belief that children learn and develop well when conditions are conducive to learning and children are kept safe. It proposes that early years settings should be a place that facilitates a sense of belonging, and one that is responsive to the needs and interests of all those who attend. Both S1 and S2 followed the EYFS (DfE, 2021) and were cognisant of this fact, however the traditional nursery school environment based within a local authority run school (S2) was different to the nursery housed within the integrated intergenerational setting (S1), but interestingly they both had some striking similarities to the Reggio Emilia approach undertaken in Northern Italy.

Reggio Emilia is a city in Northern Italy, in the Emilia-Romagna region. This area was destroyed during the second world war and the community was given funds to rebuild the town. Whilst the men wanted to put the money into farming, the women thought it would be better invested in early education. The women got their wish and the schools were financed and supported by the Municipality within a network of reflective practice and research. Both S1 and S2 have demonstrated that they are reflective practitioners as discussed in the previous theme that came through from the phase two data. In the 1980’s Loris Malaguzzi founded the Reggio Emilia approach to education, believing that a city should acknowledge its school as an important part of the community, and that these organisations are not only for the children, but also for the families, educators and the wider community. In essence these are the same values that are promoted through intergenerational practice, examples of which have been seen in the data from S1 and S2. The benefits from the intergenerational work conducted at both settings has already filtered through into the local community and reached a wider group of people. For example S1 has established a grandparents learning co-operative which provides them with a forum through which they can come together to air their views and be listened to. S2 discussed how the recycling projects undertaken at this setting are filtering out into the community via the parents and participating older adults.

The purposeful architect designed setting where S1 was based had been carefully designed and organised. The living plants, natural light and comfortable furnishings made this an inviting space. The environment was reminiscent of the Reggio Emilia nursery schools which are purpose built facilities where the architects and planners take into account the social, emotional, health, physical and educational needs of the children and staff. This was not a surprise as S1 had discussed that one of the underpinning theorists used to develop her unique intergenerational curriculum was Malaguzzi, founder of the Reggio Emilia approach (LW, S1). Reggio Emilia schools regard the environment as the third teacher (McNally and Slutsky, 2017) and in addition to the usual classrooms these settings have an art studio, a music room and some sort of piazza. The central space or piazza is designed to reflect the community within which the school is based. Children in Italy have the freedom to utilise this space as an extension of their classroom for “encounters, friendships, games and other activities that compete with the classroom” (Malaguzzi, 1993, p. 64). The evidence from the phase three data concurs with this concept as the LW with S1 led me through communal central spaces (like the piazza) as well as into a separate art room where an artist in residence works with the children and older adults (like the ateliers). Just like in Reggio Emilia, S1 has carefully considered the use of space and organised it for maximum impact.

The settings run by S1 and S2 were both visually appealing with displays reflecting the ongoing projects at each place, documenting the work of the participants both young and old. This in itself is important because documentation can contribute to the depth of children’s learning from their projects and other work experiences. Malaguzzi (1993) points out, through documentation children’s curiosity is stimulated and they grow in confidence and self esteem as they reflect upon what they have achieved. By preparing and displaying evidence of the children’s learning experiences, the children can re-visit their experience and work which may bring new understandings and more in depth thinking, questioning and dialogue. That said there is no reason why these benefits would not extend to the older adults participating in these programmes with the children. By displaying the participant’s work, efforts, ideas and learning in a beautiful and respectful way, it shows that when all people of all ages are capable, thoughtful and creative, that this is valued. Taking the ideas and work of the children and older adults seriously conveys to them that their efforts, intentions and ideas are important. In turn, that could help the participants to also take their work seriously, which encourages them to learn in a responsible, joyful and dedicated way. The learning process and results will be more satisfying for them if their learning process is recognised, appreciated and displayed in a respectful manner. In addition, documentation of the participant’s ideas, thoughts and feelings are a great way to stimulate memories of experiences and there was evidence of this in both S1 and S2 settings.

The phase three data showed that S1 engaged in a lot of creative pursuits including sculpture, shadow play, mirror play and music at her setting. Just like in the Reggio approach the participants investigate the properties of light using projectors, large white walls and reams of paper. Light boxes are used to investigate shadow play and the setting is full of natural materials such as stone, wood, fruit and vegetables to stimulate curiosity and creativity. Thornton and Brunton (2015) refer to creative resources as ‘intelligent materials’ in the belief that this encourages children to think of the resources as valuable and full of potential, ready to be transformed into any manner of new creations and inventions. Although S2 did not use the term ‘intelligent materials’ at her setting, she did encourage the children to think of the resources as valuable and full of potential, and as they were recycled or upcycled into new creations and inventions, the same level of enthusiasm and excitement for this type of learning was present. This too was an interesting piece of data, which also aligned with the stance of Reggio Emilia.

In Italy, the Remida aspect of the Reggio approach promotes the idea that waste materials can be resources. Named after the mythological King Midas, Remida encourages a golden perspective on discarded materials. Finding beauty and value in the unexpected, the community are encouraged to embrace the philosophy of revaluing waste materials and educating for a more sustainable future. The centre collects, exhibits, and offers alternative and reclaimed materials, obtained from unsold stock and rejects, or discarded materials from industrial and handicraft production, with the aim to reinvent their use and meaning (Ferrari and Giacopini, 2005). Meanwhile over in England, this was the exact same type of practice that S2 was promoting daily at her setting. It could be argued that the most precious resource that any environment needs is highly trained staff, for without the knowledge and understanding of why they are doing what they are doing, and the ability to use the resources correctly, any learning and development will fall below the levels that could be achieved. Staffing is explored as a separate theme further below.

6.4.2: Pedagogy, curriculum and the importance of autonomy

It is important to clarify from the start the difference between pedagogy and curriculum. The curriculum outlines what the teacher wants the older adults and children to learn in terms of knowledge, skills and experiences. Pedagogy refers to how that curriculum is taught in terms of the teaching styles used and theories employed. It is believed that intergenerational practice fosters the values of community, democracy and humanitarianism (Cole, 2023) with learning seen as a process co-constructed through social interactions. The phase three data strongly supports this theory in relation to S1 who asserts that the construction of meaningful relationships is at the heart of their unique curriculum (LW, S1). If correct, then this supports the idea that there needs to be certain key principles that define and underpin any intergenerational curriculum. For example, these principles could relate to the promotion of social and emotional learning; learning to relate differently to others; working and learning in collaborative groups or developing a cosmopolitan identity where people can relate to other cultural identities and develop this to gain an emotional understanding of one another.

Intergenerational practice aligns with the work of Vygotksy (1978) as it fosters collaborative learning through social interaction, scaffolding and the co-construction of knowledge. Vygotksy (1978) also believed that the ultimate goal of learning should be to internalise knowledge allowing participants to eventually become autonomous learners, allowing the participants to have a choice around what they learn, how they learn and how they interact with others will all foster a sense of empowerment, but in order for this to happen the curriculum needs to be flexible. Therefore, it could be argued that intergenerational pedagogy should create a supportive environment where learning is both emotionally and socially engaging so that all the participants can build meaningful relationships and feel motivated to engage in the learning process.

Intergenerational practice should offer the young children and older adults hands on activities and challenges that align with their current ability levels but at a level where they are achievable when given adequate support within their zone of proximal development (Vygotksy, 1978). It could be argued that any intergenerational pedagogy needs to be designed in such a way it can facilitate these factors by providing opportunities for the young children and older adults to learn from each other in a space where they can build a shared understanding based upon their unique perspectives, life skills and experiences. This type of learning encourages critical thinking, creativity and personal growth; furthermore, by the curriculum supporting the holistic development of the participants it is reflecting the social pedagogical focus around the whole person and collective growth (Smith, 2019).

The Namaste Care (NC) approach is a person-centred approach that primarily focuses on providing care and support for individuals with advanced dementia and emphasises the importance of focusing on the person, rather than the illness (Yous *et al*., 2023). S1 had prior knowledge of this method and an idea that this could be adapted and used within intergenerational practice, so she spent some further time researching this and spoke to specifically trained Namaste Care nurses. The approach works by focusing on the unique needs and interests of each child and adult participants, rather than adopting a one size fits all approach. Similar to the EYFS, NC embraces the importance of building positive relationships, providing a calm and soothing environment for individuals and sensory rich experiences through subjects such as art, music and nature. S1 realised that the principles of NC could easily be woven in with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2021) and other ways of working. This strategy enabled her to develop a unique intergenerational curriculum based on a merged pedagogical programme underpinned by influential theorists such as Froebel (1887), Malaguzzi (1993), Isaacs (1971) and Vygotsky (1978).

The data obtained during the learning walk with S1 revealed good examples of sensory activities that were taking place at this setting. This was evidenced in the activities such as making bird feeders, children helping older adults out in the garden, going for walks along the sensory paths, sitting at the tables listening to the sounds of the birds and the wind chimes. These kinds of experiences with nature can stimulate the senses and promote relaxation. The use of essential oils to create scented beanbags helped to create a positive atmosphere along with ambient lighting, which S1 explained could be used to create different moods and stimulate the senses. There were plenty of art materials on offer such as paint, clay, and markers to encourage creativity and self-expression. Sand, water, mud and playdough were utilised to promote tactile exploration and provide sensory stimulation. S1 ensured that each and every resource in that setting was appropriate to both young children and older adults.

The artefacts project and the topic of recycling (LW, S2) had provided both the children and the older adults with infinite open-ended learning opportunities around the topic of sustainability and preservation of the environment. There was learning taking place for both groups at this setting as a result of these carefully thought out and well-planned activities. Children were adopting skills for life, and the projects that were being undertaken at this setting were filtering out into the community via the parents and the older adults who participated in the programme. Ofsted were so impressed by the extent to which children recycled at this setting that they mentioned it in their 2019 inspection report remarking upon how the children talked about how they were going to recycle their crisp packets to make Christmas decorations with them. Ofsted recognised that this would help children to learn about the wider world and current environmental issues. It had been a conscious decision by S2 to design the curriculum in this way, but it should be noted that without this participant having complete autonomy at this setting, it might not have been possible to deliver this in practice. It could be argued that leaders with more autonomy are in a position to make decisions and take actions that are responsive to the specific needs and circumstances at their setting (Pink, 2018). Both leaders from S1 and S2 had the authority to make their own decisions when it came to the design and delivery of the educational programmes they provided as evidenced in the data.

A significant number of intergenerational studies have been underpinned by Montessori styled sessions (Camp and Lee, 2011; Lillard, 2005), however neither S1 nor S2 mentioned this theorist when discussing their practice. Perhaps the reason for this is that whilst some of the views of Montessori (1964) resonate with aspects of intergenerational practice, others do not align with the ethos behind the current thinking in the field, leading S1 and S2 to take a more progressive approach. For example, Montessori (1964) did not see children as a part of the community, and there was an expectation they work mostly on their own in a quiet and peaceful environment of total concentration (Holt, 2017). S1 told me (LW, S1) that the intergenerational curriculum offered at her setting was predominantly based upon the theories established by Froebel (1887), Malaguzzi (1993), Isaacs (1971) and Vygotksy (1978) and these influences had been seen in phase two data and discussed in relation to the environment.

The curriculum offer from S2 took a holistic approach that used sustainability to underpin the whole curriculum and interwoven throughout that was the intergenerational practice (LW, S2). Although S2 did not discuss any theoretical underpinning to the curriculum offer, it could be argued that the fact it was holistic by nature resonates with the work of Froebel (1887). Froebel (1887) believed that the development of children was dependent upon a unity between home, school/setting, community and nature. This approach was not supplementary to the curriculum but was firmly embedded and embraced as part of daily life at this setting, and might suggest that an educational programme around sustainability appears to have created a programme of sustainable education.

The literature suggests that specific factors play a crucial role in determining the success of intergenerational programmes. However, a common thread throughout the literature appears to be the importance of meticulous planning in the initial stages of organising intergenerational activities. Steinig (2005) further emphasised that poorly planned programmes carried the risk of treating older adults in a patronising manner. The literature reviewed for this study indicated that intergenerational programmes were successful when well-trained staff had a deep understanding of both the older adults and the children they were working with. It could therefore be argued that the effective planning of activities in such programmes has the capacity to establish a learning environment that encourages meaningful interactions and offers open-ended learning opportunities, resulting in positive outcomes for everyone involved (Epstein and Boisvert, 2006; Jarrott and Smith, 2011). The Local Government Association's report on Intergenerational Practice aligns with this perspective, identifying these factors as crucial for success (Springate, Atkinson and Martin, 2008). In essence, it is simply not enough to place older adults and children together in a shared environment and hope for success (Femia *et al*., 2008).

Given the above points made by Epstein and Boisvert (2006) and Jarrott and Smith (2011), the literature suggests that S1 who worked within an integrated intergenerational setting was already placed at an advantage in terms of the capacity for staff to build strong relationships with all the participants. The learning environment was constant and there was no pressure from the time limitations that are placed upon short-term studies. As a result it was no surprise that the data for this study suggested the quality of the interactions between the staff, the children and the older adults were of a high standard (LW, S1). S2 employed a different approach (LW, S2) and although it did involve the older adults coming into the nursery setting on a regular basis, there was not the same level of continuity offered by S1.

Intergenerational practice is a relatively new field, and this may account for the lack of existing models and frameworks in relation to pedagogy and curriculum development. S1 decided to create an original intergenerational curriculum, which would be implemented using a new pedagogical stance. The rationale behind this was that she wanted to adopt a new and innovative approach which was specifically tailored to the unique needs of the particular participants that would be at this setting, but she also needed a model that had the flexibility to be adapted and changed based upon the specific needs as time passed and participants changed. S1 had strong personal beliefs about the benefits of intergenerational practice and wanted to create an approach that aligned with those beliefs where she could put her principles into practice. This was not an easy task and proved to be a complex and time consuming process.

6.4.3: Safeguarding

One aspect of effective safeguarding is about protecting those we are responsible for by limiting any unnecessary stress, anxiety or harm placed upon them and thereby preventing any experience that could result in emotional trauma. The topic of death is a legitimate concern within intergenerational practice, and it cannot be overlooked. It is a statistical reality that children often form connections with older adults who may, unfortunately, pass away. The views of S1 align with current literature by accepting that “death is an unavoidable factor, but developing children to be resilient enough to cope when these situations occur can mitigate any upset and negativity around the matter” (LW, S1). It should be noted that the children at setting one are already being educated about life and death in ways that are both real and meaningful, for example there are numerous plants to be looked after both inside and outside the setting, some of these flourish and some of these wilt away. Some parents might grapple with concerns about how such an event might impact their children, and question whether exposing them to the array of emotions associated with death is necessary. For those advocating that children should be shielded from discussions about death, it could be argued, especially in the context of the recent pandemic that children should be prepared for such circumstances. However, this preparation should be age-appropriate, employing simple language and easily understandable concepts.

In a study conducted by George (2018), parents of children involved in an American intergenerational project, which included exposure to the loss of an older adult explained that the death had not been a traumatic experience for their children. This positive outcome was attributed to the sensitive and honest way in which the situation was handled. With the heightened awareness of mortality risks during the COVID-19 pandemic, some children have experienced anxiety regarding the wellbeing of their older relatives and friends (Bessell, 2017). Therefore, it could be argued that children who are better equipped to navigate such situations may be those who have previously encountered discussions about death, either in real-life experiences or hypothetical scenarios.

Indeed, parents in the study conducted by George (2018) believed that these types of significant experiences act as a crucial life lesson, acknowledging death as a natural and inevitable aspect of life. They believed that it was essential for children to comprehend the changes in the life cycle. These parents were aware beforehand that the possibility of encountering death existed during the project, and they unanimously expressed that the encounter had contributed to their children's emotional growth. Phase three data from LW (S1) in her setting further supports this perspective, stating that parents sending their children to the nursery strongly believed in the transformative power of intergenerational relationships and recognised death as an inherent part of life.

In George's study (2018), children were actively encouraged to share memories of the older adult who had passed and were reassured that it was acceptable to miss them. Remarkably, one child even expressed a desire to attend the funeral of 'their friend.' Despite the sadness associated with the experience, it was deemed a healthy one, with the nurturing relationships formed during the study outweighing the older adult passing away. The robust friendships established during these intergenerational practices are evident in the poignant words of Reeves (2019) quoted in Weinstein (2019, p. 14), describing the atmosphere as "so special" and expressing a desire to preserve its power and beauty. At the time of writing up this research S1 had not yet had to deal with such an event. However she was fully prepared for when the time would inevitably come, with the plan being that children would be encouraged to chat about their memories and paint stones to be placed in the garden where they could commemorate their lost friend. One of the important points raised here appears to be that working in partnership with parents and carers will help manage expectations and avoid difficult conversations further down the line.

It should be noted that the termination of relationships formed during periods of intergenerational practice happen for many reasons. Families might relocate, or for example, at Setting One, at some point the young children are going to get older and move on to school or a different educational provision. S1 explains how consideration also needs to be given as to how this will impact the older adults left behind. It is the hope of S1 that the bonds formed will be strong enough that the parents of the young children who have attended this setting will want to continue the intergenerational friendships long into the future. This was seen in the Channel 4 programme *Old People’s Home for Four Year Olds* (2018) where relationships formed during the project continued to be maintained after the project had finished, seeing some older adults taking on the role of a ‘social grandparent’ and becoming part of the family.

The literature serves as a reminder for those running intergenerational programmes that it is not always possible to predict what is going to be said or needed (Cole, 2023). In anticipation of things not running as expected it is important that parents and carers are spoken to in advance so they are aware that sometimes working with such diverse age groups can be problematic. S1 discussed an incident that had occurred at her setting whereby an older adult with additional needs wanted to participate in some of the intergenerational activities. This person normally has a carer, and the carer went with them to the session but then left. Staff quickly realised that this older adult had a greater level of need and they were able to contact the carer to return and stay with the older adult during the session. As a result, S1 now ensures any older adult who might fall into that category, is always accompanied by their carer. This incident also highlighted the fact that risk assessments completed by those with experience of working with the older adults do not always align with the risk assessments being completed by those with experience of working with the children. Again, this goes back to the lack of training around working in the field of intergenerational practice and a lack of existing frameworks and policy documents to guide the process and support practitioners to navigate such events. This data supports the case that there is a need for some sort of holistic approach when it comes to writing risk assessments rather than adopting a tick box approach.

A good example of staff taking a more holistic approach to risk assessments was evidenced in the data from S1 during the learning walk when she told me about the following situation. Staff originally trained in the care of older adults had completed a risk assessment for an older adult and queried whether it would not be safe for her to be around young children as she often hit out at people when she was feeling threatened. The person completing the initial risk assessment for the older adult felt there would not be the space needed to accommodate this person, nor was their behaviour deemed appropriate to be in a group situation with young children. S1 felt it was wrong to exclude this person based on a few ticks in a few boxes and decided to invite her to the sessions and she would personally observe and supervise the situation. Through detailed observations it later came to light that this older adult actually had sensory issues, in the same way that young children sometimes do.

S1 recognised that this older adult “was actually craving touch and there was no real aggression present” and from that baseline S1 began to introduce self hugs into the activities for all the group. When S1 noticed that the older adult was a little unsettled and beginning to get agitated she gave her “tactile beanbags which would satisfy her sensory craving for touch.” Similar practice might involve a child being given a fidget toy as a stress relief strategy. Cole (2023) talks about the diverse range of sensory impairments that might be present when working with these two groups and that consideration must be given to how activities can be differentiated so they can accommodate all the participants so that nobody is discriminated against. Taking this approach will ensure that providers are able to develop an environment that is inclusive and respectful allowing all the participants to feel they belong, by having equal opportunities to contribute and learn. Social pedagogy advocates for social inclusion and equality, believing everyone has the right to participate fully in society and the same ethos underpins intergenerational practice (Smith, 2019).

What is striking about the example from S1 is that if this holistic approach had not been taken and a tick box approach had been employed, then that older adult would have been excluded from attending these sessions. This type of incident suggests that risk assessment processes need to be thoughtfully integrated into intergenerational practice. Whilst safeguarding is important for the wellbeing of everyone, it is also a key driver when it comes to delivering successful and sustainable intergenerational practice. Again, this brings into question the issue of staff training and on-going supervision and support available for those responsible for managing the risk assessment/safeguarding process. In this example, those staff originally trained to work in early years understood the concept of schematic behaviour and how to respond to it, those originally trained to work with older adults did not. The complexities surrounding staff issues when working within an intergenerational environment is explored further in the theme below.

6.4.4: Staff

Research projects such as Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years (REPEY, 2002) and The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE, 2004a, 2004b) found that in early years settings where there was strong leadership, and trained teachers and graduates, there was a higher level of quality in relation to practice and provision, a view reiterated in The Nutbrown Review (2012). In terms of improving outcomes for children and raising quality, Roberts-Holmes noted that there was “a clear connection between highly qualified staff and high quality service for children and families” (2013, pp. 340-341).

It could be argued that those who work with older adults are almost functioning as technicians whose main responsibility is focused upon manual, task based, care procedures. S1 has taken these two different groups and put them together with the aim of creating a homogeneous workforce. Although they have all received some level of intergenerational training it has not been to the same level of that undertaken in their original field and this appears to have unsettled them somewhat. S1 explained that staff are not yet identifying as intergenerational professionals and still revert to their original field of expertise when describing themselves, viewing their intergenerational training as an add on – they were still in a state of becoming (LW, S1). Turner (1995) refers to a liminal space – a state where individuals falls into the ‘gaps’ between social groups. This is where those staff working in intergenerational practice with S1 were currently situated. They were facing challenges regarding the gap between their own original status and being able to fully shift to the status of being an intergenerational professional. The resulting hybrid professional that this has created meant forming their professional identity within the workplace had become difficult for some of them.

Merging the staff from two different fields at opposite ends of a spectrum has proved challenging. Interestingly, S1 explained that it had been easier for those originally trained in early years to transition to working with the older adults and adapt to the Namaste Care (NC) approach adopted at the setting. For those originally trained to work with older adults to transition to working effectively with the children was seemingly more problematic. There could be a few reasons why this was the case. Early years practitioners are trained in subjects such as child development, neuroscience and attachment theory, and they understand the importance of providing person centred care and focus on the unique needs, interests and abilities of each child. This approach aligns well with the person centred approach of the NC approach, which prioritises the individual rather than the illness. Furthermore, they are trained to build positive relationships with children, families, and other professionals. In addition, those working in early years know how to create a nurturing and safe environment for children. This also aligns with the NC approach, which emphasises the importance of providing a calm and soothing environment for individuals. Meanwhile, staff originally trained to work with older adults, have previously tended to focus on the physical aspects of the role, almost taking on the role of a technician. Their training consists of things such as manual handling, washing, dressing and as the data states “there seems to be no real pedagogy happening” (LW, S1).

For those leading and planning intergenerational activities, being able to address staffing issues and understanding the role that staff play is key to success. Intergenerational staff need to be able to foster and facilitate relationships by being attuned to the needs of all those they are working with. They also need to act as role models and be able to support the holistic development of both the older adults and the young children. The way in which staff interact with the young children and older adults can have a profound impact on the effectiveness of intergenerational practice and there should be the recognition that their role is more than that of care providers or instructors merely delivering information or guiding tasks. Knowledgeable staff can create spaces where social interaction and mutual learning takes place and foster an environment that reflects the core values of social pedagogy to support the growth and development of the young children and older adults in a holistic way, respecting the idea that social competence is as important as intellectual development (Smith, 2019).

Social pedagogy promotes empowerment and autonomy for individuals (Smith, 2019) and this extends to the role of staff working in intergenerational practice as well as to those young children and older adults who participate. If the staff feel that they have control over their work and the different pedagogical approaches they want to employ, it follows that they are more likely to experience a greater level of motivation, satisfaction and engagement. However, if this is not the case and staff are not feeling fulfilled in their own role, then this could negatively impact their ability to provide positive experiences for the young children and older adults.

What was evident from the data was the difficulty both S1 and S2 had in terms of recruiting staff who were suitably qualified with the necessary skills to work with both young children and older adults. Effective practice requires that staff can assume the role of the ‘more knowledgeable other’ as they scaffold and guide the learning of the young children and the older adults, thereby enabling them to complete tasks that they otherwise might not achieve without this support (Vygotksy, 1978). In addition, it is important that the staff are capable of recognising when to step in and when to stand back and allow the participants to take on more responsibility for their own learning. If staff have received training to work holistically and support the young children and older adults in their emotional, social and cognitive development then they will be in a position to engage in active listening and empathy in order to help them manage the diverse emotional and learning needs of both the generations they are working with.

It should be acknowledged that the issue of locating suitably skilled trained staff and recruitment is more complex than simply just citing the lack of intergenerational training programmes on offer. Even if this training barrier were to be removed, there is likely to still be a recruitment struggle within the field of intergenerational work. This is because, even when organisations are treated as two separate entities there is still evidence of the ongoing, long standing, struggles to recruit staff into early years settings (Rolfe *et al*., 2015) and the social care sector (Sharman, 2014; Jang *et al*., 2017; Turnpenny and Hussein, 2020). The issue of recruitment presented itself firmly in the data when one participant said that not only did the nursery have to contend with a shortage of good qualified staff when it came to recruitment, but in addition, they were still struggling with ongoing staffing levels due to illness (LW, S2).

6.5: Collation of the emergent themes

The final part of this discussion involves the collation of the emergent themes across all the phases being placed into four key groups. The themes in each group were then applied to the overarching research title and the sub questions to provide the following insights in relation to the title of this study ***“Leading learning beyond the classroom: the benefits and barriers to intergenerational practice”*** and the three sub-research questions listed below:

1. What are the benefits of intergenerational practice?
2. What are the barriers to intergenerational practice?
3. What motivates an early years leader to engage with intergenerational practice?

6.5.1: Benefits of intergenerational practice

*Diagram 12 – Key themes relating to the benefits of intergenerational practice*

The plurality of data points towards numerous benefits for those at both ends of the spectrum engaging in this type of practice. One of the key benefits highlighted was the opportunities that intergenerational practice can provide for relationship building between older adults and children; as a result of this connectedness a sense of community is fostered and social cohesion is enhanced. Children involved in intergenerational programmes were shown to develop empathy, respect, understanding and patience as they worked together with older adults. Both groups were able to learn from the different experiences and knowledge that each generation brought in a meaningful way. This creates space for a rich and engaging learning environment helping both the older adults and young children develop new skills and become better prepared for the world in which they live. The literature highlighted the fact that one of the goals of intergenerational practice should be the ability to address sustainability (Mannion, 2016). This came through in the data from this study, particularly from setting two and their recycling projects.

6.5.2: Factors that benefit successful intergenerational practice

*Diagram 13 – Factors that benefit successful intergenerational practice*

The results indicated that optimal outcomes in intergenerational programmes could be achieved with a thoughtfully designed and ambitious curriculum. Effective leadership, characterised by a strong vision and consistent evaluation of practices, played a crucial role in this success. The data revealed that it was important that the curriculum should be tailored to the needs and interests of both the young children and older adults, and that it should be delivered in an inclusive learning environment where every space is carefully constructed. Meaningful interactions between staff and participants are essential, but there needs to be the acknowledgement that building meaningful relationships takes time. Staff members should be capable of justifying the value of their actions around curriculum design, which needs to focus on the benefits for both young children and older adults. Where it is lacking, leaders must actively support their staff in acquiring and developing this knowledge.

6.5.3: Barriers to delivering successful intergenerational practice

*Diagram 14 – Key themes relating to the barriers around intergenerational practice*

It can be concluded that any concerns regarding safeguarding and the capacity to ensure the safety of two of the most vulnerable groups in society was a significant issue for those contemplating engagement in this field. This could be partly attributed to the perception in England that these two groups are less capable and require protective measures. In contrast, countries like Italy manage to safeguard these groups without implementing similarly rigorous regulations. It could be argued that England contributes to this obstacle by instilling a 'fear factor' among practitioners who may be interested in undertaking this type of work but are anxious about the associated responsibilities.

It is reasonable to suggest that the scarcity of intergenerational training programmes in England contributes to the problems surrounding the overall deficiency of knowledge in the field. This could, in part, account for the relatively low number of intergenerational programmes currently in operation when compared to certain other countries, for example USA, Canada and Japan. This links to the earlier point about safeguarding, as more available comprehensive training might instil greater confidence in practitioners considering this type of work, particularly when it comes to meeting safeguarding expectations.

Lastly, this study identified staff as a significant obstacle with respect to the challenges in recruitment from both the early years and the broader adult social care sector. This issue is also interconnected with the previously mentioned training concerns. The difficulties faced by employers working in the field wanting to secure highly qualified, well trained, knowledgeable, and appropriately compassionate intergenerational staff is apparent. This is a real challenge for those wanting to develop and implement enduring, sustainable intergenerational programmes. Whilst it could be argued that good staff are the most valuable resource in any setting, it is disappointing that the shortage of skilled professionals in both fields; early years and adult social care, continues to be particularly pronounced in England.

6.5.4: Motivation of leaders delivering successful intergenerational practice

*Diagram 15 – Key factors present in motivated leaders in the field* (Ryan and Deci, 2017)

The results indicated that highly motivated leaders play a crucial role in the effective planning and implementation of intergenerational programmes. However, to tailor decisions and actions to the specific needs of their setting, leaders required a considerable degree of autonomy. Additionally, leaders had to be in a position whereby they could exercise their ability to cultivate positive workplace relationships, foster opportunities for constructive feedback and deliver mentoring to establish strong connections among staff, young children and the older adults. Finally, the data showed how the leaders S1 and S2 who were involved in this study exhibited a willing attitude, coupled with a high level of skill and knowledge in their field. This enabled them to be innovative, creative, and flexible in translating their expertise into authentic practical experiences for the young children, older adults and staff team.

6.6: Summary

The next chapter provides a reflection upon the thesis and considers the limitations of this study whilst looking to the future in terms of the implications of this research. There will be a suggestion for some possible recommendations and a discussion about the contribution to knowledge that this work has made.

**CHAPTER SEVEN – CONCLUSION**

7.1: Introduction

This research study sought to gain a deeper understanding of intergenerational practice and uncover some of the reasons why the UK has been slower to develop or expand at the same rate as other countries in this field. The investigation concentrated exclusively on a restricted sample of early years personnel from Northern England. Functioning as an exploratory case study, it delved into their methods, perspectives, and encounters concerning the planning and implementation of intergenerational practice. While the primary goal of the study and its subsequent report was to provide insights that could resonate with professionals in both early years and organisations involved with older adults, it is crucial to acknowledge that the study does not claim to provide any definitive answers to what is a notably complex subject.

7.2: Reflecting upon the research design

In order to reflect upon the research design, it first needs to be acknowledged that this was a sequential exploratory case study, which encompassed three separate phases. This meant that there was a need for both reflection in action and reflection on action to take place throughout the whole process (Schon, 1991). Using a reflective diary was a good tool through which to evaluate the efficacy of the research design in both a reflective and reflexive way.

As this was an exploratory study, I did not know what each phase would look like right from conception. Initially, phase one was designed and used the questionnaire to generate the initial data. This was then analysed and subsequently informed the methods for phase two. The process was then repeated with phase two, the results were analysed and in turn this informed the methods for phase three, and upon reflection this was a good strategy. As I could not predict what data was going to be generated it kept the study fresh and interesting and I was able to remain motivated, designing each phase as I moved through the process, ensuring that ultimately there would be enough data generated.

In terms of the methods, I had previously used questionnaires and semi-structured interviews so I was confident these would elicit the information needed and suit the purpose of the research for phase one and two. In phase three, the decision to use an autonomy audit and personality quiz previously developed by Pink (2009) felt justified, as these tools had already been tried and tested to generate the type of data I required. Given the time limitations for this research, it seemed prudent to use these methods rather than recreate something new. The learning walk that was conducted at each setting acted as an informal interview/chat and this was a new method that I had not previously used. I was familiar with the mosaic approach (Clark and Moss, 2011) where researchers conducted tours of a setting with young children, and I was familiar with the learning walk that takes place during an early years inspection having experienced this both as an inspector and as the inspected party. However, I had recognised that during these types of situations the participants tended to relax and converse more freely about the environment they worked in and the type of work they did. It should be noted that the learning walk is not the same process used for a tour that would be given to a prospective parent because these discussions focus on pedagogy and curriculum. Out of all the methods used for this study, the learning walk is the one, which generated the richest data. To date, I am unable to think of another method that could have replaced this and still provided such a wealth of interesting and informative information.

As previously stated, this study took place over a period when the country was slowly starting to emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic. Whilst the questionnaires in phase one were distributed both electronically and in person, it would have been easy to switch this over to an online process if needed. Phases two and three carried more risk of having to be changed at the last minute. That said, it was fortunate that these phases could be carried out as planned; Covid rates were lower at the time I was ready to go ahead with these phases and the official government guidelines dictated that early years settings could be open and welcome in visitors. Had this not been the case, then obviously phases two and three would have had to be revisited. For phase two the semi-structured interviews could have taken place virtually. For phase three, the autonomy audit could have been done online and the intention of the personality quiz was always that it would be completed online so there would be no change there. Where this study would have differed and in my opinion suffered, would have been in relation to the learning walk, which would have had to be cancelled.

Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) proved to be suitable for this type of study. It was particularly effective at providing a starting point for the process but did not dictate what would be found during the analysis. It offered an inductive approach that allowed the space for deliberate choices to be taken. This was important to me because I wanted to use an approach that allowed me to have my own personal and social standpoint, recognising that themes do not emerge from the data, it is the researcher who generates the themes. Reflective thematic analysis encourages the researcher to be creative and make the discussion more like a story about the data. This way of working suited me as a researcher because it felt as though I was creating the analysis, and particularly in phase two and three, that I had permission to tell the story of both settings in a really authentic way.

Ethical clearance was gained from the University (Appendix A) and all the participants agreed and signed a consent form (Appendix C), but when I was in the settings for phases two and three I encountered situations where people not directly involved in the research would engage in conversation with me. For example, in setting one, some of the older adults approached me in the cafeteria, inquisitive as to my presence. As I conducted the learning walks, children would approach and show me a book or a picture they had drawn. This made me reflect upon literature I had read by Richardson (2019) and Heslop (2019) in relation to inclusion, and how important it was to ensure good ethical practice by always respecting anyone encountered during the research process, even if they were not direct participants themselves.

7.3: Limitations of the study

It must be acknowledged that there are limitations to this research and therefore ultimately also the thesis that has been produced. This was a small-scale study with a focus on two different settings based only 16 miles apart. Whilst one had a city basis and the other more rural surroundings, the socio-economic status and geographical situ was quite similar. At the start of phase two, I was quite concerned that I was only taking forward two settings and worried that this would not generate enough data. The reality was quite the opposite. Then came the decision making process as to what data to include and what data to exclude. As a result, I chose to include the data that best responded to the research questions to tell the story. The fact that this was a small-scale study means that it is not representative of all those who work in the field of intergenerational practice. It does however recognise that had the same research been carried out in different settings, the outcomes may have been similar but not the same. That said this study has generated reliable data, which provides a rich insight into two particular settings in terms of how intergenerational practice is planned and delivered.

The timing of this study was a limitation. With this research being undertaken as the world was slowly exiting from a pandemic I have to state that the constraints placed upon everyone by Covid-19 influenced the research design for this study. Whilst it would have been good to interview the older adults and the young children, so I had some data from the actual participants of the intergenerational practice that was taking place, this was not possible. As a result I opted to work with staff, and it is their views and perceptions that have been taken into account when analysing the data. There is always a chance that the findings might have differed if the older adults and young children had been involved more practically in the research process.

7.4: Implications for future research

One of the emergent themes from this data highlighted the issue of staff in setting one,

who appeared to be stuck in a ‘hybrid position’ as a result of their falling into a liminal space. Their original status as an early years practitioner or someone working with older adults had changed, but they did not yet see themselves as being an intergenerational professional, despite a case being made that the role of an intergenerational practitioner should be an entity in its own right. It should be noted that when this research began setting one had been open for less than a year. It would be interesting for future research to take place around this perception of their status in another year or two, when staff would have had the time to fully settle in and embed their practice.

Furthermore, as this thesis was being brought to a close, a recent article reporting upon the value of intergenerational practice was published in The Guardian newspaper (Pidd, 2024). The double page spread shows this is a topic of growing interest and that those working in the field are keen to spread the message about the importance of this type of practice. The article highlighted the benefits to both young and old whilst reviewing a fully integrated setting, believed to be the first of its kind in the country. In this newspaper article, one of the founders of this organisation states that by working in partnership with academics they hope to “prove this is a better way of early years education and older people’s care” (Egersdorff, 2024, p. 5). I am currently in contact with this setting and hope this might provide some additional opportunities in the future, so I can continue to engage with further research in the field.

7.5: Contribution to knowledge

This thesis has added to the current knowledge base regarding intergenerational practice by providing original research that deals with the insights and in-depth understandings of meanings and representations, rather than the uncovering of a single truth via empirical generalisations. When conducting the literature review for this study it was evident that there was limited information regarding UK early years settings and their involvement in intergenerational practice. This makes the findings from this particular project important because they further confirm some of the findings from previous studies in relation to assertions that the UK is not as active in the field as some other countries.

As this thesis was coming to a conclusion the subject of intergenerational practice and the value of this way of working appeared to be attracting great media attention. For example, there has been a run of recent press articles and television items, such as those presented in The Guardian (6th February, 2024) BBC The One show (5th March, 2024) and the Sunday Mirror (17th March, 2024) making this research topical. In addition, the data from this research further corroborates the findings from other studies highlighting that intergenerational practice when done well benefits participants, staff and society, and that underfunding in the sector has led to a deficit around training opportunities which has impacted the level of understanding that those working in early years have in relation to the subject. This work seeks to evoke in readers an interest in the topic, generating a greater understanding around the value of intergenerational practice. For those new to the field, it is hoped that the discussions that highlighted the benefits of this way of working, have also promoted critical thinking and reflection around ways in which to overcome potential barriers that might previously have prevented them from pursuing such practice.

The absence of any comprehensive joint safeguarding framework has been highlighted both in the literature review and the findings chapter. Concerns over safeguarding were revealed in the data to be a key barrier to practice and might potentially lead some practitioners to view the development of their own policy framework as beyond their scope or capability. Consequently, opting to refrain from this kind of work becomes the more convenient choice for some. In chapter two, I have provided suggestions as to how one might develop such a document. To further address this deficit, I have gone on to create an exemplar intergenerational safeguarding framework (Appendix H) in the hope that this might make a difference to someone having the confidence to engage in intergenerational practice and someone not. This draft framework was deliberately designed to include reflection points as opposed to a tick box system, with the intention that the process be more holistic. By challenging practitioners to really reflect on the situation and question their decisions, the idea is that the process will be truly inclusive.

A further contribution to knowledge can be seen in the theoretical framework developed specifically for this research (diagram 7 in chapter 3), which merged socio-cultural theory, social pedagogy and self-determination theory in order to create a triple lens through which to view the data. At the time of writing, no literature could be located to confirm that this combination had previously been used to analyse certain elements of intergenerational practice. Moving forward this framework might be a useful tool to others researching in the field, particularly when considering aspects such as autonomy and motivation amongst leaders and participants, a topic for which there again appeared to be a paucity of current literature.

Incorporating self-determination theory into the theoretical framework design proved to be significant and allowed a space for an unexpected theme to emerge. The data from this study showed that both the participants from phases two and three had complete autonomy over their professional practice and when this was combined with secure knowledge and competence it enabled them to deliver a variety of intergenerational programmes. This is further supported by the findings from Deci and Ryan (2000) around self-determination theory, where the three key elements required for success are identified as being autonomy, competence and knowledge. As such, the data from this study contributes further to this body of literature because it evidences that the excellent practice uncovered in this research could not have happened if the participants did not have complete autonomy over the situation. Other participants from phase one might also have had the competence and the knowledge around intergenerational practice, but without complete autonomy they would have been confined by the constraints within which their settings operated and this lack of autonomy would subsequently act as a barrier to them delivering any intergenerational practice.

7.6: Recommendations

Any implications for future research as a result of this study have been addressed in a separate section within this conclusion. What this section discusses are the more practical recommendations to support advancement within the field. The creation and introduction of a standardised safeguarding framework for intergenerational practice would provide practitioners with some useful guidance and direction when it comes to planning intergenerational activities. This study has shown there is a real hesitancy amongst practitioners to engage with this type of practice because of safeguarding concerns, which have been highlighted as a key barrier to practice. Developing such a document could be a fairly simple process as demonstrated in the draft framework created by myself (Appendix H).

As has been identified and discussed in the literature review, intergenerational practice is not valued as highly as it could be by the UK government, therefore investment in the field is at a minimum. Better planning is needed for those government funded intergenerational pilot schemes that do exist in order to see them through to completion, rather than these programmes being halted prematurely due to financial constraints. It is suggested that policymakers need to consider both the social and financial benefits of promoting and supporting more intergenerational practice, because the financial returns resulting from better health and educational outcomes for all those involved.

Finally, the data from this study supports the case for more training courses to be established to educate people around the concept and value of intergenerational practice. Introducing this topic into early childhood courses in schools, colleges and universities is just one way of approaching this. There is some limited formalised training already in existence, but this could be expanded upon to become more accessible and deeper in content, rather than appearing as an extension to previous training pathways. In taking this approach, it might be that in the future becoming an intergenerational practitioner becomes a recognised career option in the same way someone might choose to work in adult social care or early years.

7.7: Summary

To conclude, I hope this research will be of interest to early years staff and those working with older adults, from practitioners to policy makers. Furthermore, college and university lecturers could also further promote this subject by integrating materials around intergenerational practice into their education, early childhood, and health and social care programmes. Netshandama and Nevhudoli state “the trademark of a progressive society and culture is the degree to which it generates, develops, maintains, grows, exploits and protects its knowledge base” (2021, p. 57). If the readers of this study believe that the experiences presented to them throughout this thesis have been lifelike, believable and possible and their subject knowledge has increased (Ellis and Bochner, 2000) they might just be inspired to spread the word and start engaging in intergenerational practice.

**REFERENCES**

*This reference list follows the guidance from*

*the University of Sheffield’s School of Education Harvard Referencing Guide*

["Cite Them Right (2016) 10th rev. and expanded edn."](https://find.shef.ac.uk/permalink/f/1lephdb/44SFD_ALMA_DS21250961330001441" \o "Cite Them Right (2016) 10th rev. and expanded edn." \t "_blank)

Abrams, D., Eilola, T. and Swift, H.S. (2009) 'Attitudes to age in Britain 2004-8'. Department for Work and Pensions. Available at: http://kar.kent.ac.uk/23668/1/abrams\_attitudes\_age.pdf (Accessed: 3 March 2021).

Agarwal, E. *et al*. (2016) ‘Optimizing nutrition in residential aged care: a narrative review’, *Maturitas,* 92(1), pp. 70-78.

Albon, D. and Mukherji, P. (2015). *Research methods in early childhood: An introductory guide*. 2nd edn. Los Angeles: Sage.

All Party Parliamentary Group (2017) *Healing the Generation Divide.* Available at: <https://socialintegrationappg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Healing-the-Generational-Divide2.pdf> (Accessed: 22 November 2021).

All Party Parlimentary Group on Social Integration (2019) *Healing The Generational Divide Interim Report on Intergenerational Connection*. Available at: https://socialintegrationappg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/05/Healing-the-Generational-Divide.pdf (Accessed: 20 December 2021).

Allport G. W. (1954) *The nature of prejudice*. Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Altheide, D. L. and Johnson, J. M. (1994) 'Criteria for assessing interpretive validity in qualitative research', in Denzin, N.K. and Y. S. Lincoln (eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. London: Sage, pp. 485-499.

Atkins, L. and Wallace, S. (2012). *Qualitative research in education*. London: Sage.

Attia, M. and Edge, J. (2017) 'Be(com)ing a reflexive researcher: a developmental approach to research methodology', *Open Review of Educational Research*, 4(1), pp. 33-45. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23265507.2017.1300068>

Barragán, A. *et al*. (2020) *Intergenerationality Adds Up Lives.* Manifesto marking 29 April 2020, European day of solidarity between generations. Available at http://www.toyproject.net/wpcontent/uploads/2020/04/Manifesto-European-

Day\_EN\_F.pdf (Accessed: 2 January 2021).

Basit, T. N. (2010) *Conducting research in educational contexts*. London: Continuum.

Bassey, M. (1981) 'Pedagogic research: on the relative merits of search for generalisation and study of single events', *Oxford Review of Education*, 7(1), pp. 73-94. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305498810070108>

Bassey, M. (1999) *Case study research in educational settings*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Bazeley, P. (2018) *Interpreting analyses in mixed methods research*. London: Sage.

Beebe, L. (2007) 'What can we learn from pilot studies?' *Perspectives in Psychiatric Care*, 43 (4), pp. 213-218.

Belgrave, M. (2011) 'The effect of a music therapy intergenerational program on children and older adults: intergenerational interactions, cross-age attitudes, and older adults psychosocial wellbeing', *Journal of Music Therapy*, 48(4), pp. 0022-2917.

Bell, J. (2010) *Doing your research project.* 5th edn. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Bell, T. *et al.* (2010) 'Collaborative inquiry learning: models, tools, and challenges'. *International Journal of Science Education*, 32(3), pp. 349-377.

Berry, J. (1999) 'Emics and etics: a symbiotic conception', *Culture and Psychology,* 5(2), pp. 165–171.

Bessell, S. (2017) 'The role of intergenerational relationships in children's experiences

of community', *Children and Society*, 31(4), pp. 263-275.

Bessell, S. (2021a) 'The impacts of COVID-19 on children in Australia: deepening

poverty and inequality',*Children's Geographies*, 20, pp. 448-458. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2021.1902943>

Beth Johnson Foundation (2001) *Building Better Communities for All Ages Between*

*the Generations*. Available at: [http://www.centreforip.org.uk](http://www.centreforip.org.uk/) (Accessed: 7 January 2022).

Beth Johnson Foundation (2009) *Intergenerational Practice, Policy and Performance: A Framework for Local Authorities*. Available at: [www.centreforip.org.uk](http://www.centreforip.org.uk) (Accessed 15 November 2020).

Bjursell, C. (2020) 'The COVID-19 pandemic as disjuncture: learning in a context of fear', *International Review of Education,* 66(0), pp. 673–689. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-020-09863-w>

Black, L. (2018) ‘Local youngsters team up with elderly residents for special workshop’, 22nd June. Available at: <https://www.liverpoolfc.com/news/community/305076-figures-show-lfc-making-a-difference-in-the-community> (Accessed: 15 November 2020).

Boardman, K. (2018) 'Early years teachers as leaders of change through reflexivity praxis'. *Early Child Development and Care,* 190(3), pp. 322-332. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2018.1471473>

Bodrova , E. and Leong , D.J. (2003) Learning and development of preschool children from the Vygotskian perspective, in  Kozulin , A. *et al* (eds.) *Vygotsky’s educational theory in cultural context.* London: Cambridge University Press, pp. 156–76.

Brannen, J. (2003) 'Towards a typology of intergenerational relations: continuities and

change in families',*Sociological Research Online,* 8(2), pp. 50-60.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology,* 3 (2), pp. 77-101.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2019) 'Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis', *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health,* 11(4), pp. 589-597.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2020) 'One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis?' *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 18(3), pp. 328-352.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2021) 'Can I use TA? Should I use TA? Should I not use TA? Comparing reflexive thematic analysis and other pattern-based qualitative analytic approaches', *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research,* 21(1), pp. 37-47.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977) 'Toward an experimental ecology of human development'. *American Psychologist,*32(7), pp. 513–531. doi: [https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.32.7.513](https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0003-066X.32.7.513" \t "_blank)

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979) *The ecology of human development: experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Brooks, R., Te Riele, K. and Maguire, M. (2014) *Ethics and education research.* London: Sage*.*

Buffel, T. *et al.* (2014) 'Promoting sustainable communities through intergenerational practice', *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 116, pp.1785–1791. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.01.472>

Burke, S. (2020) 'Stronger together? intergenerational connection and covid-19', *Quality in Ageing and Older Adults*, 21(4) pp. 253–259. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1108/QAOA-07-2020-0033>

Butts, D.M. and Jarrott, S.E. (2021) ‘The power of proximity: co-locating childcare and eldercare programs’, in Greenberg, M. and Stamp, T. (eds.) *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Available at: <https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_power_of_proximity_co_locating_childcare_and_eldercare_programs> (Accessed 7 January 2022).

Cacioppo, J. T. and Cacioppo, S. (2014) ‘Social relationships and health: The toxic effects of perceived social isolation’, *Social and personality psychology compass,* 8(2), pp. 58-72.

Cameron, C. (2004) 'Social pedagogy and care: Danish and German practice in young people’s residential care',*Journal of Social Work*, 4 (2), pp. 133–151.

Cameron, C. and Moss, P. (2011) ***S****ocial pedagogy and working with children and young people: where care and education meet*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Camp, C. J. and Lee, M. (2011) 'Montessori-based activities as a transgenerational interface for persons with dementia and preschool children', *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 9(4), pp. 1535-0770.

Canedo-Garcia, A., Garcia-Sanchez, J.N. and Pacheco-Sanz, D.I. (2017) 'A systematic review of the effectiveness of intergenerational programs'. *Frontiers in Psychology,* 8 (1882), pp.1-13. Available at https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5663734/ (Accessed: 28 March 2021).

Cartmel, J. *et al.* (2018) 'Developing an evidenced based intergenerational pedagogy in Australia', *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 16(1), pp. 64-85. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15350770.2018.1404412>

Castiello, U. *et al.* (2010) 'Wired to be social: the ontogeny of human

interaction', *PLoS ONE*, 5(10). Available at: https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article/file?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0013199&amp;type=printable (Accessed: 23 June 2020).

Catalano, R.F. *et al.* (2004) 'The importance of bonding to school for healthy development', *The Journal of School Health*, 74(7), pp. 252 – 261.

Centre for Ageing Better. (2021) *Respect and social inclusion*. Available at: ageing-better.org.uk/respect-and-social-inclusion-age-friendly-communities. (Accessed: 3 January 2022).

Clark, A. and Moss, P. (2011) *Listening To Young Children: The Mosaic Approach*. 2nd edn. London: National Children’s Bureau.

Clough, P. and Nutbrown, C. (2012)  *A student's guide to methodology and research.* 3rd edn. London: Sage.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2018) *Research methods in education.* 8th

edn. London: Routledge.

Cole, F. (2023) *Intergenerational practice in schools and settings.* London: Routledge.

Cook, G. and Bailey, C. (2013) 'Older care home residents’ views of intergenerational

practice', *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 11(4), pp. 410-424.

Cortellesi, G. (2020) *Intergenerational learning dynamics in the Storytellers Project: Evaluation Report.* TOY Research at International Child Development Initiatives. Available at: <http://www.toyproject.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Evaluation-report-TOYStorytellers_final20102020.pdf> (Accessed: 30 March 2021).

Cowan, K. (2014) 'Multimodal transcription of video: examining interaction in early years classrooms'. *Classroom Discourse*, 5(1) pp. 1946-3014.

Cresswell, J. W. (1998) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among the Five Traditions*. London: Sage.

Crowther, K. and Merrill, K. (2009) *Evaluation of the generations together*

*programme: learning so far.* DfE: York Consulting.

Davis, E. P., Bruce, J. and Gunnar M. R. (2002). 'The anterior attention network: associations with temperament and neuroendocrine activity in 6‐year‐old children', *Development Psychobiology*, 40(1), pp. 43–56. doi: [https://doi.org/10.1002/dev.10012](https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1002/dev.10012" \t "_blank)

Decety, J. and Jackson, P. L. (2006) 'A social-neuroscience perspective on empathy', *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 15(2), pp. 0963-7214.

Deci, E. and Ryan, R. (1985) *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York: Plenum.

Denscombe, M. (2010) *The good research guide for small scale research projects.* 4th edn. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (2018). *A connected society. A strategy for tackling loneliness*. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/936725/6.4882\_DCMS\_Loneliness\_Strategy\_web\_Update\_V2.pdf (Accessed: 7 January 2021).

Department for Education (2015) *Recruitment and retention of childcare, early years and playworkers research study*. Research report RR409. London: National Institute of Economics and Social Research.

Department for Education (2021) *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation*

*Stage*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-

foundation-stage-framework--2 (Accessed: 22 November 2021).

Department for Education (2022). *Latest COVID government guidance for early*

*years settings*. Available at

https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2023/10/11/what-are-the-latest-rules-around-covid-

19-in-schools-colleges-nurseries-and-other-education-settings/ (Accessed: 6 January 2023).

Department for Education (2023) *Keeping children safe in education 2023:*

*statutory guidance for schools and colleges,* London: Department for Education.

Department for Education (2023) *Working together to safeguard children,* London: Department for Education.

Department of Health and Social Care (2020) *Staying at home and away from others (social distancing).* Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others> (Accessed: 6 June 2021).

Department of Health and Social Care (2023) *Care and Support Statutory Guidance*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance> (Accessed: 12 January 2024).

DeVore, S., Winchell, B. and Rowe, J.M. (2016) 'Intergenerational programming for

young children and older adults: an overview of needs, approaches and outcomes in

the United States', *Childhood Education,* 92(3), pp. 216-225.

Di Bona L., Kennedy S. and Mountain G. (2019) ‘Adopt a Care Home: An intergenerational initiative bringing children into care homes’, *Dementia,* 18(5), pp. 1679-1694. doi: <https://doi:10.1177/1471301217725420>

Doll, G. and Bolender, B. (2010). ‘Research: age to age: resident outcomes from a kindergarten classroom in the nursing home’, Journal of Intergenerational Relationships, 8(1), pp. 327–337. doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/15350770.2010.520614.

Doody, O. and Doody, C. (2015) 'Conducting a pilot study: case study of a novice researcher', *British Journal of Nursing,* 24 (21), pp. 1074-1078.

Early Intervention Foundation (2015) *Social and emotional learning: Skills for life and work*. Available at: <https://www.eif.org.uk/report/social-and-emotional-learning-skills-for-life-and-work> (Accessed: 4 May 2021).

Edwards, L and Hatch, B. (2003) *Passing Time: a report about young people and* *communities,* Institute of Public Policy Research. Key findings are available in the informal education archives. Available at: <http://www.infed.org/archives/e-texts/ippr_passing_time.html> Full report, Available at: <http://www.ippr.org/publications/files/PassingTimefinalreport.pdf> (Accessed: 17 November 2021).

Egan, S. *et al*. (2021) ‘Missing Early Education and Care During the pandemic: the social-emotional impact of the COVID-19 crisis on young children’, *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 49(0), pp. 925–934. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-021-01193-2>

Egersdorff, S. (2024) ‘It’s as if someone has turned her switch back on’, *The Guardian* G2, 6 February, p.5.

Eichsteller, G. and Holtoff, S. (2011) ' Foundations of social pedagogy: a transnational perspective from Germany', in Cameron, C. and Moss, P. (eds.) *Social pedagogy and working with children and young people where care and education meet.* London: Jessica Kingsley. pp. 33-52.

Ellis, C. and Bochner, A. (2000) ‘Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researcher as Subject’, in Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Pp. 733-768.

Ephgrave, A. (2018) *Planning in the moment with young children: a practical guide*

*for early years practitioners and parents.* London:Routledge.

‘Episode One’ (2018) *Old People’s Home for Four Year Olds*, Season 2, episode 1. Channel 4. Available at: https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/prog/12307F60?bcast=12765581 (Accessed: 01 February 2020).

Epstein, A. S., and Boisvert, C. (2006) 'Let's do something together: identifying the

effective components of intergenerational programs', *Journal of Intergenerational*

*Relationships,* 4(3), pp. 87-109.

Fancourt, D. and Finn, S., 2019. *What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review*. Regional Office for Europe: World Health Organization.

Feldman, S. (2012) Reading Generations Together, *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 10(4), pp. 437-439. doi: https://doi.org/[10.1080/15350770.2012.724303](https://doi.org/10.1080/15350770.2012.724303)

Femia, E.E. *et al.* (2008) 'Intergenerational pre-school experiences and the young child: potential benefits to development', *Early Childhood Research Quarterly,* 23(2), pp. 272-287.

Ferrari, A. and Giacopini, E. (2005) *Remida Day.* Available at

[https://www.reggiochildren.it/en/rc/publishing//](https://www.reggiochildren.it/en/rc/publishing/) (Accessed: 6 January 2021).

Fischer, M. D. and Ferlie, E. (2013) 'Resisting hybridisation between modes of clinical risk management: contradiction, contest, and the production of intractable conflict'. Accounting Organizations and Society, 38(1), pp. 30–49.

Fitzpatrick, A. (2020) ‘Towards a pedagogy of intergenerational learning’, in Kernan, M., and Cortellesi, G. (eds.) *Intergenerational learning in practice: Together old and young.* London: Routledge, pp. 40-59.

Fitzpatrick, A. and Halpenny, A. M (2022) ' Learning as a pedagogical strategy in early childhood education services: perspectives from an Irish study', *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2022.2153259>

Flewitt, R. (2005) 'Conducting research with young children: some ethical considerations', Early Child Development and Care, 175(6), pp. 553-565.

Flewitt, R. (2005a) 'Is every child's voice heard? Researching the different ways 3‐year‐old children communicate and make meaning at home and in a pre‐school playgroup', *Early Years,*25(3), pp. 207-222.

Flyvbjerg, B. (2006) 'Five misunderstandings about case-study research'. *Qualitative Inquiry,* 12 (2), pp. 219-45.

Freire, P. (1970) 'Pedagogy of the oppressed', in Beck *et al.* (eds.) *Toward a sociology of education*. London: Routledge, pp. 374-386.

Froebel, F. (1887) *The education of man*. New York, USA: D. Appleton and Company. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1037/12739-000> (Accessed 6 March 2021).

Fuchsberger, V. *et al.* (2012) *Design challenges and concept for intergenerational online learning* in 11th International Conference on Interaction Design and Children. Bremen, Germany - June 12 - 15, 2012. University of Salzburg, IDC. Available at: <https://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=2307123> (Accessed: 17 February 2020).

Fullan, M. (2001) *Leading in a culture of change.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Generations Working Together. (2014) 'Intergenerational approaches to improving health and wellbeing' London: Generations Working Together. Available at: https://generationsworkingtogether.org/downloads/536a04c11694b-GWT%20web%20FINAL.pdf(Accessed: 7 January 2021).

Generations Working Together (2019) *Healing The Generational Divide. Interim Report on Intergenerational Connection.* Available at: https://generationsworkingtogether.org/about/ (Accessed 24 March 2020).

George, L. 'EYFS best practice: all about… intergenerational co-location', *Nursery World, 2* April, 2018. Available at: <https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/features/article/eyfs-best-practice-all-about-intergenerational-co-location> (Accessed: 21 May 2021).

George, L. (2018) *Starting young: lifelong lessons from intergenerational care and*

*learning*. Winston Churchill Fellowship Report. Torbay Council, Available at

2019 https://www.wcmt.org.uk/sites/ default/files/report-

documents/George%20L%20Report%202017.pdf (Accessed: 24 March 2020).

George, L. (2021) 'Connecting old and young with intergenerational learning'. Available at: https://www.wcmt.org.uk/about-us/blog/blog-connecting-old-and-young-

intergenerational-learning (Accessed: 29 March 2022).

Gibbert, M. and Ruigrok, W. (2010) 'The “what’ and “how” of case study rigor: three strategies based on published work', *Organizational Research Methods*, 13, pp. 710-737.

Gough, D. and Thomas, J. (2016) 'Systematic reviews of research in education: aims, myths and multiple methods', *Review of Education*, 4(1), pp. 84-102.

Granville, G. (2002) 'A review of intergenerational practice in the UK', Stoke on Trent: The Beth Johnson Foundation.

Greene, J. C. and Caracelli, V. J. (1997) 'Defining and describing the paradigm issue in mixed-method evaluation', *New Directions for Evaluation*, 74 (1), pp. 5-17. doi: https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.1068

Grix, J. (2002) 'Introducing students to the generic terminology of social research', *Politics*, 22, pp. 175-186.

Gualano, M.R. *et al.* (2018) 'The impact of intergenerational programs on children and older adults: a review'. *International Psychogeriatrics*, 30(4), pp. 451–468.

Guba, E. G. and Lincoln, Y. S. (1994) 'Competing paradigms in qualitative research', in Denzin, N. K. and Y. S. Lincoln (eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. London: Sage, pp. 105-17.

Hammersely, M. (2000) *Taking sides in social research: essays on bias and partisanship*. London: Routledge.

Hammersley, M. and Traianou, A. (2012) *Ethics in qualitative research: controversies and contexts.* London: Sage.

Hanks, R. S. and Ponzetti, J. Jr. (2004)  'Family studies and intergenerational studies: Intersections and opportunities', J*ournal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 2(3), pp. 5-22.

Hastings, P. D. *et al.* (2000) 'The development of concern for others in children with behavior problems', *Developmental Psychology,*36(5), pp. 0012-1649.

Hatton-Yeo, A. and Batty, C. (2011) *Evaluating the contribution of intergenerational*

*practice to achieving social cohesion in promoting social cohesion*. Bristol: Policy Press. doi: https://doi.org/10.51952/9781847426963.ch012

Hauderowicz, D. and Ly Serena, K. (2020) ‘Everyday encounters in public spaces’, in Kernan, M. and Cortellesi, G. (eds.) *Intergenerational Learning in Practice.* London: Routledge, pp. 97-120.

Hayes, N. and Filipović, K. (2018) 'Nurturing ‘buds of development’: from outcomes to opportunities in early childhood practice', *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 26(3), pp. 220-232.

Heljakka, K. (2020) *Pandemic toy play against social distancing: Teddy bears, window-screens and playing for the common good in times of self-isolation.* Available at: <https://widerscreen.fi/assets/Heljakka_Kati_ak_2020.pdf> (Accessed: 30 March 2021).

Hendricks, J. and Cutler, S.J. (2004) 'Volunteerism and socioemotional selectivity in later life', The Journals of Gerontology Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social *Sciences,* 59(5), pp. 251- 257.

Hendrikx, W. and Van Gestel, N. (2017) 'The emergence of hybrid professional roles: GPs and secondary school teachers in a context of public sector reform', *Public Management Review*, 19(8) pp. 1471-9037.

Heslop, A. (2019) *Intergenerational practice: a participatory action research study*

*investigating the inclusion of older adults in the lives of young children within an*

*urban ‘Forest School’ environment*. University of Sheffield, available at

https://researchportal.northumbria.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/42470164/Library\_Copy

\_AKHeslop\_IntergenerationalThesis.pdf (Accessed: 1st November 2021).

Heydon, R. (2013) 'Learning opportunities: the production and practice of kindergarten literacy curricula in an era of change', *Journal of Curriculum Studies,*45(4), pp. 481-510.

Highman, C. *et al.* (2023). 'Music connections: participants’ perceptions of benefits and factors associated with the longevity of a community intergenerational music group'.*Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 21(2), pp. 1-20.

HM Government (2009) Generations together: a demonstrator programme of

intergenerational practice. Available at:

http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/202317/gt\_prospectus.pdf (Accessed: 6 May

2020).

Hochschild, A. (2012) *The managed heart: commercialization of human feeling.* 3rd rev edn. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Hoff, A. (2011) 'Long-term challenges of studying intergenerational relationships in research and practice', *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships,* 9(1), pp. 1–6.

Holmes, C. (2009) 'An intergenerational program with benefits', *Early Childhood*

*Education Journal*, 37(2), pp. 1082-3301.

Holt, J. (2017) *How Children Learn.* Massachusetts: Da Capo Press.

Holt-Lundstad, J. *et al.* (2015) 'Loneliness and social isolation as risk factors for mortality: a meta-analytic review', *Perspectives on Psychological Science,* 10(2) pp. 222-237. doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691614568352

Homecare Association. (2023) *Homecare deficit report 2023.* Available at:

https://www.homecareassociation.org.uk/resource/the-homecare-deficit-2023-

pdf.html (Accessed: 15 December 2023).

Hughes, P. (2001) *Paradigms, methods and knowledge*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

*Human Rights Act 1988*, c. 42. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/contents> (Accessed 12 May 2023).

Isaacs, S. (1971) *The Nursery Years: The mind of the child from birth to sixth years*. London: Routledge.

Jang, Y. *et al.* (2017) 'Determinants of job satisfaction and turnover intent in home health workers: the role of job demands and resources', *Journal of Applied Gerontology,* 36(1), pp. 56-70.

Jarrott, S. E., Gigliotti, C. M and Smock, S. A. (2006) 'Where do we stand?: testing the foundation of a shared site intergenerational program', *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships,* 4(2) pp. 1535-0770.

Jarrott, S. E. and Smith, C. L. (2010) 'The complement of research and theory in

practice: contact theory at work in nonfamilial intergenerational programs', *The*

*Gerontologist*, 51(1), pp. 112-121.

Jarrott, S. E. (2011) 'Where have we been and where are we going? Content Analysis of Evaluation Research of Intergenerational Programs', *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships,* 9 (1), pp. 37-52 doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15350770.2011.544594>

Johansson, E., Emilson, A. and Puroila, A. M. (eds.) (2018) *Values in early childhood settings: concepts, approaches and practices- international perspectives on early childhood education and development 23.* London: Routledge.

Johnson, R. B. *et al*. (2014) ‘Conducting mixed methods research: Using dialectical pluralism and social psychological strategies’, in Leavy P. (ed.) *The Oxford handbook of qualitative research*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, pp. 557-580.

Jones, M. and Ismail, S. U. (2022) ‘Bringing children and older people together through food: The promotion of intergenerational relationships across preschool, school and care home settings’, *Working with Older People*, 26(2), pp. 151-161. doi: [https://doi.org/10.1108/wwop-11-2021-0059](https://doi.org/10.1108/wwop-11-2021-0059" \t "_blank)

Kaplan, M., Larkin, E. and Hatton-Yeo, A. (2008) 'Leadership in intergenerational practice: in search of the exclusive “P” factor – passion', *Journal of Leadership Education,* 7(3). Available at https://journalofleadershiped.org/jole\_articles/leadership-in-intergenerational-practice-in-search-of-the-exclusive-p-factor-passion. (Accessed: 7 January 2021).

Kenning G. *et al*. (2021) ‘Intergenerational Practice in the Community—What Does the Community Think?’ *Social Sciences*, 10(10), p. 374. doi: https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10100374

Kernan, M. and Cortellesi, G. (2020) ‘Introduction to the TOY approach to intergenerational learning’, in Kernan, M. and Cortellesi, G. (eds.) *Intergenerational Learning in Practice.* London: Routledge, pp. 1-20.

Kim, Y. (2011) 'The pilot study in qualitative inquiry: identifying issues and learning lessons for culturally competent research', *Qualitative Social Work*, 10 (2), pp. 190-206.

Kochanska, G. (1994). ‘Beyond cognition: Expanding the search for the early roots of internalization and conscience’, Developmental Psychology, 30(1), pp. 20-22. doi: [https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.30.1.20](https://awspntest.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0012-1649.30.1.20" \t "_blank)

Kovacs, P. J. and Lee, J. (2010) 'Developing a community-university partnership for intergenerational programming: relationship building is key', *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships,* 8(4) pp. 1535-0770.

Kuehne, V. S. (2003) 'The state of our art: intergenerational program research and evaluation: part one', *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships,* 1(1) pp. 1535-0770.

Kuehne, V. and Melville, J. (2014) ‘The State of Our Art: A Review of Theories Used in Intergenerational Program Research (2003–2014) and Ways Forward’, *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 12(4), pp. 317-346. doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/15350770.2014.958969

Lancaster, G. K., Dodd, S. and Williamson, P. R., (2004) 'Design and analysis of pilot studies: recommendations for good practice', *Journal Evaluation Clinical Practice*, 10 (2), pp. 307-312.

Landeiro F, *et al.* (2017) 'Reducing social isolation and loneliness in older people: a systematic review protocol', *BMJ Open,*7(5), e013778. doi: https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2016-013778

Lather, P. (2006) 'Paradigm proliferation as a good thing to think with: teaching research in education as a wild profusion', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 19(1), pp. 35-57.

Lehmann, O. V. (2012). ‘Children’s understanding of death, from biological to religious conceptions’, *Culture & Psychology*, *18*(2), pp. 285-286. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X11434840>

Lillard, A.S. (2005) *Montessori: The science behind the genius*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Linking Generations (2021) *Care homes and intergenerational practice.* Available at: [www.linkinggenerationsni.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/ACE-Care-and-IP-.pdf](http://www.linkinggenerationsni.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/ACE-Care-and-IP-.pdf) (Accessed: 7 January 2022).

Lyndon, S. and Moss, H. (2023) ‘Creating Meaningful Interactions for Young Children, Older Friends, and Nursery School Practitioners within an Intergenerational Project’, *Early Childhood Education,* 51(0) pp. 755–764. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-022-01330-5>

Lyu, K. *et al*. (2020) ‘The implementation and effectiveness of intergenerational learning during the COVID -19 pandemic: Evidence from China’, *International Review of Education*, 66(0), pp. 833–855. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-020-09877-4>

MacKinnon, L. (2012) 'The neurosequential model of therapeutics: an interview with Bruce Perry', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 33(3), pp. 210-218. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/aft.2012.26>

MacNaughton, G. and Hughes, P. (2011) *Parents and professionals in early childhood settings.* Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Main, H. (2024) ‘The Generation Aim – Nursery and Care Home in One’, *Sunday Mirror*, 17 March, pp. 26-27.

Malaguzzi, L. and Gandini, L. (1993) 'For an education based on relationships', *Young Children,*49(1), pp. 0044-0728.

Malaguzzi, L. (1993) 'History, ideas, and basic philosophy', in Edwards, C., Gandini, L. and Forman, G. (eds.) *The hundred* *languages of children: the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education.* 2nd edn. Greenwich, CT: Ablex, pp.41-89.

Mannion, G. (2016) 'Intergenerational education and learning: we are in a NEW place',

in Punch, S. Vanderbeck, R.M. and Skelton, T. (eds.) *Families,*

*Intergenerationality and Peer Group Relations.* Singapore: Springer, pp. 307-327.

Mannheim, K. (1957) *Systematic sociology: an introduction to the study of society.* London:Routledge.

Mao, L. *et al* (2016) 'Embracing the spiral: researcher reflexivity in diverse critical methodologies', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods.* January-December 2016: pp. 1–8.

Marshall, C. and Rossman, G. B. (2016) *Designing qualitative research. 3rd ed.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Martins, T. *et al.* (2019) 'Intergenerational programs review: study design and characteristics of intervention, outcomes, and effectiveness', *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships,* 17(1), pp. 93-109.

Masny, D. (2016) 'Problematizing qualitative research: reading a data assemblage with rhizoanalysis'. *Qualitative Inquiry,* 22(8), pp.666-675. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708616636744>

# McGrath, H. (2023) ‘Blog: 1st December 2023 - Helen McGrath, LLG’, *LLG,* 1 December. Available at: <https://llg.org.uk/news/blog-1st-december-2023-helen-mcgrath-llg/> (Accessed 27 January 2021).

McNally, S. A. and Slutsky, R. (2017) 'Key elements of the Reggio Emilia approach

and how they are interconnected to create the highly regarded system of early

childhood education', *Early Child Development and Care*, 187(12), pp. 1925-1937.

McNeely C. L. and Schintler L. A. (2020) ‘The pandemic challenge: reflections on the social justice dynamic’, *World Med Health Policy***,** 12(4), pp. 344-346. doi: https://doi.org/10.1002/wmh3.375

Menter, I. (2013) 'From interesting times to critical times? Teacher education and educational research in England', *Research in Teacher Education,* 3 (1), pp. 38-40.

Merriam, S. B. (2009) *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. 2nd edn. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Middlecamp, M. and Gross, D. (2002) 'Intergenerational daycare and preschoolers’ attitudes about aging', *Educational Gerontology*, 28(4), pp. 0360-1277.

Moll, H. and Khalulyan, A. (2017) '“Not see, not hear, not speak”: pre-schoolers think they cannot perceive or address others without reciprocity', *Journal of Cognition and Development,* 18(1), pp. 152-162.

Montessori, M. (1964) *The Montessori Method*, New York: Schocken Books.

Moore, S. and Statham, E. (2006). 'Can intergenerational practice offer a way of limiting antisocial behaviour and fear of crime?' *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice,* 45(5), pp. 468-484.

Morita, K. and Kobayashi, M. (2013) 'Interactive programs with preschool children bring smiles and conversation to older adults: time-sampling study'. *BMC Geriatrics*, 13(111), pp. 1-8.

Moss, P. (2011) 'Early childhood education in Reggio Emilia and social pedagogy: are they related?', in Cameron, C. and Moss, P. (eds.) *Social Pedagogy and* *working with children and young people where care and education meet*. London: Jessica Kingsley, pp. 159-176.

Moss, P. (2014) 'The democratic and reflective professional: rethinking and reforming the early years workforce', in Miller *et al*. (eds.)*Supporting children's learning in the early years.* 2nd edn.London: Routledge,pp. 183-191.

Moustakas, L. (2023) 'Social Cohesion: Definitions, Causes and Consequences',

*Encyclopedia*, 3(3), pp. 1028-1037. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3390/encyclopedia3030075>

Mumford, L. (1949) ‘Planning for all phases of life’, *The Town Planning Review*, 20(1), pp. 5-16.

Munley, P. H. (1975) 'Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development and vocational behavior',*Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 22(4), pp.314-319. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0076749>

Neves, B. B. and Casimiro, C. (eds.) (2018) *Connecting families?; information and*

*communication technologies, generations, and the life course,* Bristol: Bristol

University Press.

Nightingale, D. J. and Cromby J. (eds.) (1999) *Social Constructionist Psychology: A Critical Analysis of Theory and Practice.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Nutbrown, C. (2012) *Foundations for Quality. the independent review of early education and childcare qualifications.* Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nutbrown-reviewfoundations-for-quality. (Accessed: 21 May 2021).

O’Cathain, A. *et al*. (2015) 'Maximising the impact of qualitative research in feasibility studies for randomized controlled trials: guidance for researchers', *Pilot and Feasibility Studies*, 1(1), pp. 1-32. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40814-015-0026-y>

Ofsted (2021a) *Education inspection framework.* Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework>. (Accessed: 7 January 2022).

O’Leary, Z. (2017) *The essential guide to doing your research project.* 3rd edn. London: Sage.

# Ollaik, L. and Ziller, H. (2012) ‘Conceptions of validity in qualitative studies’, *Educação e Pesquisa* 38(1), pp. 229-242. doi: https://doi.org/[10.1590/S1517-97022012005000002](http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S1517-97022012005000002" \t "_blank)

Opie, C. (2019). ‘Carrying out educational research - The start of your journey’*,* in Opie, C. (2019) *Getting started in your educational research: Design, data production and analysis.* London: Sage*,* pp. 1-21. doi: <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526480507>

Padgett, D. (2008) *Qualitative methods in social work research*. 2nd edn. London: Sage Publications.

Pagone, G. T., & Briggs, L. (2021) Final report: Care, dignity and respect, the royal commission into aged care quality and safety. Commonwealth of Australia 202, Canberra. Available at: <https://agedcare.royalcommission.gov.au/> (Accessed: 4 January 2022)

Pain, R. (2005) *Intergenerational relations and practice in the development of*

*sustainable communities*. Durham: Intergenerational centre for regional regeneration and development studies.

Park, A-La (2014) 'Do intergenerational activities do any good for older adults’ well-

being?: a brief review', *Journal of Gerontology and Geriatric Research*, 3(5), pp. 181.

Park, A-La (2015) 'The effects of intergenerational programmes on children and

young people', *International Journal of School and Cognitive Psychology*, 2(1), pp. 1-5.

Pasupathi, M*. et al.* (2002) 'Age and ethnicity differences in storytelling to young children: emotionality, relationality, and socialization', *Psychology and Aging,* 17(4), pp. 610-621.

Perry, B. (2012) ‘The Neurosequential model of therapeutics’, in: Brandt, K. *et al* (eds.) *Infant and early childhood mental health: Core concepts and clinical practice.* Washington: American Psychiatric Publishing, pp. 21-47.

Pettigrew, T. F. (1998) ‘Intergroup Contact Theory’, *Annual Review of Psychology*, 49(1), pp. 65-85. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.49.1.65>

Pidd, H. (2024) 'It’s as if someone has turned her switch back on’, *The Guardian G2*, 6 February, pp. 4-5.

Piercy, M., Townsend, M. and Wilton, K. (2002) 'Promoting the social acceptance of young children with moderate-severe intellectual disabilities using cooperative-learning techniques', *American Journal on Mental Retardation,* 107(5), pp. 352–360.

Pink, D. H. (2018) *Drive*. Edinburgh: Canongate Books Ltd.

Pollard, A. (2002) *Reflective teaching : effective and evidence-informed professional practice*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Poole, S. (2020) ‘Social distancing: how a 1950’s phrase came to dominate 2020’, *The Guardian*, 28 May. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/may/28/social-distancing-how-a-1950s-phrase-came-to-dominate-2020#:~:text=So%20perhaps%20we%20should%20all,Year%20is%20published%20by%20Quercus> (Accessed: 27 April 2021).

Popper, K. R. (1974). *The philosophy of Karl Popper.* Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company.

Pozzebon, M. and Freitas, H. M. R. (1998) 'Pela aplicabilidade com um maior rigor scientifico – dos estudos de caso em sistemas de informacao'. *Revista de Administracao Contemporanea,* 2, pp. 143-170.

Proietti, V., Pisacane, A. and Cassia V.M. (2013) 'Natural experience modulates the processing of older adult faces in young adults and 3-year-old children'. *PLoS ONE* 8(2) Available at http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0057499 (Accessed: 19 April 2020).

Punch, K. F. (2013).*Introduction to social research: Quantitative and qualitative approaches.* London: Sage.

Reisig, C. N. and Fees, B. S. (2007) ‘Older Adults’ Perceptions of Well-Being after Intergenerational Experiences with Youth’, Journal of Intergenerational Relationships, 4(4), pp. 6–22. doi: https://doi.org/10.1300/J194v04n04\_02

Richardson, T. (2019) '‘Why haven’t I got one of those?’ a consideration regarding

the need to protect non-participant children in early years research', *European Early*

*Childhood Research Journal*, 27(1), pp. 5-14.

Ridley, C. (2014) 'Interacting or Interfering? Improving interactions in the early years'. *Primary Health Care*, 27(7), pp. 0264-5033.

Ritchie, J. *et al.* (eds.). (2013) *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers.* London: Sage.

Roberts-Holmes, G. (2012). ‘It's the bread and butter of our practice’: experiencing the Early Years Foundation Stage',*International Journal of Early Years Education*, 20(1), pp. 30-42.

Roberts-Holmes, G. (2013)*'*The English Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) and the ‘split’ early childhood education and care (ECEC) system', *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 21(3), pp. 339-352. doi: <https://doi.org10.1080/1350293X.2012.704304>

Robinson, K. (2006) *Do schools kill creativity?* Available at: https://www.ted.com/talks/sir\_ken\_robinson\_do\_schools\_kill\_creativity(Accessed: 14 January 2021).

Rogoff, B. (1998) ‘Cognition as a collaborative process’, in Damon, W. (ed.) *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 2. Cognition, perception, and language*. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., pp. 679-744.

Rolfe, H. *et al.*(2016) *Recruitment and retention of childcare, early years and play workers: Research study.* London: Department for Education and Skills.

Rosebrook, V. (2002) 'Intergenerational connections enhance the personal / social

development of young children', *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 34(2), pp.

30-41.

Rosebrook, V. and Larkin, E. (2003) 'Introducing standards and guidelines: a rationale for defining the knowledge skills and dispositions of intergenerational practice', *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships,* 1(1), pp. 133-144.

Ryan, R. M. and Deci, E. L. (2000) 'Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and wellbeing', *American Psychologist*, 55, pp. 68-78. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68>

Ryan, R. M. and Deci, E. L. (2017) *Self-determination theory: basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness.* New York: Guilford publications.

Sahin, S. *et al*. (2016) ‘Prevalence of anemia and malnutrition and their association in elderly nursing home residents’, *Aging Clinical and Experimental Research*, 28(5) pp. 857-862.

Salari, S. M. (2002) 'Intergenerational partnerships in adult day centers: importance of age-appropriate environments and behaviors', *The Gerontologist*, 42(3), pp. 0016-9013.

Sale, J. E. M., Lohfeld, L. H. and Brazil, K. (2002) 'Revisiting the quantitative-qualitative debate: implications for mixed-methods research'. *Quality and Quantity*36, pp. 43–53. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1014301607592>

Sandberg, J. (2005) 'How do we justify knowledge produced within interpretive approaches?', *Organizational Research Methods*, 8(1), pp. 41-68.

Scaife, J. (2004) 'Reliability, validity and credibility', in Opie, C. (ed.) *Doing Educational Research*. London: Sage, pp. 55-72.

Schön, D.A. (ed.) (1991) *The reflective turn: Case studies in and on educational*

*practice. Vol. 131.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Scott, D. and Usher, R. (eds.) (2002) *Understanding educational research.* London:

Routledge.

Secker, J. *et al*. (1995) 'Qualitative methods in health promotion research: some criteria for quality', *Health Education Journal,* 54(1), pp. 74-87.

Seuring, S. A. (2008) 'Assessing the rigor of case study research in supply chain management', *Supply Chain Management: An International Journal*, 13, pp. 128-137.

Shaffer, D. R. (2008) *Social and personality development*. 6th edn. California: Belmont.

Shapka, J. *et al*. (2016) 'Online versus in-person interviews with adolescents: an exploration of data equivalence', *Computers in Human Behavior,* 58(1), pp. 361-367.

Sharman, Z. (2014) 'Recruitment and retention of home support workers in rural

communities', *Home Health Care Services Quarterly*, 33(4), pp. 229-243.

Siggelkow, N. (2007) 'Persuasion with case studies', *Academy of Management Journal,* 50(1), 20-24.

Silverman, D. (2013) *Doing qualitative research.* 4th edn. London: Sage.

Singleton, J. (2015) 'Head, heart and hands model for transformative learning: place as context for changing sustainability values', *Journal of Sustainability Education*, 9(3), pp. 171-187.

Siraj-Blatchford, I. *et al.* (2002) *Researching effective pedagogy in the early years*. Nottingham: Department for Education and Skills.

Skropeta, C. M., Colvin, A. and Sladen, S. (2014). An evaluative study of the benefits of participating in intergenerational playgroups in aged care for older people. *BMC Geriatrics*, 14, pp. 109-119. doi: https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2318-14-109.

Smith, M. K. (2019) *Social Pedagogy: the encyclopedia of pedagogy and informal education.* Available at: https://infed.org/mobi/social-pedagogy- the-development-of-theory-and-practice/ (Accessed: 15 November 2021).

Springate, I., Atkinson, M., and Martin, K. (2008) *Intergenerational practice: a*

*review of the literature*. LGA Research Report F/SR262. Slough: National Foundation for

Educational Research.

Stake, R. E. (1995) *The art of case study research.* London: Sage.

Stanistreet, P., Elfert, M. and Atchoarena, D. (2020) 'Education in the age of COVID-19: understanding the consequences', *International Review of Education,* 66, pp. 627–633. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-020-09880-9>

Starr, L. J. (2010) 'The use of autoethnography in educational research: locating who we are and what we do', *Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education*, 3(1), pp. 1-9.

Steinig, S. (ed.) (2005) *Under one roof: A guide to starting and strengthening*

*intergenerational shared site programs*. Washington, DC: Generations United.

Steward, A. and McDevitt, K. (2023) ' “Otherwise we would be like an island”: a phenomenological understanding of intergenerational engagement aimed at reducing social isolation', *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 21(2), pp. 215–233. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15350770.2021.1997870>

Stok F. M. *et al.* (2021) 'Social inequality and solidarity in times of COVID-19', *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health,* 18(12) pp. 6339. doi: https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18126339

Sylva, K. *et al.* (2004a) *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project: findings from the early primary years*. Nottingham: Department for Education and Skills.

Sylva, K. *et al*. (2004b) *The Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE) Project: final report*. Nottingham: Department for Education and Skills.

Takahashi, A. and Araujo, L. (2020) 'Case study research: opening up research opportunities', *RAUSP Management Journal*, 55(1), pp.100-111.

Tashakkori, A. and Teddlie, C. (2003) ‘Issues and dilemmas in teaching research methods courses in social and behavioural sciences: US perspective’, *International journal of social research methodology*, *6*(1), pp. 61-77.

Teater, B. (2016) ‘Intergenerational programs to promote active aging: the experiences and perspectives of older adults’, *Act Adapt Aging*, 40(1), pp. 1–19. doi: https://doi:10.1080/01924788.2016.1127041

Thang, L.L. (2015) ‘Creating an intergenerational contact zone: encounters in public spaces within Singapore’s public housing neighbourhoods’, in Vanderbeck, R. M. and Worth, N. (eds.) *Intergenerational space.* London: Routledge, pp. 17-32.

The Care Act 2014, c. 2. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/contents/enacted/data.htm> (Accessed 12 May 2023).

The TOY Project Consortium (2013a) *Intergenerational learning involving young*

*children and older people.* Available from: http://www.toyproject.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/TOY-literature\_review\_FINAL.pdf (Accessed 24 January

2021).

Thomas, G. (2011) 'A typology for the case study in social science following a definition, discourse and structure', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 17(6), pp. 511-521.

Thornton, L. and Brunton, P. (2015) *Understanding the Reggio approach: early years*

*education in practice.* London: Routledge.

Tickell, C. (2011) *The early years: foundations for life, health and learning.* London: Department for Education.

Titterington, V., Melville, J. and Johnston L. (2020) ‘Building all-age friendly communities and services’, in Kernan, M., and Cortellesi, G. (eds.) *Intergenerational learning in practice: Together old and young.* London: Routledge, pp. 121-139.

Trevarthen, C. (2011) ‘The generation of human meaning: How shared experience grows in infancy’, in Seemann, A. (ed.) *Joint attention: New developments in psychology, philosophy of mind, and social neuroscience*. Cambridge, USA: Boston Review, pp. 73-113.

Turner, V. W. (1995) *The ritual process: structure and anti-structure*. New York:

Aldine de Gruyter.

Turnpenny, A. and Hussein, S. (2020) *Recruitment and retention of the social care*

*workforce: longstanding and emerging challenges during the covid-19 pandemic.* Available at: <https://www.pssru.ac.uk/resscw/files/2021/04/RESSC> (Accessed 22 November 2022).

UK Health Security Agency. (2020) *Coronavirus (COVID-19): what is social distancing?* 4th March. Available at: https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2020/03/04/coronavirus-covid-19-what-is-social-distancing (Accessed: 14 January 2021).

UNICEF UK (1989) *The United Nations convention on the rights of the child*. Available at: <https://downloads.unicef.org.uk/wp/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC_PRESS200910web.pdf?_ga=2.78590034.795419542.1582474737-1972578648.1582474737> (Accessed: 5 April 2020).

United for All Ages (2019) *The next generation: how intergenerational interaction*

*improves life chances of children and young people.* Available at:

https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/98d289\_b66eb9bbed7f4315a0920d34bf6a4896.pdf

(Accessed: 5 April 2020).

Vander Ven, K. (2011) 'The road to intergenerational theory is under construction: a continuing story', *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships'*, 9(1), pp. 22-36.

Vanderbeck, R, and Worth, N. (eds.) (2015). *Intergenerational Space*. London: Routledge.

Veresov, N. and Fleer, M. (2016) ‘Perezhivanie as a Theoretical Concept for Researching Young Children’s Development’, *Mind, Culture and Activity*, 23(4), pp. 325-335. doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/10749039.2016.1186198

Vibert, S. (2020) *Children without internet access during lockdown,* 18 August.Available at https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/blog/children-without-internet-access-during-lockdown/ (Accessed: 4 January 2021).

Vygotksy, L. S. (1978) *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Walsh K, Furey W. J. And Malhi N. (2021) 'Narrative review: COVID-19 and paediatric anxiety', *Journal of Psychiatric Research* 144(0), pp. 421-426. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpsychires.2021.10.013>

Watts, J. (2017) 'Multi- or intergenerational learning? exploring some meanings', *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 15(1), pp. 39–51. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15350770.2017.1260367>

Waxman, O. B. (2020) 'The surprisingly deep—and often troubling—history of “social distancing”’, *Time*, 30 June. Available at: https://time.com/5856800/social-distancing-history/ (Accessed: 18 September 2020).

Weinstein, N. (2019) 'Intergenerational Practice', *Nursery World Select*, No.9, 6th May 2019. doi: <https://doi-org.edgehill.idm.oclc.org/10.12968/nuwa.2019.9.21>

Wellington, J. (2015) *Educational research: contemporary issues and practical approaches.* 2nd ed. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Whalley, M. (2008) *Leading practice in early years settings: achieving EYPS*. Exeter: Learning Matters.

Wildemuth, B.M. (2017) *Applications of social research methods to questions in information and library science*. 2nd edn. Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited.

Woods, P. and Sikes, P. (2022) *Successful writing for qualitative researchers*. London: Routledge.

World Health Organisation (2021) *Global report on ageism.* Available at: [www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp content/](http://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp%20content/) (Accessed: 17 January 2022).

World Health Organisation (2022) *Imagining the future of pandemics and epidemics: a 2022 perspective.* Available at: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240052093> (Accessed: 17 January 2023).

Yin, R.K. (2014) *Case Study Research: Design and Methods.* 5th edn. London: Sage.

Yin, R. K. (2015) *Qualitative research from start to finish.* New York: Guilford Publications.

Yous M. *et al*. (2023) 'Exploring the factors influencing meaningful engagement of persons living with advanced dementia through the Namaste Care Program: a qualitative descriptive study’, *Palliative Care* *and Social Practice*, 17, pp. 1-15. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/26323524231165319>

**APPENDICES**

APPENDIX A

Ethical Clearance Letter

A screen shot of a computer screen

Description automatically generated

Participant Information Sheet - 05/02/2021

**APPENDIX B**

**(Working Title)**

**“Lock them up – keep them at bay. The cruel consequence of the corona curse on intergenerational practice”**

Invitation

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether or not to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish.

The Purpose of this Project

This project seeks to examine how a range of community and school based intergenerational projects have been adapted to address the covid crisis, whilst considering the impact this has had, in terms of challenges and successes and what it means for the field moving forward.

There is a real danger that covid 19 has reintroduced generational barriers by accident and that social distancing, rather than physical distancing has become the norm. The old have become vulnerable and need to cocoon, the young have been stigmatised as “disease vectors” spreading the virus within the community.

By participating in this project and working together, we can develop a greater appreciation for shared spaces and move away from this dividing of the generations.

However, what is evident, is that a transition period is going to be needed, and it is not going to be a straightforward case of pre covid moving to post covid practice, but at present it is unclear as to what this period of readjustment and reimagining of intergenerational practice will look like. By participating in this project you can help shape the future of intergenerational practice.

This research is not funded and is being conducted by Louise Masterson, EdD student at the University of Sheffield for my doctoral thesis.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been approached as a potential participant because you are an active practitioner from a preschool, primary school or community based setting who indicated an interest in this project when an expression of interest email was sent to your setting. It is anticipated there will be 25 participants in stage one of this project and in addition 3-6 of those participants will be selected to engage in part two of the study.

Do I have to take part?

It is entirely up to you whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep as well as being asked to sign and return a consent form (a copy of which is enclosed with this correspondence). You can still withdraw at any time before the date specified on the documentation without it affecting you in any way. You do not have to give any reason just notify me as the sole researcher by email or telephone advising me that you wish to withdraw. Please note that it will not be possible for a participant’s data to be removed from the study beyond 30/11/2021 so any notification of withdrawal needs to be before that date.

What will happen to me if I take part? What do I have to do?

A total of 25 settings will receive an initial questionnaire (stage one of the project), this is necessary to help with the identification of those settings who have continued to engage with intergenerational practice in some form or other during the pandemic. It is on completion and review of this data that the potential participants for stage two of the project will be identified. Not everybody who participates in stage one will be required to engage with the second stage of the project. Stage two consists of participants committing to a minimum of one or maximum of two 45 minute semi-structured interviews scheduled for Summer 2021. Participants selected for stage two of the project will be practitioners who have both planned for and delivered some form of intergenerational practice throughout the pandemic. There will be a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 6 participants selected for stage two of the project (interview stage), and they will all be geographically located within the Liverpool City Region and surrounding areas. Although the selection of these practitioners will not be based upon any social/economic disadvantage this may be discussed later on as a theme within the findings.

It is anticipated that this study will commence in the Spring 2021 with the questionnaires and interviews being carried out and completed by the end of Summer 2021. This project is divided into two stages, the first stage requires completion of the questionnaire, and following on from receipt of this you may be asked to participate in a semi structured interview to share your experiences in terms of the challenges and successes of delivering intergenerational activities during the pandemic.

All the interviews will be audio recorded and these recordings will be used only for analysis and illustration in this thesis and maybe at future conference presentations and lectures. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Although the preferred course of action would be face to face in person interviews, depending upon the covid situation at the time these might have to be shifted to virtual interviews using zoom, google meets or Microsoft teams. I wish to take this opportunity to also reassure any potential participants who may be anxious about meeting with the researcher in person, that a flexible approach will be taken with regard to the interview schedule to mitigate any covid concerns. I recognise that even if face to face meetings are allowed, some potential participants may not be comfortable with this, should this be the case then the interview can be switched online - any potential participant will not be required to issue the researcher with any justification for their request. I am also aware of the fact that holding interviews with the participants may mean that they need some time away from the children, and a room in which the interview can be held. This can be problematic for some settings as it may impact upon the adult/child ratio so I am prepared, that depending on the situation, some interviews may need to be rescheduled at the last minute. Participants should feel reassured that this is perfectly understandable and will not compromise their participation in the project should this occur.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that the findings from this research can contribute to help others develop a newfound appreciation for the key role, played by intergenerational practice. By building/rebuilding that much needed solidarity amongst the generations, both throughout and beyond the pandemic, this research aims to help find the most appropriate way in which we can continue to deliver sustainable intergenerational practice that is safe for all. It is hoped that this study will allow us to add further knowledge to the field, ensuring that the good intergenerational practice carried out yesterday and today continues, and that what we learn can help us to move forward tomorrow.

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All the information that is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and be logged using pseudonyms. It will only be accessible to the members of the research team consisting of the researcher, the project supervisors and the internal and external examiners. You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications unless you have given your explicit consent for this. One caveat may be that if your intergenerational practice has already attracted media attention, been in the press and is a unique project, then the organisation delivering this might be identifiable to some in my final thesis. If any participant wishes to be named in future publications or reports on the research findings then do let the lead researcher know and specific consent for this can be obtained as part of the informed consent process.

What is the legal basis regarding my participation?

Please note that by choosing to participate in this research, this will not create a legally binding agreement, nor is it intended to create an employment relationship between you and the University of Sheffield.

What will happen to the data collected, and the results of the research project?

As the only researcher involved in this project I will have sole responsibility for gathering and storing the data throughout the course of this study, and this will adhere to GDPR guidelines. It is not anticipated that any hard copies of documents will be gathered, but should this not be the case then they will be locked in a filing cabinet in my secure home office. Data stored on my home computer will be held in encrypted files and accessed via secure password. The computer itself requires two-factor authentication to be accessed. All participants can be reassured that the information they provide will be in confidence and they can expect anonymity. The audio recordings from the interviews will be uploaded to my computer at the earliest opportunity upon returning to my home from the setting, and again storage will be in secure encrypted files. I will be the sole person analysing the data and this will take place in my home office. As part of my role as a lecturer in Early Years at another University I have already completed GDPR training and am aware of how to comply with online research data protection requirements. I am able to competently engage in good practice regarding data management and storage so I can ensure participants that all the necessary steps have been taken to protect the research data.

As this research project is for my doctoral thesis there will be others who may request access to the raw data, this is not expected to extend beyond my supervisors and subsequently any examiners. The consent form requests permission from any participants to authorise the use of any data which may be taken from this research to be used in the writing of any future journal articles. All raw data will be destroyed after the recommended period of three years from completion of the written thesis.

Who is the Data Controller?

The University of Sheffield will act as the Data Controller for this study. This means that the University of Sheffield is responsible for looking after your information and using it properly.

Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This project has been ethically approved via the University of Sheffield’s Ethics Review Procedure as administered by the School of Education.

What if something goes wrong and I wish to complain about the research?

In the event of any complaint regarding this study, you may contact the supervisors of this project whose details are:

Dr Louise Kay

(e) [louise.kay@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:louise.kay@sheffield.ac.uk)

and

Dr Emma Pearson

(e) [emma.pearson@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:emma.pearson@sheffield.ac.uk)

If you still feel your complaint has not been adequately addressed to your satisfaction, please contact the Head of the School of Education who will then escalated it through the appropriate channels.

Head of the School of Education:

Professor Rebecca Lawthom

(e) [r.lawthom@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:r.lawthom@sheffield.ac.uk)

The University of Sheffield

School of Education

241 Glossop Road

Sheffield

S10 2GW

If the complaint relates to how your personal data has been handled, information about how to raise a complaint can be found in the University’s Privacy Notice: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general>

Contacts for further information

As the researcher please do not hesitate to ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information, I can be contacted via email at [lamasterson1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:lamasterson1@sheffield.ac.uk) or on the following mobile number 07503 993399. Should I be unavailable for any reason, then please feel free to contact either of my supervisors:

Dr Louise Kay

(e) [louise.kay@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:louise.kay@sheffield.ac.uk)

or

Dr Emma Pearson

(e) [emma.pearson@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:emma.pearson@sheffield.ac.uk)

You may keep this copy of the participant information sheet for your own records. If you wish to proceed and participate then please sign and return the enclosed consent form. A copy of this form will also be issued to you for your own records.

***Thank you for the time and consideration you have given to being part of this project.***

**Consent Form (03/03/21)**

**APPENDIX C**

**“Lock them up – keep them at bay. The cruel consequence of the corona curse on intergenerational practice”**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Please tick the appropriate boxes*** | | | | **Yes** | **No** | |
| **Taking Part in the Project** | | | |  |  | |
| I have read and understood the project information sheet dated 01/01/2021 or the project has been fully explained to me. (If you will answer No to this question please do not proceed with this consent form until you are fully aware of what your participation in the project will mean.) | | | |  |  | |
| I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project. | | | |  |  | |
| I agree to take part in the project. I understand that taking part in the project may include being interviewed. This will be one or two face to face in person interviews (if the situation permits), If covid restrictions are still in place then any interviews will take place virtually using zoom, google meets or Microsoft teams. All interviews will be audio recorded. | | | |  |  | |
| I understand that by choosing to participate as a volunteer in this research, this does not create a legally binding agreement nor is it intended to create an employment relationship with the University of Sheffield. | | | |  |  | |
| I understand that my taking part is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study 30/11/2021. I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part and there will be no adverse consequences if I choose to withdraw. | | | |  |  | |
| **How my information will be used during and after the project** | | | |  |  | |
| I understand my personal details such as name, phone number, address and email address etc. will not be revealed to people outside the project. I will not identify anyone else by name during any interviews. | | | |  |  | |
| I understand and agree that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs. I understand that I will not be named in these outputs unless I specifically request this. | | | |  |  | |
| I understand and agree that other authorised researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form. | | | |  |  | |
| I understand and agree that other authorised researchers may use my data in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form. | | | |  |  | |
| **So that the information you provide can be used legally by the researchers** | | | |  |  | |
| I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials generated as part of this project to The University of Sheffield. | | | |  |  | |
|  |  |  | | |
| Name of participant [printed] | Signature | Date | | |
|  |  |  | | |
| Name of Researcher [printed] | Signature | Date | | |
|  |  |  | | |

**Project contact details for further information:**

**Principal Investigator: Louise Masterson**

**(e)** [**lamasterson1@sheffield.ac.uk**](mailto:lamasterson1@sheffield.ac.uk)

**(m) 07503 993399**

**Supervisors: Dr Louise Kay**

**(e)** [**louise.kay@sheffield.ac.uk**](mailto:louise.kay@sheffield.ac.uk)

**Dr Emma Pearson**

**(e)** [**emma.pearson@sheffield.ac.uk**](mailto:emma.pearson@sheffield.ac.uk)

**In the event of any complaint you may contact the Head of the School of Education:**

**Professor Rebecca Lawthom**

**(e)** [**r.lawthom@sheffield.ac.uk**](mailto:r.lawthom@sheffield.ac.uk)

**The University of Sheffield**

**School of Education**

**241 Glossop Road**

**Sheffield**

**S10 2GW**

Intergenerational Practice Questionnaire

**APPENDIX D**

1. How long have you worked with children aged 7 or under?

a) Less than 1 year b) Between 1-5 years c) Between 5 -10 years d) Between 10-15 years e) Over 15 years

1. What is your highest qualification?

a) GCSE or equivalent b) NNEB or equivalent c) NVQ (please state level) d) Bachelor Degree e) EYPS/EYTS or QTS

f) other (please state)……………………………..

1. Do you currently work in a:

a) school nursery b) PVI day nursery c) sessional early years’ setting d) PVI preschool e) children’s centre

f) other (please state)……………………………..

1. Would you feel confident discussing what is meant by intergenerational practice with others?

a) Yes b) No

1. Have you had any formal training in relation to any type of intergenerational practice?

a) Yes b) No

If you responded a) yes please detail…………………………………………………………………………

1. What do you consider to be the benefits of intergenerational practice?

|  |
| --- |
|  |

1. What do you consider to be the challenges of intergenerational practice?

|  |
| --- |
|  |

1. Does your current setting participate in any intergenerational practice?

a) Yes b) No

If you answered a) yes to question 8 please move onto question 9.

If you answered b) no then the questionnaire is complete and I thank you for your time and responses.

1. Has your setting continued to engage in some sort of intergenerational practice during the Covid-19 pandemic?

a) Yes b) No

If you answered a) yes to question 9 please move onto question 10.

If you answered b) no then the questionnaire is complete and I thank you for your time and responses.

1. Are you willing to be interviewed to discuss further the challenges and success of planning for and delivering intergenerational practice during the Covid – 19 pandemic?

a) Yes b) No

Please note that for phase two of this study I will be conducting interviews to explore these issues further, but you do not have to participate unless you wish to. If you decide you would like to be a part of the phase two research then please provide your contact details below:

Name………………………………………………………………………………..

Setting………………………………………………………………………………

Contact email/phone number…………………………………………….

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. All responses will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Please email the completed questionnaire to [lamasterson1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:lamasterson1@sheffield.ac.uk) or use the stamped addressed envelope provided.

APPENDIX E

Interview Questions

Q1) How have you acquired your knowledge on intergenerational practice?

Q2) How have you turned that knowledge into actions?

Q3) What have you done that worked well?

Q4) What has been the biggest challenge?

Q5) How do you see yourself?

Q6) What is it that motivates you?

APPENDIX F

Autonomy Audit

Answer the following four questions using a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 means practically zero and 10 indicates a large amount.

1. How much autonomy do you have over your tasks at work – your main responsibilities and what you do in a given day?
2. How much autonomy do you have over your time at work – for instance, when you arrive, when you leave, and how you allocate your hours each day?
3. How much autonomy do you have over your team at work – that is, to what extent are you able to choose the people with who you typically collaborate?
4. How much autonomy do you have over your technique at work – how you actually perform the main responsibilities of your job?

Personality Quiz

Please complete the following online quiz to ascertain if you are a type “I” personality or a type “X” personality.

[www.danpink.com/drive.html](http://www.danpink.com/drive.html)

APPENDIX G

A diagram of a company

Description automatically generated

A diagram of a company

Description automatically generated

A diagram of a diagram

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Appendix H

Safeguarding Framework designed to guide those leading programmes in the field of intergenerational practice

Policy Reflection Points

* Has this been underpinned by the necessary statutory documentation (listed in the table below) so it safeguards both young children and older adults?
* Does it facilitate older adults and young children to exercise their human rights when participating in intergenerational practice?
* Are there step by step instructions for staff to follow in relation to safeguarding with respect to when action needs to be taken and interventions put in place?
* Is there a complaints procedure that has been sufficiently outlined?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Young children** | **Older Adults** |
| United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 | Human rights Act 1998 |
| DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 | DHSC Care and Support Statutory Guidance 2023 |
| DfE Working Together to Safeguard Children 2024 | The Care Act 2014 – Schedule 2 |
| Early Years Foundation Stage Framework 2024 |  |

Risk Assessments Reflection Points

* Has there been consideration given to the vulnerability of some of the older adults in terms of the environment they are being placed in? For example, is the lighting sufficient? Have trip hazards been kept to a minimum? Are measures in place to ensure effective communication can take place with those who may be hearing impaired?
* Do any of the participants have a propensity to use inappropriate language?
* Have children been briefed about the needs of some of the older adults so they are prepared for what they might experience in terms of mobility and fragility?
* Can it be said that the risk assessment is proportionate and has effectively mitigated identified any other areas of concern?

Training Reflection Points

* Have all involved parties been made aware that safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility? Do you hold regular safeguarding training?
* Do staff understand the reporting procedures in relation to safeguarding incidents and issues of concern? What evidence do you have to support this?
* Do staff possess the necessary knowledge and understanding in relation to safeguarding and whistleblowing? How might this be demonstrated/recorded?
* Can staff confidently adhere to the correct information sharing procedures?